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SOCIAL IMAGINARIES: THE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY AND THE “POLITICS OF THINGS”

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Abstract

The article describes a theoretical approach to both the methodology and the concept of social imaginaries built with the systemic constructive theory. The basic presumptions of this theory are first explained (1). Then, they are outlined within a sociological discussion about “reality” (2). At the same time, a precise concept of social imaginaries would be elaborated (3). Finally, the paper concludes with a brief discussion of the methodology of observation used in this approach and its consequences within the space of politics (4).

Key words: social imaginaries, socio-cybernetics, methodology, social systems theory.

Presentation

Manuel Torres Cubeiro

In 1995 Pintos published a book entitled: *The social imaginaries. The new social construction of reality*¹. In this book he defined social imaginaries as:

“[Social imaginaries are] those collective representations that rule the identification and social integration of social systems, and that made visible the social invisibility (...) Social imaginaries are: (1) spaces of creation where meaningful images allow us access to the interpretation of the social; (2) reading spaces where socially relevant messages are code and decoded; and

(3) schemes that conform and deform the plausibility of social phenomena” (1995: 8)

Before this book in 1995, Pintos had investigated many other topics besides social imaginaries. After thisbook, he centered his investigations mainly on Social Imaginaries. His approach on social imaginaries focussed after 1995 mostly in two lines of work². A first line of investigation can be related

¹Los imaginarios sociales: la nueva construcción de la realidad social, 1995; Sal Terrae

²Pintos developed an intense scholar activity after this book with many publications, projects of investigation and university teaching both in Spain and Central and South America (visiting El Salvador, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Argentina among other countries). See Carretero Pasín, 2011 *El orden social en la postmodernidad. Ideología e imaginario social*, Barcelona: Erasmus; Torres Cubeiro, Manuel “La evolución del concepto de imaginarios sociales en la obra publicada de Juan Luis Pintos de Cea Naharro” *Imagonautas* 2015.

with the foundation of an institution named GCEIS: Spanish acronyms for Compostela's Social Imaginaries Studies group³. In this first line of research Pintos published several works exploring the concept of social imaginaries. In 2014, Pintos offered a sorter definition of social imaginaries:

“Social Imaginaries are schemes that are socially constructed to orientate our perception; to allow our explanation; and, to make possible our intervention in that that different social systems have been defining as reality (2014: 6-14).⁴”

Pintos theoretical investigation on the concept of social imaginaries took him from Habermas theory of communication towards the social systems theory of Niklas Luhmann. Almost every single publication by Pintos included somehow a theoretical reflection on social imaginaries, even if each article or book focused on other specific topics. The scope of his research themes was wide open, from medical sociology, to political power or social media analysis. In one article of 2003, centred on an analysis of a Spanish general election, he reformulated one more time his definition of social imaginaries:

“Social imaginaries, using the distinction relevance / opacity, constitute the form in which social systems auto describe themselves. Doing so, social imaginaries contribute to the form of what is taken by reality by individuals (individuals that constitute the environment of social systems). Individuals can then irritate the social system given birth to more functional responses (2003: 31)”⁵

In a second line of investigation Pintos focussed on the delimitation of a methodological toolbox to ap-

ply the concept of social imaginaries in empirical research. In this sense, during the last encounter of the GCEIS group he entitled his paper as: “Socio-cybernetic analysis of the discourse. The operation of data and the computerized procedures in the investigations on Social imaginaries. A Case”⁶. In this paper searching methodological tools, Pintos defined social imaginaries as:

“a somehow common pool of contents and procedures available to the members of a society; but that somehow could be selected to provide variable meanings in each of their concrete individual use” (2003:24).

Juan Luis Pintos sent me a draft of this article in December 2017⁷. In his email, Juan Luis told me then that he planned to finish the article soon. A couple of months later, already in 2018, Pintos sent me “the final” version we present here translated to English. We include its original form in Spanish as well. Unfortunately, in May 2018, Professor Pintos died in Santiago de Compostela (Spain). His purpose was to edit this paper to later translate it to English. Given that Professor Pintos collaborated actively in the foundation of the Journal *Imagonautas*, we considered *Imagonautas* as the right place to publish this post-mortem work.

Pintos Spanish manuscript style is not an easy read for a non specialist reader, even in Spanish. His theoretical perspective based on the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann makes his style, somehow, not transparent. In this sense, my intention as translator has been double. On the one hand, I have tried to keep the flavour of Pintos' original text reducing to the minimum the translation notes to not interfere with the English reader. These notes have been including between brackets “[O]” in the translation and they are presented as final notes in italics.

³GCEIS was founded with two city headquarters: Santiago de Chile (with Professor Manuel Antonio Baeza as its head) and Santiago de Compostela (headed by Pintos).

⁴Pintos de Cea-Naharro, J.L. y Marticorena, J.R. (2014). “Los imaginarios sociales y la política. Construcción y tratamiento comunicativo de la ‘crisis’ en España” (2007-2014 (comunicación). En III Seminario internacional sobre imaginarios sociales, Ourense. Vigo: Universidade de Vigo.

⁵Pintos de Cea-Naharro, J.L. (2003). “El metacódigo ‘relevancia/ opacidad’ en la construcción sistémica de las realidades”. *Revista de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociológicas* 2(1-2), 21-34. P.24

⁶“Análisis sociocibernético del discurso. La explotación de datos y los procedimientos informatizados en las investigaciones sobre Imaginarios Sociales. Un caso” RIPS: *Revista de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociológicas* USC 2012: 11-2). See Also Torres Cubeiro, Manuel “La evolución del concepto de imaginarios sociales en la obra publicada de Juan Luis Pintos de Cea Naharro” *Imagonautas* 2015.

⁷Pintos's wife, Ana, has authorized this publication and translation. I must also thank Carlos Allones, David Neira, Juan Coca and Juan Labora for their help editing and translating this manuscript.

On the other hand, I have simplified, wherever has been possible, some sentences and altered the order of some paragraphs to facilitate an easier lineal reading of the manuscript in English. I have also included English versions of the mentioned books in the text when this has been possible.

I finish this presentation hoping that a native English reader could appreciate the full richness of a great Spanish author. My final purpose has been to offer the chance to English readers to start to appreciate Pintos sociology of social imaginaries. This was indeed Pintos' meaning writing the paper we present here.

Social Imaginaries: construction of reality and "politics of things"

by Juan Luis Pintos de Cea Naharro,

Translated by Manuel Torres Cubeiro

1. Suppositions of the systemic and socio-cybernetics conception.

Our approach builds on the notion of social "complexity". In this perspective a decision is a selection among possibilities. Our conception utilizes the binary communicative code "opaque vs. relevant" [10] as the distinguishing axis. This axis constitutes the simplification key that produces the emergence of social imaginaries. We present now in large detail this approach from where we will introduce our current definition of social imaginaries; a definition that we consider currently as fully valid and operative both theoretically and methodologically.

The current social system is a functionally differentiated system [1] with subsystems operating inside it: the economic system, the political system, the scientific system, the legal system, the educational system, the religious system, the mass media system among others. These subsystems operate within the contemporary social system that constitutes our society. Such society can only be legitimized by the exercise of its function. This is because the social system's function consists in solving those issues posed by human individuals located in the system's envi-

ronment. The social system is not there for people. It is exactly the opposite: the social system justifies itself producing outputs for people. People irritates the different subsystems through their demands and thus people obtain benefits that meet their expectations. There is not a single instance that could punctually or permanently define these expectations. Nobody is initially legitimized to speak on behalf of all the others (being this the traditional issue presented by the different theories of "salvation"). Thus, isolated people have little chance to obtain a response to their demands, whatever could be their respective position in the system environment.

Therefore, the satisfactory operation of socially differentiated systems requires the establishment of organizations (organization of different levels of performance: public, private, local, global, familiar, professional, etc.). Organizations through which is possible to assess the system's capacity to meet the needs that are required. Organizations are basically defined as those structures that can make collective decisions based on the received information. Organizations act therefore cybernetically, they never act substantively or following immutable principles. No, organizations act anchored within time, given the recurring paths of social processes with which they perform.

Thus, power is not anymore, the main constitutive element of politics. Social order is not constructed by the subordination of one part of society to another according to the model of domination. Social order is constructed by the definition of realities that can be recognized as such realities by those involved. The basic construction mechanism of those realities are the social imaginaries that allow us to perceive something as real through the articulation of the code "relevance / opacity".

With this idea of social imaginaries in mind, our existing societies, those spaces and times where we believe we live, must be thought using the concept of pluricontextuality. We live within pluricontextual societies with high complexity. We live in societies with no vertexes and no centers as reference points that provide sense for all of us. We must face

high complexity issues, but we don't have access to knowledges which would allow us in each moment to situate ourselves in the correct area of the reality. Each functionally differentiated social systems pretends that its code could define the reality for the whole society. But its own difference restricts them reciprocally. It for this very reason that the meta-code "Inclusion / Exclusion" has achieved such exceptional relevance. Each social system must be constantly defining and delimiting the functional operation of its own code; this generates inclusion effects in the programs that the system develops and at the same time effects of exclusion to those not affected. There is just now an inclination to positively value the inclusion effects of partial systems given that governments management shrinks frequently just to identify groups and include them within public policies. But this tendency provokes the inevitable consequence of the exclusion of other groups, given that the generalization of the inclusion factors requires a non-ending extraction of resources. That is the cause of the so-called paradoxical effect of the "Welfare States" within a context where the information is accessible globally. Later years defined as years of "crisis" must have confirmed these bottom social process.

2. Discussion on reality

Each episode of the TV show *The first 48* (ITV 2004-2018) starts with this statement: "These are not actors. There is not script. This is real."⁸ This declaration implies that what we will see during the next 50 minutes is "the truth". The most frequent statements we face while watching the media - mainly stated by political actors and those individuals who define themselves as "journalists" - usually include the dictum⁸: "This is reality".

The philosophical problem of truth has been gradually transformed into the sociological problem of the "construction of reality". William I. Thomas -

one of the pioneers of American sociology - warned us nearly 100 years ago: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences"⁹. However, the discussions that this issue opens in our days have nothing to do with issues related with philosophical ontologies, but more clearly with political problems.

Under predominantly skeptical and nihilistic cognitive frameworks the strong concepts become metaphors; and pragmatic perspectives replace norms. In consequence, inside a cognitive changing medium how the decisions of individuals and the mechanisms that allow us to guide them and interpret them acquire a dominant communicative relevance.

During the last centuries, social analysts have used the concept of "ideology" as an ambiguous umbrella. Its conceptual ambiguity has satisfied the narrowed demands of positivism. Under the notion of ideology, the idea was to build a coherent speech that would describe how members of a social group would assume a narrative that could explain the events, different range of behaviors and attitudes of individuals identified with the group. This speech, the concept of ideology, stood there always before any empirical observation of what would be tokened to be "reality". In this sense, ideology orients any moral judgments within a social group; and ideology offers permanently the ground to the distinction between "us" and the "others".

However, the widespread violence against people that took place in twentieth century forced to rethink the validity of this analytical tool. Such violence showed not only the irrational consequences of ideological confrontations; but also, the social structures that had configured a world of absolute references and unmodifiable credentials.

The often so-called in the West "crisis of values",

⁸*[In English in the original manuscript]. A dictum is a statement of opinion considered acceptable given the authoritativeness of the person WHO pronounced it. Wikipedia.

⁹Thomas & Thomas, 1928, *The Child in America: Behavior problems and programs*, New York: Knopf, pp. 571-572; cited in RK Merton, *Theory and social structure*, p. 419. It was subsequently discussed by Merton in "The Thomas Theorem and the Matthew Effect." Robert K. Merton. *Social Forces*, December 1995, 74 (2): 379-424.

expresses the inadequacy of this concept of ideology. Such crisis began with the so-called crisis of the “Sciences”¹⁰. Then, it was followed by the political crisis (discussions about the validity of democracies). It went on with an almost permanent economic crisis (this is: alternatives, destruction, and reforms of the capitalist system). And it continues with the questioning of artistic and cultural forms (for instance: Klimt, “creative destruction” or the nihilistic heroes). Finally, it culminates with the dominant current forms of skeptical and nihilistic thinking (the so called “postmodernity”).

3. The social imaginaries as builders, communicators, and transformers.

Social Imaginaries (1); Are being (2); Schemes (3); Socially constructed (4); Which guide (5); Our perception (6); Allow (7); Our explanation (8); Enable (9); Our intervention (10); In which different social systems (11); It has been taken as reality (12).

Now, let us analyze each of these twelve elements of our definition [4] of social imaginaries. These twelve elements clarify the meaning we propose for the concept of social imaginaries:

1. **Social imaginaries:** we use the term in plural because societies in which we live are polycontextural. They have no centers or vertices which could produce a single imaginary nor an indisputable truth, neither a universally valid morality.
2. **[They] Are being:** Our definition has not ontological purposes. Our definition outlines evolution (“are”) that is itself transforming, adapting, and renewing.

3. **Schemes:** we use the word schemes [diagram or blueprint] in the sense of the third meaning that this word has in Spanish according to the DRAE [Royal Academy Dictionary of the Spanish Language]: [5] “An idea or concept that someone has about something and that affects his/her behavior”. We do not use this term meaning “representation” (first sense for schema according to the quoted dictionary: DRAE). Rather, we should have in mind the meaning that Kant proposed to “space and time” as “a priori schemes”. From Kant’s perspective space and time are not observable or measurable as part of the observed object, but space and time make it possible to understand objects themselves.

4. **Socially constructed:** Social imaginaries are not built by individuals but by the structures and systems in which these individuals live: their societies. Berger and Luckmann had long stated that our societies had a double nature: both as objective realities (thanks to the social processes of institutionalization and legitimization); but also, as subjective realities (thanks to the social process of internalization)¹¹. Also remember the difference between “social integration” and “systemic integration” that Jürgen Habermas proposed¹².

5. **Which guide:** Social Imaginaries are neither determinant agents nor causes. Social Imaginaries guide. Guiding involves an action linked to the cybernetic perspective. This is: actions that generates control through communication feedback and recursively. Guiding social imaginaries offer the option of modifying the direction of observation. To orientate social imaginaries, give our perspective the chance to establish a fundamental distinction between first-order observation [6] (an observation

¹⁰E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der Wissenschaften und die Europäischen Transzendentale Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologische Philosophie* (1936). [The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy, 1970, Carr, D., trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.]

¹¹Berger, P. & Luckmann, Th., *The Social Construction of Reality*, 1966 (Routledge, 1976).

¹²J. Habermas, *Theory of communicative action*, (1981), p. II, pp. 161-168, 286-287 and 551-554 (the Spanish version published in Taurus, 1987). [Beacon Press: NY 1985]

which tells us what it has been seen observed) and second order observation (an observation which observes the observers)¹³.

6. Our perception: Social Imaginaries don't guide our action neither our thoughts. Social Imaginaries are not responsible of the ideological integration of people within the beliefs of a group. Instead, social imaginaries drive the observer to perceive certain facts and not others. Social Imaginaries focus the gaze on a certain direction and not another. What is specific of social imaginaries is that their own imaginary observational material are not images; social imaginaries work with the distinction "in frame" / "out of frame" [7]. Given that what is "out of frame" cannot be observable, any given analysis in our perspective assumes critics as the starting point: for instance, why do we "perceive" [select] specific things, words, actions, etc. and not others? Social Imaginaries are therefore linked to the empirical world and its mechanisms; and in consequence, social imaginaries are far from the ideas or beliefs of the people. Our theory does not ask about "what people think?"; but rather our theory questions: "what happened so that people adopted certain specific things to believe and not those others?". And this happens in a specific society that generates certain specific mechanisms to decide

on what should be the observability of the observable and what not.¹⁴

7. Allow: Social Imaginaries allow [our explanation] because they help overcoming the ideological coercion that forces us to see things in a specific form; and that compels us to use certain interpretive schemes. For instance [8], when we are force to search for "guiltiness" of someone, somewhere by an ideological ground; when something is seen as undesirable by the majority and then the majority is guided to be able to set that someone as "the guilty" cause of the event.¹⁵

8. Our explanation: Social Imaginaries do not belong to the realm of feelings or emotions; although, they are present and effective in the processes that construct realities. The analysis of these processes of social construction of reality pretends to establish an accessible and rigorous possible explanation. Nevertheless, social imaginaries do not claim themselves as the "unique" explanation, but just as one "plausible" explanation.¹⁶

9. Enable: Given that social imaginaries identify the operational constructive mechanisms of social reality, they can offer a differentiated picture of explanations that set the focus on action; and, on how possibilities become selected.

¹³Cfr. Heinz von Foerster, *Las semillas de la cibernética. Obras escogidas*; Barcelona: Gedisa, 1991 [SEE: Soren Brier and Ranulph Glanville (Editors) 2004 Heinz Von Foerster 1911-2002. Volumen 10 de Cybernetics & Human Knowing: A Journal of Second-Order Cybernetics Auto Poiesis and Cyber-Semiotics; Imprint academic]. And, N. Luhmann, H. Maturana and others, *Beobachter. Konvergenz der Erkenntnistheorien?* (München, Wilhelm Fink, 1992). In Latin America the following books are worth Reading: I. Farías & J. Ossandón (Eds.), *Observando sistemas*, Santiago de Chile, RIL, 2006 and, H. Cadenas, A. Mascareño y A. Urquiza (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann y el legado universalista de su teoría*, Santiago de Chile, RIL, 2012. Closer to systemic perspective: F. Osorio, M. Arnold, S. González López, E. Aguado López (Coordinadores), *La nueva Teoría Social en Hispanoamérica. Introducción a la Teoría de Sistemas Constructivista*, México, UNAEM, 2008.

¹⁴Perception has become an expanded extended field of research. It has been developed in a multidisciplinary approach that has expanded in recent decades. I will just mention the book that opened this field of research by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La fenomenología de la percepción* (1945) [*Phenomenology of Perception* 2013, Routledge]. It places this concern about perception in Husserl's original reflection (there are several translations into Spanish). Much later (2002) it was published in French and Spanish (FCE, 2003) *El mundo de la percepción. Siete conferencias* [*The world of perception. Seven conferences*; 2013, Routledge] adding a radio broadcasted version of the versions offered by Merleau-Ponty in 1948.

¹⁵Galician Language often uses as synonyms these two expressions: "cause" and "guilty". [Galician is one of the languages spoken in the province in which Pintos habituated most of his life].

¹⁶Cfr. Berger & Luckmann: pp. 120-125.

Social imaginaries are not carried away by the wishful thinking that it imagines just desired (or desirable) worlds; no, social imaginaries offer possible worlds.

10. Our intervention: Specific to our theory is its desire of not pretending to be neutral. The conducted investigations do not allow us to establish a continuous framework for making decisions that involve a unique and permanent political position. Our aim is to keep our analysis outside the traditional ideological fields (left, center, right) and the “confessional” areas (artistic, religious, philosophical, etc.). We have “no reason” but “have reasons” to contribute to our based on communication societies. Nevertheless, we intend to keep the communication process out of the show business. Communication always occurs in open and recurrent paths: questions must be asked; and then, we must never be satisfied with the answers¹⁷.

11. In which different social systems: We have no claim of universality with our theory. Rather, we think that projects, methods, techniques, “data mining”, etc. have been produced in different social settings. For example, it has not been possible to apply the Marxist theory of social classes to countries with different cultures and religions; neither, it has been possible to establish a single unique “model” of revolution. Having in mind these theoretical, political and practical failures, the concept of social imaginaries leads us to the conclusion that we have to think in terms of “pluri-universes” (no longer universes), cultural diversity (rather than Multiculturalism); in terms of different “modernities”¹⁸ and different forms of political management (not ideal policies that follow just a single model).

12. It has been taken as reality. This is the core of our theory. The statement, based on experience

and analysis that we cannot count (in our present situation) with that reality as unique. Many years ago, Alfred Schütz worried about this issue and defended a theory of “multiple realities.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, his approach is now seventy years old and needs an update. It is no possible to develop here our current perspective but constitute a major part within the book I have been working on lately.

4. Conclusions. [9]

This theoretical definition of the mechanism of social imaginaries in our societies has been completed with a series of practical proposals that we have developed in recent years in my sociological investigations²⁰. As a summary of the methodology we have used in these investigations, briefly, we propose the following methodological moments or stages:

- a. Select the topic of your research with a clear spatial and temporal delimitation.
- b. Select those “first order observers”²¹ that directly address the research topic (Media: press, television, radio, movies, etc.; discussion groups; big data on the Internet; literature).
- c. Collect the words used to refer to your topic; build a dictionary with those terms.

¹⁹His contributions are included in the first volume of his *Collected Papers* (The Hage, Martinus Nijhoff, 1971) entitled *The Problem of social Reality: “On Multiple Realities”* (1945), “Symbol, Reality and Society” (1955). These and other contributions are accessible on the Amorrortu Spanish Editorial (1995)

²⁰My research has been always about empirical issues open in our society. See my personal web sites: <http://pintos.gceis.net>, or <http://pintos.gceis.net/articulo/escritos-de-juan-luis-pintos-1966-2016-con-referencias-de-publicacion-y-acceso-libre-en>. In this GCEIS web site, articles after the 90’s could also be found <http://gceis.net> [TRANSLATOR NOTE see: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Juan_Luis_Pintos ; <https://usc-es.academia.edu/JuanLuisPintos>]

²¹ About the distinction between “first order observers” and second order observation order see: *La nueva plausibilidad: la observación de segundo orden en Niklas Luhmann*, published in the journal *Anthropos*, nº 173/174 (1997) p. 126-132 [ISSN 1137-3636] <http://idd00qmm.eresmas.net/articulos/nuevaplaul.htm>

¹⁷A rigorous version of communication as a process of building realities can be seen in Niklas Luhmann, *Sistemas sociales* (Mexico: Alianza, 1991), pp. 151-186 [Social Systems; translated By John Bednarz, 1996 Sandford University Press].

¹⁸See J. Beriain, *Modernidades en Disputa* (Anthropos: Madrid, 2005).

- d. Group words according to their relative occurrence in semantic fields. These semantic fields must then be hierarchized by their frequency and amplitude to constitute your “relevance(s)” [10].
- e. What does not appear in the corpus constitutes your “opacities” [10].
- f. Each of the emitters builds what considers “reality” on your topic²² using the distinction of relevance versus opacities [10]; those terms used by the emitter versus those terms not used by the emitter but in use by others.

From this practice of observation is possible to assume a position in society that places politics as just one social system, among others. Politics is not an ultimate determinant of the attitudes of individuals or groups within society. Just the opposite, politics here (which we define as “politics of things”) has a direct link with the decisions that affect all individuals. Politics relates with the relationships between different groups that should be observed from multiple and differentiated perspectives. Such decisions are always revocable and rectifiable. Those decisions change when another perspective (through democratic paths) takes new legitimated decisions²³. The identification of politics with power (access to power and exercise of power) has been one of the biggest mistakes of the last two centuries.

Juan-Luis Pintos

Santiago de Compostela (Spain), December 2017

²²See note 13.

²³This is Niklas Luhmann’s theory developed in his multiple works: *Politische Planung. Aufsätze zur Verwaltung und Politik von Soziologie*, Opladen, Westdeutscher, 4. Aufl., 1994; *Macht* (2, durchgesehene Auflage), Stuttgart, Enke, 1988; *Politische Theorie im Wohlfahrtsstaat*, München, Olzog, 1981; *Staat und Politik. Zur Semantik der Systeme Selbstbeschreibung politischer in Soz.* Aufk. 4, pp. 74-103; *Die Zukunft der Demokratie*, in *Soz.* Aufk. 4, pp. 126-132; *Self-organization and information in the political system*, in *Revista de Occidente*, No. 150 (1993) 41-60; *Die Politik der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2000; *Politische Soziologie*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2010. [SEE: *The Radical Luhmann* (2018) Columbia U.P. by Hans-Georg Moeller for a general introduction to Luhmann in English]

TRANSLATOR NOTES

[1] **Social (differentiated) systems.** In this article Pintos takes by granted the social systems theory by the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann as the foundations of his approach (see: M. Torres 2008 *Luhmann, Bahia: A Coruña*; or in English: Hans-Georg Moeller *Radical Luhmann* (2018) Columbia U.P.). From a social systems perspective, society emerged in human evolution when group complexity increased with population and face-to-face interactions. Society appeared then to rise chances of communicative success when communicational success became highly improbable. From a Luhmann’s sociological point of view, societies are not composed by people, but by communications and systems of communications that work to increase the chances of success. People are in this perspective just the surrounding environment of the system and people irritates the system. Our current society organizes a not human manageable complexity thanks to subsystems that have emerged with a specific function: the educational system to provide a somehow common shared semantics that facilitates communication; the economic system to organize the scarcity of resources; the political system to organize the decision taken in complex conditions; the scientific system and mass media system functions are there to facilitate communication on a “common reality”... Each social subsystem communicates, as tribes’ members communicate with their cultural jargon, with different vocabulary, without even considering or understanding any other coexisting jargons. The educational system, science and the media provide coherence to all the other systems, making more probable the understanding. Appealing to that “taken for granted coherence” is what we do when we talk about society. Nevertheless, that coherence is not a natural product; at least, not like the law of gravity is a natural law. Such “coherence” is a communicatively constructed social product through repetition. Because societies repeated and repeat communicative processes to generate assumptions that make sense possible, that is the function of the evolutive artefact which we call society. What we know about

reality, given its complexity, was and is constantly socially constructed. Pintos perspective is therefore a social constructivism.

[2] **Policontextuality:** According to Luhmann and Pintos, societies provide meaning with a semantic pool constructed by recursive repetitions. This takes places in “contexts” that are polycontextural. Polycontextuality is written with a “r” to mark the difference with the word “contextual”. Polycontextuality describes the situation in which multiple codes with contradictory values are valid simultaneously within a unique society. Contextural represents a fabric composed of fragments of diverse materials integrating a unit. Each social system (economy, education, health...) as an element of the whole society develops components for the social system, but none of those social systems dominates the others. There are no vertices, no center, no periphery, there is contextuRality, polycontexturality. That is the case, Luhmann and Pintos argues, because it is impossible to describe today’s society: society cannot offer itself a description of its complexity, because each social system only sees what it can see from the perspective of the function it develops. Each system observes the others from its function. In the polycontextuality situation, direct understanding cannot be possible. Therefore, given that sociology’s function is to describe society, the contradiction of sociology itself consists in a scientific pursuit to play a role similar to what theology preformed before in less complex communities: the objective of sociology isto construct in our times a scientific account of social complexity. Social imaginaries are in this context, a key notion.

[3] **Code, inclusion / exclusion:** From social system theory, each social system operates using a binary code. The effect of such code is to include and to exclude, but only from the operating perspective of a subsystem. For instance, an economic decision could involve that a medicine is not paid with public money, something that from a political perspective could be a disaster.

[4] **Definitions with 12 elements:** Since his first publications, Pintos has inspired many of his writ-

ing on Marx’s 11 theses about Feuerbach. In this article, Pintos modifies a bit his previous definitions of social imaginaries. First, Pintos offers a full sentence divided in 12 parts. Later, Pintos specifies the meaning of each of the 12 components. See Pintos 1995: *Social Imaginaries: the new social construction of reality* (Los imaginarios sociales: la nueva construcción de la realidad social, 1995; Sal Terrae)

[5] **Scripts / schemas:** Pintos defines social imaginaries as something close to schemas, in a Kantian sense, but not as representations. In many of his publications, Pintos considers the concept of representation as too close to the image or pictures, and from Pintos perspective that is **not** what social imaginaries are.

[6] **1st order observation / 2nd order observation:** Luhmann and Pintos follow the epistemology presented by G. Spencer-Brown in his book, *Laws of form* (1979, NY: Dutton). Spencer-Brown differentiates between an observation and the observation of an observation, the first is named first order observation, and the later second order observation. An observation is the base of any communication when a system divides the universe in two drawing a line, Spencer-Brown states. Once the line is drowned, the system takes one side of the divided universe and generates observations that allow its communication; but the system forgets which side its token becoming its blind point. According to Luhmann and Pintos, societies as social communication systems emerged to simplify complex generalized second order observations.

[7] **Out of frame / in frame:** The distinction comes from the audiovisual field. Pintos considers that social imaginaries simplify reality in social complex environments helping us to focus on something while we forget everything that is out of focus. Thorough the recursive repetition, social imaginaries help us to socially construct reality.

[8] **Mass media:** Social internet media and mass media deliver us with what socially have been constructed as reality. What we know in complex social environments about social reality is provided and

constructed by those media. (See: Luhmann 2007 *The reality of mass media*, Sandford U.P.)

[9] **Methodological conclusion:** Pintos does not conclude his paper with a summary of the main ideas he developed. On the contrary, Pintos ends his article with a summary of the process that an ideal researcher should follow to be able to use his definition of social imaginaries (see: “Análisis sociocibernético del discurso. La explotación de datos y los procedimientos informatizados en las investigaciones sobre Imaginarios Sociales. Un caso” RIPS: *Revista de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociológicas* USC 2012: 11-2). The main idea is to offer a tool that would help the research identify which social imaginaries are in play in the selected topic. Each social imaginary operates with a relevant / not relevant code, so that the methodology offered by Pintos in this conclusion pretends to describe the steps to identify social imaginaries.

[10] **Relevant / non relevant ; visible / non visible ; relevance / opacity:** According to Pintos, each social imaginary operates with a relevant / not relevant code. The assumption is that If a newspaper sees something as relevant and covers it as news, the same newspaper have selected many other news as not relevant. The only chance to detect the no relevance field from a system theory perspective is to compare. We need to observe how another newspaper selected another item as news, while did not select the item selected by the first newspaper. The idea is that the list of terms mentioned here by Pintos, would allow us to observe the emergency of relevant / opaque terms, because those relevant for a second observer became not relevant for the former. Pintos developed a computer program to process relevancies and opacities comparing multiple discourses (see Pintos’ articles quoted before).

IMAGINARIOS SOCIALES: CONSTRUCCION DE REALIDAD Y POLITICA DE LAS COSAS

Resumen

En este artículo se describe un planteamiento teórico del concepto y método de los “Imaginarios sociales” enmarcado en la teoría constructivista sistémica. Se plantean los supuestos básicos de esa teoría (1), se enmarca en la discusión sociológica sobre “la realidad” (2), se elabora una definición precisa del concepto (3) y se concluye con una breve exposición de la metodología de observación y las consecuencias en el terreno de la política (4)

Palabras clave: imaginarios sociales, socio cibernética, metodología, teoría de los sistemas sociales.

Nota introductoria

Manuel Torres Cubeiro

Durante años Juan Luis Pintos había mostrado su interés en traducir su propuesta sobre Imaginarios sociales al inglés, con una clara intención de ofrecer a lectores de habla inglesa su teoría. Con este

propósito en mente Juan Luis se planteó escribir un artículo resumiendo sus ideas como preludio a un libro en el que venía trabajando desde hacía tiempo.

En diciembre de 2017 Juan Luis me envió un boceto de un artículo que planeaba terminar en breve. Habíamos proyectado traducirlo al inglés para publicarlo pronto. Un par de meses después, ya en 2018, Pintos me envió una versión “final” de ese mismo

artículo. Desafortunadamente Juan Luis falleció en mayo de 2018. Dejando sin terminar ni artículo ni la traducción. Una traducción que hubiéramos revisado juntos.

La intención de Juan Luis era editar algo más el artículo y trabajar conjuntamente en su traducción al inglés. Su muerte lo hizo imposible, convirtiendo quizás este artículo en su último escrito sobre imaginarios sociales. Los lectores y colaboradores habituales de esta revista saben que Juan Luis fue uno de sus fundadores. Es por esto por lo que nos parece que esta revista es el medio adecuado para dar a luz este artículo de forma póstuma, traducido al inglés como fue su deseo. Incluimos también el original en castellano.

1. Supuestos de la concepción sistémica y sociocibernética

*Por Juan Luis Pintos de Cea Naharro,
Traducido por Manuel Torres Cubeiro*

Parte del análisis de la “complejidad” y de la decisión como selección de posibilidades. Utiliza como eje diferenciador el código comunicativo “relevancia/opacidad”. Pasemos a desarrollar con cierta amplitud esta perspectiva desde la que propondremos la definición de imaginarios sociales que hoy en día consideramos apropiada teórica y operativamente.

Las sociedades actuales, estos espacios y tiempos caóticos en los que creemos vivir, hay que pensarlas bajo el concepto de “policontextualidad”. Vivimos en sociedades policontextuales de elevada complejidad. Vivimos en sociedades que ya no disponen de centros ni vértices como referencias únicas o totales de sentido para todos. Tenemos que enfrentarnos con situaciones de elevada complejidad y no disponemos de un repertorio de saberes que nos permitan en cada momento situarnos inequívocamente en un determinado ámbito de la realidad. Cada sistema social funcionalmente diferenciado tiene la pretensión de que su código particular puede definir la realidad de toda la sociedad. Pero es su misma diferencia la que los limita recíprocamente. Por eso ha adquirido una

importancia excepcional el metacódigo “Inclusión/Exclusión”. Cada sistema tiene que estar definiendo y delimitando constantemente el ámbito de operación funcional de su código propio; ello produce efectos de inclusión en los programas que desarrolla y de exclusión para los no afectados. Hay una tendencia en la actualidad a valorar positivamente los efectos de inclusión de los sistemas parciales en cuanto que la gestión de los gobiernos se reduce en muchos casos a identificar grupos de sujetos para incluirlos en sus operaciones de políticas públicas. Pero esa tendencia tiene como efecto inevitable el de excluir a otros grupos de las mismas, dado que la generalización de los factores de inclusión requiere una infinita obtención de recursos. De ahí los efectos paradójicos de los denominados “Estados del Bienestar”, en un contexto de globalización de la información. Los años últimos definidos por muchas instancias sociales como de “Crisis” no han hecho más que confirmar estos procesos sociales de fondo.

El sistema social actual, funcionalmente diferenciado (Sistemas económico, político, científico, jurídico, educativo, religioso, mediático, etc.), solo puede legitimarse por el ejercicio de su función que consiste en resolver los problemas planteados por los individuos situados en su entorno. No existen los individuos para beneficio del sistema, sino el sistema se justifica beneficiando a los individuos. Estos son los que irritan a los diferentes subsistemas a través de sus exigencias y obtienen así rendimientos que responden a sus expectativas. No hay ninguna instancia que pueda definir puntual o permanentemente estas expectativas. Nadie está legitimado inicialmente para hablar en nombre de los demás (problemática histórica de la “salvación”). Pero los individuos aislados tienen pocas probabilidades de obtener respuesta a sus propuestas, sea la que sea su posición respectiva en el entorno del sistema.

Por esto el funcionamiento satisfactorio de los sistemas socialmente diferenciados requiere la constitución de organizaciones (de diferentes niveles de actuación, públicos, privados, locales, globales, familiares, profesionales, etc.) a través de las que se pueda evaluar la capacidad de los sistemas de satisfacer las necesidades planteadas. Las organizaciones

se definen básicamente como estructuras capaces de tomar decisiones colectivas en base a las informaciones recibidas. Actúan así cibernéticamente, nunca sustantivamente o en base a principios inmutables, sino siempre vinculadas al tiempo, a través de recorridos recurrentes de los procesos sociales.

El poder ya no es, por tanto, el constitutivo propio de la política. El orden de la sociedad no se construye por la subordinación de una parte de la sociedad a otra según el modelo de la dominación, sino por la definición de realidades que puedan ser reconocidas como tales por los implicados. El mecanismo básico de construcción de esas realidades son los imaginarios sociales que nos permiten percibir algo como real a través de la articulación del código “relevancia / opacidad”.

2. Discusión sobre la realidad

Según la serie televisiva policiaca “Las primeras 48 horas” al principio de cada capítulo se afirma: “These are not actors”, “There is not script”, “This is real”. Es decir que lo que vamos a ver durante 50 minutos es “de verdad”. Las comunicaciones más frecuentes que encontramos en los diferentes medios emitidas principalmente por actores políticos y los diferentes individuos que se presentan como “periodistas”, suelen acompañarse frecuentemente por expresiones, con mayor o menor contundencia, que reclaman para su discurso la calificación de “verdadero” bajo el dictumⁱ: “Esto es realidad”.

Paulatinamente el problema filosófico de la verdad se ha ido transformando en el problema sociológico de la “construcción de la realidad. Ya lo advirtió hace casi 100 años uno de los pioneros de la sociología estadounidense William I. Thomas: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”ⁱⁱ. Los planteamientos y discusiones que esta cuestión suscita en nuestros días no tienen que ver con ontologías filosóficas sino con problemas políticos.

Bajo marcos cognitivos predominantemente escépticos y nihilistas los conceptos fuertes se convier-

ten en metáforas y las perspectivas pragmáticas sustituyen a las normativas. Por eso adquieren una relevancia comunicativa predominante el modo en que se configuran las decisiones de los individuos y aquellos mecanismos que nos permiten orientarlas e interpretarlas en un medio cognitivo cambiante.

Durante los últimos siglos los analistas sociales se sirvieron de un concepto cuya ambigüedad permitía satisfacer las reducidas exigencias propias del pensamiento positivista: el concepto de “Ideología”. Se trataba de construir un discurso coherente que fuera asumido por los miembros de un grupo como forma de explicar los diferentes acontecimientos, conductas y actitudes de los individuos identificados con el grupo. Este discurso era previo a cualquier observación empírica de lo que se tuviera por “realidad”. Orientaba todos los juicios morales del grupo y fundamentaba permanentemente la distinción entre “nosotros” y los “otros”.

Pero la violencia generalizada contra las personas que tuvo lugar en el siglo XX obligó a repensar la validez de ese instrumento de análisis. Sacó a la luz las consecuencias irracionales de los enfrentamientos ideológicos y las estructuras configuradas por un mundo de referencias absolutas, credenciales e inamovibles.

Lo que se ha denominado frecuentemente en Occidente “Crisis de valores” es la forma de expresarse la insuficiencia de ese concepto de ideología. Comienza por las “Ciencias”ⁱⁱⁱ, sigue por la política (discusiones sobre la validez de las democracias), pasa, permanentemente, por la economía (alternativas, destrucción y reformas del sistema capitalista), cuestiona las formas artísticas y culturales (Klimt: “destrucción creadora”, héroes nihilistas), y culmina en las formas dominantes actuales de pensamiento escéptico y nihilista (“posmodernidad”).

3. Imaginarios como constructores, comunicadores, transformadores

Los Imaginarios sociales [1], Están siendo [2], Esquemas [3], Construidos socialmente [4], Que orientan [5], Nuestra percepción [6], Permiten [7], Nuestra

explicación [8], Hacen posible [9], Nuestra intervención [10], En lo que en diferentes sistemas sociales [11], Sea tenido como realidad [12]>>

Veamos ahora cada uno de esos elementos de la definición ampliando el significado que nosotros proponemos:

1. **Los imaginarios sociales:** en plural, porque las sociedades en las que vivimos son policon-texturales no tienen centros ni vértices que produzcan un imaginario único ni una verdad indiscutible, ni una moral universalmente válida.
2. **Están siendo:** no proponemos una definición ontológica (“son”) sino una evolutiva que va transformándose, adaptándose y renovándose.
3. **Esquemas:** en el sentido de la tercera acepción del DRAE: “Idea o concepto que alguien tiene de algo y que condiciona su comportamiento”, pero no en el de “representación” (acepción 1 del DRAE). Más bien habría que pensar en la propuesta kantiana del espacio y el tiempo como esquemas a priori. No son observables ni medibles como un objeto, pero hacen posible entender muchos objetos.
4. **Construidos socialmente:** no construidos por los sujetos sino por las estructuras y sistemas en que esos sujetos habitan. Habría que recordar a Berger & Luckmann y sus ideas sobre las sociedades como realidades objetivas (institucionalización y legitimación) y como realidades subjetivas (internalización)^{iv}; y también la diferencia que propone Jürgen Habermas entre “integración social” e “integración sistémica”^v.
5. **Que orientan:** no son determinantes ni causantes. Orientar es una acción vinculada a la perspectiva cibernética de producir un control a través de la retroalimentación comunicativa y la recursividad. Orientar es la posibilidad de variar el rumbo de la observación y de distinguir entre la observación de primer orden (la que nos cuenta lo que ve) y la de segundo orden (la que observa a los observadores)^{vi}.
6. **Nuestra percepción:** no nuestra acción ni nuestro pensamiento. No tiene que ver con una integración ideológica en las creencias de un grupo, sino que lleva al observador a percibir determinados hechos y no otros, a enfocar la mirada hacia una determinada dirección y no en otra. Lo que es peculiar de los imaginarios es que su material propio de observación no son las imágenes sino la distinción “dentro de campo” “fuera de campo”. Como lo que está fuera de campo no es observable el análisis de los imaginarios asume como punto de partida la crítica de lo observable: ¿por qué percibimos determinadas cosas, palabras, acciones, etc. y otras no? Los imaginarios se vinculan a lo empírico y sus mecanismos, no a las ideas o creencias de la gente. No pregunta ¿qué se cree la gente?, sino ¿qué sucede para que la gente se crea determinadas cosas? Y eso sucede en una sociedad específica que produce ciertos mecanismos que deciden acerca de la observabilidad de lo observable^{vii}.
7. **Permiten:** en el sentido de superar la coacción ideológica que obliga a ver las cosas de una determinada manera y a emplear ciertos esquemas interpretativos (como por ejemplo buscar la “culpabilidad” de alguien en algún hecho no deseable por la mayoría y poderlo establecer como causa atribuida del suceso)^{viii}.
8. **Nuestra explicación:** no pertenecen los imaginarios al campo de los sentimientos ni de las emociones, aunque sean elementos muy presentes y eficaces en los procesos de construcción de realidades. El análisis de esos procesos trata de establecer de un modo accesible y riguroso una explicación posible. Si bien no tienen la pretensión de proponer la explicación como “única”, sino como “plausible”^{ix}.
9. **Hacen posible:** al establecer las operaciones de los mecanismos constructivos pueden ofrecer un panorama diferenciado de explicaciones que sitúen el campo de la acción en el de la selección de posibilidades. No se dejan llevar por volun-

tarismos capaces de imaginar sólo mundos deseados (o deseables) sino mundos posibles.

10. Nuestra intervención: específico de nuestra teoría es su voluntad de no pretender ser neutral. Las investigaciones realizadas no nos permiten establecer un marco continuo de toma de decisiones que implicarían una única y permanente posición política. Nuestra pretensión es mantener nuestros análisis fuera de los ámbitos ideológicos tradicionales (izquierda, centro, derecha) y de los ámbitos “confesionales” (artísticos, religiosos, filosóficos, etc.). Pensamos no tener “la razón” pero sí “tener razones” que aportar en las sociedades basadas en la comunicación. Pero pretendemos mantener el proceso comunicativo fuera de los espectáculos. La comunicación se produce siempre en trayectorias abiertas y recurrentes: hay que plantear preguntas y no contentarse con las respuestas^x.

11. En lo que en diferentes sistemas sociales: No tenemos ninguna pretensión de universalidad de nuestra teoría. Más bien pensamos que proyectos, métodos, técnicas, “data mining”, etc. se producen en configuraciones sociales distintas. No ha sido posible, por ejemplo, aplicar la teoría marxista de las clases sociales a países de distintas culturas o religiones, ni tampoco establecer un “modelo” único de revolución. Tener en cuenta esos fracasos teóricos, políticos y prácticos nos lleva a la conclusión de que tenemos que pensar en términos de “pluriversos” (ya no universos), de diversidad cultural (y no de multiculturalidad), de diferentes “modernidades”^{xi} y diferentes formas de gestión política (no en políticas ideales que siguen un modelo único).

12. Sea tenido como realidad: este es el eje central de nuestra teoría. La afirmación, basada en la experiencia y en el análisis de que no podemos contar (en nuestra situación presente) con que la realidad sea única. Ya hace muchos años Alfred Schütz se preocupó de esta cuestión y planteó una teoría de “realidades múltiples”^{xii}, pero han pasado ya setenta años y necesita actualizaciones. No

es posible desarrollar aquí nuestras perspectivas actuales, pero constituirán una parte principal del libro que estamos preparando.

4. Conclusiones

Esta definición teórica del mecanismo de los imaginarios sociales en nuestras sociedades se completa con una serie de propuestas prácticas que hemos desarrollado en los últimos años en nuestras investigaciones sociológicas^{xiii}. Como resumen de la metodología empleada en esas investigaciones, y muy brevemente, proponemos los siguientes momentos metodológicos:

- Seleccionar el tema a investigar y delimitarlo espacial y temporalmente;
- Seleccionar los “observadores de primer orden”^{xiv} (medios: prensa, televisión, radio, películas, etc.; grupos de discusión; big data en internet; literatura) que abordan directamente el tema a investigar;
- Recoger las palabras con las que se refieren el tema a investigar; construir un diccionario;
- A partir de la frecuencia de aparición, agruparlas en campos semánticos. Estos, jerarquizados por su frecuencia y amplitud constituyen las “Relevancias”;
- Lo que no aparece en el corpus constituyen las “Opacidades”;
- Cada uno de los emisores construye así lo que considera “la realidad” del tema investigado^{xv}.

Desde la práctica de esta observación es posible asumir una posición en la sociedad que sitúe la política como un ámbito más del sistema social. No como un determinante último de las actitudes de los individuos o los grupos de pertenencia. Por el contrario, la política -que aquí definimos como “la política de las cosas”- tiene que ver directamente con la toma de decisiones que afectan al conjunto de los individuos y las relaciones entre distintos grupos y que necesariamente se tienen que tomar desde perspectivas

diferenciadas y múltiples. Estas decisiones son siempre revocables y rectificables en el tiempo cuando otra perspectiva asume -a través de procedimientos democráticos- el ejercicio de la capacidad legítima de tomar esas decisiones^{xvi}. La identificación de la política con el poder (el acceso y el ejercicio) ha sido uno de los grandes errores de los dos pasados siglos.

Juan-Luis Pintos

Santiago de Compostela (España), diciembre de 2017

Endnotes

ⁱA dictum is a statement of opinion considered authoritative (although not binding), given the recognized authoritativeness of the person who pronounced it.[en.Wikipedia]

ⁱⁱThomas & Thomas, 1928, *The child in America: Behavior problems and programs*, New York: Knopf, pp. 571-572, Citado en R.K. Merton, *Teoría y estructura sociales*, p. 419. Fue comentado posteriormente por Merton en: "The Thomas Theorem and the Matthew Effect." Robert K. Merton. *Social Forces*, December 1995, 74(2):379-424.

ⁱⁱⁱE. Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die Transzendentale Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologische Philosophie* (1936)

^{iv}Berger, P. & Luckmann, Th., *La construcción social de la realidad*, 1966 (Amorrortu, 1976).

^vJ. Habermas, *Teoría de la acción comunicativa*, (1981), t. II, pp. 161-168, 286-287 y 551-554 (de la versión española publicada en Taurus, 1987)

^{vi}Cfr. Heinz von Foerster, *Las semillas de la cibernética*. Obras escogidas, Gedisa, 1991. Y también, N. Luhmann, H. Maturana y otros, *Beobachter. Konvergenz der Erkenntnistheorien?*, München, Wilhelm Fink, 1992. En la investigación de ámbito hispanoamericano hay que señalar, I. Fariás & J. Ossandón (Eds.), *Observando sistemas*, Santiago de Chile, RIL, 2006 y más recientemente, H. Cadenas, A. Mascareño y A. Urquiza (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann y el legado universalista de su teoría*, Santiago de Chile, RIL, 2012. En una perspectiva explicativa del actual constructivismo sistémico hay que tener en cuenta: F. Osorio, M. Arnold, S. González López, E. Aguado López (Coordinadores), *La nueva Teoría Social en Hispanoamérica*. Introducción a la Teoría de Sistemas Constructivista, México, UNAEM, 2008.

^{vii}El campo de la percepción es muy extenso y se ha desarrollado y ampliado multidisciplinariamente en las últimas décadas, por lo que no podemos ahora dar cuenta del mismo. Sólo mencionar que la obra que abre esta investigación es la de Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La fenomenología de la percepción* (1945) que ubica esta preocupación en la reflexión husserliana (hay varias traducciones al español). Muy posteriormente (2002) se publicaron en

francés y en español (FCE, 2003) *El mundo de la percepción*. Siete conferencias, que recogen una versión radiofónica del tema que el mismo Merleau expuso en 1948.

^{viii}En gallego se suele utilizar la expresión "por culpa de..." en vez de "a causa de..."

^{ix}Cfr. Berger & Luckmann, o.c. pp. 120-125.

^xUna versión rigurosa de la comunicación como proceso de construcción de realidades puede verse en Niklas Luhmann, *Sistemas sociales* (México, Alianza, 1991), pp. 151-186.

^{xi}Ver J. Beriain, *Modernidades en disputa* (Anthropos, 2005).

^{xii}Sus contribuciones están recogidas en el primer volumen de sus *Collected Papers* (The Hage, Martinus Nijhoff, 1971) titulado *The Problem of Social Reality: "On multiple realities"* (1945), "Symbol, Reality and Society" (1955). Estas y otras contribuciones están accesibles en español en la editorial Amorrortu (1995)

^{xiii}Las investigaciones se han referido siempre a cuestiones empíricas correspondientes a alguno de los problemas planteados en nuestra sociedad. Pueden verse la mayor parte de los resultados en mi página web [<http://pintos.gceis.net>], en el vínculo: <http://pintos.gceis.net/articulo/escritos-de-juan-luis-pintos-1966-2016-conferencias-de-publicacion-y-acceso-libre-en>. Especialmente los publicados a partir de los años 90. También se pueden encontrar referencias interesantes en la página del Grupo Compostela de estudios sobre imaginarios sociales [<http://gceis.net>]. [NOTA EDITOR: ver: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Juan_Luis_Pintos y <https://usc-es.academia.edu/JuanLuisPintos>]

^{xiv}Sobre la distinción entre "observadores de primer orden" y la observación de segundo orden puede verse mi contribución: *La nueva plausibilidad: La observación de segundo orden* en Niklas Luhmann, publicado en la revista *Anthropos*, nº 173/174 (1997) pág. 126-132 [ISSN 1137-3636] <http://idd00qmm.eresmas.net/articulos/nuevaplaui.htm>

^{xv}Pueden verse ejemplos concretos de estos procedimientos en los artículos citados en la nota 13.

^{xvi}Esta es la perspectiva que elaboró Niklas Luhmann en múltiples obras. Cito sólo las más relevantes: *Politische Planung. Aufsätze zur Soziologie von Politik und Verwaltung*, Opladen, Westdeutscher, 4. Aufl., 1994, 256 p.; *Macht* (2., durchgesehene Auflage), Stuttgart, Enke, 1988, 156 p.; *Politische Theorie im Wohlfahrtsstaat*, München, Olzog, 1981, 158 p.; *Staat und Politik. Zur Semantik der Selbstbeschreibung politischer Systeme*, en *Soz. Aufk.* 4, pp. 74-103; *Die Zukunft der Demokratie*, en *Soz. Aufk.* 4, pp. 126-132; *Autoorganización e información en el sistema político*, en *REVISTA DE OCCIDENTE*, nº 150 (1993) 41-60; *Die Politik der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2000, 444 p.; *Politische Soziologie*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2010, 499 p.

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