

Contesting power in public art spaces. Liminal p(l)aces, diverting methodologies and observant participation in Valor y Cambio.

Interpelando al poder en los espacios públicos de arte. Lugares liminales, metodologías divergentes y observación participativa en el proyecto Valor y Cambio.

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Resumen: Este artículo propone que las formas en las que asociamos conceptos entre sí puede establecerlos como puntos de partida para nuevas figuraciones no centralizadoras de los mismos que nos permitan avanzar hacia una descolonización epistemológica. De esta forma los conceptos se convierten en metodologías excéntricas en tanto que funcionan como patrones difractivos y cartografías de acción en lugar de quedarse varadas en fronteras y límites. Ilustro estos presupuestos con un análisis de la instalación/experiencia Valor y Cambio, de Frances Negrón-Muntaner. Investigo su narrativa contrahegemónica y sus metodologías excéntricas y divergentes para el cambio social.

Abstract: This article proposes that the way we put concepts together can unpack them as methodologies and points of departure for new figurations. Only by breaking with monistic/centric figurations of concepts can we progress towards epistemic decolonization and embrace a constellation of methodologies we may refer to as eccentric. They are eccentric since they function by diffractive patterns which move them away from the center. They become cartographies of action rather than static border maps. Inspired by the above, the present contribution looks into Frances Negrón-Muntaner's Valor y Cambio installation/experience as a case study on counterhegemonic narratives and diverting/eccentric methodologies for social and academic change.

Palabras clave: cartografías de acción, arte decolonial, Valor y cambio, archivos, representación, contradicciones, temporalidades, contra-hegemonía.

Keywords: cartographies of action, decolonial art, Value and change, archives, representation, contradictions, temporalities, counter-hegemony.

1. INTRODUCTION: A CARTOGRAPHY OF ACTIONS.

“What power epistemologies self-confine inside concepts?” This was the first question that came to mind when wondering on a starting point for this article. Although inspired now by the Covid-19 circumstances, the idea has indeed been part of my research since long ago. It was during a feminist theory seminar I attended three years ago that I first had the opportunity to problematize the use and abuse of the most influential critical concepts. The group’s opinion at the time was that these concepts were intrinsically associated with the "big names" who had coined them, and that the resulting conceptual architecture was built on power and privileged chronotopes. This, together with the immutability of the concepts themselves, generated our suspicion of our mechanical use of such concepts in research. The experience also triggered a process of reflection, which has eventually given birth to the present contribution.

Two other considerations have been added to this discussion since. One: that when we conduct research we often neglect the colonial epistemologies embedded in our sources of reference; and two: that we assume certain configurations as naturally rooted in the concepts we employ, which, in turn, may have a distorting effect on the transference of research results to the arena of social activity and political motions.

This article, therefore, sets out from the conviction that concepts are more than mere passive agents helping us explain the world we are immersed in. The way we put concepts together does not only unpack them as methodologies but also gives them a space and a place for recognition, a point of departure for a new (con)figuration. It is my opinion that only by choosing to break with monistic/centric (con)figurations of concepts can we progress towards a real decolonization of epistemologies and, hence, embrace a constellation of methodologies we may refer to as ‘eccentric’. They are eccentric since they do not occupy the center by standing there stagnantly. Rather, they function by diffractive patterns that speak more about cartographies of action than about static border maps.

Inspired by the above, the present contribution examines Frances Negrón-Muntaner's *Valor y Cambio* installation/experience as a case study on counter-hegemonic narratives and diverting/eccentric methodologies for social and academic change. It is the first of a group of four case studies under the umbrella of a doctoral FPU research project entitled "Power in public art spaces. Generating counter-hegemonic narratives and Art Therapy as a toolbox against exclusion" (2018-2022). Among other aims, the project intends to explore new gender approaches to material culture¹ and to the decolonization of cultural

¹ Following González Marcén et al., 2012; Alarcón García y Sánchez Romero 2015 among others.

epistemologies and spaces² so as to deconstruct art spaces as containers of cultural concepts.

This article presents my response-able three-month long observant participation of *Valor y Cambio* as a public space transnational installation. Taking its cue from the queering of temporalities (Esteban Muñoz, 2009; Berlant, 2011), it is my intention to re-conceptualise these spaces as what I would term "liminal p(l)aces". It is from this vantage point that we can contemplate present contexts by breaking rigid chronologies and opening up, in turn, the possibility of revisiting public art spaces and art education disciplines as eccentric forms of social transformation. New understandings of materiality and material cultures can, indeed, lead to new collective forms of transgressive living, with the generation of new knowledges emerging from the decolonizing and liberation of urban spaces and with projects of circular economy, such as the one under investigation here. By making room for multifarious identities and positions, the active engagement of "life otherwise" (Gómez-Barris, 2018) is reactivated, reshaped and materialises in the political imagination of the people who happen to affect and be affected (Barad, 2014).

A final consideration determines my own standpoint, looking at my research from the various intersections of my specific training as an art historian in an academic scene (an archaeology department) and as a cultural scholar. This conveys an enquiry into the epistemic assumptions from which academic material is created and into how it expands in all directions and temporalities. In other words, the way we look at history, at its material culture from traditional archaeology, also proves the epistemic belief that concepts are intrinsic to situations and that meaning is prior to action. It is what Uzma Rizvi, engaging in a decolonization of knowledge, refers to as the "epistemic injustice and violence", which she relates to the "construction of a colonial hermeneutic" (2018, p. 56).

2. PRESENTING THE CASE STUDY.

Created by Frances Negrón-Muntaner, writer, film-maker, professor of cultural studies and coordinator of both the project and the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race (CSER) and with the collaboration of artist Sarabel Santos Negrón, *Valor y Cambio* was conceived in 2019 as "a story-telling, community-building, and solidarity economy project [which] is out to spark a broad conversation about what is a just economy and how to foster collective empowerment in the face of austerity and neoliberal policies locally and nationally" (<https://www.valorycambio.org/abouttheproject>).

The project, which started in Puerto Rico, was launched with the circulation of its own currency conceived as a tool for exchange and transformation within the community at all levels. These 'pesos of Puerto Rico' are dispensed from an

² Following Lugones, 2008; Mezzadra, 2012; Rizvi, 2018.

ATM-style machine and different Puerto Rican personalities, such as activists, educators, athletes or communities, feature on them. In order to access the pesos, people must answer questions about what they value. They can then choose to extend their participation in the project by continuing the circulation of the currency by exchanging the pesos for products or services, or they can just keep the pesos as a cultural memento of the figures they feature.

After the initial Puerto Rican phase, the project was intended to come to Harlem in the Spring of 2020 as a collaboration between Columbia University and the New York and Harlem City Councils. However, Covid-19 made its unexpected appearance instead and with it many things changed. The research structure for the article had to be adapted as a consequence of the new circumstances. The result was in itself queerly eccentric, since it got me into peripheral practices. My initial goal was the examination of how *Valor y Cambio* could have a transformative impact/affect upon: 1. the academic unit participating in it, the Media and Idea Lab (MIL) within the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race (CSER) at Columbia University; and 2. the city of New York and the Harlem neighborhood in particular. However, with Covid, research became an action that had to depart, now more than ever, from my own position. Faithful to my main goals of unpacking my practices and remaining self-critical, I became involved in two singular projects. The first one was my contribution to a series of films and videos, "Days With(in)", a joint project developed by Columbia University students attending Prof. Frances Negrón-Muntaner's "Video as Inquiry" course at CSER in the Spring 2020. In it we reflected upon quarantine, self-isolation and an inquiry into new futures³. The second one was an interview/conversation with Negrón-Muntaner on *Valor y Cambio* and on how the project tackles the concepts I am researching into (2020B).

Nevertheless, the triggering research questions which have guided me through this case study, and which I explore in this contribution, remain the same as intended before the pandemic started. They are questions such as: Is academic direct-action possible? Can we talk about a conceptual turn in academia towards active/eccentric methodologies? What does non-binarism imply in this turn and/or as a concept when trespassing the dichotomy gender/space (Preciado, 2014)? And throughout the discussion of the meaning of power: could this trespassing be approached as a disruption of both, a beyond, the horizon of Spinozian "potentia" which may also be embedded in "potestas" (Weheliye, 2014)?

Plans and intentions had to give way under the pressure of the sudden transformation of our lives with Covid. I, like anyone in a housing situation, had to take shelter within the limits of the domestic space. I realised that the new

³ The collection of films can be found at <https://vimeo.com/channels/dayswithinseries> and my own contribution, co-authored with Zahira Galindo Salmerón at <https://vimeo.com/437081222>

situation was disturbing the basic premises of the social divisions of space and of cultural public representations which had originally inspired me to undertake a research experience on public art spaces at Columbia University and the City of New York. What came next was the unexpected generation of public conversations and joint creation during the times within and under the constraints of the private.

3. THE RADICAL IDEA OF ACTIVE CONCEPTS.

In the context of this visit, and of the enormous inspiration that Frances Negrón-Muntaner's work has meant to my own research, the following section analyses some fragments of the interview/conversation I had the opportunity to engage in with her. These fragments are aligned with concepts that are fundamental to my thesis, and in particular to this article. They touch upon social problematics and their possible solutions through activism. They speak about how to transform the contradictions we find in our research into new horizons to move towards.⁴

Before analysing the virtual encounter, let me start by exploring the roles played by “eccentricity” and Karen Barad's diffractive shift in the re-activation of concepts I propose in this article. Barad's diffraction can help problematize the centrality of concepts and the mindset which legitimizes them according to the logics of maps, whose borders validate some of them while excluding others. I propose that the logics of cartographies can help replace exclusive borders with inclusive liminality and that a diffractive approach to the use of concepts inside hegemonic spaces, such as academia, can trigger their radical transformation into actions. Following Trinh T. Minh-ha's (1990) rejection of the leveling out of differences conveyed by hegemony, I maintain that concepts as actions, and within actions, can unleash translocations, trans-fluctuations and translocations of performativity.

Translocation involves a diffraction of the notion of space and a re-configuration of the concepts of maps and borders. It opens up understandings of spaces as eccentric cartographies which involve the eliciting of their performance of power. Thus, on the one hand, from the stance of critical theory this article uses space to engage with situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988; Csordas, 1994). On the other, material locations are reconceptualized here through an approach to physics as hypothetical simultaneous possibilities, or in Barad's (2014) terms, a quantic superposition of potentialities.

In this trend, I reject physics as the study of what *there is* and I propose a transgression of the ontology of this concept. In a similar vein, I reject the idea that

⁴ The interview, which took place on 29 June 2020, will be transcribed following the fragments that serve to sustain the topics that are discussed in these pages. The complete interview will be published in my PhD thesis (forthcoming).

one should just limit oneself to the act of *speaking* about paths of knowledge rather than taking action on them. It is as if the material part of existence would blur into the fluidity of postmodernity, into all its misleading words as momentum reactions with no consequences⁵. In this sense, my formula would be to use an onto-epistemological approach so as to break free from "geometries of absolute exteriority or interiority [...] remaining resolutely accountable for the role 'we' play in the intertwined practices of knowing and becoming" (Barad, 2003, p. 802).

From here, I move on to a consideration of *p(l)ace*. I use this concept in order to show the intersections between *place* and *pace*, interwoven in the title of this article, as the blending of matter and consciousness, a junction of space and its inner rhythms. The practices of concepts have to start articulating the performative part of their 'becoming', a queer becoming, serving as a tribute to José Esteban Muñoz's queer horizons, words that combine and transition with no need for fixed arrivals. This understanding and use of 'becoming' has the potentiality of performing specific actions that are both evolving and located.

Following the arguments outlined above, another aspect in the dismantling of centrality is the urgent need to pay attention to the multiplicity of meanings in language. Concepts exist because they are articulated through language. Their polysemy gives them a potentiality for manifold uses and relationalities. As language, concepts are both located and can (re)locate and in this sense language plays tricks on us. Take for instance the concept of identity, which derives from the latin *identificare*, a combination of two terms: *identicus* + *-ificare* (equal + to fix). The connotations of fixation, stasis and permanence are evident in the original Latin term while they are covert in the English one. Hence, when using the English language, the concept itself functions as a shield against attempts to enliven it, to give it fluidity and movement. Language is, therefore, finally responsible for the way policies based on concepts, such as politics of identity, tend to get stuck in space, time and relationality once the initial motion which generates them is over.

Breaking with a monistic understanding of concepts and choosing their plurality of meaning entails also breaking free from their oppositional usages and resisting their commodification. Just like free radicals, concepts can be used as ramifications which outreach and escape the control of institutions, whether academic or others. In other words, I question the rhizomatic meanings we encounter in concepts when attending to how they interpelate and are interpelated by the material cultures in which they are used. We can question, for instance, whether we can work through the concept of "anticapitalism" in cases where the

⁵ Let me illustrate this thought with the following example: We are constantly told by scientists, that the essence of science is impossible for 'us' to access. In this sense, this 'us' refers to 'others', the uninvited guests to academic research and practices dictated by scientific powers whose hegemony depends on exclusion. This exclusion cannot be attained without the use of a specific type of language, encrypted to everyone other than the scientists who designed it.

concept of economy is itself rooted in logics other than those of accumulation, as is the case, with *Valor y Cambio*. It is about decolonizing the concept of economy and its imbrication within the state and the system.

4. WHAT DO YOU VALUE? *VALOR Y CAMBIO*

Valor y Cambio started in February 2019 in Puerto Rico and then was taken to New York, in 2020, partly because of the large Puerto Rican community who have been living in the city for over a century now. It contains more action than many other academic projects. It is a solidarity collaboration between different communities which destabilizes what we understand as living in a society. It reappropriates and gives new force to diverse concepts, such as *value* and *exchange*, that give the project its title.

Negrón-Muntaner started by posing the following question to the people participating in the Puerto Rican experience at the first stage of the project: "what groups or persons do you know about that do what you value?" on which she comments

This seemed to be the most difficult question to answer. People participating in the experience responded they did not know anyone that did what they valued, or their answer was *Valor y Cambio*, the experience that they were living through at the moment. (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 5:11-5:23)⁶.

The difficulty to respond to the question is not due, in her opinion, to their not really knowing what matters, since, as she explains,

Most people know what they want but they do not know how they want it. It is amazing that the largest amount [90%], regard education, after family, as the most valuable asset. And they don't mean education as a means for social mobility, they mean education in the sense of their own relation to the world, with themselves and with others. (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 12:50-13:26)

This was an interesting point in the project, because it suggested many aspects from which to depart. As Negrón-Muntaner states, people knew what they valued. It was the how, the means, the method, that they had not thought about. This is exactly what my research was looking for: eccentric thinking, a radical break from hegemonic mindsets for which the end, usually, justifies the means. I wondered about the commitment of the participants, particularly those involved in public education. As she explains,

I realised that the teachers and students from schools in Puerto Rico had come in an autonomous way [...] What we did was two workshops of forty educators each and it was amazing because they rapidly saw the possibilities of using the exchange notes as a way of involving the whole school in the education process.

⁶ Subsequent references to the interview are indicated as Negrón-Muntaner, followed by the minutes in the recording.

Some of these teachers have other ecological projects or other types of projects that integrate different subjects. (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 7:07- 9:15)

Teachers perceived *Valor y Cambio* as an educational methodology in itself, or as I read it, a making of connections, not only between people and their experiences, but also between different realms of knowledge.

The fact that Puerto Rico has been and still is “a Caribbean Archipelago that has been subject to US colonial-capitalist rule for more than a century” (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020, p. 171), has political specificities that also impact the project. Negrón-Muntaner comments on the way politics are differently lived and experienced in Puerto Rico as compared to the USA. In Puerto Rico, she notes, the period of elections is felt many months before they take place, in contrast with the USA, where the tension is concentrated in the last period, only weeks before the event. Hence, her intention was to return to Puerto Rico in 2020 to investigate the changes in the people's consciousness one year after. As she explains:

After the protests [of summer 2019], in one of which one million people participated, new names and groups of people appeared in the scene. Then, I wanted to test whether the new protests scenario had generated changes in the people with respect to those groups who were acting on what they valued. (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 5:25- 5: 46)

With all this in mind, I thought of the connection with the ongoing protests taking place in the USA that erupted after George Floyd's murder at the hands of the police a few weeks before our interview. I wanted to speak about the link between the resistance I perceived in Negrón-Muntaner's project and those protests, both touching, in my opinion, on the concepts that constitute socio-political ways of living, both aiming to transcend official responses and to have an effect on everyday action. Commenting on this, Negrón-Muntaner remarks that the atmosphere of resistance has been growing for a long time, and, more specifically, during the past two years. She recalls some of the factors that have generated the specific climate and reflects on the importance of language and terminology

The move to rethink justice also includes rethinking the levels of incarceration, police brutality and further rethinking. Another factor is the increase in the understanding of racism as a systemic problem, which is interesting since media has recently been discussing what terminology to use when talking about anti-racist movements. If the catchword 10 years ago was *African-American*, the claim now is *Black*. This change is strongly influenced by the BLM movement, a radicalization of perspectives which responds to systemic racism and white supremacy. Regardless of its different shapes, both of these are just as present as they've always been and keep the same roots as before. All of this, added to a situation of economic polarization, of less options for the youth to access the job market [...], and COVID, makes people more conscious of the neoliberal impact on them. And then, George Floyd's murder triggers and

explodes it all. There is an interesting thing about Bernie Sanders's campaign concerning terminology and concepts. He offered a vocabulary to speak about what was really happening in the USA which was not accepted by most African-American electors. This means that the category of race and racism is not so much terminology which emanates from class but the way inequality is thought. Sanders spoke about a revolution, an insurrection, but he did so using a vocabulary which could not generate it (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 17:50-20:48).

Here Negrón-Muntaner touches upon the main concerns of my research: the importance of language and its capability to materialize itself into living concepts. In order to work through these resistances, an important step is, the analysis of the way concepts structure our lives and are maintained and sustained through space and time. As she continues, in relation to *Valor y Cambio*,

The project and other projects of the kind [...] respond to a need to transition from an economy based on exploitation, accumulation and extraction to one that puts the welfare of the community at its center [...] The crisis has generated a number of new mutual-help projects which are not always about creating a social currency, but there are notions that coexist and insist in the need for a transformation. If you speak about capitalism from a colony, your perception and experience of capitalism won't be privileged. You see things that a person in NY wouldn't, because even if you are poor in NY you are in a place of abundance. (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 20:50-22:24)

The concept of economy as used by Negrón-Muntaner, transitioning towards communal welfare, emerges here as an example of what I mean by reclaiming concepts as cartographies of action. Some of its components, such as circular economy or solidary economy, are activated while others, such as economy as exploitation, accumulation or extractivism are discarded. And in this Macarena Gómez-Barris's "life otherwise" (2018) theories come to mind since she proposes an ecological praxis of memories and new understandings of experiencing and materializing pleasurable lives.

Valor y Cambio is a breath of fresh air because it brings about a multiplicity of records, perspectives and experiences. The way economy is perceived from colonies, from neoliberal spaces and from other locations where the concept of economy does not even exist queers the very definition of economy. I see this as a project that also works through imagination, and in this respect I wanted to bring the project's relation to art into the conversation. I suggested to Negrón-Muntaner that Walter Mignolo's division of *Aesthetics* and *Aesthesis* (2010) could be a pertinent parallel to *Valor y Cambio*, since they both go beyond the idea of progress and its connection to futurity maintained by hegemonic aesthetics. Mignolo's division, as I see it, speaks about a type of political imagination that can reconceptualize concepts that are basic to many social structures, such as those of economy or art. In this sense, *Valor y Cambio* had an artistic base from

the start, following this idea of political imagination. After researching and asking herself about the best way to introduce the project to the public she realized most people, and in particular activists, were tired of speaking about problematics,

They denied any form of conventional thinking: they didn't want assemblies or meetings. They didn't want to talk to other people doing what they were doing. They said they felt exhausted, they had no energy left and all they wanted to do was continue their work in their communities. I then started thinking of other ways of having these conversations which would not feel like work, which would not drain their energy. The question then was 'how to circulate a new currency and with it a new set of ideas and narratives?' [...] There are lots of people who think art can't have that impact, and that's not always so, since in our case art has been an essential component [...] The best thing that can be done is to generate an experience which is not felt as an imposition. (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 24:23-28:46)

The attention to agency, an essential point in the interview when rethinking academic practices and hegemonies, took me back to the times when I was being trained as an art therapist. My work as an art therapist made me see the potentialities of other forms of communication which centrifugate languages towards borderlands (following Gloria Anzaldúa, 1987). Alternative forms of communication, such as art, allow for diverse forms of accessibility into the experience conveyed by those languages. Therefore, new artistic figurations provoke new agencies and epistemologies. Along these lines, Negrón-Muntaner suggests that [*Valor y Cambio*] demystifies and challenges the idea that art is an elitist experience. It can be, and indeed it is, so if we speak about art hierarchies, museums and traditional institutions with all their conflicts. However, people also give value to artistic experiences as precious knowledge. In the Puerto Rican context, many people prefer artistic interventions because they value artists more than they do other representatives, such as politicians [...] I have been thinking about that lately. James Baldwin came to mind because he has been forgotten for decades, partly because of his homosexuality, partly because he did not respond to the same hero paradigm as Martin Luther King or Malcom X did. Still, recent transformations in social demands make him an important voice now. Thus, we must preserve these materials, circulate them and make them accessible for future use. We know that the tree may take its time to grow but this doesn't matter since the process is an ongoing one (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 32:30-36:20).

The very idea of the archive is here revalued and re-written from new temporalities. It lets us speak about its value using it as a power tool. The eternity of the process of creation, a queer horizon to which the genealogy of knowledge aspires, makes archives eccentric methodologies because of their disobedience to the idea of progress and futurity contained in the traditional understanding of genealogies. This, in turn, leads to a decodification of traditional ways of creating and learning about life and forms of living, and opens up the experience of what

Negrón-Muntaner calls *Decolonial Joy*. She narrates that when she started the project her idea was to bring "out" what she had learned from debt [And] take it to the streets. But, what happened was that the streets provided me and others with a space to reconsider other things, for example the concept itself [*decolonial joy*], which I think would not have emerged from my academic work. It emerged from the space we created and shared (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 38:23-38:58).

Decolonial joy is collective and is a response to a colonial past and present. It enables very diverse forms of thought,

[*In the designing of the currency*], color [*was*] also very important. Every color communicates something different. Colour is also loaded with knowledge. It connotes stories, archives, perspectives, theorizations, actions, emotions, etc. [...] How people speak and express themselves, not only what they say, is fundamental for the complexity of thought and action. (Negrón Muntaner, 2020B; 59:10- 1:02:03)

Inspired by this, I spoke to Frances about my own conflict with the archive since my own research was not only a result of academic knowledge, but also the outcome of my relationships. The people I have encountered in my life have embodied and generated my ideas. Speaking of the way non-academic influences should also be cited in my work, Negrón-Muntaner reminded me that theories depart from practice. In the case of gender, for instance, she remarks that "movements and the way people theorize about their bodies is where these theories emanate from, not the other way round. Academia organizes and links these thoughts" (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 41:42-42:03).

This was a salient issue to me. I mentioned the concept of genealogy and the meaning of heritage, particularly inside the discipline of Archaeology. Responding to this, Negrón-Muntaner explains that one of the principal aims of the project was to generate a new genealogy from the currency notes by displaying historical figures that had been dismissed in the historical narratives coming from Puerto Rico. One of the main groups of figures was the Corderos, a group of siblings who dedicated their lives to education. These sisters were unspecific figures, unknown by the vast majority of their country and this was so because of the way genealogies and historical canons are constructed: while Rafael Cordero's students were boys who then grew up to become literate men and could leave precise records of his life, the 12 sisters' students were girls who, as Negrón explains, "grew up being women and, later on, wives who did not write about their teachers" (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 52:15-52:23), hence the absence of historical records which also extends to the image realm:

There are no images of these women [...] while Rafael Cordero was captured in different paintings[...] The dilemma here was, 'what can we do?'. We looked for photos and paintings at the time, we did research on Rafael's face and we invented them. It is complicated and generates questions. It doesn't resolve, but at least it opens up questions (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 53:43-54:48)

It is a question of imagination, of political imagination. The situational aporia also unlocks paradoxical forms of knowledge. In this regard, Negrón-Muntaner remembers how emotion and affect was another way to access these new epistemologies. Thinking of other forms of archive, I wondered what potentialities exist inside spaces of recognition, or to translate this thought into Spinozian terms, what *potentia* can be found in *potestas*. In a way, this multiplicity of positions has been pivotal to Negrón, recognizing divergent genealogies inside academic frameworks. As she remembers:

Coming from a black genealogy, the archive has been of great importance. Counter-archives have meant a source and basis for the construction of discourses against white supremacy, for example. This is not to say that it is free of contradictions, but it is a strategy for subaltern power[...] How you look at it, how you use it, how you relate it, is key to working through these materials. You see a link in things you hadn't considered previously (Negrón-Muntaner, 2020B; 1:05:23- 1:06:01)

A response-able attitude to genealogy also implies that, as Negrón-Muntaner highlights, the archives must subserve a strategy against hegemony.

5. CARTOGRAPHIES OF ACTION: SOME TRANSITIONS INTO NEW MUTATIONS

As illustrated by this case study, and as seen above, we need renewed images, concepts as cartographies of action, which can bring political imaginations to disrupt our hegemonic methodologies. What follows is a summary of the new concepts which, in my opinion, emerge from the *Valor y Cambio* experience.

5.1. The liminal p(l)ace of contradictions: the private and the public

To rethink through counter-archives, as Negrón-Muntaner proposes, is a necessary eccentric move in our decolonial practices. Taking response-ability for the genealogy we each depart from is an ongoing process that brings forward continuous contradictions: our different identities from a queerness of the self, the diverse spaces we inhabit and perform, even the conflict that can be found in being a member of Academia, as Negrón-Muntaner recognizes from her own experience. Still, though conflicts and problematics are present, contradictions can become joyful if we manage to provide space for them. Hence, although archives may be generated from inside institutions they can still provoke motions of resistance. The contradictions and frictions of their being outside-within allow for a diffractive space of relations that can enact a "cutting together apart" (Barad, 2014, p. 176).

Space has attracted my attention since I first came to the field of feminism. *Space* as a physical, astrological, social, relational, fictional and figurative

scenario. Indeed, one of the first claims of hegemonic feminism has been the reclaiming of public space in contrast to the private, read as domestic, sphere. Years have passed since then and a number of situations have taught me that the spaces of militant resistance cannot be limited to this binary division between the private and the public. I now maintain, after militant years of cruising through different feminisms, that identity is manifold and that, therefore, spatial dynamism should not be assumed as delimited but as liminal. This is perfectly exemplified in the case of *Valor y cambio* which confirms my belief that this binary does not make sense any more. The material and relational intimacies generated by the *Valor y cambio* experience make the private blend with the public so that the former stops responding to the logics of capital, ownership, accumulation and the latter stops signifying the power of institutions. I propose to call this a *liminal* concept: *anticapital private-spaces of desire*. I find another illustration of this idea in the current antiracist protests taking place in the USA.

These new readings of spaces as liminal takes us to epistemological edges, transversed maps and failure methods of imagining, as Jack Halberstam would put it (2011:89). It is an alliance towards a flux of openings, an ejaculation of possibilities, a “*potentia gaudendis* [...] as an orgasmic force [that does not seek] any immediate resolution” (Preciado, 2008, p. 38, my translation). Liminality leads to eccentricity, dislocating centres and activating cartographies without N-S referential points, transitioning towards the acknowledgment of asphyxia, of combat breathing (Fanon, 1959).

5.2. Dislocating temporalities into archives of desire

Combat breathing, or to hashtag it through current actions #ICan'tBreathe, is the urge to identify non-linear temporalities, non-passing reparations, and to accept that violence towards certain bodies keeps going. The current transition from *Black Lives Matter* to *Black Livings Matter* is a move towards accountability in everyday actions and experiences that become accountable. It is also a queering of the temporalities of production since bodies are given meaning outside the production-consumption logic, and are valued for every inch of their flesh (lives) and experience (livings).

In this sense, queering temporalities enables the establishment of new archives, new genealogies, new histories, and thus, new identifications. It is not about a particular destination, but a horizon of desires, an incessant process. *Potentia* and *potestas*, in the oppositional Spinozian terminology, come into conversation, examining what possibilities open up when reconceptualizing the notion of power itself.

As an art historian and art therapist, one of the most important connections I have made in my research and practice has been the constant friction between fiction and reality. History is both the most fascinating imaginative tale and also

the best way to approach not only present materialities but also past periods, times and rhythms.

In the defense of an eccentric approach to the archives which give form to what we interpret as our *reality* at present, one of the most engaging methodologies used in *Valor y Cambio* is the new currency with the images of Puerto Rican figures overlooked in history, such as Rafael Cordero's twelve sisters, previously known by most people as unspecified figures associated with their well-known brother. The exposure of the re-imagined figures of those forgotten sisters is certainly a decisive dissident move towards decolonizing the collective imaginary. The deserved recognition of neglected local agents of change, revolution and organization, attained by their spotlighting, is essential for Negrón-Muntaner's *decolonial joy* and what we can refer to as *archives of desire*. By joining the concept of *archive* with the concept of *desire*, the resulting conceptualization becomes a transformative affect which could engage communities in more radical ways. It is in this sense that I insist on concepts becoming *cartographies of action*.

5.3. Beyond aesthetics: Art, material Heritage and linguistic rituals

Transforming the concept of archive also implies a conversion of material culture. Heritage comes into question and with it the remains of matter that in *Valor y Cambio* shape into a communitarian currency. I have brought about the need to decolonize material heritage by calling on Mignolo's division between aesthesis and aesthetics. What is recognized as preservable, as artistic, is an assumption of a legitimate and official way of representation, a system that sorts out what is valuable from what is disposable.

Imagination and art concoct differently from the way aesthetics and art do. When art becomes a language, concepts enact affect, and consequently art evolves as a decolonial practice, a constellation of epistemologies communicated via an infinite number of paths. As in Gloria Anzaldúa's *La Frontera*, eccentric forms of knowledge are not always made accessible, but remain in-between experiential codes which do not want transliteration.

Rather than close this article with conclusions, I prefer to finish with a cartography of action and use language as ritual, as repetitive procedures, and, ultimately, in Byung-Chul Han's words "a home in space." Concepts as linguistic rituals can facilitate fluidity of communication and exchange between bodies, including other than human. They become tokens of recognition, as liminal identities from where to explore life.

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