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Mercado Bonpland and solidarity production networks in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Victoria Habermehl, Nela Lena Gallardo Araya and María Ximena Arqueros

Introduction

This chapter uses Mercado Bonpland, a small market organised by many self-managed organizations in Buenos Aires, as a focus for how alternative economic practices such as economic solidarity, alternative consumption, production and exchange take place. Mercado Bonpland demonstrates the many solidarity practices, both in terms of economic and collaborative organization that can take place in such spaces. The value of this chapter is that it highlights these solidarity practices, which also exist in other markets, such as those discussed in this book. In order to identify these solidarity practices, the introduction develops the history of solidarity and social economy organizing in Buenos Aires. In the second section, Mercado Bonpland operates as an important bridge linking production and consumption places, practices and collectives. In the last section the way that urban to rural production and consumption is explored in relation to national and international networks. In this way the market demonstrates the complexity of networks of solidarity economies beyond the market space itself. Our methodological approach encompasses different qualitative research into the study of markets and production conditions. This research is based on interviews and ethnographic research in Mercado Bonpland as well as with producers outside of the market.

In this chapter, we argue that the creation of alternative economy spaces in Buenos Aires is established through rural-urban networks of producers and consumers. These

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networks were strengthened and generated as a way to respond to the multiple crises of 2001 in Argentina (economic, political and social). It is worth saying that the crisis was not confined to one event but was long term, and can be traced to the state withdrawal of the 1990s, which also compelled people to take politics into their own hands.

By the late 1990s, the feasibility of neoliberal development was criticized in academic and policy circles, which led to the creation alternative social policies. These included the Social and Solidarity Economy (Hintze 2007a, p. 4) which occupied an important role and would later be taken on as state policy by subsequent progressive left governments. The Social and Solidarity Economy proposal centres around the idea developed by Coraggio and Sabaté that 'another economy is possible' based on the principle of social inclusion. This built on an analysis of the difficulty of reintegrating most of the population through Keynesian economic policies (Coraggio, 1999 and Federico-Sabaté, 2003 in Hintze, 2007b). After the crisis in Argentina, most people were excluded from the economy, which meant that individual citizens had to find their own solutions whilst some social policies were also implemented to mitigate the consequences of neoliberal model.

At the same time, a new movement of neighbourhood assemblies emerged as experiences of self-management that not only resisted these neoliberal economic models but created 'alternatives' through direct action (Fernández, 2011). In time these were replicated in other areas with similar characteristics as well as their own particularities, such as urban gardens, cultural centres, public libraries and worker managed factories. Thus across different scales there were hundreds of experiences of self-management; Some were supported by public programs, whilst others were autonomous and tried to

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solve social exclusion through integrating more people into production (Coraggio and Sabaté in Hintze 2007b). These were organised through different groups such as community associations, organised production of groups of unemployed workers, mutual aid societies, self-managed public services, NGOs and private foundations utilizing volunteer work, craft workshops, microenterprises, cooperatives, mutuals, bankrupt companies managed by their workers, solidarity barter markets, initiatives of reproduction and self-employment of domestic units in the city, solidarity credit, and so on. They were also supported by researchers at public universities (ibid.). These new forms of economic organisation brought about tensions between two different approaches: firstly, that of autogestion, direct democracy, horizontal organization and secondly vertical structures of organization such as bureaucratic processes or organisation through the state (Fernández, 2011 p.130). The results of these projects were often hybrid combinations of both approaches, for example, cooperatives that function in assemblies in opposition to the state, yet rely on them to facilitate certain conditions of production. We situate our case study of the Mercado de Economía Solidaria Bonpland (Bonpland Solidarity Economy Market) as one such experience that connects many examples of these different diverse forms of organisation. Mercado Bonpland is therefore one case in the multiple and diverse examples of self-managed practices in Buenos Aires but more widely can also be seen as an illustration of collective practices that are already happening in other markets across the world.

Mercado Bonpland opened in 1914 as part of a network of 36 municipal markets that were built in Buenos Aires between 1856 and the beginning of the twentieth century, due to a public policy to provide food for a growing urban population (Medina and Álvarez, 2009). Mercado Bonpland is located in the northern neighbourhood of Palermo, in a district known as Palermo Hollywood, an area that has been transformed radically by investments leading to the area being full of bars, restaurants and TV

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studios and leading to a displacement of previous residents in the neighbourhood (Herzer et al 2015). During this urban transformation the municipal market was slowly abandoned, particularly during the late 1990s, until 2007 when the Palermo Viejo neighbourhood assembly, which emerged during the 2001 crisis mentioned above, organised and moved inside the market building (Mauro and Rossi, 2013). Mercado Bonpland as we know it today consists of 17 stalls each run by a different cooperative association, producer or small network. We focus particularly on the food described as 'natural', 'organic', 'healthy' and 'direct from producers' that are characterized by various actors who integrate rural-urban networks.

Mercado Bonpland: The reconstruction of the networks

In the district of the CABA (Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, City of Buenos Aires), we find as in other mega-cities of the world, the abandonment of traditional retail markets in favour of shopping centres of mega consumption, such as, the Abasto or Spinetto shopping centres. As with other cities discussed in this book, gentrification of some of these traditional spaces is mainly driven by tourism and gourmetisation trends as demonstrated in the proliferation of 'organic' markets in the neighbourhoods of Palermo and San Telmo. Mercado de Economía Solidaria Bonpland (Palermo, since 2007) and El Galpón market (in Chacarita neighbourhood, since 2005) also sell 'organic' products but with a commitment to a solidarity economy and agroecology. They are characteristic of solidarity economy markets as they engage in direct social relationships between producers and consumers based on: removal and/or elimination of intermediaries; fairer prices; healthy products; lack of worker exploitation; promoting gender equality; environmental protection, and so on. However, these markets are not totally autonomous, as whilst there are many different experiences, organizing takes place through co-operatives, worker-led companies and some of which have state support to continue (Caracciolo, 2014).

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The Government of the City of Buenos Aires also influences markets and fairs through public policies. On the one hand, it subsidizes Itinerant Neighbourhood Provision Markets, which are traditional municipal markets that are organized once a week in each neighbourhood of the Buenos Aires. These markets offer fresh affordable produce for the middle and working classes through government-controlled prices. On the other hand, as part of a policy of reclaiming public space to build a 'green city' (slogan of the government for Buenos Aires from 2007 to the present), gourmet markets such as Buenos Aires Market are promoted, especially to middle and upper class consumers, where fairs operate as elite weekend events. Simultaneously tourist markets linked to gastronomy in squares, public parks and streets, promote the illusion of traditional, healthy, locally produced foods. In both of these cases Social and Solidarity Economy policies are not promoted. However, at the same time, the national government also implemented policies to support the Social and Solidarity Economy. Consequently, these policies generated different tensions, for example, some markets receive grants and permission to use public spaces whilst others do not.

Overall, therefore there is a multiplicity of experiences in terms of markets in Buenos Aires. Yet whilst the appearance of some solidarity markets may seem similar to gourmet events, economic solidarity markets in Buenos Aires demonstrate how markets can function as spaces through which to build alternative networks. Resistance to 'business-as-usual' global economic processes can be seen in the resourceful, community-oriented, co-operative and independently-organised markets such as Mercado Bonpland. This case highlights the potential of establishing alternative economic and social production systems within all markets. In the following two subsections we elaborate further on the roots of the Mercado Bonpland, namely the rich history of agroecology networks of production and consumption in Argentina and the

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autogestive urban assemblies which can all be conceptualized within the Social and Solidarity Economy.

(a) The agroecological movement

Mercado Bonpland's producers organise around agroecological production conditions as well as solidarity economic practices. It is important to distinguish between production networks organized around 'agroecological principles' from 'organic production'. Each have different principles, in particular the focus of agroecological production is for producers to create more just production conditions, without intermediaries, rather than only focusing on creating a high value product. Moreover, agroecological production is connected with markets and fairs that support alternative exchange networks, often organized by social movements that emerged in Argentina after the 2001 crisis. These practices are used to develop the Social and Solidarity Economy. There has long been academic debate over the use of the terms Social and Solidarity Economy in Europe and Latin America from social movements (Defourny, 2003; Laville et al., 2007; Coraggio, 2002; Singer, 2010). Yet, the focus of the Social and Solidarity Economy is to include those excluded from the broader economy by creating an active relationship with producers.

Additionally, Mercado Bonpland must be situated within the long history in Argentina of alternative economic networks demonstrated through fairs, markets and particularly in the form of *ferias francas* (Carballo, 2000; Carballo et al. 2004; Sevilla Guzmán and Martínez Alier, 2006; Goldberg, 1999). These fairs have been part of the process of reclaiming production rights for many years, and are facilitated through non-monetary

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exchange. This exchange has provided a way of moving beyond producing cash crops for the international market and instead supports small-scale independent production (García Guerreio, 2014). Furthermore, these ferias are important in resistance histories, facilitating barter, production for survival, and against land grabs and big producers.

At the present time many of these ferias ascribe to the principles of the Social and Solidarity Economy and connect with 'new rural social movements' emerging across the world in defence of traditional agroecological methods (Sevilla Guzmán and Martínez Alier, 2005). These movements are born out of local resistance to multinationals producing seeds, degradation of ecosystems and the threats to livelihoods because of agricultural modernization. They are based on ancient knowledge of farming systems and innovations of low input agriculture. As Sevilla Guzmán and Martínez Alier (2005) discuss, there is a difference between agroecological farming in Latin America and organic farming in Europe; agroecological movements in Latin America often function as advocacy for large rural populations, peasants and landless labourers. Importantly agroecological movements develop and support direct sales, (such as in Mercado Bonpland), which relies on complex networks of rural and urban actors coordinated at the local, national and global level built over decades. An example of these networks developed through agroecological principles and sold in Mercado Bonpland is the yerba mate called 'Titrayjú'. This name of this Argentine tea is a combination of the words 'tierra, trabajo y justicia' (land, work and justice) which represents the focus of their work.

The history of Titrayjú (which is currently sold in Bonpland) is an example of the necessity of producers organizing both networks of consumption, relationships and the

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history of political struggles. Titrayjú is a product of a cooperative created in 1975, in the city of Oberá, by MAM (Movimiento Agrario Misionero, Agrarian Missionary Movement) to generate more potential for autonomous farming. During the military dictatorship (1976-1983), political persecutions meant that the cooperative stopped producing, but activities began again in 1985, with the change to a democratic government (Vázquez, 2006). In the context of the globalisation and corporate concentration of agricultural production (Teubal and Rodriguez, 2002), the cooperative started participating in *ferias francas* (described earlier) in Argentina and began to have the support of public institutions such as Programa Social Agropecuario (Agricultural Social Program) (Vázquez, 2006). In 2001 the cooperative started the brand Titrayjú (ibid.) creating an alternative circuit to the traditional forms of commercialisation, which they developed through direct sales to consumers (ibid.). Through contacts with social organizations they made initial direct sales in Buenos Aires, however it was only through fairs like the *feria de Mataderos*¹ that networks of direct buyers were created and future members developed, including Mercado Bonpland. Thus Titrayjú is one case that demonstrates the history of organising through resistive exchange markets and how the fairs that became common during the 2001 crisis led to the development of networks of alternative economies.

b) The assembly movement

Whilst Titrayjú demonstrates the history of agroecological networks and organizing, Mercado Bonpland is also a result of the assembly organising from 2001 in Argentina. The assemblies were the form of resistance in the urban environment to the neoliberal model from both the middle and working classes. The exchange of goods on the street at *ferias* was a key survival strategy in the crisis, as well as a way for people to independently organise their daily lives. Ana, a market stallholder and member of the Palermo Viejo Assembly in Buenos Aires explains how she was involved in fairs in

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urban public spaces. This experience led to her initial involvement in Mercado Bonpland:

[I]t was a time when there were a lot [of fairs] – every fortnight, with people in San Telmo fair, from San Telmo Assembly, we put them in Diagonal Sur, where the Bank of Boston is and Florida. We would assemble in public space... That was a big movement you see. And I always came to assemblies that were made here, and participated.

(Interview with Bonpland Market stallholder Ana, 2014)

As Ana describes, the movement of ferias in urban public spaces also provided a way for people to come together, and these fairs in prominent public spaces were thus used as a meeting point as well as a means for building connections. The ferias therefore went beyond just exchanging goods, to contributing to the organising of the neighbourhood.

Mercado Bonpland and the networks of autogestive projects that it relies on are organised through different scales and varying actors, but both are connected through the exchange of goods, knowledge and experience, amongst other things. As such, Mercado Bonpland underlines the potential to organise autogestive projects between and through different spaces. Highlighting the state's governance and control of public spaces, Mercado Bonpland focused on daily survival and producing solidarity economic practices.

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Mercado Bonpland: a bridge in the network of solidarity economies

Mercado Bonpland as it is today was formed in 2007 in the abandoned traditional retail market (1914) (Medina and Álvarez, 2009) on Bonpland Street, in the gentrified neighbourhood of Palermo. This small market operates at a completely different scale from many of the other markets that are featured in this book. However, alongside this small scale, Bonpland demonstrates an attempt to organise around a different set of principles than those that are the premise of many of the other markets. The case of Mercado Bonpland allows a focus on the organisation of alternative economic practices such as economic solidarity, alternative consumption, production and exchange. The focus of Bonpland on the Social and Solidarity Economy questions the logic of capitalist production and consumption on the premises of fair trade (fair prices to producers), autogestive or self-managed production, healthy food and responsible consumption.

08_Figure 8.1 goes here.

TITLE: The exterior of Mercado Bonpland. Source: Victoria Habermehl, 2014

Mercado Bonpland acts as a 'bridge' between initiatives (its aim is to facilitate connections between networks), as well as a space in the city for face-to-face meetings. As such, the market is an organisational point for economic solidarity initiatives, as well as a visual symbol of these alternative initiatives in the city and a method of facilitating different forms of consumption. A participant of La Asamblearia, one of the stalls in the market, describes the importance of the market in connecting producers: 'Not intended to be the centre of activity, so that each actor develops in its own way, [the market] is only intended as a knot in that vast network, a bridge between initiatives which now appear as isolated' (La Asamblearia, 2013). Bonpland connects networks of alternative projects. The focus of the organisers is not only to maintain and promote the

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marketplace itself but to help to improve all of the projects associated with the network. The market is only important because of these many other projects, not despite them.

As already mentioned, the initial stimulus for the constitution of the Mercado Bonpland came from the Palermo Viejo neighbourhood assembly which started to meet inside the building in 2001. In particular, as part of their activities, the neighbourhood assembly organized 'La Trama' a political-cultural festival held in May 2002, which developed economic solidarity initiatives as a focus for the neighbourhood assembly (Mauro and Rossi, 2013). This festival acted as an impetus for developing the theme of economic solidarity; developing connections, engagements and networks with small producers, ferias and autogestive projects. In this context, the participants of assemblies wanted to develop solidarity with and in order to support small rural producers and cooperatives, who had difficulties linked with sales of their products. After several years organising and location changes, the economic solidarity market in Bonpland was formed.

'La Trama' signified a break from the broader assembly organising to a focus on economic solidarity projects. As we have already highlighted, the Social and Solidarity Economy in Argentina is a government project as well as something organised by social movements. Accordingly, in wanting to make change as well as be seen as 'legitimate actors in the neighbourhood' neighbours organised economic solidarity projects (ibid.). For La Asamblea, an organisation in Mercado Bonpland:

Solidarity Economy is the intent that is made from different stakeholders to articulate the economic emergency response that the popular sectors are giving

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to the crisis, making them come together in an integrated subsystem or economic sector.

(La Asamblearia, n.d.)

Building on this rich history of social mobilisation, Mercado Bonpland and the cultural centre behind it, is now constituted through many organisations. These organisations have connections either through cooperatives, historic organisations such as the assemblies or La Trama festival, or through working collectively. Within the market they produce and sell different products, such as: handmade clothes from Soncko Argentino; fresh vegetables from CEDEPO (Centro Ecumenico de Educacion Popular or Centre for Promotion of Religious Unity and Popular Education) and APF (Asociación de Productores Familiares, Family Producers Association); and products from reclaimed factories as La Alameda. At the same time there are cooperatives which organise and sell agroecological products, such as La Asamblearia and Colectivo Solidario

. Furthermore, there are some cultural groups as Movimiento Popular La Dignidad (The Popular Movement for Dignity). Whilst there are overlaps, as many stalls support multiple projects (and many projects organise across these categories), this emphasises the predominant organisational aims. Through their organisation these networks, therefore bridge a divide between the perceived separation of urban/rural or production/consumption. Mercado Bonpland therefore demonstrates connections that these autogestive networks build through organisation between apparently different projects.

08_Figure 8.2 [here](#).

TITLE: Map showing layout of market, 2015. Photo: Ximena Arqueros

Consequently, in organising around this solidarity economy, the neighbours and now market organisers are seeking to develop more 'reliable' economic approaches, through

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improving individual and collective capacities to create the economy. This improves life in the neighbourhood, as well as connecting to many other spaces where similar projects that are trying to create alternative economies. For Bonpland, this means developing relationships with these other spaces such as small agricultural projects, self-managed factories, cooperatives and artisans. These groups prioritise self-managed or dignified work, fair trade and responsible consumption.

Mercado Bonpland operates as a space that not only Palermo locals rely on, but where autogestive projects and 'alternatives' to ordinary economic organising can sell their products. However, the physical space of the market is also vitally important to what the market achieves. In the neighbourhood of Palermo, Mercado Bonpland is a visual sign and connection point to the other alternative projects in the city. In visiting Mercado Bonpland, consumers immediately have connections to the other spaces it supports - though information, people and products. This means that physically it demonstrates the power of these alternative economic ideas. This space is also a place where people can meet face-to-face with others. Bonpland is consequently also useful as a meeting space, or a place to connect with others that are working on or supporting similar projects. In this way, Bonpland - particularly when organising classes, talks, theatre events and so on - operates similarly to cultural centres, whereby the space is crucial to develop and expand these networks of alternative projects.

One example is the cooperative Colectivo Solidario whose aims are to sell agroecological products, 'educate urban consumers' and encourage thinking about consumption as a political act with slogans: 'Hacé justicia por compra propia. Animate a un consumo diferente' ('Make justice through your consumption: Try a different

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consumption'). With these aims, they provide information about agroecological products, organise debates with critical academics, experts and producers. Therefore, through these organisations Mercado Bonpland acts as a resource of support for other projects; It is a space that people know and can rely on. La Asamblearia is another cooperative stall at Bonpland, an organisation and an example of an urban network which has supported Mercado Bonpland from the beginning in accordance with the principles of the assembly movement. This cooperative began after the crisis of 2001 and works as an intermediary connecting urban consumers with rural producers. These rural producers form part of peasant and indigenous movements as Movimiento Nacional Campesino e Indígena (Argentine Peasant and Indigenous Movement). We develop more of the urban rural relationships in the following section.

Whilst Mercado Bonpland is organised in order to create a solidarity economy, there are many ways in which through being organised to create and tackle everyday economic issues, Mercado Bonpland is embedded within these struggles. For example it attempts to challenge relationships of capitalist consumption whilst at the same time it relies on relationships of consumption to function as a market. It highlights the potential for organising through networks of alternative economies and connecting to markets. We are not claiming that Mercado Bonpland is outside of these complex and contradictory relationships. In fact, organising from this everyday life context means that the market organisers, generally intermediaries between producers and consumers such as Colectivo Solidario and La Asamblearia, have encountered many challenges, emphasising the complexity of such organising rather than attempting to establish that Mercado Bonpland is outside of capitalism.

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Mercado Bonpland: Connecting urban and rural spaces

The history of the neighbourhood organising (focused on autogestion from organisers living within and outside the neighbourhood), is crucial to understanding the development of the market. It is also important to understand the agroecological food and agriculture networks connected through Bonpland. This is characterised by two examples, CEDEPO and APF, who sell in Bonpland and demonstrate the crucial work of connecting producers and consumers through the sale of fresh vegetables.

CEDEPO (Centro Ecuménico de Educación Popular or Centre for the Promotion of Religious Unity and Popular Education) is a civil association and one of the main providers of the fresh vegetables in Mercado Bonpland. CEDEPO has a centre for education, research and ecological production called La Parcela, located in the rural-urban outskirts of Greater Buenos Aires known as Florencio Varela, a deprived area with high levels of poverty. In La Parcela, family farmers and experts produce food through a popular education and agroecological approach, and sell directly in Bonpland.

However, the CEDEPO project has a scope beyond food production, Elsa, a CEDEPO member and worker in Mercado Bonpland, explained that local people were initially encouraged to visit La Parcela to use the healthcare centre, as there were inadequate facilities in the area. When using the healthcare centre, people would see other things being produced which, in turn, built their interest in engaging with CEDEPO. The development of this organisation led to a significant improvement in people's basic

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daily lives. In talking to Elsa (and other CEDEPO members who work in Mercado Bonpland) she explained that previously local residents, 'had no orchard, no hens, not even rabbits. All that appeared with CEDEPO' (Interview market stall holder Elsa, 2013).

Initially, La Parcela's educational role facilitated practical skills, such as how to produce agroecologically with the land using different techniques, such as permaculture, biodynamic and other traditional (peasant and indigenous) knowledges. The aim of this was to ensure that people with access to land also had the opportunity to learn skills that would help them produce, as producing their own food meant more self-reliance. The project was tailored to the needs of local residents, focusing on different forms of production and on improving local people's day-to-day lives.

These educational and community projects led to many new co-operatives and family agriculture projects, which have eventually become independent:

Yes, it changed a lot, but also new co-operatives were born, like for example APF (Asociación de Productores Familiares - Family Producers Association). Neighbours started to get some information, they started to build their own orchards, their own experiences, and so they started to create their own co-operatives

(Interview with market stallholder Elsa, 2013)

This APF cooperative also produces vegetables which are sold in Mercado Bonpland, and although it began through taking part in CEDEPO, it now maintains independence. CEDEPO and its education and production focus has thus created a network of self-organised co-operatives that produce agricultural products. The independence of these groups ensures that people can produce and organise for themselves, and thus can

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improve their lives, rather than focusing on strengthening the organisation, CEDEPO, itself. Similarly, to Bonpland market, the focus of CEDEPO is that people who work with the organisation can sell or produce for themselves. This independence for producers was emphasised as crucial by stallholders in the market.

As such, the organisations of CEDEPO and APF are connected through local, national and international networks. CEDEPO and APF participate in the Mesa Provincial de Organizaciones de Productores Familiares de Buenos Aires (Provincial Bureau of Family Producers Organizations of Buenos Aires). Their aim is to strengthen grassroots organisations of peasants and familiar producers in the context of the 2001 crisis. Both groups are involved in an international movement MAELA (Movimiento Agroecológico de Latinoamérica y el Caribe or Agroecological Movement of Latin America and the Caribbean) and through MAELA are part of La Via Campesina, a global alliance of organizations of family farmers, peasant farmers, indigenous people, landless peasants and farm workers, rural women, and rural youth, representing at least 200 million families worldwide (Rosset and Martínez Torres, 2013). These examples demonstrate the multiple scales of organisation on an everyday and movement level.

Mercado Bonpland is crucial for CEDEPO and APF, as the market provides a space where these small producers can sell without an intermediary. This gives local producers more control over what and when they sell, as well as an opportunity to sell at a fair price. The market therefore allows local co-operatives and communities to focus on improving their daily lives rather than solely focusing on production as in order to sell. Knowing that there is a secured sale through Bonpland therefore gives the

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producers more flexibility in focusing on production and to focus on improving autogestion.

The above examples demonstrate how Mercado Bonpland connects the supposedly separate yet related worlds of the urban and rural, production and consumption, nature and society. As with all markets they are reliant on production of surrounding regions to sell and vice versa. The market challenges linear relationships of production and consumption, reformulating organisation in order to create relationships of support. As such the space of Mercado Bonpland can only continue because of the many different spaces of autogestion being organised beyond Mercado Bonpland. Similarly, these autogestive workplaces, coops, farms and factories can continue to develop because of the work and space to sell provided by Mercado Bonpland.

In developing these reciprocal relationships, Mercado Bonpland (as well as the associated examples of CEDEPO, APF, Movimiento Nacional Campesino e Indígena, La Vía Campesina, and other grassroots organisations), demonstrates that much of the work of such a market is in connecting with producers and organising in the neighbourhoods where production is situated, as much as in the market itself. As such, the market is entirely reliant on grassroots organising, much of which stems from the 2001 social movement organising. Each organisation in Bonpland also has to continue to work to connect with specific producers in small towns and through networks of producers. In this way, through producers, the connections between the way that products are produced, the labour inherent in producing them, the spatial configuration of this production and the sale on the marketplace of Bonpland, demonstrates alternative

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organisation processes. The interconnection of such networks, people, organisation and ideas are essential.

Mercado Bonpland's origins are in the experience of the crisis of 2001, and collectively organising to resist industrial agriculture in the case of the producers and to reclaim public spaces for the neighbourhood in the case of consumers. Mercado Bonpland, as an experiment in producing another economy, does not only have connections with producers for produce, it also develops relationships of support, knowledge exchange, visits and education projects. In addition, those that do not have a production relationship can use the market as networks of resources to expand their own potential to produce. This means that the expansion of networks of autogestive projects developed through organising together creates more possibilities, resources and connections between projects. Finally, these spaces are connected through people's use of Bonpland for their consumption, as they all support the development of healthy food, produced following agroecological principles. For Bonpland, the history and experience of organising developed these projects, and connects these sometimes disparate seeming organisations.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we argue that Bonpland is one expression amongst many of an alternative and solidarity economy in practice. Constructed through networks of producers, this market relies on many different alternative spaces of production (such as

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family agriculture, reclaimed factories and cooperatives, and with the specific cases in this chapter: Titrayjú, Colectivo Solidario, La Asambleria, CEDEPO and APF) which operate within and beyond the city. These relationships cannot operate without the support of the government and they are beyond utilitarian production interactions, relying on networks of organisers supporting multiple projects and exchanging practical and theoretical knowledge, workshops and events. Therefore, the networks of alternative economies that were formed from the experience of crisis of 2001 show connections and history of organising in this crisis period and beyond. Through these networks, constituted by neighbourhood production organising in Bonpland provides (re)claiming of unused spaces (market, or land) for the local community and solidarity economy. As such we argue that seen through networks, Bonpland demonstrates challenges to the dominant understandings of the economy through production processes.

Bonpland organises urban and rural production through various grassroots social movements seeking to contest neoliberal production systems. On the one hand, the urban scale was arranged through assemblies then emerged from the crisis of 2001. On the other hand, rural movements are connected to Bonpland through the rural, peasant and indigenous movements (which have their origins in the 1960s and 70s in Argentina) and more recent organizations of 'Family Agriculture'. These connections are strengthened by the changing perceptions of global environmental issues, which since the 60s, have resulted in farmers organising to produce in some cases in opposition of industrial agriculture. Additionally, urban consumers aware of these environmental issues wish to support alternative production through the consumption of ecological produce. The Bonpland experience generates understandings and practices that engage in consumption as a political act and that demonstrates the social relationships which exist in a market. The assembly of networks of different rural and urban social groups

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embodied in Mercado Bonpland actively creates a public space that facilitates this economy and demonstrates the recovery of the public space by a neighbourhood assembly. The physical space of the market demonstrates a fight for the occupation of public space in a context where there is a growing contestation over it.

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¹ A kind of Sunday market that brings traditional Gaucho (Argentine cowboy) rural culture directly into the city.