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Interwoven Violences in Latin America

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This special issue contributes to the study of violence, particularly extreme and large-scale contemporary violence, by emphasizing the interconnected nature of violent phenomena and contexts, rather than analyzing them in isolation. The focus is on the relationships and diverse forms of violence, working with the concept of interwoven violences, where gender-based, racial, and economic violence, among others, intersect and give rise to extreme manifestations such as femicide.

Extreme and large-scale violence, including genocide and massacres, has been explored in the social sciences primarily from two main perspectives. The first examines violence through the lens of the systems or structures that generate it, while the second centers on the lived experiences of victims and survivors. Within the first approach, extreme violence is often analyzed using philosophical frameworks such as biopolitics, necropolitics, thanatopolitics, bare life, and the state of exception. These concepts have been employed to study phenomena such as disappearances, massacres, and femicides. A key focus of these analyses is understanding the origins and perpetuation of such violence through global social systems—be they institutions, structures, mechanisms, or devices. These systems of power kill, allow death, or enforce disappearance, whether through complicity, omission, or direct participation. They disproportionately affect migrants, women, and racialized populations, shedding light on the systemic and intersectional nature of extreme violence.

Beyond approaches that analyze the mechanisms behind large-scale violence, there is a growing body of work focused on the lived experiences of violence. These studies explore the impacts on victims and survivors, aiming to understand the subjectivities that emerge from and within situations of extreme violence. While early research often revolved around testimony—particularly in the context of Holocaust survivors—there has been a shift toward anthropological studies of human suffering. These newer investigations focus less on witness narratives and more on the everyday practices of survival, including the ability or inability to grieve, the emotional and physical scars left behind, and the silence that frequently surrounds both past and ongoing acts of violence.

Significant contributions to the study of contemporary violence have emerged from regions with distinct political, economic, and social dynamics, such as Latin America. Over the past two decades, research in this area has placed particular emphasis on economic and spatial dimensions, highlighting segregation and inequality as fundamental to understanding the phenomenon in the region. Key studies focus on the spatial contexts where violence occurs, the prevalence of violence in peripheral urban areas, and the everyday acts of resistance that arise in response.

Beyond urban violence, there has been increasing attention to new forms of political violence, such as police brutality against young people.

The concept of interwoven violences offers a way to explore the diversity, complexity, and accumulation of violent forms across different regions of Latin America. These violences reflect both continuities with past legacies—such as colonial and dictatorial violence—and the emergence of new patterns and phenomena.

We define interwoven violence as a concept that captures at least two key relationships between forms of violence. The first is multiplicity, referring to the coexistence of diverse forms of violence within the same social, physical, material, or symbolic space. This includes the various bodies where acts of violence occur, such as direct violence—killing, torturing, or disappearing people—which leaves mnemonic and material traces in spaces of sacrifice, clandestine graves, urban infrastructures, landscapes, atmospheres, sounds, and more.

The second is the interconnection of violences, encompassing direct violence against individuals, groups, or communities within a broader framework of indirect violence. Indirect forms may include structural violence, slow violence, institutional violence, or others that disproportionately impact particular individuals or groups, amplifying the effects of direct violence.

The concept of interwoven violence, viewed through an intersectional lens, sheds light on the varying levels of vulnerability experienced by individuals based on factors such as migration status, class, race, sexual orientation, and gender identity. In this context, both the multiplicity and interplay of violences shape victims' ability to organize and access justice.

In essence, interwoven violence operates as a metaphor to analyze, from a relational perspective, forms of violence that have traditionally been studied in isolation across different approaches in Latin America and globally. This perspective allows us to understand differential exposure to violence through intersectionality, integrating approaches that examine its causes and mechanisms of reproduction with those that emphasize its consequences for victims and their social environments in everyday life.

We invite contributions from a wide range of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities that engage with anthropology and archaeology, addressing the following thematic axes: 1) Interwoven violences and temporality. 2) Interwoven violences and space. 3) Interwoven violences and the production of (non)sense.

Keywords: Extreme violence, intersectionality, interwoven violence, Latin America, spaces, temporalities.

Thematic axes:

- a) *Interwoven violences and temporality:* Contributions that explore the continuities and ruptures of extreme and large-scale violence over time. Examples include state violence during dictatorships and police violence in democratic or post-dictatorship contexts, state-sponsored violence alongside mechanisms of transitional justice, and colonial as well as postcolonial forms of violence.
- b) *Interwoven violences and space:* Contributions that examine how multiple forms of violence converge within the same social or geographic space. Examples include environmental sacrifice zones that double as sites of violence, such as clandestine graves or extermination camps, or migratory routes that transform into spaces of extortion, kidnapping, and massacres. This axis also considers bodies as social spaces, inviting work that interrogates the creation of violated and violent bodies, the disembodied ontologies of violence, and the role of forensic practices—whether by citizens or experts—in territories and human remains to uncover injuries, exposure, and concealment of violence.
- c) *Interwoven violences and the production of (non)sense:* Contributions exploring the symbolic practices that arise from interwoven violences, such as musical or narrative productions that represent extreme violence by combining gender-based violence, criminal practices, and the romanticization or heroization of violence. This axis also welcomes studies of memorial practices carried out by victims' families and survivors, which connect past and present violences, as well as analyses of emotions tied to violence that shape the lives of victims and the societies they inhabit. Additionally, it considers forms of inhabiting and traversing territories marked by violence.