

Mapping social economy discourses in Chile

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyze the social economy discourses in four regions of Chile, characterized by their internal economic heterogeneity.

Design/methodology/approach – Using an intentional sample, semi-structured interviews were applied to 45 key informants from the public sector, universities, consultant enterprises, cooperatives and civil society organizations. Through a content analysis, thematic axes were identified that allowed to characterize and to recognize the narratives that key informants held about their initiatives, experiences or ventures.

Findings – The results allow us to understand the diversity of discourses and practices about alternative economies, being able to organize them from two axes: the tension between molar and molecular subjectivities; and the tension between reform and transformation (which refers to a transformative type of institutional and socio-material change). These axes propose an interpretative framework that integrates a diversity of distinctions and/or polarities and problematizes the homogeneity of formal economic discourse.

Research limitations/implications – The discourses analyzed by this paper offers representativeness by saturation. It do not allow to ponder for sure the relative presence of each of these discourses in the field of economic diversity. The analysis of what type of actors sustain each type of discourse remains pending.

Social implications – The high discourse heterogeneity makes it possible to foresee major difficulties in terms of political articulation and the visibility of various alternative economic experiences, initiatives or ventures as part of a social transformation movement.

Originality/value – Previous studies developed in Latin America about social and solidarity economy have been focused in objective dimensions as the volume of incomes, expenditures or jobs. This is the first study aimed at characterizing the subjective field of discourse held by different actors who recognize themselves as part of an alternative economy movement.

Keywords Social economy, Cooperatives, Fair trade, Solidarity economics

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Economic thought has been hegemonized by the so-called Standard Economic Theory, characterized by a universalistic, deductive and formalistic theoretical body. This is based on a theory of rational, maximizing and self-interested action – the homo economicus – from which emerges a set of formal models of social functioning. These models work as descriptive, predictive and normative systems, which not only approach the economic reality in a scientific way, but also define what is “speakable” and “unspeakable” economically. They trace thus, what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls an “abysmal line”



between the economy recognized as existing, and the relationships and economic practices not only invisible but also actively produced as nonexistent within a “monoculture of productivity” (de Sousa Santos, 2011). The theoretical body of the Standard Economic Theory – described by Gibson-Graham (2006) as a “capitalocentric” – fails to account for the ideological and political concerns and economic practices of a diversity of actors – individuals and collectives – who seek to build other economic relationships, founded in the expanded reproduction of human and non-human life.

The purpose of this document is to compile and analyze the discourses of actors that participate in the construction of other relationships and economic practices in four regions of south central Chile, characterized by internal economic heterogeneity: Valparaíso, Maule, Biobío and La Araucanía. These regions account for important share of Chilean peasant families and traditional mapuche people communities. At the same time, they hold relevant import substitutive industrial sectors downsized by globalization; and growing export oriented natural resources industries, like pulp and paper, fishmeal, fruits and vegetables and wine.

It will be observed that these actors do not build a homogenous discourse, but that their proposals are diverse and are crossed by tensions that hinder their social articulation and political projection, blurring the strict line of separation between dominant economic visions and emancipatory proposals and opening a hybrid space of strategies, objectives and values that the research seek to unveil and connect.

This document corresponds to the findings of the first stage of the project that seeks to contribute to a thought of economic heterogeneity asking what invisible forms of production, exchange and consumption – and the epistemologies that underlie them – can be recognized in the bio-socio-economically homogenized areas by industry in the researched regions.

Plural economy and economics

The Standard Economic Theory conceives the world as an enormous mechanism constituted by a series of pieces – elementary units of analysis – that interact forming a whole. There are a series of laws that emerge from the rationality and individual coordinated behavior that, at any time and place, govern the relations of production and exchange (Misas, 2004). As Latour points out, the Standard Economic Theory has been built on a model of action and decision, which does not account for the diversity of subjectivities – passionate interests – that animate the economy. And even more, economy-discipline has built the economy-thing (Latour and Lépinay, 2008), in what Polanyi (1944) called a great self-fulfilling prophecy. With the provocative phrase of “there has never been a capitalist regime” (Latour and Lépinay, 2008), the authors reveal the performativity of economic activity – as a process that is being done, which leaves different possibilities for the future open – and the relevance of the actors in front of naturalized structures, which returns the capacity of action and political incidence of the actors and contributes to an empowering economic discourse. This semantic change rejects the naturalization of the discourses of domination, power and violence to reconstruct a capable discourse of glimpsing alternative scripts (Latour, 2005). Latour’s co-constructivist approach and the Actor Network Theory (ANT) to abandon pre-packaged categories (including capitalism and neoliberalism) and to follow the traces of the actors and their association exercises, including non-human actors or actants (i.e. economic materialities such as products, money, nature, etc.). He looks for contribute to an empowering economic discourse that validates a variety of actors, recognizing for example the ability to control stakeholders and consumers; resistance and pressure networks (workers, the environment, etc.); and the capacity of resilience of local economies to coexist and re-enact the “penetrations” of capital (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

The Latourian bet aims to relieve the subjective and inter-subjective economic activity, the relevance of desires, beliefs and “passionate interests” as a driving force. So also the importance of extra-economic factors (from personal affections to institutional conventions) in their stabilization.

In a similar perspective, Callon (1998) argues that economists have neglected the study of real market places because of their stubbornness in focusing only on market abstraction and that it is now vital to go back to empirical markets. This claim seems to be nothing more than the main claim of several economic sociologists and anthropologists. However, while some sociologists try to enrich the homo economicus by adding cultural assumptions, Callon regards the existence of such a homo economicus as a consequence of economic theory's influence on the social word. Thus, he claims to devise tools that will endow economics agents with the capacity to experiment with different forms of markets organization (Callon, in Barry and Slater, 2002, p. 301).

For French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, focusing on language is fruitless since an utterance is never performative *per se* but becomes performative in a specific social, symbolic or economic field (Bourdieu, 1982). It is, thereby, important not only to study the influence of language on social praxis, in the sense that social institutions are kinds of performative utterances produced by certain social groups, but, also, the social context in which the discourse takes place.

In the same way, Polanyi calls for a "substantivist" approach to economics as opposed to the "formalist" one (Polanyi, 1944). This is an empirical approach to economic facts that take specifically into account the institutional and normative context in which they perform. This recognizes the social character of economics, which is governed by socially instituted rules, and therefore quite diverse among different contexts. Polanyi points out that the formal assumptions of formal economic science account for the institutional framework of nineteenth-century liberal England, but a substantive view opens up the space for diverse institutional settings and economic practices. Moreover, he argued that the formal meaning of "economic" springs from the logical character of the means-ends relationship. Contrary to this, the substantive meaning of "economic" points to the elemental fact that human beings, like all other living things, cannot exist for any length of time without a physical environment that sustains them. This is the origin of the substantive definition of economic. So, in the substantive sense "economic" denotes nothing other than bearing reference to the process of satisfying the material needs of the community.

This substantive approach to economics builds on the economic anthropology tradition (Maus, 1925; Sahlins, 1972) that showed the existence of non-capitalist exchanges and markets. It also builds on sociology that looks the problem of embeddedness of economics in social structure (Bourdieu, 2000; Weber, 1922; Granovetter, 1985; Polanyi, 1944). These perspectives allow us to challenge the dominant imaginary of a self-reproducing stable economy, isolated from social relations, with a unique and universal rationality.

Discussions on critical views of the economy (alternatives to capitalism, alternatives to development) do not consider looking at the degree of differences (a more docile kind of economy) but differences in forms and expressions of the economic organization that is usually described as post capitalist (Gibson-Graham, 2006) or post-developmental (Escobar, 2011). Under this perspective, the importance of "other" economies, which emerge from the capitalist siege, has been demonstrated. These diverse economic expressions respond to demands and needs in the outskirts of the state and of the market (de Nanteuil and Laville s/f; Razeto, 1994).

From a substantivist perspective located in the Latin American empirical reality, Coraggio *et al.* (2010) proposed a set of distinctions that allow the recognition, beyond capital companies and public companies, of a "popular economy," made up of worker initiatives or undertakings of their domestic units and specific organizations, which organize natural processes and human capacities to reproduce their life and work force.

Methodology

The research adopted a comprehensive epistemological approach, which considers that there is no single way of conceiving economic relationships and activities; but several

definitions depending on actors, their stories and their interpretations of reality. Thus, it was proposed to show the economic diversity through a typology of discourses elaborated from the analysis of key informant discourses. The target population was composed by actors linked to the social and solidarity economy sector in the regions of Valparaíso, Maule, Biobío and La Araucanía, building an intentional sample of 45 key informants, who were contacted using the snowball technique. It is guaranteed a certain stratification of the sample to include three types of actors:

- Leaders and managers of cooperatives, networks and economic associations that consider themselves part of social economy. Here we includes presidents and managers on several regional formal cooperatives as well as social leaders of networks of social economy, such as “Feria del Buen Vivir.”
- Directors of foundations and NGOs, at national and regional levels, whose objective is to promote various forms of social economy. There is a wide range of organizations, including promotion of social entrepreneurship (as Social B), micro-entrepreneurship (as “Trabajo para un Hermano” and “Acción Emprendedora” foundations) and associativity (such as Fair Trade).
- Public sector actors that regulate and promote the sector. We interviewed representatives of Regional Secretaries of Economy Ministry and municipal managers of local economic development units.
- Academics and consultants connected with research and promotion activities of social economy, specifically in the field of Fair Trade.

Table I reports the regional and category distribution of key informants interviewed for the study.

The research conducted in-depth interviews focusing on four major themes: values and political and territorial strategies of the organization; cooperation networks that the organization establishes; vision and diagnosis of the general panorama of the social economy and the solidarity economy in the region; and economic desires on the territory as the area of the transformative political imagination. Both in the sampling and in the interviews, certain degrees of emergence and flexibility were used, according to the characteristics and particularities of each case.

The information was analyzed with the tools of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1993; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Van Dijk, 2000), using Nvivo software and developing an inductive procedure in which the large conceptual categories worked by the interviewees, were identified and organized as simple content opositions. In this way, two types of categories emerged. The first is a more abstract plane which account for general objectives and values regarding the economy. The second is the scope of the specific strategies in which these discourses are operationalized by the interviewed organizations.

These categories were then organized in a semantic field that accounts for their diversity and tensions, whose formulation was also inductive, allowing to recognize different areas of discourse.

Table I.
Key informants
interviewed

Category/Región	Valparaiso	Maule	Biobío	Araucanía	Total
Leaders and managers of social enterprises	11	5	7	3	26
Directors of NGOs	1	3	4	0	8
Public sector actors	3	1	3	0	7
Academic and consultants	1	2	1	0	4
Total	15	11	16	3	45

Results

Objectives and fundamental values

The actors do not perceive economic practice as a self-regulated system (the “machine economy”), but as a space where it is necessary, possible and urgent to obtain certain political objectives and where a set of values must be actively promoted. Another economic landscape appears here, in which the rational simplicity of the homo oeconomicus is made more complex by other action and decision criteria.

The objectives sought by the associativity and economic organization go from very basic elements, such as ensuring personal and collective survival, to ambitious objectives, such as building another development capable of redefining the relationships between people and nature:

- (1) Subsistence and survival: some actors identify personal and collective subsistence as the first objective and horizon to be achieved and safeguarded, in markets that are controlled by large companies. Surviving, as economic actors and as people, is perceived as a difficult achievement that can only be achieved through associative processes. In the words of one NGO activist: “associativity permits people’s survival [...] systems of reciprocity, cooperation, complex forms of also doing economy.”
- (2) Good work: there is a shared diagnosis that states that capitalism does not guarantee fair labor remuneration. As state by a peasant leader: “there is whole generations of workers [...] that finishing their labour life do not have anything [...] horrible pension, many of them, not even a place to live in.” Faced with this, the challenge is to generate another form of work that allows for good living and overcoming precarious conditions. Decent work or the dignity of the condition of producer or worker is presented in a wide range of discourses: as a right, as a moral reservoir, a vehicle of dignity, fulfillment and empowerment and a source of popular political power.
- (3) Empowerment: it also appears as a very transversal category that goes from personal processes of empowerment and awareness, up to expanded political processes of autonomy construction. In the words of a professional of a traditional NGO “empowerment, means awareness of rights, awareness of your own abilities, looking your environment and say I am not alone, I am not condemned to live in poverty, to live on state subsidies [...] a glance of dignity.”

Sustaining a productive economic activity helps the processes of people empowerment but helps the territorial social construction. The economy is thought to be a source of identity construction and a space that allows connecting with others and building new community references. A community leader states “People are empowered by their production, their identity, then beyond the strictly economic the people also begin to linked each other in other ways [...] to build community.”

- (4) Development: most of the interviewees identify development as a need, but at the same time, as something that needs to be reinvented, as its coordinates are monopolized by large corporations and defined by economic growth, global markets and homogenization. This development would be contrary to the development of the people who live here. These words recognize a type of development in local processes and their socio-ecological relationships that is necessary to understand, respect and promote it. In the word of a mapuche community leader: “there are development activities that are contrary to what development means for people who live here; the forest industry, is a problem for us [...] little by little we are giving meaning and value, not only about culture, but also we need to have a more balanced territory, then we need natural heritage [...] protecting, caring. So, our development vision is contrary to the development of forestry [...] we collide.”

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- (5) Autonomy and self-management: building economic and political autonomy, personal and collective, with respect to the different actors that exercise power, appears as a central objective to achieve through economic and cooperation practices. For some, it is autonomy with respect to the state and its clientelist networks; for others it is economic autonomy against the pressure of the capitalist market; and, finally for others, it is a self-management capacity to build political transformation projects.

Some discourses synthesize these three dimensions. For peasants organizations, it is central the autonomy from debts cycles and agor-insumes: “today, people is in total dependence [...] if he who does not have seed, does not sow. He who has no money to buy the seed is fucked, he does not sow. Furthermore is the dependence on inputs [...] Then, we raises agroecology [...] it's a necessity!”

- (6) Buen Vivir (Good living): it appears repeatedly as a reference horizon without a clear definition. Thus, the construction of good living does not follow single path but is a space for negotiation and exchange between different visions, where territorial articulation is relevant. It arises in opposition to fragmentary logics promoted by the state and other groups of power and that separate aspects such as food, health, education, etc. Logics that represent a homogenizing epistemology of western imprint, as stated by a Cooperative leader: “we are accustomed to look for a global referent, because this is how we have been trained, [...] but we have to think in terms of diversity, respect, alliance [...] in a logic of service, to take care of life. It is a question of paradigm, at the end, we are talking about life, and behind there is health, nutrition, education, all are dimensions of life, not this separation that the West does. Now the importance of networks, connections to raise references to counterpoints of power, but in the small area scenario, in the territory we live in.”

These fundamental objectives are articulated to a body with transversal values, which are considered to be guaranteed and respected in economic activity:

- (1) Justice: notion that start on the shared diagnosis among different organizations that “we live in a society grossly unjust.” As such, it presides over a variety of discourses of various initiatives or ventures associated with fair trade, but also connected with the perspective of small producers who face markets from an asymmetrical condition of power and vulnerability. The notion of justice or, rather, of injustice deals with social order, public policies, etc. In this way, the category of fair price appears connected not only with economic results but with the notion of work dignity and valuation of different forms of life.
- (2) Solidarity: which also appears to be defined broadly, transversally and explicitly in the different discourses and it is regularly associated with very diverse economic expressions such as the common good, fair trade, social and solidarity economy, conscious collaborative economy, agroecology, etc. Therefore, it appears as a polysemic category, whose meanings vary according to who promotes it. In the words of a Fair Trade promoter: “there is a flourishing [...] you have the economy of the common good, fair trade, social and solidarity economy, conscious collaborative economy, movements such as Agroecology, 100K short circuit movement, in short, different expressions whose common denominator is that they are based on values, these values at the heart of their work.”
- (3) Cooperation: as a transversal value that operates as one of the guiding principles of these experiences and that is present in economic practices. It is understood as a value that mobilizes resources and constructs alternatives for the solution of particular territorial problems. Interviewees see cooperation has being historically rooted,

which has been made invisible by the “capitalocentric” discourse that promotes competition and individual improvement. The value of cooperation, as a support for the practices of economic diversity, is sustained in its historical anchoring but also allows us to understand the current reproduction and survival of economic alternatives to hegemonic capitalism. From there, associative relations are also interpreted as a way to obtain advantages in a competitive scenario, which is a tactical role rather than a transformative path to understand and build territories. In the words of a NGO professional: “I believe that there is an essence and a way of doing economics that is very old, which is the basic associative way of understanding the coexistence, that peasant communities have historically done and that they still do today: the principle of “cooperation” as a base to solve things that individually cannot do.”

- (4) Respect for nature and for the reproduction of life: it is presented in some discourses – particularly in urban sectors concerned with consumption and in peasant and indigenous organizations – and understood as necessary conditions and the ultimate horizon of economic activity. The economic is not then only production, but also the extended reproduction of all the beings and relations of a territory. In the words of an indigenous leader: “we value the natural heritage, taking care of the basins, [...] we have been gaining ground against the forestry industry, we have been restoring part of the basin and [...] and I think that in the future we will go in that line, to restore more water springs, that for us, they are not only the birth of water, but important menokos, where there is a lot of energy, where are the medicinal herbs.”

This set of values expressed by the actors allow us to imagine an economic and territorial desire. These are principles that sustain and guide economic practices, but above all that, seek to subvert the current order not only in its economic dimension but also in the social and cultural ones. They propose a new way of interpreting territories, intersubjective relations and the link with the state. Therefore, it is a long-term project that does not begin or end with the production and marketing of a specific good or service, however local or solidary may be, but its impact is more profound and multidimensional. For this reason, its concretion confronts important conflicts and obstacles, which relate both with daily life practices, but adverse external conditions determined by the neoliberal economic model and its state legitimization.

It should also be noted that these principles are constructed from a view of what already exists. There are no negations or constructions from the lack, on the contrary, they are expressions of a positive countercurrent that seek to recover certain values of the past, not in a dogmatic way, but as potentialities that are present in the territories and that have to be awakened. Self-management, autonomy, cooperation and solidarity are values that are recognized in Chilean society and that today are fundamental in recovering the collective construction of an emancipatory project.

Economic strategies

At the time of materialize these abstract values and objectives, the economic strategies proposed, are of different types:

- (1) Entrepreneurship: the entrepreneurship strategy is broad but controversial. For some actors this category appears related to the empowerment and development of their own capacities and a process of dignifying the person, as opposed to the moral degradation of being dependent on state subsidies. In this way, entrepreneurship or micro-entrepreneurship would represent a perspective that transcends practical needs and is projected to a political and ideological level.

As explained by one NGO –Trabajo para un Hermano- with a long trajectory of promoting micro-entrepreneurship: “we are trying to change this society, that we feel it is a gross and scandalously unfair society. And we are betting on the dignity of people, the development of their own capabilities.”

For other actors, however, entrepreneurship is interpreted as another strategy of the neoliberal model that strengthens the idea of economic construction based on individual effort and, therefore, de-emphasizes the collective and cooperative construction effort. At the same time, different interviewees allude to the inappropriate use of this category to legitimize a necessary resource allocation from the state, which usually does not have a long-term impact on the territories and their economic logic. Thus, it is considered a redistributive political exercise that does not favor other ways of understanding or building economies.

Then this concept does not refer to a single idea but is an expression of differences that can be observed in territories that range from an emancipatory conception to a critical one. For the first, the idea of entrepreneurship can be an opportunity niche supported by public policies. While for the second, it is a strategy to legitimize the role of these agents and the cooptation of territorial economies.

- (2) Articulation of actors and institutions: the maintenance over time and the projection of economic initiatives requires the visibility of practices, content and articulation of its drivers. This articulation and construction of networks requires institutional support and provides an opportunity to access markets. As stated by one public officer: “what they seek is to compete better in the market, they see that by partnering they can have greater capacity, generating an economy of scale to be able to compete [...] I hope the cooperative model works well and has an adequate legal framework, adequate financing so that it became an option to associate.” In the first aspect, institutional support is recognized as fundamental (for example: the state, universities, municipality, etc.) to sustain the articulated work of experiences over time, and spaces for exchanges and education in related matters. It is also perceived, that the articulation for access to markets can allow for a more competitive economic insertion and reproduce the virtuous values of cooperation beyond the actors that participate in it. At the formative level, universities acquire a fundamental role since they have the potential space to include these topics, through the curricular inclusion of the contents, concepts and strategies that emanate from these economic practices and understand them as part of the current socio-economic mechanism.
- (3) Social responsibility: this category highlights the responsibility for the consequences of our economic actions in the context of regular market functioning, being a central principle of economic ethics for some of the interviewees. It can be recognized as an organizing principle of fair trade, which promotes social and responsible consumption and production; and it is also central to actors, that seek to minimize the social and environmental impacts of the activities done by companies and organizations. In the case of corporate social responsibility, the notion appears to be related both to corporate marketing strategies and to the possibility that capital companies, guided by the principle of profit, can incorporate social and environmental criteria in their actions.

A consumer organization states: “consumption is an act of life and an act of transformation [...]. If I want a sustainable society I have to begin to consume sustainably, if I want a society without abuse I have to start consuming those companies that do not abuse and punish those that abuse.”

- (4) Productive diversification of the territory: it is built as a political horizon for the development of local economies and a principal condition for translating and understanding the dynamics and opportunities that small-scale economies mean for

the territories. The expression of this diversity goes through several ways that gives form and content to local economic practices, which translates into higher levels of agrobiodiversity, different knowledge in the production and preparation of goods or in the provision of services. However, diversification also includes the integration of new economic activities such as tourism or the development of new products for larger markets.

- (5) Rescuing the local, ancestral and traditional quality: associated with the notion of territorial productive diversification, there is a need to revitalize technologies and quality of local products, based on ancestral and traditional knowledge and practices. Different discourses affirm the relevance of knowledge, ways of doing and local experiences, which are not always understood from outside. The idea of locality appears as a set of knowledge and cultural heritage, which have economic and development potential, which is at risk and must be rescued. In the words of an NGO worker: “recovering local knowledge, traditional trades, make sense for the territories. [...] resignifying the heritage field as another space to work on development issues, say, do not reify it [...] there are cultists who have a knowledge -true, local super relevant for the reproduction of the territories- but they are under conditions of erosion, It is necessary to create a device that can, sustain these systems of knowledge, these practices.”
- (6) Recovery of local economic circuits: productive diversification, depending on local needs or the service to new markets, is associated with the notion of economically densified territories, articulating territorial circuits.

The issue with the marketing of small-scale production is one of the crosscutting challenges that occur in these practices. Hence, overcoming this barrier is necessary not only for an economic purpose, but because it recognizes the transformation of marketing methods which can generate virtuous elements. These elements cannot be reproduced in a conventional model determined by marketing methods based on the monetary transaction and fundamentally by the figure of the intermediary. This is complemented by the issue of responsible consumption that is understood, from the speeches, as a practice that seeks to be resignified as a political exercise at the individual decision level. Therefore, short-term economic circuits allow marketing, but they also are an opportunity to generate spaces for dialogue and exchange of knowledge, information and practices among people and organizations that are developing local economic experiences. In this dimension, the notion of recovering or creating local technological capacities appears to be key.

- (7) Community, commons and territory: under these categories, the territory is understood as a socio-natural-cultural framework, through which it must be protected. In the same way, the territory is understood as a space for political interaction and experimentation of economic practices. That is, as a space for the creation of communities and the defense of common resources that appear as expropriated by private corporate logics (e.g. water, native forest, fishing, etc.). In the word of a mapuche leader: “we are taking responsibility on your territory. So, there is attachment to your place, we make people feel that it belong to us, that we are in charge of this, and that is why we are fighting the forestry industry, to restore water springs and to restore the basin [...]” For these extractive logics, the associativism, the community, the collective, the public is an enemy to defeat in this offensive to gain control of resources. Among the commons mentioned, the need to recover land and water in the face of privatization waves stands out.

- (8) Commensality and community reconstruction: this category is marked less by the actors interviewed, but refers to experiences based on the consolidation of strong community bonds, with a high emphasis on the autonomy, self-management and a certain detachment from the structural variables that affect them; actual “economic circuits for the life”(cooperative leader).

Key to sustaining these strategies over time is the collective and articulated work that responds to the productive and market territorial needs, but also to their great diversity at all levels. There are competing categories within discourses that seem antagonistic, for example, the idea of micro-entrepreneurship and social responsibility (strategies that enjoy legitimacy in the market economy), with the idea of rescuing the ancestral, local and traditional quality, interpreted as an exercise of autonomy with respect to the conditioning factors of conventional knowledge.

This diversity has not prevented these strategies from focusing primarily on the promotion of other economies that break the standard economic orthodoxy. Recognizing them, involves cultural rescue work that shows other rationalities, logics, knowledge and other relationships of human beings with history and nature. The construction of a political subject is also necessary, given the current invisibility and dispersion of alternative economic practices. This has been raised by various indigenous peoples of Latin America, in relation to principles such as “Küme Mongen” and “Buen Vivir,” called by Luis Razeto as “seed for a new civilization” (Razeto, 2011).

Discussion

The discourse categories described above are diverse and some of them contradictory, reflecting tensions between the social economy actors. It is possible to distribute them in two axes of tension: reform-transformation and molar–molecular, which cross not only the discourses but also the literature on economic alternatives

In the reform-transformation tension, critical economic thinking ranges between regulatory or reformist perspectives and radical ones. The first ones see the existence of social, economic, environmental problems, etc. (considered as a negative externality), which require the introduction of gradual reforms to the function of market and government. On the contrary, the “transformation” or “transition” approach considers these as structural problems, making it necessary to transform the existing institutions to transcend the developmental and capital-centered normative horizon. This distinction is reflected in the difference between “alternative development” and “alternatives to development” (Escobar, 1995; Eschenhagen and Maldonado, 2014; Gudynas, 2014). The first category includes a series of instrumental reforms that do not depart from the episteme of the “traditional” development discourse. This involves discussions about the role of mediators (e.g. state, private companies, etc.), redistribution policies, indicators, entrepreneurship, etc. The different aspects of alternative development (e.g. endogenous, human, sustainable development, etc.) account for the sequence of criticism and historical rectification of development, where some dimensions are modified without corrupting its structural axis. For the case of the discourses shown here there are topics such as support for popular entrepreneurship and productive chains, social responsibility – business, consumption, etc. –, and in general, those perspectives that seek to correct the consequences of capitalism by introducing ethical components and focusing in those who are considered less favored.

The alternatives to development discourse, on the contrary, aim to transcend the very idea of development, with objectives, values and strategies that break its enclosure of eurocentric and “capitalocentric” prism. This second category includes the discourses of differences and transitions that seek to transcend development and make visible hidden or subordinated knowledge, from marginalized sectors and grassroot movements. For the

case of the discourses analyzed here, appears those who seek to promote the self-managed community, solidarity, construction and recovery of commons, and circuits of land, labor and capital.

There are also some general values, such as empowerment and justice, which are formulated from both sides. Empowerment is seen on one hand as a tool for entrepreneurship, and on the other as the construction of transforming subjectivities. Justice, on the other hand, is seen as both a corrective attribute – fair trade, fair businesses – as well as a fundamental political value for the construction of new economic relations.

The molar–molecular tension is based on a Deleuzian notion of politics, where desire is central as a mobilizer of life. Capitalism codifies desire as a commodity to be consumed and, in this way, not only capitalism is reproduced but also the same desire is governmentalized. The expression of the libidinal or desiring energy has two faces – molar and molecular – that includes and transcends macro and micro. Molar refers to the macro-physical, constituted, totalizing and agglutinating; the molecular, microphysical, constituent, singularizing, scattered by the social body. Molar and molecular coexist and their difference is of nature and not of dimension (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988).

The molar corresponds to “current,” “constituted,” across groups and individuals, the macro-structural level of stabilities and contradictions, hierarchies and functionalities. It was classified on this side of the axis those speeches that appeal to the rectification and transformation of structures, whether business, distribution, class or government. Molecular inhabits the constituent subject, where one would have to look for tendencies of experimentation and transformation lines. Here, it was classified those values and strategies that bet on transforming subjectivities and primary community relations. Molecular differences cannot speak of contradiction or opposition, but of mutations, fluidity and micropolitical leaks: constituent and transversal with respect to constituted subjects. Between both, there are communicating vessels, for which the molecular view is updated and made effective by the integration to molar views in institutions that are endowed with stability and fixity (Deleuze, 2014). Molecular movements acquire relevance when passing through large molar organizations, and modify their segments and binary distributions of sexes, classes and parties (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). Power is a converter from molecular to molar through standardization exercises, which are based on language and micro-awareness (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988).

In this way, the first axis of discursive tension allows us to understand the range of meanings attributed to an initiative, experience or economic undertaking, from simple survival to the defense of human rights or the care of Mother Earth. In the same way, the second axis of tension allows to include/understand the smaller or greater political projection assigned to such initiatives, experiences or entrepreneurship.

The crossing of both axes allows mapping the discourses, placing the categories in the quadrants generated, as shown in Figure 1.

Thus, the categories of discourse can be recognized as belonging to four different groups:

- (1) Discourses based on a molecular and reformist policy: correspond to the upper left quadrant in Figure 1, which accounts for discourses of the alternatives in economics, associated with survival in the market, as well as strategies and reforms to improve these conditions. Some of the discourses here are “family micro-entrepreneurship” linked to overcoming poverty and social inclusion; “resistance in the market,” that values supportive family networks; and notion of cooperating to compete, based on different types of instrumental associativity. Also, in this quadrant appears the discourse of “positive discrimination,” based on the patrimonialization of experiences. It is also possible to identify clientelist or welfare discourses that express the governmental influence at the molecular level in the last decades, through different support programs. In short, this quadrant corresponds to the

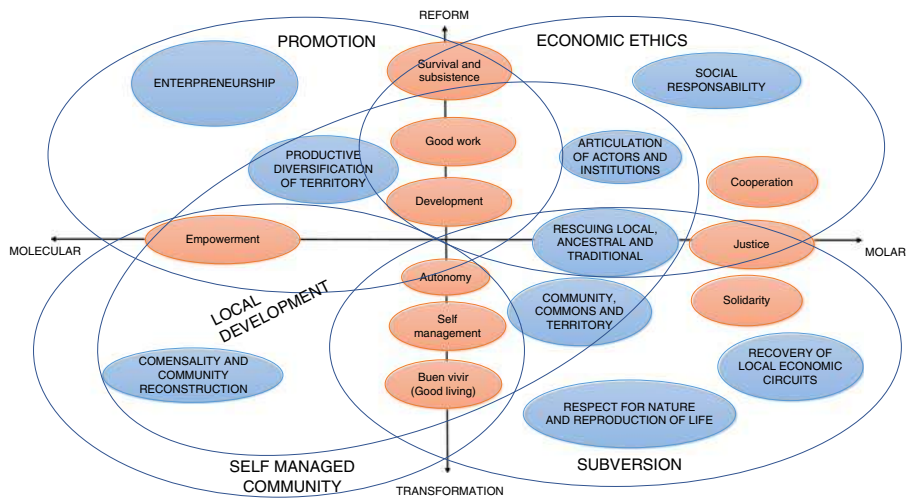


Figure 1.
Discourse map
of social economy
in Chile

discursive field of “promotion,” where the political commitment is to articulate a public and private support network to generate a protected space for the development of popular and associative economic activities.

- (2) Discourses based on a molar and reformist policy: they correspond to the upper right quadrant in Figure 1, which accounts for discourses that claim “social justice and care for the environment” and are oriented by reforms to improve market conditions for enterprises that integrate these values in their practices. The hegemonic discursive field is the appeal to ethical and responsible economic behavior, as a standard for market performance. From this perspective, structural problems are ultimately anti-ethical behavior problems. It appeals to the “ethics in consumption and intermediation” – with the tools of fair trade –, “business ethics” – through the incorporation of social responsibility in business practices. Different guild actors as well as fair trade agents use this type of discourse. This box holds a negative or ambivalent evaluation regarding the possibility of developing a sector of the social and solidarity economy, with particular reference to cooperatives, which is anchored in traumatic experiences from the dictatorship period and the subsequent transition to democracy. In correlation, this quadrant the molar appears in the discourse as a state issue, referring to the history of interventions and strategic reorientations of the economic fabric and also to a subjectivity that has been subordinated to these definitions.
- (3) Discourses based on a molecular policy and oriented toward societal transformation: corresponds to the lower right quadrant in Figure 1 and accounts for discourses that value commensality, the construction of community through economic practices such as “conscious, ethical, or organic consumption,” and “small scale production/circulation.” The socioecological transformation is considered a utopian horizon, mainly associated to the practice of a consumption that recognizes a plurality of senses (fair, organic, sustainable, ethical, responsible, etc.), and where the transformation does not necessarily pass through the institution or state but lies in the reconstruction of communal ethics.
- (4) Discourses based on a molar policy and oriented toward a societal transformation: corresponds to the lower left quadrant in Figure 1 and gives an account of

traditional discourses of “solidary and cooperative economy,” others more contemporary and defined as ecologists, focused on “degrowth” or “Buen Vivir.” The set of these speeches has a utopian horizon as the construction of another society, in its relations between human beings and the environment. Rather than resist, they articulate about a broad concept of “subversion” or construction of another personal, social and institutional order.

In addition to the quadrants defined by the two tension axes proposed, it is possible to recognize a field of discourse that transcends the proposed scheme and refers to the reconstruction of local space as a privileged area of economic activity. The local space appears as a reference and reservoir of knowledge and practices – traditional and reinvented – that would allow the refoundation of an economic ethic, a communal practice and a subversive articulation.

Final thoughts

Previous studies developed in Latin America about social and solidarity economy have been focused in objective dimensions as the volume of incomes, expenditures or jobs (Coraggio *et al.*, 2010). This is the first study aimed at characterizing the subjective field of discourse held by different actors who recognize themselves as part of an alternative economy movement. Others related studies on discourses about alternative economics focus on Brazilian individual social entrepreneurs promoting engagement process through social media projects (Casaqui, 2015). However it founded such social projects have no regard for the role of the State, for the polyphony existing in society and for the political dimension of transformation processes.

In this study, high discourse heterogeneity makes it possible to foresee major difficulties in terms of political articulation and the visibility of various alternative economic practices, initiatives or ventures as part of a social transformation movement. The semantic maps show that “the social” in economics is a polysemic sign, where there has not been a collective definition of the meaning of social economy, and each group of actors gives their opinion that fits their interests. This diversity shelters very divergent political projects, where there are collective actors that push for a substantive transformation of capitalism/developmentalism while other groups are for corrective and compensatory efforts. There are also groups that push for social and structural interventions, while others focus their efforts on processes of subjectivation such as empowerment, entrepreneurship and community construction. All this hinders the possibilities of political articulation in sustainable networks over time and favors the instrumentalization of social economy discourses by actors who are alien to the historicity of the movement.

The fields of “promotion” and “economic ethics,” and to a lesser extent the field of the “local space,” maintain a certain stability over time because they have managed to articulate their discourses and practices with the needs and practices of both state governmentality and corporate image. This has allowed them access to resources, and institutional stabilization. On the contrary, the “subversive” and “self-managed communities” fields depend heavily on their actor’s political and community work that affects their continuity over time, which makes them fragmentary, and makes it difficult to achieve molar stability. Nevertheless, they are constructed – in their eyes and by other actors – as an ethical-political reservoir of the movement.

Now, these distinctions are diffuse, variable and populated with hybridizations. In particular, the possibility of articulating and receiving resources from the state, often relativizes the radicality of positions; converting what is alternative to capitalism at the discourse level into complementary to capitalism at the level of practices.

This paper offers a panorama of discourses associated with an intentional sample – representativeness by saturation –. This type of sampling and analysis does not allow us to ponder for sure the relative presence of each of these discourses in the field of economic diversity. The analysis of what type of actors sustain each type of discourse remains pending. However, it is observed a greater presence of actors and discourses of a reformist tendency, associated with greater availability of resources and market insertion. The research team believes that in order to build a strong social and solidarity economy field, it is necessary to collect the ethical and political reservoir of transformative proposals – especially self-managed ones – projecting their molecular constituent character into processes of molarization and institutionalization.

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