ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

Vol.11 – Issue 1 [July 2024]

Introduction to Solidarity Politics: the (Re)activation of European-Latin American Solidarities

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Accepted: 23 July 2024 / Published online: 31 July 2024

How to cite:

Marty S., Grimaldi A. (2024), Introduction to Solidarity Politics: the (Re)activation of European-Latin American Solidarities, *Alternautas,* 11(1), 1-15. DOI: 10.31273/an.v11i1.1692

University of Warwick Press
http://www.alternautas.net

ISSN - 2057-4924

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Introduction to Solidarity Politics: the (Re)activation of European-Latin American Solidarities

"Todos los callados, todos los sometidos, todos los invisibles (...)
Esto no es utopía, es alegre rebeldía
Del baile de los que sobran"

"All the silenced, the oppressed, the invisible (...)
This is not utopia, it is a joyful rebellion
Of the dance of those who are left"

Ana Tijoux, Somos Sur (2014, translation by authors)

In 2014, Chilean-French musician Ana Tijoux released the track and music video for *Somos Sur* ("We are South"), featuring British-Palestinian rapper Shadia Mansour. Although Tijoux "positions herself as both Chilean and French" (Dotson-Renta, 2021), *Somos Sur* draws from her experiences as a second-

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generation Chilean exile and *retornada*[3] to identify and generate solidarity with a particular transnational political subjectivity: the Global South. In doing so, Tijoux reactivates a mode of European-Latin American solidarity with specific roots in the wave of authoritarian-military regimes that swept across Latin America from the 1960s; one catalysed by political exile and sustained through immigrant-based networks, solidarities and knowledge exchange. With that particular historical legacy behind, Tijoux now amplifies these old solidarities and connects them to a wider web of support for all those suffering from the perpetual inequalities that colonialism evoked. *Somos Sur* captures several facets of this phenomenon, centering on Global South experiences of neocolonial extraction and exploitation (Donoso Aceituno, 2018), structural inequalities, and racism. Doing so, she names former colonial powers, such as Tijoux's country of upbringing, France, as the sources and drivers of oppression. Like many of her other works, the video for *Somos Sur* acts as a collection of visual, spoken, musical, and embodied symbols, which are brought together to expose counter-hegemonic experiences, highlight the agency of history's unsung heroes, and establish memory where it has been silenced, omitted and invisibilised. For Tijoux, this narrative cannot be constructed through hopeful political imaginaries alone but rather, through the joyful rebellion that is lived and (re)transmitted through the bodies of those who survive the horrors of political violence.

Somos Sur echoes a distinct strand of radical, Global-South-based solidarity networks between Latin America and Europe, which also extended into the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, surcompassing nation-states with legacies of repressive pasts. By centering these two women's presented shared struggle for freedom, the video is reminiscent of the concept of Global South solidarity established and disseminated through Cuban visual print material from the 1960s (Parrot, 2022; Stites Mor, 2019). Its lyrics are sung in (Latin American) Spanish and (Palestinian) Arabic, rejecting the imperial languages of English and French; through costumes and dances, the video assembles women's bodies to transmit solidarity and collective action; and advocate music as resistance "to deny erasure and proclaim and celebrate existence" (Dotson-Renta, 2021: 383). In essence, *Somos Sur* configures a specific combination of artefacts, some of which were generated by European-Latin American solidarities during the Cold War. Herself a product of exile solidarity and political activism, Tijoux's performance acts as a transmission of political action that connects past and present, providing insight

[3] *Retornada* (returnee), in this regard, describes Chileans who have not lived under the Pinochet regime but returned to the country in the late 1980s to early 1990s (Lindholm, 2018: 78).

into the genealogies of solidarity and the various ways they are reactivated through cultural and artistic practices.

When thinking about this introduction, Ana Tijoux's music video revealed itself as the perfect way to begin exploring questions of transnational solidarities. It captures precisely what drove our curiosities: a catalyst of debates around remnants of Global Cold War exile and solidarity, which both pushed the boundaries of methodological orthodoxies and challenged hegemonic political analyses of European-Latin American social networks. Like this special issue, Tijoux's performance of *Somos Sur* sheds light on a distinct form of cultural, transnational, and translocal solidarity and activism, adding to the bases of knowledge based on more classic forms of leftwing solidarities such as trade unionism and exile organisations, but also a wide range of cultural artefacts. Crucially, Tijoux mobilises indigeneity and gender as a marker of the Global South community to which she speaks, highlighting the intersectionality of diasporic experiences. Inspired by Nueva Canción,[4] Tijoux practises a specific Latin American form of local and global solidarity through music, which also emerges across a number of our interventions. Finally, Tijoux's work reflects the shifting landscape of European-Latin American exile and solidarity over time. As a second-generation exile and *retornada*, Tijoux's art embodies the memory and knowledge of transnational solidarity of the time while also reconfiguring the past and imbuing it with new meaning. This relationship between memory and re-iteration is likewise explored through the reinterpretations of artistic artefacts constructed and collected through solidarity. The dialogue between these pieces helps us to think beyond traditional conceptualisations of historical archival materials as evidence of past events, but rather as transmitters of political messages, knowledge and practices that are re-configured with each new iteration.

Archives and Solidarity

Our proposal for this special issue was inspired by the breadth of commemorations we were witnessing in the lead-up to September 11th, 2023, the 50th anniversary of the military coup that has cast a shadow over Chileans until today. Seeking to avoid repeating the question of where, how, and between whom European-Latin American solidarity takes and has taken place from its inception, we intended this special issue to go beyond the question of chronological memory

[4] Nueva Canción describes a popular Latin American music style that emerged in the 1960s and 70s as part of vast leftwing movements, notably in Chile, Cuba, Argentina and Uruguay (McSherry, 2019).

and historiography to rethink the cyclical and reiterative nature of these solidarities rooted in the Cold War. From the unique vantage point of living with the third generation of Chile's exile diaspora, we wanted to revisit the current-day vernaculars and practices of European-Latin American relations through concepts of translocal and transgenerational solidarity. Similarly, at a time when older categories of internationalism and anti-imperialism have taken on entirely new meanings for protest movements and social justice activism, adapted definitions of the vocabulary surrounding human rights, solidarity, and democracy play an increasingly central role in activism narratives and need to be more thoroughly scrutinised.

We interpreted this challenge from a critical, decolonial theorisation of the archive in relation to memory (Longoni, 2016; Cook, 2011; Fraser and Todd, 2016; Ghadar and Caswell, 2019; see also: Traverso, 2017). Given our particular interest in the relationship between past and present, we took artefacts of past solidarity as the starting point for our conversation. Instead of reducing cultural pieces to historical relics, we consider cultural artefacts to be vessels through which the past can be reinterpreted, reflected and reenacted. Overcoming their imperial baggage of being loci of power (Stoler, 2009), archives can also be places of political mobilisation (Hall, 2001; Hirsch and Taylor, 2012). From this perspective, archives are more than just dusty repositories of documenting the past: they represent a dynamic potential for collective action through engaging artefacts beyond the "historical", as they have the potential to document present struggles as well as past ones. Through our critical approach to the archive, we unlock multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations of temporalities and solidarity.

Our issue focuses specifically on the Latin American-European solidarities that blossomed from the 1970s, a phenomenon that has inspired historians and political scientists alike to periodise the 1970s as the transnationalisation of human rights and solidarity practices (Moyn, 2010; Burk, 2013). While some authors have argued that solidarity was a concept belonging to the "dustbin of 1970s ideals" (de Koenig and de Jong, 2017: 11), we follow a range of interdisciplinary thinkers in reflecting on solidarity as a theoretical principle as well as a practice. We contribute to debates around the complexities of conceptualising solidarity itself, drawing from insights in political philosophy, history, and geography (Brunkhorst, 2005; Christiaens, 2014, 2018; Featherstone, 2012; Kelliher, 2018; Pensky, 2008). In its loosest understanding, these authors describe solidarity as an unwritten social contract of a common perception of injustice or oppression that holds a group together. These can arise out of moral principles, a sense of civic duty, or other mobilising forces. It is assumed that solidarity is based on mutuality and unity and on uniting across differences.

Research on solidarity in and with Latin America reflects the important role of grassroots movements that emerged in response to the region's Cold War

violence. A recent wave of publications, many of which draw inspiration from historian Tanya Harmer's work on Latin America's experience of the Global Cold War (Harmer, 2011; Harmer and Alvares, 2021), have shed light on the multiple intersecting global networks of exchange between Latin Americans and Europeans (Avery, 2022; Bradbury, 2023; Garbe, 2022; Gould, 2019; Grimaldi, 2023; Hatzky and Stites Mor, 2014; Helm, 2014; Livingstone, 2018; Stites Mor, 2013; Markarian, 2016; Sharnak, 2023; Van Ommen, 2024). These works have also benefited from the groundwork of a vast, albeit disperse, number of studies based on specific artefacts, localities, time periods, and actors involved in solidarity, largely between Western Europe and Latin America, but also beyond (Camacho Padilla, 2011; Camacho Padilla and Cristiá, 2021; Carrasco and Smith, forthcoming; Christiaens, 2018; Kievd, 2013; Badan Ribeiro, 2016; Chirio, 2005; Quadrat, 2008; Perry, 2020; Orzes, 2022). These studies demonstrate, in particular, how modalities of solidarity, and knowledge thereof, are transmitted through cultural artefacts, such as murals, songs, political posters, and cartoons. In some case studies, these artefacts also connect to the digital sphere. These help convey the particular struggles that Latin American leftwing struggles faced in the Cold War and up until today.

Forging a debate between solidarity studies and the historical relationship between Latin America and Europe, we intend to address the very nature and meaning of solidarity while also contemplating the role of archives in its making; in establishing, preserving, developing, disseminating, memorialising and reviving knowledge and practices of solidarity from the past.

New Modalities of Solidarity

This special issue unites various disciplinary backgrounds, such as history, cultural studies, education, anthropology, and political geography, to introduce the various forms of the vernacular mobilisation of solidarity. The latter act as "snapshots," interventions in the critical and theoretical dialogue ongoing between the research articles, providing a moment for reflecting on the relationship between theory and praxis, memory, history, and the present. Given our starting point, a reflection on the past 50 years of solidarity between Latin America and Europe, it is unsurprising that so many of our interventions focused on Chile, largely considered the watershed moment of transnational solidarity movements that occurred with the Chilean coup d'état in 1973. Until today, public awareness of and academic research on Latin American solidarities during the Cold War, particularly of Western scholarship, has largely focused on Chile. This results from a combination of how close the social democratic Allende project

was to the hearts of the European and US-American Left and how sudden and violent the end of Allende's tenure was. In this context, Chile is seen as having played a central role in the construction of European forms and practices of solidarity from the 1970s.

Hence, solidarity between Europe and Latin America has evolved along a complex and long series of developments since the 1970s, constructing a multifaceted genealogy that is mobilised to varying degrees and to diverse ends in the present. To capture this diversity as best as we could, we included contributions from both academics and activists, all of whom engage with artefacts in different ways, and we conceptualised the modality of solidarity in an expansive way, to include a range of cultural, visual and embodied artefacts. This element of our approach reaffirms our understanding of what constitutes an archive, and therefore the transmission and reconfiguration of knowledge between past and present. We weave these 'non-academic' interventions with the research articles, placing them against and alongside one another in the co-production of new knowledge. In this way, we cut through the typical rhythms of empiricism with real voices and self-representations, creating an overall experience that allows the reader's own interpretation of the spaces in between and across the various pieces that make up the whole.

The contributions to this special issue explores multiple entangled histories of Cold War hot spots such as Chile (Barria & Rudman), El Salvador (Bradbury et al.), and Nicaragua (Molina) with their transnational connections with Western Europe, such as Austria (Molden et al.), the Federal Republic of Germany (Garbe), the German Democratic Republic (Marty), Greece (Featherstone et al.), and the UK (Bradbury et al.; Grimaldi & Smith; Relano; West). These pieces evoke the past with exploring historical artefacts and archival approaches such as archives/documents, political pamphlets, posters, interviews, songs, testimony, personal (digital) photographs, workshops, exhibitions, and social media content (Grimaldi & Smith; Molden et al.; Relano). Murals have received surprising attention, possibly due to their widespread locations, and grassroots efforts for their restauration (Barria & Rudman; Bradbury et al.; Marty).

Finally, each contribution to this volume sheds light on questions surrounding the relationship between past and present in the solidarities of Europe and Latin America. In dynamic ways, the issue showcases how interdisciplinary and multi-modal archival methods can reveal new dimensions of transnational solidarity in the past; how collaborative, artistic practices and cultural knowledge exchange act as gateways for the transmission of past knowledge and practices in the present; and, how phrases, symbols, objects, locations, repertoires of contention and cultural artefacts are continuously reconfigured and redeployed across generations of exiles and diasporic communities, academics, students and activists.

The political and social significance of archives is documented across several of the following interventions, such as through the creation of digital platforms and collective practices of memory-making around Chilean exile and solidarity. These insights have likewise allowed us to highlight forms of activism and research that challenge colonial conceptualisations of the archive by engaging with the past through artefacts. One of the key ways this has emerged is through highlighting the political-pedagogical dimensions of archival work. Archives and artefacts, as transmitters of various types of knowledge and experiences, are also the source of learning through the co-creation of new ideas and practices. Several of our contributions attest to this, either by revisiting historical archives with novel perspectives, highlighting the agency of historically overlooked protagonists, creating informal spaces of collective learning through culture, or actively reconfiguring the meanings and purposes around historical artefacts (Bradbury et al.; Featherstone et al.; Grimaldi & Smith; Molden et al.; Relano). In a similar vein, our exploration of the cyclical nature of solidarity also brings to mind the most recent wave of far-right politics sweeping across Europe, which has the potential to recreate, or reawaken, the conditions for identification with and solidarity for Latin America seen during the long 1970s and 80s.

Reflecting on this issue's contributions, it is clear that class and inequality form a predominant discursive role across the Cold War solidarities observed, heightened by its internationalist understanding. At the same time, our focus on the reawakening, reperforming or reconfiguration of past Latin American-European solidarities in the current socio-political climate also captures the shift in their relationships within and to new global political-economic paradigms. While in the 1970s more "traditional" leftwing, internationalist connections such as trade union solidarities were predominant, contemporary challenges included bridging divergent ideas of solidarity derived from different modes of thinking. A crucial mode of solidarity-making is, as some of the contributions highlight, now expressed through indigeneity, national belonging in exile communities, and the reclamation of cultural symbols and artefacts. The constraints of these new forms and expressions of solidarity activism lie in the exclusionary nature of some of these alliances. They demonstrate that solidarity is not merely a one-size-fits-all principle but can restrict the extent to which it is shared and reciprocated. Thus, this special issue intervenes in the previously assumed universal principle of solidarity, leading to a more nuanced and complex understanding of the term.

Reaching out through our networks to bring more diverse voices to the fore allowed us to weave together a dynamic picture. Our research articles focused on indigenous groups, workers, students, musicians, artists, and politicians as subjects of study; working critically with sources to shed light on the experiences

and contributions of narratives that have been historically obscured. We also noted the influence of the recent turn to gendered and racial lenses, as many of the articles, albeit implicitly, raise the importance of women, the elderly, or indigenous activists in organising and participating in social justice solidarity and exile activism. By inviting 'non-academic' contributions, we also included the perspectives of activists, (exile) artists, practitioners, students, and activist-academics of today. In this way, our more critical approach and expansive conceptualisation of the archive has allowed us to move beyond the text, incorporating a variety of sources and artefacts. The issue also prompts a reflection on broader European-Latin American relations, especially the *direction* of solidarities. In multiple contributions, visual materials and testimonies have revealed the 'two-way'-ness of Latin American-European solidarities, both in the past and present, highlighting the potential to revisit existing conceptualisations of solidarity itself.

Collecting and Showcasing Solidarities

This special issue features six scholarly articles and four contributions that offer a perspective on solidarity rooted in local communities and grassroots efforts. To begin, David Featherstone, Ben Gowland, and Lazaros Karaliotas present *Solidarity, Worldmaking and Inter-Connected Geographies of Authoritarianism: Trade Unions and the Multiple Trajectories of Chile Solidarity* to interrogate how geographically distant trade union solidarities with Chile in Britain, Greece, Grenada, and Trinidad came together in their fight against authoritarianism. One of the work's many strengths is its multi-lingual, multi-archival approach to research, which brings new voices to the fore and helps us to reflect on the evolution of solidarity, particularly the protagonist role played by unions.

Departing from traditional leftwing solidarities, Samira Marty critically interrogates past and present struggles of Nicaraguan exiles and German residents that arose around the so-called Monimbó mural in a former East Berlin district. Her article, *On Weathering: Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Struggles Around the Nicaragua Mural in Berlin After 2018*, questions the legacies and continuities of anti-imperialist solidarities amid the backdrop of Nicaragua's brutal crackdown on protesters in 2018. Marty's work takes a specific artefact and uses this as a point of departure for understanding the multiple timelines of solidarity that are lived, reawoken, shared and contested between generations.

Continuing with the Nicaraguan solidarity after 2018, the Nicaraguan artist Pedro Molina demonstrates in *Political Caricature to Mobilize Solidarity Through Humor* how he uses his artistic –and often satirical– practice to raise awareness of Nicaragua's descent into authoritarianism. As an artist, Pedro's work invites us to reflect on the shifting modalities of archiving exile experiences, and the evolution

from political pamphlets and posters to digital collections on social media accounts.

In *Changing the Picture and Music for Hope: Cultural Expressions of Solidarity in the UK with El Salvador at the End of the Cold War,* Pablo Bradbury, Emily McIndoe and Andrew Redden explore two specific instances of cultural practices of international solidarity in the context of the end of the Cold War and the civil war in El Salvador, as well as the reception of the latter in the UK. Their investigation of the mural "Changing the Picture" is an example of Salvadoran political art being reinvigorated in London's Greenwich district, while "Music for Hope" showcases how traditional Salvadoran musical practices can be preserved and mobilised within a community-building project. Together, these examples provide a picture of what lies at the nexus of research-activism today, as well as how solidarity can be constructed through the exile and transnational exchange of specific cultural, artistic, and musical practices.

Continuing on murals, NGO practitioner Neil West recounts how he commissioned a collective of Argentinian and English artists to paint a mural, which visually connected Northern England's Stockport (near Manchester) with Buenos Aires' La Boca district. *La Boca to La Stocka* transmits the complex yet joyful experience of bringing artists across the Atlantic under the umbrella of solidarity. It also captures how the moment of solidarity-making can arise in the most unexpected of circumstances; in this story, chance conversations and intercultural exchanges led to the creation of a *new* solidarity, one which draws on age-old practices of muralism while also benefiting from the creation of digital collections to capture the experiences and disseminate them online.

Murals appear again in a contribution from Cristóbal Barria and Sandra Rudman, who take murals in various European cities as a starting point to explore how, despite being ephemeral in nature, these monuments serve as symbols of collective, transnational memory associated with Chilean exile. *Chilean Muralism in Exile: On Solidarity and Transnational Memory of Exile* exposes the potential of murals, as artefacts, to provide insight into the multiple social relations and experiences behind this mode of exile-based solidarity. Barria and Rudman also challenge conceptualisations of exile itself, framing the murals as carriers of cultural and political practices of resistance to the Pinochet regime.

"Equality, freedom, solidarity – the issues on which I was raised" by Berthold Molden, Rayen Cornejo Torres, and Marcela Torres-Heredia, written on behalf of the Viena Chilena 73 | 23 collective, introduces the vernacular archive of Austrian-Chilean encounters with the fiftieth anniversary of the coup d'état in Chile. The project engages personal archives, consisting of photographs,

pamphlets, political posters and a wide array of personal statements of Chilean exiles in Vienna. Through a more inclusive approach to digital archive-making, the project's particular organisation of its collection of artefacts is designed to mitigate against prescribed categories and labels, inviting visitors to embark on their own journey and narrative discovery of its contents.

Complicating the historiography of Chilean solidarities, Sebastian Garbe's ethnographic exploration, titled *Indigenous Solidarities – 50 Years of the Transnational Mapuche Advocacy Network*, looks at how the Mapuche from Chile interacted with the Chile solidarity movement and exile activists in Western Europe. Through indigenous experiences and narratives of exile during the Chilean military regime, Garbe highlights the centrality of intergenerational knowledges and practices of solidarity that began with the struggle to carve out a space in the wider solidarity movement around Chilean nationals. Engaging with decolonial and feminist readings of the past and present, Garbe prompts us to contemplate an alternative reading of the hegemonic universalist principles of solidarity.

In another exploration of the past and present, Anna Grimaldi and Richard Smith reflect on their experiences as participants in a decolonial pedagogical project. Their contribution, *The Semiotics of Solidarity: Reinterpreting Artefacts of Latin American Resistance in Contemporary Leeds*, presents novel interpretations of Latin American solidarity, the relationship between past and present, and the transformative political potential of archives. Returning to the spaces between academia and activism, the article sheds light on how students, researchers, and local community organisations can co-create new experiences and knowledge around intergenerational memory, digital intercultural exchange, and affective co-creation.

The special issue closes with a contribution from student Elisa Martinez Relano, whose reflective piece, *¿Why Leeds?*, provides first-hand insight into the experience of participating in Grimaldi and Smith's project. Her work, a critical reflection of her learning process, contemplates the origins of solidarity and captures the moment a single artefact inspired an entire research endeavour. The experience took Martinez Relano on an intense journey through the past of her home city and university, to visit the multiple collections that document experiences of exile, to witness and participate in the cultural dimensions of solidarity, and into direct conversation with Chilean activists, exiles and the second and third generation of those who fled Chile in the 1970s.

As we open the floor to our truly inspirational and enriching contributions, we invite the reader to explore the issue with curiosity and with an eye to the future; to participate in completing our foray into the connections between past and present by taking forward the artefacts and experiences we showcase to create

your own prefigurative visions of solidarity in the future. What direction do we see for the future of transnational union, student, and indigenous solidarity in the current socio-political climate? Will the murals, songs, and posters introduced to us throughout the issue survive and return once again to take on new meaning? What new modalities of knowledge transmission will emerge with the evolution of the digital sphere? And in light of these circumstances, how does all of this translate into our understanding and practice of solidarity in the present day?

To return to where we began: we see potential answers to these questions in Ana Tijoux's video performance of *Somos Sur*. As a picture of the more radical, anti-imperialist, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal transnational solidarities stemming from the exile experiences of Latin Americans in Europe, the video produces a solidarity of and for the Global South, defined as a non-geographical political subjectivity based on resistance to oppression. As much of the world enters a frightening if recognisable normalisation of Far-Right politics and colonial, genocidal territorial conflicts, the return of solidarity artefacts, and the explicit and embodied knowledges they possess, provide vital tools that can be taken forward. The particular Global South solidarities we see in Tijoux's video form part of a broader movement in cultural production, which, supported by the digital sphere, are gaining increasing global visibility. Here, solidarity rooted in Cold War Latin American exile experiences in Europe has the potential to bring together the Global South, and in doing so, calls us to pay more nuanced attention to Latin America and its solidarities today.

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