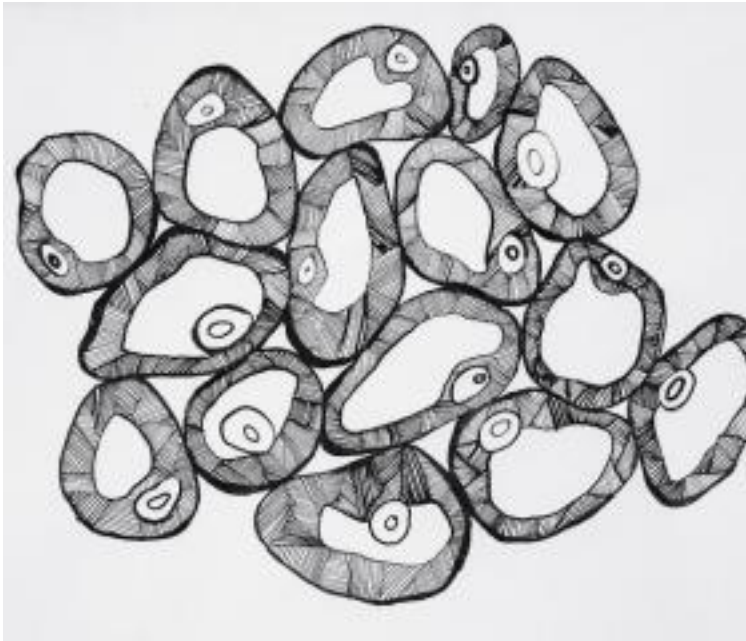

Cells become tissue - engage the community



As cells organize themselves to create body tissues, people gather in different groups and become part of diverse communities that form our social fabric. For us community is something more than a group of individuals that share space, it is not the same as neighbors who live together in a flat or a neighborhood who decide about issues together related to the space they share. In our understanding, community is a group of people in a dynamic and transformation relationship with each other. A community share common interests and concerns at determinate time and space. Through this dynamic interrelationship, the individuals build a sense of belonging, a common social identity and a consciousness of themselves as a community. In a community their members organize, cooperate and collaborate between themselves to achieve common goals.

The idea of working together to achieve a common goal it's not new. Historically

people have been collaborating to be able to survive: managing the commons, in villages helping each other harvesting, organizing themselves to achieve working rights creating workers organizations, etc... With the start of the industrialization, the rise of patriarchy and systems of egoistic control and empowerment, the idea of community has been step by step replaced by a more individualistic approach.

Paradoxes live in actual "democratic" societies; our societies provide spaces for people to self-organize and spend time and energy to promote active citizenship at the same time that they develop new laws and social control mechanisms that paralyzes participation. *One recent example of this is the Spanish evictions where the PAH (platform of people affected by the mortgage) with the help of thousands of volunteers collected 5 millions of signatures to bring a popular initiative to change the actual eviction law. After collecting the signatures the proposal went to the parliament and there the parties turned down the proposal.*

The actual system in which we are living, promotes individualism but our lives are dependent on others. It is in relation with others how we grow and develop as an individual, so our life and our social needs collaborate in order to achieve common goals. How life would have been possible if the cells that build us would not have been able to group themselves to create tissue and organs?

From Paulo Freire to feminist theories going through Saul Alinsky, Augusto Boal or Open source has been trying to concretize different methods how to engage communities. We are borrowing some of their concepts, mixing them together and creating a list of essential aspects that for us are part of the process that leads social activation and empowerment.

Education for freedom

We share Freire ideas about education. Education must lead toward liberation of students in opposition of "banking" concept of education- where students are empty vessels to be filled. For him and for us education processes centers on critical consciousness, where the oppressed recognize the causes of their oppression

"There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an

“so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, on which makes possible the pursuit of fuller humanity.”

Inclusion

“Everybody has something to share”, It may sound a bit hippie but inclusion is an important aspect to take into account when we talk about communities and groups. People engage themselves when they feel active part of the process and when they feel they have something to give: to the community, to the issue, to the development of a specific action. Starting from people potentials, things they feel comfortable to do will attract people to participate and encourage them to stay.

instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the ‘practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.” Paulo Freire

Analyze the collective reality

The process of building power and engaging community goes through including the members in the analysis of their reality which will help them to identify and define the problems that they wish to address, the solutions they wish to pursue and the methods they will use to accomplish their solutions. This type of analysis occurs in local settings and focus in a local level, in concrete and specific problems to overcome: for example, the closing of a neighborhood social Centre, dismantling a local park, etc.

Action and reflection

“It is not enough for people to come together in dialog in order to gain knowledge of their social reality”. People in a community must act together upon their environment in order to reflect critically about their reality and to transform it through further action and critical reflection. In this sense action is fundamental because it is the process of changing the reality. Through action and reflection process another different process arises: “conscietización”. Paulo

Freire defines conscientización as the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. He says that during our development as individuals, we all acquire social myths which have a dominant tendency and so learning is a critical process which depends upon uncovering real problems and actual needs.

Free knowledge, sharing knowledge and tools

"Free software is software that respects your freedom and the social solidarity of your community. So it's free as in freedom", - Richard Stallman. Inspired by the principles of free software the free knowledge movement affirms that all knowledge should be accessible, sharable and interpreted freely for community benefit. Actual communities and societies are built on the deconstruction and reconstruction of past knowledge. We couldn't be how we are without sharing it!

Celebration of success

"If I can't dance is not my revolution", - Emma Goldman

Even if the final result of our action is not what we expected, never forget to celebrate. Celebrating brings people together, developing community and concretize a sense of accomplishment by unifying our stories and common goals.

Cells need other cells in order to function together as an organism. The same should be happening with communities so, for the sake of sustainable and integrated results of any activities, the single member needs to have the potential to share its intentions, opinions and information.

Visuals by:

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