Instituto de Ciencia
Política de la
Facultad de Ciencias
Sociales de la
Universidad de la
República.
Montevideo,
Uruguay.

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“PROGRESSIVE” GOVERNMENT (2005-2009) AND THE LGTTBQ AGENDA: ON THE (RECENT) QUEERING OF URUGUAY AND ITS LIMITS

Documento On Line Nº [01/10]
[Setiembre 2010]

documentos
de trabajo

ISSN: 1688-5058
TÍTULO-CLAVE: DOCUMENTO DE TRABAJO (INSTITUTO DE CIENCIA POLÍTICA. MONTEVIDEO)
TÍTULO-CLAVE ABREVIADO: DOC. TRAB. (INST. CIENC. POLÍT., MONTEV.)

“PROGRESSIVE” GOVERNMENT (2005-2009) AND THE LGTTBQ AGENDA: ON THE (RECENT) QUEERING OF URUGUAY AND ITS LIMITS [*]

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[*] A previous version of this paper was published by CERLAC (York University) in its Working Papers series.

To those children who suffer(ed) bullying at school for being putos (fags) or marimachos (butch women) –both the survivors and the others...

1. Introduction: Understanding the (incomplete) Uruguayan path from harassment to the (public) "re-subjectivization" of queers

"Montevideo's main Plaza Independencia has palaces, a statue of the nation's founder, vendors and a gay bar"

Toronto Star, March 14, 2009[1]

The transition from being the object of humiliation of heterosexist discourse, to being a subject who transforms the horror suffered into (self) creation ("resubjectivization") - the main motif of Didier Eribon's Réflexions sur la question gay (1999) - somehow describes what many queers have experienced in Uruguay in recent years, not only as individuals but also, and especially, as a collective. Even though, as is superbly captured in the famous metaphors of the Uruguayan thinker Real de Azúa (1984) ("shock absorber society", "the impulse and its containment"), Uruguay is seen and analyzed as a country in which extremes are avoided and "time goes by slowly", its "metropolitan coming out" (Sinfield, 2000) has been deep and relatively fast. These days, Montevideo seems, to many and different observers, an "open environment" – a "queer-friendly place" (Sempol, 2008).[2] In this sense, the country in which I grew up is very different from that which I left some months ago.[3]

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[1] http://www.thestar.com/comment/columnists/article/600522

[2] To see how this social opening operates at the level of the "pink dollar" see http://www.viajessunlight.com

[3] As a gay intellectual who faced systematic discrimination and even so-called bullying almost my entire (educational) life, my feelings and thoughts are contradictory. It is still "strange" (I have not found a better expression yet) to see these fast shifts in the dynamics and meanings of diverse realms and spaces (from streets to schools) in queer lives and, especially, in the attitude of heterosexual people. I want to emphasize that the question of what to do *collectively* with the painful scars caused by past *collective* abuses and discrimination *will remain* even after a hard-to-imagine total suppression of queer-phobia and sexism. It must: the theme addressed here is anchored in bodies, memories and subjectivities; it is anchored in the suffering of many. My analytical and epistemological perspective (Casen and Ravecca, 2009; Ravecca, 2007; Ravecca and Casen, 2008) follows a general feature of queer literature in its most reflexive and radical versions, where thought and life are neither artificially segmented nor

In the following pages I offer a basic interpretation of this recent and incomplete "queering of Uruguay". I do so using two moments of explanation: the structure and the conjuncture of the country. I am not using these terms in a conceptually complex way. By "structure" I refer to the historical trajectory and some main stable features of Uruguay that (I will argue) are helpful for "making sense" of the issues addressed here. From this starting point, we will be ready to look at what is going on today, and here again it is necessary to choose a window, a point of view: in this case, the spectacular growth in visibility of queer social movements and their success in putting sexual diversity issues onto the social and institutional agenda (Aguilar Villanueva, 1992; 1992b & 1992c). But this achievement cannot be understood without considering the arrival of the "progressive" Frente Amplio (Broad Front) to government in 2004. Thus, I will explore the articulation among queer social movements, public policy and state discourse.

In the conclusion I will try to go beyond the understandable celebration of this (partial) opening by critically exploring some possible problematic implications of this specific incorporation of queerness into the nation. Throughout, I contend with the scarcity of academic research and literature on this topic, the novelty of this terrain of reflection in Uruguay, and (in the case of the conjuncture) the recentness of the process under analysis; thus, the reader will find I take only some preliminary steps in the directions indicated.

2. Structure and history: Some basic features and moments of Uruguay. Glocal contexts and temporalities of this queer story

Latin America is an extremely heterogeneous continent. The trend, common in the so-called Global North, to make strong statements about "Latin America" as a whole, is extremely problematic.[4] I consider it relevant that it is from Canada that I am making this contribution toward understanding the situation of queer people in Uruguay, as Uruguay is a space generally

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"con-fused". Thus, I consider it important to make explicit this (for a lack of a better word) "subjective" dimension, since it will be operating on each page of this paper (and because, as many authors have shown from different approaches, we tend to forget too easily). On the issue of bullying in primary schools and high schools in Montevideo, see Contreras (2008).

[4] An example of this in the terrain of sexuality is Nesvig (2001), which refers to "Latin American homosexuality" while working only on three or four national contexts. As always, there is a problem of "positionality" – who speaks about what or whom, and from what place. I am not claiming the privilege of "native knowledge", but I do share Cooper (1994)'s concerns about the power operations implied in "external" discourses and views, especially if they come from a "self-represented" privileged space and they do not take careful methodological, theoretical and empirical measures with each interpretative step.

absent from the reflection and research of Canadians.[5] Thus, this article must confront the challenge of speaking to two very different audiences: the Uruguayan academy, which is not generally familiar with the theoretical frameworks I employ; and the Canadian academy, which is very distant from Uruguay and tends to "imagine" Latin American countries in ways that must be problematized.

With a surface area of 177.410 square kilometers and a population of three-and-a-half million, Uruguay is located in the southeastern corner of Latin America, between two of the most powerful nations of the region: Argentina and Brazil. Its main colonial background is Spanish but it was the scene of battles between different empires (Portugal, Spain and England) and among its neighbors. In fact, its independence, achieved in 1830, was at least partially caused by the operations in the region of the British official Lord Ponsomby. Several historians have shown that Ponsomby saw the creation of a country "in the middle", between Brazil and the United Provinces (today's Argentina), as needed to pacify the region while imposing conditions advantageous to British interests. The notion of "state cap" (an independent territory between two powerful states) was an explicit goal; a common joke in Uruguay is to call the country "Ponsomby-land". Thus, in many senses, Uruguay was born transnational and, as I will show, has remained in that condition to the present, when the arrival of the leftist Frente Amplio to government is only interpretable in the context of the Latin American turn to the left.[6]

In the following paragraphs I describe some historical features that are key to understanding the works of Uruguayan (homo)sexuality.

The absence of masses of indigenous people "apt to be subjected to servitude" (Real de Azúa, 1984: 18), their resistance to the colonizers and the lack of gold in the area explain the late and weak consolidation of the colony and the absence of a strong tradition of evangelization. Thus, the weakness of the Catholic Church and the non-existence of an Oligarchy in the traditional Latin American sense of the term are two main features of "longue durée" (Braudel) in Uruguayan history (Caetano, 1993). The process of murdering "heterosexualization", conceptually developed by Alexander (2005), did not take place in Uruguay as elsewhere. However, genocide was not absent from Uruguay's story: the scant aboriginal population was not evangelized, but was killed by the descendants of the Spanish - the criollos (creole people).

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[5] In fact, I have been exploring the research interests of an enormous number of Canadian experts on Latin America and have not yet identified any Uruguay specialists.

[6] Historian Gerardo Caetano (1993) explains: "The 'inside' of Uruguayans historically has been very interpenetrated by the 'outside'. The borders between these dimensions are blurred" ("el de los uruguayos ha sido históricamente un «adentro» muy interpenetrado por el «afuera», en donde las fronteras entre una y otra dimensión resultan borrosas"). The translation is mine. See: http://www.rau.edu.uy/mercosur/caetano.htm.

The 19th century was extremely violent in Uruguay. The two main political parties – the Blanco (White) and Colorado (Red) parties, among the oldest in the world - were frequently at war and the countryside, inhabited by gauchos and the scant native population, was a not a regulated space in formal-institutional terms: the enclosure of the fields took place in the late 1800's. Abundant space, sparse population, and a relatively egalitarian social reality have shaped the public sphere ever since.

The state was extremely weak, "almost an illusion" (Filgueira, Garcé, Ramos and Yaffé: 2003), until 1875, when a process of institutional consolidation and modernization began under military government. Paradoxically, the authoritarian regime of Máximo Santos allowed for the secular expansion of public education, spearheaded by the celebrated reformer José Pedro Varela ("public, free and mandatory education" was his motto). This process of secularization, among the most important in Latin America, was completed by the democratic governments of the first part of the 20th century. In 1907, with the military defeat of the Blanco Party, the state was consolidated in Weberian terms; it attained a "monopoly over legitimate physical violence" (Weber, 1991).

A new stage in the life of the country had begun: the Colorado Party would govern Uruguay for a long period, and the country would become one of the most consolidated, stable and strong democracies in the region and beyond (Moreira et al, 2008, among many others). The previously noted sociological configuration, especially the absence of an oligarchic group, is central to understanding this period: the political elites were relatively distinct from the dominant social classes (Serna, 2006 & 2007) and developed a relatively strong welfare state that touched national life in all aspects.[7] Batllismo, the most "progressive" fraction of the Colorado Party whose most important leader was José Batlle y Ordóñez (1903-1907, 1911-1915), played a fundamental role: to be clear but simplistic, Batllismo embodied a social democratic project that had to negotiate/struggle with "conservative" forces – both inside and outside the Colorado Party, especially the Blanco Party. Batllismo, which was quite anti-clerical, completed the process of secularization,[8] and passed "advanced" social and labor laws – for example, it legalized the right of women to sue for divorce (1907 and 1913). During the period 1933-1935, abortion was legal, but it was criminalized again due to strong conservative opposition (Sempol, 2008).

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[7] The literature on this point is enormous. A small selection of (very different) examples: Filgueira and Filgueira, 1994; Filgueira, Garcé, Ramos and Yaffé, 2003; Jung and Ravecca, 2008; Lanzaro, 1986; Moreira, 1997 & 2007; Moreira et al, 2008; Moreira and Ravecca, 2008; Rama, 1989, etc. The literature on political national history is extensive too. I think that the already classic works of José Pedro Barrán and Benjamín Nahúm, and those of

During the first half of the 20th century, Uruguay was imagined as an extended urban and cultured "middle class" –a concept that included the working class in a "hyper-integrated" configuration (Real de Azúa, 1984; Rama, 1989). Batllismo's ideological complexity was noted by several historians. On this point, Diego Sempol, a Uruguayan historian and queer activist, made an interesting comment:

> *I think that Batllismo was not only a political but a cultural phenomenon that expressed an ideological and philosophical point of view, which, in its most radical expressions (the case of Domingo Arena), promoted free love, divorce by women's choice, abortion, education and anti-clericalism. Today's progressive project[9] lacks that ideological substratum to address sexual diversity issues, and that is why it represents a sort of reconfiguration of Batllismo in its means, but without reaching the radical levels reached by that earlier political current.*

This comparison between the political elite of the old Colorado Party (which today, as we will see, is located on the right side of the ideological spectrum) and the current leftist government led by the Frente Amplio, created in 1971, which has come to occupy the ideological space of traditional Batllismo, is very telling. We could say that "the past" – or at least some manifestations of Batllismo – was more radical than the present project of the Frente

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Caetano and Rilla, provide a general approximation. Real de Azúa's books are essential to understanding any aspect of Uruguayan society.

[8] The Catholic Church, displaced from the management of hospitals and schools, was definitely weakened as agent of socialization.

[9] In 1994 the Frente Amplio formed a coalition with other minor electoral forces. It changed its name, incorporating the expression "*Encuentro Progresista*" (Progressive Encounter). Eventually, the name changed again but this expression remains in common use. Here, when Sempol refers to the "progressive project", he is simply using the name of the coalition, which does not imply necessarily that he considers it progressive. In fact, the shift from "leftist" language to a "progressive" one implied a shift to the center.

Amplio. The latter, due to changes to the electoral system in 1996, had to shift to the center to gain sufficient votes to win the presidency (Garcé and Yaffé, 2005; Yaffé, 2005). Note that, additionally, this coalition of parties was formed by former members of the Blanco and the Colorado Parties, Christian-democrats, Communists, Socialists, ex-guerrillas, etc. The Marxist and Catholic legacies that colored its political orientation imposed limitations on how it has addressed sexual diversity issues. However, it is still necessary to acknowledge that the Frente Amplio was the political force that, while recovering "discursively and in fact" the welfare state, finally opened the institutional door to the queer agenda.

The Colorado Party, then, founded the welfare state, and its major faction, Batllismo, laid the groundwork for a (relatively, in the context of Latin America) "equal national gender regime." The main historical electoral and social forces opposing the welfare state (i.e., the Blanco Party, some sectors of the Colorado Party and the Church) were also more conservative in the social realm. In this sense, I think that this specific historical case demands a critical interrogation of some assumptions of what the state means in terms of sexuality in the world's periphery (Wallerstein, 1975). For example, in Alexander (2005), Puar (2007) and Wekker (2006), among others, the state is generally conceived as a "provider of (hetero-normative and sexist) violence". This perspective can be, paradoxically (and despite the authors' intentions), functional to the neoliberal project, especially in Latin America, where it is hard to imagine a serious contestation of capitalism and other oppressive social relations and structures without the state.[10] Briefly: state politics-centered Uruguayan society had, among the forces that built this public sensibility towards the state and the public sphere, the "queerest" discourse/project given the historical and national context. In Uruguay the state is "progressive"; the non-state is regressive or irrelevant. (Of course, I do not mean to imply the absence of other spaces of action; indeed, I am looking precisely at the articulation of state politics with other spaces.)

The "Switzerland of America" (as Uruguay was known) was, however, also a "regressive" discursive entity/project: it did not regret the country's being marked by the "absence" of native people and, in fact, many Uruguayans used to be proud of this characteristic. The extermination of the scant aboriginal population permitted the image of a homogeneous and "manageable" country: “geographically tiny, inhabited by a small population that is more integrated spatially, racially and socially than any other part of Latin America” (Real de Azúa, 1984: 14). It is easy to see the radically racist dimension of this “ideal”.[11]

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[10] Even in Bolivia, where social movements play a huge political role, it is precisely their connection with the state that enables their project of socio-political change (Casen and Ravecca, 2008).

Undoubtedly, the modernization/ disciplinary societal project described in detail by Barrán (1993), pursued between 1860 and 1920, was Eurocentric (and still hetero-sexist and hetero-normative, despite its “progressive” aspects). Not only was it based on the extermination of aboriginals but also on discrimination against Afro-Uruguayans.[12] I think it important to explore the possible connections between the historical “symbolic space” occupied by the “racial(ized) other”, and the current incorporation of queers in Uruguay: in what subtle ways does the past dominate the present (Braudel, 1985)? I will briefly address this issue in section III.[13]

2.1 Politics and social welfare: the interconnection.

Uruguay is part of the so-called Global South (or “periphery”, in Wallersteinean language), having a structurally dependent economy. However, the myth of its being the “Switzerland of America” was built on real foundations. It has been (and still is) the most egalitarian country of the continent, as shown by the Gini Index in Chart 1.

The Uruguayan Human Development Report of 2008 asserts that “Uruguay was and still is a country with relatively high levels of human development for the region. Known as the

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[11] “During an important period of their history, Uruguayans represented their nation as a European island in Latin America. In the same manner, they have been proud of not having an indigenous population, presenting themselves as a society of whites with a homogeneous Eurocentric matrix. A society ‘is’ also what it believes it is, and ours has generally cultivated the myth of our ancestors as exclusively comprised of “men who descended from ships”, slighting and undervaluing other racial and cultural legacies, such as those of the blacks and the Indians” (Caetano, 1993). http://www.rau.edu.uy/mercosur/caetano.htm The translation is mine. “Indian” (“indio”) is not considered a racist or offensive term in Uruguay.

[12] Alfaro (1998) has challenged Barran´s perspective on the “disciplining of society”, by looking at resistance to (and the multi-layered appropriations of) this project. She shows that if the carnival (a traditional “uncivilized” cultural expression) was disciplined, at the same time discipline was “carnivalized” in various ways too.

[13] Despite the contemporary efforts of the most important Uruguayan queer social movement, *Ovejas Negras* (Black Sheep), to address the issue of racism, in my opinion the queer community can be/is being integrated basically via the concept of the “metropolitan” gay (Sinfield, 2000), which fits with the imagined white urban middle class citizen of *Batllismo*. I think that Uruguay exemplifies the effects of a radically paradoxical discourse, as theorized by Foucault (polyvalence of discourse) and Laclau and Mouffe (2004).

American Switzerland, it was characterized by early modernization, the development of a social state advanced for its time, and early democratic consolidation"[14] (Moreira et al, 2008: 129).

To interpret the "conjuncture", I consider it necessary to examine the phenomenon mentioned in this quotation: the highly institutionalized democracy of Uruguay (Mainwaring and Scully: 1995). The report states that the traditional Uruguayan parties built a strong tradition of democratic stability and welfare policies.

There are no differing opinions on this issue: "politics", in the traditional sense, are central to understanding the relatively good human development performance of Uruguay. Considering our understanding of Uruguay as a state politics-centered society, it is difficult to imagine an emancipatory project not "filtered" or enacted by institutional actors. In fact, the way in which this article addresses queerness in present-day Uruguay is a symptom of this fact: Uruguay cannot be understood without a consideration of its political parties.[15]

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[14] "El Uruguay fue y sigue siendo un país de alto desarrollo humano relativo en el concierto de los países de la región. Conocido como la *Suiza de América*, se caracterizó por una modernización temprana, el desarrollo de un Estado social de avanzada para su época y una precoz consolidación democrática". The translation is mine.

[15] I would note another feature: Uruguayan democratic political culture tends to be more leftist than in other countries in Latin America. There is an anecdote about a social meeting in which Ricardo Lagos, the former President of Chile, said: "the Uruguayan right-wing is at the center, and their center is on the left". Even though the statement is simplistic it is not by chance that this important politician perceives the Uruguayan context in this way.

Chart 1. Gini index by country (Showing latest available data)

Rank	Countries	Amount (top to bottom)
#6	Bolivia	60.6
#11	Brazil:	56.7
#15	Mexico	54.6
#16	Colombia	53.8
#17	Chile	53.8
#28	Peru	49.8
#30	Argentina	48.3
#34	Costa Rica	46.5
#37	Uruguay	45.2
#39	United States	45
#70	United Kingdom	36.8
#121	Sweden	25
#122	Denmark	23.2
	Weighted average	40.5

Definition: This index measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country. The index is calculated from the Lorenz curve, in which cumulative family income is plotted against the number of families arranged from the poorest to the rich.

Source: CIA World Factbook, 14 June, 2007

2.2 The fall and the warriors: the 60´s

The violence of the 19th century ended with the military defeat of Aparicio Saravia (Blanco Party) in 1907, with which the Uruguayan state achieved the most important Weberian requirement of statehood. In the following decades, Uruguayan society tended to have a very exalted self-perception. The World Wars allowed certain economic welfare even in the absence of a sustainable planned path for development. The elites, during the so-called period of “second Batllismo” (1942-1958), tended to be more irresponsible with the management of the state, colonizing it via “rings of clientelism”. For instance, there was a spectacular increase in the number of civil servants between 1941 and 1955. Some intellectuals (called the “critical generation” by Rama, 1972) used to say that Uruguay was dreaming in many and problematic ways, and that its waking would be terrible. They were right. Uruguayan multidimensional “exceptionalism” reached its limits in the second half of the 20th century (Filgueira and Filgueira, 1994; Rama, 1989). A traumatic process began, through which the country may still be passing. Symptomatic of this is the fact that the Uruguayan intelligentsia commonly thinks about the country through the notion of “crisis” (Paternain, 2002).

Uruguay's process of industrialization never surpassed the agro-export model and, when the terms of international exchange became disadvantageous, it was affected tremendously. During the 1960's, the social situation became more and more tense, polarized and even agonistic. In the context of the Cold War and political polarization in Latin America, the imperialist foreign policy of the United States became extremely aggressive. Leftist forces were not very powerful in the electoral arena and, most of the time, they were divided (into the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and other groups). A minority, called the Tupamaros, considered la lucha armada (armed struggle) the only possible path to socialism and initiated a guerilla struggle. In response, the national government developed authoritarian security policies and militarized the battle against this guerrilla force. This step strengthened the military, giving to them a political role that they had never undertaken before. In 1971, the legal forces of the left created the Frente Amplio, and in 1972 the guerrilla (which never took the control of any part of the country –it was an "urban guerrilla" force) was definitively defeated. However, the objective of conservative forces and the US was not to defend democracy: they were defending capitalism. So, in 1973 an extremely violent, anti-communist (and anti-leftist in general) dictatorship was established. A huge general strike could not avert this fate.

2.3 The dictatorship (1973-1985): a new global order and (militaristic) hyper-masculinity

Numerous scholarly works have been written about the cruelest regime that Uruguay has known in modern history. However, sex and gender scarcely have been discussed in this scholarship, and –of course− queer views and memories are absolutely absent from the literature. At least some authors have been thinking about the period in a way that goes beyond the most traditional approaches: in terms of its deeply multilayered effects on people's lives. The whole of society was scrutinized, controlled, raped, tortured, and even "disappeared". Private space and the cultural realm were disrupted (Cosse and Markarián, 1996; Gil and Viñar, 1998; Giorgi, 1995). I want to stress an important project called *Memoria para armar* (Memory for assembling) which pulls together the written testimonies of women who experienced the dictatorship in different ways. The collected views are as diverse as the individuals and life itself. Those testimonies are invaluable for producing meaning about the period through the concept of gender and beyond. I would say that they "do theory". One salient aspect of these testimonies is that they reflect the complexity of the context about which they talk. For example, they reveal how military men and leftist militants shared some discursive logic in terms of gender and the body, though the difference between them was enormous.

For the leftist organizations, the body was an instrument of political activity –eventually, it should be sacrificed for “the cause”. The “discourse of the warrior” and of class struggle did not recognize gender in any form. Regarding “homosexuality”, the situation was worse: Marxists and fascists used to employ similar language. However, again, complexity must be acknowledged; if Marxism needs a reorientation in practice and theory to abandon its hyper-masculinist discourse, a simple comparison of militant and military bodies is enough to discover the difference. The leftist militants had beards, long hair, undisciplined bodies (thin, unworked); they represented a kind of “mixed body” in which the “feminization” of 1968 was expressed. The “body fascism” of the dictatorship, on the other hand, was fixated on gendered roles; the dictatorship hysterically “cleaned”, “fixed” and “gendered” bodies.

Spanish colonization, the neocolonial state and empire-building share a tough approach to gender regulation in terms of violent heterosexualization (Alexander, 2007). In the case of Uruguay, the dictatorship not only tortured and killed leftist militants, but imposed a clearly gendered regime in the schools (textbooks, uniforms, hair, and attitude) and developed a repressive discourse explicitly opposed to the relatively open environment of the sixties. If the building of the Republic itself implied the extermination of native people and a public sphere conducted basically by men, the dictatorship tried to impose a discourse in which communism was alien to “our society” and the strong *men*, the military, saved us from that foreign form of *depravation*. Schools were a very sensitive space in this regard. Extremely conservative “teachers” of “Moral and Civic Education” lectured about the appropriate behavior of women, their desirable subordination towards men and the necessary sexual division of duties and rights. Male students had to wear their hair very short, while jeans were prohibited and gendered uniforms imposed. As documented in the shocking report on human rights violations during the dictatorship, entitled Nunca Más (“Never Again”) (SERPAJ, 1989), sexuality also played an important role in torture. Many political prisoners were raped –both women and men. The notion of “breaking” the masculinity of the male militant was always implied. However, it seems that women have been more able to talk about the uses of sexuality in prison. I can only wonder about the deep implications of all of this for thinking through the layers of Uruguayan (homo)sexuality.

In their social project, the military failed in almost every respect imaginable[16]: the dictatorship did not build anything durable; it only destroyed and traumatized. The Uruguayan people rejected the army's Constitutional project in a plebiscite in 1980: though in the grip of fear and terror, still they voted against the military regime. After the democratic transition, the political system seemed to be intact: the same configuration, with similar political forces. Some authors have argued that the democratic transition restored the past more than ushering in a new future. In leftist militant culture the narratives about "the people" against "the military" excluded again *the diversity of the people*. Social battles were masculinized through the notion of "heroes" (political prisoners) who resisted "terrible tortures" with dignity (Sempol, 2008). At least these identities had their language and their narrative: others were without words, silent. Regarding the abuses suffered by queer people during the dictatorship and the transition, see Sempol (2008).

Julio María Sanguinetti, one of the most important contemporary leaders of the Colorado Party, became the President of the transition period (1984-1989). Since then, the Colorado (1994-2004) and Blanco Party (1989-1994) have governed in turn sharing in general terms an increasingly neoliberalized script.

3. Conjuncture: Frente Amplio's first government and the Ovejas Negras.[17] Politics, policies and discourse

Over the period spanning the ideologically polarized sixties, the dictatorship (1973-1984), the transition to democracy (1985-1990), the long neoliberal decade (1990-2004), and the worst financial crisis in the country's history (2002), the Uruguayan polis was deeply eroded –with rising levels of inequality rates being a symptom/metaphor of this process.

The Frente Amplio, an extremely institutionalized coalition composed of center-left and leftist parties and movements, gained votes consistently since 1971: it has governed the capital of the country since 1989, and in 2004 it won the national elections without need of a second ballot.[18] This is a completely unprecedented political situation. Chart 2 shows the electoral evolution of Uruguay from 1971 to 2004 (1973-1984 is the dictatorial period).

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[16] This is one of the differences between the Uruguayan regime and Pinochet's: the latter was as cruel as the Uruguayan dictatorship, but it succeeded in "re-drawing" Chilean society in extremely neoliberal *and* conservative terms.

[17] *Ovejas Negras* (Black Sheep) is the largest queer advocacy group in Uruguay. I consider it unnecessary to explain the serious (political) joke implied in the name.

The Colorado Party has been shifting constantly to the right of the ideological spectrum. The Foro Batllista (Batllista Forum), the least conservative of its fractions in the post-authoritarian period, has lost electoral ground. Recently, the son of the ex-dictator Juan María Bordaberry, the neoliberal and Catholic Pedro Bordaberry, has become an important leader and probably will be the Colorado Party's Presidential candidate for 2009.[19] The Blanco Party has structural links to the Catholic Church, and the majority of its leaders are known to be homophobic and sexist. This means that, in contemporary Uruguay, there is "correspondence" between neoliberalism and social conservatism, which makes the development of a "neoliberal queer discourse" almost impossible −at least in the institutional realm. Both parties have always rejected the queer agenda. In contrast, the Frente Amplio was born with radical purposes (agrarian reform, a wide program of nationalization, etc.) and eventually shifted to the center. Today, we could say that, contrary to neoliberal dogma, it seeks to "bring the state back" (Skocpol) and to recuperate the legacy of Batllismo. The post-1990 crisis of Marxism as a theoretical frame for political action, and the necessity of electoral growth (especially with the new electoral system), have been seen as a window of opportunity for the incorporation of other struggles and subjects, beyond those that are class-centered.

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[18] The constitutional reform of 1996 introduced the ballotage (also known as second ballot or runoff voting): since then, if no party attains 50% of the vote in the first round, there is a second ballot. This allows the "traditional parties" (Blanco and Colorado) to vote together against the Frente Amplio. The reform had the obvious political intention of preventing the latter from winning the presidential elections at the time, and it was successful. However, it had the paradoxical effect of consolidating the left, which, because it never before occupied government, was seen as the only hope for real change. This reform electorally polarized the political system, and, at the "end of the game" (Moreira, 2004), produced a very powerful center-left government.

[19] This article was written before July 28 2009, when the primary elections took place. In fact, Pedro Bordaberry will be the Colorado Party's next presidential candidate. He obtained a historic result: more than 70% of the votes.

Chart 2. Electoral evolution in Uruguay (percentage of votes)

	1971	1984	1989	1994	1999	1999 (2^{nd} Turn)	2004
Colorado Party	40.9	41.2	30.3	32.3	32.8	54.1	10.6
Blanco Party	40.2	35.0	38.9	31.2	22.3	---	36,7
Frente Amplio	18.3	21.3	21.2	30.6	40.1	45.9	51.7
Other parties	0.6	2.5	9.4	5.9	4.8	---	1.0

Source: Moreira and Ravecca (2008)

Thus, Uruguay, one of the oldest democracies in the world, remains a very political place in the traditional sense.[20] With a weak civil society and a strong and institutionalized public space, it is hard to imagine any emancipatory project/process not led or at least co-led by the political parties, especially the center-left Frente Amplio, in which are still concentrated the most progressive Uruguayan political forces. Given this structure of opportunity, the strongest and most politically progressive queer advocacy group, Ovejas Negras, has been working intensively with the new government, operating cunningly within "the not-so-large social space available for civil society in Uruguay" (Sempol, interview). I argue that the characteristics of both the Frente Amplio and Ovejas Negras produced a "positive" articulation between them (not without limits), which has resulted in important shifts at different levels: state discourse on (homo)sexuality, concrete policies, and the empowerment of queer social movements. At this point it is necessary to look more closely at the Ovejas Negras.

Created in 2004, Ovejas Negras is the largest queer advocacy group in the history of Uruguay.[21] Some of its characteristics explain its political and social success. As I will show, it has various strengths and its ideological tendencies facilitated its engagement with the current government.

First of all, Ovejas Negras members are aware of the "precarious site" that the lgttbq agenda occupies in Uruguayan society, so they connect their agenda, theoretically and practically, with other civil society struggles and subjects: afro-Uruguayan organizations, women's movements, the main student union of the Public University and the powerful confederation of labor unions (PIT-CNT).[22] Political parties (especially the Frente Amplio) are involved with all of these spaces. Ovejas Negras navigates different terrains comfortably: non-traditional politics (and some of its members are "apolitical"), though it is carefully framed by its leadership as being "traditionally leftist". The group is well organized into different teams (communication, academic, social agenda, etc.) and it boasts a significant number of active cadre (more than 40) to whom it has provided intellectual and practical training −and some of these cadres are already involved in other political spaces (the Frente Amplio, the public university, etc.).

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[20] Politics and (partisan) political identities and conversations are very present in Uruguayan lives (Caetano, 1987; Caetano, Gallardo and Rilla, 1995; Moreira et al, 2008; Pérez-Antón, 1984). The public sphere concentrates collective narratives (the absence of successful business stories - a very common way of building identity in North America - is salient, for example).

[21] For an exploration of the history of the lgttbq movement in Uruguay, see Sempol (2008).

In the words of one of its members, "another distinctive feature of Ovejas Negras is its capacity to articulate with the political system (with the different sectors of Frente Amplio in particular), and to exploit politically the alliance between the Catholic Church and the Blanco Party [which, I would add, is the current major electoral threat to the Frente Amplio] to push (the left side of) Parliament into advancing the sexual diversity agenda". Taking into account that the Frente Amplio holds more than 50% of the seats in the Legislative Power, if Ovejas Negras were able to enlist the support of an influential Member of Parliament, they would be able to become very strong - and this is exactly what happened.

The Frente Amplio is internally complex and diverse, and there are huge differences among its fractions. Some extremely powerful (leftist) parties such as the Communist Party and the Movimiento de Participación Popular (Movement of Popular Participation) tend to privilege notions such as "class" or "people", and to relegate "postmodern" issues (gender, sexual diversity, youth[23]) to the margins. The "moderate" La Vertiente Artiguista (Artiguist Slope) and the recently created Corriente de Acción y Pensamiento – Libertad, CAP-L (Stream of Action and Thought - Liberty) have a very different perspective on these questions –it is not by chance that there are members of Ovejas Negras in both. The Socialist Party seems to be in the middle: its youth have defended the sexual diversity cause, but this attitude is less "organic" in this case.

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[22] Note that the two last-named important and powerful organizations are typical products of the "leftist" side of Uruguay.

[23] This is shown by Filardo et al (2008), a research project on social and political youth organizations in Uruguay. The study was coordinated by the School of Social Sciences (University of the Republic) and *Cotidiano Mujer* (Everyday Women, a feminist organization).

Then there are influential fractions of the center-left that are not very sympathetic to queers, like the Alianza Progresista (Progressive Alliance). However, if we compare the Frente Amplio as a whole with the traditional parties, it is obvious that: 1. the Frente Amplio has a more "positive" political attitude towards queers; and 2. this positive attitude is concentrated at the center of the ideological spectrum.

Thus, the "moderate" Vertiente Artiguista, and especially one of its senators, Margarita Percovich[24], politically and intellectually respected by all the political parties, has played a central role in the production of pro-queer legislation and public policy. In the words of Diego Sempol: "She takes elements from feminist discourse, from her juridical advisors and from the legal discussions going on in Spain. Ovejas Negras worked with her, and almost all the legal projects were thought through and written together with her. She is always ready to support the cause". This kind of "ideological and practical harmony" between an important part of the Frente Amplio and the lgttbq agenda has been made manifest on several occasions, from policy decisions to symbolic reciprocal gestures.

One of these gestures took place in 2006 when the annual queer parade was sponsored by the Ministry of Public Health.[25] The public, institutional medical discourse stated not only that sexual diversity is not pathological, but that discrimination is unacceptable; indeed, this discourse almost pathologized discrimination. The organizers acknowledged the members of the Frente Amplio who were present that day. At the same time, the motto of the event was *muy uruguayo* ("very Uruguayan") and politics-centered, while challenging the traditional conception of politics: "Without diversity there is no democracy". At the moment of the "turn to the left" in Latin America (Moreira and Ravecca, 2007), and in a context in which the Frente Amplio claims that it is building a "more inclusive democracy", the motto was politically cunning. This entire symbolic scenario represents a "productive" encounter. It is not by chance that, in the survey conducted during the 2005 parade by Ovejas Negras, the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of the Republic, Uruguay), and the Queer Area of the Buenos Aires' University (Argentina), among other institutions, the majority of the participants declared that they had voted for Frente

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[24] http://www.mpercovich.depolitica.com.uy

[25] Ravecca (2006) focuses on the symbolic aspects of this parade.

Amplio in the national elections. (In other important figures, 67% declared they had suffered some form of discrimination and 5% of these had been the target of physical aggression). Undoubtedly, such public/institutional legitimization may be seen as an accomplishment of these parades, which started with some tens of people participating and which today attract more than 7000.

In terms of concrete governmental policy and legislation, in August 2004 (with the Colorado Party still in office) Law Nº 17.817 ("Against racism, xenophobia and discrimination") was approved, creating the Honorary Commission against Racism, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Discrimination –an important step in the production of a safer environment for queers. Other measures have been taken, but let us focus on the best known and most controversial.

Chart 3. For which party did you vote? (2005 Pride Parade)

Frente Amplio	157
Blanco Party	10
Colorado Party	1
None	12
Other party	3
I did not vote	10
Other	13
Total	206

Source: Ovejas Negras (2005)

In December 2007, Uruguay became the first Latin American country to formally acknowledge homosexual couples at the national level. The Ley de Unión Concubinaria (Law of Common-law Unions), which regulates the status of both heterosexual and homosexual couples, was finally approved with the support of the Frente Amplio and some members of the Colorado Party.[26] The Blanco Party maintained its homophobic and sexist discourse on "the family", and

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[26] It defines partnership as "a situation of fact derived by the community of life between two persons –independently of their sex, identity, sexual orientation or preference− who maintain an exclusive, singular, stable and permanent sexual and affective relationship, without being married to each other" ("unión concubinaria" es "la situación de hecho derivada de la comunidad de vida de dos personas −cualquiera sea su sexo, identidad, orientación u opción sexual− que mantienen una relación afectiva de índole sexual, de carácter exclusiva, singular, estable y permanente, sin estar unidas por matrimonio entre sí").

See: http://www.parlamento.gub.uy/repartidos/AccesoRepartidos.asp?Url=/repartidos/camara/d2006090771-00.htm voted against the bill. Antecedent legislation of this kind in the region had been much more partial, generally at the local or provincial level (as in Argentina and Mexico).

This legal step can be seen as the incorporation of gays-lesbians as “desirable national subjects” (Harewood, 2005; Puar, 2007). In fact, Margarita Percovich and the most progressive political voices in Uruguay propose a change in the conception of “family” (“the cells of society”). Gays and lesbians are now protected by the law not only in a general sense, as human beings: now we are acknowledged in our specific condition and identity/orientation/preference (the three categories that appear in the law): in our way of exercising love. The Catholic Church and the Blanco Party imagine a different nation, one built on the basis of “traditional Uruguayan values”. And the conflict between these competing notions of nationhood is harmful. I remember when the highest authority of the Catholic Church in Uruguay, Monsignor Nicolás Cotugno, attacked the lgttbq community, saying that homosexuality was an “aberrant disease”. The responses were as strong as his statement. The leftist weekly Brecha, the most important of its kind in Uruguay, opened a space for members of the intelligentsia (which in general is relatively progressive on these issues) and the lgttbq community to express their fury.

Despite all these achievements and reciprocal acknowledgements, Ovejas Negras is aware of the internal contradictions of the Frente Amplio, which, for example, had a socialist president vetoing the decriminalization of abortion, a measure supported by the majority of Frente Amplio members and common people, and which would have been a great achievement for the women’s movement. I also remember a TV show in which a member of the Movimiento de Participación Popular (the biggest fraction of the Frente Amplio today) employed a frightening, anti-urban, anti-intellectual and hyper-masculinist discourse: for him, rural areas were the “moral reservoir” of the country −in contrast, of course, to the decadent capital. It is quite obvious that this politician would oppose any liberal measure in the social arena (he originally belonged to the Blanco Party). Examples that illustrate the fragility of the sexual diversity agenda are many. This kind of ideological and political “schizophrenia” is understandable, given the careless incorporation of new groups and people into the Frente Amplio that was part of its electoral strategy. As put by Diego Sempol:

> *Liberalism is ready to forget its politics of rights if a conservative alliance with the churches gives it electoral advantage. The majority of the left (Movimiento de Participación Popular) still thinks that the most important conflict is class*

> *struggle and all others must be subordinated to it. The Vertiente Artiguista and the CAP-L have incorporated this issue [sexual diversity] as central, understanding politics from a less traditional perspective, but you know they are still a minority within the Frente Amplio.*

This is why Ovejas Negras does not limit its activities to the institutional arena. They not only work with other civil society groups, they also have internationalized their action. This is an important aspect of their project, both intellectually and practically. The recently created Academic Web LGTTB MERCOSUR[27] is an expression of this. As one of my interviewers told me: "Collaboration with Argentina is very intense. They come to our activities, we participate in theirs. We operate together in MERCOSUR". This articulation has had very concrete effects. I was surprised once when Percovich was talking about her own collaboration with an Argentinean politician and she added: "Moreover, the LGTTB collectives also have their networks in MERCOSUR, and the Ley Concubinaria was drafted with their involvement; they informed us of their problems to see how they could be prevented within a new juridical framework".[28] As Diego Sempol puts it, "international influence is huge. Ideologically and strategically there is a very close relation. There have been articulations within the region since the end of the nineties. Contemporary debates are incorporated in our discussions. The most influential countries are the United States and Spain and, at the local level, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo".

As a sympathizer of Ovejas Negras, I organized a workshop in 2007 on Political Theory and its usefulness for queer political action, but I am not so sure about their incorporation of "theoretical innovations from around the world". However, the academic dimension of Ovejas Negras was concretized with the creation of the Academic Area[29], which organized the first Academic Seminar on Sexual Diversity (Montevideo, September 23, 24 and 25 of 2008) in one of the most important Public Museums of the country and with the Minister of Culture attending.

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[27] The Southern Common Market is a customs union among Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and, since June 2006, Venezuela. There are discussions about its potentials and limitations, but it has been incorporated as a "cultural-political common space" in the discourse of some social and political actors, as in the next quote.

[28] http://www.sentidog.com/article.php?id_news=22913

[29] http://www.elpais.com.uy/08/09/26/pciuda_372002.asp

The most recent action of Ovejas Negras is taking place right now[30]: the "un beso es un beso" ("a kiss is a kiss") campaign launched on March 23 2009. It is the first of its kind in Uruguay.

Using a simplistic definition of "discrimination", Uruguay is characterized as a space without homophobia. This discourse has some foundation in truth: in Uruguay, if you keep your "preference" in the closet, people are very "respectful". Of course, this implies a kind of cruel filter: those who cannot conceal their condition (I am thinking especially of trans-gender people) are in trouble. In fact, Montevideo can be the most violent space imaginable in such cases. If you are a mainstream gay or lesbian, the social contract implies your invisibilization as such: a kind of "don't ask, don't tell" policy for the whole country. The "a kiss is a kiss" campaign challenges this oppressive social arrangement.[31]

3.1 Who is being incorporated? The threats of/to this development

If our imagined future includes freedom and justice, it is clear that the developments in question can be seen as "desirable". They imply an expansion of public space and the empowerment of excluded subjects. They are also changing many individual lives. However, I consider it necessary to problematize this process. If, in civil society, sexual diversity issues are hegemonized / framed (Laclau and Mouffe, 2004) by leftist understandings (the ideological preference of Ovejas Negras leaders), this agenda is being politically appropriated by the most moderate side of the Frente Amplio. To caricaturize: the Communist Party works for "the poor" from a Ministry especially created for that purpose, while the Vertiente Artiguista works on "postmodern" (chic) issues.

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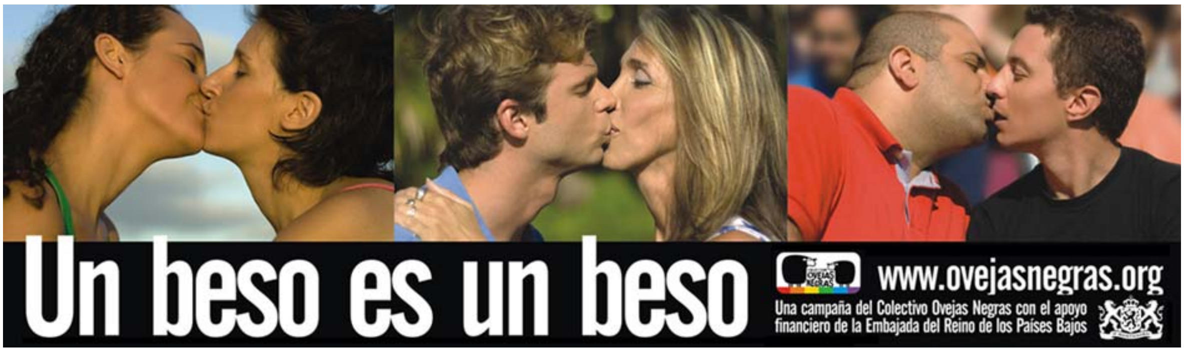
[30] April 2009.

[31] As one of my informants commented, "the campaign is doing well (on TV, radio and bus posters). It tries to promote visibilization and empowerment, naturalizing what we are required to keep in the closet". While finishing this paper, however, I received notification that the private TV Channel 10 refused to broadcast the campaign spot, arguing that it is "too aggressive". This covert act of discrimination has been denounced by different institutions (the Public University, the National Society of Sexology, of course Ovejas Negras, among others). The spot can be seen at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmSpaggU4E8

Image 1. The “A kiss is a kiss” campaign


Un beso es un beso
www.ovejasnegras.org
Una campaña del Colectivo Ovejas Negras con el apoyo
financiero de la Embajada del Reino de los Países Bajos

The “gay citizen” fits very well into the traditional symbolic representation of Uruguay as an exemplary space –though today this image is not so sustainable. The advanced laws for “gays and lesbians” are analogous to those which protected women in the beginning of the 20th century: a kind of (neo)neo-Batllismo allied again with civil society against the barbaric right-wing. I wonder if this reinforces the “metropolitan” representation of queers (Sinfield, 2000), which, even if it is not “neoliberalized” (Alexander, 2005) or nationalist (Puar, 2007), carries exclusion and violence: queerness is appropriated by those in a specific social location –the middle class.

“I think that policies and politics for Uruguayans have always been designed by/for the middle class” (Diego Sempol). However, although the government has developed an enormous set of policies for fighting poverty, these excluded at first trans-people (who, in general, have incomes below the poverty line) because they were considered to be “single men without dependents”. These programs were conceived for “the poor” (presumed to be heterosexual), not for “gays” (presumed to belong to the middle-class). Asked about this possible “reduction” of queerness and class(ist) bias, Sempol’s answer[32] seems to imply that he detects the problem of “normalization” from the side of “society” and not in connection to “who is listening” from the political system. He does not see that "queer rights" are being addressed by the center-left (and, therefore, framed by liberal understandings) as "politically problematic". These dynamics persist despite good intentions and have a lot to do with available political spaces and opportunities.

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[32] “I think that the lesbian-gay was mainstreamed many years ago in certain environments. This is reflected in the fact that in some gay night-clubs they do not admit trans-people or members of popular sectors. I think that the Ovejas Negras project has this problem with its agenda, and seeks as much as possible to work with trans-people to build bridges (…) Our group has a multi-class composition (middle class and popular sectors), but we are trapped by the fact that our audience is the classist and racist gay who lives in night-clubs, thinks that his liberation has already been achieved, or lives his life with completely individualistic strategies and is unwilling to give anything to anyone”.

Ovejas Negras have several initiatives that aim to support the weakest characters in this story, and these initiatives are articulated with social leftist forces that call for the redistribution of wealth. They take part in the 1st of May (Labor Day) mobilizations, the important march for those "disappeared" by the dictatorship, and the main events of the Frente Amplio.

> *Legislative demands respond in this case to different social classes. The partnership and adoption laws are directed toward the upper and middle classes (…) but the bill to change sex registration benefits the trans-population exclusively, all of them poor and marginal in Uruguay*[33].

However, the best known queer victory is associated with the metropolitan gay: the legal recognition of gay couples. It seems that the Uruguayan configuration privileges white middle class men. Thus, the way in which this achievement was presented in the media and several websites ("in Uruguay it is now possible to be declared 'husband and husband'"[34]), and the reactivation of a civilized, cultured and respectful imagined space in reality implies silent/subtle exclusions in terms of class, race and gender: Queerness is reduced to gayness, and "gayness" is not only associated with the middle class (you can be gay if you afford it), but also with a white male body.

If in Toronto the new queer visibility is largely tied to a white male body, in Uruguay those "tough geographies" for black queers (Walcott, 2004) are much tougher (racism in Uruguay is subtle but strong, and members of the Ovejas Negras are aware of this), and also affect mainstream lesbians. In fact, the lgttbq movement has been much more successful than the black and women's movements when it comes to mobilizing people and articulating with the left. Collaboration with these other groups is ongoing and relatively fluid. Therefore, I want to emphasize that I do not mean to suggest that the actions of the Ovejas Negras tend to be exclusive; on the contrary: I think that the incorporation of gayness into the nation is tied to a history and a context, and it cannot escape from these assigned meanings[35].

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[33] The quote continues: "The aim of this law is to promote social integration, to overcome sanitary and educational exclusion, and to increase job opportunities. This project, even though it provokes juridical resistance in some deputies, is more likely to touch the hearts of our leftist politicians who still insist on class struggle and social marginality".

[34] http://blogs.20minutos.es/cruzdelsur/post/2007/12/28/en-uruguay-ya-se-pueden-declarar-marido-y-marido

I want to finish with a simple fact: those political forces that are clearly queer-friendly do not speak the language of deep social transformation. I agree with Sempol regarding the importance of the expansion of the political realm/agenda, but to do so it is not necessary to shift to the center. The rejection of socialism erodes the core (or at least part of it) of an emancipatory project still sustained, for example, by the (homophobic) Communist Party. Paradoxically, if

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[35] **On the struggles and contradictions of a queer diasporic Uruguayan academic subject. Re-presentations, power and radical-self reflection**:

The title of this note may sound pretentious. In fact, it does to me. However, it expresses accurately what I need to say. When I arrived in Toronto some months ago, I was shocked by the fact that Latin America is considered "non-Western" in Canada. We are "other" and the othering of us is something that takes place constantly, even in the most progressive intellectual environments. I used to say that progressive Canadians seem to need an imagined "other" to help, to understand, and to protect in order to reproduce certain relations of power while retaining the status of being "progressive". Something has to be said about positionality here: when Latin Americans talk about the continent as a unity, we acknowledge a common history of colonialism, neoliberalism and oppression. But when the place of enunciation is the "Global North" and there are references to (for example) "Latin American homosexuality", the discursive effect is very different.

"We" (Latin Americans), have to remain in that different symbolic space. I used to be angry with ignorance about Latin America´s diversity, something that does not fit that homogeneous imagined space. The reality of Uruguay and Argentina, for example, does not fit the dominant Canadian representation of Latin America. And it seems to be "boring" or uninteresting to analyze someone who, being similar to you, challenges your self-conception as being a "privileged Westerner". What happens when the other appears similar to you? I wondered many times if the revaluing of supposed non-Western cultures by progressive Canadians operates, at least in some cases, as a device of power. After thinking long about the issue, I arrived at a tentative answer: yes and no. My own defensiveness was implicated in what I was criticizing – a double-edged knife.

Founded on the "absence" of aboriginals, Uruguay is somehow the perfect colonized space, even more so than Canada and the United States, which, because they are rich, are "Western" even though they were colonies too. They still have aboriginal peoples who remind them that "they were there first". In Uruguay there are no aboriginal people (or almost none). They were exterminated both physically and symbolically. Few voices support the memory of the genocide. While Bolivia, after years of popular struggle, recently has approved a new Constitution that acknowledges its multinational character, in Uruguay that would be impossible... Many scholars and common citizens argue that Uruguayans are homogeneous (although from diverse European backgrounds), and that the theme of (post)colonialism (in terms of "race") does not apply. However, the paradox is that this is true because the colonial project was completed in hands of the *criollos* in the 19th century: it was Uruguayans who killed the aboriginal people.

Colonialism is about "race" *and* political economy (Alexander, 2005): in Canada we are not considered "Western" (a shocking surprise for a lot of Uruguayans) and in Spain we are humiliated and attacked (not surprising considering the intense contact with Spain). Our imposed Mother rejects us. Spain-Europe landed in Latin America five hundred years ago, finding gold to extract and people to exploit, and now they close their borders and (again) kill whoever tries to cross them. The US, which trained our military to torture, to disappear and to murder, and which supported the cruellest regime in Uruguayan history, asks us for visas.

Both the queer and the leftist project, even if the articulation between them succeeds, will remain incomplete if they do not address the (neo)colonial and racist dimension of Uruguayan society.

Ovejas Negras has "framed" and "hegemonized" sexual diversity issues in leftist terms, building articulations that are not "natural" or "necessary" between different identities and claims, and if in the Pride March people remember the dark times of the dictatorship and talk about socialism, the incorporation of queerness into the political system is being accomplished by forces that do not fight for the goal without which "complete queerness" is unthinkable: a radical political future beyond exploitation and commodification.

4. Conclusion: Queer or class struggle?

Slavoj Zizek (Butler, Laclau and Zizek: 2003), reproducing the logic of a joke from a Marx Brothers' film, asks: "Postmodernism or class struggle?" and answers: "Yes, please!" Now I am "stealing his theft" in my subtitle above. Is this other articulation possible? Can we answer "Yes, please!" going beyond the intellectual and political structures and limitations of these theoretical times −and even expanding our notion of "Uruguayan identity"?

In any case, if our collective goal is to imagine and build a radical political future, the desirable queer subject should not be neoliberalized or social-democratized −that is, he/she should not be comfortably allocated to the symbolic space owned by a "progressive", professional middle class within a renewed (though incomplete) social-democratic formation. The latter, of course, is politically seductive, since it speaks the language of metropolitan global gay identity (Sinfield, 2000; Alexander, 2005), articulating it with Uruguay's state-centered political culture and Uruguayans' (homogenizing) egalitarian self-image (Filgueira, Garcé, Ramos and Yaffé: 2003; Moreira at all, 2008; Rama, 1989; Real de Azúa, 1984, among others). In addition, in the context of the battle against global capital, and considering the harmful effects of neoliberal policies in the region, social democracy does not look bad –this is understandable!

However, I want to make explicit my concern regarding the fullest implications of the possible configuration of a center−left gay subject within the context of this neo-neo-batllista (poor neo-social democrat) formation: the obliteration of the fight for the queering of socialism – a struggle in which leftist parties and movements remain on the left and do not forget about class struggle, and in which queers are neither imagined as picky (neoliberal) consumers nor as members of a compassionate and cultured progressive middle class. In Uruguay, this implies the encounter of the most radical forces of the Frente Amplio and the queer movements –and the creation of a political discourse in which queer issues do not substitute for class struggle, and in which class struggle (finally!) does not imply homophobia.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Eduardo Canel, Cécile Casen, Andil Gosine, David Murray, Diego Pardo, Rafael Paternain, Diego Sempol and Lucía Tiscornia for their comments; and also Liisa North, for suggesting a more careful editing of the text.

Finally, I am especially grateful to Marshall Beck for his detailed and thoughtful comments, and also for being a great editor.

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