

## **Bonds generated by homeless people in economic initiatives in Porto Alegre, Brazil**

### **Vínculos estabelecidos por pessoas em situação de rua em iniciativas econômicas de Porto Alegre, Brasil**

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#### **Background**

In Porto Alegre, homeless people, or those who once lived on the streets, organize themselves on fronts that contradict their negative representation in the media and challenge consolidated academic knowledge. They are the newspaper Boca de Rua (Boca); and the bakery collective Amada Massa, which are initiatives for the production and sale of newspapers and bread, respectively. While Boca de Rua and Amada Massa offer a job to their members, whether as a journalist and newspaperman, in one, as a baker, in the other, acting in these initiatives causes material and subjective effects that contribute to transformations of the bonds that the members establish among themselves, in their self-image and in the relationship between this part of the population and the rest of society. We see in these initiatives a strong relationship between economics and ethics that seems to be fruitful.

#### **Aims**

The article is dedicated to answering the question: What are the main contributions that the bond to Boca de Rua and Amada Massa contribute to the material and subjective development of homeless, towards strengthening them as ethical subjects?

#### **Method & Procedures**

The dynamics of data collection was inspired by the Operative Groups, in which it was up to us to act as observers (Pichon-Rivière, 2005), although performing, in the meantime, the tasks that were ours as members of the Supportive Networks of the initiatives. The research of one of us in each of the groups took place from January to July 2019 at Boca de Rua; and from April to November 2019, at Amada Massa. Every two weeks, the researchers got together to, based on our field diaries and situations experienced in the meetings, exchanged impressions, wrote down our theoretical intuitions and highlighted elements that pointed to the members' bonds. From the field diaries, we consolidated individualized research reports. Each report was treated as a single text and composed the corpus to be analyzed. The analysis of these texts followed the recommendations of the Bakhtin Circle in the search for an intertextuality between the research reports. From the category 'intertextuality', we can understand how the discursive elements are repeated and related in different texts (Bakhtin, 1984). The intertextuality pointed out situations experienced in the two initiatives that referred to each other; how the bonds were perceived and treated; and how the situations of tension in the groups and the moments of celebration materialized symbolic and cultural systems. We also searched for intertextuality with the consolidated theoretical framework. While revising the texts, they referred to the categories that we revised. Among these, the bond, solidarity, corporeality and bodily nexus, human needs, freedom and responsibility stand out.

#### **Results & discussion**

In Boca de Rua and Amada Massa, the equal relationship between unequal, pointed out by Hinkelammert (1983, 2012) was evident. The purpose of the Supportive Network is not to produce and sell vegan bread, but to support Pilgrims in achieving this end. This "being together", this "doing with" surpasses a philanthropic relationship and allows to intensify the homeless' bonds, precisely because of the difference and how this difference could generate an environment of

learning and mutual strengthening. With the intensification of the bond, the homeless began to realize that the space and the initiative belonged to them. In addition to selling bread on the streets, they started to work in production. The relationship between participation in weekly meetings and changes in the lives of the homeless became clearer: they agreed that those who had a greater participation in the weekly listening circles could participate in the bread production process, and thus be paid for two days of work. The certainty of this income, added to the weekly wiretaps, made it possible for couples who still slept on the streets to move to a room in a simple hotel, which is one of the main benefits generated by strengthening the bond in this initiative. In Boca de Rua, the relationship between the bond and solidarity also appears. Boca allows these people to tell their stories, report their daily lives, demand rights, articulate with other social movements. The volunteers linked to the Boca de Rua Network act so that everyone has the right to speak, give their opinion on the agenda and participate in the production of the articles. Their motivations and those of the homeless are evidently diverse, but they generate a bond in which solidarity is far away from charity. Differences in socioeconomic conditions, possibilities of production and material reproduction of their lives and of subjective structure are present and necessary elements for the development the bond of its members.

### Conclusion

In addition to the immediate satisfaction of material needs from the sale of bread and newspapers, the participation in the production engenders social relations and can alter the subjective constitution of the homeless. The occupation of public space places them in the same territory as small farmers and traders, selling the fruit of their work. From that space, another conception of the self and new needs may arise. The relationship between the homeless and the volunteers makes it possible to strengthen the bonds based on the articulation of the three key theses of the economy for life: (1) the satisfaction (and empowerment) of human needs from the use value; (2) the primacy of the collective worker and the coordination of social work, in which it is not possible to apply any formal and deterministic principle of distribution of the social product; (3) to subject half-end rationality to a reproductive rationality of the natural circuit of human life. In the situations experienced, it is a matter of “doing with” without having primacy in the activities carried out in these collectives

**Keywords:** economy for life, ethics, group bond, homeless people

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