

Lost Essays of Solidarity



Solidarity Abstention. The idea had his kung-fu. By May 2018, the Venezuelan government once again resorted to an electoral process as a tactic to divide society through a false dilemma. If to achieve this, he had to invest energy, then how could we use the force of oppression against him? We came from the cycle of protests of 2017, one of the most extensive and intense on the continent. Very hard duels were breathed in the face of failures and misunderstandings. achievements were measured. The hangover stepped on bodies and weighed on the streets. There was still momentum, but fragmentation and apathy threatened to blow up in our hands.

Before the elections, different options were considered. Challenge the legitimacy of the elections. Persist in the negotiation. Hallucinate with violence. Insist on winning quotas of power. Document, disseminate, denounce each violation of the right to free participation and the full exercise of the vote.

Perhaps everything was debatable except for the crisis of confidence that was attacking the epicenter of the complex humanitarian emergency. Was someone exaggerating when he said that the frustration of not finding an answer to the collapse also hurt in his body?

It seemed imperative to design some kind of response that would invite defragmentation and the generation of trust, of recognition of the helplessness we were experiencing.

One dollar, one vote. The premise was controversial. Through a crowdfund hosted in a country with robust audit possibilities, under a transparency and open source scheme that, in turn, without many complexities, could contribute to anonymity, Venezuelan citizens were invited to allocate a dollar to a probity solidarity organization or initiative. Thus, everyone could express their disagreement or abstention in the face of the dubious election that bogged us down in false

dilemmas while the devastation progressed. Those who did not have a dollar or a way to cast their vote could resort to a bond of trust abroad.

After all, given the fragmenting panorama that the elections of that time loomed, why couldn't we sympathize with our helplessness, with the abandonment and anthropological damage to which we were exposed?

Solidarity Abstention. Before the campaign started, we discovered how much we still needed to weave ourselves together, make a body, strengthen the network. The device, blatantly witty and naive, ended up shelved.

Of people making and braking curves

Since 2018, as a citizen laboratory, inspired by Ghandi's "constructive program" approach, in open meetings, sometimes improvised, we have asked ourselves about solidarity, including how it could, even from a reciprocity environment, produce hierarchies subjected to exercises of power that favor stigmatization. A year later, the maneuver of the opposition, in its bid for the entry of humanitarian aid across the borders, would clearly show us how destructive the political manipulation of solidarity can be. Later, just around the corner, between 2020 and 2021, we would witness how the de facto government increased the harassment of autonomous solidarity exercises such as Azul Positivo, Alimenta La Solidaridad and Fundaredes.

In short, what makes solidarity more or less strategic in the framework of Active Nonviolence movements, in the era of crowdfunding and the perpetual refugee crisis? Well seen, if the citizens are in charge of providing themselves with the protection that the government denies them, doesn't the government conserve its energy to then dedicate it to increasing oppression and helplessness?

From the year of the protest to the year of the exodus, to the year of the pandemic -that is, between 2017 and 2020- at some point the words of Paul Preciado in some Wuhan soup resonated among us. For the philosopher, the entire planet was subjected to the "strict confinement and immobilization measures that as a community we have applied in recent years to migrants and refugees -until leaving them out of any community-" (2020, p. 170). While the Venezuelan refugees were stigmatized by the government, the precarious conditions of the population that remained on the land became no less acute.

Moved precisely by the principle of community, we then dared to a new test of solidarity in alliance with five other organizations. We call it PeopleDoing. The approach: join the Slow the curve movement born in Spain, to make visible, connect and catalyze the different solidarities that people exercised and invented to take care of themselves in full quarantine.

But this campaign, which had started so strongly, would also fall apart.

The condition of solidarity

Solidarity. Let's say that the notion shines eloquently in the movement led by a shipyard electrician to dismantle a certain dictatorship in Poland. Let us add, perhaps, in addition, that with the nickname of solidarity a vicariate in Chile sheltered the victims of Pinochet's tyranny and that some no less Polish Pope stressed how solidarity leads to getting involved in the destiny of the other.

On the other hand, Levinas (1993, p. 110) in his essay *Between us*, reminds us that "the other subsists behind the concept that I communicate" and that our relationship with the other goes beyond understanding. Daring a risky and erratic transposition, solidarity is beyond the concept from which we plot it in relation to the other, beyond our positions, but also of the purposes and, however, it makes consist or gives consistency to said relationship. . As it escapes comprehension, its pretensions, instrumentalization, it implicates us in our own helplessness.

If so, a “solidarity” “device” seems to contravene the idea that one cannot help another without being involved in their existence. The help that I offer or receive is not a definitive solution, rather it challenges it, and yet it challenges helplessness because in the midst of it we have dared to interact, to recognize each other, to trust each other. So, only for its own sake, solidarity becomes strategic by questioning the foundations of the oppressive apparatus; All the more so because it transcends “mere adherence” -in the words of Vaclav Havel-, behind which he takes refuge through gifts and demagoguery.

Even so, after much testing these reflections, when at the end of 2020, the de facto government would once again appeal to the electoral exercise to corner Venezuelan citizens, we tried to "hack" the already usual false dilemma, inviting Venezuelans to choose to help each other one another in order, among other things, to help contain social fragmentation.

Choose Solidarity, we insist

Perhaps more aware of our limitations, attentive to our own aporias in the face of another fraudulent use of elections as an instrument of domination, we networked and listened carefully to transform the concept of Solidarity Abstention. The agile grammar of start-up and entrepreneurship led us to opt for the minimum possible exercise, one that would manifest, not only with the usual declarations, but also with actions, with praxis itself, our position regarding the 2020 parliamentary elections.

We designed a micro-campaign through social networks to make visible the most dissimilar exercises of solidarity and mobilize the population towards it. The result, through the linktree that invited to support different initiatives, was, at best, brief, almost ridiculous. But we had chosen, from the outset, to embrace in desperation, that zero-comma-one-millimeter of land gained versus land scorched in the middle of the fire.

Perhaps that was the first learning. Risking that microscopic gesture of solidarity in the 2020 electoral framework, with no other purpose than solidarity itself, was our way of telling ourselves that we were still alive. A life, furthermore, that aspired to articulation, to organization. Ours was a round trip distress signal, where desire was included, a factor that always seems essential to us.

We continue to explore the hypothesis that the construction of a massive campaign for the exercise of solidarity can also subject a devastated social body to an operation that must attend to its helplessness. We returned to look at social networks as a vast ecosystem with countless exercises of solidarity, loops and rhizomes that, in order to perhaps acquire momentum - something that would be necessary in the face of a device anchored in the electoral situation - demands other forms of articulation. The social fabric is resilient, "anti-fragile", but it requires a time that is nothing more than the rhythm of its own history as it is embodied. We even ask ourselves, thinking of that crowdfund that in 2015 aspired to pay off Greece's debt, if the mere and particular nonchalance would have sufficed, at least, as an even more spontaneous political gesture. Perhaps we failed to focus on a single action of solidarity, no matter how small or debatable it might be, instead of appealing to that "solidarity of solidarities", which has something totalizing and reassuring.

In any case, as a laboratory we comply with continuing to test mobilization alternatives to help increase the repertoire of tactical innovation. We accept that although the mechanisms of demonstration, of protest, are not always specified or articulated in an ideal way to generate the impact we long for, they serve as a living metaphor through which to produce articulations, learning and capacities in the face of the dilemmas to which which oppression subjects us to, insofar as they allow us to submit possible responses to the simplest test of all: the street, the body, the common, the unappealable; our most daily and close practice of strange citizenship.

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LABO, also known as Active Nonviolence Citizen Laboratory, develops campaigns, activities and projects focused on offering citizens spaces for experimentation and deliberation based on three premises: strengthening the social fabric, developing timely content and designing actions within the framework of Human Rights .

References

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