

from just about everywhere crowding the streets and tram stops. Near the imperial splendor of the Topkapi palace are two must-see architectural wonders, the Hagia Sophia of Byzantine fame and the majestic Sultan Ahmet mosque. Spread out along the main tramway and narrow alleys are a multitude of small hotels and restaurants, most offering the ubiquitous kebab cuisine.

Given the crowds of tourists lining up to see the major sites, I opted for the more prudent option of walking the streets. The ethnographer in me wanted to see the bustle of life today rather than take in the jewels of Ottoman heritage, precious as those can be. So in this mindset I danced through the side streets and narrow alleyways, absorbing the everyday mix of new and old. Turkey today thrives on its Ottoman past. The major Islamic empire of half a millennium never erased its Byzantine Christian or Jewish past. As unfashionable as the old binaries are today (whether East vs West, Ottoman Era vs Ataturk, liberal vs conservative), the ghosts of the Orient Express pervade and define this historic part of Istanbul. Across the street from a kebab restaurant you can find a McDonalds or a Burger King or a Domino's Pizza, as though fast food heals all political wounds. There are couples holding hands: some with the man in a t-shirt alongside his wife in niqab, others as though romantic tourists are strolling along the Champs-Élysées in Paris. On the face of a clothing

store is a giant image of a scantily clad woman advertising Victoria's Secret-like underwear for public view; across the street a modern mosque is squeezed in beside the dens of modern commerce.

The Istanbul on display to the world defies pigeonholing as either European or Oriental. In Ataturk International Airport, the duty free stores sell as much Chivas whiskey as any other major airport, while many of the cafes feature Efes Pilsen beer alongside the unmatched Turkish coffee. There are mosques everywhere, some centuries old and showing the wear of their age, but the latest boutiques also abound. There is even an Eataly in Istanbul, and of course, an Ikea. In the 1980s, when I first visited Istanbul on a Fulbright fellowship, I was amazed to find virtually naked centerfolds in major Turkish newspapers. When I naively asked a Turkish friend why a major newspaper would put such a risqué photograph inside, I was told the obvious: sex sells. Erotic overlap in advertising is still as visible in Istanbul as Vienna or Berlin or New York.

Of all the images, the one that most captured my attention to the neoliberalized neon schizophrenia of Istanbul today is an image used to entice tourists to see local dance performances (see the online version of this essay for the image). Here you will notice the whirling dervish heritage above the exotic belly dance, both the religious and the secular serving the commercial need

of an economy that thrives on international tourism. Turkey has been touted as offering a middle way for an Islamic majority country, the middle maintaining the secularity that Europe and America see as a buffer to the various Islamic resurgence movements of the past half century. Reconciling Ataturk with Erdogan's Islamic wave requires a delicate dance step, one that does not waltz too closely to the Eurozone's secular whims, yet one that avoids the dangerous tango with extremist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood or ISIS/ISIL/IS. For the time being and for the foreseeable future, given the massive influx of tourist Euros and dollars, you have an invitation to dance through the secularly blessed sacred precincts of a welcoming Istanbul.

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Published October 15, 2014 on
anthropology-news.org

INEQUALITY

OTRA ECONOMÍA OTRA SOCIEDAD

Self-organization, Integration and Homeless People

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Some people are stigmatized as excluded, marginalized, poor, homeless and helpless, and other categories with which western capitalist societies tend to label the living situation of people who do not conform to common sense patterns of the market economy. Palleres (2004) has documented that over time, people living on the streets are signified as lacking (a home or shelter, abilities to work, capacity to conform to the norm). It is seldom that what people living on the streets know and can do is documented, analyzed and interpreted in key of contribution. Many of the so-called excluded, marginalized and homeless, however, have been developing a collective position of their own, and a critical thinking process about their living experience which, in turn, informs the conceptualization of self-management, collective decision-making and social solidarity economy. In this post I will show some of these processes and reflect on their contributions in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The Espacio Carlos Mugica are a collective group composed of people who live on the street and by organizations that support people who live on the street. Its main purpose is to participate in the design, implementation and assessment of public policy to protect the rights those who live on the streets.

Funded in 2012, this collective of organizations was built taking into account the work of another network (la Red en la Calle) which existed between 2010 and 2012, and whose main purpose was to help put together a law specifically directed to protect homeless people's rights.

However, as documented by Ávila, Palleres, Colantoni and Sangroni (2014), both the Red and the Espacio, as organizations, bring together a prior history of attempts to self-organize and reclaim the voice of those who live on the street. According to these authors, the 2001 crisis in Argentina aggravated the situation of people who were at the verge of supporting their lives within the market economy, and many of them lost their jobs, their homes and drastically changed their daily living patterns. However, it was during those years (2001–03) that, simultaneously, a process of direct political organization started.

In this way, paradoxically, the same crisis that pushed thousands of people to the streets was the scenario in which self-organization, direct decision making and political horizontal participation made possible specific collective practices by homeless people. As early as 2003–04, people living on the streets started to organize by establishing a meeting point in the city of Buenos Aires, where, weekly, they would discuss their issues and find ways of taking action, collectively. Primarily, their actions were geared towards supporting

their lives (food, shelter, health), yet very soon, they focused on issues of public policy.

It was out of this process that one specific organization called Proyecto 7 started to advocate for the rights of street people. This organization sustained their work over the years, and recently started to self-manage an Integration Center. This is the first organization, world wide, self-managed by homeless men.

Anthropologist Palleres (2004) documented that in Argentina, prior to 2004 didn't exist an organization conducted by people living on the street, a phenomenon that was found in other parts of the world; she documented that *Proyecto 7* is the first in kind for Argentina.

As documented elsewhere (Pagotto and Heras, 2014a) the *Espacio Mugica* has been able to put to debate a specific way of conceptualizing what counts as support when it comes to understanding the situation of people who live on the street. Support, for this collective of organizations, is defined as a frame of reference in which people network with other people in order to take care of themselves at the same time they advocate for their rights. This conceptual frame is different than the one most prevalent in public policy, oriented towards defining people who live on the streets as people who can't organize, nor participate in public policy decision-making processes (Heras and

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Pagotto, 2014). In this manner, support, self-organization, and advocacy are pillars of a way of conceiving political participation by people who currently live on the streets. Additionally, the Espacio Mugica has also emphasized that one of the ways in which this conceptual frame is put to work is by exchanging knowledge among the different organizations that network together and by critically examining their practice (Pagotto y Heras, 2014 b).

These orientations are also held by other organizations, such as the Isauro Arancibia Educational Center (IAEC hereafter) or the Herman@s de Calle. The IAEC started their work during 1998, prior to the big 2001 economic and political Argentinean crisis, aimed at supporting the educational process of children, youth and adults for whom the public school system failed. The teachers who funded the IAEC started noticing that such student population was—for the most part—

living on the streets. These teachers advocated for the public school system to allow for a specific educational center that would work with a critical pedagogy approach and foster schooling for this specific population. Over the years they organized as a self-managed public school.

In turn, their educational practice supported youth attending the IAEC to conform their own organization (Herman@s de Calle). They started to work as a group during 2014, and their main goal is to design and implement a collective housing project. Meanwhile they have networked to contest a governmental decision to demolish their school, since the IAEC is now housed in a building that is under dispute (the current Buenos Aires administration is arguing to tear it down in order to modernize the transportation system).

What is original about Herman@s de calle is that it is an organization composed by young people, it starts out within an educational project, and it is geared towards re-thinking the issue of housing from a collective, cooperative perspective.

I end on a reflective note, posed as rhetorical questions: Could it be that those who seem to be out of the system are contributing to push our thinking about the system all together? Is it that they are proposing us to practice a different way of living, one based on the collective good? And finally, what can we identify when we look at the importance of combining support with self-organization and advocacy for all? May this be an important contribution by those who seem to have nothing?

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**Published October 27, 2014 on
anthropology-news.org**



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