

Methodology of Coyuntural Analysis

Notebook # 10: Methodological Proposal for a Workshop of Popular Coyuntural Analysis

Part Two

GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF THE SERIES

This material that you have in your hands is the product of a practice and reflection of many years of work. As a product of this process, we in SIPRO arrived to this systemization with the contribution of many people and with the valuable collaboration of Enrique Valencia who made the basic text of this edition possible. From his document we try to be loyal to the methodological process he plants in a difficult theme, but essential for those who carry out a labor of education and accompaniment to social processes and the reality of our country.

These materials are aimed at contributing to all of those people from the NGO's, promoters, advisors, students, professionals, educators who accompany processes of popular education and of social organizations, and for those intellectuals who produce coyuntural analysis.

The notebooks we present here are a basic text, a contribution that does not signify the last word over this subject. There is a lot still to be said, proposed, and written over it. For many, the approaches and concepts can be debatable, questionable and anachronistic. We are in agreement over that and that is what it is about: generate a reflection and understanding that begins to find new roads and horizons in this galloping reality.

The content of these notebooks can be used in multiple forms depending on the interest. It can easily be part of an extensive course, used for a more deep and focused discussion on the theme, or it can be used as a tool for consulting. It does exempt its readers from the task of going into depth, questioning, criticizing, connecting, proposing changes and even less so of the challenge of sharing in a more accessible way if the theme is deeply comprehended. This would be the central objective of our proposal.

In the face of the disordered reality in which we live, we see the necessity of stopping to analyze it with the objective of accompanying the historical process of change and be participants of it. That is why in *Servicios Informativos Procesados, A.C.*, we revisit this document and we retransmit it for those actors who want to be an active part of their own history.

We hope that the systemization of these notebooks can be a modest contribution and useful for the best development of the analysis of coyuntura.

Gustavo E. Castro Soto

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INTRODUCTION

If you are looking to find in this Notebook the only path and recipe to carry out a workshop of coyuntural analysis, you can close this now and return to the beginning of the readings of this Series. It would have represented that you did not understand us well.

After having read and studied in depth the content of these Notebooks we can conclude that, in order to translate it into a workshop, it is necessary to take into account a number of factors. There will be as many models as there are people who require them.

For them, in this Notebook we suggest a methodological path in order to prepare a workshop, those elements and criteria have taken into account how to define it. We also offer a few summarized schemes of the Series in order to make it possible to access the Notebooks more quickly and easily.

We have not forgotten what we raised from the beginning: it is a challenge for everyone to share and translate the elements of coyuntural analysis with other sectors –including those most popular—with the goal of actively including in the construction of a historic project which will respect the justice and human rights of everyone.

The central object of this material consists to stress those necessary elements –which can be the most—in order to take the most useful ones. The conducting of the workshop and its success will depend on each one, not on this Notebook.

We hope that those contributions, suggestions, and experiences that you can communicate them to SIPRO, from where we will be able to initiate a dialogue in order to continue constructing and enriching the methodology.

Methodological Proposal For Popular Workshop Of Coyuntural Analysis

A) Statement of the Problem

Generally we speak of
the “current moment”,
of a “conjunctural moment”,
“conjunctural analysis”,
“fall into the [strike up] conjuncture”,
“to make the most of the conjuncture”,
“a diagnosis”,
“structural change”,
“of a change in the conjuncture”,
“that the stage change”,
that “the correlation of forces changed”,
etc.

In other occasions we felt as experts in the matter of **conjunctural analysis** and we hardly understood its **foundation**, the way we presented [stated] it in the first part of the series (Notebooks 1-2).

We presuppose that we know well and that others know well the **concepts** that we use for analysis (*stages, correlation of forces, alliances, power, State, hegemonic block, hegemony, etc.*)

We come to the organization of campesinos –for example—to give a conjunctural analysis workshop and unload all of our **preconcepts, prejudices** not previously critiqued and that way we retransmitted our loaded attitudes.

And that is why in order to present an analysis of coyuntura it is necessary to first clarify a number of issues: **to whom, about what, conditions, requirements, where and how I situate myself personally in the matter, etc.**

In so far as we are clear on these answers or workshop will be of greatest benefit and so we will avoid frustrations, vagueness, or irresponsible invitations that the analysis hurls out to the social practice of the organizations.

Actually, if we conduct ourselves with sufficient methodological clarity of conjunctural analysis this workbook is not necessary. In whatever way we dare, we dare to propose a **method** to guide our preparation.

It is in that way it seems to us indispensable to take into account the following **elements** that one by one will be clarified and help to define the workshop.

You can keep returning to these **methodological steps:**
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ORGANIZER

ELEMENTS THAT DEFINE A WORKSHOP

1. Orienting focus

Type
Liberating
Education for Peace
Popular Education

2. Types of benefits

sectors
Popular
Intermediary
Academic

3. possible content

Methodological Toolkit
Coyuntural Analysis
Toolkit and Analysis
Formative

4. Number of participants

5. Time available

6. Critical Route

General Objective of the Workshop
Agenda
Specific Objectives
Goals
Methodology
Resources
Evaluation

These elements taken together and defining each one we will be able to say that we have clarity about the workshop. Let us see that we understand each one of them:

B) REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ORGANIZER

To coordinate a coyuntural analysis workshop is not easy, it requires at least the **minimum elements** that we are now suggesting for your consideration.

There could be more, but we believe these to be the most important to take into account **to avoid these errors and deviations.**

1. confusions in the reference group
2. ambiguities and vagueness in the workshop
3. deviations in the conclusions
4. irresponsible, opportunistic, and pragmatic actions

Due to the preceding, we propose these **minimal suppositions for an organizer or facilitator** to rise to the challenge of joining with others in the search for a **project of historical transformation.**

1. Minimum experience of social praxis

It will help to better understand social process and their dynamics

2. Minimum experience in analytical practice

It will help to share certainties, errors, and lapses

3. Minimum knowledge of group dynamics, integration, etc.

It will facilitate assimilation of the contents

4. The ability to invent and adapt to alternatives of play in order to acquire new knowledge

It will facilitate confronting new things and adapt the workshop to the necessities of the sector

5. Knowledge of the foundation of conjunctural and structural analysis

It will facilitate situating the group's contributions and orientation

6. Knowledge of the type of focus

It will guarantee the adequate orientation

7. Knowledge of popular education methodology

It will guarantee the appropriation of the analysis based on the experience of the beneficiaries

8. Review of the epistemological barriers themselves [on their own]

It will avoid transmitting uncritical assessments

9. Sufficient management of the principal analytical concepts

It will clarify the location of the conceptual framework itself and of the group

10. Knowledge of an analytical methodology

It will avoid confusions and vagueness

Well then, if **analysis is not neutral**, like we have already seen in the notebooks in the series, then it has a tendency to the maintenance or transformation of social formation, **avoid the polarization of ideological postures [positions] so from there one can sustain an analysis that is being hoped for**, that seems indispensable.

That is why it is important for the **facilitator** know how to locate himself personally, that he has *the capacity for self critique and discover his own limitations and epistemological barriers*. (**Notebook No. 3**)

In so far as the facilitator *sufficiently manages with facility the content of the Notebooks of the Series*, he will be able to with great agility extract from each one what's necessary according to the group referred to in the workshop. In this way, these Notebooks will be accessible like a toolbox for consulting.

C) METHODOLOGICAL STEPS TO DEFINE A WORKSHOP

These **elements** will help to situate the workshop in its proper dimensions. Therefore we **propose to define**:

Focus

Benefits

Content

Number

Time

Critical Route

Let us see what we want to say about each one:

1. Orienting Focuses

From where do we situate the workshop?

We can find various focuses or angles that orient a workshop. For now we propose these four orienting focuses:

a. Gender:

We refer to:

--The necessity to include in the dynamic of the workshops the participation of women for the construction of an analysis and new stages of struggle.

--Women are a social, popular subject, eventually to turn into a **political subject** for the transformation of society.¹

--**The participation of women in a social project is indispensable**, since we can no longer think of new historical projects that does not only account for the correlation of forces but the relations of oppression, domination and subordination, by men against women in the public sphere as well as privately.

--Give space **to undertake a focus on gender** and include **the language of gender** in the same.²

b. Liberating:

We refer to:

--That the workshop should result in **the participants abandoning epistemological ties and barriers** that impede analyzing reality with more objectivity.

--Achieve an attitude of **continual self criticism of one's own assessments and preconcepts** in order to clean the lense with which we approach to analyze reality.

--Generate interest in acting in light of reality with a **provocative capacity to generate projects, alliances, and change.**

c. Education for peace:

We refer to:

--Include in the workshop a **vision of peace, justice, and new standards of education** that avoid as much as possible changes that taint the social transformation with blood and drives dialogues, culture of tolerance, the search for new and creative alternatives, and with as little violence as possible in the resolution of social conflicts.

--Not underestimating **legal or illegal peaceful actions, but non-violent**, for the resolution of social conflicts like civil resistance, disobedience, strikes, etc.

d. Popular Education:

We refer to:

¹ See *Familias en Transformación y Códigos por Transformar*, construyendo las propuestas políticas de las mujeres para el Código Civil, Memoria del Taller, febrero 28 y 29, México, 1992. GEM.

² Regarding gender focus there is an extensive bibliography, however, we suggest the following: *Mujeres, Desarrollo y Políticas de Cooperación*, aportes para la discusión desde una perspectiva de género, Puntos de Encuentro, Colección Debate No. 1, 1a. Edición, Managua, Nicaragua, 1991. Also very recommendable are the works of Marcela Lagarde.

--The dialectical methodological conception in the pedagogical dimension like the **methodology of popular education**.

--This dialectical logic understood as a process of knowledge **starting with social praxis** in opposition to “bank teller education” –as Friere would say.

--In this “**theorization of practice**” operative concepts are constructed that synthesize the levels of analysis and interpretations reached and are a bridge that conform to concepts and interpretations more fully formed. The knowledge of other theories will be a function **of and as a result of the practical transformation**.

--The dialectical cycle referring to the new practice, so that the beginning and end of this continuous process is the transformative practice and not exclusively the sphere of consciousness.³

These **four elements** should be tackled **together**. In such a way that the approach of gender has to be itself liberating with a methodology of popular education and with new values of a culture of peace. On the other hand, popular education can't be without the element of gender that eliminates the roots of domination in the relations between men and women, etc.

**Gender
Education for Peace
Liberating
Popular Education**

2. Types of Benefits

What social group will be targeted for the workshop?

Having **clarity of the sector** that the workshop is directed to will be able to help us to discover:

a. The capacity of **methodological and conceptual abstraction** with the goal *to situate the limit of the context*.

b. The **experience of the social practice** with the goal *to situate the degree of profundization* according to the praxis [going deeply into the subject].

c. The **specific objectives** of the workshop with the goal of **clearly delineating that which it wants to achieve**.

³ Regarding this topic consult the book, *Educación para Transformar...Transformar para Educar*. CEAAL, 1989. Also see Núñez H., Carlos, *Educación Popular, Movimientos Populares y Procesos de Democratización*. IMDEC, A.C., 2a. Edición, México, 1992.

You can **defined the sectors** in the way that will help the best. What is certain is that to define them **will help situate the other elements** and avoid practical and methodological confusions.

In many occasions we will be able to go to a workshop without situating the specific sector and of course giving a methodological schematic of the workshop like a wildcard for each group. However, each group is very different.

In general terms we propose this division that might help situate the workshop:

a) popular sector:

(campesinos, workers, squatters, church base communities [communities of faith], indigenous, political party militants, etc.)

b) intermediate sector:

(religious, NGO members, political party leaders, leaders, etc.)

c) academic sector:

(professors, students, analysts, university students, etc.)

In fact, in each one are different levels that would have to match. Here we only want to point out the need to distinguish explicitly the beneficiary group from the workshop since this will determine the content.

Examples

1. If a workshop is destined for militants or members of the political parties, the political-electoral participation can be emphasized. (Notebook No. 7)
2. If a workshop is directed religious sectors, alliances can be emphasized. (Notebook No. 7)
3. If a workshop is directed university students and academics, with little social practice, but close to the media, epistemological foundations can be emphasized. (Notebooks No. 1, 2 and 3)
4. If the workshop is directed at communities of campesinos, indigenous within a context of armed conflict, a focus of education for peace, alliances, revision of the posture of revolutionaries, etc., can be emphasized. (Introduction of Notebook No. 1; chapters A of Notebooks No. 2 and 3; chapter C of Notebooks No. 4 and 5; Chapter B of Notebook No. 7)
5. If a workshop is directed at members of NGOs or analysts, periodization and spatial criteria can be emphasized. (Notebooks No. 5 and 6)

In any case, Notebook 3, about **epistemological obstacles**, seems like a good place for one to open up to the methodology of coyuntural analysis.

In order to facilitate managing the Notebooks of the Series we propose just ahead a table that summarizes the indexes, themes and principal concepts of each one.

3 Possible Contents

What is the content of each workshop?

After having explicitly identified the beneficiary group, it is very important to distinguish the type of demand of said sector of coyuntural analysis,