

COMMONS INFRASTRUCTURES: COLLABORATIVE DESIGN OF A POLITICAL TENT AS COSMOGRAM

Pablo Piquinela and Gonzalo Correa

In recent decades, Science and Technology Studies (STS) have developed several conceptual tools for understanding the role of things in the political composition of the world. This paper proposes to study the production of a commons and its related infrastructure. We therefore analyse the redesign practices of a tent belonging to the Uruguayan Solidarity Economy Network (USEN), which brings together different ventures and collectives to practise Solidarity and Social Economy (SSE). The notion of the 'cosmogram' – as defined by John Tresch and revisited by Bruno Latour – accounts for the compositional character of life in common, emphasising the relational plot where humans and non-human roles and functions are distributed. Taking composition in the Deleuzian sense as a key concept, we consider the USEN tent as infrastructure constantly undergoing construction. From our methodological approach, actor-network theory (ANT) is relevant because of its ability to broaden the meaning of a collective, including non-human actors in the compositional exercise. In agreement with USEN, one of the authors began to develop a multi-situated ethnography – carried out between September 2017 and August 2018 – emphasising collaborative and experimental practices). From this experience of infrastructuring the tent as a commons, we conclude that the tent is not a simple good, but it is an opportunity to infrastructure, in an affective and relational field, a common world.

Keywords: commons; infrastructure; cosmogram; collaborative design; social and solidarity economics; material politics.

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non-human roles and functions are distributed. Taking composition in the Deleuzian sense as a key concept, we consider the USEN tent as infrastructure constantly undergoing construction. From our methodological approach, actor-network theory (ANT) is relevant because of its ability to broaden the meaning of a collective, including non-human actors in the compositional exercise. In agreement with USEN, one of the authors began to develop a multi-situated ethnography – carried out between September 2017 and August 2018 – emphasising collaborative and experimental practices). From this experience of infrastructuring the tent as a commons, we conclude that the tent is not a simple good, but it is an opportunity to infrastructure, in an affective and relational field, a common world.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Science and Technology Studies (STS) have developed several conceptual tools for understanding the role of things in the political composition of the world (Latour 2007; Stengers 2005). Since the development of this approach, matter – far from being conceived of as an accessory – is considered as a constituent of any collective, while also simultaneously being key components for infrastructuring the relationships that support collective life (Björgvinsson et al. 2010; Le Dantec 2012; Star 1999; Star and Bowker 2002). Interest in this field in terms of political practices goes back to its beginnings, when diverse investigations centred on understanding the relationships of power inside the production of scientific facts (Latour and Woolgar 1986; Law 1992; Shapin and Schaffer 1985). These studies showed how the products of technoscience –its laws, laboratories, and facts – were the result of a political exercise of separation between the natural and the cultural world, inaugurating a division of domains in which technoscience took nature as its object (Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe 2001).

These concerns express the deep interest in the democratisation of science, technology and democracy that persists in the STS (Kleinman 1998) and that conceives of nature and culture as a seamless web (Hughes 1986). Having focused on participation as a way to include both expert and lay knowledge in technoscience procedures – what is called the participatory turn (Jasanoff 2003) – there currently exists a growing interest in enabling and producing more collaborative ways of bringing together activism and experimentation in the same movement (Estalella and Sánchez-Criado 2018; Sismondo 2008). The meaning of the collective as something more than human and the suspension of the identities of experts and laypeople has made it possible to investigate more experimental, symmetrical and collaborative ways of thinking

about the production of common worlds from situated experiences. This new trend is what Ignacio Farías (2016) calls the ‘collaborative turn’. These emerging perspectives, which are a product of the mixture between activism and academia, conceive of STS from a theoretical perspective as well as a practical one; namely, they see it as a renewed space of production that allows investigation, design and promotion, in a collaborative way, of collective processes of production of commons based on experimentation. The efforts to practise a politics that includes in its work other beings – not necessarily human – and that centre affectation will make it possible to radicalise the inclusion of things and other non-human beings in the ways of understanding, not only the political practices, but also the participatory designs of technologies and infrastructures. An example of this can be found in the work of Noortje Marres and Javier Lezaun (2011), who call for innovative ways of introducing everyday objects into our understanding of politics. This materialistic and relational programme, expressed by many STS practitioners, will be a key condition for articulating this field with others, such as design, and heralding new ways of political action, thereby broadening our understanding of what a collective is and, with it, the very meaning of politics (Latour 2007; Yaneva 2015).

Assuming this perspective, this paper inquires into the production of a commons and its infrastructuring through the study of the redesign practices of a tent belonging to the Uruguayan Solidarity Economy Network (USEN), which brings together different ventures and collectives to practise Solidarity and Social Economy (SSE; Laville and Gaiger 2013; UN 2018). One of the tasks of this organisation, consolidated in 2008, is to promote and disseminate SSE in Uruguay and to manage marketing spaces based on the premise of responsible consumption and fair trade. Composed of collectives of producers and artisans, the network includes meeting spaces that allow its members to think about and participate in all economic phases – distribution, marketing and consumption (CES 2012). From collective discussion spaces, its activists organise

meetings and undertake joint actions that promote SSE in the country, as well as international exchanges with fair-trade networks and movements that make up the World Social Forum. From the dialogue between the Montevideo Network, one of the collectives that take part in USEN, and other actors has arisen the idea of buying and circulating a tent in the city of Montevideo to disseminate their productions and ideas with a greater degree of autonomy. From the beginning, the tent was thought of as a commons. Its use was planned to be open to all of the groups that adhered to its terms of use (including municipal administration offices such as Espacio Enlace and the Social Economy of Solidarity Unit). Using the notion of the cosmogram (Tresch 2005), we analyse the material and relational arrangements assembled to produce a situated composition of the SSE, expressed by the infrastructuring of this tent as a commons. Our interest lies in explaining the relational feature of a commons through sharing a participatory and open process of design in which a collective is composed while the tent is assembled.

COMMONS INFRASTRUCTURES AND INFRASTRUCTURING COMMONS AS COSMOGRAM

John Tresch (2005) first heard of the idea of the cosmogram in a lecture given by David Ramrosch, a historian of religion, about the Tabernacle, the temple that Moses built at the end of Exodus, which is the entire representation of the cosmos. Tresch says:

The Tabernacle is a temple with the architectural plan, materials, and even the colors chosen by God. It's adapted to the religious life of a nomadic people: it's portable. Like a tent, it can be taken down and built again, and it's made with all the technologies that the Hebrews had at that point: metal working, weaving, drawing, dyeing, woodwork, all of which God mentions by name. At its center is an altar, the Ark of the Covenant, and inside that are the

tablets of the Law, a census of all the members of all tribes, and all the prescriptions on ethics and food: classifications of different kinds of action, different types of people, different plants and animals. In other words, the text of Exodus is a cosmogram that will embody the relations between humans, God and nature. (Tresch 2005, p. 67)

It is no longer a cosmology or cosmovision, as though explaining a culture from outside it, but a cosmogram – a set of material relationships, objects, symbols, animals and plants that make up the world of those who practise it. Curiously, the example that serves to develop the notion of the cosmogram – the Tabernacle of the people of Moses – was a tent: a closed and portable space that allowed the Hebrew people to move their world about on their shoulders. In a similar way, USEN has been producing its own Tabernacle: a tent in which to put in relation the objects, people, products and ideas that make up a particular way of understanding the production of values associated with life. The notion of the cosmogram, formulated by John Tresch (2005) and taken up again by Bruno Latour (2007) to explain his version of cosmopolitics, gives an account of the compositional character of life in common, emphasising the relational plot where humans and non-human roles and functions are distributed. A cosmogram is an inventory of objects, practices and relationships that, together, make up an idea of the world. In the words of Tresch (2005), it is 'a text that results in a concrete practice and set of objects, which weave together a complete inventory or map of the world' (p. 68). A concept like this is useful for combining, in the same movement, the commons and the collective, showing the process of infrastructuring that situates them as part of the same common world.

Our interest is clarifying the relationship between the commons and infrastructuring to talk about the processes of creating common infrastructures. We therefore propose using the concept of composition present in the work of Gilles Deleuze (1998). Composition is not synonymous with structure or

with totality. It is an open collective process, in constant decomposition and recomposition, that brings together heterogeneous elements that co-work – work together – and that, in this co-working, affect and mutually transform each other. The composition supposes the meeting of the heterogeneous and the different, as well as the production of a common body in constant becoming and the confluence of the multiple affectations that produce it (Bogue 2014). In this way, the Deleuzian approach introduces the affections at the heart of the assemblages, avoiding a substantial treatment of objects and subjects, while understanding common life as relational. The idea of the Tabernacle brought in by Tresch offers us an image that illustrates how a community gathers and puts together different things, beliefs and affections that shape them as a common body. The action of gathering things and assembling a tent to join those things together constitutes the foundation of the community. In STS, particularly in actor-network theory (ANT), the idea of composition is present too. Bruno Latour noted:

Even though the word “composition” is a bit too long and windy, what is nice is that it underlines that things have to be put together (Latin *componere*) while retaining their heterogeneity. Also, it is connected with composure; it has clear roots in art, painting, music, theater, dance, and thus is associated with choreography and scenography; it is not too far from “compromise” and “compromising,” retaining a certain diplomatic and prudential flavor. Speaking of flavor, it carries with it the pungent but ecologically correct smell of “compost,” itself due to the active “de-composition” of many invisible agents... Above all, a composition can fail and thus retains what is most important in the notion of constructivism (a label which I could have used as well, had it not been already taken by art history). It thus draws attention away from the irrelevant difference between what is constructed and what is not constructed, toward the crucial difference between what is

well or badly constructed, well or badly composed. What is to be composed may, at any point, be decomposed. (Latour 2010, pp. 473-474)

Taking composition as a key concept, we want to think of the USEN’s tent as an infrastructure in a state of constant and permanent construction. Nevertheless this is not just any infrastructure, but one that has been imagined and thought of as a commons. While not all infrastructure is a common good, we can think of the commons as infrastructure that makes it possible to sustain our lives – that is, the political and material relationships that support collective life in the world. The idea of the commons expresses a particular way of understanding the collective, as well as the emergence of different communities of concerned groups around an issue or good (Callon and Rabeharisoa 2008; Klein 2001).

One of the usual forms of understanding commons refers to the legal-economic relationship related to goods or spaces that is associated with the set of collective practices that sustain or manage a good (Östrom 2000). This perspective, although it refers to goods that are materially expressed in multiple ways (whether natural goods such as air or intangibles such as communication), focuses on them as substantial goods that can be separated from the communities that use and defend them. One of the consequences of this approach is forgetting that these are goods that involve communal relations in themselves by their direct link with sustaining life (Gutierrez 2017). As many authors affirm, the commons cannot be thought of in a substantial way, but as a relationship (Caffentzis and Federici 2014) – not of any nature but of a particular kind: relationships that sustain our existence and that escape, in relation to their property, from the logic of the market and the state. In other words, the commons are goods that belong to everyone and nobody at the same time; they are neither public nor private property, although this does not mean that they are not threatened by privatisation or protected and regulated by the state administrative apparatus (Lafuente 2007). For a

good to become a 'common' good must be first established as part of the vital relationships it enables, but with one caveat: at the same time that the commons is established, the community that claims it for itself is established as well – as in the example of the Tabernacle and the People of Moses. In this sense, the production of any common good is nothing more than making common a vital infrastructure. Community and commons are simultaneously (infra)structured in the same act of creation of the relationships that sustain them both.

Infrastructure, as its name indicates, is those material relationships that support different communities of practice (Star and Bowker 2002; Star, Bowker and Neumann 2003). Far from being understood as hard, stable and strictly material, infrastructure is conceived of as relationships that make the action of certain collectives possible or impossible. Susan Leigh Star (1999) defines infrastructure, not as a substance, but as relational, the purpose of which is nothing other than sustaining the lives of different communities of practice. Different communities develop their existence, converge or mutually exclude each other, express agreement and disagreement, strengthen or diminish their conflicts supported by infrastructure (Star, Bowker and Neumann 2003; Lampland and Star 2009). Infrastructure will be thought of as a constitutive part of the vital relationships that unfold within it. We will use this idea of infrastructure as a process and a composition in considering the experience of the USEN tent; it is an infrastructure where the legal, the economic, the political and design take part in a continuous process of production of a commons and a collective that mobilises a multiplicity of actors that are not exclusively human (Stengers 2010).

As our aim is not say whether the USEN tent is a model for how to become a commons, the notion of establishment, particularly as related to the design process, could be useful (Björgvinsson et al. 2010; Ehn 2008; Le Dantec 2012; Le Dantec et al. 2011). Following Le Dantec and Di Salvo (2013), paying attention to the process of design as infrastructuring

'comes by broadening the view of what counts as innovation, moving away from a technocratic view of innovation toward one that includes social innovation: innovation that arises out of social interactions and action that arises from the constitution of a public' (p. 247). For the authors, infrastructuring could be considered a particular mode or practice of participatory design that provides socio-material resources and experiences by way of attachments to the constitution of collectives or communities by common issues. This particular mode has a main distinctive feature: its openness. Björgvinsson et al. (2010) maintain that infrastructuring can be seen as an ongoing process and, they add, it should not be seen as limited to a design project phase in the development of a freestanding system (p. 43). This ongoing process includes other previous infrastructure activities entangled with everyday design activities in actual use, as well as design in use. Le Dantec and Di Salvo (2013) highlight that 'an important aspect of infrastructuring is recognising that those attachments are dynamic; they will change, often in unanticipated ways' (p. 255). Ultimately, this approach to design as infrastructuring returns the focus to the political aspects of design and thus reconsidering the political conditions of community-based design. Instead of emphasising product or service development, this point of view stresses capacity building and associative politics (Le Dantec and DiSalvo 2015, pp. 247-248).

MAKING A NETWORK: A METHODOLOGICAL INQUIRY

ANT is one of the main influences on our methodological approach because of its ability to broaden the meaning of the 'collective', including non-human actors in the compositional exercise (Stengers 2010). In this sense, following the human and non-human actors and their attachments and enactments (Bruun Jensen 2007; Mol 2002) allows a greater understanding of how a collective is composed while a commons is established. This socio-technical analysis of objects breaks the dichotomy of subjective-objective and inquires into

the simultaneous emergence of objects and their environments (Akrich 1989). Although objects matter in this approach, ANT does not reduce its analysis to them. Interested in the ways in which technical objects actively participate in the production of society, ANT teaches us how every single technical aspect of an object accounts for a cultural, psychological and economical world, producing hybrid assemblages (Callon 1998; Michael 1996). Albena Yaneva (2009) highlights something interesting for our point of view: 'although ANT scholars do not refer explicitly to the notion of design, in their writings they analyse extensively the coming into being of different objects, the way they work and how they are capacitated to act' (pp. 276–277). Oriented by this confluence, we can find different studies that articulate ANT and design (Clausen and Yoshinaka 2007; Potts 2009; Siemens and Conole 2011; Storni, Binder, Linde and Stuedahl 2015; Vallès-Peris, Angulo and Domènech 2018).

The experience of USEN's tent shows how an infrastructure is practised and designed in the making. As Susan Leigh Star has observed, when infrastructures fail, break down or cease to function, we realise their importance and what they sustain. To study them it is precisely necessary to remove them from their silent and invisible place, exposing all of the relationships that make them the infrastructure of other processes, relationships and practices. This methodological gesture is what Bowker (1994) calls infrastructural inversion. In our case, the tent as a common infrastructure is being made, so it is not necessary to study its failure. The idea of infrastructuring is thus more suited to our purpose (Le Dantec and DiSalvo 2013). Far from being a finished infrastructure, it is permanently under construction. Its unfinished design makes it a prototype – an infrastructure in beta – that the actors claim the right to infrastructure (Corsín Jiménez 2014; Corsín Jiménez and Estalella 2017).

This particular feature of the tent is marked by openness in many ways. First, in terms of the actors: it is not possible to identify a single actor as the designer. Throughout the process, many people

were involved in the design (including those of us who wrote this article). Second, in terms of material: from the beginning it was not clear what the design of the tent would be, so the inclusion of different materials was left open. Before each installation, the organisation of the inside of the tent changed as new materials were added to its composition. Finally, in terms of identity: the tent is a USEN initiative, but it does not belong to USEN. Municipal actors are involved in its financing and maintenance, but it is not owned by the municipality, either. The tent's identity lies on the border between the public and the private, which reinforces its status as a commons.

These characteristics led, from the beginning, to the adoption of a methodological strategy capable of dialogue with these different degrees of openness that was carried out for almost a year between September 2017 and August 2018. In agreement with USEN, one of the authors began to develop a multi-situated ethnography (Marcus 1995), emphasising the collaborative and experimental (Estalella and Sánchez Criado 2019). The multi-site aspect served to account for the process that took occurred in various places: assemblies, meetings with municipal authorities and different neighbourhoods of the city – that is, a network of sites that sequentially and sometimes simultaneously officiated as the situations for the tent. The collaborative and experimental aspect was marked by the inclusion of one of the researchers in the design process itself. Instead of studying how USEN designed its tent, the ethnography presented was part of the design process itself. At times, as Estalella and Sánchez Criado reflect (2019), the role of the researchers was blurred and with it their disciplinary position, participating at the same level as the activists in the assemblies called to define the strategy of the design. During this process of participatory ethnography, the researcher held interviews with the promoters of the tent, participated in Network assemblies, meetings of USEN and dialogues for its installation during the study year.

REDESIGNING A TENT: CONSTRUCTING A MATERIAL AND POLITICAL SUBJECT

The tent was incorporated by the network to transmit, share and circulate the values and local productions of the SSE. SSE here refers to a set of practices and organisations within which are included expressions of self-management, cooperativism and associativism with different levels of organisation that share some common postulates such as horizontality, equity, fair trade, responsible consumption and care for the environment (Laville and Gaiger 2013). It is usually understood as a broad spectrum of organisations and movements within which are cooperativism, the popular economy, the social economy and enterprises recovered by their workers (UN 2018). Circulating around the city, the tent is a place for conversations and exchanges, a trade fair and an exhibition hall for crafts, food, architectural designs, speeches, knowledge and a whole set of practices gathered around an alternative economy. To promote this transmission, USEN proposed to intervene in its design, seeking to harmonise its shape and aesthetics with the values of the collective. The tent is a large folding metal structure that, through nuts and bolts, is composed of white tarpaulins that delimit the space. Its own conformation enables it to generate places, doors and windows in a random way, adjustable according to temperature and air circulation. Since its acquisition, the tent has circulated through Montevideo City, adapting its contents and shape to each territory in which it is assembled. In general, its installation takes place in public spaces such as the esplanades of public buildings, squares, parks or bus terminals. Its large size and material conformation makes it look like a large white semi-sphere from the outside, which makes it necessary for an individual to enter to get to know its contents (see Image 1).



Image 1. The tent during its installation in *Huelga General Square*, April 2018.

Tenting a collective

The idea of the tent arose from the evocation of a previous experience that some of the members of the network had had. A group of artisans who sold their work jointly – under the name *Mercado de los Artesanos* – faced the difficulty of having to stop the sale of their crafts for a few months due to the refurbishment of the new location for their market. The temporary absence of a building was resolved by assembling a tent in a central square. This tent served as a sales space while the building was being refurbished. One of the most active members of the network narrated this story:

Miriam tells us that the idea of the tent arose from an experience that those who were part of the *Mercado de los Artesanos* had at the time of their move. As the new premises were being repaired and there was a need to continue selling, during that time they decided to set up a tent in the *Plaza Cagancha*, outside where the new *Mercado de los Artesanos* would be. She tells us they were very excited that something different happened there, that the instance of sharing that space was very significant for those who participated. (Fieldwork notes, day 2, June 2017)

During that time, that tent, which would later inspire

the tent studied here, delimited a space that served, among other things, to share stories and knowledge that strengthened the practices of mutual support. That experience was strongly marked in the memory of the member who told us the situation, and her narration was very vivid and emotional, highlighting the collective feeling around that memory. This story from 2008 was significant for understanding the affective component of the relationships at stake in the design. The updated presence of this memory suggests that the composition of a commons such as a tent is made of materials (such as canvas and metal) as well as affectations. We could quickly fall into the temptation to make a linear interpretation and say loudly that that the experience was the 'origin' of this other tent or at least its 'model'. On the contrary, we understand that this experience was part of its constituent relationships; it is not simply a nostalgic evocation, but a presence modelling the present and the future of the new tent. The tent as a commons does not have a precise origin; the idea of its acquisition is part of an affective and relational field in which the whole process of redesign is inscribed. To a certain extent, the image of the tent expresses the power of a collective that needs to circulate through sites and make visible another way of understanding and practising economic relations.

Why a tent? A tent is not just any object: its material characteristics delimit a space and produce an atmosphere separate from an outside, one that is able to contain and diagram different encounters and bodies within itself, allowing the use of open space protected from the elements. Another quality that we understand to be relevant to a tent is its ability to be assembled and disassembled, which allows it to be moved from one place to another. It is an ephemeral and nomadic architecture that becomes more and more constant due to its circulation. These qualities of any tent are what allow the USEN to imagine one for themselves, one that allows them to take the city and develop their activities of marketing and promotion under the protection of its structure.

Who are they? After the collective decision to initiate the process of acquisition, redesign and circulation of the tent began a series of conversations with institutional, social and political actors to gather the necessary resources to make the tent possible. This process forced them to redefine themselves, broadening the collective through association with other groups similar to the ideas of this 'other economy' with a common desire to promote political practices expressly associated with SSE. Among the other actors that provided economic support are state actors – such as the Social Solidarity Economy Unit of the Montevideo City Council (IM), the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) and the National Cooperative Institute (INACOOP) – and other social actors, such as the Federation of Production Cooperatives of Uruguay (FCPU), the Coordination of Uruguayan Solidarity Economy (CES), the National Association of Enterprises Recovered by Workers and the Institute for Social Economic Promotion of Uruguay. This association made up of state collectives and civil society gave an account of the weaving work made possible by the idea of the tent. It inscribes a new topology (Law 2002) that operated at the limits between the public and the common, making possible the development of a proposal that, despite having the support of the state, managed to exercise its autonomy without losing its creative and productive capacity.

Within the framework of these alliances, an agreement was established with the Espacio Enlace (a co-working space that stimulates innovative economic and cultural ventures promoted by the Montevideo City Hall): the metal structure, tarpaulins, posters and other objects that make up the tent could be stored while not in use at the organisation's headquarters. The rest of the materials necessary for its assembly (tables, chairs, lights, tablecloths, etc.) were provided by the different groups that participated in setting up the tent as a way of materialising the commitment of each group for the tent's support. This distributed participation shows the collective dimension of the

tent and the association work required for its existence.

Containing a solidarity world

The tent is a large structure that contains within itself a series of very particular relationships between people, materials, products and ideas. This delimited space defines, through clear guidelines (such as the prohibition of the resale of products), which relationships are allowed within and which are not. The content of the tent is conditioned both by its mobile structure and by the products that can circulate within it. The definition of what it contains can be found in the guidelines of the relationships that comprise the SSE, and in this sense, they are delimited by the relationships of production, transport and marketing. One of the first premises is the relationship of the artisan with her or his product, since the products must be manufactured or produced by craft and their sale must be without intermediaries. Likewise, the goods exhibited are linked to manual labour that is closely related to the ideas or stories of the people selling them and who intend to exhibit them within this framework. As Laura, a craftswoman tells us:

Many of those who are here, faced with having to earn an income, have known how to weave for a lifetime. I, for example, started knitting at the age of eight. Weaving is a practice of women, transmitted by their mothers or grandmothers, and that by taking apart a pullover they can make a bag to sell. It has been a challenge for them to consider weavers as artisans. This is throughout the place, and how participation in the installation is conceived. The tent in its relationships produces political attributes delegated in its redesign, the distribution of its places and the delimitation of its contents. (Interview with Laura, USEN member)

Designing new values

As we saw, the tent is white, and its interior forms a

diaphanous space. Its redesign appears as a purpose that mobilises USEN, a kind of promise that allows its members to continue doing things. So far we have seen that the tent is installed under the principles of SSE, yet the collective insists that it must be redesigned so that its structure, forms, internal distribution and colours (to mention just a few of its attributes) express the values of this economic practice.

Since its acquisition, the tent was thought of as an object that, in its movement, transmitted a clear political idea: it can express, through different ways (from its own redesign, to the inclusion of musical and spoken presentations) the values and principles of SSE. USEN thus began to implement actions that would make its financing possible.

‘We must not lose sight of the fact that the tent, no matter what, has to be designed and has to transmit the values of social and solidarity economy’, says Miriam. Ana answers ‘the visual is what gives results to the call call’ and Elsa adds, ‘with the white tent we are not saying anything’ (Fieldwork notes, September 2017).

The idea that the ‘white tent’ does not convey any message is linked to the fact that it can be associated with any other tent that is set up in the city, such as the book fair tent, the city hall’s entertainment tent or other tents that act as sales spaces for products from other collectives (See Image 2).



Image 2. Tent from the 33rd International Book Fair.
From: <http://www.universidad.edu.uy>.

The first efforts to differentiate and singularise the tent were directed towards conveying, materially, the values of the SSE and to plan the costs of this eventual design that would endow the tent with a unique character. The group contacted the Architecture, Design and Urbanism School (FADU) and agreed to work with a group of students who, after having a first meeting, transmitted general ideas and possible costs. The first design attempts focused on communicating, through drawings, the ideas of cooperation and solidarity at the request of the USEN members.

Those first ideas served as an initial kick-off to continue the conversation, leading to a greater number of FADU industrial design students who, guided by a teacher, developed interior design proposals as part of their curricular activities. The shaping of this work team resulted in actions of a different order. The FADU students, taking ideas about SSE as triggers, appealed to their previous knowledge about design for the realisation of a visual figure that could express SSE values.

To clarify these values, USEN gathered a group of psychology students – coordinated by one of the authors – that took as a strategy the realisation of participant observations, interviews and workshops. In the participative instances, the participants

gathered in subgroups and shared anecdotes, experiences and affections lived in the installations of the tent. The students set up a space to recover memories that would help to express, collectively, the principles and values enunciated in those experiences. In this way, the psychology students began a process that sought to de-essentialise the terms and take them out of a moral scheme (good values, bad values) while creating an ethical proposal through which the collective could define what it understands by solidarity, horizontality, responsible consumption and other notions (no longer as universal values but as practices and experiences related to the becoming of the collective).

During the co-design workshop we talked to the members about their idea of SSE, which led them to reflect on their transit through USEN. One of the participants said:

The first time I went to an SSE fair, I set up my stand there very shyly because I'd been working in a family home for years and I always wanted to improve myself. Besides working I always went to courses, here and there and well, I got trained, I got together with other women, and well many thing..., Then my children were grown up – because when they were kids, I had a lot of work, I divorced young, I ended up raising them practically alone – and as a head of household I wanted to improve myself and I always liked crafts (...)
(Workshop notes, September 2018)

And another adds:

For me, solidarity within the network means being totally open to give more than to receive. Everyone has a lot to give, so giving can be built collectively, because if you only come with the idea of receiving you will probably leave poorer than you came. That is my vision, sharing and being open is what helps you (...). What matters is the well-being of people and in all its context,

how they move, what their health is like, what they consume, what they spend their money on, their time – all because time is also part of what the solidarity economy is for us.

(Workshop notes, September 2018)

For them, the concepts that mobilise the SSE are more than ideas: they are bearers of an alternative world proposal. Not in vain, they insist on the redesign of the tent to reflect those values. This idea of a moral nature, carrier of a very particular concept of politics, is centred in the existence of universal values that give form to an idea of good living. The problem we face is how these values are created – that is, how relationships and behaviours expected of others are valued. There is a tension in the network between previous definitions inherent to the idea of SSE and their own definitions, needs or possibilities as a group. So a movement was made in which the group's ethics can be submitted to a moral idea. The strategy of the psychology students consisted in defining values, not in a normative way, but by making visible and giving meaning to the USEN's own practices: that is, they decided to move from a normative idea of solidarity, mutual support and cooperation to a practical idea of these principles. This movement made it possible to question and hold in tension both ideals and practices, thus shaping an ethical plot that put affections in the first scene (Deleuze 1988). In this sense, producing values also affirms a particular way of understanding human and non-human relationships and, with it, of practicing those bonds. The insistence of the collective on transmitting values through the redesign of the tent refers to this idea.

M: (...) These valuations made by the Network establish a very clear limit between what the tent can contain, the s that it entails and the outside. But this value, in a moral sense, is also economic value. There is no distinction between the valorisation of behaviours related to others (ethical level) and the valorisation that is played in the production and marketing of their

products (economic level). The valorisation is for them the production of a new world. The tent, as an integral part of these relationships, is not alien to these practices of value production – to the point that its working depends on these same valorisations. *Something artistic about it, something handcrafted, and something of a legacy. These are the things that we want to be in the tent. Little by little they are considering us as artisans and that opens doors to new places and new possibilities.*

(Interview with Miriam, October 2017)

These definitions, based on SSE principles, are also the boundaries of the tent. Not only its openings and structures establish the outside and the inside, but also these criteria associated with the other materials compose the itinerant space of the SSE. The values are already expressed in a pragmatic way in the very constitution of the tent. These compositional principles affirm what may or may not be composed by these relationships. Not anything or any collective can enter and make a common body. At the same time as becoming a tent, the SSE is being practised, and the collective is constituted cosmogramatically (Tresch 2005).

PROTOCOLS OF THE TENT

Each installation of the tent is unique because those who exhibit, what is exhibited and the activities that are deployed are specific to each installation. This singularity also depends what time of year the tent is installed, as well as the geographical place where it is located. To carry out each assembly, an open call is made to individual and groups of entrepreneurs, craftswomen, weavers and producers who must submit a sales proposal, and priority is given to those people who belong to the area where the tent will be set up.

As we can see, the tent has its rules and guidelines, and its definition is an inherent part of the political conception of the collective. Its constant movement provoke the USEN to make efforts to standardise and stabilise the contents of the tent, as well as its

functioning, and ultimately, its shape (Lampland and Star 2009). These definitions are agreed upon in meetings that, through conversation, build the agreements that rule the stability of the tent (Latour 1992). The collective generates this space of exchange where, in a quite informal way, consensus is reached from the articulation of the different proposals presented:

A large part of the tent is the bonds that are established, the coexistence, the entrepreneurs spend hours sitting down talking. Miriam says: 'This creates an atmosphere of trust where stories and life projects are shared. Those who submitted the evaluation together generally shared opinions .' The hours of conversation were also related to the setting up of the tent and its organisation. (Fieldwork notes, April 2018).

Although each installation of the tent is unique, there are a series of agreements that define certain general guidelines for its establishment. These agreements shape a protocol called the 'Coexistence Agreement, whichs was designed to be modified to fit each installation (see Table 1).

Coexistence Agreement
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone is responsible for his or her product, but they must respect the values of the SSE. There can be no resale. 2. We must assemble the tables, place the tablecloths and take responsibility for them. 3. Distribute the stands through a lottery. 4. Name a person to in charge for day of the tent to face the unforeseen, who will have to arrive before the event finishes. 5. Have a communication team for each day, colleagues who support the task of communicating with the press, radio, etc. 6. Have a person responsible for collecting 10% of sales at the end of each day. 7. Respect the collective schedules that already reported; in case of absences, be sure that someone is there to cover the shift and ensure that closing time is respected on the last day. 8. Know where the municipality's contributions to improve the quality of the day will be placed, to ensure sharing of information and collective use.

Table 1. Fragment of the Coexistence Agreement elaborated by USEN.

Although this proposed agreement, submitted to the group formed at that particular installation, explicitly establishes parameters for the installation, its main objective is to generate guidelines that enable trust, agreement and mutual support among those who participate in the installation of the tent. In addition, it delimits and makes visible the link with the state, specifying that the participating municipalities will have a place to put their contributions and material.

The document begins with the principles of horizontality and equity in the distribution of spaces and tasks - that is, through the lottery and compliance with all expressions of these values. As can be seen in points 4, 5 and 6, responsibilities and roles that enable the operation of the tent are established and, particularly in point 6, the percentage of sales destined to finance the redesign is mentioned. This sets guidelines for the people, products and materials that make up the tent. The agreement also serves as a political orientation for the tent, as it delimits what it contains, as well as how products and people can be laid out and distributed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The broad epistemological territory of the STS offers several conceptual and methodological tools to address the establishment of a commons such as the tent. It also gives us clues for understanding how infrastructure becomes a commons. The experience discussed here reaffirms the conviction of various authors that the commons are not simply material goods, but rather relationships relevant to the sustainability of life in common. In the case studied, the tent was born as a commons from the moment it was conceived and had no other purpose than to support the development of SSE. In the literature on the commons little importance has been given to the process of infrastructuring necessary to sustain such common relationships. The emphasis has been on defending the commons (Couclelis 2000; Harvey 2011). It is in this sense that we believe that the STS can contribute. Alberto Corsín Jiménez (2014) claims:

the right to infrastructure is neither a human-centred 'entitlement', part of what may be thought of as human-rights approaches to urban social justice; nor an object or device whose novel (say, sensor or network) capabilities 'claim' recognition in an urban ecology. It is neither a right to infrastructure, nor an infrastructure made right. Rather, the right to

infrastructure allows us to escape the human–nonhuman and epistemology–ontology dichotomies altogether by opening up the agential work of infrastructures as a source (an open source) of possibilities in their own right. (Corsín Jiménez 2014, p. 343)

Introducing the idea of infrastructuring from the field of STS allows us to broaden our view and to attend to non-human actors that actively participate in the production and maintenance of a commons. Throughout the process of the tent's construction, we were able to see how the collective created itself, to the extent that the tent became a common issue and concern, which was the spark that ignited its own public (in this case the actors around USEN; Marres 2005). As Le Dantec and Di Salvo (2013) state, infrastructuring, understood as an approach, allows us to understand design processes in an open way, while also paying attention to the different attachments, publics and political senses emerging from those relationships. In our case we have shown various situations in which very different components and actors were added throughout this unfinished design process. But our emphasis was on showing the tent not as a thing, but as a relational and affective field where those connections take place. We therefore appealed to Deleuze's notion of composition, which, as we said, Latour himself had already integrated into the conceptual repertoire of ANT. This concept allowed us to emphasise the affective dimension of the assemblages in the process of infrastructuring. The memory of another tent, the ideals of SSE expressed in daily practices and life experiences and the relationship of the craftswomen with their materials helped us think about the relevance of the affective side in the infrastructuring of a commons. Considering the tent as a commons led us to think about the production of the common in the experience. The immanent character of its definitions, delimitations and territorial inscriptions, and of the actualisation of the idea of SSE that is realised in it, establishes a political field that cannot be separated from the affections. This field, composed of multiple relations and materials, expresses the tent as a thing that can

only be explained by its heterogeneity (Law 1992). Its products express a knowledge and a form of production of life that overlap a personal and political narrative as a way of understanding the sustainability of life. As we saw, the tent was a great place for conversations and exchange, and each encounter, whether a sales situation or a shared moment between saleswomen, was an opportunity to exchange stories, knowledge and new ideas about the products. In such encounters were inscribed family histories, the knowledge transmitted through generations, as well as an idea of production, marketing and consumption that rescued the value of craftsmanship and work without exploitation. In short, it created the idea of a world to come, in a cosmopolitical sense (Latour 2007; Stengers 2005).

As Escobar states (2018), we are at a time when design is spreading to many spheres of life and when more and more people are assuming their status as designers without being designers by trade. This reality only underlines the importance that design has at the beginning of this century, as well as the increasing awareness that many actors are appropriating it as a way of producing habitable worlds. The tent, as an object that carries and contains a world – the tent as a cosmogram (Latour 2007; Tresch 2005) – brings within itself an idea of a political assemblage that rescues knowledge as politics and gives it the capacity to make politics through its re-establishment and redesign. In addition to referring to values such as solidarity, horizontality and the idea of building a possible 'other world', the concrete reference to SSE as a practice is mentioned by the members of USEN as 'what happens in the tent'. The tent is not defined by a previous idea of SSE, but rather the idea is enacted from its effects and its relations (Mol 2002). The tent updates an idea of SSE that appears imbricated with the unfinished initiative of redesign, a project that drives the actors to redefine themselves and think of themselves as practitioners of this 'other economy'.

The design process involved two parallel ways of

practising and analysing an SSE political proposal: the idea that the tent would be a space for the projection of SSE ideas and the construction of SSE in a compositional way during the process. The former political projection took place when USEN members insisted on transmitting their ideas such that the tent says and shows, itself, what SSE is – that is, showing a sort of anthropological point of view. For the latter, the tent as a compositional process bringing into being an SSE collective during the design process, shows us a more-than-human perspective that opens up the agential work of infrastructures as a source of possibilities in their own right (Corsín Jiménez 2014).

In sum, the tent was not a simple good, but rather an opportunity to infrastructure, in an affective and relational field, a common world. We can see this expressed in the following:

Although moved to project the values of the SSE into the tent, the infrastructuring of the tent – as an open process – allows them to practise a compositional politics where human and non-human actors could be brought together in an assembled way.

The economic values of handicraft production and the ethical values of the collective were simultaneously enacted in their daily practices. The tent and all of the relationships that unfolded in its becoming were composable thanks to these ethical-political practices. The transmission of values as a design aim remained the driving force behind its production. USEN's experience teaches us the ethical, political and economic nature of the values enacted through a design practice.

The open design and the way and the number of actors and things mobilised around it constitute a practical way of understanding SSE. Decision-making in assemblies, the desire to bring more and more groups together and the possibility of generating new conversations showed how the infrastructuring of the tent was integral to how USEN understands and practises SSE.

The different attachments included materials, collective agreements, documents, tables, chairs and financial resources, but also conceptual definitions, values and ways of doing things. This

heterogeneous set participated in the constant process of infrastructuring. The meeting was a cosmopolitical moment in which another possible world was produced, where SSE could be practised, not as a utopia, but as a real alternative to other dominant modes of economy.

The tent as a cosmogram teaches us the human and non-human capacity to produce habitable worlds in which to develop life. This process requires a constant effort and is not exempt from failures and interruptions. The open and unfinished design accounts for certain difficulties (mostly of an economic nature), but also for a way of doing things that is necessarily practised with others. In this sense, making a commons is a way of cosmogramatically supporting life.

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