

3° Anticipation Conference - Oslo

Symmetric valuation of past and future in the design of anticipatory agendas

- Revised version -

PhD Gonzalo Iparraguirre

Abstract

Based on the model called "presence of the future" and the political experience as a government official in Argentina, a methodology for the design of anticipatory agendas is proposed.

The future, as a dimension of time, is the source of all human action and, therefore, what allows the production of value, be it social, political, economical or any other. This model proposes that the value we assign to the future when conceiving it asymmetrically from the past, can be resignified through anticipation studies because they allow us to visualize the "other half" of the symbolic components that intervene in any decision-making process. The presence of the future affects any decision with the same relevance as the presence of the past and allows us to conceive a symmetric valuation.

The methodology of this model combines social imaginaries and cultural rhythmicity, with focus on the becoming of knowledge that is not yet stabilized (the imaginaries of the future), and not only on past experience. Linear temporality naturalizes past experience as the basis of decisions and simultaneously the denying of visions and anticipations.

Latin American governmental agendas are analyzed as general examples of asymmetric valuation centered on the past. Considering the design of a strategic plan and urbanistic, touristic and energetic development programs, specific cases of planning at national and municipal level in Argentina are described.

Discussion

Following the overarching aim of this Conference from an anthropological perspective, how cultures use ideas of the future to act in the present, this model proposed to discuss how interventions in the temporality of the decision-making groups can generate changes in the present based in the imaginaries of future.

Management of decision-making processes implicates the synchronization of the three tensions of any temporality, so it is possible to diagnose which were the problems in the past, which are the current ones and which could be the ones to come by the presence of the future. Specifically, the rhythmic diagnosis relates the temporality of the group under observation, by correlating how time was conceived and used in the past (experience), in becoming (decisions) and in the future (visions).

Planning agendas of development in Argentina and in Latin America manifests that arrhythmic decisions are taken, in most cases, based on the presence of the past. The neglect of the sociocultural dimension in government planning, has precisely its epistemological root in a

constant that goes through the design of agendas throughout the continent: planning public policies based on the experience of the past unilaterally, ignoring the imaginaries of the future. The one-sided look towards the economy and infrastructure are evidence of a temporality that neglects the socio-cultural dimension of development. Development processes that integrate this dimension, although they require infrastructure of roads, buildings, mobility and access to resources, do not exhaust their impact on the work itself, on the built thing, but use them to convey knowledge, traditions, identity, that is, what defines and sustains every social group.

Summary of research

The research I've been shaping for more than 15 years generated a theoretical model called presence of the future, based on previous works on temporality, social rhythms, development and anticipation. Current research focuses on problematizing the notion of "future" as well as describing and exemplifying the theoretical and methodological tools produced, both from research and from public management. These seek to transform the action of designing agendas incorporating the value of the future into the equation of considering, asymmetrically and predominantly, the value of the past.

Research on anticipatory agendas allows to visualize the imaginaries of the future, make them operative as planning, and decision making tools. Simultaneous uses of these anticipation tools, builds a permanent record of the correlation between the presence of the past (what was prescribed in what was planned up to yesterday) and the presence of the future (what is apprehended today with incidence of tomorrow).

The purpose of this research and its applications is to make the future accessible through the design of development agendas and policy making, shaping anticipatory practices and networks. If our decisions in the design of agendas cease to be thought as anchored only in the past, then we begin to understand that the intervention on societies and resources has an unknown possibility in considering the future as the main source of our imagination and any process of valuation (economical, financial, artistic, political, social, among others).