Literature Review

RETHINKING THE COMMON FROM SPATIALIZED DIFFERENCES: NEW INTERPELLATIONS FOR COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY[§]

Alicia Raquel Rodríguez Ferreyra[*]

Although community psychology (CP) regards diversity as inherent in community processes and warns about the risks of its invisibilization, its composition and its place in what is common in communities, has received little attention. This paper is a critical review of the focus on the common in CP, based on the notion of sense of community, to locate the problem of community and the problem of difference as expressions of the forms of sociability. The analysis of various approaches to differences leads to a conception of common which places them at the center and involves an ethical-political perspective of alterity. The idea that in community psychologists work with territorial communities' geographic space has been predominantly thought of as a substratum of social relationships and practices, highlights the power of this dimension in the construction of other forms of the common and different. The conclusion is the inseparability of commonality and differences, the implications of conceiving difference as multiplicity in approaching the communal, and an interpellation of the ourselves of community psychologists, as well as our role in the construction of otherness and our involvement in multiplicities that do not disregard inequalities.

***Keywords**: spatialized differences, the common, multiplicity, community, community psychology*

Si bien la psicología comunitaria (PC) considera la diversidad como inherente a los procesos comunitarios y advierte sobre los riesgos de su invisibilización, su composición y su lugar en lo común de las comunidades, ha recibido poca atención. Se realiza una revisión crítica del enfoque de lo común en la CP, a partir de la noción de sentido de comunidad, para ubicar el problema de la comunidad y el problema de la diferencia como expresiones de las formas modernas de sociabilidad. El análisis de las diversas aproximaciones a las diferencias conduce a una concepción de lo común que las sitúa en el centro e implica una perspectiva ético-política de la alteridad. La idea de que en el trabajo de los psicólogos comunitarios el espacio geográfico de las comunidades territoriales ha sido pensado predominantemente como un sustrato de relaciones y prácticas sociales, destaca el poder de esta dimensión en la construcción de otras formas de lo común y lo diferente. La conclusión es la inseparabilidad de lo común y lo diferente, las implicaciones de concebir la diferencia como multiplicidad en el abordaje de lo comunitario, y una interpelación al nosotros de los psicólogos comunitarios, así como nuestro papel en la construcción de la alteridad y nuestro involucramiento en multiplicidades que no ignoren las desigualdades.

***Palabras claves**: diferencias espacializadas, lo común, multiplicidad, comunidad, psicología comunitaria*

[§] The original version of this article was published in Puerto Rican Journal of Psychology (RePs): Rodríguez Ferreyra, A.R. (2020). Repensar lo común desde las diferencias espacializadas: nuevas interpelaciones para la Psicología Comunitaria. *Revista Puertorriqueña de Psicología*, 31*(2),* 206-220.

[*] Universidad de la República, Uruguay.

1. Introduction

Although community psychology (CP) has regarded diversity as inherent in community processes, pointing out the risks of its invisibilization (Montero, 2004; Wiesenfeld, 1996), the composition of that diversity and its place in community relations deserve to be studied in more depth. The emphasis of the discipline has been on the construction of the *common* of the community while the debate has focused on its organizing dimensions (territory, psychological sense of community, relations of interdependence, culture, shared needs, history) (Krause, 2001; Montero, 2004). However, in recent years, reflection on the tensions between a sense of community and diversity has intensified, with different points of view emerging about the compatibility between both concepts (Barbieri & Zani, 2015; Mannarini & Salvatore, 2019; Neal, 2017). Recognizing that they are complex, multifaceted notions and that no unique definitions of them exist, it has become necessary to reconceptualize them as a way of addressing these tensions (Neal, 2017). In line with the need to move beyond dichotomous and essentialized views (Mannarini & Salvatore, 2019), our aim is to contribute to these discussions by proposing that diversity is not only inherent in the notion of community but that it is also an ontological condition for the *common*. Far from conceiving of the common and difference as attributes of people or groups, we believe in the collective and heterogeneous nature of existence, emphasizing the socio-historical quality of such notions and the ethical-political effects of the way in which they are considered.

In addition, although community psychologists have frequently worked in and with territorial communities, geographical space – whose significance within the notion of community has been questioned – has been thought of largely as a container or substrate of community processes, disregarding their productive, material and symbolic potential. The meeting of CP with environmental psychology has led to the development of other meanings of geographical space (Wiesenfeld, 2003; Wiesenfeld & Zara, 2012), providing insight into its role in the construction of the common as well as addressing differences.

The experience of working in working-class neighbourhoods in Montevideo, Uruguay marked by residential heterogeneity as a result of neoliberal capitalist urban development (Castells, 1972; Harvey, 2004) forced us to challenge the notion of community and rethink the position of differences in relation to what is common (Montenegro, Rodríguez & Pujol, 2014; Rodríguez & Montenegro, 2016). It also allowed us to redefine the role of space in the configuration of senses of belonging (experiencing *the common*) and of alterities (experiencing differences), in the production of territorialized subjectivities.

In line with the concept of Multiple Senses of Community, typical of contemporary societies (Brodsky, 2009; Barbieri & Zani, 2015), I argue in this article that rethinking *the common* on the basis of spatialized differences involves conceiving more than one *ourselves* with various features. At the same time, the hierarchical interconnections between spatialized differences should be altered in order to construct other senses of *being in common* or *being with others* consistent with the ethical-political horizons of CP as well as resisting relations which characterize capitalist societies.

In order to arrive at these postulates, I conducted a critical review of the historically constructed meanings of *the common* and of *difference* within communities. I propose forms of *the common* and of *difference* contemplating ethical-political dimension, and analyse the role of spatial dimensions in that construction.

2. Approaching the common in community psychology: A critical review

Beyond the debates regarding components that can define community, there is broad consensus that the *sense of community* (SC) or *psychological sense of community* (PSC) is a core category of the expression of the *common*. Coined by Sarason (1974), PSC relates to the subjective experience of belonging to a community, where the perception of similarity and the recognition of interdependence with others prevail. McMillan & Chavis (1986) were pioneers in enhancing its conceptualization, and built a rating scale (Sense of Community Index, SCI) to study the weight and the relationship between the factors associated with this phenomenon. 1) *Membership* or sense of belonging; 2) *Reciprocal influence* between the group and its members; 3) *Reinforcement* or integration of personal needs into the group and 4) *Shared emotional connection*.

Both the notion of SC or PSC, and the scale for rating it, have been widely accepted in the scientific community due to their predictive nature regarding people's behaviours (Ante Lezama & Reyes, 2016; Millán, Domínguez, Hombrados, Gómez & García, 2019; Moura et al., 2017). SC has been studied in various geographical latitudes (North America, Europe and Latin America), in different groups (residents of neighbourhoods, immigrants, different age groups, various socio-economic sectors, school and work environments, victims of catastrophes or armed conflicts), and in its relationship with various factors (participation, resilience, well-being, fatalism, social crises) (Millán et al., 2019; Molina, 2020; Moura et al., 2020; Narváez & Hernández, 2019; Rojas, Cabello, Leiva & Castillo, 2019).

However, SC and its approach have also drawn plenty of criticism. One of the main criticisms is the limited consideration of the social and cultural particularities of the scenarios studied, and the intention of universalizing the concept and its rating scale (Ante & Reyes, 2016; Castella et al., 2016; Millán et al., 2019; Moura et al, 2020; Rojas et al., 2019). Furthermore, reference to the socio-historical and structural contexts related to findings in local spaces is almost absent. If any, it plays a descriptive, exteriority role, that is, it considers those contexts as something that lies outside of the community and cannot be influenced. These criticisms have led to suggesting that qualitative methods be used for its study because of their consistency with the rhetoric of CP, by avoiding ethnocentric bias and incorporating local and cultural singularities, diversity of experiences, and complexity in dialogue with macrosocial conditions.

On the other hand, paradoxically, SC has been approached from an individual perspective: it is stated by the *self*, rather than by *ourselves*. Moura and colleagues (2020) wondered if what is being rated is the subject's relationship with the community or the sense of community as a whole. If it were the former, would *the common* and the *ourselves* be the product of the relative weight of individual senses of belonging in relation to the community? An affirmative answer would be heir to the modern conception of the individual and society as independent entities, which has been heavily criticized by CP (Montero, 2004). In fact, some indigenous peoples in Latin America show other alternatives where the collective *ourselves* transcends the *social self* in discourses and in their way of experiencing that which is *communal* (Herazo &Moreno, 2014).

I am interested in focusing on two significant elements of the classical notion of SC due to their ethical-political consequences. In the first place, the sense of belonging is the factor that has shown the greatest internal consistency in studies on SC (Maya, 2004). This sense involves, according to McMillan and Chavis (1986), establishing boundaries between those who belong to a community and those who do not. While these authors warn about the danger of the way in which groups use reaffirming those boundaries to exclude those they call "deviants" and about the risk of polarization. However, they justify the need and benefits of those barriers as protection against perceived threats. Additionally, the component of bidirectional influence between individual and community reportedly shows the tension between cohesion and loss of personal freedom or between cohesion and diversity. The authors also conclude that influence is beneficial in that it can generate cohesion and collective action.

As is the case with the concept of community, SC is associated with an idea of positivity in social relationships and presented in ideal terms, with little mention of conflict. Despite the recognition of diversity inherent in communities, it is striking that so little attention is given to differentiation processes within them and that what prevails is the claim that differences and conflicts stand as obstacles to their formation and to the SC. According to Mannarini and Salvatore (2019), some authors have argued that this notion and that of diversity are incompatible, while others have argued that their compatibility is conditioned by the context in which they develop.

Overrating regularity, balance and congruence and denying antagonistic forces, conflicts and differences is typical of positivist theories in social psychology and leads to the preservation of the status quo rather than the promotion of social change. These changes call for the acknowledgment of diversity and contradictions; they cannot be disregarded, circumvented, denied or hidden, even if they drive us away from the myth of the *ourselves* (Wiesenfeld, 1996). It is necessary to address SC critically so that it becomes a tool for change (Moura et al, 2020). Every community experience implies cultural, gender, age, economic, class and ethnic asymmetries, and therefore involves conflict (Almeida and Sánchez, 2017).

Rather than a relationship of compatibility or incompatibility between community and diversity, we propose, based on contemporary philosophical postulates (Alvaro, 2015; Torres, 2013; Salazar, 2011), that diversity is a condition for the existence of community. Therefore, what is most significant for CP is *how* the common and the diverse are conceived of, and *how* difference is approached, since that is the product of socio-historically constructed significations that have ethical-political effects on forms of sociability.

3. The problem of community and the problem of difference

The critical analysis of some effects of the way SC has been approached exposes two problematic aspects related to the conception of *the common*: the construction of alterities or the *ourselves-others* relationship and the *homogeneity-diversity* tension. We propose thinking of these aspects as resulting from the so-called *problem of community and the problem of difference* – closely interconnected. These are theoretical and empirical problems that have been part of major debates in the development of modern political philosophy and sociology (Alvaro, 2015; Torres, 2013) and contribute to CP discussions.

The problem of community arises whenever the forms of sociability are questioned due to the social transformations resulting from capitalism throughout its development and its successive crises (Almeida & Sánchez, 2014; Alvaro, 2015; Ante & Reyes, 2016). The recurring sensation of loss of community resulting from these changes leads to a nostalgic feeling nurtured by the community myth and a binary thought that represents life in common in western modernity (community-society). The latter is clearly expressed in "Community and Society" (1887/1947), the classic work of one of the founders of scientific sociology, Ferdinand Tönnies. Community therefore occupies the place of what no longer is and cannot be again on the pole of positivity and pleasant feelings, as opposed to the negativity of the present (Bauman, 2003). This binary device is still present and updated in the multiple references to the communal by very diverse stakeholders, including the State and the business world (through advertising) (Alvaro, 2015). A recent example is the illusion of community, present in the prevailing discourses on the pandemic, which has rendered the deep social inequalities invisible in order to tackle the crisis situation. Given that this binary thinking has been at the base of extremes events such as Nazism[1] and is evident today in different parts of the planet with the emergence of neo-fascist movements in partnership with right-wing and far-right governments, we propose jointly addressing the *problem of community* and the *problem of difference* (Fernández, 2009).

The question of what to do *with* the 'different ones' expresses the inequalities and biopolitical devices that nurture differences (Fernández, 2009). Meanwhile, what to do *as* different ones is evidence of the failure of assimilation and tolerance policies, vindicating the knowledge of many differences without harmonizing them. Bridging both problems, Almeida and Sánchez (2014) state that one of the social ruptures of contemporary societies is the difficulty in harmonizing citizenship, cultural diversity and equity into an equality that will not standardize and a diversity that will not discriminate. Here lies one of the main challenges for the expression of *the common* in contemporary society.

4. Senses of difference: Alterity, diversity, inequality and multiplicity

The foundation of psychic and social life is known to lie in alterity, a condition for identity development (Jodelet, 1998; Jovchelovitch, 1998). In order to construct identity, the individual has to recognize and establish a relationship with what s/he is not. The notion of alterity is always placed in counterpoint: a *not self* or a *not ourselves*, or *one other self of oneself* (Jodelet, 1998, p.48). The consciousness of one *other* world challenges the individual as "one among other selves" (Jovchelovitch, 1998, p. 73) and places him/her in relation to his/her limits. According to Jodelet (1998), there are two terms in the French language for the not-self: *autrui* (other humans), that is, a different *other* bearing a resemblance to the *self*, and *autre* (or alter), which implies difference and the establishment of a radical distance in a context of plurality, "product and process of social construction and exclusion" (Seidmann, 2015, p. 348). Indeed, the conception

[1] Daniel Alvaro (2015, p. 278) discusses how "in the name of community, mass destruction events were carried out that would forever mark the history of Europe in the 20th century".

one may have of human beings, the *self* (or *ourselves*) and the *other* (or *others*), and the kind of relationship established among them implies an ethical dimension (Guareschi, 1998). Meanings that are based on the differences between people and between groups occur socio-historically and are linked to their treatment and to the conceptualizations of differences. Different ways of thinking of differences or what is different include:

1) *Negativized alterity*. Differences here are nurtured by the construction of *others* not identical to the *ourselves* that turn into objects of discrimination and stigmatization and into binary and domination relationships. This alterity is supported by the philosophical thought of the One, a universal individual identical to him or herself that regards difference as the negative of identical, where *other* is foreign, threatening, abnormal and disqualifiable (Duschatzky & Skliar, 2000; Fernández, 2009). Differences are thought of as an attribute of the *other* rather than of the relationship (e.g., poverty applies to the poor, deficiency applies to the deficient). Fixed, homogeneous identities are built that deny the heterogeneity of anything social and deny hybrid forms of identity (Jodelet, 1998). This conception of *different* results in the adoption of different strategies to control alterity, which leads to its negativization: the demonization of *other*, its invention by the State, its invisibilization, its discursive location on the outside, their fixation of stereotypes. These mechanisms serve to appease that which is threatening: the similarity *others* (Grüner, 2004), which is exacerbated in contexts of fear, such as those that have recently been experienced in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several authors argue that the conquest of America and colonizations in other latitudes established the idea of "the Other of Europe" and of an alterity linked to biological difference and the notion of race; the colonized *other* is the object of contempt, exploitation and extermination. This marks the emergence of the denial that what is not identical to *oneself* (in this case, the west) may exist (Clastres, 1968). These processes did not end with the decolonizations (19th and 20th centuries), so domination and negativized alterity permeate racial, epistemic, economic and gender relations to this day (Quijano, 2000).

2) *The acknowledgement of diversity and tolerance*. Hand in hand with the criticism of ethnocentrism, *otherness* is constructed as diversity (Bouvin et al., 2004). From this point of view, there is an admission that one's own culture is not the only one and there are different ways of fulfilling needs. This perspective emerges in the midst of the tension between conceiving of the different cultures as homogeneous wholes, dissolving the links between them (Duschatzky & Skliar, 2000), or as a product of their relations of opposition, similarity and distinction. It leads to a cultural relativism that denies conflicts and power relations, and is based on abstract equality. Although the acknowledgement of diversity produces a decentration of the *ourselves*, inasmuch as it conceives of other rationalities, the position of whoever looks at and constructs diversity is not dissolved. Liberal and multiculturalism discourses express these ways of conceiving differences (Almeida & Sánchez, 2014; Bidaseca, 2010; Fernández, 2009). The centrality of these discourses allows *others* to continue to be *others*, but these *others* are some *others*, not all. Integrable differences matter, while inequalities, perceived as normal, are augmented. The *multi* in these cases is "the many of the One" (Fernández, 2009, p. 26). It is still a discourse issued from order and professing order (Skliar, 2007). The discourse of tolerance, heir to religious struggles

(17th-18th century) (Balcarce, 2014), accompanies that of cultural diversity. It “bears a strong family resemblance to indifference” (Duschatzky & Skliar, 2000, p.11). The more polarized the world, the more talk of tolerance, with inhuman ways of life being naturalized. In the words of Grüner (2002), diversity thus understood expresses obliviousness to the conflictive social bond, the ways of producing differences, “almost complete” renunciation “of all concern for the historical-social or political-economic interactions of cultural processes” (p.76).

3) *Inequality at the centre*. From the perspectives stressing inequality as a substantive factor, differences, as results of socio-historical production, are part of the power relations between hegemonic and subaltern cultures. For postcolonial thinkers, difference and inequality are social constructs, so:

“…The meaning that the stakeholders ascribe to difference is the result of sedimented social practices that install a specific way of thinking of difference as inequality and activate different mechanisms to legitimize it. As Spivak argues, difference should be neither celebrated nor rejected, but rather we should find what specific case of inequality leads to its use” (Bidaseca, 2010, p. 167).

From this point of view, the *other* is the *subaltern*, an agent whose voice has been silenced through imperialist, nationalist and modern narratives, or distorted by the official culture or the elite. The notion of cultural hegemony reveals a form of differentiation configured through a subtle, symbolic power, different from the repressive and coercive power of the State (Boivin et al., 2004). Not everything is the result of either autonomy or domination. Popular cultures have the right to construct their own meaning, even though relations of force and laws of unequal interaction exist and link social classes with each other (García Canclini, 2004). Domination practices involve their reproduction and transformation, which implies recognizing conflict in the processes of social differentiation and the possibility of enunciation by subaltern sectors as a way to remove themselves from that place of subalternity (Bidaseca, 2010).

4) *Multiplicity and multiple identities*. Stemming from this approach, difference is an expression of singularities in the context of a collective existence marked by a diversity that is not without conflicts or contradictions. Fernández (2009) proposes the notion of *multiplicity* and *difference of differences* (Deleuze, 1988; Deleuze & Guattari, 1998), where the parts are not subsumed in totalizations, nor do they refer to a model. It is about *making* differences rather than *being* different, avoiding fixing alterities or essentialisms, which means giving the notion of identity a new meaning. e I no such thing as the *other* but a division into multiple identities: class, race, gender (Grüner, 2002). This involves thinking of differences as “*in-between* spaces that provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal –” (Bhabha, 2002, p.18)). Identities are fluid, they refer to different positions that a subject assumes in social practices. Difference is not a universal category, but "stands as historically and culturally contingent discursive fields (...) in edifices in a certain time-space" (Guareschi, 2008, p. 64). Studies into migratory processes show that it is not possible to think of static, standard identities restricted in time and space, but rather that they should be thought of as changing, hybrid identities with blurred boundaries between spatialities which can be interconnected and need to be thought of in a historical basis (Cassim et al., 2019). These positions on differences entail a polyphony of meanings produced on a daily basis

that leads to denaturing and destabilizing identity markers to produce new positions and practices of meaning-building. Bhabha (2002) speaks of synecdochization, alluding to the ability to be a woman one day, then black, then a muslim. Indeed, Afro postcolonial feminism or counter-hegemonic feminism placed the issue of multiple oppressions (sexist, classist, racist) and interrelated domination systems facing black women on the map. The predominance of one axis of differentiation over others can only be considered situationally and from the particularity of its meaning in each context.

After this exploration of the different ways of conceiving of differences and their implications, we highlight the importance for CP of paying attention to the significations that they take on in each particular situation and to the power devices that are instituted around them. We believe that it is essential to promote ways of de-essentializing differences to influence the production of modalities of the common consistent with the ethico-political horizons of the discipline and with the purposes of communities fighting multiple battles for a more egalitarian world.

5. Other forms of the common and difference in community

Understanding differences and conflict not as obstacles or phenomena to be avoided but as dimensions inherent in communities (Almeida & Sánchez, 2014; Burton & Kagan, 2015; Rozas, 2015), while steering clear of idealized conceptions of them alien to their concrete expressions, require categories that surpass modern binarisms. These categories allow us to think of forms of sociability in complex, contradictory, paradoxical and unfinished dynamics of *being with others* with an ethical-political stance. "Neither this nor that, or else this and that", says Alvaro (2015); one other concept of community "that has to explain, first of all, the open and necessarily contradictory, aporetic sense" (p. 310) of relationships among humans and with every living thing.

Some authors address the common by putting diversity at the center, and oppose *community* to *collective* (Delgado, 2007; Percia, 2017). Others, in order to avoid the substantialization of community and prioritize its evolution, use the word *communal* (Salazar, 2011; Torres, 2013). Aside from the names (a discussion which I will avoid on this occasion), I am interested in stressing that the concern regarding these approaches is over the quality of the bond that makes up the *ourselves*, the approach to difference, and the possibility of convergence based on the acknowledgement of the latter. In opposition to the idea of community as fusion, *collective* involves different modalities of joining *the same* (Delgado, 2017), and there are no hierarchies or relations of dominance, but mutuality and horizontality (Percia, 2017; Sawaia, 2004). Without departing from the notion of community, and considering the Latin American experience, Torres (2013) believes it to be born out of intersubjectivity, in a heterogeneity irreducible to the individuals that it is made up of and that develop within it. This is an individual that is neither reduced to the modern person nor to the fusional community level, but rather implies interaction in difference.

Authors do not allude to a static entity but rather to the dynamic nature and constant and contingent recreation of community, an unrelenting constitution and destitution of identity (Salazar, 2011; Sawaia, 2004), bond and immanence in permanent inception (Torres, 2013).

The inherent character of difference in *the common* lies in the fact that *being with another* implies the impossibility of being *the same* as *the other*, the acknowledgment of incompleteness and boundaries. Convergence ratifies the separation that makes it possible. *The common* is therefore the awareness of being apart, which enables reciprocal acknowledgment. Difference is therefore what makes the common possible. The utterance and the experience of an *ourselves* depend on separation due to absence and difference (Salazar, 2011). "Community occurs in the dynamics resulting from difference", according to Mario Flores (2014). Community implies multiple meetings and separations (Wiesenfeld, 1996) and unresolved tension between implication (*communitas*) and exemption (*immunitas*) (Esposito, 2007, 2009). Indeed, according to Almeida & Sánchez (2017), it is the acknowledgment of shared vulnerabilities that helps address conflicts in community life. This means talking about the awareness of interdependence (Butler, 2017) and of a symbolic universe according to which people are part of a complex, larger system in which differences are inherent (Mannarini & Salvatore, 2019). It also involves presenting a critique of the idea of self-sufficiency and independence that neoliberal capitalism has instituted on the basis of the modern notion of the individual.

Indeed, it is necessary to distinguish between *individual* and *singular*. One of the obstacles to thinking about collective is that "we remain tied to the individual as a figure of singularity and to the union between individuals separated from each other as a figure of plurality" (Teles, 2009, p. 29). This is modern thinking denying that the individual is necessarily social. *Singularity*, inherent in the diversity that makes up that which is collective, provides an insight into its transformative power and community as resistance. A person is a diversity, "a differentiated assertion of the same vision" (Ellacuría, 1990, p. 390). Along these lines, there are ways of thinking of the *ourselves* where the notion of the individual is missing. In the Tojolabal language of the Mayan people (Chiapas, Mexico), *us* is common existence of every living thing (Percia, 2017). In the town of Santa Martha Acatitla (Mexico), SC is expressed "in the existence of Experiencing the *Ourselves*, Feeling the *Ourselves*, Vocalizing the *Ourselves*, and the Awareness of the *Ourselves*" (Herazo & Moreno, 2014, p. 172).

Conceiving of other forms of *the common* alternative to the notions of community that lay stress on cohesion and homogeneity entails assuming the multiplicity of differences at the centre and admitting different modalities of joining *the same* (several *sames*) in an intentional search for non-hierarchical relationships as well as making power relations and inequalities visible in order to denature and deconstruct them. It involves accommodating a polyphony of voices and utterances from *low voices* (Guha, 2002) and allowing the deployment of singularities in a process that will enable the plurality of identities and hybridity while questioning the tendency to fix them and shut them down. It involves harmonizing differences or harmonizing amidst differences, knowing that this harmonization is contingent, changing, unfinished, and fraught with tensions and contradictions.

It should be added that conceiving of this form of *the common* involves relationships of interdependence not only among humans but also in relation to all living things, other species and nature, as well as objects, technology and spaces (Haraway, 2020). On the basis of our work experiences, we will now address the spatial dimension.

6. The power of the spatial dimension to address the common and difference in the community

Thinking about the above with a focus on the spatial dimension contributes to the analysis of the production of *the common* and *difference*, making aspects that are often overlooked in CP visible and offering tools for intervention.

Although most studies on SC refer to territorial communities, the spatial component has hardly been dealt with. Although relationships are identified between SC and other notions that link people with their physical environments – attachment to place and place identity –, the complexity of these processes has not always been addressed. These environments also tend to be assimilated to the environment in a generic sense without delving into its materiality, which is usually presented as a passive, pre-existing dimension (Berroeta et al., 2015). The meeting of CP with Environmental Psychology has made it possible to give another density to the role of space in community processes (Wiesenfeld, 2003). Indeed, numerous authors have shown that space – socially constructed and meaningful – is not secondary to or the setting for social relations, but rather establishes them. It is also worth noting the collective experiences that place territory at the centre as the reason for their claims and actions (Bonet, 2012; Harvey, 2014; Rodríguez & Grondona, 2018; Stavrides, 2016)[2], where the role of the dimension of space in people's lives becomes more apparent.

We have already seen the relationship between alterity and identity processes. Spaces contribute to the formation of social identities through the concepts of *spatial social identity* and *urban social identity*. They operate with categorization and comparison, assimilation and differentiation mechanisms – stressing intragroup similarities and intergroup differences – typical of social identity processes (Valera & Pol, 1994).

Studies on the spatialization of racial discrimination and residential segregation processes, help to understand social differentiation phenomena and the power relations involved. Place discourses produce and reproduce identities, distinctions, belongings and foreignness, and guide actions, that is, they are configured as true place policies. Racism becomes opaque, because racist exclusions result in spatial exclusions, becoming naturalized due to the apparent transparency, objectivity and innocence of the place. Relations of racial hierarchy are therefore expressed in daily spatial practices and are made up of them; they are embodied in the geography of everyday life, contributing to their permanence (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

Through naturalization, social oppositions are objectified in physical spaces and take the shape of categories of perception and assessment of social space: "urban borders sedimented by historical, economic and political processes have been incorporated into the perception and classification schemata and action of social actors" (Grimson & Segura, 2016, p. 32). These authors conceive of three dimensions

[3] We use the notions of space and territory interchangeably here. We will not address the differences between them since that exceeds the scope of the article. We are dealing with a complex notion of space from critical geography (León, 2016) that allows us to link it with the notion of territory as addressed by the Brazilian geographers Haesbaert (2007) and Mançano (2005, 2008), among other authors.

in the construction of boundaries: *material* (natural or man-made), *social* (access and distribution of resources and opportunities) and *symbolic* (categorization of objects, people and practices), with complex and dynamic relationships established among them. them. They agree with Simmel that boundaries separate and unite. While some operations are performed that separate and isolate, others build bridges and connections between the separated (Segura, 2013). Boundaries, therefore, do not imply imply the absence of interactions, nor does overstepping them imply abolishing them.

Along these lines, space in the social sciences is presented as inherently fragmented, as if it were a neutral environment where differences are inscribed: "the presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography to conceal successfully the topography of power" (Gupta & Ferguson, 2008, p. 237), which shows the risks of isomorphism among space, place and culture. Therefore, many times, when the pre-existing, localized community is taken as a given starting point, no attention is paid to the spatial distribution of the power relations that have intervened in the symbolic construction of that space as a place or locality. Spaces have always been interconnected and have been hierarchically It is about "exploring the processes of production of difference in a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces" (Gupta & Ferguson, 2008, p. 245).

These reflections on the boundaries that are built in social dynamics have given rise to theorizations about hybridity, interstices, border and liminal areas (usually rendered invisible or regarded as insignificant). These places destabilize the fixity of *ourselves* and *others* and force us to represent territory in terms of connections and contiguities, including multiple planes, in addition to physical space (class, gender, race), in relation to which the differences are constructed according to the location in the field of power

Indeed, *thresholds* can be thought as meeting scenarios that are neither structured nor unstructured, but rather are structured through the social practices in them. The threshold produces the potential for communication between opposing worlds, contributing to relationships between selfhood and alterity. In order to challenge contemporary urban identities – defined and framed in apparently independent, self-contained spaces, with a strong homogenizing effect on those who inhabit them –, it is necessary to produce different spatial experiences, moving from enclaves, indifferent to each another, to a network of communicating areas connected through permeable membranes that can enable the emergence of the hybrid, the new, the multiple (Stavrides, 2016). On the basis of the experiences in community psychology that they implement from an ecological and systemic perspective, Burton and Kagan (2015) argue for the significance of thinking in terms of fields and edges, introducing the notion of an *ecological edge* with characteristics of the ecosystems interacting in it, which results in a wealth of resources.

Finally, since the ways of thinking of and experiencing the relationship *with others* are spatialized socio-historical productions (Savransky, 2012), it is essential to analyze the power of space in the production of *the common* and in the treatment of the differences it is made up of from a perspective that questions the frequent naturalization of people's relationship with spaces and their reifying illusion. Indeed, the political dimension involved in these matters, entails scrutinizing the frequent person-place isomorphism and questioning – given the spatialization of differences – the construction of a view made up of unconnected fragments which denies its socio-historical-spatial production and the hierarchical connection of diversity (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, 2008). In their capacity as separators and linkers as well as *thresholds*, boundaries stand as meaningful spaces that can contribute to the understanding of the complex processes involved in the construction of *the common* from a perspective of multiplicity.

Going back to the idea of differences as a condition for the construction of *the common*, a look at the spatial dimension of communities contributes to questioning the tendency to essentialize them (by regarding them as attributes of people, groups or spaces). It also allows us to make visible the possibilities of articulation (always changing and contingent) between these differences, without attempting a homogenization that will annul them, but for the purpose of altering the hierarchical relationships that have been historically instituted.

So far from being a mere vessel for or the scene of community processes, space, in its material and symbolic dimension, is a constituent of people's lives and part of the relationships of interdependence that are the basis for the common as a condition for existence. It also contains the power for reproduction and rupture, for criticism and resistance to relations of domination (Lefebvre, 1974; León, 2016; Savransky, 2012) and, therefore, for influencing an approach to the differences involved in the communities.

7. Final thoughts

On the basis of a critical analysis of two central aspects for CP, namely the construction of the common and the place of diversity in the community, I have attempted to contribute to the debates about the relationship between them. We propose that diversity is an ontological condition for *the common*, and restate the need to move beyond dichotomous and essentialized analyses that tend to homogenize and fragment social existence. It would not be so much a matter of asking ourselves about the dimensions that define what is common to the community or about the elements that promote or hinder the construction of a SC (which has been the subject of multiple debates in the discipline), but rather of analyzing the quality of the *ourselves* configured in the multiplicity of social scenarios in which CP works and questioning ourselves about the ethical-political ways of *being with others*. This is especially significant at a time when modalities of sociability involving a radicalization of negativized forms of alterity are gaining ground in the world.

We have argued that rather than attributes of people or groups, *the common* and diversity are socio-historical constructions whose significations are played out in particular communities. Only if community is thought of as an illusion of homogeneity and uniformity – alien to everyday relationships – and diversity as a product of static, fixed, closed identities where the *other* is experienced as a *not-me* or a *not-us*, is it possible to argue that community and diversity are incompatible. Or, as Brodsky (2017) puts it, the extent to which diversity and a sense of community are in conflict is the extent to which diversity exists without inclusion; in other words, when it leads to exclusion.

Focusing on an approach to differences requires us as community psychologists to understand and intervene in the multiple devices of power that institute these differences as inequalities (class, gender, place of origin, ethnicity, etc.) and critically analyze the bland ways of dealing with diversity that often hide contradictions and conflict. Instead, conceiving of difference as multiplicity allows us to connect with the power of the common based on the articulation of singularities. The common is not possible other than on the basis of the differences that it is made up of, the recognition of our incompleteness, our vulnerability and the interdependence that shapes our existence. This interdependence involves the human and the non-human, and the living and the seemingly inanimate, such as the spatial dimension.

While territorial communities have been significant for CP, the role of spaces in *being with others* cannot be taken for granted. It is essential to analyze the complexity of people's relationship with them and identify the ways in which spatialized differences can be approached in order to alter the hierarchical connections of diversity, which are typical of contemporary capitalist societies.

There are numerous experiences in Latin American cities which show the incidence of government interventions in community or neighbourhood public spaces (Berroeta, 2012), in the lives of territorial communities. In these spaces, public may become common, either through autonomous collective actions or through forms of co-management between local governments and the inhabitants. The emphasis placed on the diversity that is part of community processes and on how it manifests itself in spaces helps to draw attention to and enhance articulations (between generations, between residents of different spaces, between groups addressing common issues, etc.), and generate actions at the *between* and threshold levels that will make it possible to influence the hierarchical relationships connecting the differences.

Finally, asking ourselves about the ways of producing the common and approaching differences requires a recognition that as community psychologists, we are builders of *otherness* when we treat community as a discrete object, making its nature as a social construct invisible, and positioning ourselves in in an exteriority that is illusory. In the words of Bidaseca (2010), how do you escape the risk of betrayal associated with translating other voices or the violence of representing the *other*? According to the author, Spivak proposes two alternatives: the intellectual speaks from universal knowledge, speaks for others without explaining his position, or knows that intellectual discourse is set in a rationality that prevents any objectivity and takes a political position within the knowledge-producing machinery.

In community intervention and research processes, conceiving of other forms of *the common* imposed by a capitalist society (where the focus is not on reproducing life but on destroying it), requires challenging the quality of the *ourselves* in order to build an ethics of alterity, where difference is not synonymous with inequality or a reason for domination. It is necessary to make visible and denature hegemonic relationships (patriarchal, colonial and hierarchical) which we tend to reproduce. It involves calling into question who the *other* is and thinking of him as an autonomous fellow human being; a position that, while seeking to listen to smothered, camouflaged, phagocytised voices, and understand their meanings without disallowing the voice that emits them, without destroying diversity, or reducing some bodies of knowledge to others (Boaventura de Souza Santos, 2006), involves forswearing any attempt to apprehend him.

The *ourselves* is included in the construction of *otherness*, which means taking responsibility for the *self-ourselves-others* relationship and thinking about the harsh, hard, tense, conflictive *among ourselves* (Skliar, 2007). It is necessary to admit the existence of an *other* decentred from the *ourselves* and the pride of place it gives us, that the *other* “lives and lived, the other exists and existed in his history, his narration, his alterity and his experience, outside our control and disciplining devices” (p. 5). That is, the *other* does not come into being on the basis of the idea of diversity or difference.

The *other* is the alien, strange culture that we can never fully understand and brings us face to face with the uncodable and the irreducible. At stake is "the respect for the other’s intractable silence" “for the right to safeguard strictly incommunicable areas of his Being" (Grüner, p. 320). *Hospitality* – Derrida’s notion – should guide the relationship with the *other*, that is, the act of receiving the *other* beyond the capacity of the *self*, of being hosts without laying down conditions, without the *other* requesting accommodation. It involves letting the *other* break in, feeling responsible for him, being hospitable to his specificity, supported by the language of ethics, giving rise to the *other’s experience of being another*, knowing that something about the *other* is elusive, unpredictable and unreadable (Skliar, 2007). Along the same lines, Dussel’s analectics (1988) as a method and as an ethical and practical condition that makes it possible to incorporate diversity, the strange, the unimagined, the unrecognized voices (Montero, 2014). Thinking of ourselves as just another player among others operating in the communities we work with, involves recognizing ourselves as part of the multiplicity in order to prepare to produce collectively in scenarios marked by diverse inequalities in which we are not strangers.

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