CHAPTER 11

Concluding Thoughts: Connecting Women's Struggles. Reorganizing Social Reproduction, Democratizing Solidarity Economy, Reframing Value

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In the current context of financialization of capitalism, impoverishment, increasing inequalities and crisis of social reproduction, voices and claims for changes *here and now*, without waiting for a general upheaving,

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are rumbling. Under certain conditions, the *power of the powerless* is growing. Solidarity economy (SE) practices participate to this movement, without, however, escaping the pressure of the dominant system and the contradictions it may induce.

Realistically appreciating the transformative potential of solidarity practices requires rethinking the notions of work, economy and politics and integrating a renewed and feminist understanding of social reproduction. Social reproduction, as developed in Chapter 1 of this book, enfolds all the activities, social relationships and institutions necessary for the reproduction and maintenance of life, now and for the future generations. Solidarity practices constitute one response to the crisis of social reproduction, through the collective and democratic organization of the delivery of necessary goods and services—like healthy food, childcare facilities, environmental care, social protection, as the examples in this book illustrate. At a theoretical level, these practices make up spaces where new social relationships are trying to be constructed, which are neither "domestic" nor capitalist, but based on voluntary forms of interdependencies and guided by equality and democracy. These practices entail concrete actions and interrogations based on decision making through deliberation processes but also on mobilization, resistance or public action—thereby contributing to rethinking politics. These initiatives embrace the concerns of many feminist movements, convinced that the struggle against the patriarchal and capitalist system requires revisiting the very nature of economy and politics.

The feminist analyses of concrete SE practices in India and Latin America discussed in this book renew the discussions on the economy, women's work, social relationships and social reproduction; on the constitution of political subjects and the articulation with the State. They shed new light on the understandings of solidarity and of the territory, a space where women and local communities face serious threats but where, at the same time, their practices can unfold and rearticulate the politics of everyday life. While difficulties and risks are indeed present and no progress can be assumed a priori, women's grass-roots resistances constitute a key path to constructing alternatives from a position of exploitation and devaluation. Through subaltern women's work and actions, the no-place of exclusion and periphery may become a territory of struggle. Their emerging practices may reconstitute forms of organization and resistance combining autonomy, communality and territoriality, in defence of life

and of rights. The analyses presented in this book also show how integrating a critical feminist perspective of SE practices can contribute to the renewal of public action and policies for the reproduction of life.

We argued in our introduction that *solidarity economy can offer transformative and sustainable paths for feminist social change, but only if it includes a reorganization of social reproduction*. This implies *constructing new social relationships, neither domestic nor capitalist ones, but based on solidarity, internal democracy and the construction of networks of actors and other forms of connexion and collective organization*. It also requires *putting gender, race, caste and class equality at the forefront of political debates*, at all levels, from the household to the communities, the market and the State and changing the patriarchal and racist values underlying social relationships. It finally also requires understanding the articulation of the different forms of economy, domestic, capitalist and solidarity, which explains how the whole system works.

What is the position of the examined SE initiatives with regard to the present organization—and crisis—of social reproduction? In this critical context, to what extent do they suggest changes in the unequal power relations in activities, in social relations and institutions? Some SE practices studied here are spaces where the burden of activities for social reproduction is better recognized or revalued. Some case studies show that SE practices encourage changes in the distribution and the value of reproductive work inside the households. Some are spaces where the unequal distribution of this work between families, associations, the market and the State is put into question. Some offer rays of hope as spaces where different social relationships are being constructed. Solidarity-driven grass-roots women's organizations may emerge as paths towards resisting capitalism and constructing a different, more egalitarian, feminist and sustainable system. Despite their singularities, all the case studies presented in this book shed light on common trends and processes. Drawing on their findings, we present below some relevant conditions under which these changes either offer promising avenues or may not succeed. However, this does not mean trying to identify what "works" and what "does not work" anywhere and at any time. Initiatives are rooted in singular historical and institutional trajectories. Gender power relations are intertwined with a multitude of other forms of power , which vary greatly according to space and time. What works here may not work elsewhere. What worked yesterday may not work today or tomorrow. What we have studied here relates to *processes* and

not to "good practices". Women's voices and experiences illustrate the complexities and contradictions inherent in solidarity economy practices: no linear changes, but ebbs and flows; no easy and final transformations but an entanglement of endeavours to combat patriarchy, resist capitalism and move towards better lives; never-ending struggles with no promise of victory. Understanding why and how they may not be successful contributes to take possible alternatives seriously (Tilly, 1990).

Women's Work and Social Reproduction: Collective Responses in the Midst of an Ever-Going Crisis

Our research shows the scale of the crisis of social reproduction and its huge and concrete social, economic, but also political, environmental and ethical extent. The crisis has diverse effects but also recurring features. Feminist studies have identified since long social reproduction as a key issue to understand capitalist development and how it prospers thanks to the unequal sexual, social and racial division of labour, and as a result of the maintenance of a domestic economy. Our research shows that unpaid work, mainly performed by subaltern women, functions as a "shock absorber" of the consequences of the economic, social and environmental crises, and remains a massive and still unrecognized part of all work. In rural areas, subsistence agriculture relies heavily on small family agriculture, and particularly on the work of female peasants or wage labourers, who face growing difficulties and often decreasing support from public policies. Urban or transnational temporary migration of generally young workers, either mainly male (in the case of Bolivia for instance), or involving both men and women (in the case of Brazil or Tamil Nadu, for example)—increases the burden of work of women living in rural areas. This in turn feeds the urban economy. Access to certain basic infrastructures and "modern" equipment may simplify certain domestic tasks but it also creates new tasks and new constraints, due to dependence on the market, which is sometimes extremely rapid in comparison with other periods of history (see Chapter 4, Changalpet), and the need to acquire new skills (budget management, children's education).

Wild extractivism and other indirect causes of destruction of mineral, vegetal and water resources primarily penalize subaltern women (like the Dalit women in Changalpet or peasant women in Vale do Ribeira), who

are more dependent on these resources for their daily work and the survival strategies they are considered responsible for. In the process of modernization of the craft sectors, the women are excluded and loose access to more valued activities and resources. In urban areas, marginalized women are particularly submitted to a combination of low provision of decent jobs, precarious housing and environmental conditions, long distance to go from home to work and weak transport facilities, lack of infrastructure and public services and high levels of violence. Gender as an organizing principle makes women feel themselves responsible of taking care of the daily life and needs of close persons in those peripherical, abandoned and neglected spaces.

To ensure that life goes on, women resist, join and experiment various forms of collective initiatives, where they put together work (e.g. childcare, farming, food preparation) and/or resources (e.g. fish, water, sand, seeds, biodiversity, energy, knowledge). Besides these activities, they also reimagine social relations and institutions, all necessary for social reproduction, but outside the realms of the household and the market. This is one of the major results that we want to highlight. In this regard, the practices discussed in this book have many differences but share this essential feature.

The women involved in these groups struggle to construct other social relationships in order to create fairer and more sustainable modes of organization of social reproduction. As seen all along the book, these initiatives challenge the artificial division between "production" and "social reproduction". They enlarge the meaning of social reproduction to a broader vision of life, both human and non-human. They translate their vision to some degree of communalization of social reproduction activities, organized through principles of internal democracy. Some experiment alternative modes of appropriation of work, which in turn require a revaluation of women's work as a whole, whether through quantification or symbolic forms. They do not claim a dominant principle of exchange, be it market, redistribution, reciprocity or householding. Like any form of economic practice, they combine these different principles, but they try to subordinate them to the principles of equality and democracy. The social relations that emerge from these experiments are neither "domestic", nor capitalist, nor State-led, but driven by solidarity.

These solidarity groups are not necessarily harmonious places, free from conflict, rivalry and inequalities, whether based on patriarchy, class, race, caste, place or age. They nevertheless offer a space where alternative

social relationships are being constructed, where the meaning of work is being reframed and where the articulation of "domestic" and capitalist social relationships is being challenged. As explained in Chapter 1, maintaining the domestic economy articulated to the global capitalist economy is necessary to feed its prosperity. Challenging this harmful articulation requires that gender relations are questioned and that the collectives involved attempt to work without providing the unpaid work that subsidizes the capitalist economy. However, this also requires other conditions, listed below.

As observed elsewhere (Kabeer et al., 2013), the women involved in solidarity groups struggle for recognition—from public authorities, sometimes from employers, and within their households and communities—and for redistribution measures. They claim for a status as worker and for decent work—with social protection, minimum wages—they demand agricultural policies, market regulation, environmental conservation and/or protection from violence against women. All initiatives described here have been able to obtain concrete results in terms of legislation and policy making in some of these domains (see Chapter 2 for a summary). The extent to which these changes have been obtained depends in particular on the alliances that have been constructed with similar groups, with feminist or women's movements, social movements, unions, or with NGOs, locally, nationally or transnationally.

Their actions and advocacy involve a constant struggle to raise *awareness* of social reproduction work and/or resources and to recognize its *value*. This process is encouraged among the women by the fact of working in a collective and thus creating spaces to discuss sensitive issues among themselves and with allies. These processes may include reflecting on the power relations in their social environment, namely with men. This may include employers and public authorities at different levels, male-based or mixed organizations (unions, associations, social movements). As various cases illustrate, contesting openly intra-household relations is quite challenging, especially when "families […] continue to be their major source of social and emotional security" (Chapter 6, Kerala). Challenging power relations is of course a long-lasting process. Some methodologies illustrate the type of actions that contribute to the recognition of value. An example is given by the exercise of quantification of the value of products—as we read in the case of the *cadernetas agroecoló-cias* in Brazil, produced in domestic and in solidarity-driven economies and exchanged under different forms (Chapter 9). Recognizing value may

also be the result of collective discussions on value and valuation: what is the quality of food, soils, water or care services and more broadly, what makes up the quality of work and what is the meaning of life, at different levels.

These collectives are also stepping stones to empowerment processes. These might be economic empowerment processes in the substantive sense—processes of gaining personal and collective power over the provisioning of goods and services necessary to life, whether the means are monetary and market-based or not—but also and foremost collective empowerment processes at the social and political level, where women can constitute themselves as subjects of rights.

At the same time, these initiatives face a recurring difficulty: the gendered division of labour is extremely difficult to question, either at the household level (as various Indian cases and the Bolivian case recall), the organizations' level (as the Community Centres in Argentina, the Tamil Unions or the local associations in Bolivia and Brazil illustrate), or at the global level. When solidarity practices are not articulated with feminist movements and/or a politicization of social reproduction, power relations remain difficult to challenge, reproductive work is a constraint to achieve equality and reinforces patriarchal norms. These norms are maintained by eminently patriarchal States (see below), a situation that may be reinforced with the rise of powerful conservative political governments (as we write these lines, May 2020). Ultimately, in some cases, the (relative) collective and personal empowerment that women experience through these groups is still at the expense of an overburden of reproductive workload. While unchallenged sexual division of labour may limit women's participation to political spaces, as we have seen in some cases, women may also purposely use their "maternalized image" in their claims, as they know this is the only way to achieve their objectives (see Chapter 5, Bolivia). In other cases, like in Vale do Ribeira (Chapter 9, Brazil), some changes in the sexual division of work may be observed, with men starting to collaborate in preparing food or caring for young children, so that women can participate in meetings and collective activities. As one woman said, "*it's not only men who are changing, we are changing also*". In the Argentinian case (Chapter 7), socializing care issues is considered by the women as transformatory. Indeed, even if the activities remain very gender-stereotypical, the fact of achieving and managing these activities in a collective way makes a change. We may thus simultaneously observe an increase in women's reproductive workload, some

changes in the sexual division of work, and changes of the meaning and value given to this work.

While we observe paths of emergence of new social relationships, in the end, and even if structural results are achieved through legislative measures and/or the adoption of specific policies, we may not speak of a radical transformation of capitalism: rather, the main result of these solidarity practices is to offer *possibilities for change* through spaces of resistance to capitalist and domestic economies. These spaces, articulated in varied forms to capitalist and domestic economies, offer opportunities, depending on their willingness but also ability to openly challenge the social relations of reproduction. They show varied degrees of robustness, and this in turn depends upon their comprehension, will and abilities to construct changes, and their capacities to build alliances with other groups, organizations and movements. Whatever their achievements, these experiences may be considered by the women themselves as invaluable, unlocking collective understandings of women's rights and the value of their work and opening paths for the constitution of political subjects.

The Emergence of Solidarities and the Constitution of Political Subjects

A second result concerns the conditions under which these initiatives emerge as collectives and the role of solidarities in this process, considering that solidarities do not form in a vacuum, but that they result of gradual, often chaotic and still fragile processes that all chapters describe in detail. "Solidarity among women is not something that we can be taken for granted, it is a process explained by the collectivization of care and the participation of the organizations in regional and national meetings of women" (Chapter 6, Kerala). "Solidarity is not just a 'value' adopted or defended by (poor) women farmers, but rather the result of concrete action and the rules created in the actions" (Chapter 9, Brazil). The construction of a common cause and collective identities is central here. Several factors prove to be decisive:

- *Territory.* We use the term territory in its broad sense, both as a concrete and a symbolic space. Territory is a place that embodies material interdependence, family relations, memory and culture,

affective and spiritual relations (Escobar 2008). As our case studies illustrate, territories have become a significant aspect of social movements' action. The crisis of social reproduction is also a crisis of territories, threatened in their own reproduction, whether through the depletion of ecosystemic resources, extractivism, migration, lack of infrastructures, violence, the vanishing of collective identities or new threats to collective rights (like *quilombola* and indigenous communities in Brazil). Women, mostly because they are less mobile (like in India or Bolivia) or bound to a location (depending on urban social networks to survive, for instance in the Argentinian case), or because they have internalized that they are supposed to ensure the reproduction of the labour force in the immediate environment, are more concerned about the threats to the survival of their own territories. "Rights of livelihood and residence are interlinked" (Chapter 3, Tamil Nadu). Several initiatives studied here share the fact that they are based on a feeling of belonging to a particular territory and defend the existence and sustainability of this territory and its human, social and environmental resources. In some cases, marginalized women's groups attempt to connect in the process of building a political subject capable of redefining the territory and of engendering different, more inclusive and egalitarian social relations. In this sense, the territory constitutes the basis of the construction of solidarities, of a new collective political subject. The territory also constitutes the basis for the construction of a new collective political subject. However, such processes are of course not automatic, as threats to the territory can also reinforce local hierarchies, especially when these hierarchies are also associated to forms of protections.

– *Dynamics of social differentiation*. Besides sharing a territory, women have multiple collective identities, both inherited and acquired, that intersect and reinforce each other. The building of voluntary forms of solidarity connects with pre-existing forms of collective identities and solidarity based on neighbourhood and work experience, but also kinship, caste, ethnicity or religion. While most initiatives are shaped by some specific shared identities, it is interesting to note that some also build bridges, sometimes in a very pragmatic way, to foster alliances across various collective identities (see the case of women fish sellers in Udupi, India, Chapter 8). This broadens solidarities, confers legitimacy and subsequently helps advance solidarity associations' objectives. In the Indian context, in which caste remains a

very powerful organising institution, most collectives have succeeded in forging solidarity relations that transcend caste belonging and this is worth noting (Chapters 3, 6, 8 all in India). When this is not the case, the very fact that non-Dalit women (and men) allow Dalit women to mobilize for a cause that directly threatens caste hierarchy is already a significant achievement (Chapter 4, India).

– *Building a common cause*. Collective identities and belonging to the territory are built around common causes, which, we observe, are woven around three main issues: (i) women's collective recognition of their oppressed condition, at least one of its multiple facets, and their collective experience of this condition; (ii) the awakening of the willingness to change and to struggle; and (iii) the collective framing and construction of concrete possibilities for change. By making political connections with other women and their experiences, by doing a political and critical analysis of their concrete, personal problems and lifeworld, and by trying to build political solutions, women are becoming feminists (Narayan, 1997). They recognize a common cause, whether it is to improve the working and living conditions of women's care workers in the informal economy (Chapter 6, Kerala), "to defend their identity with pride" for women manual workers in Tamil Nadu (Chapter 3), to "continue putting food on the table" for the fish sellers in Udupi (Chapter 8), to defend a feminist view on agroecology for the peasants in Vale do Ribeira (Chapter 9, Brazil), or to claim their status as "educators or community workers" and not as "caring mothers" for the community care workers in Buenos Aires (Chapter 7). Their ability to construct a common cause and collective identities out of individual subjectivities changes their experience into a political and feminist one, even though this term is not always used. It is truly this common cause that allows to transcend pre-existing differentiations such as caste (Chapters on Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Udupi). It is this common cause that makes it possible to create solidarity between distinct social classes and between urban and rural. This is the case of the "responsible consumption" urban groups, constituted by workers from the urban periphery of Sao Paulo who buy products from women peasant groups at fair prices (Chapter 9). The strength and purpose of solidarity associations may be determined by the capacity of women to achieve this level of collective consciousness. Obviously, not all the factors necessary to reach this level are always present. For instance, in the Bolivian case,

for different reasons (see Chapter 5), the denunciation of domestic violence during discussions in women-only SE initiatives does not convert into collective action, women do not recognize themselves as subjects of rights nor consider private issues as structural issues affecting them by the fact of being women. One of the important results of this research has been to understand that the *methodologies* at work to construct strategic alliances between women's solidarity-driven groups and social movements, and namely feminist movements, are essential to the constitution of political subjectivities and for bottom-up political transformations, (see below).

– *Deliberative practices*. SE initiatives are spaces where women can freely express themselves on their constraints, share sensitive issues and imagine collectively the horizons of possibility. This requires particular forms of collective management and different power relations, with an emphasis on horizontality and internal democracy. These informal spaces play the role of what Nancy Fraser qualifies as "subaltern counter-publics" (Fraser, 1990). Deliberation participates to the construction of ideas and collective proposals and the politicization of so-called private issues. Articulated with broader spaces of negotiation with various institutions and at various levels (individual employers, municipalities, prefectures or districts but also ministries, male-dominated unions or cooperatives, international organizations), they are crucial to transform the collectives into vehicles of structural and institutional change.

– *The emotional aspect of mobilizations*. SE women's initiatives constitute spaces where negative emotions and affects—like crying, anxiety, fear or anger—as well as positive emotions and affects—the pleasure of being together, laughing, dancing, feeling beautiful, liberation of the bodies—may be expressed. These emotions all together contribute to the liberation of speech and the acquisition of a critical consciousness, to feel strength and mutual support, to raise consciousness, to voice the claims and shape mobilizations, to constitute oneself as subjects of rights. They are part of lifeworld in the sense of Jürgen Habermas (1997), where communicative rationality unfolds and where resistance to colonization is built subjectively. The case studies in Tamil Nadu and Vale do Ribeira, Karnataka or Buenos Aires illustrate this dimension, that is typically valued in feminist studies or by researchers working with participatory action-research methodologies.

– *Strategic alliances.* SE initiatives depend enormously on the construction of alliances, with social and feminist movements, trade unions, NGOs, political parties, researchers, locally and internationally and this for at least two main reasons. First, when the struggles are fragmented or local populations are heterogeneous, working with external entities is a way to associate diverse or even diverging causes, at least partially, and overcome some divisions (Kabeer et al., 2013), i.e., to connect without necessarily integrating, out of respect for democratic plurality. In this sense, turning to third parties (NGOs, Unions, "Incubators", Universities, etc.) is inherent to the model of radical and plural democracy. Second, public action and lobbying necessarily require broader alliances that allow to exert influence and power. The case study in Brazil illustrates the importance of this second factor, but also the difficulty of putting it into practice and sustaining the results. During the governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff (2003–2016), rural women's collectives at different levels allied themselves with feminist NGOs and movements, as well as with rural movements. These alliances enabled them to obtain policies that were unprecedented in terms of support, but which were obtained at the cost of strong internal resistance in the agroecological movement and family farming organizations, and which disappeared after the end of these governments. In order to respect and value women's voices, knowledge and priorities, these two kinds of alliances require constant negotiation efforts, and the tactical use of public partnerships (Chatterjee, 2015). Alliances with committed men are also crucial but they are not devoid of difficulties (see Chapter 2).

Even though solidarity is a driver of these initiatives, they are neither necessarily emblematic nor best-practices of what is characteristically considered "solidarity economy" by experts of decision makers (see below the gender bias of SE policies). Besides, "solidarity economy" is not commonly used in some contexts or is used in a gender-blind and biased way in other contexts. To what extent should we then continue using this expression? Even though the term *solidarity* may be used in an ambiguous, naïve or fuzzy way, we propose to keep it adjoined to *economy* as this sparks to aspects of the organization, the social relations, the values and the visions that are considered important by the women's collective practices that we studied. Although another emic and maybe better word

might come up some day, solidarity is useful to express consideration to the vibrancy of this effervescent movement and its capacity to build relations and mode of appropriation of women's work that are not based on exploitation, whether domestic or capitalist. While subaltern women may not be victorious in the search of more egalitarian social relationships and alternatives to capitalism, or while they may only be healing the destructive effects of capitalism, their experience in constructing these spaces driven by solidarity is invaluable.

The Paradoxical Relationship with the State

The collectives we studied are, finally, all in constant struggle with the State. They devote continuous efforts in lobbying and pressuring governments—from the local to the national level—to fulfil their obligations to protect the rights and livelihoods of the population. This process is carried out through intermediaries, such as non-governmental organizations or unions and through broader alliances, such as social movements, feminist, agro-ecological, women worker's movements; through direct negotiations and/or through street protests, marches, demonstrations and encounters. Under certain conditions, solidarity initiatives may play an important role in challenging the State and in shaping the public policy agenda. Given that States are always complex, multiple and multilayer entities, they may succeed in some of their claims, and they may fail in others. In exploring the multiple strategies and articulations between solidarity initiatives and the States, we come to various conclusions. Some are rather general and refer to the usual difficulties of relations between civil society and the State, others are more specific to women's groups and the issue of social reproduction.

– Apart from managing commons, and notwithstanding lobbying for new laws and new schemes, *solidarity initiatives spend considerable time and energy to demand that the State fulfils its responsibilities*, i.e. that information is transmitted, that public programmes are delivered or that infrastructure functions. When the State provides part of the coverage of social reproduction, the complexity of the measures, their opacity and the multiple dysfunctions of the services require specific work, provided by women, and most often unpaid and unrecognized. Requiring the State to play its role in social reproduction is a form of female responsibility, and a component of social

reproduction work. When some functions have been delegated by the State to third sector organizations (community organizations, NGOs, foundations, churches, or even social enterprises) or are in fact assumed by them, women's performative work extends to these organizations. In the women-led unions from Tamil Nadu, some leaders estimate that "they spent at least half their time and energies in pursuing welfare schemes for workers from the boards" (Chapter 3). Other case studies also insist on their time-consuming and incessant role as mediators with the State, which Kaveri Thara describes as "political work" (Thara forthcoming).

– At the same time, solidarity initiatives desperately need the State in different ways. For instance, public funding of community workers involved in community-based care organizations in Argentina is a condition for their existence. Public buying schemes for small farmers in Brazil is a condition for their survival, to absorb their marketed production and the *Bolsa Familia* is essential to provide minimal incomes, even though these sort of schemes have a maternalistic bias (Destremau & Georges, 2017; Hainard & Verschuur 2005). Social rights for fisherwomen in Udupi depends on the State and is a condition of the sustainability of their economic activities in monsoon times. While in some contexts, particularly in India, initiatives avoid or limit any form of subsidy in order to preserve their autonomy (Chatterjee, 2015; see also Chapter 4, Changalpet), public procurement or licensing, minimum wages and social protection measures are indispensable for the sustainability of these initiatives. *This dependency is a permanent source of fragility.*

– The *gender and productive bias of social and solidarity economy laws and programs.* When they exist (or existed) (in Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina), SE public policies and legal recognition are narrowly conceived, with SE focussed on productive organizations (cooperatives, some associations, social enterprises) and support primarily financial sustainability and entrepreneurial management. Such characteristics do not apply to SE initiatives that aim to transform social relations from a feminist perspective. This narrow conception is characterized by a "productive bias" that places reproductive activities in a secondary position to activities that centre on job creation and financial sustainability. In its present form, and echoing observations done in other parts of the world (see, for instance, Guérin et al.,

2011), SE policies are most often hardly compatible with a feminist agenda.

– The *nexus between the State and private capital* is sometimes an insurmountable obstacle, that condemns women engaged in common management of resources to failure. In the case of Tamil Nadu, for example, while the women had got the State to regulate sand extraction, it turned out that State regulation has strengthened the pillage of natural resources through strong mafia-like nexus between the State and private capital (Chapter 4, Changalpet).

– *States are, fundamentally, patriarchal States.* The limited attention in public policies to social reproduction issues reflects the deeply rooted structural bias inherent in capitalist societies that view women's work as a service to the community rather than labour. As feminist analysis has long shown, public policies are often paternalistic and informed by a gendered worldview. As such, they reaffirm the hierarchies in the organization of (re)productive activities that characterize capitalist societies and sustain existing gender norms. The case studies presented here are no exception and, if changes are not brought about by feminist organizations such as in Argentina or Brazil, public policies strengthen further these maternalistic approaches. Even progressive governments have shown these productive and patriarchal biases, clientelist logics, co-optation and alliances with corporative interests. However, the political changes observed in all the countries where our case studies are based, all but Argentina governed now (early 2020) by conservative governments, have a negative impact on the SE initiatives, due to the disappearance of subsidies and social protection measures.

In these contradictory and complex scenarios, the relationships of the analysed initiatives with the State are of permanent tension and negotiation, including in the case of governments that have been considered progressive. While one can observe effervescent initiatives that are *bubbling up* and multiplying in autonomous and creative ways, the lack of State support and the productive bias in the conceptualization of SE may let them be as fragile as soap bubbles. What is clear is that State's co-responsibility in the provision of all services, means and infrastructures that are necessary for social reproduction is not being fulfilled (Salazar et al., 2012). Claims to the State to accomplish these responsibilities should be pursued, as these should not rest on families, associations, nor

SE initiatives alone without due recognition and reward. At the same time, some public policies, in their attempts to scaling up SE initiatives, run permanently the risk of co-optation and exploitation, fading away or wearing out, ultimately losing their *raison d'être*. When initiatives manage to withstand the test of time, staying true to their original goals is a daily struggle. The evolution of the Peruvian kitchens (Anderson, 2015) and Indian and Kenyan Self-Help-Groups (Johnson, 2015; Sudarshan, 2015) reveal striking similarities, characterized by collaboration, confrontation and co-optation by different entities or networks, be they public authorities, political parties or religious entities.

Our conclusions suggest that the pathways out of fragility and to amplify the movement rest on the *connexions of these multiple initiatives*, leaving them with autonomy that might be reinforced by alliances with governmental or non-governmental organizations, as long as they are not co-opted by them. This needs political environments that allow the constitution of networks and discursive fields to sustain the confluence of dispersed initiatives, and the recognition of the need to reorganize social reproduction. Feminist and solidarity NGOs can be nodal points (Alvarez, 2009) through which the dispersed fields become and remain articulated.

Subaltern women in these collective practices are constituting themselves as subjects of history, illustrating the power of the powerless, although these processes might be considered insignificant or ephemeral. In this process, they are contributing to reframing the meaning of work, constructing solidarity-driven social relationships and combatting their subordination. They are building spaces of resistance to financialized capitalism and its devastating effects on the environment, the bodies, the territories, the social fabric, economy and politics. These are spaces where social relations of reproduction may be questioned in ways that do not reproduce gender, class, caste and race inequalities. Even if they are not successful in their attempts to change the economy and the politics, even if they encounter multiple resistances, if their trajectories are chaotic and their results are sometimes ambivalent, these spaces constitute paths to unlock imaginaries. They are valued experiences, where the powerless consolidate and extend their spaces of resistance, where gender may be questioned and where social reproduction can be reframed, reorganized and revalued.

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