Unemployed Workers' Movements and the Territory of Social Reproduction[1]

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Abstract

Unemployment soared in Argentina when the country fell into economic crisis in the late 1990s. Amid these dire circumstances, women took the lead in organizing resistance to the neoliberal policies that had caused the crisis, as well as in developing everyday alternative practices that would allow thousands of people to survive the crisis without support from the state. Out of these actions the unemployed workers' movements were formed, which became well-known for organizing large roadblocks on major highways across the country and for creating alternative economic practices. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork, this paper examines the role of women in the unemployed workers' movements of the urban periphery in Buenos Aires. It argues that one of the movement's main achievements was politicizing and making visible issues of social reproduction. The paper shows how organizing around social reproduction involves a new spatiality of struggle – privileging spaces of everyday life in the neighborhood – and a form of politics that prioritizes creating new social relations and increasing democratic control over everyday life. The paper goes on to explore the alternative economic practices and autonomous forms of social reproduction created by the unemployed workers' movements in the territories in which they operate.

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Introduction

> The roadblocks... they were massive. On one end were the burning tires, huge piles of them to stop traffic from passing, and we were ready, with sticks, ready for repression. But it was not just this, there was also the cooking and eating together, sitting around the fire playing guitar and singing… There were children too, we took care of them together; there was a medical tent in case someone was injured. We took care of everything ourselves. In reality, we were finding another way of living together. (Interview, October, 2011, La Matanza)

These roadblocks were the unemployeds' way of blocking the day-to-day functioning of capitalism, since they had been denied a workplace in which to strike. In small cities in rural Argentina, whole communities joined the roadblocks to protest layoffs after the privatization of the state-run oil company (Dinerstein, 2001; Dinerstein, Contartese, and Deledicque, 2010; Svampa and Pereyra, 2009).

In the peripheries of major cities, the unemployed began assembling in response to rising inflation and cuts to social services (Flores, 2005; Colectivo Situaciones and MTD de Solano, 2002). Women were particularly affected by these neoliberal measures and often took the lead in organizing against them (Auyero, 2003). Roadblocks were extremely effective in forcing both local administrations and the federal government to provide aid to the poor and unemployed, including food assistance, new jobs programs, unemployment benefits and other social programs. The mobilized unemployed became known as *piqueteros* for this tactic and soon coalesced into more concrete organizations (Mazzeo, 2004; Svampa and Pereyra, 2009).

However, rather than understanding the unemployed workers' movements as either a less effective labor movement or as a *new social movement* in opposition to the labor movement, I argue that the unemployed workers' organizations still focus on labor but expand their definition of labor to include social reproduction. Dinerstein has challenged the idea that the struggles of the unemployed are reactive and defensive, showing that they make three contributions: 1) constituting "a labour collective and an identity of resistance that also challenged many of the

assumptions and practices of the labour movement" (2014: 1040); 2) "implementing cooperative and productive projects in the communities and neighbourhoods" (1043); and 3) influencing state policy (1044). Here I focus on how the unemployed workers' movements organized around social reproduction to demonstrate how politicizing reproductive labor marks a feminization of resistance, simultaneously addressing the roots of women's subordination and challenging the reproduction of capitalism itself.

This article takes the perspective of social reproduction to show not only how women were particularly affected by neoliberal structural adjustment and austerity measures, but also how their participation and leadership shaped the unemployed workers' movements. I will show how these movements politicized reproductive labor by making it visible and actively organizing around issues related to reproduction, such as hunger, healthcare, housing, and education. I will then analyze how organizing around reproduction, and the key role of women in doing so, implies a different sense of *the political*, which decenters the spaces and institutions of the state in order to privilege *territorial organizing* in the spaces of everyday life. Next, I turn to the alternative economic practices and autonomous forms of social reproduction created by unemployed workers' movements to show how these organizations created practices that privilege the reproduction of material life over the reproduction of capital. This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in various intervals between 2005 and 2013 with two different *Movimientos de Trabajadores Desocupados* (Unemployed Workers' Movements) or MTDs[2] in the urban periphery of Buenos Aires. The fieldwork included participant observation in many of the movement's events and spaces, as well as semi-structured interviews with organizers and participants in the unemployed workers' movements. I also analyze the organizations' writ-

[2] While numerous organizations of the unemployed emerged during this period in Argentina, my focus here is specifically on the so called MTDs: the more autonomous organizations of the unemployed, which largely remained independent from trade unions and political parties, and thus were able to more fully develop a new form of politics. For more on the histories and trajectories of different unemployed workers' movements and organizations across Argentina, see Svampa and Pereyra (2009) and Dinerstein (2003).

ings and theoretical production, recognizing that self-reflective knowledge production is a fundamental element of this new form of politics (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil, and Powell, 2008; Motta and Esteves, 2014).

Feminization of Resistance

Various authors have noted that recent social movements exhibit a "feminization of resistance", "reconfiguring and reimagining the nature, meaning, and subjects of political resistance and social transformation" (Motta, 2013: 36). This feminization of resistance goes beyond a quantitative increase in women's participation and leadership in social movements or the increasing visibility of women's issues to imply a qualitative difference in how resistance takes shape. Among other elements, the feminization of resistance entails challenging the traditional divisions between the public and private spheres, politicizing the "personal", and shifting emphasis onto bodies and the everyday activities of social reproduction (Fernandes, 2007; Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2015; Motta, 2013; Sutton, 2007).

On the one hand, the feminization of resistance is related to the corresponding "feminization of poverty" under neoliberalism, in which the increasing informalization of labor and breakdown of survival strategies for the poor means that "the place of popular struggle has shifted from the formal world of work to the community" (Motta, 2013: 36). Since "women are at the heart of the community, they become central actors in these new forms of popular politics" (Ibid.). However, this feminization of resistance is not only a reaction to the ills of neoliberalism, but is also the result of decades of women's struggles to recognize domestic labor and other reproductive tasks, to challenge machismo and discrimination within trade unions and Leftist political parties, and to defy the hierarchies and sexism inherent within the state institutions. Women have long sought to include the sphere of personal relationships in political struggle along with the everyday reproductive labor necessary to sustain and build a movement, from feeding participants to providing safeguards against burnout (Federici, 2012; James, 2012). They have also critiqued the gendered division of labor within movements: how certain forms of care work are undervalued and assumed to be women's responsibility, while men engage in what is typically considered "political" work:

decision-making, public actions, speaking, etc. (Fernandes, 2007). Thus, the feminization of resistance should not only be understood as a reactive response to shifts in capital, but also a proactive strategy of women to push their position to the forefront of anti-capitalist struggles.

Thus, the feminization of resistance becomes an important element in how many movements, especially in Latin America, are attempting to redefine the political. Gutiérrez Aguilar alternates between the terms "non-state-centric politics" and "politics in feminine" to describe this reconfiguration. She argues that non-state-centric politics:

> does not propose confrontation with the state as the central issue nor is it oriented by building strategies for its "occupation" or "takeover;" but rather, basically, it is entrenched in the defense of the common, it displaces the state and capital's capacities of control, and pluralizes and expands multiple social capacities of intervention and decision-making about public affairs: it disperses power as it enables the reappropriation of language and collective decision-making about issues that are incumbent to all because they affect all of us. (2015: 89)

Gutiérrez insists that this is a politics in feminine because

> its main axis and heart is the reproduction of material life, the traditional focus of feminine activity, not exclusive, but crucial and as its expansive and subversive quality is based in the possibility of including and articulating human creativity and activity for autonomous ends. (Ibid.: 88–89)

In other words, this new form of politics is defined both by the rejection of the centrality of the state and a re-centering of issues related to reproduction, care, and the common.

In this paper, I will explore one specific aspect of the feminization of resistance: the politicization of social reproduction. Feminist Marxists have long sought to highlight the central role that reproductive labor plays in the capitalist system by directly producing the commodity labor power (Dalla Costa and James, 1972).[3] Marx discussed social reproduc-

[3] For an overview of this debate within Marxian and feminist politics, see Chap-

tion as the activities and structures that reproduce the capitalist class relation from one generation to the next, thus ensuring the reproduction of capital itself. On the other hand, a feminist perspective defines social reproduction as the "complex of activities and services that reproduce human beings as well as the commodity labor power, starting with child-care, housework, sex work and elder care, both in the form of waged and unwaged labour" (Barbagallo and Federici, 2012: 1). These activities include

> household cleaning, shopping, preparing food, doing the laundry, paying the bills, providing intimacy and emotional support, such as listening and consoling; bearing children, teaching and disciplining them are also an important part of reproductive work. We must add the unnamed, unnamable labor required to anticipate, prevent or resolve crises, keep up good relations with kin and neighbours, coping with the growing threats to our health – through the food we eat, the water we drink. (Ibid.: 4)

Beyond the tasks that traditionally make up concepts of domestic work and biological reproduction, this definition includes the affective labor of creating and maintaining social relations that are at the heart of capitalist production today (Hardt and Negri, 2009). These are the activities that allow for the reproduction of human life, of labor power, of the bios, but also the territory and the community.

Federici compares the Marxian conception of reproduction to the one developed in feminist struggles:

> While the feminist concept of "reproduction" may appear to be a more modest category when compared to the Marxian one, the opposite is true. For Marx, "reproduction" was the process by which capital accumulates itself. In contrast, feminists conceive of "reproduction" as the process that reproduces both the true makers of capitalist accumulation and the struggle against it. (2016: 365)

In other words, reproduction refers to how the capitalist relation is

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ter 3 of Kathi Weeks' *The Problem with Work* (2011).

reproduced, but also the moment when different social relations can be produced. In Marxian terms, social reproduction refers to the biological reproduction of the labor force as well as the reproduction of the capitalist social relation. Yet the feminist reading of social reproduction opens the door for autonomous forms of social reproduction that allow the working class to ensure its own material reproduction, as well as to create non-capitalist social relations. As it is this separation from the means of their own reproduction that forces the working class to sell their labor and enter into the capitalist relation, reclaiming control over social reproduction is a key element of any sustainable anti-capitalist struggle (Caffentzis, 2010). Furthermore, the devaluing of social reproduction is one of the many causes of women's subordinate position in contemporary capitalist societies (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Federici, 2004).

Despite its key role, the sphere of social reproduction has often been ignored both by academics studying labor and social movements and by labor and political movement leaders (Barbagallo and Federici, 2012; Federici, 2012). However, recently movements around the world have begun to actively focus on issues related to social reproduction. Zechner and Rubner Hansen (2016) show how many contemporary social movements are organizing around reproduction and argue that struggles around social reproduction are important for building power, and take place across four levels: "at the level of social relations of care, at the level of spaces and inhabiting, at the level of production and distribution of resources, and at the level of institutions". They argue:

> By building autonomous circuits of self-reproduction, such struggles ensure the collective power needed to sustain a fight for change. Being able to temporarily opt out of dominant forms of access to resources – be it via labor strikes, road blocks or boycotts – generates a huge increase in collective bargaining and blockading power. These are powerful antagonistic or agonistic agents vis-à-vis the state and market because, by allowing people to partially withdraw from hegemonic circuits of self-reproduction, they provide the basis of an actual oppositional power.

Building on this argument, in the remainder of this paper I will discuss the unemployed workers' movements' contributions to politicizing social reproduction, as well as creating autonomous forms of reproduction. In doing so, I hope to highlight how the unemployed workers' movements build on past labor movements, but with a significant expansion of the concept of labor to include reproductive labor, which has allowed them to challenge women's subordination and prevailing gender relations.

Crisis of Social Reproduction

During the period of neoliberal structural adjustment in the 1990s, women faced an increased burden as the social safety net provided by the state was greatly reduced by austerity measures. As the state withdrew from its role in ensuring social reproduction, cutting spending on health care, education, unemployment benefits and general aid to the poor, women were forced to pick up the extra costs in order to protect their families. Dalla Costa understands neoliberalism in this way as a process which:

> Further sacrificed the sphere of reproduction to that of production, and has therefore underdeveloped reproduction in order to further develop production. This led to the disappearance of individual and collective rights achieved through hard struggle in the preceding decades, and to the withdrawal of resources available for the pursuit of a life that would not be 'all work' in a context of increasing precarity and uncertainty. (2008: 30)

This extra work is added to the generally unwaged and unrecognized labor that women already carried out, especially in peripheral neighborhoods in which the state often does not provide basic services (such as running water and sewage). Nagar et al. also note how structural adjustment disproportionately affects women:

> Neoliberal states are subsidized through the informal provision of housing, food, health care, and education. As neoliberal states withdraw from the provision of social services, this work is most often assumed by women in the feminized spheres of household and community. (2002: 261)

In other words, women take on extra work to make up for the state's withdrawal in this role.

The state's withdrawal from social reproduction, along with the crisis in formal labor, led to what can be understood as a crisis in social reproduction. The neoliberal austerity measures of the 1990s were a direct attack on the popular sectors' ability to reproduce themselves. Pérez Orozco defines the crisis in social reproduction as "the increasing difficulties for putting forth the conditions that make it possible to fulfill the material, affective, and relational expectations of reproduction" (2014: 189). She continues,

> These troubles do not attack all of the social body; there are groups that manage to impose their lives as those that deserve to be rescued and satisfy their elitist and individualist aspirations. We can characterize the crisis of social reproduction in terms of three connected processes: the general increase in vital precarity, the proliferation of situations of exclusion, and the multiplication of social inequalities to the point of being able to speak of a process of social hypersegregation. (Ibid.)

Pérez Orozco recognizes this crisis of social reproduction as a key feature of the 2008 financial crisis in Europe, as well as of economic crises around the world, demonstrating how economic crises particularly affect women.

In Argentina, this crisis of social reproduction was largely manifested through increasing inflation that caused the prices of utilities and basic goods to skyrocket. As previously nationalized industries were privatized and private investors began pulling out of the country due to currency instability and international market crashes, there was initially an increase in self-employment and informal sector employment, but as the economic crisis worsened, those possibilities dried up as well (Gago, 2014), making it increasingly difficult for women to obtain any type of employment. Along with drastic increases in food prices and utility rates, the partial privatization of healthcare and education effectively gave rise to a two-tiered system in which the wealthy used private services, while the poor were stuck with greatly underfunded public services. Women especially suffered from these measures since they are usually respon-

sible for shopping and cooking food, ensuring that household expenses and utilities are paid, taking care of children, and coordinating the family's healthcare needs.

However, while neoliberalism has particularly affected women, especially poor and non-white women, these women are not passive victims in the face of an ever more powerful abstract neoliberal force, but have proven to be one of the strongest sources of resistance to neoliberalism (Fernandes, 2007; Motta, 2013; Sutton, 2007). The networks created by women to feed their families and provide for their basic needs, for example through community meals and barter networks, laid the groundwork for the establishment of unemployed workers' movements in urban areas and were able to effectively meet people's basic needs, allowing them to survive the worst times of neoliberalism and crisis (Svampa and Pereyra, 2009; Zibechi, 2003). Besides the directly productive activities of women in these networks (starting micro-enterprises in their homes, for example), they also carried out the essential affective labor of creating the social relationships based on solidarity that allowed people to support one another, establishing the basis for the eventual movements and organizations that would emerge out of their struggles.

Making Social Reproduction Visible

In response to this crisis of social reproduction, the women's first concern was to take care of their families and communities. Women took the lead in organizing *ollas populares*, communal meals where everyone contributed what they could and ate what they needed. These meals took place in public spaces, plazas or street corners, bringing the issue of hunger into the public eye, and sometimes were confrontational, blocking streets or local government buildings. Thus, the *ollas populares* simultaneously served two purposes: first, they were an immediate and direct solution to the problem of hunger; second, they served to bring the issue of hunger, and of social reproduction more generally, into the public sphere. These questions, of putting enough food on the table, paying bills, making house repairs, and dealing with medical issues, are usually considered *private* and *personal*, the responsibility of each individual family unit. By cooking and distributing food in *public* spaces, organizers challenged this relegation of issues of social reproduction and brought them into the public discussion, in other words, *politicizing social reproduction*.

The piquetes continued this work of politicizing and making visible the labor of social reproduction. While most clearly a protest about unemployment, demanding jobs and/or unemployment subsidies, the piquetes also served to increase visibility of reproductive labor. Besides protests, the piquetes were encampments in the middle of the highways, spaces where people lived out their everyday lives. Thus, the piquetes were forms of experimentation with collective life: community meals, health care and medical aid, popular education, varied cultural activities, and the common production of subjectivity. These commoning practices were as important as the disruptive element of the protests, by both encouraging a broader range of participation and allowing the piquetes to persist by providing people with the material and emotional support needed to camp out on the road for extended periods of time. Organizers, many of whom were women, clearly valued this activity and prioritized it when coordinating the piquetes. Women were at the forefront of organizing piquetes and other protests of the unemployed because their responsibilities of caring were in crisis, and because their ways of relating to one another and working collectively would sow the seeds of the solution to the crisis. Women were less likely to be represented by labor unions, but had developed other less formal ways of supporting each other – networks for exchanging goods and caring for each other – that greatly impacted the form of organization adopted by the movements of the unemployed. Meanwhile, many men were left feeling shocked and uprooted by losing what they had considered to be life-time employment, upon which they based much of their sense of identity, friendships, and militancy. Svampa and Pereyra (2009) describe a crisis in masculinity brought about by cultural shifts but also rising levels of male unemployment in the 1990s that separated men from the work that was a crucial element of their identity and social ties. Many unemployed men were initially unwilling to organize, feeling shame, guilt, and impotency after losing their jobs (Auyero, 2003). One woman, an early member of the MTD La Matanza, describes how many responded to being laid off:

> The men were embarrassed, they didn't want anyone to know they were not working, so they would stay inside all day, many started drinking… Meanwhile, us women had to go on providing for our families, we had

> to eat, we didn't have time to go about being embarrassed or worrying about our pride… that's why we came together and started organizing. (Interview, November 11, 2011, La Matanza)

This initial organizing was aimed at meeting the basic needs of participants and other neighborhood residents through collective meals and other forms of mutual aid and support, recognizing that those needs would either be met collectively or not at all. It was later that these networks of care and support coalesced into unemployed workers' organizations in many of the country's urban areas.

These actions – the *ollas populares*, everyday life in the piquetes, women's visible role in organizing the unemployed workers' movements – served to *politicize* reproductive labor. First, they made issues of reproduction – hunger, unaffordable utility rates, inadequate healthcare and education – visible in the public eye and as common problems, not merely the responsibility of individual families. By carrying out the labor of social reproduction in public spaces in the middle of piquetes, the MTDs highlighted the importance of this labor and those who perform it. Demands related to obtaining food, lower utility rates, better healthcare and education, and unemployment benefits put issues regarding reproduction at the center of the debate around neoliberalism, highlighted the effect of structural adjustment on women, and posited these issues as collective social responsibilities, or in other words as political problems. Women's participation in the ollas populares and piquetes was important because it was a way for women to break out of the spaces to which they traditionally had been confined (the household and by extension the neighborhood) into the public spaces of plazas and highways. As one young woman who began participating in roadblocks at the age of sixteen describes,

> the piquete was the first place where I experienced where people would listen to me, where I could be a leader. Before I thought my destiny would be to clean or cook for other people, I never saw that woman could take leadership in something that big like the piquetes. (Interview, Laferre, October 2011)

This effort to make struggles around social reproduction visible was one of the driving forces leading to a change in public policy to eventually garner more state support for reproductive activities (Garay, 2007). Additionally, using women's traditional activities as political tactics and carrying them out in public allowed more women to become politicized and actively assume leadership roles within organizations as a form of subversion, in, against, and beyond the traditional figure of woman as mother (Fernandes, 2007; Motta, 2013; Sutton, 2007). Their political actions also have a theoretical force: they challenge the division between the private and the public, in which activities of social reproduction are seen as *private*, both physically taking place in the private sphere of the home and a private matter to be resolved by the individual or family, in opposition to *public* matters, which are automatically considered political (McDowell, 1999). Additionally, this challenges the relegation of women's labor as unproductive or secondary.

New Form of Politics

As stated in the opening section, the unemployed workers' movements should be understood within the framework of a new *form of politics* characterized by the feminization of resistance. Gutiérrez Aguilar highlights how the feminization of politics, focusing on the material reproduction of everyday life, overturns the very meaning of the political:

> The political, currently linked to the reproduction and general expansion of capital and as such always "political-economic," is and can be time and time again defied from the multiple order of the material reproduction of social life *within, against and beyond* capital and its reproduction (2015: 132).

The movements of the unemployed formed part of a broader wave of social movements that emerged across Argentina in the late 1990s in opposition to neoliberal structural adjustment and austerity measures. In 2001, as the country fell even deeper into economic crisis, social unrest grew throughout the population and ultimately leading to an uprising on December 19th and 20th that forced the president out of office with the rallying cry, "*Que se vayan todos"* (They all must go), calling for the end of the neoliberal system and the entire class of politicians supporting it

(Barrientos and Isaía, 2011). Yet after the protests, rather than attempting to take over the state apparatus or to occupy the Casa Rosada, protesters returned to their neighborhoods where they began building alternatives in their everyday lives (MTD Solano, 2011). These movements did not seek representation or to occupy the institutions of government, but rather were concerned with creating forms of counter-power or popular power from below.[4] This form of politics understands power as relational, as enacted in everyday interactions between people and in forms of governmentality that expand throughout the social field.[5] These movements challenged the traditional forms of organizing practiced by political parties, labor unions, and other Leftist movements, which tended to understand power as residing in bodies of authority and focused exclusively on making demands to those bodies. Instead, they aimed to create new social relations, subjectivities and forms of life in the present, to build collective autonomy and control over daily life (Colectivo Situaciones, 2012; MTD de Solano, 2011).

As part of this new form of politics, the piquetero movement reimagined and reworked their own internal relationships by using assemblies and other non-hierarchical forms of decision-making (Sitrin, 2012). That is, piqueteros created decentralized and horizontal forms of organization and coordination, prioritized direct democracy in their own practices, and organized themselves in terms of the spaces and rhythms of everyday life. While internal hierarchies and divisions can often preclude the participation of women, youth, and racial or ethnic minorities, by promoting horizontal and democratic practices within the organizations the MTDs created spaces for more diverse participation. Women and youth were often at the forefront of the organizations of the unemployed, providing a stark contrast with male-dominated labor unions and

[4] While other organizations of the unemployed who were affiliated with labor unions or political parties ultimately became incorporated into the Kirchner government, the MTDs remained independent. See the two appendices of Svampa and Pereyra's *Entre la ruta y el barrio* (2009) for more on the distinctions between different organizations of the unemployed and their relationship to the Kirchner government.

[5] For more on the different understandings of power of different unemployed workers' organizations, see Colectivo Situaciones (2001) and Mazzeo (2011).

Peronist party organizations (Svampa and Pereyra, 2009; Zibechi, 2003). Again, this form of politics does not see politics as lying elsewhere but as something that is practiced in the everyday interactions between movement members.

By rejecting traditional forms of representational politics, the MTDs were not promoting a sort of anti-politics or apolitical organization. Rather, they were enacting a form of politics that is not centered on the institutions of the state, that does not assume that power operates only from above or that the path to social change lies in occupying institutions of power – a non-state-centric form of politics. This way of doing politics otherwise must be understood by looking at its effects in terms of the production of knowledge, meaning, social relations, and subjectivities. It could also be thought of in terms of micropolitics: "how we reproduce (or don't) the dominant modes of subjectivation" (Guattari and Rolnik, 2005), which does not necessarily mean small scale, but rather recognizes that capitalism functions at the level of subjectivity and is reproduced as a social relation. Therefore, the MTD Solano emphasizes autonomy and horizontality in their project, not as dogmatic rules but as new forms of relating. As Neka Jara from the MTD elaborates: "Autonomy is not an established thing, it is the modification of certain logics of life, of internal and external relations" (MTD Solano, 2011: 196).

This commitment to creating new social relations, which are not determined by the market or capital-labor relations, permeates all aspects of the MTDs' organization as they take their struggles beyond the workplace to the spaces of everyday life. Sitrin describes these experiences as "everyday revolutions", referring to the wide range of movements that emerged around the period of 2001 in Argentina and prioritized the creation of new social relations in their struggles. She describes this "revolution of the everyday" as a combination of horizontality, self-management, sustenance projects, territorial practices, changing social relationships, affective politics, self-reflection, and autonomy (2012: 3–4). This recognition that politics takes place in the space of everyday activities, and refusing the separation of distinct realms of the social, the political, and the economic, is key to understanding the MTDs.

The political can be found in conflictual production of subjectivity, new social relations, and forms of life. As already mentioned, these struggles decenter the institutions of the state in the affirmation of a non-state-centric form of politics focused on building counter-power from below. Counter-power refers to a power from below that does not seek to become an institutionalized, hegemonic or centralized form of power, but rather to expand the popular capacity for intervention, the creation and affirmation of new values and forms of life (Colectivo Situaciones, 2001; Colectivo Situaciones and MTD de Solano, 2002). Parallel to this notion of counter-power is the concept of autonomy, which is understood not only as independence from the institutions of the state and capital through the creation of alternative economic practices and forms of social organization, but also as an ontological autonomy to determine one's own values and desires. Autonomy thus requires going beyond the binary logic of the state to develop an autonomous form of thought and create one's own categories (Colectivo Situaciones, 2009). In terms of reproduction, autonomy thus refers to the material autonomy to be able to reproduce ourselves as people in relation to others, but also as the autonomy to determine how that reproduction takes place and what value is ascribed to that labor. Thus, this new form of politics explicitly turns social reproduction into a terrain of struggle, questioning what social relations are being reproduced and how, while privileging the creation of non-capitalist social relations. As will be discussed below, these non-capitalist social relations are founded on a connection to a concrete territory, and on communities and relationships based on cooperation rather than competition.

Territorial Organizing

This new form of politics and the politicization of social reproduction requires a shift in the spatiality of politics. Following the moment of rupture represented by the *piquetes* and December 2001 protests, many of the organizations of the unemployed decided to focus their efforts on organizing in the specific neighborhoods in which their members lived, creating new social relations, alternative economic practices, and autonomous forms of social reproduction in those territories (Svampa and Pereyra, 2009). By deciding to focus primarily on territorial organiz-

ing, the MTDs dedicated themselves to directly addressing the needs of neighborhood residents, without waiting for state intervention, first to survive the crisis and then to create new, collective ways of life.

This focus on territorial organizing is closely related to transformations in the spatial organization of labor, as well as the spatiality of reproductive labor. For people engaged in precarious and informal forms of labor, work is no longer the primary place of socialization, of building relations and community, is no longer the privileged site for political organizing. As one woman participating in the MTD La Matanza explained:

> I work cleaning houses in the Capital, but I work alone, I don't see anyone there, that's not where I socialize, it's when I come back home, to the neighborhood, that's where my life is, that's why we fight to make the conditions better there, in the neighborhood, where we live. (Interview, April 23, 2012, La Matanza)

Without a consistently shared site of work, labor organizing cannot be limited to or centered around the workplace. It was with this in mind, and looking for new places from which to base their struggles, that the MTDs began organizing in the specific neighborhoods where members *lived*. It is in these neighborhoods where the most important work takes place: the labor of social reproduction. The MTDs themselves have recognized this transition with the popular slogan and organizing mantra, "The neighborhood is the new factory" (Mazzeo, 2004). This recognizes not only that production and labor are not limited to the factory, but also that struggles cannot be confined to the factory.

Thus, territorial organization can be seen as a way of expanding the struggle to produce new social relations outside the workplace and into the spaces of everyday life by establishing a physical presence in a given neighborhood or territory and seeking to collectively manage as many elements of daily life as possible. Territorial organization as practiced by the MTDs means organizing around the needs of community residents, including food, clean water, housing, education, and the desire to form community in neighborhoods that are socially and ethnically fragmented. The MTDs attempted to build on what they had won with the piquetes

by establishing more permanent spaces such as social centers, clinics and schools, as well as cooperative productive enterprises, which serve to house the movements' activities and meetings, and more generally as spaces of encounter, where movement participants can come together for any or no reason whatsoever. Through these spaces, the MTDs were able to build a presence and support in their territories, allowing them to better understand and intervene the most pressing issues to neighborhood residents. This territorial organization implies opening up all the spaces of daily activity to critique and as possible sites of organization (Zibechi, 2008). It also points to how these movements recognize and value the different types of labor that go into producing a territory by placing an emphasis on practices of care and education. In other words, the different social relations that these movements strive to create are embodied in the physical space they inhabit, just as capitalist social relations are also inscribed in spaces (Lefebvre, 1991).

The territorial work of the organizations of the unemployed is explicitly linked to the formation of new identities and subjectivities (Ferrara, 2003). Zibechi argues that a subject cannot exist without territory, and therefore capital works to deterritorialize. Zibechi locates the antecedents to the territorialization of the piquetero movement in the movement of land takeovers and squatter settlements of the 1980s. He goes further, however, by arguing that it is in the settlements where the beginnings of an autonomous working class culture is able to develop, as residents have more control over their spaces: they are not subject to formal property law or building codes, and thus construct their dwellings where and how they want to; they name their own streets; and in some cases residents even have their own forms of governance and justice (Zibechi, 2003: 164–165). This is what the MTDs aim to accomplish, little by little, as they wrestle control of territory from party politicians, state officials, and agents of capital in order to create spaces for the poor and unemployed to create their own forms of life based on solidarity and cooperation.

Delamata, looking specifically at the experience of the MTD Solano, explains the meaning of territorial organizing:

> Carrying out territorial work in this case, not only means, to strengthen the collective's work in the local space, but rather, above all, attribute to the possibility of social change to these community activities. First, the work in the territory is proposed as the production of new values of solidarity that reconstitute interpersonal relations and the existential dimensions of people who have been broken by unemployment, poverty, and the forms of authoritarianism that permeate society in different ways. Secondly, this communitarian construction aims to produce a new society, that does not directly antagonize the places of constituted power in order to impose itself, but rather it projects itself and affirms itself as "non-state sovereignty." (2004: 48)

Territorial organizing is based on the fundamental recognition that power lies in the forms of life in the territory and therefore does not attempt to "scale-up" or privilege larger scale politics as being more effective forms of achieving social change. Above all, territorial organizing is based on a commitment to changing social relations in a particular place, attacking capitalist reproduction at its most fundamental level, and working to enact new social relations and subjectivities in that place. Thus, this shift to territorial organizing shows how the feminization of resistance and the politicization of social reproduction entails a *spatial* shift in organizing, opening up spaces that have been traditionally considered private or women's spaces to political struggle.

Alternative Economic Practices

As Argentina's economic crisis made the failures and limitations of the neoliberal capitalist system clear, both the need for and potential to create alternative economic practices became more apparent. The crisis of social reproduction discussed above made it necessary for the poor and unemployed, who could no longer rely on either formal employment or state support, to invent new forms of support. Many of the alternative economic practices began as informal practices of solidarity and mutual aid between neighbors, sharing food or even utilities and housing, in times of great need, such as the *ollas populares* previously discussed. These ad hoc, often spontaneous forms of support and mutual aid became increasingly organized when the rising rate of unemployment, both in

the formal and the informal sector, left more and more people without access to an income. In many cases, more formal organization was developed and the activities themselves adopted a more explicitly political character.

In this sense, these alternative economic practices, which emerged as survival mechanisms and became increasingly political, can be thought of as comprising a *solidarity economy*. Coraggio (2009) defines the solidarity economy as one that emphasizes use value and meeting the needs of its participants over exchange value and the accumulation of wealth. Acosta (2008) similarly emphasizes that the solidarity economy is one that is not ruled by the market or the state, but rather one in which solidarity is considered the basic economic value, and the market functions to reproduce solidarity, not the other way around. Along with worker-managed forms of production, the solidarity economy also refers to alternative forms of exchange and distribution, pricing mechanisms, and property arrangements (Giarracca and Massuh, 2008). This is similar to the ecofeminist approach taken by Pérez Orozco that argues for economies that put sustaining life – both human and non-human – at their center, rather than the reproduction of markets. These different ways of theorizing the solidarity economy ultimately point to the creation of practices that put the reproduction of life over the reproduction of capital, thus making reproduction a crucial terrain of struggle.

The MTD Solano makes a similar argument, defining its vision of an alternative economy as one that creates common and communitarian forms of life, in which meeting participants' basic needs comes before the question of how much profit different enterprises generate (Colectivo Situaciones and MTD de Solano, 2002). In other words, the MTD's objectives are not merely to autonomously produce economic wealth, but also to challenge notions of value that place individual economic wealth over collective economic and social well-being.

Toward this end, many of the unemployed workers' movements started their own worker-managed or cooperative enterprises. Along with providing some amount of income to movement members, cooperatives also aimed to create ways of working otherwise, to provide work with dignity. The self-managed productive enterprises are usually

organized as cooperatives, where workers or the organization as a whole collectively own the means of production, emphasizing workplace democracy, non-hierarchical forms of internal organization, and the just distribution of surplus. All decisions regarding production, distribution, pay, and internal organization are taken collectively by workers in assemblies. This does require that more of workers' time and energy goes into administration and management, but it also means that those decisions become politicized. Additionally, this challenges the division between intellectual and manual labor, as does rotating specific tasks (Matonte, 2010). Rotating tasks helps ensure that hierarchies do not develop within the enterprise, even informal hierarchies based on skills and knowledges. For this reason, the cooperatives also tend to emphasize internal skills training and knowledge-sharing about all aspects of the enterprise, as well as the politics of worker self-management and cooperativism.

According to Flores of the MTD La Matanza, "cooperation not only represented an economic response to the needs of life, but was also the organizational form that we found to break with isolation and to counteract the politics of neoliberal individualism predominant in our society" (2005: 36). He discusses how self-management and cooperativism allow the movement to resolve issues of daily life by providing for basic needs, but also, and more importantly, they help the movement strengthen its organization to be able to more effectively confront capital. Flores continues, "for us, since then, [cooperativism] became a form of life" (Ibid.). He sees cooperativism and self-management as "spaces for the construction of a double power… where the transitional work of 'workers' control' takes place" (Ibid.). The MTD's interest in cooperativism was not without critiques, however. Flores criticizes what he refers to as "business cooperatives" for being organized too much like capitalist businesses and becoming another way of appropriating workers' efforts. Therefore, before starting their cooperatives MTD members studied cooperativism, especially focusing on the experiences in the Zapatista territories in Chiapas and the landless movements in Brazil (Ibid.: 35). The fundamental element of these cooperatives, according to Flores, was that "they were built as tools for the social movement, and, therefore, had a qualitatively different character" (Ibid.).

These educational experiences served as the basis from which the MTD La Matanza was able to begin their own cooperative project. They started their first cooperative soon after occupying an abandoned school premise in the neighborhood of La Juanita, a small textile workshop. Various group members were already doing sewing work out of their homes using their own machines. On top of these machines they already owned, the MTD was able to purchase more sewing machines and equipment from a small grant from the Swiss Embassy. The cooperative initially employed six women, members of the MTD who were without work and had prior sewing/textile-work experience. The MTD also operates a cooperative bakery based on the same model. Originally paying all workers an equal salary, the cooperative's assembly later decided to take other factors into account, such as seniority and need, in determining pay rates as the cooperative grew to incorporate more workers. The important thing, workers expressed, is that these decisions are made openly, in assemblies, where all the workers are able to express their concerns and opinions, and they come to agreement over the final decision. Therefore, rather than a way of controlling and exploiting workers, the wage becomes a form of ensuring the community's continued reproduction.

One of the textile cooperative's most successful projects has been its ongoing collaboration with fashion designer Martín Churba. Describing his relationship with the MTD, Churba states, "I can't even say that I'm giving them work, I'm giving them a space where they develop their own capacities" (2007: 237). In their largest collaboration, the MTD's cooperative produced 1,500 fashion *guardapolvos* (the white coat traditionally worn as a school uniform), which were mostly exported. Rather than Churba making the designs on his own while the MTD's workers carried out the manual labor, the entire production process was collaborative. Movement members participated in the *guardapolvo* design, with Churba and his employees taking the time to work with the MTD not only to train workers in the cooperative but also to incorporate their ideas into the production. The project was immensely successful: it created decently paid employment for a number of MTD members, it generated a profit for the cooperative, which was used to expand the sewing workshop and support the MTD's other activities, and visibility from the

project helped the MTD build connections for other projects. Following the *guardapolvo* project, the MTD's cooperative made uniforms for other companies, including a few recuperated factories, as well as bags and t-shirts for other social organizations.

Perhaps more important than the material production that takes place in these cooperatives is the production of new social relations and subjectivities as workers learn to collectively manage their own activities without relying on an external authority and overcoming feelings of guilt and unworthiness from being unemployed (Flores, 2005). The MTD La Matanza discusses their cooperatives as not only an alternative method of organizing the economy, but also of organizing society, thus refusing to accept the separation of the economic from the social. The goal of cooperativism is "to try to construct through the basis of cooperation another culture, another subjectivity, other social relations, really another society" (Ibid.: 100). Thus, within the politicization of social reproduction, these cooperative enterprises play an important role on at least two levels: first, they provide some sort of income enabling the material reproduction of the unemployed, and second, they are part of a process of the creation of new (horizontal, non-capitalist) social relations. Additionally, by making decisions in assemblies and rotating tasks, the cooperatives challenge traditional gendered divisions of labor wherein women are relegated to more menial tasks on the lower end of hierarchies. Assemblies do not merely overturn traditional workplace hierarchies, for example, allowing women to be bosses, but seek to abolish those hierarchies altogether, creating a format in which all workers participate equally and fully in decision-making and are not managed or controlled by others.

Autonomous Social Reproduction

The MTDs' decision to return to the neighborhood and focus on territorial organizing fundamentally involved the creation of new ways of organizing and sustaining daily life through autonomous forms of social reproduction. This serves two purposes: to enable the poor and unemployed, those excluded from waged labor, to survive, and to create the material foundation of a counter-power from below. Rather than merely taking over what should be state responsibilities and thus serving as an

apology for the neoliberal state as some critics have argued, these autonomous projects recognize that it is in these actions of social reproduction that relations of dominance are produced and where they can be challenged. While there are many facets of social reproduction, here I will focus on concrete examples from the MTD La Matanza, as well as the MTD Solano. These brief descriptive accounts will shed light on what it means to focus on reproduction in practice, and the important impacts of these projects for participants.

MTD La Matanza: Education and Childcare

A focus on study and education at all ages and levels has been a key component of the MTD La Matanza's political activity since the early days of the organization. This emphasis came after the difficulties of self-management and in sustaining an autonomous movement in general demonstrated that capitalist values were much more deeply ingrained than they had previously imagined (Flores, 2005). Thus, focusing on education was seen as a way to directly create new values, to challenge masculinist and capitalist ways of knowing, and to create new relationships between all participants in the education experience (Motta and Esteves, 2014).

When the MTD La Matanza formed in 1996, one of their first activities was a reading group to study the economic and political transformations underway in Argentina, starting with readings that allowed them to understand the structural causes behind the increase in unemployment. Understanding unemployment as a structural issue was a key moment in helping them to politicize their own situation, rather than remaining trapped in the neoliberal ideology that only recognizes individual responsibility for unemployment. Later the movement worked with a group of social psychology students based at the University of La Matanza to investigate more of these subjective effects of unemployment and the ways in which that neoliberal ideology becomes internalized. This investigation led the MTD to recognize guilt as a key element of neoliberal ideology, which must be overcome in order to effectively organize the unemployed (Flores, 2005). Following this research on the role of guilt, the MTD continued doing workshops with social psychology students on how to counteract this guilt and build new relationships based on solidarity. These workshops and experiences of collective in-

vestigation around guilt were part of an essential process of building the relationships that would allow the movement to grow and workers to cooperatively self-manage the textile workshop and bakery.

Soon after occupying the abandoned school building where the cooperatives are also located, the MTD La Matanza officially inaugurated the building as the Center for Education and Formation of Communitarian Culture (*Centro de Educación y Formacion de Cultura Comunitaria,* CEFOCC). They sought to use the space to provide educational activities to children and adults in the neighborhood, as well as for more formal political "formation" exercises as part of the political project of constructing the movement. Here education was not considered a neutral, objective good, an object to be handed down from those who know to those who do not, but rather as a political tool for the creation of new values and subjectivities. Therefore, they emphasize the construction of "communitarian culture" in all of their educational practices, using an assembly-based model that values different voices and experiences, understanding that new knowledges and relations are formed precisely through the interaction of differences in the process of discussion and learning.

Early childhood education quickly became one of the MTD La Matanza's main priorities after they realized that cooperative values need to be instilled from a young age. In 2004, they opened the preschool CIEL (*Crecer Imaginando en Libertad* – Grow up Imagining Freedom) in their premises. The preschool is made up of two classrooms, divided by age, and employs two trained preschool teachers. It also relies on a large number of outside volunteers, often education students from the nearby University of La Matanza or international volunteers, and is supported financially by the MTD's other productive enterprises and donations from local and international NGOs. The preschool's stated goal is to start fomenting values of mutual aid, care, and solidarity from an early age. Classes start each day with a check-in, giving children a chance to speak about issues in their lives, and throughout the day cooperative games and activities are emphasized, providing an alternative to the often violent and competitive norms common in the neighborhood. Thus, students learn different ways of relating to one another and to adults, as well as the skills necessary to continue fighting for their rights as they grow older.

The MTD La Matanza also started an adult literacy program, which evolved into a popular high school, that later split into a separate organization due to political differences. The school expanded to offer a complete primary school education for adults and, in 2010, a high school for adults. Many of the students are migrants from rural areas of Argentina and neighboring countries, mostly women, who had few opportunities for formal education in their youth. Besides teaching the government-mandated courses, the school teaches classes about health and nutrition, as well as political formation, reading influential Latin American Marxists and learning about the revolutionary history of Argentina. These readings and discussions serve to politicize neighborhood residents, encouraging them to take action to improve their own quality of life. The principle teachers are paid by the government for their work, while other "volunteers" count the time they spend in the school as their weekly work requirement to receive unemployment benefits.

The MTD also makes an effort to provide childcare or create child-friendly spaces at all of its events. On the one hand, providing childcare allows women, who are normally the primary caregivers for children, to participate in other activities, be they political or some sort of employment. It makes taking care of the children a collective, community responsibility, not the sole responsibility of mothers or other female relatives, and enables women to be more equal participants in the movement as a whole. On the other hand, by paying members to work in childcare and educational projects, either directly or through government subsidies, the MTD demonstrates the importance it places on these activities. Valuing and compensating this labor thus directly contrasts against its invisibilization and naturalization as women's labor under capitalism, and allows for the work to be shared rather than falling solely to women.

MTD Solano: Housing and Health

The MTD de Solano formed in the mid 1990s in the southern region of Greater Buenos Aires as a group of unemployed women and men occupied a church and began to discuss their common problems. Like the MTD La Matanza, they first focused their energy on organizing roadblocks, as well as directly protesting at supermarkets demanding food.

After the 2002 murders of Dario Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki,[6] the MTD Solano decided to reorient its energies towards the neighborhood where most of its members lived. There they started working to address the most immediate needs of neighborhood residents – access to food, housing, and healthcare – as well as the generalized feeling of a lack of trust and solidarity in their communities (Colectivo Situaciones and MTD Solano, 2002).

One of the MTD Solano's primary areas of intervention has been on issues related to housing and land access. They understand housing as more than a physical roof over one's head, but also as the stability and self-determination of a home and the basis for the construction of new social relations and community. In 2005, members of the MTD Solano participated in the takeover and settlement of a neighborhood in the municipality of Florencio Varela. According to one participant, "we were thirty to forty families that wanted to have the experience of living and constructing in community. The houses were built collectively among all of us, we even made the [concrete] blocks that we used to build these houses" (Interview, September 8, 2012). She describes the situation leading up to the initial takeover:

> After participation in various land takeovers in the southern region of Greater Buenos Aires (in Quilmes, Solano, Varela) since the 1990s with very intense movements of organization and community struggle, we started to think about what would happen if we won the land. In general, very different logics were imposed than those that some of us wanted for ourselves. Many times they went through moments of community, organization, assembly and collective logics to other moments where a more individual logic reigned. After the events of "Puente Pueyrredón" the need to construct a communitarian space emerged, the desire to project a life with our friends. (Ibid.)

This settlement was the MTD Solano's main basis of operation for many years, from which they organized other neighborhood residents

[6] On June 26, 2002, two piqueteros from the Coordinadora de Trabajadores Desocupados Aníbal Verón, of which the MTD Solano then formed a part, were shot and killed by police in a piquete on Puente Pueyrredón.

around issues relating to everyday life in the neighborhood, including creating a large community garden and a number of cultural and educational activities.

Nearly seven years later, the MTD was forced out of that neighborhood due to increased violence from local drug dealers seeking to expand into their territory. They decided to build a new housing collective in another part of the urban periphery. Members build the houses themselves, following the principle of the *minga*, or collective work sessions, originating in campesino and indigenous communities. These *mingas* are an informal sort of contract or work agreement between participants: everyone helps one family build their house this month, and a few months later everyone pitches in to help another family. In this way, the *mingas* constitute a rotating form of collaborative work and mutual aid, creating long-lasting relationships and bonds of solidarity and community between participants.

The houses are built according to environmental principles that make them more energy-efficient, such as the green or living roofs covered in vegetation in order to better insulate the building. Much of this construction expertise comes from visits and workshops with environmental activists and indigenous communities. Additionally, as an organization of unemployed/precarious/informal workers, the MTD members have varied experiences in the construction industry, as well as odd jobs involving carpentry or electrical wiring. This mixture of different skills and experiences, one of the outcomes of the heterogeneity of the composition of "the unemployed", here proves a crucial asset in building a new community. Collective work also produces the feeling that these are all common projects in which everyone is invested, and materially produces new social relations and ties of solidarity between participants. The *minga* points to a different way of organizing labor in general, in a non-alienated and dignified way. In other words, it is not only the houses themselves, nor even the physical community of the collective houses, that are the outcome of political struggle, but also how the houses are built, the social relations and subjectivities created in the process, and those that persist in the newly created space.

The MTD Solano also operates a health clinic located in another neighborhood of the urban periphery. On the one hand, this clinic

provides important services for neighborhood residents who otherwise would not have access to them. The clinic relies on doctors and other healthcare practitioners who are willing to donate their time to serving low-income communities, as well as donations and government subsidies for some medical supplies. Many movement members have training in psychology or other health services and dedicate much of their time to working in the clinic. (This is in part due to the rich network of alternative education institutions, such as the *Universidad Popular de Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, which allows for activists to study these topics for free and with a social justice focus.) Besides providing these much-needed services, the clinic also seeks to create alternative notions of health and care. Recognizing how capitalist values have deeply affected the medical industry in terms of prioritizing the profits of the pharmaceutical industry over the well-being of people, the clinic aims to promote a notion of health based on collective well-being rather than the distribution of drugs and diagnoses of illnesses. Many of the clinic's services focus on mental health, especially problems related to substance abuse and addiction. However, rather than reinforcing the mainstream medical approach that treats these as psychiatric illnesses, clinic workers adopt an approach that treats these problems in a more holistic manner: for individuals to receive treatment, their family members (defined broadly meaning at least one family member or close friend) must also participate in separate sessions, in an attempt to address underlying causes of the issue and create a more healthy and supportive community for the afflicted person. Health care practitioners work in pairs, usually a medical doctor paired with a social psychologist, to treat patients. They also participate in various alternative health networks, such as a local women's health group and other groups working around indigenous ideas of health and well-being (Interview with Neka Jara and Alberto Spagnolo, February 18, 2013).

Thus, through organizing around housing and health care, as well as food production in their community garden, the MTD Solano directly intervenes in issues of reproduction. These interventions allow its members to sustain themselves, while also creating different social relations that challenge the reproduction of capitalist relations. Members of the MTD consistently speak of *care* as one of their fundamental values and the cornerstone of their project: care for each other as members

of a movement, as well as care for the environment and community in a broader sense. This emphasis on care permeates all of their activities: from literally taking care of each in the clinic and collectively caring for children to taking care to equally share labor and decision-making responsibilities within the organization. Speaking of care implies a way of engaging differently in reproduction by prioritizing the creation and reproduction of life and healthy social relations over the reproduction of capital. This emphasis on the ethics of care is an important thread running through the feminization of politics at different scales and in different places, pointing to a way of carrying out social reproduction otherwise (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2015; Motta, 2013; Zechner and Rubner Hansen, 2016).

Conclusion

This analysis of the unemployed workers' movements from the perspective of reproductive labor has shown that the unemployed workers' movements emerged as a response to a crisis of social reproduction, that they successfully made that reproductive labor visible, politicized it, and in some cases were able to provide remuneration for it, and that their projects were aimed at creating autonomous forms of social reproduction in specific territories. These movements point to a new spatiality of political struggle: rather than being centered around the spaces and institutions of the state, the unemployed workers' movements organized *territorially*, in the spaces of everyday life in which social reproduction occurs. Organizing around the spaces where people live and issues of social reproduction has allowed the MTDs to focus on what people have in common, despite the heterogeneous composition and social fragmentation of the unemployed.

This focus on reproduction and the spaces of everyday life can be understood in a broader framework of the feminization of resistance, referring not only to the increased visible participation of women in movements, but also to profound changes to how resistance is carried out. This new form of politics emphasizes internal dynamics and democratic decision-making processes, as well as a focus on the everyday practicalities of how members reproduce themselves, rather than privileging an abstract and state-centered politics. This means challenging machismo

and patriarchal forms of dominance within movements, as well as gendered divisions of labor that often consider issues of reproduction to be secondary or naturally women's work. By organizing explicitly around issues of reproduction, the MTDs demonstrate the importance of this work and those who carry it out.

Focusing on reproduction also allows for rethinking not only what counts as labor but what labor is valuable and necessary work. Reproduction opens an interesting question because it is the reproduction of capital but also of ourselves. If it is in these activities of reproduction that we reproduce the capitalist relation, then it is also where we can start to build something new. As Federici states, addressing the political potential of organizing around reproduction:

> For nothing so effectively stifles our lives as the transformation into work of the activities and relations that satisfy our desires. By the same token, it is through the day-to-day activities by means of which we produce our existence, that we can develop our capacity to cooperate and not only resist our dehumanization but learn to reconstruct the world as a space of nurturing, creativity, and care. (2012: 12)

Reproduction is thus the central point of conflict: where capitalist relations can be reproduced or not, either as the basis of exploitation or the seeds of new social relations and ways of living together.

Recent events continue to indicate that social reproduction is at the crux of contemporary struggles: struggles over life and death for the poor and unemployed, but also attempts by capital and the state to expand their control over ever more areas of life by attempting to capture and capitalize on reproductive labor. However, women continue to lead the resistance to processes of neoliberalism and the precaritization wrought by this crisis of reproduction, through the creation of autonomous forms of social reproduction and the promotion of an ethics of care that challenges the basic assumptions of capitalist development.

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