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Milton Santos

Toward an Other Globalization: From the Single Thought to Universal Conscience

Translated and Edited by Lucas Melgaço and Tim Clarke



 Springer

Author

Milton Santos (Deceased)

Translators

Lucas Melgaço
Department of Criminology
Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)
Brussels
Belgium

Tim Clarke
Department of English
University of Ottawa
Ottawa, ON
Canada

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Milton Santos

Por uma outra globalização: do pensamento único à consciência universal

Toward an Other Globalization
From the Single Thought to Universal
Conscience

Translated and Edited by
Lucas Melgaço and Tim Clarke



Milton Santos, 1994. Photo by Jorge Maruta, from the collection of the magazine *Jornal da USP* (University of São Paulo). Permission to use this photo was granted by the photographer

Introducing Milton Santos: A Voice from the Global South

Our motivation for translating this work by Brazilian geographer Milton Santos into English arose from the frustration of finding his voice so absent from the English-speaking discourse on globalization. Despite Santos's renown throughout Latin America and parts of Europe, for which he received the prestigious Vautrin Lud International Geography Prize in 1994, the most important award in the field, he has been more or less inaccessible to the English-speaking world. Until now, only one text, *The Shared Space: The Two Circuits of the Urban Economy in Underdeveloped Countries*, has been available in English. Originally published in 1975, an English translation by Chris Gerry was produced in 1979. However, the works of Santos's most important phase, from the eighties until his death in 2001, is still unavailable in translation.

Although Santos's reputation is primarily as a specialist in underdevelopment, urbanization and globalization, these labels understate the breadth of his contributions. Santos was a true theoretician who created a set of concepts that could be combined to produce a complex and systematic method for analyzing reality through the lens of the territory, the geographic space. His method also makes prominent use of the idea of the technique, another concept central to his thought. Santos's theoretical framework has been used by other researchers, particularly in Brazil and Latin America, in the study of topics as various as security, transportation, health, economics, cultural studies, urban and rural studies, and so on. He created a veritable school of theory, in the sense that there are scholars today who pursue a clear 'Miltonian' trajectory in their studies.

In an effort to condense the breadth of his theory into a single text, Santos published *A Natureza do Espaço* in 1996, a work that can be counted as the most groundbreaking of his publications. Translated into both Spanish and French, this text has not yet an English version. This begs the question, then, as to why we have instead elected to translate *Por uma Outra Globalização*. Our reasons are many. Firstly, as our English title *Toward an Other Globalization* suggests, this book represents a much needed alternative theory of globalization that derives not from the perspective of the West, from which this process emerged, but from that of the so-called 'Third World,' which has borne the greatest weight of globalization.

In this regard, Santos offers a perspective unavailable to the apologists of Western hegemony. Secondly, our academic experience has shown us the delicacy of introducing students to new and intricate theories. Santos's writings abound in idiosyncrasies and difficulties of interpretation; he is no easy read. *A Natureza do Espaço* is the most substantial of Santos's works, but it not necessarily the best introduction. It is not wrong to claim that a full understanding of such a text can only be arrived at through an extensive reading of Santos's other books and articles, leaving the difficulties of *A Natureza do Espaço* until one has developed the necessary framework to consume it. But if this is indeed the case, where might a prospective reader of Santos begin? Of the nearly forty books produced over Santos's career, we consider *Toward an Other Globalization* to be the most suitable and accessible introduction to his theories, especially for an English audience that, for the time being, is cut off from the other works of his oeuvre. As Santos explains in his preface, this book was intended not only for geographers, but for a broader audience of social scientists. Thus, the examples he uses and the writing style he employs are aimed at a heterogeneous public. In addition, there exists a documentary based on the central premises of this text titled *Encounter with Milton Santos*, produced by Brazilian filmmaker Silvio Tendler, which is subtitled in English and may serve to complement any inquiries this text may provoke. Lastly, *Toward an Other Globalization* was among the last texts published by Santos in his lifetime. Thus, it constitutes one of the most mature works of his career.

Although *Toward an Other Globalization* is one of Santos's more accessible books, it nevertheless bears the author's characteristic difficulty. As a consequence, it is not merely a challenging text to read, but also to translate. Among Santos's particular stylistic hallmarks are innumerable neologisms, a vacillation between very short and extremely long passages, and frequent shifts from formal, highly refined registers to colloquial and vernacular ones. Indeed, some of the articles that make up this book are excerpts of talks Santos gave over his career, and thus maintain traces of their oral style.

Given the differences between the vernacular styles of Portuguese and English, we have occasionally had to take liberties in adapting the text for the sake of clarity. At other points, we have opted for a more conservative translation so as to avoid over-interpreting passages that remain ambiguous in the original text. We are sensitive to the fact that English readers may well object that we have maintained too much of the Lusophone feel and rhythm of the original. On the other hand, Portuguese-speaking readers familiar with Santos's theory may well have the opposite objection, that we have been played too free with the text. But translation, as they say, is an imperfect art. We are of the opinion that it is more important that a first translation of a text be accessible and faithful to the meaning of the source than to its style. We have done our best to maintain some Santos's idiosyncrasies, but it is inevitable that we should lose the full effect, the full poetry, of his prose.

Unlike the Romance languages, contemporary English is not well adapted to the hypotactic sentence structures and extensive use of appositions that are common in Santos's work. It was with this in mind that we reworked passages and expressions that would have been awkward to render in English. We took a relatively free hand

in dividing longer sentences into more manageable ones and in adapting Santos's rhetorical flourishes to an English audience. Furthermore a number of passages that were ambiguous in the original Portuguese were rephrased, sometimes in such a manner that diminished the original ambiguity. We have tried to mark these instances with footnotes in order to explain the possibility for alternative interpretations.

Santos's original text purposefully avoided employing a large number of quotations and bibliographic references in the interests of providing a straightforward analysis. We have retained Santos's citation style without alteration. It must also be noted that this book was originally published without footnotes. All footnotes included in this edition are the insertions of the translators and not of Santos himself, and have been added in order to present the reader with notes on our choice of translation, information about the Brazilian context of Santos's works, and comments elucidating concepts that derive from the author's earlier texts. These footnotes reflect no opinions or interpretations but those of the translators, and ought not to be confused with the positions and sentiments of the author.

We encountered further difficulties in deciding how to translate the frequent use of the universal masculine pronoun, which is quite common in Romance languages, but may be considered politically incorrect in English. We have decided not to maintain the author's wording, preferring to replace the general term 'man' by 'person', 'humanity' or 'humankind'. In the case of the universal pronoun 'he', we have preferred general constructions with the pronoun 'one'. We have also made adjustments to phrasing in some sections to facilitate the reading experience. Where possible, we have used English titles for books that Santos references which have English translations. For example, John Gray's *False Dawn* is referenced in Portuguese in the original, but has been rendered in English in this translation. Those originally written in other languages have been written in the title Santos cites for them. Where necessary, we have translated some plural words and concepts in the singular, and vice versa, for ease of reading. The punctuation and style conventions of the original have also been adapted for an English audience. In some cases, we have simplified sentences where two words in Portuguese designate a single concept in English. Both 'calendário' and 'folhinha' (a specific kind of religious calendar utilized in Brazil), for instance, have been translated as 'calendar', since English does not make a distinction between the two words and the difference between them has no significant bearing on the meaning of the passage in question. Lastly, we have made the editorial decision to standardize what appear to be unintentional irregularities in the source text, opting, for example, to capitalize the word 'Triad', which appears inconsistently in both the upper and lower case in the original text.

It is also worth noting that this book was written to a specific context, which involved a specific space and time. Although globalization is a topic of general interest, the text was written first and foremost for a Brazilian audience. Thus, some references and examples may be unfamiliar to other audiences. All references to 'this country', or 'this territory' are to be read as references to Brazil. Given that this text was published in 2000, references to 'the rise of the new century' are obviously

in reference to the one in which we currently live. We should also note that *Toward an Other Globalization* was written just prior to such important and paradigmatic events as the 9/11 attacks against the United States, which introduced new and vital perspectives into the discourse surrounding globalization. In some ways, Santos's theory offers new tools to our understanding of such phenomena, particularly in his discussions of counter-rationality. The Brazilian economic environment has also changed drastically since the time of Santos's observations. In the intervening years, Brazil has experienced a period of rapid economic growth. The political situation has also changed, with the resurgence of left-oriented parties at the state and federal level. Most importantly of all, though, is the fact that in spite of all this, the bulk of the injustices against which Santos positions himself and the overall structure of inequality remain intact.

Translating Santos is at the same time a privilege and a delicate labour. We have come to experience more fully the richness and breadth of his work, its persistent applicability to the present day, and the prescience of its observations; we have even come to see some of the limitations of his theory. On the other hand, the labour of translation must be sensitive to the fact that Santos is a well-established public intellectual in many circles, particularly in Brazilian ones. Consequently, we bear the responsibility for translating his work in a manner that does him justice. Thus, we have undertaken this work in concert with one another and with the hope that our backgrounds and expertise have allowed us to carry this project to a satisfactory conclusion. It is our hope that our varied backgrounds and expertise has contributed to the production of something that can be of help to future readers. One of us is a Brazilian geographer and Assistant Professor at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in Belgium specializing in Milton Santos's theories and the other is a Canadian doctoral candidate in English literature at the University of Ottawa. The translation was conducted through an intensive back-and-forth exchange of drafts, so that no section has been published that has not had the eyes of a native speaker of both Portuguese and English over the course of multiply drafts.

In some parts of Brazil, particularly in some departments of geography, Santos is known simply as 'the Professor'. Whether we consider this an exaggeration or not, it is a testament to the profound influence of his thought. One can recognize, in fact, a sharp divide in Brazilian academia between supporters and detractors of Santos's ideas. When the present text was first published in Brazil, its author was already well-known, and so, too, were his concepts and style. The situation at hand is quite different, as we are here introducing his work into a context where his niche is a small one, well aware that many may be encountering Santos for the first time. It is with this in mind that we have strived to produce a translation that is both accurate and accessible. Our task of introducing this text to an English-speaking audience is indebted to Marie-Hélène Santos, the late author's wife. Marie-Hélène has been foremost among those striving to preserve Santos's legacy and to bring his life's work to the attention of those for whom it has remained inaccessible. We would like to offer our sincere thanks for her support and counsel over the course of this project.

Although innovative in many ways, perhaps the most genuine contribution that this text offers to an English audience, more than its value as an analysis of empirical cases, is the fact that it addresses globalization not from the West, but from what Santos calls ‘the South,’ the other side of this globalized world. It is from this perspective that Santos is able to conclude his book with a message of optimism that is not in any sense naïve. This is, indeed, a revolutionary optimism and an *other* globalization.

Brussels, Belgium
Ottawa, Canada
September 2016

Lucas Melgaço
Tim Clarke

Preface

This book hopes to be an independent reflection on our time, a meditation on its material and political foundations, and an attempt to explain the pains and problems of the present world. However, despite the difficulties of the present era, it also seeks to be a message bearer of the objective reasons to continue living and fighting.

The intellectual work that sustains this text is the fruit borne of our dedication to understanding the nature of geographic space, but it also pays tribute to other realities and academic disciplines.



Milton Santos, 1994. Photo by Jorge Maruta, from the collection of the magazine *Jornal da USP* (University of São Paulo)

In contrast with our other books, the reader is not going to find here a copious listing of quotations. Such books of ours were focused on more specific questions of society and were genuine theses, since they were sustained and ambitious demonstrations directed above all at the scientific community. This direction pushed the author to make concessions of lengthy bibliographies to the small world of his colleagues. It is well known that this has become almost an obligation of scholarship, since the academy enjoys citations, even if they are idle or sometimes ridiculous. Undoubtedly, this book also directs itself to scholars, but above all else desires to reach the greater public. Thus, it dispenses with the ceremonial obligation of references. That is not to say that the author imagines himself to have reinvented the wheel; his experience in different moments of the century and in various countries and continents is also the experience of those others whom he has heard or read. However, the originality here is in the interpretation or the particular emphasis, the unique manner of combining what exists and what is foreseen: the very definition of what constitutes an idea.

This book results from a great deal of arduous and pleasing work. Most of its chapters have not been published in their present form, as they are, in a certain way, a rewriting of lectures, conferences, newspaper and magazine articles, and media interviews, each one offering a particular level of discourse and difficulty. I am very thankful to all those with whom I collaborated in this dialogue and even to those who were unaware of participating in such an exchange. Amongst the former, I want to highlight the current partners in the ambitious academic project which I have been leading at the Department of Geography at the University of São Paulo since 1983: my tireless collaborator, Doctor Maria Laura Silveira, who read the assembled manuscript, and Doctor Maria Angela Faggin Pereira Leite, as well as the PhD candidates Adriana Bernardes, Cilene Gomes and Mónica Arroyo, and the Master's students Eliza Almeida, Fábio Contel, Flávia Grimm, Lídia Antongiovanni, Marcos Xavier, Paula Borin and Soraia Ramos. I also extend thanks to the Department of Geography of the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages and Literature, and Human Sciences, which hosts and stimulates me. My particular acknowledgements go, too, to the Political Geography and Territorial and Environmental Laboratory (Laboplan), coordinated by my old friend Armen Mamigonian. I want to also thank my colleagues Maria Adélia A. de Souza, Rosa Ester Rossini, and Ana Clara Torres Ribeiro, with whom I have collaborated for about twenty years.

I am also indebted to the voluntary collaborators I encountered in numerous travels around Brazil, those participants at conferences, debates, and meetings, for their interventions and suggestions. I am grateful to the newspapers *Folha de São Paulo* and *Correio Braziliense* for their authorization to republish my articles in their original or modified forms. While still in this chapter of acknowledgements, a special word goes to the geographer Flávia Grimm, who had the patience to listen to tiring dictations of the manuscripts from which this book results. The assistance of the geographer Paula Borin was found once more to be valuable. I am also sensitive to the support received from the *Council for Scientific and Technological Development* (CNPq) and the *São Paulo Research Foundation* (FAPESP). These

two institutions did not contribute directly to this work, but intellectual production is always a unit made up of parts. A work or body of research is always a sub-product of others. Also, as always, the incentive of my wife, Marie-Hélène, was very precious.

Contrary to the French author Joël de Rosnay, who suggested in the preface of his book *Le Macroscopie* that his readers begin to read wherever they please, we must give a different warning. If someone reads only the first chapters separately, one might consider the author a pessimist; and those who start from the later chapters might imagine him an optimist. In reality, what we intended was, on the one hand, to treat reality as it is, even if it is undesirably pungent; and, on the other, to suggest reality as it can be, even if our prognostication might sound laughable to skeptics.

The central emphasis of this book comes from the conviction of the role of ideology in the production, dissemination, reproduction, and maintenance of the current process of globalization. This role is also a novelty of our time; hence, the necessity to analyze its fundamental principles and to point out its lines of weakness and strength. Our insistence on the role of ideology derives from our conviction that, given the same technical and material conditions presently existing, just as it is possible to continue making an inferno of the planet, as Brazil is currently experiencing, it is also possible to realize its contrary. Thus, the relevance of politics, which is to say, the art of imagining changes and creating the conditions to bring them into effect. Moreover, the transformations that recent history has shown have allowed us to predict the emergence of more promising situations. One might say that our belief in the change of humankind is unjustifiable. But what if it is the world, indeed, that is changing?

We are convinced that the historical change that is to happen will issue from an upward movement having as its principal actors the underdeveloped rather than the rich countries; the deserted and the poor rather than the opulent and other obese classes; the free individual participating in new masses rather than the chained person; free thought rather than the single discourse.

As we believe in the power of ideas at this moment of history, for better or for worse, we intend to show in filigree how the scholar's role, which is to say, the role of free thought, will be increasingly necessary in the current world. For this reason, we intended in the first drafts of this book to dedicate a chapter exclusively to genuine intellectual activity. However, we decided instead to discuss this role in different moments of the writing process, always when the opportunity was raised.

The book is made up of six chapters, of which the first is the introduction. The second chapter includes five subchapters¹ and seeks to show how the process of the production of globalization has occurred. This subject has already been treated to a degree in our other books and publications. The third chapter, made up of six subchapters, aims to explain the reasons why the present globalization is perverse,

¹Translators' Note: In Santos's original text, the introductions to each chapter were not numbered. The number of subchapters he mentions therefore refer to the main body of the work.

founded in the tyranny of information and money, in competitiveness, in the confusion of spirits, and in structural violence, leading to the downfall of the politics of the state and the imposition of a politics promoted by companies. The fourth chapter shows the relations maintained between the contemporary economy, above all the financial sector, and the territory. Six subchapters make up this chapter, the last of which could also be included in the chapter which follows, since it shows, through the notion of territorial schizophrenia, how the geographic space constitutes one of the limits of this perverse globalization. This idea of a limit to present history predominates in the fifth chapter, where the failures of the dominant rationality, the emergence of new central variables, and the role of the poor in the production of the present and the future are demonstrated. The sixth chapter, a sort of conclusion, is dedicated to what we imagine to be, in the rise of this new century, the ongoing transition. Here, the analyzed subjects highlight the under-studied manifestations of the country from below, from culture to politics. This reasoning can also be applied to the very periphery of the worldwide capitalist system, the centrality of which is present as a new dynamic factor of history. It is precisely the presence of these actors, effective but under-studied, that allowed us to believe that the present globalization is not irreversible. We are convinced that universal history is only starting.

São Paulo, Brazil
2000

Milton Santos

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