

Beyond the border between the North and the South: towards a decolonization of epistemologies and fields of research on Mercosur*

Para além da fronteira entre o Norte e o Sul: por uma descolonização das epistemologias e dos campos de pesquisa sobre o Mercosul

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at presenting the possibilities of introducing Decolonial approaches in the field of research on Regionalisms. It states that Eurocentrism and lack of epistemic alternatives produced in the South are the main obstacles to undertaking in-depth studies on Mercosur.

The first topic presents the historiography of research conducted on Mercosur and emphasizes the main themes and issues that have been on the agenda for debate. The second topic describes the motivations behind the use of Decolonial approaches in the sphere of regionalisms. The last topic raises some hypotheses about the possibilities of promoting the decolonization of Mercosur's realm of research by applying tools offered by new Latin American critical epistememes.

The use of critical approaches and “border epistemologies” in the field of regionalisms is innovative and useful because they offer the opportunity to redefine the emancipatory assumptions of Modernity - rather than reject them - and to include and appreciate other epistemic places of enunciation by opening spaces for pluriversal, non-hierarchical dialog with “other experiences” and “other knowledges”.

Keywords: Decoloniality; Mercosur; critical approaches; fields of research.

RESUMO:

O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar a possibilidade de introdução das abordagens Decoloniais no campo de pesquisas sobre os regionalismos. Defende-se que o eurocentrismo e a carência de alternativas epistêmicas produzidas no Sul constituem-se como importantes limitadores para o aprofundamento dos estudos sobre o Mercosul.

O primeiro tópico apresenta a historiografia das pesquisas elaboradas sobre o Mercosul e enfatiza os principais temas e problemas que têm ocupado espaço nas agendas de debates. O segundo tópico expõe as motivações para utilização das abordagens Decoloniais na esfera dos regionalismos. No

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último tópico são levantadas algumas hipóteses sobre as possibilidades de promover a descolonização dos espaços investigatórios mercosulinos, através da aplicação de ferramentas oferecidas pelas novas epistemias críticas latino-americanas.

A introdução de abordagens críticas e das “epistemologias de fronteira” nos campos dos regionalismos é inovadora e útil porque oferece a oportunidade de redefinir os pressupostos emancipatórios da Modernidade - ao invés de rechaçá-los - e de incluir e valorizar outros lugares de enunciação epistêmica, através da abertura de espaços de diálogo pluriversalizado, não hierarquizado com as experiências-outras e os saberes-outras.

Palavras-chave: Decolonialidade; Mercosul; epistemologias críticas; campos de pesquisas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mercosur has never comfortably fit into the measures established by European standards. Theories of regional integration formulated in the North, although relevant in many aspects, can hardly encompass the whole of the landscape designed from the Global South. Although this diagnosis has already been widely accepted by the European literature, comparative analyses made in the Southern Cone are still strongly induced by Eurocentric parameters, which poses problems for research on regionalism.

Research studies in this field will produce further insights when they start taking into account critical thoughts borne from the Global South and geared towards the diversity of integrationist movements. The fact that theoretical frameworks are still based in the North, while the subjects of study are located in the South, poses risks of image distortion. Breaking such limitations requires, first and foremost, overcoming intellectual dependence and decolonizing the knowledge that naturalizes the hierarchies of rationalities; however, above all, it is crucial to transcend fundamentalisms, “whether hegemonic or marginal”¹.

The objective of this article is to discuss the possibi-

lity of introducing Decolonial approaches in the field of research on regionalisms and argue that Eurocentrism and lack of epistemic critical alternatives produced in the Global South are the main barriers to undertaking in-depth studies on Mercosur.

The first topic presents the historiography of research conducted on Mercosur and emphasizes the main themes and issues that have been on the agenda for debate. The second topic describes the motivations behind the use of Decolonial approaches in the sphere of regionalisms. The last topic raises some hypotheses about the possibilities of promoting the decolonization of Mercosur’s realm of research by applying tools offered by new Latin American critical epistememes.

This study will highlight the possible contributions that Decolonial perspectives can offer to the field of regional integration (RI) by questioning the reproduction of Eurocentrism and ‘coloniality of knowledge’ in this context.

The purpose of introducing Latin American critical approaches is to widen the understanding of integration processes in this region rather than discard the existing frameworks. This is not an anti-European manifest, and we acknowledge the relevant contribution of European intellectual movements. However, this study stresses the need to extend the scope of theoretical frameworks by including Latin Americans critical approaches in essays.

It is assumed that one should look into regionalisms as historical processes and, therefore, one has to identify their genealogy in order to understand their potential and their constraints. Much of the uniqueness of the Southern Cone is connected with colonialist legacies; similarly, the nature of the European Union (EU) maintains traces and the legacies of the great world wars. The existing theories are unable to interpret the whole of colonial influence on the core of Mercosur.

For this reason, fields of research should be decolonized in order to expose the omissions and prejudice in mainstream thinking as well as overcome the influence of Eurocentric Modernity, based on plural cartographies that allow reaching the integrality of problems and more adequately disclose the limitations, challenges and perspectives of existing regionalisms outside Europe.

One of the many solutions proposed by Decolonial approaches to promote such decolonization, without

1 GROSFOGUEL, R. Para descolonizar os estudos de economia política e os estudos pós-coloniais: TransModernidade, pensamento de fronteira e colonialidade global. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 80, 2008, p. 115.

resorting to the outdated dilemma “Eurocentric *versus* fundamentalist”, is the so-called “border thinking”.

Border epistemologies are useful and innovative because they redefine the emancipatory assumptions of Modernity - rather than reject them - based on cosmologies and epistemologies of groups subordinated by colonial difference, with a view to engaging in libertarian decolonial practices capable of transcending the downside of Modernity, that is the suppression of the differences and a justification of European Imperialism.

This proposal, if applied to the field of regional integration, implies recognizing and validating the parameters and categories offered by integrationist theories while resignifying them by appreciating local experiences and by opening spaces for pluriversal, non-hierarchical dialog with different point of views and “other knowledges”.

2. HISTORIOGRAPHY OF RESEARCH ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN MERCOSUR

Research studies on Mercosur arose concomitantly with the birth of the block, although the studies on regionalism have already emerged as an object of interest (after World War II) of the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL), which stood out for the developmental thought, whose main thinker was Argentinian Raul Prebisch. Subsequently, the subject gained some prominence through the Dependency Theories, through its main approaches, internationally known by the works of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Enzo Faletto, Theothonio dos Santos, Mauro Marini, and others. In 1970 and 1980, Marini revived the Bolivarian dream and argued that the integration was a prerequisite for the Latin American insertion into the global economy.

Despite the differences between Dependency theorists and CEPAL, when they examined the relations between the development of central countries and underdevelopment of peripheral nations, they placed regional integration in a prominent place on the Latin American agenda. Even though none of these paradigms has broken free from the ties of the ‘coloniality of power’, since they remained stuck to the modern ideals of development and the concept of Eurocentric progress²,

these are powerful theoretical contributions that inspired the progressive forces which influenced Mercosur at the beginning of the 21st century.

Actually, the Treaty founder of Mercosur resulted from the context known as liberal regionalism, present in the 1990s, whose premises advocated open markets, minimization of the State and reduction of the state’s intervention in the economy. In this situation, the studies that have spread more vigorously were those that approached the liberal principles of the Washington Consensus. On the other hand, there also emerged critiques against the neoliberal thesis³ and against the commercial liberalization without being accompanied by a formulation of common politics executed by supranational institutions⁴.

Since the beginning, the choices of analytical axes and scopes of research on the Southern Cone have privileged the theoretical trends and themes predominant in European Schools, particularly focusing on the principles of Intergovernmentalism, Functionalism and Federalism.

The degree of interest and sophistication of research on themes about the Southern Cone is concomitant with the phases of delight and disappointment with the vitality of the block.

The first wave of studies was influenced by the enthusiasm arising from the signature of the Treaty of Asunción, which launched Mercosur. The *belle époque* of the 1990s⁵ was reflected in the academy and stimulated the development of numerous analyses that were first elaborated in the fields of Economics, Law and Political Science. However, they soon spread to other branches of knowledge such as History, Geography, Education, Literature, etc. The studies that had the most significant repercussions were concentrated in the areas of Law, Political Science and Economy, and addressed themes such as institutional engineering, the Supranationality-Intergovernmentality binomial, globalization, inter-

Teoria da Dependência na América Latina. *REALIS – Revista de Estudos Antiutilitaristas e Póscoloniais*, 3 (2), 2013, p. 27.

3 MARINI, R. *América Latina: dependência e integração*. São Paulo: Brasil Urgente, 1992.

4 GUIMARÃES, Samuel P. *Quinhentos anos de periferia*. Porto Alegre: Ed. UFRGS, 1999.

5 LINS, Hoyedo. *Vinte anos de MERCOSUL: as partes e o todo*. In: 3º Encontro Nacional da Associação Brasileira de Relações Internacionais - Governança Global e Novos Atores. Anais. São Paulo, 2011.

2 GROSFOGUEL, R. Desenvolvimentismo, Modernidade e

regional trade, investments, freedoms of the common market, international insertion of the region, the nuances of the Integration Law and, especially, the subjects derived from external policies of the member countries⁶.

Nonetheless, in the early 2000s, considered as an *almost requiem* of Mercosur⁷, academic enthusiasm diminished and, consequently, there were fewer scopes of debates.

However, the rise of left-wing governments in South America signalled the emergence of an era known as “*neo-developmental regionalism*”, which, in turn, gave power and robustness to integrationist discourses. This moment of regionalism, referred to as post-liberal⁸, was responsible for closing a cycle based on the precepts of trade and the inauguration of a social and productive Mercosur, a phase in which the social agenda has taken on the space of economic-commercial regulatory demands. The components of physical and energy integration were also included in the regional platform that, this way, acquired structural connotations. The domestic agenda of progressive governments that favoured affirmative policies and income distribution, mechanisms of social inclusion and expansion of citizenship, crossed borders and reached the sub-regional scope.

One cannot yet claim that social cohesion can be considered as the “coal and steel” of Mercosur, i.e. if it is “the functional task that is manifestly difficult to realize within the confines of a single national state, and capable of generating concrete benefits for all participants within a relatively short period of time” as pointed by Philippe Schmitter in his paper *The experience of European integration and its potential for regional integration*⁹.

6 VENTURA, Deisy. (Org.) *Direito Comunitário do Mercosul - Série Integração Latino americana*. Porto Alegre: Livraria do Advogado, 1997; BAPTISTA, L. *Mercosul: das Negociações à Implantação*. São Paulo: LTr, 1994; VIGEVANI, T. *Mercosul e globalização: sindicato e atores sociais*. *Caderno CEDEC*, São Paulo, n.63, p. 1-28, 1997; MARINI, R. *América Latina: dependência e integração*. São Paulo: Brasil Urgente, 1992.

7 LINS, Hoyedo. *Vinte anos de MERCOSUL: as partes e o todo*. In: 3º Encontro Nacional da Associação Brasileira de Relações Internacionais - Governança Global e Novos Atores. Anais. São Paulo, 2011.

8 SANAHUJA, J.A. Del ‘regionalismo abierto’ al ‘regionalismo postliberal’: Crisis y cambio en la integración regional en América Latina. *Anuario de la Integración Regional de América Latina y el Gran Caribe*, 7, 12-54, 2009.

9 SCHMITTER, P. A experiência da integração europeia e seu potencial para integração regional. *Lua Nova*, 80, 2010. p. 40-43.

However, the inclusion of social themes in agenda of the Organization is surely one of the most valuable assets of Mercosur’s heritage.

This second developmental stage of the block - which was marked by the fact that the Member States explicitly recognized the existence of structural asymmetries¹⁰ - renewed Mercosur’s vivacity by implementing the Mercosur Structural Convergence Fund (FOCEM), the Social Institute, the Strategic Plan for social projects and also by creating the position of High Representative-General. The procedures for the admission of Venezuela and Bolivia have reinforced the tone of this recent picture that showed a more progressive facet.

The thematic axes which have had more room in the second phase are the theories about the current state of art, the constraints and advances of the model, in particular as regards the participation of civil society, of subnational actors, democracy and the crisis of representativeness and the implementation of the Mercosur Parliament, as well as the various nuances of “Social Mercosur” and the FOCEM itself. These subjects represent the potentiality of new dimensions of integration and, consequently, of fields of research¹¹.

There are debates that remain steadfast in academic realm, revealing key issues that have been considered as motivating and relevant, such as the constraints caused by the low level of institutionalization¹² that, as pointed out by Leticia Pinheiro¹³, is convenient to Brazil. By impeding a deeper institutional structure, Brazil’s federal government manages to keep a high degree of intervention and control over the rules and, consequently,

10 VIGEVANI, T.; RAMANZINI JÚNIOR, H. *Autonomia, Integração Regional e Política Externa Brasileira: Mercosul e Unasul*. *DADOS - Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 57 (2), 517-552, 2014.

11 RESENDE, E. S. A.; MALLMANN, M. I. (Orgs.) *Mercosul 21 anos: maioria ou imaturidade?* Curitiba: Appris, 2013; OLIVEIRA, M. F. *Mercosul: atores políticos e grupos de interesses brasileiros*. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2003; MEDEIROS, M. A. *Legitimidade, democracia e accountability no Mercosul*. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, v. 23, p. 51-69, 2008; MARIANO, Karina Lilia Pasquariello. *A eleição parlamentar no Mercosul*. *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*. v. 54, p. 138-157, 2011; BRICEÑO J.; HOFFMANN A. Ribeiro. ‘Post-Hegemonic Regionalism, UNASUR and the Reconfiguration of Cooperation in South America’. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 40(1), 48-62, 2015.

12 COSTA, Rogério S.; SILVA, Karine de S. *Organizações Internacionais de Integração Regional: União Europeia, Mercosul e UNASUL*. Florianópolis: EDUFSC, 2013.

13 PINHEIRO, L. *Traídos pelo desejo: um ensaio sobre a Teoria e a prática da política externa brasileira contemporânea*. *Contexto internacional*, 22, 305- 335, 2000.

does not have to shoulder the costs derived from the supranational format. The literature points out that the gaps in institutional spaces have opened margins for the decisions taken by means of presidential diplomacy¹⁴, headed by the two largest states, and they show, on the one hand, the convergences and divergences between Brazil and Argentina and their influence on the pace and design of Mercosur¹⁵ and, on the other hand, the specificities of the perennial dispute of leadership between the two paymasters.

In this vein, the incursions of Brazilian foreign policy between regionalism and universalism, and the challenge of reconciling the logics of autonomy with regional needs, have raised questions about the regional leadership of the Latin American giant and misgivings about possible intentions of sub-imperialism or regional hegemony.

A topic of relative interest has been the gains of Mercosur in various sectors, a fact that runs counter to the predominant theories of regional integration, as the block does not accumulate some requirements considered to be central, e.g., absence of history of accentuated interdependence (demand factors) and lack of a vigorous institutional basis (supply factor)¹⁶. In fact, the agreement was signed as an initiative of national governments per se rather than as demands formulated by transnational actors, as it occurred in Europe. In this case, social appeals for adjustment are incorporated in the Southern Cone after the signature of the Treaty of Asunción¹⁷.

In effect, the European epistemologies are incapable of plausibly explaining the trajectory and performance of the non-western regionalisms that responds to impulses and concrete objectives that differ from those theorized by the mainstream¹⁸. Mercosur does not fit

perfectly in the stages of economic integration, and beyond this, the protagonism of the topics related to democracy¹⁹ and human rights²⁰ in its agenda are unique when compared to other cases of regionalism. The Residence Treaties of Mercosur that include Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador are regulatory benchmarks for migrations that represent a pragmatic turn because they encompass States that are not full members and thereby strengthen the solidary ties of the regional community.

However, it is certain that the weakening of Mercosur caused an impact in the academy, where interest in the area of regionalism has declined in recent years, especially because the objectives contained in the Treaty of 1991 have not been fulfilled. By the end of the second wave, alike to that of the first, a certain academic discouragement has occurred. Clearly, in a context marked by the international crisis and by its implications in domestic environments, the moment calls for introspection. In this sense, most of the literature has been dedicated mainly to evaluating the influence of internal factors in the results and dynamics of integration, in addition to verifying the overlapping regionalism and the compatibility of Mercosur with Unasur or with a possible competition against the Pacific Alliance. A few studies have looked into institutional elasticity, the path for democratic consolidation through citizen participation and the implementation of Parlasur, the potential of integration, the existence of an autonomous Legal Theory of regional integration, migrations, in addition to theorizations on regional public goods²¹.

Studies Quarterly, 58 (4): 1-13, 2014.

19 HOFFMANN, A. Ribeiro. O processo de institucionalização dos direitos humanos no Mercosul e as comunidades epistêmicas. RESENDE, E. S. A.; MALLMANN, M. I. (Orgs.) *Mercosul 21 anos: maioria ou imaturidade?* Curitiba: Appris, 2013. p. 135-158.

20 SIKKINK, Kathryn. Latin American Countries as Norm Protagonists of the Idea of International Human Rights. *Global Governance* 20 (3): 389-404, 2014.

21 BERGAMASCHINE, JAMILE; JAEGER JÚNIOR, AUGUSTO. Por uma teoria jurídica da integração regional: a inter-relação direito interno, Direito Internacional Público e Direito da integração. *Revista de Direito Internacional*, v. 12, p. 139-158, 2016; MOURA, A. B. A criação de um espaço de livre residência no Mercosul sob a perspectiva teleológica da integração regional: aspectos normativos e sociais dos Acordos de Residência. *Revista de Direito Internacional*, v. 12, p. 630-648, 2015; RESENDE, E. S. A.; MALLMANN, M. I. (Orgs.) *Mercosul 21 anos: maioria ou imaturidade?* Curitiba: Appris, 2013; HOFFMANN, A. Ribeiro; BIANCULLI, A. C. (Orgs.) *Regional Organizations and Social Policy in Europe and Latin America: a Space for Social Citizenship?* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; BOTTO, M. I. *La integración regional en América*

14 MALAMUD, A. Presidential diplomacy and the institutional underpinnings of Mercosur. *Latin American Research Review*, 40 (1), p. 138-164, 2005.

15 SARAIVA, M. Brazilian foreign policy towards South America during the Lula administration: caught between South America and Mercosur. *Revista brasileira de Política Internacional*, 53, 151-168, 2010.

16 MORAVCSIK, A. *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power From Messina to Maastricht*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1998; SANDHOLTZ, W.; STONE SWEET, A. *European Integration and Supranational Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

17 MALAMUD, A. Mercosur Turns 15: Between Rising Rhetoric and Declining Achievement. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 18 (3), p. 421-433, 2005a.

18 ACHARYA, Amitav. Global International Relations and Regional Worlds: a new agenda for international studies. *International*

Currently, there are too few empirical studies about the implementation of specific themes of the integration agenda, outcomes, regional public goods, challenges posed by asymmetries, deficiencies of transport, energy and communications infrastructure. In the context of predominance of presidential activism, research should also focus on how much the top-down approach meets the demands of societies, and how one can facilitate the opening of more channels of participation for civil society which, for the most part, is completely unaware of the existence of Mercosur. Consequently, another theme that has been hardly explored is the equalization between demands and regional goods that only regional integration can satisfy.

Also dialogs on methodological questions have been neglected in the Southern Cone. Consequently, there is no regular debate on comparative research and little interaction takes place between scholars from other regions of the world, except with European ones. Studies about comparative regionalism have been dominated by the idea whereby the EU is a *sui generis* phenomenon. This vision is an obstacle to further understanding regionalism in South America. The so-called $n = 1$ problem has produced serious barriers to further research²². This way, it is necessary to develop the comparative facet of regionalism without falling into the trap of Eurocentrism or parochialism²³ and recognizing the literary contributions and the experiences about regionalisms that are produced in non-western contexts²⁴. Although the theoretical corpus of the Eurocentrism, in the realm of regionalisms, have been amply questioned, it has not been possible to reverse²⁵.

Undoubtedly, one of the main limitations of commonly formulated diagnostics is the lack of reflection

about the influence of the colonial heritage on Mercosur and the lack of introduction of critical perspectives in this context.

Explanations about the non-materialization of the Common Market, the failed attempt of the sub-regional strategy to gain international insertion²⁶ and the institutional difficulties are both endogenous and exogenous, and they are often related to the historical background of the Member States. The arguments based on the rhetoric of governments, the reluctance to cede sovereignty, the responsibilities of paymasters, the institutional weaknesses and the ambiguous leadership of Brazil are useful to explain the problems of the block, but they cannot reveal the whole panorama.

Evaluations on the influence of the EU on the results and impulses of integration have been neglected; however, they open a new horizon for research.

The fact that the Common Market has not been implemented as envisaged in the Treaty of Asunción has fuelled mercosceptic narratives, especially because of the comparison with the European Union. However, it is clear that Mercosur has gone deeper²⁷ by including social themes which, in turn, have stimulated the foundation of new decision-making bodies that granted more autonomy to the block and propitiated the expansions and the redefinition of Mercosur's identity. In other words, it cannot be categorically stated that the model is in free fall, or that it is a failure, because one might come down to dangerous reductionism. The institutional redesign by including actors and topics is proof that the agenda has become complex, dynamic and intense.

The current institutional structure, while inadequate to enable the construction of an integrationist sentiment among the Member States, was not able to interrupt a certain development of the block, although it remained in continuous inactivity in some areas and even regressed in others.

As stated previously, the existing theories cannot perfectly portray the reality of Mercosur, nor do they point to appropriate mechanisms to capture the influence exerted by the colonial past on South American

Latina: Quo Vadis? el Mercosur desde una perspectiva sectorial comparada. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2015; DRI, C. Latin America and the building of regional public goods. In: XXXIII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association 2015. Anais. San Juan, 2015.

22 SÖDERBAUM, Fredrik. *Rethinking Regionalism*. London: Palgrave, 2016; SÖDERBAUM, F. & SBRAGIA, A. "EU studies and the New Regionalism: What can be gained from dialogue?" *Journal of European Integration*, 32(6), 563-582, 2010.

23 BÖRZEL, T.; RISSE, T. *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*. Oxford: Oxford, 2016, p. 50.

24 ACHARYA, Amitav. Comparative Regionalism. A field whose time has gone? *The international Spectator: Italian Journal of international Affairs*, 47,(1), 3-15, 2012.

25 ACHARYA, Amitav. Comparative Regionalism. A field whose time has gone? *The international Spectator: Italian Journal of international Affairs*, 47,(1), 3-15, 2012.

26 HURREL, A. Lula's Brazil: a rising power, but going where? *Current History*, 107 (706), 51-57, 2008.

27 CAETANO, G. (Org.). *Mercosur 20 años*. Montevideo: CEFIR, 2011.

regionalisms. There are few attempts to critically think about the integration from the Global South, although both Dependency theorists and developmentalists have warned of the dangers of interpreting Latin American phenomena by unconditionally using theories which correspond to another historical reality²⁸. For this reason, the integration has to be thought beyond Eurocentric categories, and Latin American thoughts have to be built on IR.

One problem is that Eurocentric analyses are based on a notion of the progress founded on a concept of linear time and therefore are not able to grasp the idiosyncrasies and the context where the integration in South America is formed. It is in this sense that Decolonial approaches can shed light on the matter and construct alternatives.

3. BRINGING TOGETHER DECOLONIAL APPROACHES AND THE FIELD OF REGIONALISMS

Preliminarily, it is necessary to emphasize the relevance of introducing critical approaches in debates on regionalisms, because they allow the analysis of asymmetries and exclusions that occur in the various bodies of international society and that are permeated by the dynamics of production of inequalities. The use of critical thinking categories is also aimed at encouraging the emancipatory and heterarchical dialog with collectivities historically devoid of voice and agency within international relations. To establish dialogs, it is extremely necessary to include local voices in the discussions.

The Decolonial approach is the result of the “Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality” (MCD) project, and it is considered as the most genuine Latin American contribution to the Academy nowadays. This is one of the most important sets of critical thinking, whose interdisciplinary perspective comprises views of several areas of knowledge, such as Sociology, Semiotics, Anthropology, Philosophy, etc. Major theorists include Walter Dignolo, Anibal Quijano, Ramón Grosfoguel, Santiago Castro-Gómez, Enrique Dussel and Catherine Walsh, among others.

The Decolonial thought suggests that colonization

was a violent process in physical and symbolic terms, which proposed to homogenize cultural patterns and cosmovisions based on an alleged concept of progress that, inevitably, affected colonial populations²⁹. This mentality clearly emerges in dichotomies such as civilization/barbarity, Western/non-Western, developed/underdeveloped, which consider that non-European peoples are inferior.

MDC considers that the end of colonialism was the first stage of the process of decolonization. The second step of decolonization is Decoloniality, which is the struggle to break free from the old features of colonialism. Coloniality arises from colonialism and remains after the end of it by peripherally importing European models and reproducing certain patterns of power. Thus, the second decolonization, referred to by the category *Decoloniality*, will have to be “geared to the heterarchy of multiple racial, ethnic, sexual, epistemic, economic and gender relations that the first decolonization left intact”³⁰. As a result, the world at the beginning of the 21st century needs a decoloniality that complements the decolonization that was carried out in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It is assumed that the world is not yet fully post-colonial. The eradication of colonial administrations and the formation of independent states did not mean the opening of a post-colonial era³¹. The “colonial power matrix” is not extinguished with the political-judicial decolonization, since the old hierarchies between Europeans and non-Europeans still remain in power relations. For this reason, the “myth of post-colonial world” needs to be overcome through the decolonization of the structures of international relations, and therefore of the fields of knowledge, or in other words, surpass the coloniality of knowledge³². In this way, it is essential

29 LISBOA, A. De América a Abya Yala – Semiótica da descolonização. *Revista de Educação Pública*, 23 (53/2), p. 505-506, 2014.

30 CASTRO-GÓMEZ, S.; GROSFUGUEL, R. Giro decolonial, teoría crítica y pensamiento heterárquico. In: CASTRO-GÓMEZ, Santiago; GROSFUGUEL, Ramon. (Org.) *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores; Universidad Central, Instituto de Estudios Sociales Contemporáneos y Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Instituto Pensar, 2007. p. 17.

31 GROSFUGUEL, R. The epistemic Cultural turn. Beyond political-economy paradigms. *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2-3), p. 211-223, 2007.

32 GROSFUGUEL, R. Para descolonizar os estudos de economia política e os estudos pós-coloniais: TransModernidade, pensamento de fronteira e colonialidade global. *Revista Crítica de Ciências*

28 PREBISCH, R. *Transformación y desarrollo: la gran tarea de América Latina*. México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970.

to give voice, also, to the “other knowledges”³³ and to “other experiences”.

Decolonization has uncovered the wounds of colonized societies, which continue reproducing the values of Modernity, such as ethnic-racial hierarchy, maintenance of coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, etc., since these societies have been not completely decolonized. Thus, Decoloniality induces the release from domination, the search for mental emancipators; the fight against “*nordomanía*”, a term initially conceived by José Enrique Rodó (1900) and evoked by Santiago Castro-Gómez and Ramón Grosfoguel³⁴, which represents the efforts of indigenous elites to evoke models of Northern States, reproducing the old forms of colonialism³⁵. In this way, Decoloniality is not understood as just a legal-political-economic process, since it holds an epistemic and cultural dimension³⁶.

The MCD project has shown to be engaged in the search for alternatives to overcome the Eurocentric Modernity without ignoring the most important contributions that it has offered to humanity. For such purpose, the first step in this direction is to transcend the fundamentalist dichotomies. The second step is to enable the opening of spaces for the promotion of dialogs between scholars originating from different regions, in an effort to think also from the Global South, rather than only from the North. Thirdly, it is essential to gain intellectual dependence. This said, it is stated that one of the principal riches offered by the MDC Movement to the area of research on South American regionalisms is the possibility of formulating epistemic perspectives which exceed the so-called third-world and Eurocentric

fundamentalisms.

The MCD collective proposes “border thinking” as a critical response to fundamentalism, be they Eurocentric or anti-European, since there is not only a single epistemic tradition that can find truth and universality³⁷.

Based on “border thinking”³⁸ one can rethink, reinterpret concepts, categories and forms of relations, without submitting neither to the standards imposed by European Modernity, nor to anti-modern, anti-European fundamentalisms. This is “a decolonial transmodern response of the subaltern to Eurocentric modernity”³⁹. This response, applied to the field of regionalisms, means recognizing and validating the parameters and categories offered by European integrationist theories, and enrich them while also resignifying them through the appreciation of local experience and by opening non-hierarchical, pluriversal dialogic environments that also include non-European experiences and knowledge.

Following the reasoning of Grosfoguel, the conditions for decolonization of knowledge are: broadening the matrix of thought, which is still dominated by Western canons; fighting against allegedly universal particularisms, since Decoloniality must be “the result of critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects towards a pluriversal as opposed to a universal world”; including “the epistemic perspective/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South thinking from and with subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies”⁴⁰.

Critical approaches can aid the understanding of issues relative to regional integration based on some categories such as epistemic decolonization, coloniality of power, being and knowledge, Decoloniality, transmo-

Sociais, 80, p. 115-147, 2008; QUIJANO, A. Coloniality of Power, Ethnocentrism, and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(3), 533-580, 2000.

33 WALSH, C. “Other” Knowledges, “Other” Critiques: Reflections on the Politics and Practices of Philosophy and Decoloniality in the “Other” America. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1(3), 11-27, 2012.

34 CASTRO-GÓMEZ, Santiago; GROSFUGUEL, Ramon. (Org.) *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores; Universidad Central, Instituto de Estudios Sociales Contemporáneos y Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Instituto Pensar, 2007.

35 CASTRO-GÓMEZ, Santiago; GROSFUGUEL, Ramon. (Org.) *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores; Universidad Central, Instituto de Estudios Sociales Contemporáneos y Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Instituto Pensar, 2007.

36 QUIJANO, A. Colonialidade, poder, globalização e democracia. *Novos Rumos*, 37 (17), 4-28, 2002.

37 GROSFUGUEL, R. Para descolonizar os estudos de economia política e os estudos pós-coloniais: TransModernidade, pensamento de fronteira e colonialidade global. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 80, p. 115-147, 2008.

38 MIGNOLO, W. *Historias locales/diseños globales: Colonialidad, conocimientos subalternos y pensamiento fronterizo*. Madrid: Ed. Akal, 2003.

39 GROSFUGUEL, R. Para descolonizar os estudos de economia política e os estudos pós-coloniais: TransModernidade, pensamento de fronteira e colonialidade global. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 80, p. 115-147, 2008.

40 GROSFUGUEL, R. Para descolonizar os estudos de economia política e os estudos pós-coloniais: TransModernidade, pensamento de fronteira e colonialidade global. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 80, p. 115-147, 2008.

dernity, border thinking, Global South, emancipation, heterarchy and pluriversality.

In fact, the attempts of mimetization of European regional integration in other corners of the world follows the line of argument of Enrique Dussel, when he deals with the fallacy of developmentalism that has existed since the beginning of Modernity. For Dussel, “developmentism itself is an ontological position by which it is thought that the path of Europe’s modern development must be followed unilaterally by every other cultures. Development is taken here as an ontological, and not simply a sociological or economic category, but a fundamental philosophical category. For Hegel, it is the necessary movement of being, its inevitable development. Eurocentrism is trapped by the developmentist fallacy: these are two aspects of itself”. In this sense, it is important to clarify that Dussel does not deny the rational core of Modernity but rather “its irrational moment of sacrificial myth, its domineering, victimizing and violent reason”⁴¹.

Under Dussel’s influence, it can be seen that the conceptions and idealizations on regionalism are replicated from Europe to the world, from a Eurocentric angle, often without considering cultures and local specificities.

Once again, this proposition doesn’t repeat the error of discourses that reject the knowledge and practices originating in central countries, thus running the risk of falling into the same Eurocentric trap. Denying the West means reproducing intolerance and praising a discriminating discourse, incapable of understanding the various forms of alterities and cultural multiplicities. Criticism is directed towards two main issues: (a) the exclusion of alterities in an environment that is meant to be plural; b) the intents to use, without the participation of local subjects, models and categories that are not necessarily suitable for the context of South America. The European example is fully relevant to the debate on the ontology of regionalism, and to the theoretical, historical and comparative dimensions of this field of study. However, while Eurocentrism has to be urgently avoided, the EU cannot be considered to be an “anti-model”⁴². The problem is not to be European,

but Eurocentric, which are two different concepts. The European is a geographic concept, while Eurocentrism is a hierarchical cannon.

According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, one should not demonize the European thought, but “recognize its incompleteness”. The same way, one cannot “romanticise the innovations of the South, but approach them through a sociology of absences and emergencies, that is, to recognize invisibilized experiences and knowledges devalued by the colonial thought in order to think the future from a dilated present”⁴³.

In this vein, the attempt to merely incorporate theories into other contexts is a colonial attitude towards knowledge, a fact that reinforces the hierarchies between the center and periphery that are present in Eurocentrism. What can be seen, in practice, is that no process can develop in the same way and pace as in the EU. Acharya⁴⁴ states that non-western regionalisms should not be judged in terms of how they comply with EU goals.

“Euromimetism” in Mercosur follows the logic of Modernity imposed by the French Revolution, which merges a concept of progress conceivable from a “tyranny of linear time, of progress and development”⁴⁵, with the universalization of European values. The tendency to conceive history from the European experience is surely detrimental to understanding and making an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon.

Some of the Decolonial categories can be used to respond to important issues that remain under Mercosur’s regionalism, such as: the participation of civil society, the role of elites in the reproduction of foreign models; the attempts of institutional isomorfism allied to the old intergovernmentalism vs. supranationality debate; the difficulties in transferring parcels of sovereignty; the influence and the interests of the EU in the modulation of the block; the construction of public goods driven by external demands; the international in-

41 DUSSEL, E. *1492: o encobrimento do outro: a origem do mito da modernidade*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1992, p. 07.

42 SÖDERBAUM, F. What’s Wrong with Regional Integration? The Problem of Eurocentrism. *EUI Working Paper RSCAS 2013/64*,

p. 2-3, 2013.

43 SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. Para uma nova visão da Europa: aprender com o Sul. *Sociologias*, Porto Alegre, ano 18, no 43, set/dez 2016, p. 28.

44 ACHARYA, Amitav. Comparative Regionalism. A field whose time has gone? *The international Spectator: Italian Journal of international Affairs*, 47,(1), 3-15, 2012.

45 MIGNOLO, W. *Historias locales/diseños globales: Colonialidad, conocimientos subalternos y pensamiento fronterizo*. Madrid: Ed. Akal, 2003, p. 30.

tegration of the region; and the obstacles to regional interdependence. Some of these themes will be addressed in the next topic.

4. DECOLONIALITY AND MERCOSUR: ADDRESSING SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS

Integration is not an end in itself. It is a means, a form of political-regional interconnection that, in Mercosur, must be intended for the promotion of social cohesion, the fight against poverty, the materialization of regional goods, the defence of national sovereignty, of human rights, of democracy, of development, etc. In other words, each process has a history, a spirit, a reason to exist and its own way to connect other processes. Thus, Mercosur has its own personality - inherited by the Bolivarian aspirations of unity and non-intervention and modelled after its advocacy in the affirmation of democracy, social cohesion and human rights - and it cannot and will never be a copy of the EU and must not be what the Union wants it to be.

The European literature already attested to the problem of Eurocentrism in comparison of experiences of integration that exist outside the EU⁴⁶. Actually, the debate began in the 1960s with Ernest Haas⁴⁷ (1961) about the possibility of imitating the European archetype in other regions. This discussion has already been questioned and acquired other connotations after some authors realized the dangers of generalizing a local experience. In this sense, Söderbaum and Sbragia⁴⁸ observed that the false universalism of the EU demonstrates a lack of sensitivity to other regions which occupy unequal positions in the world.

46 DE LOMBAERDE P, SÖDERBAUM, F, VAN LANGENHOVE, L. & BAERT F. The Problem of Comparison in Comparative Regionalism. *Review of International Studies*, 36 (3), 731-753, 2010; MOXON-BROWNE, E. Mercosur and the European Union: politics in the making? In: LAURSEN, F. (Org.) *Comparative regional integration: Europe and beyond*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010. p. 131-146; SÖDERBAUM, F. What's Wrong with Regional Integration? The Problem of Eurocentrism. *EUI Working Paper RSCAS 2013/64*, 2013.

47 HAAS, E. International Integration: The European and the Universal Process. (1961) In: DE LOMBAERDE, Philippe; SÖDERBAUM, F. (Org.) *Regionalism: Classical Regional Integration (1945-1970)*. London: SAGE, 2013. p. 139-168.

48 SÖDERBAUM, F. & SBRAGIA, A. "EU studies and the New Regionalism: What can be gained from dialogue?" *Journal of European Integration*, 32(6), 563-582, 2010.

Still, in the current context, Eurocentrism and coloniality continue being limiting factors for understanding and the recognition of Mercosur's identity. They pose obstacles that affect research on RI and compromise the creation of innovative theoretical inputs.

That said, the core question is whether or not the fields of research on Mercosur can be decolonized. Preliminarily, it is necessary to understand this problem in the context of the theory itself of the International Relations that marginalize narratives and concepts of non-western worlds and subordinate alternative methodologies⁴⁹. In this framework, Decoloniality can pave tracks that are intended to search for possible responses in order to overcome some challenges.

In this sense, the first academic challenge consists in promoting the incorporation of new epistemologies that imply a re-signification of symbols, cognitive models and nomenclatures that incorporate new discursive and communicative actions.

New codes of understanding and interaction should be included in this sphere of knowledge, as Eurocentrism also echoes in categories and classifications. As can be seen, Mercosur's structure is completely succumbed by EU designations. According to Edward Moxon-Browne, the use of imported nomenclatures to appoint things that are not equal leads to confusion, and "not only invites the comparison, but also legitimizes it". The theses that abound in the academy on Mercosur's hypothetical failure reveal the stigma of comparison embedded in "implicit or explicit Eurocentrism"⁵⁰. In this context, comparing is far from being an easy task and requires heroic efforts from researchers. In this sense, it is stated that overcoming "subalternity involves, in particular, criticism of words, grammar"⁵¹. An interesting exercise in comparative domain would be to investigate what lessons Mercosur can bring to the theories of Regional Integration and to the EU and to what extent the non-western regionalisms can interconnect themselves and offer insights for the sophistication of other models.

49 JONES, B. G. (Org.), *Decolonizing International Relations*. Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006; ACHARYA, Amitav. Dialogue and Discovery: search of International Relations Theories Beyond the West. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, London, 39, 3, 619-637, 2011.

50 MOXON-BROWNE, E. Mercosur and the European Union: politics in the making? In: LAURSEN, F. (Org.) *Comparative regional integration: Europe and beyond*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010. p. 131-146.

51 LISBOA, A. De América a Abya Yala - Semiótica da descolonização. *Revista de Educação Pública*, 23 (53/2), p. 505-506, 2014.

In this way, it is easy to understand how colonizing images extended from the process of construction of the State until regional integration, since colonization was not just physical, as it has achieved imaginaries and identities. In other words, it has encompassed material and non-material spatialities.

The second challenge to decolonize fields of research on Mercosur involves denouncing and opposing to the nordomaniac conduct that affects a large extent of political elites in the region. Policy makers have negotiated the Treaty of Asunción as a reflection of the former European Communities. The attempts of institutional isomorphism have combined with local singularities and gave Mercosur a degree of hybridism that originated an unprecedented equation ‘incomplete free trade zone + imperfect customs union’, which does not fit in the traditional theoretical frameworks. To explain such eccentricity, some sectors of the doctrine and of the political communities argue that the roots of this “deformation” are in the absence of supranationality and/or in the institutional fragility of Mercosur. And the alleged solutions to such “problem” always appear combined with proposals that add more doses of EU, seen as the final horizon of all regional agreements. In practice, what can be seen is that Mercosur cannot “move forward” in the same way and rhythm as the EU.

In this order of ideas, it can be seen that the integration of the Southern Cone has been shaped according to the logic of Modernity that merges a concept of ideal progress, based on a “tyranny of time”⁵², with the universalization of European values. The tendency to conceive history based on the European experience is surely detrimental to understanding and making an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. For this reason, it is imperative to perceive that the “logic of linear time is one among multiple concepts of possible time”⁵³. In this sense, the characterization of regionalism in the Americas as failed shows “a teleological prejudice informed by the assumption that ‘progress’ in regional integration is defined in terms of EU-style institutionalisation”⁵⁴.

52 MIGNOLO, W. *Historias locales/diseños globales*. Colonialidad, conocimientos subalternos y pensamiento fronterizo. Madrid: Ed. Akal, 2003.

53 SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa; ARAÚJO, S.; BAUMGARTEN, M. As Epistemologias do Sul num mundo fora do mapa. *Sociologias*, Porto Alegre, ano 18, no 43, set/dez, p. 2016, p. 17.

54 BRESLIN, S.; HIGGOTT, R.; ROSAMOND, B. Regions in comparative perspective. In: S. BRESLIN, C. HUGHES, N. PHILIPS; B. ROSAMOND (Orgs.) *New regionalisms in the global political economy*. London: Routledge, 2002. p. 11.

The attempt of mere repetition, in other contexts, of the phases of economic integration outlined by Bellassa, is a further effort to export a theory of Europe to the world. In the same way, the theories of European political integration, such as Federalism, Functionalism, Neo-functionalism, among others, do not properly apply to South American contexts⁵⁵.

Attempts to implement Eurocentric standards have never been successful, and worst of all, have led to more dependencies and favoured the creation of deformed institutions that do not conform to local realities.

As a result of the position of subordination, elites believe that the emulation of external models is a means to improve their legitimacy and hence get aid from international cooperation⁵⁶. That is, they are not properly interested in the success of the models. Söderbaum and Taylor⁵⁷, by analysing Sub-Saharan regionalism, found that elites are not interested in improving citizens’ quality of life or deepening regionalism. In fact, what happens is the so-called “syndrome of partial reform”, i.e., it is a vicious circle in which the gear actors implement parts of the agenda that do not collide with their interests and practices of governance⁵⁸. This finding also applies to the case of Mercosur, i.e., Eurocentrism is not only an external imposition because many policy makers accept, incorporate and perpetuate colonial discourses and practices. The paradoxical behaviour of the negotiators of the Asunción Treaty, when validating the emulation proposal of EU essays, demonstrates true disinterest in interrupting the dual dynamic that oscillates between discourse of independence and subalternized practices. This occurs because a good part of the elites who govern South American States validate the scenario of *nordomanía* and of coloniality of power, of being

cal economy. London: Routledge, 2002. p. 11.

55 ACHARYA, Amitav. Comparative Regionalism. A field whose time has gone? *The international Spectator: Italian Journal of international Affairs*, 47,(1), 3-15, 2012.

56 PICCOLINO, G. The European Union and the Promotion of Regional Integration: A Viable Approach to the Resolution of Regional Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa? 2013. Disponível em: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2455061. Acesso em 03 jun 2016.

57 SÖDERBAUM, Fredrik; Ian TAYLOR. (Org.). *Afro-regions: the dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa*. Stockholm: Northern African Institute, 2008.

58 SÖDERBAUM, Fredrik; Ian TAYLOR. (Org.). *Afro-regions: the dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa*. Stockholm: Northern African Institute, 2008; VAN DE WALLE, N. *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979-1999*. New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

and of knowledge. Thus, even in a context of legal independence, there is no autonomy, since the political elites continue to reproduce European habits, as was the specific case of elaboration of the Asuncion Treaty that incorporated almost automatically many elements and goals of the European institutional architecture.

The third challenge faced by Mercosur researchers refers to elaboration of studies that address the influence and the interests of the EU in the construction of regions in South America. In its role as a global actor, the EU stands out by its ability to induce integration schemes in various parts of the world⁵⁹ by means of diffusion mechanisms such as socialization, emulation and persuasion⁶⁰. Strengthening regionalism as a fundamental axis of the EU's external action is part of its intention to export its values and to consolidate internationally as a civilian and normative power.

The hegemonic interests of the EU have made it the largest foreign investor in Mercosur and its main trade partner. In the attempt to repeat its own image, the European Union uses its partnerships as a means to export its values and guarantee advantages. In addition to overt political and economic support, the EU is the most important supplier of services that aim to foster integration over cooperation. Obviously, no donor is neutral or acts only inspired by a spirit of solidarity. Political and economic investments not only have a direct impact on the structure and functioning of Mercosur, but also ensure hegemony in the region of ex-colonies and reinforce the international expansion of European values and the consolidation of Europe as a civil power.

Through emulation, EU models are applied in different contexts and occasions. And when the results are positive, then it is a victory of the EU, but if they are

considered as a failure, it is due to the incompetence of those who applied them locally or the conditions that were adverse⁶¹.

In this regard, one of the problems mainly lies in the analysis of the role of regional integration in the reproduction of Eurocentrism and to what extent the European model fits for all regions, in accordance with the default “*our size fits all*”⁶². In particular, one has to question the obvious activism of the EU for repetition of patterns and external categories in favour of institutionalization of regional integration models in the American continent as well as to identify the contradictions and the problems deriving from reproducing the coloniality of power by means of policies of cooperation with Mercosur and its Member States.

That said, it reinforces the hypothesis whereby it is necessary and essential to decolonize the fields of research on Mercosur. In the same way, it should be stressed that the preliminary challenge in this direction is the search for “epistemic decolonization, to give rise to a new intercultural communication, an exchange of experiences and meanings, as the basis for another rationality that can claim, with legitimacy, some universality. Therefore, nothing is less rational than to claim that a specific general worldview, of a particular ethnic group, should be imposed as the universal rationality, albeit that ethnicity in particular is called Western Europe. Because, in fact, it means wishing to give provincialism the title of universal”⁶³. And, for this, it is necessary demontamentalize Europe, rescue the subaltern histories, and taking from Europe the condition of subject of all the narratives. One of the challenges of this path constitutes itself in “unlearn the alleged universality of monocultural thought and overcome the dichotomist approach that have for reference the modern cannon”⁶⁴.

Finally, a Decolonial behaviour implies the effort of listening to local voices, to enlighten cosmovisions and repositories of knowledge that have been, for centuries,

59 MOXON-BROWNE, E. Mercosur and the European Union: politics in the making? In: LAURSEN, F. (Org.) *Comparative regional integration: Europe and beyond*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010. p. 131-146.

60 JETSCHKE, A. *Is Regional Integration Contagious? European Integration and Regional Organization in Asia*, Berlin: KFG Working Paper No. 17, 2010; DUINA, F. Frames, Scripts, and the Making of Regional Trade Areas. In: ABDELA, Rawi L; BLYTH, Mark; PARSONS, Craig (Orgs.) *Constructing the International Economy*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2010. p. 93-113; LENZ, T. Spurred Emulation: The EU and Regional Integration in Mercosur and SADC. *West European Politics* 35 (1), p. 155-173, 2012; DE LOMBAERDE, P.; M. SCHULZ. (Orgs.) *The EU and World Regionalism: The Makability of Regions in the 21st Century*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009; YEO, L. H. EU-ASEAN Relations and Policy-Learning. In: BALME, R.; BRIDGES B. *Europe-Asia Relations: Building Multilateralism*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. p. 83-102.

61 MOXON-BROWNE, E. Mercosur and the European Union: politics in the making? In: LAURSEN, F. (Org.) *Comparative regional integration: Europe and beyond*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010. p. 131-146.

62 BICCHI, F. “Our Size Fits All”: Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean’. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 286-303, 2006.

63 QUIJANO, A. Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad. *Peru Indígena*, 13 (29), 1992, p. 20.

64 SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa; ARAÚJO, S.; BAUMGARTEN, M. As Epistemologias do Sul num mundo fora do mapa. *Sociologias*, Porto Alegre, ano 18, no 43, set/dez, 2016. p. 23.

silenced by relations between knowledge vs. power from central countries. Based on border thinking, the field of knowledge of RI may be “unwesternized” if one can include the collectivities historically devoid of voice, agency and memory.

5. FINAL REMARKS

Colonization meant the domination of cognitive spheres, while it intended, based on the assumptions of modern science, to catechize, evangelize, civilize peoples as a means to achieve the so-called progress. In the case of sub-regional integration, the EU attempts to domesticate through examples and investments.

Because the biggest challenge of Mercosur is to promote its social agenda, the production of knowledge must be committed to realizing the potential of societies and to overcoming problems such as social disparities and external vulnerabilities. In this sense, because critical theories encompass alternative projects for social and political transformation, they have great potential for application in the framework of regional integration.

Through these categories, one can question the reproduction of coloniality of power in relations between the EU and Mercosur, evaluate the nuances and the dangers of mimetization of western models and institutions, and find ways to decolonize the practices and knowledge of Mercosur’s regionalism, whose structure was built under the influence of Eurocentric thought.

Being a historical process, Mercosur must be examined from two viewpoints that do not oppose one another: firstly, it is imperative to recognize its colonial heritage; and finally, it should be analysed second to its Bolivarian roots. Although the attempts to integrate the “Patria Grande” have not been consolidated, some important regional instruments, such as Mercosur and Unasul, represent an effort of regional and sub-regional unity. In fact, the Asuncion Treaty, still fashioned by liberal ideas, clearly affirms in its preamble a political desire of the members “to establish the bases for a union more and more tight among its peoples”⁶⁵. In

this sense, it is valuable to note that the very pioneers of regionalism are the Latin Americans and not the European people. As shown by Acharya⁶⁶ (2014), the Latin Americans, even though they have not materialized initiatives of intuitionism, they have already promoted regionalism 100 years before the foundation of the former European Communities. The practices of regionalism spread through the world while theoretic formulations on the subject were confined to the European continent.

Because it is a historical process, Mercosur needs to be examined from its colonial parentage. The Decolonial project points to this fact and the use of its categories can also contribute to the discussions on the difficulties in placing Mercosur in the international system - based on arguments that reinforce the need of dewesternization of international relations - and on the search for theoretical and praxeological alternatives that combat the Western hegemony and the “monistic universalism”⁶⁷. The decolonization of knowledge is intimately related with the decolonization of International Relations. This means, according to Jones, it is necessary to recognize the imperial nature of this field of knowledge and reveal “nonimperial and anti-imperial histories, values, struggles, ideas, and ways of being. This is both a possibility and an imperative”⁶⁸.

The decolonization of imaginary fields will be established through the horizontal intercultural dialog between the North-South critical thinkers, inspired by border thinking, in that it will strengthen the multiplicity of decolonial responses and favour the formation of epistemic communities focused on thinking about integration from its core. The Global South must be incorporated as a legitimate place of enunciation of discourses, so that the producers of knowledge can have the ability for self-representation in this context that is still permeated by representational limits.

Interpreting the identity of South American regionalisms based on its heritage means perceiving what makes Mercosur different and what moves it forward.

65 MERCOSUL. Tratado de Assunção. 1991. Disponível em: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto/1990-1994/d0350.htm Acesso em 20 jun 2015.

66 ACHARYA, Amitav. Global International Relations and Regional Worlds: a new agenda for international studies. *International Studies Quarterly*, 58 (4): 01-13, 2014.

67 ACHARYA, Amitav. Global International Relations and Regional Worlds: a new agenda for international studies. *International Studies Quarterly*, 58 (4): 1-13, 2014

68 JONES, B. G. (Org.), *Decolonizing International Relations*. Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006. p. 13.

It also means admitting that it is the most developed experience of South American integration that has been ever heard of. It is not what it was meant to be, as stated in the Treaty of 1991, but it is something that has essence, has soul and is another possible format of RI. The path of reconciliation with its own origin implies recognizing and appreciating the thought and the efforts of ancestors that are rooted in Simon Bolívar's pan-Americanism. Leaving the biography of South American integration in darkness is the same as condemning Mercosur to the unnecessary work of Sisyphus in search of something unattainable.

Finally, the aim is not only including one more intellectual movement in the spectrum of analytical theories but rather to widen and deepen the visions, transversely positioning the criticism in the realm of RI. In other words, this is not only about opening space for new explanations, but also making room for libertarian practices.

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