Report of Paris Meeting Tables

Transformations – free access vs. privatization, corporatization, meritocracy

Spatial issues

The first point upon entering the space was an intervention to reorganize it from a speaker on a stage and an audience to more of a shared experience including moderation. As it is an important strategy for the organizers to provide large spaces and the idea of using this large university was also an act of occupation or appropriation, it fit perfectly. However, the expert on stage and audience relation of power must not be duplicated, so some attempt was made to break that and reorganize the space. Therefore it was suggested to not speak from the stage, but rather use it as a surface for projecting the shared experiences of the group and bring everyone into as much of a circle as possible.

Introduction

As I was asked to present some of my research, I initially took the time for a short overview of topics related to the historical privatization of education and the significance and threat of its global competitiveness and how this is exacerbating conditions of austerity, social division, precarity and meritocracy among other traps of divide and conquer that people fall into when merely trying to enter and remain in institutions of higher education.

Shared round

The participants were then encouraged to share the threats, experiences and lessons learned from their local struggles. Then a closing round was made in which individuals and/or groups presented concrete statements and demands. The information was then recorded/mapped on the whiteboard in the front of the room. It was divided according to: localities presented, threats, catalysts, statements and some final targets (the full-documentation of these notes was sent out to the list as a .doc and should be available for anyone who would like them).

Some conclusions from the experiences and statements:

-      Apparently protest can be very lonely, there is a strong need to share experiences, which means that we need to fight for collective strength and not reproduce the divisions that are imposed onto us. These experiences are additionally helpful to other groups because the progression of individual struggles takes place with differing intensity and differing speeds, so others' experiences can be very valuable in order to learn lessons for how to fight or avoid the appropriation of struggles, police oppression, strategies of working with the media, and the inclusion of other groups such as workers, educators, families, etc.

-      One issue was a lack of one common and continuous space for articulation – although there were separate and very relevant individual experiences, there were too many parallel platforms, publications, websites, etc. and too little linking between them – the only form of functional linking seems to be such meetings, but which are also not realistic for a day-to-day struggle.

-      Some claims/necessities were to:

  • find a position towards the state in a condition where public and private are interwoven.
  • Establish a common motto
  • How to deal with the media and which media
  • How can we create a space to bring students and teachers together?
  • Bringing more clarity into the struggle
  • How can we raise university struggles as a question of the whole society? i.e. convincing people that everyone deserves education, because it is a common.

The days of action and several transnational venues were proposed in conclusion.

Autonomous Education, Self-Education, Free School: New Practices in Alternative Education.

Introduction:

The first point was to avoid deep philosophical discussions and long self – presentations of our own collectives. Taking into account these are really fundamental discussions for all of us, I put as a first idea to discuss about possible tools (wiki like) which allow us have debates on theories and practices.

The discussion was exciting and for some moments a bit chaotic. Some activists talked about their strategies of knowledge transmission, some others about how to create new institutions for self education, some others underlined the need of paying attention on school education and not only on universities' problems. There were a lot of different point of views on what's to be done but we had all the time a feeling of affinity among us.

We didn't use shared lexicons all the time. This was a richness but at the same time a problem.

The majoritie of participants are involved as well in university struggles. How to connect this struggles with experiences of autonomous education was a common worry. How to create a strong network was another big interrogant in our table. The following proposals are a first attempt to answer it.

Map:

I introduced myself as a member of universidad nómada. This awaked the curiosity of some persons who asked questions about the specifity of universidad nómada. The point was not to talk about any collective, however it was a desire to know better the activities of the other collectives. In this sense, one of the first needs in order to improve the borning network was the creation of a map. This map would be useful to make visible all the self education collectives and free schools which participated in the now called Knowledge Liberation Front (KLF).

This was not said but I suggest that the map could follow the spirit of this one

http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?
ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=101468105053700014421.0004731344655634d97a5&z=2

Book:

We found a really good idea to write a book. This book would be useful to talk in first person about our collectives, our needs, theories, perspectives of political action and problems. The problem of not having a common lexicon could be solved partially with this initiative. Some activists described this proposal as a co-research, that is to say a research about organized groups not only to know them but to improve the organizatonial form.

It was said that a book is a good idea but we could start describing our collectives on a website or something similar. No patterns to do that we're defined.

Website:

This was the most important point because to talk about informatic tools means to talk about continuity of discussions. Some of the participants in our table took part in the new technologies workshop. The creation of crabgrass satisfies completely this necessity.

PRECARIOUSNESS – DEBT – WELFARE : TOWARDS COMMONFARE

The strongest questions were:

What is precariousness today?

How to think new forms of organization of this precariousness?

But also: how do we make network, how do we reach and how do we involve people?

As well as: how do we research, expand and how do we touch different struggles?

There is the necessity to re-think the concept of right as a re-appropriation of the richness we all produce and we fight for; to create new common institutions and to give some energy to the existing ones, far away from the nineghteen century model. Students are a paradigm of a general situation of precariousness. We all struggle against the market for autonomy and we have to build starting from our struggles.

Struggle for:

- a universal basic income

- the free circulation of knowledge/people

- a global citizenship

But how do we ignite a process of production of common beyond the differences of gender and race that edify the capitalistic valorization?

We have to organize differences – not to normalize them – and we have to overdraw the hierarchical organization of society that usually translate differences in values. We have to be inside the social rupture and struggle inside the circulation of bodies, knowledge and political practices.

We all agree on one common week of action the 24th/26th of March 2011 with: – new forms of strike

- new creative forms of occupation against financial institutions

- a common name (ex: U-STRIKE, We are your Crisis, Kafca…etc.)

- common symbols (ex: book blocks)

- common claims

- a paper of struggles

- a common website

Beside, some forms of organizations and actions have been suggested as "people's tribunals", to map the kinds of precariousness in their concrete ways and fight them ; permanent city assemblies, as a permanent left structure, active not only during movements.