

Current Notes on Economy, Society and the Law in Argentina.

Heras Monner Sans, Ana Inés.

Cita:

Heras Monner Sans, Ana Inés (2014). *Current Notes on Economy, Society and the Law in Argentina*. *Anthropology News*, 55 (8), 1-3.

Dirección estable: <https://www.aacademica.org/ana.ines.heras/30>

ARK: <https://n2t.net/ark:/13683/pomx/oxz>



Esta obra está bajo una licencia de Creative Commons.
Para ver una copia de esta licencia, visite
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.es>.

Acta Académica es un proyecto académico sin fines de lucro enmarcado en la iniciativa de acceso abierto. Acta Académica fue creado para facilitar a investigadores de todo el mundo el compartir su producción académica. Para crear un perfil gratuitamente o acceder a otros trabajos visite: <https://www.aacademica.org>.

[Current Notes on Economy, Society and the Law in Argentina](#)

<http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2014/08/14/current-notes-on-economy-society-and-the-law-in-argentina/>

Ana Inés Heras

As formerly stated, an issue continually under debate in the field of *otra economía & sociedad* is whether it is positioning differently from current capitalistic practices or is it, instead, supporting them.

In a recent article, the [Department of Political Economy at the Cultural Center for Cooperation \(Argentina\)](#) identified four views regarding social solidarity economy. These vary from an economic system for poor people by poor people, a social assistance conceptual frame that does not question capitalism, ranging to economic, cultural and political practices that challenge capitalism directly.

In their analysis they also identify that the Argentinean national state has promoted the use of social-solidarity economy as a discourse category for the design and implementation of public policy, very clearly since the 2003 administration. To better understand the discursive position assumed by the state, it has to be noted that during the 2001 crisis, more than 50% of the population was under the line of poverty (for a discussion see [Heras 2013: 167-170](#)). Such is the context in which, by 2003 the creation of jobs under the umbrella of social economy was undertaken. [Anthropologist Hopp documented](#) that this was an innovative measure by the Social Development Ministry under the then new (Kirchner) national administration. They sought to implement a solidarity paradigm: public policy was designed to support people who conformed groups, ie, state subsidized cooperatives of workers. However, her analysis shows that as it was the Social Development Ministry the office implementing these policies, the modus operandi was prone to that of social assistance, rather than supporting social-economy frameworks and practices as an approach. Specifically in regards to the cultural aspects associated to social economy she states, “Argentinean social economy policies are failing to achieve the potential of cooperatives to forge a collective sense of identity, rather than one of individual dependency. The possibility of building a collective identity of workers that belong to the social economy is limited by working conditions, low incomes and the hybrid nature of the design of policies that promote the social economy in Argentina.”

How Do These Positions Relate to the Debates over the National Law?

The issues described above come to the forefront when a national law regulating social solidarity economy is at debate. Given the tensions at stake, and difficulties in finding a common ground across different positions, it comes as no surprise that, for example, in Argentina there have been three different organizations contributing to designing a social economy solidarity law: [Espacio-Ley Economía Social Solidaria](#); [Foro Hacia Otra Economía](#); [Espacio Amplio Nacional de Cooperativas Auto-gestionadas](#).

Their differences can be noted in the terms each has chosen to name themselves: while the Espacio-Ley uses the social solidarity economy phrase, the Foro chooses to differentiate by using the “Otra Economía” (different from capitalism it is understood) and the Espacio Amplio Nacional reinforces the statement of auto-gestión (self-management), an issue that is not debated within the Espacio-Ley at all, for example, and that causes some tension when brought up at the Foro.

Additionally, other groups within the cooperative and mutuality sectors have also been gathering, concerned about the norms, regulations and laws for social solidarity economy and [cooperative workers](#).



Mapping Otra Economía with our own bodies, 2013 at Santiago del Estero, Argentina. Photo courtesy Rosana Miraglino from Fundación Oasi

As an anthropologist interested in these issues, [I have documented some of the practices held by these different groups](#), interpreting their positions in the national spectrum as a sort of paradox: on the one hand, the fact that all these groups exist and devote time and energies to thinking about “otra economía and the law” is an indicator of the importance the sector is acquiring, and of the need that these issues be on the national political agenda. On the other hand, one may hold as an hypothesis, the fact that they remain as different groups is showing that so far, consensus cannot be reached to push for the passing of a national law.

To provide a brief history, the Espacio-Ley originated in actions developed by professionals who joined grass-roots organizations to foster the social economy sector in Río Negro. Their collaboration translated into designing a Social Economy Law for that Province. The Law passed in 2009, although there have been several controversial issues on its regulation and implementation. In 2012 these professionals networked with others, and called upon a meeting to communicate the results of their work, nation-wide.

Concurrently, the Foro Hacia Otra Economía had been meeting since 2010, holding so far [three National Forums](#).

It also conformed Small Task Groups, concentrating each on an issue that the Foro at large considered worth researching, all related to “otra economía”, such as: gender relations; the construction of subjectivity; solidarity, art & culture; exchange and related practices (ie, community currencies; barter; gift-exchange); legislation and social-economy, amongst the most relevant.

Additionally, by 2012, another group was created to think specifically about *auto-gestión* and to translate some of that thinking into law proposals. Their name, which loosely translates into “Self-Managed Cooperatives’ Broad National Movement” (EANCA for the acronym in Spanish), makes explicit their focus is on auto-gestión (self-management oriented by direct decision making practices) and on that they consider themselves broad, intending to mean: where several different political perspectives co-exist. It is worth noting however that all three groups make that claim.

What distinguishes the Espacio-Ley from the Foro is that the Espacio-Ley devotes its efforts focusing on legal aspects mainly, and the Foro seeks to understand all related aspects as a whole. Therefore, as a researcher working on these issues, I may occasionally participate at the Espacio-Ley or the EANCA with an informed perspective on the issues discussed at any point in time when invited, yet I participate systematically in the Foro because the mechanisms implemented (small action-research task groups) and the inter-connected approach facilitate collaboration.

On my next column in September, I will portray details of how this collaboration has translated into specific actions regarding the law.

***Ana Inés Heras** earned her MA and PhD in education (1995) with a Fulbright scholarship at UCSB. She also studied history and physical education at the undergraduate level in Argentina. She currently studies participants' collective learning processes at autonomous, self-managed organizations in contemporary Argentina, focusing on how diversity is understood in such processes.*