



UNDER THE FLYOVER: HOMELESS PEOPLE, POWER OF CHOICE AND THE PRACTICE OF AUTONOMY THROUGH AN EXCHANGE FAIR

LUCIANE LUCAS DOS SANTOS

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: LUCIANE LUCAS DOS SANTOS, CENTRE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF COIMBRA, COLÉGIO DE S. JERÓNIMO, LARGO D. DINIS, APARTADO 3087 3000-995 COIMBRA, PORTUGAL. EMAIL: LUCIANELUCAS@CES.UC.PT

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ABSTRACT

AS IT IS CONSIDERED A FLOW ZONE, NOBODY PAYS ATTENTION TO FLYOVERS IN THE CITIES NOR TO THEIR REGULAR INHABITANTS, HOMELESS PEOPLE. REGARDLESS OF THEIR SOCIAL INVISIBILITY, HOMELESS PEOPLE DO NOT SOLELY ADOPT STRATEGIES TO FIGHT AGAINST MARGINALISATION BUT ALSO ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE CERTAIN ECONOMIC AUTONOMY. THIS PAPER FOCUSES ON A LOCAL ECONOMIC EXPERIENCE, WHERE HOMELESS PEOPLE, UNDER A LARGE BRAZILIAN FLYOVER, GET TOGETHER TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN AN EXCHANGE FAIR WHERE A SOCIAL CURRENCY IS USED. I ARGUE THAT WE MUST DRAW ATTENTION TO THE EMERGENCE OF DIFFERENT AND COMPLEX FORMS OF COLLABORATIVE WORK AND COLLECTIVE CONSUMPTION, SINCE THEY MAY RESCUE CITIZENSHIP, PROMOTE A CERTAIN KIND OF ECONOMIC AUTONOMY, AND CONSTITUTE A POWERFUL TOOL AGAINST SOCIAL INVISIBILITY. I ALSO DISCUSS THE DIFFERENT CONSUMPTION PERSPECTIVE THAT HAS BEEN CONSOLIDATED THROUGH THIS INITIATIVE, BY BRINGING FORWARD OTHER FORMS OF CONSUMPTION NOT BASED ON SOCIAL DISTINCTION.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

LUCIANE LUCAS DOS SANTOS IS A SENIOR RESEARCHER AT THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF COIMBRA, AND A MEMBER OF THE STUDY GROUP ON SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AT CES (ECOSOL/CES). SHE WAS RESEARCHER AT THE ALICE PROJECT – STRANGE MIRRORS, UNSUSPECTED LESSONS, AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL, COORDINATED BY BOAVENTURA DE SOUSA SANTOS. HER RESEARCH INTERESTS ARE: POSTCOLONIAL AND DECOLONIAL STUDIES ON ECONOMICS, FEMINIST ECONOMICS AND FEMINIST AESTHETICS. EMAIL: LUCIANELUCAS@CES.UC.PT



Introduction

This article emerges from a larger research project on non-capitalist exchange circuits, whose main goals were concurrently to reach a postcolonial and critical assessment of consumption and an identification of alternative forms of consumption and economic organisation. The analysis I propose here gives emphasis to one of the local exchange fairs I studied, particularly characterised for grouping homeless people and for stimulating economic exchanges between them, on the one hand, and also between them and associated production initiatives, on the other. This experience took place underneath a large flyover – the Glicerio flyover – in the centre of São Paulo, the biggest city in Brazil.

I have structured my argument in four parts. The first one depicts the homeless people situation in Brazil and briefly discusses the usual misunderstanding regarding not solely their condition as a labour force but also their strategies to face the marginalisation of which they are usually victims. The second part stresses some relevant characteristics of solidarity economy initiatives in Brazil, emphasising the common points and the differences concerning the concept of social enterprises. The third part highlights exchange fairs as experiences which might promote a different kind of consumption – not grounded on the social distinction rule, which is usually considered universal. By social distinction from consumption – discussed by authors such as Veblen, Simmel and Bourdieu – I refer to the need for someone to be legitimated and differentiated through lifestyle and material/symbolic consumption.² In the last part of the paper, I analyse the Glicerio exchange fair, stressing the collaborative work which the homeless people performed: assisting in the very organisation of the fair and participating in the informal, associated production of some items available to be exchanged. Thus, this article aims to discuss: (1) the daily public invisibility of homeless people, evincing what Boaventura de Sousa Santos called the fascism of social apartheid, which refers to the “social segregation of the excluded through the division of cities into savage and civilized zones” (2014, p. 128); (2) the survival strategies that homeless people have adopted in order to reach relative material autonomy; (3) the social achievements brought about by collaborative forms of organising economy, constituting a social safety network; and (4) the very invisibility of these collective and local economic arrangements whose logic may not fit into standard economic theories, particularly the scarcity law. After discussing these ideas, I will present some preliminary conclusions I have outlined departing from the fieldwork.

Some additional words should be said about methodology and theoretical framework. During the participative observation, in which all these aspects were closely witnessed, ten people were interviewed about the Glicerio exchange fair (with five in-depth interviews and a focus group with five participants). Four additional spontaneous statements by homeless people and community leaders were recorded, clarifying some aspects regarding the fair project, the association responsible for the monthly event, and the projects coupled with this solidarity fair. To support my arguments, I depart from some concepts proposed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (particularly the monoculture of the universal and the global) as well as from postcolonial studies applied to the field of economics, represented by authors such as S. Charusheela, Eiman Zein-Elabdin, and Antonio Callari. I also draw on postcolonial feminist theories and on some studies concerned with community economies and post capitalist framework (particularly the contributions brought by J. K. Gibson-Graham).

Who are the homeless people in Brazil?

City dwellers usually consider a flyover to be a flow zone, a mere point of connection between public (or private) spaces in town. The invisibility of the flow zones scattered throughout the city can only be compared to the invisibility of their usual inhabitants, homeless people. This very large human contingent reaches about 16.000 people³ in the city of São Paulo alone, and, according to a national census carried out in 2008 (MDS, 2008), this number has increased to 31.922 people in Brasil⁴, with respect to the surveyed 71 Brazilian municipalities. This number is in fact likely to be much higher, since many cities were not included in the sum. More recently, an estimate presented a new and astonishing number: that there were 101.854 homeless people in Brazil in 2015 (Natalino, 2016). In little more than a decade, in the central area of São Paulo, the number of homeless people nearly doubled, reaching 15.905 in 2015 (FIPE, 2015a, 2015b). Indeed, “the city of São Paulo accumulates the largest homeless population in Brazil” (Rosa and Ferreira, 2016, p. 27, my translation). As it can be seen from this framework, we are facing a large invisible city within the city itself.

Notwithstanding the prevalent social representations regarding homeless people, these men and women usually perform

several informal jobs as part of the invisible labour force in the city. According to the previously mentioned national census (MDS, 2008, p. 10), about 70,9 % of homeless people carry out paid work as recyclable material collectors (27,5 %), parking attendants (14,1 %), construction workers (6,3 %), cleaning personnel (4,2 %), and dockers (3,1 %), to name but a few. Equally important is the fact that 58,6 % of the interviewees said that they had a profession.⁵ It is also known that, despite living on the streets, many of them send the little money earned through these informal jobs to their families. The public opinion's reluctance to perceive and recognise homeless people's work reveals a thorny issue: that we are facing a wider framework of public invisibility (Gonçalves Filho, 2004), social humiliation, and political obliteration. Homeless people's bodies are deliberately erased, both in the context of an urban plan, which ignores their presence and mobility right in the city, and in the inconceivable absence of official and reliable numbers to document their situation (Natalino, 2016). Treated as social outcasts, homeless people got used to recurring humiliation, which has produced two life-changing consequences: (1) the sense of having no rights; (2) a bodily presentiment of harassment and public humiliation wherever they are (Gonçalves Filho, 2004, p. 12).

Nonetheless, despite all the invisibility, these numbers concerning labour pose a threat to the prevalent social representations according to which homeless people have neither work capacity nor ability to manage their needs. Notwithstanding the evidence of this misinterpretation, overlapping inequalities are likely to be deepened. Inequalities relative to class, race, and sexual identity, to name but a few, seem to be crossed in the streets at a growing rate. Consequently, some people who belong to various identity groups simultaneously may face undeniable difficulties, not solely when it comes to getting a formal job, but also when applying for a permanent shelter – which is a common situation among homeless *travestis*. For instance, as a means to obtaining shelter for the night, it is not unusual that some homeless *travestis* are forced to dress according to a gender they are not comfortable with.

Social enterprises or solidarity economy initiatives to face social vulnerability? Some contextual differences

Extreme poverty and social inequality are serious problems in Brazil. Not because it is usually considered an underdeveloped country – as some authors will argue – but because it is undeniably marked by unequal wealth distribution. Regarding this issue, I align with the postcolonial perspective on economics, which opts for the concept of a “subaltern postcolonial world” when referring to the “formerly colonised regions” (Zein-Elabdin & Charusheela, 2004, p. 2). According to this postcolonial perspective, the very narrative of development and, consequently, the concepts of poverty and riches as well as the “guidelines” to overcome the former, have epistemologically contributed to a believed “precedence of modern European societies as a basis for its theory of history” (Zein-Elabdin & Charusheela, 2004, p. 2).

I depart from this theoretical perspective to argue that some undeniably relevant European and/or North American frameworks for considering and reducing poverty might not explain or even properly address the realities of marginalised people in the Global South⁶ – particularly the articulation these people may build, sometimes in informal ways, to deal with the absence of the state and the manifested market's disdain for them. This articulation among the poor and the socially vulnerable, supported or not by institutions and/or local governments, has assumed a political dimension insofar as they question the uniqueness of the capitalist market concerning their everyday provision. Given that the economy should not be reduced to one of its historical expressions, that is, the market (Polanyi, 1957a, p. 234), it is worth stressing that subaltern⁷ people, through insurgent arenas⁸ (Fraser, 1990), have developed surviving strategies, by reinvigorating the principles of reciprocity, redistribution, exchange, and householding in community arrangements. Regardless of the relevance of factors such as innovation, efficiency, and economic sustainability, taken from for-profit businesses, some popular and alternative economic initiatives consider other characteristics worth being valued, namely the capacity for fostering a safety network or the respect for people's rhythm and expectations within the community.

In this sense, I argue that the initiative I aim to analyse regarding homeless people is better framed in terms of solidarity economy than of social economy or social entrepreneurship. As previously debated by Hespanha and Lucas dos Santos (2016), Laville (2011) and Roque Amaro (2016), there are differences among these concepts, which does not mean a fruitful dialogue cannot be stimulated or complementarities achieved.

These differences are said to be related to a range of aspects: (1) the agent who is responsible for promoting and running the initiative, (2) the role played (or not) by the state, (3) the nature of the relationship with the market, (4) the option for a centralised/collective management, and (5) the main goal towards the benefited groups (Hespanha & Lucas dos Santos, 2016, pp. 38-41). I will return to this issue later. But, first of all, it is timely to discuss the concept of social enterprise, widely used to refer to a very diversified set of organisations with strong focus on social aims. This discussion is particularly relevant for this paper since social enterprise has been a concept applied to economic experiences similar to the one I analyse here. That is to say, social enterprise has been considered a key concept on issues such as “the structural unemployment of groups excluded from the labour market (...) urban regeneration, environmental services, and the provision of other public goods or services (...)” (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006). It is worth noting that there is extensive literature on this issue that discusses the very possibilities for social enterprise, especially within European and US contexts (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006, 2008; Galera & Borzaga, 2009; Hulgard, 2014; Laville & Nyssens, 2001; Laville, Lemaître & Nyssens, 2006; Teasdale, 2011).

Despite the relevance and dissemination of social enterprise worldwide, a consensus has not been achieved relative to its meaning. As has been acutely remarked by Teasdale (2011), social enterprise assumes a changeable form, as it is outlined by different actors according to different discourses and different academic frameworks. He is not alone in his analysis. Defourny and Nyssens (2006) also recognise that social enterprise, as a concept, may sound vague in some contexts, but remember that, in an European framework, it plays an important role in building a theoretical bridge between non-profit organisations and cooperatives. It is also worth mentioning that there are internal differences in the field between US and European approaches – the latter of which is represented by the European Association for Social Enterprise Research (widely known as EMES – European Research Network). It could be said that the American approach refers to “a ‘different way’ of doing business when compared to conventional enterprises and also of providing social services when compared to public agencies”. For the European framework, in turn, “collective and participatory dimensions continue to be a key feature (...)” (Galera & Borzaga, 2009, p. 213). However, as noted by Teasdale (2011), both approaches cope with two issues/challenges: the emphasis on social or economic goals, on the one hand, and a concern with questions such as ownership and democratic control, on the other. The multiplicity of formats can be better understood with Teasdale’s words:

The label social enterprise has been applied to a range of phenomena. It has been used to refer to earned income strategies by nonprofits (Dees, 1998); voluntary organisations delivering public services (Di Domenico et al., 2009); democratically controlled organisations blending social and economic goals (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006); profit-orientated businesses operating in public welfare fields (Kanter and Purrington, 1998), or having a social conscience (Harding, 2010); and community enterprises addressing social problems (Williams, 2007). The only defining characteristics central to each of these definitions are the primacy of social aims and the centrality of trading (Peattie and Morley, 2008) (2011, p. 3).

Social enterprise means different things to different people across time and context. It is a label that has been applied to worker cooperatives and employee-owned firms; not-for-profit local regeneration initiatives; private sector organisations who pay less than half their profits as dividends and self-identify as social enterprises; charities that earned income; and the privatisation of public services. These different organisational forms are linked to different practitioner discourses, and explained by different academic theories (2011, p. 16, my emphasis).

Nonetheless, despite the fact that social enterprise may refer to worker cooperatives, employee-owned firms, and community enterprises, as argued by Simon Teasdale, further approaching the solidarity economy framework, I argue that solidarity economy in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, is characterised by some distinctive traits which distance it from the prevailing concept of social enterprise – more connected to social economy and third sector debates. It does not mean that social enterprise cannot be framed in terms of solidarity economy, as recently outlined by Coraggio, Laville, Hillenkamp, and other researchers (Coraggio et al., 2015). When proposing that “social enterprise is arguably positioned between the private and public spheres” (2015, p. 236), I consider that Laville and these researchers have broadened the scope of the social enterprise debate in two directions: (1) the possibility of considering initiatives which may be informal and closer to the logic of the private space of the householding – found, for instance, in popular markets driven by women from peripheral areas of Latin America;

and (2) the possibility of broadening the epistemological limits of the 'political', by integrating those initiatives that can constitute subaltern arenas (Fraser, 1990), usually invisible for a middle class-driven public sphere.

Despite the emancipatory frame proposed by the EMES concept of social enterprise⁹ (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006), emphasising "the importance of participative governance" (Coraggio et al., 2015, p. 234), I consider that the very concepts of autonomy and political dimension should be broadened and further discussed. There are economic experiences which are not taken into consideration right now simply because of their informality, autonomy of decision regarding profit and non-profit institutions which cover them, or non-compliance to performance guidelines brought by state or support organisations. Questions remain: to what extent may the idea of economic initiatives governed by the people who created them (Defourny, 2001 apud Defourny & Nyssens, 2006) be applied to collectivities themselves? To what extent are they allowed to deviate from the outside-modelled development guidelines?

Even though it is difficult to find solidarity economy initiatives in Brazil that are totally independent of the organisations supporting them, I consider premature to label, in the first place, some popular economic experiences, grounded on the subjects' autonomy and shared-management, as social entrepreneurship. Solidarity economy, from the perspective of the South, is expected to boost the outlining of economic solutions by the community itself, in line with its rhythms, temporalities, and local knowledge. It means that outside-modelled development guidelines should be renounced as much as possible. Besides, it is likely that community rhythms and perspectives do not fit the support institutions' goals and guidelines. That is why collectivities in solidarity economy should not be taken for the support associations related to them.

Concerning the popular economic initiative, the Glicerio exchange fair, which I intend to describe further on, there is a non-profit organisation responsible for economic and professional support. Hence, one can expect that an experience like that should be interpreted from a social enterprise standpoint, as a community enterprise with social aims or, more likely, as an association devoted to facing social vulnerability of marginalised people. Despite the reality of the latter, it is worth stressing the relevance of the context in which this and other exchange fairs have taken place, since, in the case of Brazilian solidarity economy, support organisations are supposed to foster the autonomy of the collectivities they endorse. The prominence and leadership are thus given to the community. Likewise, collective decisions and self-management are non-negotiable stepping-stones, even if these decisions compromise or delay the initiative efficiency or the support organisation's goals.

In practical terms, the Glicerio exchange fair for homeless people distances itself from social entrepreneurship and, consequently, from the usual social enterprise model for various reasons: (1) it is not grounded on a model of economic efficiency or social insertion; (2) it does not aim to produce goods tailored for the market demands, meaning that the set-up of the fair does not rely on the supply-demand pair; (3) the focus is collective, meaning that emancipatory sociabilities and the autonomy of the group are prioritised in comparison with each participant's financial autonomy; (4) there is no concern with replicability (a highly valued idea in social entrepreneurship), whereas scale and impact are carefully treated since they can be biased; (5) management and marketing discourses are not prevailing but are replaced by local forms of expression and understanding.

Exchange Trading Systems: Definitions and purposes

Solidarity markets, also known as alternative exchange systems, are constituted by groups of people who decide to meet to exchange products, services, and knowledge. These people are expected to bring goods produced by themselves, although things considered as being of no use for them any longer might also be available for exchange. A great variety of services may be developed, ranging from daily activities – such as harvesting crops, taking care of children, driving someone to the doctor, or paying the bills for someone with mobility difficulties – to professional competences, such as sewing clothes, giving private lessons, working as a carpenter or a bricklayer. These exchanges are performed by means of a social currency, which is created and run by the community itself, without mandatory parity between this social currency and the official one. Just to illustrate this idea, a unit of a social currency may be equivalent, for instance, to a dozen of eggs, a loaf of bread, or a certain quantity of recyclable cans or bottles (Lucas dos Santos, 2012; Lucas dos Santos and Caitana, 2014; Soares, 2011). Otherwise, the parity may be based on the official currency. The community itself will make the decision.

However, social currencies are not indispensable in order for exchange fairs to exist. There are many economic exchange

experiences worldwide which prefer not to use a currency, instead opting for direct exchanges (Lucas dos Santos and Caitana, 2014; Sotiropoulou, 2012). Notwithstanding some communities' concern with the issuing of a complementary currency, the fact is that alternative systems of payment have increased at a striking rate. It is possible to say that, nowadays, "[w]ell over 5,000 complementary currency systems have been established worldwide to date", ranging from "very large systems, such as the WIR-Cooperation Ring, to small neighbour to neighbour exchange circles" (Martignoni, 2012, p. 1). These economic initiatives may also assume different forms, according to different classification proposals (Blanc, 2011; DeMeulenaere, 2007; Lietaer, 2001; Lietaer and Primavera, 2013; Martignoni, 2012; Tichit, Mathonnat and Landivar, 2016). Likewise, the chosen format is variable. As recalled by North (2007, p. xi), the "currency may be in the form of a note, a check, a scorecard, or just an entry on a computer", thus "members trade with other members of the network at markets or by contacting each other through a directory or a notice board".

Community currencies are, at a first glance, just a way to exchange goods, services, and knowledge. Nonetheless, they may play a political role since they provide the community with autonomy to discuss and interfere on the issues of value (for instance, stimulating demurrage¹⁰ or proposing different forms of parity). But regardless of the political dimension a community currency may have, which I address below, for the sake of the discussion here I will focus primarily on the very concept of the exchange fair.

First and foremost, I argue that solidarity fairs strengthen the social dynamics as they value the assorted knowledge available in the community. These informal exchange practices generate a virtuous circuit of economic and social self-organisation, despite the usual unemployment situation or structural poverty which many collectivities may face. The presence of a social currency (in a virtual format or on paper) not only amplifies the possibilities of exchange in both time and space – as well as between people with products of different use-values – but also avoids the draining of community economic resources, especially in the peripheries of big cities. In addition, exchange fairs and social currencies have questioned the apparently unquestionable universality of scarcity law. This happens because social currency allows someone to acquire what he/she needs even in the absence of money, and, at the same time, enables this person to make his/her surpluses, skills, and knowledge available to neighbours who are in the same precarious situation. Although there is a strong likelihood that there are few surpluses to be exchanged, the community is capable of creating a kind of safety network by connecting its members. This network, in turn, may quickly transform someone's sparse daily resources into useful services for another community member – services that would probably not be traded outside a formal job or without a regular commercial infrastructure. These initiatives stimulate the possibility of abundance by means of a collective arrangement, which gathers the surpluses of each participant. An interviewee who usually attends some solidarity exchange fairs explains the idea:

(...) Santo Amaro Exchange Fair happens in the end of the month, when the wage doesn't exist anymore (...) There were months in which my fridge was empty and my storeroom was asking for help... At that time, I used to go to Santo Amaro exchange fair and carry my Herbalife products. I offered facial cleansing and came back home with vegetables and non-perishable food for the rest of the week until the pay-day (...) When you arrive at the beginning of the fair, you can find 'taioba', chicory, mustard, in short, many things, banana, lemon, lime (...) you can get vegetables for a week (...) Exchange fair is the solution for who doesn't have money (...) Jeans are turned into food. Mobile phone chargers become food stuff¹¹ (Anonymous 1).

Together with the Santo Amaro exchange fair¹², which is organised for and with the support of users of mental health service, the Glicerio exchange fair formed part of the solidarity exchange circuits with a more diversified assortment of goods in São Paulo. It probably happened because these two fairs were designed as solidarity exchange banks.¹³ It means, in practical terms, that they amplified the assortment of goods by inviting informal workers' cooperatives to also participate in the exchange circuits. Payment, however, was expected to be always made in social currencies.

More specifically, the Glicerio exchange fair (picture 1) was an economic initiative outlined about ten years ago by a partnership between an institution focused on supporting homeless people in São Paulo – My Street My Home Association (Associação Minha Rua Minha Casa)¹⁴, henceforth AMRMC – and the Technological Hatchery of Popular Cooperatives (ITCP-FGV), attached to the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (a Brazilian university in São Paulo). The fair project aimed at stimulating economic and symbolic autonomy among homeless people. Men and women living under the Glicerio flyover and nearby

were invited to take part in the organisation of the fair since the very first arrangements, and became responsible, among other chores, for assembling the tents in which the products were later displayed. They also performed different tasks regarding the organisation of this monthly event, such as washing bathrooms, helping local cooks prepare meals, and doing the dishes. In return for each performed task, they were given ten *mirucas* (the equivalent value of ten reais, the Brazilian official currency) by which they could buy different goods they needed: clothes, food, and personal hygiene supplies. It is worth mentioning that the prices of most available goods were indeed symbolic, as the social currency was just a tool for facilitating and amplifying the possibilities of exchange in time and space. At the end of each fair, the participants could keep the amount of “money” they received as well as the non-used currency in a kind of local bank (called ecobank), and withdraw what he/she needed each solidarity fair edition.

It is relevant to clarify that *miruca* (picture 2), as a social currency, is neither expected to be saved nor turned into a way of capitalising on exchanges. What I mean is that, unlike bank money, accumulation and profiteering are not watchwords in solidarity exchange fairs, including the Glicerio exchange fair. In order to discourage this impulse for retaining social currencies, some collectivities have opted for ‘demurrage-based money’ or ‘demurrage-based cc’, in which cc means complementary currency (Godschalk, 2012). In so doing, circuit members are supposed to use community currencies as a means for participants to purchase goods to the extent needed, but, by contrast, in a much faster way than the official currency.



Picture 2 – *Miruca*
(private photo archive)

Picture 1 – The Glicerio exchange
fair under the Glicerio flyover
(private photo archive)

In 2014, after almost seven years of operation, the Glicerio exchange fair unfortunately had to cease its activities due to lack of funding. This economic initiative was part of a larger programme for homeless people in the city of São Paulo conducted by the Fraternal Assistance Organisation (OAF), a non-profit institution responsible for different projects through both local public funds and private grants. As a matter of fact, OAF sponsored some very interesting programmes for homeless people related to housing and productive integration – among them, the AMRMC conviviality centre, created in 1994 underneath the Glicerio flyover. This association – used to proposing many activities in regimen of collective work (*mutirão*) among workers, volunteers, and associated homeless people – had been the structure responsible for the Glicerio exchange fair for many years. This association did not work according to a charity perspective but, instead, was permanently concerned with stimulating homeless people’s autonomy as well as with encouraging them for the world of work. The association was, however, discontinued due to lack of funding as well as problems sustaining the entire infrastructure below the flyover. Since the association closed, other programmes were experimented with, such as the project “Human Rights under the flyover”, which gathered homeless people and the surrounding community around art therapy activities and a cultural fair. In the face of the current political context in Brazil, which has not been in favour of public policies – especially those aimed at homeless people and other minorities –, OAF decided to focus on housing rights¹⁵, particularly on the lease of social housing. The institution still maintains seven welcome centres, which provide homeless people with provisional housing in a system similar to a republic, where people are expected

to directly participate in the running of the household.

Despite the end of the Glicerio exchange fair (the last edition took place in June 2014), the initiative not only showed the possibility of creating a relative collective abundance from almost absolute individual scarcity but also suggested the epistemological broadening of the very concepts of work and payment. As underlined by Gibson-Graham (2002, p. 4), we have not properly considered the diversified and existing ways of calculating commensurability, “performing and remunerating labor” and “of producing, appropriating and distributing surplus”. What we can see at this fair is the very possibility of valuing different ways of performing labour (for instance, homeless people’s activity of collecting recyclable items in the streets) and being paid for this and other tasks concluded before and during the fair. It can be said that the payment to homeless people for the work done is useful for many reasons: firstly, because it reintroduces some of them into the world of work through a participative and self-managed approach; secondly, because this symbolic payment gives back the idea of a homeless person as a productive subject, capable of creating his/her own autonomy; and finally, because this payment, despite being a token, rescues the right of choice¹⁶.

There were four main ways of receiving social currency at the Glicerio exchange fair. In short, each participant could receive *mirucas*: (1) by working at the fair; (2) by bringing products she/he had produced; (3) by collecting recyclable items and exchanging them for *mirucas*; (4) by exchanging official money for social currency – a common solution for visitors. Taking part in an informal and associative production group and offering these products during the fair was another alternative to receive social currency and exchange them for basic goods. A prime example is the informal association whose collective work – made by homeless people or those who lived in emergency shelters for a time – took place underneath the Glicerio flyover. Art and Street Light (*Arte e Luz da Rua*) is a workshop¹⁷ created in 1999 in which reading and floor lamps made of sugarcane bagasse are collectively produced (picture 3). During the period in which the Glicerio exchange fair existed, these handmade lamps were sold at the monthly fair for *mirucas* (picture 4). Below, I offer two statements about the Art and Street Light workshop which explain the relevance of this participative (and transformative) process of popular art as well as its connection with the Glicerio exchange fair:

I worked at the Art and Street Light workshop four years ago. I have been employed for two years. Now I have a home. I owe a lot to Art and Street Light and to Edwiges. So I am very grateful to this work (...) It welcomed me at the moment I needed the most. She did not want to know where I came from, why I came. Because when you get there, you have low self-esteem when you are abandoned by the family. Then through Art and [Street] Light I did not drink. I’ve never used drugs. I just had strength for working. Today I am in vacation, so I reciprocate to Art [and Street] Light by coming to help. (Anonymous 2 - craftswoman, former homeless person; my translation)¹⁸

Afterwards, we brought clothes [received as donation after distribution to the workshop participants], as today, so that the workshop itself could get this money and exchange it for sugar, coffee, soap, birthday gifts (...) There are always one, two, three bags being filled with pet, tetra[pack], with everything (...) And then, every other month, we bring these two bags to be exchanged, and these mirucas will be used again to buy toilet soap, sugar. So we got into this exchange mood since the workshop also needs things available at the fair. If you think there is nothing at the fair the workshop needs, you’re wrong. You need a soap, you need sugar since people here don’t drink coffee without sugar. And then we were getting into this exchange mood, always bringing the lamps. And since we participate in the initiative, in the exchange process, in the changeover [from mirucas to reais], we receive reais to buy raw material to produce, then we have enjoyed this partnership¹⁹ (Hedwig Knist, known as Edwiges, coordinator of the workshop; my translation).



Picture 3 – Producing lamps from sugarcane bagasse under the Glicerio flyover (private photo archive).



Picture 4 – Lamps collectively produced underneath the Glicerio flyover available for exchanging in the Glicerio exchange fair (private photo archive)

As is evident, four of the five aforementioned alternatives to receive social currency were directly related to performing a job. Nevertheless, as these tasks did not correspond to the social imagery of formal and regular paid employment, they could be easily considered residual. Even though it is not possible for homeless people to overcome economic precariousness by means of a social currency, it is worth stressing some aspects concerning the connection between community currency and social emancipation: (1) social currency enables different ways of payment in the absence of money; (2) gathering people with, to a certain extent, different resources and needs, social currency allows communities in economic vulnerability to transform the almost absolute absence of resources into a creative and fair form of redistribution between community members; (3) environmental goals can also be targeted since recyclable items collected in the streets may be exchanged for *mirucas*; (4) different parities may be tested, making people rethink the way they are used to ascribing value to goods and services.

There is another aspect I aim to highlight: the Glicerio exchange fair had never been a charity project. People were not given the usual plus-sized clothes for which they were expected to be grateful. Regarding this silencing violence, according to which a person could be constrained, even plastered in an unending debtor position, Godelier (2008) has reminded us that gift-giving may also transform inequality into hierarchy due to its ambiguous nature: on the one hand, generosity and sharing; on the other, symbolic violence. Conversely, the Glicerio exchange fair focused on the building of promising sociabilities, which established, in turn, a feeding ground for citizenship reconstruction. Citizenship here does not necessarily have to do with the very idea of accessing basic goods but appears, otherwise, as a result of retaking the power of choice and rescuing the status of presence.²⁰ It leads us to another issue of heated debate, which is the concept of social humiliation. Individuals who have been ignored all their lives are permanently faced with the idea of having their power of presence fiercely struck (Weil apud Gonçalves Filho, 2004). Humiliation, here, has to do with this unending invisibility and refers to “the status of who lost the self-perception as a donor. Humiliated is that one who tends not to be perceived as having conditions to offer something” (Gonçalves Filho, 2004, p. 43, my translation). What was so special about this fair underneath a flyover was precisely the way it posed a threat to this socially agreed invisibility.

The Glicerio exchange fair, as an economic initiative, also evinced the assorted ways by which people can organise their daily material lives, demonstrating the need of an epistemological revision of the very concept of economy. The dominant discourse disseminated by economics as a field does not effectively handle the economic diversity, as the market is just a part of the economy as we know it – and practice it – in everyday life (Gibson-Graham, 2002). This broadened perspective of ‘the economic’ is similar to the concept of economy as the field of provision, as proposed by some feminist and institutionalist economists (Ferber and Nelson, 2003; Caldas, 2010; Reis, 2011). And when we consider economy as the larger field of provision, we are likely to deepen our analysis relative to the social vulnerability of minorities, including homeless people.

Thinking of economic asymmetries and inequitable conditions of provision in a more complex way requires discussing not only lack of resources but also overlapping inequalities, which may be embodied by a person in her/his daily life due to the way gender, sexual identity, class, and race are intersected. This 'intersectionality'²¹ can be understood, according to Brah and Phoenix (2004, p. 76), as the "complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts". Thereby, considering that these overlapping layers of asymmetries and hierarchies deepen even more the social and economic vulnerability of many individuals, it follows that subaltern initiatives to face inequalities should be better framed since they mean political reaction through the constitution of "subaltern counterpublics" (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). These subaltern arenas, in turn, show us that other rationalities are possible, legitimate and contemporary, whether in aesthetic, economic, or symbolic terms.

At the same time, since the heterogeneity of the subjects is frequently struck by social representations and fictions about Otherness (Mohanty, 1986, p. 333), including those promoted by economic discourse, other logics of organising material life should gain prominence in our discussion on everyday economy – from the range of community economies to the ones which question the hegemonic imagery. Undoubtedly, economic imageries (Gibson-Graham, 1996) should be urgently challenged. In this sense, the Glicerio exchange fair undermined certainties because it gathered initiatives which not only stimulated collaborative work but also valued local knowledges, allowing community people to fight against hegemonic social representations of homeless people.

Right to the city, community belonging, and power of choice: Other aspects to be stressed

The Glicerio exchange fair also invites us to reflect upon the city and its growing privatisation. All of us have faced, on a daily basis, the social disappearance of many public spaces in the city, reduced to the condition of mere flow zones whenever in disagreement with the hegemonic aesthetics. There has been a trend towards valuing solely what can be labelled as merchandise. Although the Movement for Urban Reform in Brazil, constituted by social movements, aimed at guaranteeing the people's right to housing and to mobility as well as curbing the segregational urbanisation model, cities remained prepared to fit an entrepreneurial ideal, transforming the social right to housing into a real state market issue (Rolnik, 2013, 2016). The City Statute²², a result of this movement, tells us "a history of disputes between different urban reform projects in the country, particularly between a rights-based approach of the urban reform movement and a market-driven competitive cities spatial regime paradigm" (Rolnik, 2013, p. 54).

As was to be expected, the neoliberal project of the city had harmful effects on homeless people, who were evicted from the streets just to fall outside our field of vision. This winter, in the centre of São Paulo, in the early hours of the coldest day, homeless people were awakened with cold water-jets by a third-party cleaning company under the orders of the municipality.²³ In this context of deterioration of the rights of city dwellers, flyovers are part of this 'hygienist' project in which the urbanisation plan is connected with an elite and medium-class conception of the city.

Transformed into a meeting place, the Glicerio Flyover, in the centre of São Paulo, challenged and even confronted two basic assumptions regarding the unequal urban landscapes: (1) first, it invited people to stand in a place whose logic is the permanent flow, where gazing is almost forbidden; (2) it evoked the 'presence' of these people who, as subjects of permanent social humiliation, had only been conceived and treated as a street appendix.

In this sense, initiatives like this not solely propose a reflection on what can be considered economic but also indicate the level of power imbalance relative to the citizens' urban mobility. With respect to the geopolitics of the city, I argue that the production of space in Brazil (and not only in this country) has been graded, genderised, and racialised, reaffirming the usual privilege of particular social groups concerning the right to the city. The expansion of a hostile architecture to maintain the invisibility of poverty (through anti-homeless spikes, for instance), euphemistically called defensive architecture, as well as the privatisation of public spaces for segregating people have demonstrated that we are facing a kind of social apartheid (Santos, 2003, 2006).

Despite having been a singular initiative with budget limits, shortage of labour, and bureaucratic constraints to be main-

tained, the Glicerio exchange fair had challenged, to a certain extent, this apartheid cartography, by turning a flow zone into a meeting point, a place of invisibility and segregation into a safety network, a readout of poverty into a space for exchanging and exercising the right to choose. In fact, this is one of the most powerful aspects to be highlighted. In this regard, Rosana Baesso, the coordinator of AMRMC, states the following:

*This fair allows the homeless person to access food and products which are not available to him. How does he manage to purchase? Working. So he brings recyclable material, he brings products he finds in the streets, he cooperates by doing chores at the association... all of this will be worth social currency. And on the day of the fair he will be able to consume anything he wants: a razor, a piece of clothing in the proper size and a colour he appreciates. The exchange fair also contributes to the homeless person's self-esteem. That's the retaking of his power of choice. He will decide, at least here in the fair, what he wants to buy - whether a razor or a piece of clothing... if he wants a snack or prefers lasagna (...) **Here he is seen by those who don't live in the street, he steps out of anonymity. Because people get used to walking by those on the street without noticing them anymore. They became part of the city landscape. Not here. Here people look, bump into, touch and talk to each other**²⁴ (my translation and emphasis).*

The level of abundance which might be drawn from the Glicerio exchange fair help us question the universality of the scarcity law. I do not refer to the diversity of goods and services brought to the fair, but to the capacity of people to create economic flows in the neighbourhood even in the face of the almost absolute absence of money. A person is simultaneously able to be supplied with some basic goods and make some of her/his products and services available for other people who are in the same situation. It is also worth mentioning that, in a city marked by an unfettered waste of resources, the Glicerio exchange fair and the Art and Street Light workshop were prime examples of associated production by reusing what is usually considered to be refuse.

Still concerning the scarcity law, it is important to emphasise that scarcity is not expected to be invalidated as an effective issue in market societies – it is true that resources in general are scarce and that people are supposed to compete to acquire them. What I argue, though, is that, despite the scarcity of resources, taken still more seriously within contexts of extreme poverty, we can be surprised by an unexpected absence of competition for obtaining them. In the Glicerio exchange fair, people are, from the very beginning, aware of their finite and scant resources; even so, they bet that, by constituting a kind of collective asset through each participant's surplus, they can deal more wisely with their own scarcity. I argue, then, that competition for resources which are scant in the community may be replaced by cooperation among people as a means to obtain those resources. Redistribution of what is collectively available, just to give an example, may amplify the possibilities of purchasing what is needed.

In fact, scarcity is a concept particularly connected with the idea of a market and makes sense in the context of a formalist perspective. From a Polanyian substantive approach of economics (Polanyi, 1957b, 1977) and a plural perspective of economy (Polanyi, 1977; Laville, 2014), there are other principles besides the market to be considered in the shaping of everyday provisioning. Thus, I would like to stress two aspects concerning the scarcity law and exchange fairs: (1) in popular and solidarity exchange circuits, scarcity can be partially fiddled by unifying the resources into a collective domain and by stimulating forms of redistribution; (2) generally speaking, scarcity may be challenged not solely by other principles of substantive economy, such as reciprocity and redistribution, but also by the very acknowledgement that scarcity only exists as embodied in a concrete and situated reality. Scarcity is, let us not forget, an abstract starting point, and we are not expected to just concentrate on the scant resources, recalling that economics "also helps us amplify and improve the existing resources (...) raising their availability" (Reis, 2014, p. 4, my translation). With regard to this issue, Nuno Machado, referring respectively to the ideas of Karl Polanyi and Harry Pearson, explains the following:

Provisioning is universal, but the reason by which it is efficient or maximising depends on empirical facts. For a substantive economist or an economic sociologist, economic rationality should be considered as an institutionalised value. Moreover, even if it is part of a given society, economic rationality does not exist in a vacuum but

is otherwise embedded in a complex set of values which cannot be assumed as consistent [by themselves] or non-competitive between them (Stanfield et al., 2004, p. 258-260; 1986, p. 49-50; 1980, p. 600) (Machado, 2012, p. 181; my translation).

Just like the concept of scarcity, the surplus theorem is only useful when the conditions for a specific surplus are institutionally defined. Such as the premise of the scarcity, the concept of a general surplus stems from that ideal and institutional compound which [not solely] assumes a man as a saving atom with a tendency for exchange and negotiation [but also] provides the market system in order to make [them] possible (Machado, 2012, p. 183; my translation).

As an isolated experience, the Glicerio exchange fair may not be convincing enough to rattle the fundamentals of the scarcity law. However, it demonstrated that neither the supply-demand pair nor the market-based pricing model can fully explain the underlying dynamics which encompass the principles of economic integration in the solidarity markets, i.e. reciprocity, redistribution, house holding,²⁵ and exchange.

The last two issues I would like to address relative to the Glicerio exchange fair are concerned with consumption. I have remarked that a subaltern and different type of consumption seems to flourish in popular and self-managed economic initiatives such as this. In popular and solidarity circuits – Glicerio included – it is noticeable that one does not consume exactly to be different in comparison with Otherness – a characteristic of capitalist consumption – but rather to guarantee a kind of connection with the collectivity.²⁶ Maintaining a community safety network in contexts of permanent precariousness seems to be more important than standing out from the pairs. Social distinction, so acutely described by Bourdieu (1984), does not make sense in the context of the Glicerio exchange fair and other solidarity markets.

In the Glicerio exchange fair, but also in other solidarity fairs I visited during my fieldwork, I could see a different logic cheering the circulation of goods. In Curitiba (South of Brazil), for instance, the tapestry made by a craftswoman was a success because her products were associated to herself and her history. Buying her crafts corresponded to keeping her in mind, to recognise her efforts, and to validate her struggle as a woman and as an active member of solidarity economy.²⁷ The same could be remarked in the Glicerio exchange fair concerning the sugarcane bagasse lamps produced collectively under the flyover within the context of the Art and Street Light workshop. They were sold in the fair and outside it, not only for the beauty of the pieces produced but also for the history of resistance they tell.

If social distinction is a tacit goal that moves people when choosing goods and consuming representations (Lucas dos Santos, 2015), it is also true that affections are involved every time something is bought to someone else as a gift or a gesture of care. Conversely, it can be said that there is a considerable difference between capitalist and solidarity consumption. In the first, there is a permanent play between belonging to a group and being different in order to be recognised by peers. In solidarity circuits, hierarchies are badly perceived and not welcomed. In this sense, belonging implies not solely refusing hierarchies as much as possible but also being connected to the needs of the others.

Thus, in these initiatives, symbolic autonomy might be of greater relevance than the economic autonomy itself. Even though solidarity economy in Brazil has focused on tackling social vulnerability, exchange fairs may be organised or maintained for other reasons. Numbers do matter and, in reality, they may not be uplifting if these initiatives are measured by market productivity criteria. Besides being concerned with people's material needs, but in agreement with community rhythms and customs, exchange fairs rest heavily on the constitution of safety networks. Coupled with this self-assistance arrangement constituted by community people (whether supported by organisations or not), symbolic autonomy gains prominence insofar as it means an invitation to rescue the power of choice.

To sum up, with specific regard to the Glicerio exchange fair, it is worth mentioning how material and symbolic autonomy had been articulated over its lifetime. In terms of material consumption, homeless people nearby were able to improve their conditions of purchasing things they needed via social currency earned from their work before/during/after the fair or recyclable items exchanged for social currency. It is also relevant to stress here the perspective of valuing work. In contrast, the professional support from the staff at AMRMC seemed to be necessary to guarantee a favourable development of the fair, despite the staff's concern with the active participation of homeless people in the decisions. However, even in these circumstances

of both financial support dependency and the needed institutional backing, in symbolic terms, homeless people's self-esteem, their awareness of the power of choice, and the break with their naturalised invisibility under the flyover were remarkable and undeniable social achievements.

Conclusion

Different from the capitalist market, solidarity fairs have been concerned with symbolic and economic autonomy, also stimulating forms of reciprocity and redistribution. In this sense, solidarity exchange circuits have contributed to questioning and broadening the usual circulating economic imageries, becoming a powerful tool against the prevalent colonisation of the imagery about which Quijano (1992) warned us. That is, the vast amount of ways to guarantee the daily provision beyond the market should be considered, the latter of which has a sure place in a plural economy (Polanyi, 1977; Laville, 2011, 2014), but is never presumed to be the only one to help us organise our material lives.

Solidarity fairs, as community economic initiatives, have not only showed us the community capacity of fostering innovative methods of democratic participation and dealing with social vulnerability, but also the need for an epistemological broadening of the very concept of economy by effectively considering subaltern perspectives of organising material life.

As a matter of fact, this wide and long-standing assortment of community economies – such as self-provisioning, barter economy, volunteering, neighbourhood economy, gift-giving, collective savings – has been overshadowed by the dominant perspective of capitalist large-scale solutions. Consequently, those economic solutions which are not suitable for replication have been prematurely discarded. By this, I do not mean that small-scale initiatives are necessarily the best. But we should consider that a large-scale solution may imply, at times, alien guidelines to be followed in the name of profit-making activities, ignoring the relevance of the context, the community rhythm, or the genuine knowledge these people maintain. Regarding this, Santos (2002, p. 248) reminds us that we have been driven by the logic of a dominant scale, meaning that “the scale adopted as primordial determines the irrelevance of other possible scales.” From the perspective of the Epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2014), it reveals that concepts and ideas which are particularities connected to a specific context have been transplanted to other realities, assumed, by their dissemination, as naturally suitable and universal. In sum, a modern framework – which supports economics as it is and feeds imagery and narratives towards growth, development, and progress (Zein-Elabdin & Charusheela, 2004) – has prevented us from abandoning the myopia of large-scale solutions²⁸ and universalised concepts.

Notwithstanding the value of community economies in general and solidarity fairs in particular, these initiatives should not be expected to guarantee an endogenous economic autonomy. There are different factors which affect the capacity of these community arrangements to uphold the diversity of the goods they need. However, this is not the main aspect to be stressed concerning solidarity fairs. The symbolic autonomy seems indeed to be of greater relevance than the economic autonomy itself. As an economic initiative which appears in the context of precariousness, these short-scale experiences should not be misunderstood as a failure. As it can be demonstrated, these initiatives may strengthen the citizens' awareness of rights, public policies, and management of public resources.

It is also worth emphasising the fact that solidarity fairs propose new perspectives of sociability in contexts where processes of social isolation, social vulnerability, and neglect by the state have been naturalised. Relative to the access to basic goods and other assets, these alternative economic circuits have proved to foster a counter-hegemonic perspective of consumption in which different ways of being recognised in the collectivity and of communicating identity, not necessarily grounded on the social distinction, are consolidated.

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Endnotes

- 1 This article was prepared in the context of an international research project - "Alice Project: strange mirrors, unsuspected lessons" -, coordinated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra (Portugal) and funded by the European Research Council, 7th Framework Program of the European Union (FP/2007-2013) / ERC Grant Agreement n. [269807]. I gratefully acknowledge the ERC support as well as the postdoctoral grant given by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) through the Operational Programme Human Potential of the European Social Forum (POPH/FSE) / FCT Grant: SFRH / BPD / 68317 / 2010.
- 2 A more detailed discussion on this issue can be found in Lucas dos Santos (2015).
- 3 According to a census carried out in São Paulo in the 2011/2012 reference years (SMADS, 2011), there were 14.478 homeless people, regarding 96 municipal districts. These numbers have been continuously increased. With regard to the census carried out more recently in São Paulo (FIPE, 2015), there were 15.905 homeless people (including those individuals who were in shelters). These numbers were also presented by Rosana Baesso, a social worker who coordinated My Street My Home Association (Associação Minha Rua Minha Casa) during several years. She was one of the interviewees during the fieldwork in São Paulo.
- 4 Just to allow comparison between the numbers, the Brazilian population was estimated at 189,6 millions of people in 2008 (<http://www.inesc.org.br/noticias/noticias-gerais/2008/agosto/populacao-brasileira-chega-a-189-6-milhoes-de-habitantes-estima-ibge>) and should have been at about 207,7 millions of people in 2017 (<http://www.brasil.gov.br/cidadania-e-justica/2017/08/populacao-brasileira-passa-de-207-7-milhoes-em-2017>).
- 5 According to the 2008 national census.
- 6 Global South here does not have to do with a geographical perspective, Instead, it refers to a sociological perspective, according to which South is a concept capable of expressing the consequences suffered by formerly colonised areas. To a more detailed explanation, please see Santos (2014) and Santos & Meneses (2010).
- 7 The concept of subaltern is applied here in agreement with the Subaltern Studies. The term refers to Gramsci's concept but goes beyond it. Whereas Gramsci considered that autonomy could not be partially conquered by subaltern people (1971), Subaltern Studies' authors - such as Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Partha Chatterjee - thought the sense inherent to 'the political' should be epistemologically broadened since some subaltern perspectives of fight might not be visible by the lens of conventional historiography. For Subaltern Studies, then, subaltern autonomy may be small-scaled and incidental; even this way, this achievable autonomy could evoke challenging narratives with regard to the supposed universality of dominant perspectives of history. To know the common points and differences between Gramsci's and Subaltern's perspectives, please see: Chatterjee (1982), Guha (1982), and Góes (2013).
- 8 Nancy Fraser has proposed the concept of 'subaltern counterpublics' to refer to minorities ("alternative publics") who have been politically articulated in order to tackle the asymmetries they are used to dealing with. Subaltern counterpublics constitute insurgent arenas which extrapolate the Habermasian public sphere grounded on the idea of consensus. According to Fraser (1990: 67), "(...) members of subordinated social groups - women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians - have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative. I propose to call these *subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arena where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs". With regard to this paper, I argue that Glicerio exchange fair constitutes a kind of insurgent arena which challenges the invisibility and social humiliation to which homeless people are permanently relegated.
- 9 According to Defourny and Nyssens (2006:5-6), the EMES definition for social enterprise relies on four criteria, namely, an economic "continuous activity", "a high degree of autonomy," "a significant level of economic risk" and "a minimum amount of paid work". Regarding the second criteria, Defourny (2001 apud Defourny and Nyssens, 2006: 5) explains the following: "Social enterprises are created by a group of people on the basis of an autonomous project and they are governed by these people. They may depend on public subsidies but they are not managed, directly or indirectly, by public authorities or other organizations (federations, for-profit private firms, etc.). They have

- the right to take up their own position ('voice') as well as to terminate their activity ('exit').
- 10 Demurrage means the possibility of devaluing a currency so that it can circulate faster amongst people. According to Godschalk (2012: 59), 'demurrage' can be understood as "the built-in pre-programmed depreciation of the nominal value of a currency. The depreciation process should be durable in time, like a negative (not compound!) interest".
- 11 "A feira de Santo Amaro é no final do mês, é quando o pagamento da gente não existe mais, no último sábado do mês (...) Teve meses em que minha geladeira estava vazia e o meu armário tava pedindo um arrego e eu fui à feira de Santo Amaro, levei meus produtos da Herbalife, que eu fazia nutrição facial, fiz nutrição facial e voltei com verduras, legumes e alimentos não perecíveis para aquele resto de semana até o dia do pagamento (...) A feira de Santo Amaro, quando você chega no início você encontra taioba, almeirão, mostarda in natura, enfim, 'n' coisas, banana, limão, lima da pérsia (...) dá pra você ter legumes e verduras pra uma semana (...) O clube de trocas é a solução para quem não tem grana (...) A calça jeans vira comida. Os cabos de celular vira comida" (Anonymous 1).
- 12 This fair happens for almost 12 years in São Paulo. It has been organised in the context of an institution, CECCO-Santo Amaro (Community Centre and Cooperative), coupled with the Town Hall of São Paulo. CECCO branches are non-caring public health units concerned with social reintegration of mental health service users through craft workshops and body practices. Many times, this initiative functions as a hatchery for cooperatives. During this fair, mental health service users, together with other community participants, are responsible for assembling and disassembling tents in which the products will be displayed. They are given a certain amount of social currency (*talentos*) for this task with which they can buy exposed products (including those ones collectively produced by them). It is worth mentioning that, being an open space, this fair is also usually sought by homeless people who are used to sleeping on the bus station platform nearby.
- 13 This concept was explained by Felipe Bannitz, who was, at the beginning of the initiative, the technical coordinator of the Technological Hatchery of Popular Cooperatives (ITCP-FGV), attached to Getúlio Vargas Foundation, in São Paulo. He gave an important contribution to the shaping of the initiative under the Glicerio Flyover.
- 14 My Street My Home Association (*Associação Minha Rua Minha Casa*) is an institution created in 1994 in order to organise and support a community centre for homeless people.
- 15 Many information in this paragraph was obtained during the interview with the social worker Rosana Baesso, responsible for the fair and coordinator of My Street my Home Association when visited for fieldwork. Some additional and relevant information, especially those related to the current focus chosen by OAF, was obtained by an informal conversation by phone with Abel Rodrigues da Silva, sociologist and activist who coordinated the programme "Human Rights under the flyover".
- 16 I would like to stress here the aforementioned perspective of rescuing the power of choice as one of the most important issues to be discussed relative to exchange fairs and social vulnerability. I would not be really aware of this without the testimony of the social worker Rosana Baesso.
- 17 To know this initiative in more detail, see its homepage: <http://arteeluzdarua.org>.
- 18 "Eu trabalhei na Arte e Luz da Rua há 4 anos atrás. Hoje eu estou empregada faz 2 anos. Hoje eu tenho uma casa. Devo muito à Arte e Luz e à Edwiges. Então, eu sou muito grata a este trabalho (...) Me acolheu na hora que eu mais precisei. Não quis saber d'aonde eu vim, porque eu vim. Porque quando vc chega lá, vc chega com a auto estima baixa, quando vc é posta na rua pela família. Então, através da Arte e Luz eu não bebi. Eu nunca usei drogas. Eu só tive forças para trabalhar. Então, através da Arte e Luz, eu não bebi. Hoje estou de férias, então eu retribuo à Arte e Luz vindo ajudar eles".
- 19 "Depois a gente também colocou a roupa [recebida em doação e que sobrava após distribuição aos participantes da oficina], que nem hoje, para a própria oficina arrecadar este dinheiro e trocar por açúcar, por café, por sabonete, presentes de aniversário (...) Sempre tem um, dois, três sacos que vão enchendo com pet, com tetra, com tudo (...) E aí a gente traz a cada dois meses, a gente traz os dois sacos aqui pra trocar e estas mirucas de novo vai comprar sabonete, vai trocar açúcar. Então a gente entrou neste espírito da troca que a oficina também precisa coisas que a feira tem. Se vc acha que não tem nada na feira que a oficina precisa, tá errado. Vc precisa um sabonete no

banheiro, você precisa de açúcar que o povo não bebe café sem açúcar. E assim a gente foi entrando neste espírito da troca, trazendo as luminárias sempre. E como a gente com a luminária participa do empreendimento, da troca, da conversão, recebe os reais para comprar matéria-prima de produção, então a gente tá aproveitando bem esta parceria” (Hedwig Knist, known as Edwiges, coordinator of the workshop)”.

- 20 The concept of presence applied here has to do with the meaning proposed by Simone Weil. For her, “there is a power which is inherent to the arrival of someone (...) a power which is drastically reduced in case of people who were humiliated” (Gonçalves Filho, 2004: 44, my translation).
- 21 This concept was firstly mentioned by Kimberlé Creenshaw (1991) in order to discuss the invisibility of black women and the violence they are used to suffering in a way neither properly considered by anti-racist movements nor by white feminisms.
- 22 Concerning the City Statute in Brazil, Raquel Rolnik (2013: 56-58) adds the following: “Although the City Statute inherited much of its content from the urban reform agenda, during the 1990s, the ideas of ‘urban entrepreneurship’ also gained ground, as a neoliberal response to the political and economic crisis of the provider state (...) The neoliberal reform’s agenda that also penetrated the Brazilian state was accompanied by a discourse of participation and revalorising of civil society, defined as a ‘third sector’. This idea emptied the concept of public participation as the radicalisation of democracy and instead aligned it with the liberal concept of a minimalist state.”
- 23 To understand the situation of homeless people in São Paulo, please see these two news: <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/moradores-de-rua-sao-acordados-com-jatos-de-agua-fria-em-sp-diz-cbn-21607407> and <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-4689616/Battle-downtown-Sao-Paulo-pits-squatters-against-mayor.html>
- 24 “A feira possibilita que a pessoa da rua acesse alimentos e produtos que ele normalmente não consegue. Como é que ele vai acessar? Trabalhando. Então ele traz material reciclável, ele traz os produtos que ele encontra na rua, ele coopera aqui na associação... tudo isso vai valer a moeda social. E que no dia da feira ele vai poder consumir tudo o que ele quiser: um barbeador, uma roupa do tamanho e da cor que ele gosta (...) A feira de troca também contribui para o aumento da auto-estima da pessoa que está na rua.. é a retomada do poder de escolha dele. Ele vai decidir, pelo menos aqui dentro da feira, o que é que ele quer comprar - se ele um barbeador ou uma roupa... se ele vai querer um pastel ou se vai querer a lasanha (...) Aqui ele é enxergado por quem não está na rua, ele sai deste anonimato. Porque as pessoas vão se acostumando a passar pela pessoa que tá deitada e nem observar mais que ele existe. Já ficou parte da paisagem da cidade. Aqui não. Aqui a pessoa se olha, se esbarra, se toca, se conversa”.
- 25 With regard to householding as a possible Polanyian principle of economic integration, please see Hillenkamp (2013) and Lucas dos Santos (2016).
- 26 To understand in more detail, see Carneiro and Bez (2011), Mascarello and Machado (2014), and Mascarello (2016).
- 27 This experience in Curitiba will be analysed in more detail in a forthcoming paper, by focusing in the consumption issue.
- 28 Regarding the issue of the scales, see Santos’ concept of a “monoculture of the universal and of the global” (2002, 2007a). See also: http://www.ces.uc.pt/bss/documentos/fsm_eng.pdf.

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