'The Winds of Change:' Cosmopolitanism and Geopolitical Identities in the Context of ICOGRADA

Dora Souza Dias
University of Brighton

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Drawing on the studies of the sociology of organisations, social psychology, debates on cosmopolitanism and postcolonial theory, this paper aims to address the strategies adopted by individuals from so-called 'underdeveloped' nations–in particular focusing on Latin American graphic designers–that participated as members of the Executive Board of the international Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA) making a parallel with their cosmopolitan identities, while also contextualising the impact changes brought about by technological changes, economical ones and globalisation had in the activities of Icograda.

Social categories, self-identification and geopolitical identities

Since its foundation, in 1963, the International Council of Graphic Design Associations—ICOGRADA for short—has assembled many representatives with varied backgrounds in its Executive Board. In its first decade of activity, however, the meaning of 'international' was closer to 'inter-nations' than to 'global.' For instance, the first Board included only European representatives while the Executives Boards from 1966–1968 and 1968–1970 had mostly European representatives, with the exception of one member from the US. It was not until the late 1990s that the Council's governance became more plural in its composition, having members based in all continents. (ICOGRADA, 1963–2003)

However, it is important to highlight that, in this paper, all processes of identification of an individual with a wider group or social category are seen as constructed 'on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation' (HALL, 1996: 2). As defined by Hogg and Terry (2001), 'a social category (e.g., nationality, political affiliation, organization, work group) within which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category – a self-definition that is a part of the self-concept.' Moreover, the constitution of a self-concept in a social context, that is, a social identity is seen here as an act of power (LACLAU, 1990; REICHER, 2004) in which the process of self-categorisation helps an individual to define its positionality. '[S]elf-categories shape social action' and flexibility is achieved through the categories to which one belongs, the others with whom one compare themselves, and the dimensions along which such comparisons occur (REICHER, 2004: 921).

Even in the context of an international organisation such as ICOGRADA, whose Executive Council members can be considered cosmopolitan, geopolitical identities play a part in the social relations established. They are part of the construction of diverse 'cosmopolitanisms' (POLLOCK at al., 2000) in which are enmeshed the negotiation of geopolitical representations as well as the understanding of graphic design expertise.

The place held by geopolitical identities inside the Council, particularly in relation to the identities of Executive Board members, becomes clearer when analysing minutes of General Assemblies held by the Council (1963–2003), as well as the main means of communication between the Executive Board and its members: *Icograda New Bulletins* (1963–1981) and *Icograda BoardMessage* (1982–2003).

In order to explore how geopolitical identities might reflect on relationships inside the Council, this paper explores the case of two Executive Board members connected to Latin America. For that, it is necessary to understand the wider context of the Cold War as well as its reflection on networks and intergroup relations inside ICOGRADA. Organisations, such as ICOGRADA, 'are internally structured groups that are located in complex networks of intergroup relations characterized by power, status, and prestige differentials' (HOGG; TERRY, 2000). And '[w]ithin large, complex organizations, [...] extraorganizational social categories [...] also play themselves out in organizational settings' (BRICKSON; BREWER, 2001).

During the Cold War period, the stigma of the 'Third World' as 'underdeveloped' affects the positionality of individuals by reflecting the same stigmas on their identity. Particularly in relation to a specific concept of graphic design, seen by some members of ICOGRADA as having its higher form of knowledge in Europe. Which meant that, from the Council's perspective, graphic design practice elsewhere was 'disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated,' therefore being a 'subjugated knowledge' (FOUCAULT, 1972: 82; SPIVAK, 1994: 76), and that ICOGRADA 'might help [Latin American designers] to help themselves' (KNEEBONE, 1979: n.p.).

In the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the changes brought about by the process of globalisation, there was a significant shift in the Council's way to address cultural, economical and geopolitical differences. The shift in the way Latin Americans position themselves has also to be accounted for.

After the end of the Cold War, the stigmas associated with the term 'Third World' were still alive. However, even as the USA established itself as a superpower, the changes in Latin American economic policies and agreements from 1989 represented a significant change. In particular with the establishment of a South American trade bloc in 1991, the *Mercosul* (translates to Southern Common Market in English). Even though many Latin American countries do not integrate the economic bloc, the fact that some of them managed to ally themselves and break free from major economic ties with the USA and Europe by establish their own regional treaties, created a sense of power against imperialism and, therefore, opened a new path of economic independence as well as a sense of less inequality in terms of international trade (Martins et al., 2006). And in the context of international relations of Latin American countries, this change affected the perception of the region and of its representatives in international settings.

The intention here is not to seek for bipolar oppositions, but rather explore how the performativity of geopolitical social categories can be flexible as well as an act of power. In other words, how the study of cases of ICOGRADA Executive Board members offers ways to analyse geopolitical identities as projects that create a certain version of them in the context of the Council.

According to social psychologist Stephen Reicher (2004:931), in order to understand the actions of members of subordinate groups is necessary to consider whether these members will act individually or collectively, either choosing a strategy of 'exit,' if 'the boundaries between [social] categories are seen as permeable; or of 'voice' when boundaries are seen as impermeable. However, in the context of a Council with cosmopolitan ideals, the strategies adopted might not be as extreme, since there is the possibility to accumulate geopolitical identities.

In ICOGRADA, it is not only a matter of which association, which country, region or even continent an Executive Board member was representing, but rather of the subtle indications of which identities are chosen as 'better' options in a defined situation or context; whereby, some identities are silenced, while others are opportunely collected.

Case study: Jorge Frascara

The participation of Jorge Frascara in the Council's Executive Board officially began when, in 1979, he was elected vice president. Frascara first came into contact with the Council when he spent the academic year 1973/74 in London researching graphic design education with a small grant from the British Council (GDC, s.d.). Between 1974 and 1979, he participated in a series of activities related to ICOGRADA and, in August 1976, he emigrated to Canada to become Associate Professor at the University of Alberta. In 1979, when Frascara officially became a member of the Executive Board he was already established in Canada.

The comparison of two of his biographies, one from the Chicago Congress of 1978 and the one of his candidacy as Vice President to the Executive Board in 1979, shed light on the strategies adopted in processes of social identification and self-categorisation.

In the Chicago Congress in 1978:

> Jorge Frascara is a faculty member at the University of Alberta in Canada. Prior to this he was Head of Graphic Design at the Escuela Panamericana de Arte, Buenos Aires. He has been invited to lecture at various universities, including the Universidad de la Plata, Universidad de Guatemala and the University of Surrey, England. [...] Jorge Frascara has done extensive research on art teaching in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, England, Colombia and Guatemala [...] (ICOGRADA, 1978: n.p.).

In his biographical details as candidate as ICOGRADA Vice-President:

> Argentinian national resident in Canada. Assistant Professor Department of Art and Design, University of Alberta, Edmonton. [...] Has lectured at various universities both in Argentina and Canada. [...] Founder and Vice-President of the Argentinian Association of Graphic Designers [...] (ICOGRADA, 1979: n.p.).

While in the biography of 1978, the information about Frascara's nationality is absent or silenced – which was not uncommon if compared to other biographies, specially in the case of émigrés–, the biographical note from 1979 starts with this information, followed by the information that he was living and teaching in Canada. As an émigré, Frascara could choose how to identify himself and, even though he was based in Canada, which meant he was considered in official documents as a Canadian representative, it was his choice to highlight that he was associated with a 'Third World' nation as well as with a 'First World' one. Some years later, in 1983, Frascara would use a biography very similar to the one from 1978, in the biographical details as candidate to be President Elected of the Council, while keeping the

information related to his 'nationalities.' The phrase 'Argentinian born now a Canadian citizen' (ICOGRADA, 1983) would remain in biographical notes up to the end of his tenure (ICOGRADA, 1987).

This suggests that from 1979 onwards, Frascara does not attempt to camouflage his connection to Latin America; on the contrary, his biography seems to express an attempt to harmonise social categories by merging both strategies described by Reicher. By affirming to have two nationalities, using the strategy of 'exit' by connecting himself to more than one place and also the strategy of 'voice' by being able to represent more places, Frascara is not only able to detach himself from 'Third World' stigmas, but also make his cosmopolitan identity more evident.

Frascara's approach to his biographical notes reflect the many layers of his identity as an émigré and as a cosmopolitan individual navigating between different cultures, while also showing that he chooses to reinforce his connection to Argentina—and therefore with Latin America—as well as Canada—and the Anglo America. Considering that he emigrated to Canada, he could have chosen to only highlight his role as a representative of a Canadian association and camouflage his connection to Latin America. Instead, Frascara chose to be the 'voice' and the sole representative of not only Argentina, but of the whole Latin America.

Nevertheless, this also meant that the way in which other Executive Board members perceived him might have been also informed by preconceptions on Latin American graphic design practice at the time. The book *Who's Who in Graphic Art* edited by Walter Amstutz in 1982 offers a sense of what was the perception of Latin American practice promoted internationally as well as what was claimed to be 'a world review of the graphic arts' (AMSTUTZ, 1982: 11). Published in a multilingual edition – English, French and German –, the book collected not only biographies and works of professional designers assembled by nation (even though most of them could be said to have multiple nationalities), but also accounts of the state of contemporary practice of graphic design in each of the nations represented in the volume.

In this book, the Latin American accounts present a mixture of a sense of backwardness (ESCOREL, 1982), the need for a practice that reflects local identity (GRASS, 1982), a frustration in relation to foreign frames of reference of design practice, a celebration of indigenous pre-Columbian graphics (CONDE, 1982; DIETERICH, 1982), as well as a sense of achievement (BLUM, 1982). Even though these accounts are mostly individual views of national practices that might not be necessarily historically accurate, they portray contemporary perceptions of graphic design practice, as snapshots of particular perspectives on national practices at the time. And, as such, these contemporary accounts illustrate and contextualise Frascara's remarks as well as his role as a representative of Latin America; while also qualifying his background and, therefore, adding layers to his identity in international settings and inside the Council.

The sum of 'First' and the 'Third World' identities play a significant role, as they allowed Frascara to navigate with more ease inside ICOGRADA without having to 'defend' himself, or his ability to speak English for instance – as it happened later with José Korn Bruzzone. Instead, Frascara had a privileged view that of a more informed participant with first hand knowledge about both 'Worlds.'

Case study: José Korn Bruzzone

Differently from Jorge Frascara, the positionality of José Korn Bruzzone was completely and exclusively connected to Latin America. Based in Chile and President of a Chilean Association, Bruzzone was not only born in the region but he also represented the region in all instances and international settings. For the first time, the Council elected a President that would preside it from the Southern Hemisphere. Hence, Bruzzone adopted the strategy of 'voice,' not only of Latin America but also of other countries of the 'Third World,' as a strategy for strengthening his position, not necessarily because it was his only option.

During his mandate as vice president, Bruzzone focused on developing Latin American connections. He organised the first Latin American Symposium of Education in Santiago del Chile in 1993 (ICOGRADA, 1993), and was also involved in the organisation of a second symposium held in 1995 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, that gathered more than 200 delegates (ICOGRADA, 1993). Through these symposia and the constant correspondence with Latin American designers, Bruzzone reinforced his position as representative of Latin America.

As a candidate for President Elected in 1993, he was also in tune with the needs of ICOGRADA. During this General Assembly, he advocated for ICOGRADA by 'using' his position as a Latin American representative:

> Jose Korn Bruzzone, CDP Chile said that *countries in Latin America and many third world countries* believed in the importance of graphic design and that through ICOGRADA, graphic design could be developed to its *full potential.* If these countries were willing to pay the £2.50 per capita fee, as he knew they were, then *he wondered why developed countries who were very much wealthier were so reluctant to do so. His statement received prolonged applause* (ICOGRADA, 1993: 12).

In this quote, it becomes clear how

Bruzzone engaged in collective action, using the strategy of 'voice,' by allying himself not only with fellow Latin Americans but also with many 'Third World' nations. It could be also said that his words hid an attribution of guilt, bringing to light a sense of shame to the associations from 'developed' countries that were 'very much wealthier' but also reluctant to accept an increase to which the 'Third World' representatives agreed to. The binary division between 'centre and periphery' is brought to the fore by Bruzzone's words, not only as a tool to achieve what was in ICOGRADA's interest, but also to question the position of 'developed' nations as backward, not progressive enough to acknowledge the efforts needed to achieve the 'full potential' of ICOGRADA.

It is interesting that, immediately after this discussion the candidates for the Executive Board 1993–1995 were asked to present themselves. Bruzzone was then 'questioned regarding his knowledge and use of English and if he felt this would create a problem (ICOGRADA, 1993: 13), what seems an interesting turn of events and a significant development from the previous discussion. By questioning his ability to communicate, his adequacy as a candidate for Presidency was also questioned along with his ability to lead ICOGRADA. It seems ironic that in a Council that announces itself as international and attempts to be accessible in many languages since its early years (ICOGRADA, 1969), it would seem problematic to have a President that does not dominate English, particularly considering that Spanish—a widely spoken language—was Bruzzone's native language. Yet, Bruzzone was elected President Elected in 1993, which meant that he would hold this position for two years, to then take over as President of the Council.

As President, the main challenge faced by Bruzzone was the organisation of an ICOGRADA International Congress in Latin American soil. However, it was not without some use of what Bruzzone called 'Latin American magic' that this success was achieved. (BRUZZONE; CANDIA, n.d.)

In the context of the meeting, the idea 'Latin American magic' represents an ability of making the unlikely happen, in this case, making the ICOGRADA International Congress happen in Latin America against all odds. It is not unusual to see ideas such as inventiveness, innovation, adaptation and the creation of unexpected or even unlikely solutions for problems seems to be part of what is recognised by Latin Americans as one of the Latin American social identifiers—an improvisational trait that permeates the daily routines of all Latin Americans.

The positionality of Bruzzone's actions was aligned with a wider turn, a shift of ethos 'away from the quiet pain or compassion, toward assertiveness and, indeed, celebration. Impurity and intermingling [in the late 1990s] offer [...] a possibility of reconciliation, it is a source—perhaps the most important source—of desirable cultural renewal' (HANNERZ, 1997: 12).

This shift can also be seen in the changes of the international perception of Latin American graphic design practice. For instance, as shown by the comparison of the texts about Latin American practice in the *Who's Who in Graphic Art* from 1982 previously mentioned (AMSTUTZ), and the edition from 1994 (GROSSHOLZ). There is a sense of achievement in the graphic design profession that permeates most Latin American accounts from the early 1990s. It is a moment of change, in which Latin American graphic designers value their own visual culture and their own forms of practice, while highlighting singularities of their national identities.

'The Winds of Change:' the internationalisation of ICOGRADA

When Guy A. Schockaert became ICOGRADA President in 1997, just after Bruzzone, the title of his mission statement—'The Winds of Change'—reflected the acknowledgment of the transformations occurring (ICOGRADA, 1997: n.p.). Decades before that, 'The Wind of Change' was the title of another speech, delivered by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in 1960, in which he acknowledged the growth of national consciousness, moving forward the British decolonisation process in Africa (MACMILLAN, 1960). By using a similar title, Guy Schockaert acknowledged the changes in place while aiming to build a different consciousness, that of the 'destiny of graphic designers' (ICOGRADA, 1997: n.p.). In an attempt to adapt the Council's global intentions and activities to a globalised context, Schockaert invited designers to reform the profession of graphic design: 'Open up to the world's cultures. Prepare for world-class communication. Exchange/share ideas and experiences. Use our cultural diversity to create opportunities' (ICOGRADA, 1997: n.p.).

The perpetual stream of change brought about by globalisation affected the daily running of the Council, while highlighted the inadequacy its structure. In the 1990s, ICOGRADA operated 'within the extremes of the instant flash of contemporary simultaneous communication and the comparative slowness of the consultative, democratic process of representative bodies' (MULLIN, 1997: n.p.). And while encouraging graphic designers to reconsider the scope of their professional practice, the Executive Board of the Council also attempted to update itself

'[i]n order to ensure the continued operation of ICOGRADA as the international voice of the graphic design community and in order to permit ICOGRADA to better serve its Member Associations' (ICOGRADA, 1997: n.p.).

At the same time, with the changes in travel and telecommunications, it became highly complex, if not impossible, to define the extent to which different intercultural exchanges overlap and, even more complex, to define geopolitical identities of individuals. The idea that Executive Board members had no fixed base and that they could easily navigate in many different countries and cultures, implies that national identity became only another trait of their identities, but one that was overshadowed by the weight of their cosmopolitan identity.

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Dora Souza Dias is a PhD candidate at the University of Brighton. Her current research problematises the role of the Icograda in internationalising graphic design and looks at the Latin American networks established by the Council. She has co-edited the second volume of the series "Histórias do Design no Brasil." ORCID number 0000-0002-7970-7978.
dorasouzadias@gmail.com