

The Social and Solidarity Economy Tent: Contributions to the analysis of the processes of subjectivation

La Carpa de Economía Social y Solidaria: Aportes al análisis de los procesos de subjetivación

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Background

The idea of SSE has been subject to several studies and a field of academic interest in recent years. As an analysis category, and based on the introduction to economic rationality that constitutes a political plane, it includes a plurality of practices that are grouped under the categories of fair trade, companies recovered by their workers, cooperativism, associativism, to name a few (Alquézar, 2018; Gaiger, 2013; Lavile, 2013). It also means a rupture with the dichotomous binarism that divides the public and private spheres as a scheme under which economic activities are thought of. Generally, discussions in political economy are centered on the scope of the role of the state, and, as its counterpart, on the freedom of the market. This scheme, which associates the public with activities or regulations promoted by state institutions, and understands the private sphere like the one where the maximization of benefits is prioritized, makes invisible economic practices that, without necessarily being promoted by state agencies that escape the determination of profit maximization as the only way to deploy economic relations, make up what some call the third sector (Guerra, 2006).

Aims

This work presents the results of a previous investigation whose objective was to explain the processes of co-design and participation based on the investigation of the composition of the tent as a political object and a space for co-creation. The study asked how a network formed that sustains its itinerancy as an economic, political, and social commons.

Method & Procedures

The research was carried out during a year of fieldwork between September 2017 and October 2018, in spaces agreed upon with the CES and the Montevidean Network. The work was developed in four stages: approaching the topic and contacting qualified informants, accompanying the process and setting up the tent, evaluation, and coordination of co-design workshops. These stages were carried out through thirteen days of participant observation, which were recorded through recordings and field notes, three co-design workshops, and ten ethnographic interviews. During these instances, a field diary was prepared from a notebook and recordings that were collected in the observation instances. Students from the degree program in Psychology at the University of the Republic also participated in the co-design workshops with students from the Faculty of Architecture, Design, and Urbanism at the same university. The interviews were carried out with participants in the tent's installation, during August 2018 in the eastern zone of Montevideo. The selection criteria considered: i) the participation of members of the Network who was there from the beginning, ii) participants with no experience in the organizations, iii) members of the installation of the tent without participation in the organization.

Results & discussion

The relational plot of the bodies and objects that participate in the experience constitute an affective dimension that produces a mode of the political. Politics is no longer thought of exclusively as the institutional spaces where major decisions are made, but rather as an integrated part of everyday life where, through the deployment of power, it is possible to generate relationships of the common (Spinoza, 1677/1986). The common or the community will not be something

that is given beforehand or as a formal determination, not necessarily coming from the conformation as a collective that is organized and incorporates an associative form (Teles, 2018). The deployment of the power of the members of the Tent embodies a politicization of their practices, the idea of practicing another way of life, and the reaffirmation of the intention to share and circulate this project. The process, however, is not without its tensions and discussions. The parameters that are set in order to delimit which practices are admitted within the SSE and which are not are a point of tension. From the moment of its planning, the idea of the Tent is to be an object that will circulate around the city in an itinerant way, composing a cosmogrammatic (Stengers, 2005b) idea of carrying a world that one tries to move. This idea conveys an intention, but, above all, a practice of another possible world. This way of understanding politics has ontological implications insofar as it allows us to conceive the individual as a necessarily collective composition.

Conclusion

The experience of the tent invites us to think of SSE practices as an analysis tool in relation to a very specific mode of production of subjectivity. The affirmation of the individual as an instance of individuation that is always collective affirms an idea of the individual that is necessarily shaped by a set of relationships that cross the idea of individuality, contrary to the usual forms that present us with a rational individual endowed with a certain interiority that presents itself before a collective as exteriority. The challenge of considering the political within the production of an affective regime emerges as a possibility insofar as SSE practices can enable us to other possible economic and world forms. A mode of production and commercialization of products that sustains, as a genesis movement, economic relations in which commercialization is not centered on the maximization of profits, but on an appropriation of the productive process that, in a collective construction, composes relations of the common.

Keywords: ethnography, social and solidarity economy, subjectivation

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