

Life as Tangram: Towards multiplicities of emotional ecologies

By Adrián Scribano

A tangram is a Chinese dissection puzzle formed from 7 polygons. A dissection puzzle, also known as a Richter Puzzle or transformation puzzle, is a mosaic made up of a set of pieces that can be arranged in different ways to obtain two or more different geometric shapes. It is played/used both as an entertainment and as an educational or mathematical tool, as it increases the skills of shape recognition, problem solving and pattern design. It is made up of seven polygons, 5 right triangles, 1 square, and 1 parallelogram/rhomboid.

If we follow one of the many stories that are told about the origin of the Tangram, it tells how the Emperor had brought a fine glass for a special window of the palace and that the person who carried it had crossed seas, rivers, and deserts, and that in the end he climbed from the road high into the mountains, but fell, breaking the precious object into seven parts. When the bearer was questioned by the Emperor, he replied, "Look at it this way: with these seven parts you can build whatever you want, ships, animals, mountains and also a window."

It seems that at the beginning of the 21st century the practices of feeling bring us the same message: life is a Tangram with which we can elaborate multiple geometries of bodies and grammars of actions. Life as Tangram in the 21st century, and in the context of a Pandemic, is presented to us as a possibility and a challenge - we can keep the parts broken by time and history, or reassemble our lives.

Responding to challenges and new questions makes us permanent Tangram players since with the materials we create, re-create and reproduce new shapes, different modes, differential geometries and, of course, other experiences.

The Pandemic puts us in front of what until recently was an unnoticed reality: how much bodies and emotions matter. The planetary expansion of COVID-19 transformed us into Tangram players who had to accept the forms from which they started, select those at which they wanted to arrive, and

navigate without an astrolabe in seas so deep and previously unnoticed that we almost did not know.

It is in this framework that the recognition and critical analysis of the emotional ecologies that we have at hand acquire importance¹, which can in some way help to relocate the pieces of the game, which will be beyond whether we accept their presence or not.

An **emotional ecology** can be characterized by three factors: first, in each politics of sensitivities a set of emotions are constituted connected by aspects of family, the kinship of practices, proximity and emotional amplitudes. Second, this set of emotions constitutes a reference system for each of these emotions in a particular geopolitical and geocultural context that give them a specific valence. Third, they are groups of feeling practices whose particular experience regarding an element of life can only be understood in its collective context.

In the first sense that we are pointing out, an emotional ecology is being constituted by those emotions that are in a similar chromatic field. With sadness, melancholy and anguish, for example, we are forming a surface of emotional inscription that allows us to understand the content of each one by the relationship of proximity and distance that each one acquires in the field/space that is formed on this surface. Joy, happiness and joyfulness offer another example of how, in a given society, they can be understood through the proximity and distance in which practices acquire their experientiality and sociability. These aspects of family allow an emotion to occupy a place in the field, given a certain value of attraction and rejection with another that inhabits that same ecology: immediate enjoyment through consumption means that happiness and joy are experienced in a different way, but in mutual

1 At present there are several ways of understanding collective emotions that are not the same view that we want to give to emotional ecology here, but that must be mentioned as close "antecedents" CFR (Flam, 2015; Von Scheve and Salmela, 2014; Garcia and Rime, 2019; and Scribano and Lisdero, 2018).

reference. They are kinship to practices that, to be captured, must be put into play in the identification and assessment of each one and the whole. Enjoyment can only be explained by accepting the differences and similarities with joy, happiness and joyfulness in relation to consumption.

On the other hand, emotional ecology refers to the weight of where and for who this set of practices taken as a whole is lived. Thus, there are the political and cultural valences of what can and should be felt in association with each of these references. The scenario constituted by the politics of sensitivities is conditioned by the spatial distribution of power, its territorial organization and the borders and “bridges” that unite/separate the practices of feeling. It is in this sense that an emotional ecology must be understood within a geopolitics that provides the parameters for experiencing emotions in particular. In a similar direction, an emotional ecology is structured based on the cultural identities and particular ways of life of those who experience those ecologies. The unequal distribution of nutrients, the differential access to sources of bodily energy, and the inequality of possibilities of “eating healthily” are the manifestation of how a geopolitics of food conditions the experience of the anguish of scarcity, social suffering in the face of not eating, and the “heaviness” of full bellies. In this case, it is also palpable how an ecology of fear is detectable in war zones, in migrant and refugee camps, in the daily life of women in the face of femicide; regions, countries and continents that are geopolitical structures of an emotional ecology.

Third, an emotional ecology implies the collective imputation of the experience of a set of emotions with respect to processes, people and objects, that is, an emotion is performed from the collective socially learned experiences, its valences and chromaticity in connection with a specific element. Sadness, anguish and pain in the face of death are constructed in a different way, sieved and socially organized. What to feel, how to feel it, in what way to express it nests in pre-existing societal experiences that are apprehended and learned as a member of a collective. In the face of death, births, love unions, birthdays, the connections between happiness, joyful and joy are different. Life lived, everyday life, is marked by politics of sensitivities where words and things acquire volumes, densities and values. Where things and words are inscribed in one or another emotional ecology; from the insult to praise, from the photo to the TikTok video, from the political slogan to the religious interpellation. Planetary emotionalization is the “glocal” result of a political economy of morality that harbors politics of

sensibilities in which the diverse political ecologies nest.

This issue of RELACES allows us to visualize a very special Tangram as a pre-pandemic space that makes visible figurations of the body as body image, emotional interventions as a psychological state and psychology, experiences of masculinities, results of disciplines, the imperatives of enacting happiness, macho performativity and the prevalence of sad passions among young Europeans.

Seven sides, bodies/emotions in seven pieces, everyday puzzles and diverse emotional ecologies: life appears in its plurality as a broken and polychromatic window. Each twist of the feeling practices associated with the aforementioned practices, each gap identified in the “between” of the experience, each re-created form, as in a Tangram, enables us to continue thinking about the complex game between emotional ecologies, where the pain of dependency and the joy of autonomy continue to conflict and push against one another.

In the first contribution **Maria Silvana Bitencourt**, presents her article entitled “**Being beautiful to be oily: As influences and motivations of adolescents about the care of the contemporary body**”, in which she analyzes the subjective demands that adolescents in public school present in relation to matters related to the body, crossed by the motivations and influences that they experience in adolescence. Based on a qualitative approach, based on in-depth interviews, the article revolves around the discourses that permeate the construction of bodies and focuses on the place that schools occupy as institutions that, when normalized under a heteronormative matrix, do not promote the debate on the importance of body studies focused upon adolescents.

Nayelhi Saavedra continues the exploration with an article entitled: “**The verbal pill: relief techniques in first level care centers in marginalized neighborhoods**”. There, he investigates the perceptions of patients and psychologists from 19 top-level health centers, located in marginalized areas of Mexico City, where the demand for care for emotional problems has grown in recent years. Differentiating from the health perspective, and based on the concept of relief techniques and the perceptions analyzed, it was understood that the psychological care provided in the centers is a way of shaping the emotions and relieving the emotional tensions of these groups, in the face of situations of precariousness and uncertainty that they must face on a daily basis.

Third, **Juan Carlos Ramírez Rodríguez**, presents the article entitled “**Men and masculinities:**

emotions and meaning of work", where he exposes and analyzes the emotions experienced by men from a masculinities approach. Using a qualitative and ethnographic approach, the author shows how male residents of the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, Mexico, weave emotions around work with mandates of masculinity. To do this, he explores the work and family trajectory and the emotions of men who were unemployed, or who had gone through a recent period of unemployment, showing the variations in the meanings of work and emotions.

Freddy Timmermann, in the fourth article entitled "**Beyond capitalism, with capitalism. Time, consumption, pain and work in the neoliberal habitus**", analyzes the effects of the daily rhythms of work as action in terms of capitalist disciplining in neoliberal cyclical time, establishing possible tensions with human autonomy. To do this, the author projects Husserl's remembrances and perceptions, understanding historiographically and sociologically the insertion of the emotional body in mimetic consumption. Finally, he shows that the work carried out in this context refers to intro-extrospective configurations that operate in an emotional totality linked to productive efficiency, subtracting the body, absenting it from a natural dynamic.

Ana María Lopez Narbona, in the fifth contribution, offers her article entitled "**Happiness as an emotional and cognitive performative process**", where in addition to delving into this particular emotion as "universal human aspiration", she advances in a definition of emotions, understanding these as interrelational elements that involve cognitive and bodily processes. The author undertakes a journey through different ways of defining happiness, as well as conducting an analysis of two surveys of international scope to delimit its main components. This allows her to conceive the emotion in question as a complex social process that involves what people do and have, at the same time that it implies attending to space and time as a determining element in what makes people happy.

The sixth article, **Ana Carolina Ferreira-Habrá and Lucas Emanuel Torres'** paper "**Women in Argentine advertisements for men: reinforcing models of male domination through social networks**", analyzes the construction of women presented in Argentine advertisements directed at men, during the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. To do this, a virtual ethnography was carried out on the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the brands AX, Nivea, Gillette, Rexona and Dove, in which women appeared as incomprehensible, complicated and annoying; as objects of sexualization, objectification,

and commodification; or in their place as mothers and wives. From there, the authors conclude that the narrative, semiotic and interpellative mechanisms identified reinforce gender stereotypes and naturalize expressions of violence against women.

Alessandra Polidori writes the seventh article of the issue, entitled "**Youth: an analysis of sad passions**" in which she analyzes how certain emotions cross and prevail in the experience of youth, encompassed in the category of *sad passions*. The author goes through the different factors that could contribute to and shape those emotional states that constitute the experience of young people. Thus, it recovers the acceleration of time, new technologies, processes of economic crisis, and the flexibility of the labor market, among other processes, and how these influence the duration and characteristics of their ties, the feeling of loneliness and spatio-temporal dislocation, triggering different ways of feeling such as anxiety, anger and sadness.

Closing this issue of RELACES are two book reviews. The first was carried out by **María Belén de Yong**, entitled "**Towards an approach to bodies/emotions: ways of being and feeling in State interventions**", a review of the book by A. Dettano (2020): *Social Policies and emotions: (per) experiences around state interventions*. The second, by **Gisela Coronado Schwindt**, is titled "**I feel, therefore I exist: the sensory turn in the social sciences and humanities**", and is a review of the book edited by O. Sabido Ramos (2019): *The senses of the body: the sensory turn in social research and gender studies*.

These emotional ecologies that are born in our eyes in and through the articles clearly show how groups, institutions, classes, states, nations, all forms of collectives, build their own emotional ecologies.

More than 600 years ago Ibn Khaldun, considered a classic of sociology, justifying his analytical approach to history in the context of a direct connection between civilizations and emotions, wrote: "Nothing can be achieved in these matters without fighting for it. that man has a natural urge to resist. And to fight you cannot do without the **group feeling**, as we mentioned at the beginning. This should be taken as the guiding principle for our subsequent exposition. "(Khaldun 2015: 171 *emphasis ours*).

This is how Khaldun understood *Asabiyya* (group feeling) as an operative concept that allowed the story to be explained, a lesson that we may need to recover trying to put together our post-pandemic Tangram with our emotional lives.

We thank the authors and all those who have sent us their manuscripts. We remind readers that the call for articles is permanently open.

To conclude, we must reiterate that, from issue 15 of RELACES, we began to publish up to two articles in English per issue. As we have been reiterating for a long time: at RELACES, its entire Editorial Team and the entire Editorial Board, believe it necessary for each article of our journal to serve as a node that allows us to continue the path of dialogue and scientific/academic exchange as a social task and policy to achieve a freer and more autonomous society. It is in the above context that we want to thank all those who trust us as a vehicle to instantiate such dialogue.

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