

25: Knowledge Production in South American Urban Indigenous and Popular Economies (Workshop)

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Economic knowledge production has been a highly controversial issue in economic anthropology, not only during the years of the substantivism-formalism debate. Today, and prominently in South American anthropology, the discussion is being continued – under new circumstances, with novel terms and less openly controversial – as a political and theoretical quarrel between universalist and comparative approaches (Marxism, political economy, institutional analysis) and particularistic and cultural perspectives (decolonialism, ontology).

In this workshop, we aim at discussing economic knowledge production in South American urban indigenous and popular economies. We are especially interested in the epistemological and methodological grounds for understanding everyday socio-economic practices of globally connected actors and communities. How do we theorize the distinctive character of ‘other’ economic logics in the context of transnational trade connections? How does the temporality and materiality of popular economies question abstract universalist theories that continue to be dominant in scientific and public debates despite sustained criticism?

In sum, the workshop will generate a discussion on the historical tension where the agency of actors (of how business is done, how goods are distributed, how prices are set, how they are valued and how material goods are intertwined with non-material ones) endures, is remade, adapts, shrinks or expands under parameters that form centers of gravity and dispersion of ‘their way of doing business’.

From Brasilia to favela: eclectic morality and neoliberal subjectivities in the solidarity economy movement in Brazil

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In Brazil, solidarity economy is a set of small-scale economic practices embedded with a different morality than the capitalist economy. I analyze the discourse and practices around solidarity economy at three levels: state, expert and local, as implemented by the leader of the solidarity economy movement in Brazil, the Palmas Bank. Data consists of ethnographic material collected between 2015 and 2022 at the Palmas Bank and public official discourses issued. My analysis points to the tensions and contradictions embedded in the solidarity economy movement,

and focuses on the creation of neoliberal subjectivities and the overall existence of an eclectic morality, in contrast with scholars of moral economies (Carrier 2008; Hart, Laville, and Cattani 2010). The Brazilian state pairs solidarity economy with poverty reduction, portrays the “poor” as a homogenous group that is inherently “good”, like the noble Savage while leaving the responsibility of these actors to overcome their condition through entrepreneurship. The experts (academics and the media), emphasize the utopian aspect of the solidarity economy movement, its capacity to challenge capitalist structures while also relying on romanticized notions ideas of poverty. Lastly, the NGO struggles to maintain legitimacy when solidarity economy cannot respond to locals’ most immediate problems.

“Siempre quise blanquear” – Experiences of Bolivian Fashion Cooperativistas in Buenos Aires from an intersectional perspective

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In America’s Southern Cone, the production of fashion in mega cities like Buenos Aires and São Paulo for the domestic market is closely linked to mobilities from the Andean regions of Bolivia towards urban sweatshops. Bolivian migrants have been working in this urban industry from the 1980ies through growing transnational social networks and nowadays form an integral part of it as garment workers and entrepreneurs of different scales in the production network of fashion. Often, their labor enters the value-added chain “informally”, which makes them part of a transnationally connected popular economy. Social organizations in Argentina have started to integrate the garment sector into their strategy of organizing workers of the popular economy by forming cooperatives since 2015. This step includes a process of formalization, migrant workers refer to as “blanquear”. Through methods of ethnographic research including co-working, participant observation and interviews with a garment cooperative in Buenos Aires, I scrutinize the perspectives of the cooperativistas on this process as well as their way of dealing with this highly flexible industry. The findings from my research consider the situation of independent migrant workers from an intersectional perspective and raise thoughts about their strategies to make the cooperative profitable and move towards the goal of creating their own fashion brand.

Qamiris. Aymara economic practices in the city of El Alto, Bolivia

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Qamiri is an Aymara term that refers to individuals or families who have achieved social and economic prosperity within their community. Recently, the term has become widely used in the city of El Alto, especially in academic and political circles, as a category representing the new elites of Indigenous traders in this city. Qamiris have risen to social and economic prominence thanks to their success as traders, which is a result of their local and transnational commercial connections, as well as the socio-material manifestations of their spending power.

This paper, based on case studies that use an autoethnographic approach, seeks to explore the socioeconomic practices of this sector, as well as to consider its epistemological and political foundations. The Qamiris of El Alto are a relevant case for the study of the different logics of economic prosperity in urban Indigenous populations, in a context where official policy, based on philosophical principles such as Vivir Bien, presents this group as part of an anti-mercantile society.

***“Clarito tienes que soñar, cuando se sueña hay que tomar en cuenta”:
Elementos no-materiales en la economía de las caseras alteñas***

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La economía de las caseras alteñas (Villa Adela, Bolivia) es tema de mi trabajo de investigación doctoral, en ello analizo de qué modo se producen estas relaciones, sobre todo a partir de las perspectivas de las mujeres que las conformaron en el espacio urbano de El Alto. De este modo, propongo debatir los elementos no-materiales que son parte de esta economía y que están tejidos con los elementos materiales. El objetivo de eso es demostrar, por medio de mi trabajo de campo en los últimos tres años, de qué forma en estas economías populares, a parte de sus intercambios de productos, las relaciones de producción-circulación-consumo conllevan distintos otros elementos no-materiales que son parte de la ontología aymara de estas mujeres, como la importancia del sueño que define la cantidad de producción diaria, la relación con los sujetos otros que humanos (la Pachamama y las wak'as) y el primer cliente como definidor de la cantidad de venta diaria (como la necesidad de escapar del mich'a ["tacaño" en aymara]). Esto se vincula a la propuesta del panel, ya que presenta una relación entre los bienes materiales con los no materiales que es común en muchas economías populares.

In between and all at once: Perspectives on economic transformation of rural women near Cusco

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This research considers women in rural areas around Cusco as protagonists of future. Women in this area are actors in a variety of economic activities, be it unpaid forms of care work or the family "financial contribution" through a small village shop, the sale of agricultural products or the commercialisation of handmade wool products. In doing so, they move within a field of negotiation between many shades of "tradition and modernity": market systems with exchange structures meet with the growing availability of imported goods; ideas of a solidary community with collective duties meet with personal profit calculations; new forms of living ask for new sources of income. What solutions do they find in everyday life? What visions do they have for their future and that of their economic activities? To what extent do materialities, temporalities and space influence these actions and visions? Privileging women's perspectives on matters of rural development offers important insights into wider transformation processes of the region and brings up perspectives that hardly find a decisive place in politics and science. As this research is based on ethnographic methods, I would also like to engage in a dialogue about horizontal and creative methods of knowledge production.

„De las mulas a los chutos“ Estructuras comerciales y sociales de origen rural en la articulación de circuitos comerciales globales

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La propuesta pretende mostrar la articulación de estructuras comerciales y sociales de origen rural con cadenas de suministros globales. Esto a partir del estudio de caso de los autos usados que son importados desde Japón, pasan por Chile para posteriormente ingresar a Bolivia, Perú y Paraguay. Lo que nos interesa mostrar es mostrar a quienes articulan estas cadenas de suministros. Debido a que son actores intercalados en el territorio- como pakistaníes, chuteros, loros, aduaneros, policías y autoridades, que propician condiciones, infraestructuras físicas, políticas y sociales, para el acceso a estos vehículos en comunidades rurales de Bolivia.

En este caso se puede ver cómo las llamadas hormigas de la globalización en clave rural se articulan de manera solapada a las cadenas de suministros hegemónicas para poder responder a necesidades locales del otro lado del mundo. Los pakistaníes, chuteros y loros han producido una ruta comercial de abastecimiento de automóviles usados tensionando prácticas legales con ilegales.

Between markets, healers and remedies. The traditional Andean healthcare network in northern Chile's cross-border area

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Given the growing neo-liberalization and precariousness of the Chilean healthcare system, migrant populations in northern Chile cross borders to seek formal healthcare and make use of a traditional cross-border economy that is key to meeting their needs and demands. Based on an ethnographic study of the cross-border health mobility of indigenous Bolivians and Peruvians (Aymaras and Quechuas) from the historical region of Tarapacá (Chile) to the cities of Oruro (Bolivia) and Tacna (Peru), we show the Andean population's specific economics and socio-spatial responses. A traditional health care network emerges where state and traditional dynamics interact to manage cross-border spatiality. This network serves as evidence of the circulatory nature of the territory and recreates traditional Andean medical knowledge in a neoliberal context characterized by structural vulnerability.

Fraternidades folklóricas bolivianas entre lo móvil y lo inmóvil

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Si los estudios anteriores sobre la presencia boliviana en São Paulo, Brasil se han centrado en las relaciones laborales en la industria textil, cuya perspectiva analítica es inmóvil, otro fenómeno desborda hoy la experiencia de los migrantes bolivianos en la ciudad: las fraternidades folklóricas. Constituyen nuevas sociabilidades políticas y económicas, sin abandonar, no obstante, el aspecto migrante. Tanto en la organización interna de las fraternidades como en las fiestas que organizan, se establecen flujos transnacionales de mercancías, que van desde trajes a máquinas de costura, o desde grandes sumas de dinero a alimentos "típicos", formando mercados paralelos operados, sobre todo, por agentes en tránsito a través de las fronteras. En este sentido, repiten una dinámica de circulación económica que transformó la economía boliviana en las décadas de 1980 y 1990 (Rosa Rea, 2016). Sin embargo, más que intercambios materiales, estos mercados también significan movibilidades de imágenes, ideas y narrativas que no sólo los refuerzan, sino que, al mismo tiempo, sostienen la continuidad de

las fraternidades y sus celebraciones. Para los bolivianos que viven en São Paulo, estos flujos representan también la (re)organización de sus posiciones sociales, en las que cada uno debe bailar la danza (y en la fraternidad) que conviene al lugar socioeconómico que ocupa.

La relación del capital económico y cultural en los jóvenes comerciantes de la calle

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El presente resumen se refiere a la relación del capital económico y cultural en los jóvenes comerciantes, que es parte de una investigación que se ha realizado en Santiago de Chile y El Alto para una tesis doctoral. En ese sentido, se advierten los capitales económico y cultural como una estrategia de ascenso social de los jóvenes en economías familiares precarias. En Santiago de Chile, los jóvenes comerciantes poseen mayor capital cultural incorporado por las habilidades y destrezas que desarrollan en un empleo formal o eventual; sin embargo, disponen de poco tiempo para dedicar a sus estudios escolares o superior, porque dedican más tiempo al comercio de la calle que es lo que les permite generar ingresos y avizorar un futuro laboral estable, pero de manera independiente. Esta situación en la ciudad de El Alto, Bolivia significa mayores ventajas por la permisividad del comercio de la calle, siendo una labor que no solo emplea a jóvenes sino a personas adultas predominantemente. Pero, es recurrente encontrar a jóvenes vendiendo en la calle diferentes mercancías de bajo costo y su tiempo con sus estudios. En suma, significa estrategias de acumulación de capital económico y cultural institucional.