

TRANSLATED ARTICLES SECTION**Paula Varela** Women Workers at the Heart of
Social Reproduction Struggles:
Theoretical Debates and
Political Battles¹**ABSTRACT**

This article proposes a reflection on social reproduction struggles under neoliberalism from the point of view of Social Reproduction Theory. I divide the article into three parts. The first defines Social Reproduction Theory as a critical theory of capitalism that focuses on the contradictions inscribed in the reproduction of the labour power under capitalism. The second part addresses what we mean by social reproduction struggles, distinguishing three types of social reproduction struggles that allow us to highlight the strategic position occupied by women workers, who guarantee life. The third part proposes a reflection on social reproduction struggles as a space of articulation between the powerful women's movement (and other social movements) and the labour movement, where we could democratically debate our right (as a life-work class) to settle the conditions of our social reproduction.

KEYWORDS

Working class struggles
Women workers
New feminist wave
Social reproduction
Marxism

¹ A Spanish version of this text was published in the journal *Encrucijadas. Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales*, 23(2), r2302 (Spain) in Nov. 2023. The English translation was provided by the author whom we thank the authorization for publishing

The discussion on social reproduction under neoliberalism has been gaining attention in both academic and political circles. We owe much of this to the new feminist wave and its power to put a series of questions on the public agenda that have a long history in the women's movement, particularly in its left-wing, anti-capitalist and socialist expressions: What are the conditions under which (human) life is produced and reproduced in capitalist societies? What does social reproduction work entail and what "value" does it have under capitalism? What is the relationship between women's oppression and the social fact that we are the ones who carry out this work?

The increasing focus on the question of the reproduction of life is also due to capitalism itself, and the deep crisis of social reproduction that it has engendered, which is exploding today in many different ways. Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed this crisis without anaesthesia, by placing in front of our eyes what Susan Ferguson (2021) called "life-making" vs. "death-making". But even before the outbreak of the pandemic, we were already witnessing, on a global level, a diversity of social struggles emerging from this crisis of social reproduction: against job precarisation and the impoverishment of labour; against austerity plans; against institutional violence towards "lives that do not matter"; against the dispossession of natural resources of local communities; against state reactions to forced migrations. Much of the rise in social conflicts worldwide is marked by this crisis of social reproduction that is pushing different sectors of the life-work class (Antunes, 2005) to fight, whether in the terrain of strictly labour struggles, or in the broader terrain of social struggles.

This article proposes a reflection on social reproduction struggles under neoliberalism from the point of view of Social Reproduction Theory. To this end, I divide the article into three parts. The first provides a definition of Social Reproduction Theory as a critical theory of capitalism that focuses on the contradictions inscribed in the reproduction of the labour power (and the lives that bear it) under capitalism, as a process that is differentiated but cannot be dissociated from that of the production of value. In this sense, Social Reproduction Theory is here understood as a theory of the relation between the production and reproduction realms, and it is from the understanding of this interlinking that a radical critique of capitalism emerges. The second part offers a definition of what we mean by social reproduction struggles in order to delineate its contours and make them recognisable, without losing the diversity of forms it assumes. To this end, I distinguish three types of social reproduction struggles that allow us to identify protagonists, territories and potentialities, and to highlight the strategic position occupied by women workers, who guarantee life. The third part, to close, proposes a reflection on social reproduction struggles as a space of articulation between the powerful women's movement (and other social movements) and the labour movement, where we could democratically debate our right (as the life-work class) to settle the conditions of our social reproduction: –a strategic dispute that has women workers at its heart.

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THEORY AS CRITICAL THEORY

The discussion on social reproduction in the field of feminism requires, from the very beginning, a clarification: we are not talking about the set of processes implicated in the reproduction of capitalist society as a whole, but to the set of processes involved in the reproduction of labour power and the life that bears it. This distinction is what Laslett and Brenner (1989) called the difference between "societal reproduction" and "social reproduction". In other words, when we speak of social reproduction we are referring to this "narrow" but, as we shall see, highly complex (and compelling) meaning.

One of the richest moments in the discussion of social reproduction was the second wave of feminism, and particularly what became known as the domestic labour debate within Marxist and socialist feminism. The debate on domestic labour, kicked off by Margaret Benston's early text, *The Political Economy of Women's Liberation*, published in 1969¹, involved great intellectuals and activists such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James, Jean Gardiner, Christine Delphy and Wally Seccombe, among others.

Forty years after that discussion, and on the basis of an important series of works and publications, we can now distinguish three perspectives that have in common placing the concept of social reproduction at the centre of their analyses (both for understanding the oppression of women and for understanding capitalism as a whole), although they differ in their ways of conceiving it. The autonomist (or post-operaist) perspective, which includes authors such as Silvia Federici (2019) and Alessandra Mezzadri (2019), who have reformulated proposals such as "the commons"². The feminist economics perspective, from authors such as Amaia Pérez Orozco (2014), Cristina Carrasco (2016) and Corina Rodríguez Enríquez (2015), focuses on the notions of "sustainability of life" or "crisis of care". And Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), from authors such as Tithi Bhattacharya (2017), Susan Ferguson (2020) and Cinzia Arruzza (Arruzza y Bhattacharya, 2020), poses the question about the current forms taken by the (contradictory) relationship between the sphere of production of value (and surplus value) and that of the reproduction of labour power and life at the centre of its theoretical and political concerns.

As part of the latter perspective – whose fundamental outlines were traced by Lise Vogel in her book *Marxism and Women's Oppression. Towards a Unitary Theory* (2013), originally published in 1983³ – I would like to point out a series of elements that allow us to understand Social Reproduction Theory as a Marxist approach that is, at the same time, a feminist theory about the oppression of women in capitalist societies, a theory about the ways in which the working class is historically produced and reproduced, and a critical theory of capitalism that focuses on its irreducible tendency to impoverish (and even destroy) the possibilities of reproducing our lives, and therefore compels us to fight it unambiguously.

1 It is interesting to note that simultaneously, and apparently without mutual knowledge, in Latin America, Isabel Largaia and John Dumoulin (socialist militants who lived in Cuba after the revolution) published the text *Por un Feminismo Científico* (1969) (For a Scientific Feminism) in which they analyse the "invisible work" of women and its indispensable character for the production of value and surplus-value. In this work, they distinguish three types of invisible work: biological reproduction, education, and care of children, the elderly and the sick people – the reproduction of the labour power consumed daily. For a brief history of Largaia and Dumoulin, see the book by Mabel Bellucci and Emmanuel Theumer (2018).

2 See the dossier published in 2019 in *Radical Philosophy* 2.04, series 2, "Social Reproduction Theory. History, issues and present challenges". For a critique, see Varela (2020b).

3 In 2013, *Historical Materialism* reprinted it with an excellent introductory study by Susan Ferguson and David McNally (2013). The French and Brazilian editions were published in 2022 and the Spanish one will be published this year.

The first element has to do with how life is produced and reproduced in capitalist societies. This question makes it possible to highlight the first complexity: under capitalism, the reproduction of life is also (and unfortunately) the reproduction of labour power as a commodity. Those of us who do not have capital (or rent) are condemned to sell our labour power in order to live, and if we do not manage to sell it, we are forced to depend on someone else who does (or on the state and its reduced social policies). The very logic of capitalism (of expropriation and exploitation) imposes this condemnation on us. In this sense, the reproduction of life depends on two different but inseparable processes: a) the “invisible” work of making and reproducing life, carried out mainly by women, and b) what happens in the sphere of production of value and surplus value (the conditions in which labour power is sold, exploited and even expelled from the labour market), because that’s where the means to guarantee our life comes from (in the form of wages or remuneration). To consider that the reproduction of life is or can be resolved exclusively in the sphere of social reproduction (dislocating it from the sphere of production) is to ignore the indispensable character of labour power as a commodity for the accumulation of capital and, therefore, for capitalism. Contrary to that illusion, neoliberalism (by expanding expropriation and exploitation mechanisms) has reinforced the indispensability of labour power for its own survival⁴, and has turned the screw even further: even if we sell our labour power, we cannot guarantee our social reproduction. The expansion of the phenomenon of low-waged workers – not only in the countries of the periphery (such as Argentina) but also in Europe and the US – is proof of this tendency (and it is a dimension of the current social reproduction crisis).

The second element has to do with the importance of identifying the various spheres in which social reproduction work is carried out (always mostly by women): the household and the community⁵ (that “hidden abode of the hidden abode”), the public sphere (schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly, and so on), and the commodified sphere (the so-called education and health-care industries, increasingly relevant niches of capital accumulation). This means a broader view of this strongly feminised work which, although having the home and the family at its centre, exceeds this specific *locus* and imbricates the sphere of paid work, creating and reinforcing feminised sectors of the labour market, and taking on different institutional forms depending on the moment of capitalism in question and the socio-institutional framework in which it is immersed. In order to understand how the current crisis of social reproduction is unfolding, it is necessary to look at all these spheres and their articulations: household-community; public institutions; commodified services. As we will see below, this point of view makes it possible to analyse the strategic position of women workers in the institutions of social reproduction today.

The third element has to do with highlighting that social reproduction work is one of the ways in which capital guarantees the availability of labour power, but not the only one. The others are

migration, violent dispossession (through expropriation of natural resources or through debt), political dispossession (through undocumentation policies), forms of forced labour (such as slavery, human trafficking and prisons). This is of great importance because it places the problem of the reproduction of life at the heart of a broader debate on the (extremely violent) mechanisms of domination with which capitalism resolves its need for labour power to exploit and expropriate. This directly connects the debate on social reproduction with discussions about racialisation, colonialism, migration, institutional violence and the like. All these dimensions become a necessary part of the debate on the reproduction of life because they are inescapably part of the specific and historical ways in which labour power is produced and reproduced under capitalism. They are *necessary* aspects, therefore, of the morphology of the life-work class, to use the Brazilian sociologist Ricardo Antunes’ (2005) idea.

It is understanding all these interlinked processes involved in the reproduction of life that makes Social Reproduction Theory a feminist theory of women’s oppression under capitalism, based on the analysis of the necessary yet devalued nature of social reproduction work and the consequences for power relations in capitalist societies, as well as a theory of the making of the working class based on analysing the historical processes through which labour power is produced and reproduced in a gendered, racialised, sexed, expropriated and disabled way, and a critical theory of capitalism that places at its very core the struggle to build our right to shape the conditions of our own social reproduction.

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION STRUGGLES: PROTAGONISTS, TERRITORIES AND POTENTIALITIES

From this theoretical approach, I will focus on analyses of a series of struggles with specific characteristics, which we call social reproduction struggles. The aim of the sort of typology I present here is threefold: to emphasise the social and political importance of these struggles in the context of the deep social reproduction crisis we are going through; to identify their contours and differences in order to think about their potentialities; and to establish their possible articulations with other social struggles so as to think about their inscription in the increased social unrest that has been taking place in recent years globally.

The first type of social reproduction struggle is what we call struggles of institutionalised social reproduction, which refers to those conflicts and strikes that take place in institutions (public or private) of social reproduction such as hospitals, schools and homes for the elderly. These kind of struggles (mainly led by women) have been gaining strength in recent years in the heat of three combined trends. On the one hand, the growth of workers in this services sector. As pointed out by various authors who analyse changes in the morphology of the working class (An-

4 As in every period of crisis, the “end of labour” discourse has come back into fashion, whether in its optimistic version (emphasising that capitalism has advanced so far in its technological development that human labour will be displaced by new technologies) or in its pessimistic version (pointing out that the current “capitalism of finance” and debt no longer requires the exploitation of the available population in order to accumulate capital and, therefore, we are heading towards an ineluctable scenario of mass unemployment). However, an empirical analysis of the situation of workers worldwide shows that, far from disappearing, the class that lives from labour is spreading, becoming more precarious and impoverished. See Gutiérrez Rossi and Varela (2023).

5 The socio-community sphere could be seen as a fourth space for the reproduction of life, which is becoming increasingly important, spurred on by social reproduction crisis and the “bursting” of households. From the perspective of feminist economics, these four spheres make up the so-called “care diamond”. Here I prefer to place it as a form of the household sphere because of a twofold consideration: on the one hand, it is a mistake to conceive of the household as equivalent to the “nuclear family” (as black feminists argue, the notion of household/family has long adopted various modalities that include communal networks); on the other hand, it is necessary to pay great attention to socio-community reproduction work in slums or poor neighbourhoods (soup kitchens, community child care, educational support) due to the fact that the state is taking advantage of this work to turn it into a policy guaranteeing the reproduction of life at a very low cost.

tunes, 2018; Benanav, 2021; Silver, 2003; Smith, 2020; Moody, 2017), there is an increase in the services sector in global terms, with different dynamics by region and country. Within this heterogeneous sector, one of the branches that has grown most is institutionalised social reproduction, which has the general characteristics of the services sector and the particular characteristics of social reproduction work: it is a low-productivity and labour-intensive sector, and an extraordinarily feminised and low-wage sector, especially if we take into account the high qualifications required for much of this work (education, health and care). The other trend that is spurring struggles in this sector is austerity plans (through budget cuts, outsourcing, subcontracting and privatisation) in the case of public institutions, and job insecurity and precariousness of working conditions in the case of private institutions. These attacks have meant that, in the vast majority of social reproduction struggles of this type, labour demands for working conditions and salaries have been combined with demands around the quality of the service provided – in other words, demands about the conditions of social reproduction of the population who attend these institutions to reproduce their lives. Finally, a third trend that should be taken into account when analysing the rise in conflicts in the sector is the new feminist wave, which questions the devaluation of care work and vindicates it as work that is essential for the reproduction of life (but also for the reproduction of capital and capitalist society as a whole). While not asserting here that the struggles and strikes in this sector have a feminist identity *per se* (which would imply attributing to them a political orientation that does not necessarily emerge, although it is sometimes openly stated), it must be said that the new feminist wave (and its capacity to establish a public agenda) has helped to deepen the contradiction between the necessary status of this work (“essential”, as it was called during the pandemic) and the “disposable” status of the workers who carry it out for both the state and private institutions. In short, the rising levels of conflict in social reproduction institutions should be understood in the context of an increase in the number of workers in the sector and the ongoing austerity plans and cuts that affect job security, working conditions and quality of the service, as well as a certain revaluation of this highly feminised work, based on the topics put on the agenda by feminism.

These struggles in social reproduction institutions present a peculiarity that derives from the specific position of these workers, which has a direct impact on their class power. As we know, the question of the sources of workers’ power⁶ is a classic one in labour sociology and also in Marxism. So is the distinction elaborated by E.O. Wright (2000) and enriched by Beverly Silver (2003) between “structural power” (derived from the position of workers in the economic system, which opens up the possibility of interrupting or restricting the accumulation of capital) and “associative power” (derived from the unity of workers and the building of workers’ organisations, whether they are trade unions or political parties). The point I want to make here is the need to incorporate a third category into the analysis: the socio-reproductive position as a specific and differentiated source of power of the working-class. By socio-reproductive position I mean the

location of wage workers⁷ who perform tasks in the institutionalised system of social reproduction, whether public or private (health, education, care). This location implies a specific source of power that stems from *the possibility of directly affecting the reproduction of life*. In contrast to what happens with structural power, these workers do not hold a strategic position in the economic-productive system (as might be thought for sectors such as logistics or certain industries), but *they do hold a strategic position in ensuring the condition of possibility of this economic-productive system: the existence of labour power available to go to work*. That is the very core of the particularity of these workers’ position and, consequently, of their source of class power: that work that produces and reproduces life, in doing so, produces and reproduces the most precious commodity for capital, *labour power*. Affecting the institutionalised production and reproduction of labour power usually has indirect impacts on the accumulation of capital, but direct impacts on working-class families and, through them, on the community as a whole. Moreover, it affects what is considered a right (despite it being under constant fire from neoliberal austerity plans) – the right to life in the form of the right to education, healthcare and assistance for those in vulnerable situations.

This is an extremely important peculiarity of these (mostly women) workers’ position: the institutions in which this work is carried out combine, in time and space – due to the very nature of the work of producing and reproducing life – the needs of workers as wage earners with the needs of workers as part of the life-work class, that is, of the working class as a whole (not only its wage-earning fraction). The institutions of social reproduction are amphibious territories, and thus potential nodes of articulation of production and reproduction struggles. And this can be highly explosive, because it opens the possibility of a counter-tendency to corporative and sectorial labour struggles (the major strategy of trade unions nowadays) and of replacing these with the debate about how to organise class struggles that, by contrast, articulate demands in a transversal way. The “socio-reproductive power” held by the workers of social reproduction institutions offers, as part of its characteristics, the possibility of linking demands that today appear dichotomised (those of wage labour and those of social reproduction) not in an arbitrary way or based purely on principles of class solidarity (which are necessary) but in an organic way. It is the objective characteristics of these particular institutions of reproduction and of the work that is carried out there that opens up the possibility of such articulation. And this organic character is given because the working conditions of social reproduction workers are inextricably linked to the conditions in which the lives of the people who attend these services are reproduced. This inseparability, which is inherent to this concrete work, opens up the possibility of linking demands in a common struggle in the field of collective action by the working class.

It is clear that the achievement or not of this articulation is not settled in the field of the source of power but in the political strategies of trade unions and also feminist organisations, and in the possibility of understanding (theoretically but, above all,

6 Unlike other authors, I prefer to speak of “sources of power” and not of “resources of power” in order to emphasise that, given the relational character of working class power (always in antagonistic terms with capital), there are no such things as “resources” available (like a set of available options) but that these sources of power are transformed (or not) into working class resources depending on the strategies that the working class gives itself in its relation with capital.

7 As much of social reproduction work is carried out without wages at the household and community level, it is important to note that when I refer to the socio-reproductive position as a source of working class power, I am referring specifically to workers who perform such work in a paid capacity in institutions of social reproduction such as education, health and care. As we will see below, other forms of social reproduction work also involve a source of power that runs through other types of social reproduction struggles.

politically) that the right to settle the conditions of our own social reproduction is a demand that intersects different sectors of the working class, with its huge heterogeneity of race, sexual orientation, gender, migratory origin, community belonging and capacity. This right, which shoots to the heart of capitalism because it has an articulated impact on the sphere of production and social reproduction, refers not only to the material conditions of our reproduction, but also the subjective, affective and moral conditions.

Some of this socio-reproductive power became evident in diverse recent strikes such as the Teachers' Spring in the USA in 2018 or the teachers' strikes in Chicago in 2019, when the workers included demands for an end to racism in schools or for good food for neglected populations such as Blacks and Latinos as a relevant to their struggle. Similarly, in strikes of care homes' workers in the Basque Country in 2016/2017, strikers put on the table the impossibility of providing decent care due to the ratios, lack of inputs and lack of staff. In the health strike in Neuquén (Argentina) in 2021, they formed an inter-hospital assembly that brought together workers of the different hospitals in the region and coordinated pickets and street actions with the active support of the population, blocking the choke points of oil production in the region.

This socio-reproductive power – as the capacity to articulate the demands of production and social reproduction circuits – compensates for the weakness in structural power of these sectors of the working class, and endows them with a great firepower that it is imperative to examine theoretically and politically as a strategic position.

Struggles involving women workers in unpaid social reproduction work, particularly women's work in the household and in communities, are the second type of social reproduction struggle. These kinds of struggles have been highlighted, in particular, by the international women's strike that has been taking place since 2017, worldwide. It has re-signified the strike, thinking of it beyond the workplace (and the production circuit) and reconfiguring it as a cessation of activities, whether they are paid (and therefore recognised as work), or whether they are unpaid (and therefore naturalised as part of care or "love", to use the now historic phrase: "they call it love, we call it unwaged work").

As is well known, the international women's strike marked a turning point in the dynamics of the women's movement at an international level, and placed the issue of the work women do at the centre of the scene. This meant a recognition of women as subjects who work and produce, a valorisation through which the figure of the strike becomes deeply meaningful, and emblematic slogans – such as "if our bodies aren't worth it, produce without us" – emerged. This slogan links the two topics that run through the new wave of feminism at an international level: on one hand, the struggle against male violence and its materialisation of women's bodies as "bodies that do not matter" (a materialisation whose extreme is femicide, but which includes rape and systematic harassment and the denial of the right to decide on pregnancy); and on the other, the construction of women as

a "contentious subject", and ultimately as a possible "dangerous subject". This construction of women as a threatening subject is based on women as subjects who produce – that is, *as workers*. It is because of this, and not for any other reason, that the threat to stop working and paralyze the world becomes performative.

This specific type of social reproduction struggle has three important particularities. It brings together, in the same collective action, an enormous diversity of women who, united by their capacity to work (to produce and reproduce), have different and often diverging experiences. This is because, at least in its postulation (although much more complex in its realisation⁸), it is a strike on the household terrain, but not *only* on that terrain. It is a strike in all the spaces where women work: hospitals, schools, care institutions, cleaning companies, hairdressers, shops, factories, transport, universities. But it is also a strike that expands the issues for which it is necessary to go out and fight, and thus puts on the table a broader and more complex conception of social reproduction. It is not only about economic demands (without which we would have an idealistic vision of how life is reproduced in our societies); it is also about affective, political, gender, moral, bodily and sexual dimensions. The right to abortion, to choose sexuality and gender, to the defence of life and the end of patriarchal and institutional violence, to leisure time, to pleasure, to the future, are central dimensions of our social reproduction (Jaffe, 2021) because the reproduction of life is not only a material process (biological and social) but a subjective one in which all aspects of "how we want to be governed" are at stake. Finally, this type of social reproduction struggle takes place in the streets, public squares and all the political spaces of cities, because this level of discussion on the reproduction of life has the capitalist state as its privileged interlocutor. Indeed, it is the capitalist state, the ultimate guardian of the violence that shapes our social reproduction under this system, that privileges profit. The international women's strike targets states (and their representatives) as the administrators of a social reproduction that does not satisfy us, that is in crisis, that violates us, that impoverishes us.

The third type of social reproduction struggle is those whose demands are directly related to the possibility of the reproduction of life, even if they are not headed by social reproduction workers. This type of struggle, the broadest of the three, includes struggles for housing, the increase in the prices of basic goods, public transport, and access to services such as water, electricity, sewage and gas, but also (and this is very important), against police and institutional violence on certain populations, insecurity in working class neighbourhoods, dispossession through debt, and expropriation of natural resources from local communities (water, clean air, land and forests). In other words, a heterogeneous set of demands that shape the specific conditions in which life is reproduced. This type of struggle has been led by social movements such as the students who started the revolts in Chile with the slogan "It's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years"; the Indignados in Spain; the Geração à Rasca in Portugal; Black Lives Matter, with its epicentre in the United States but which has spread to various countries around the world; and the current radicalised struggles in France against pension reform. These movements,

⁸ Of course, this shift "from victims to workers" who threaten to strike brings with it a series of new elements. One of the most important is the question of how the threat is made effective – that is, the performativity of the strike. One of the risks facing the international women's strike today is that of losing the performativity of the strike due to a restrictive view of women's work, as if it were reduced to the work we carry out in the private sphere of the household, without taking into account all the forms of paid work to which we are subjected. Such a narrow conception makes it impossible to show the socio-reproductive power of women workers in waged social reproduction, which would completely dislocate the "normal life" of the community and, through it, of capital.

which in some cases have been thought up in opposition to the so-called “classic” workers’ protests, are complementary to (and sometimes, as is the case in France now, have even been articulated with) workplaces strikes, shaping a rise in conflict at the international level, which is directly related to the crisis of social reproduction as a dimension of the capitalist crisis unleashed in 2008. As Aaron Benanav points out:

After more than ten years since the 2008 crisis, political immobilism seems to be cracking. Social struggles have developed on a scale not seen for decades. There have been waves of strikes and social movements across five continents, from China to North Africa, from Argentina to Greece and from Indonesia to the United States. (Benanav, 2020: 155-156).

A perspective that places social reproduction (and its crisis) at the forefront of the analysis allows us to link these heterogeneous struggles. It makes it possible to include not only the powerful women’s movement but also other social movements that have broadened and radicalised the political horizons of a new militant generation, within a common struggle for our right to shape the conditions of our social reproduction.

WOMEN WORKERS AT THE HEART OF A RADICAL FIGHT AGAINST CAPITALISM

The three types of social reproduction struggles described above reveal three signs of our times that might be turned into tools and, if I may say so, weapons of combat. The first one is *the centrality of women workers not only in social reproduction work but also in the articulations between the production and the social reproduction realms*. It is in this amphibious territory, in this permeable boundary, that women find our specific position within the working class as a whole. We are at the plexus of the contradictory relationship between production and reproduction. And it is this place of bridges that offers us (though does not guarantee us) a leading role, and a leadership role, in the heterogeneous struggles of our class to resist the further degradation of the reproduction of life. Assuming such a role implies a fight within the new wave of feminism, but also within workers’ organisations, whether they take the form of trade unions or social movements. If Cinzia Arruzza (2010) referred to feminist socialist militants as “those without a part”, to point out a kind of foreignness in the feminist movement to defending a class position, and a foreignness also in the labour movement to defending a feminist position, the perspective of Social Reproduction Theory allows us, by contrast, to place ourselves (and our essential work) in the intertwining of gender oppression and class exploitation, to demand our full citizenship card as women workers, and to exercise our place of leadership.

The second sign of our times is *the tendency towards politicisation that is part of social reproduction struggles*. In a context in which the far right, in the form of right-wing populism, seems ready to fight to hegemonise the point of view of “the people” in the face of a “neoliberal progressivism” (Fraser, 2017) devoted to identity politics that reproduce partialities *ad infinitum*, the holistic view offered by the social reproduction approach is fundamental. We are not facing identity-based struggles that claim

individual pro-choice rights. Nor are we dealing with sectorial workers’ struggles that delude themselves with the illusion of guaranteeing their social reproduction while the reproduction of the rest is endangered. We are talking about the collective and universalising struggle for our right, as the life-work class, to be the ones who democratically settle the material and subjective conditions in which we want to reproduce our lives, – conditions that enable us to unfold our productive, amatory, ludic and caring capacities to their fullest expression.

The third sign of our times is *the radicalisation of some social reproduction struggles in the form of revolts and violent confrontations*. The depth of the capitalist crisis has not only triggered this series of struggles, it has also brought into focus the impotence of moderate politics proposals (the Pink Tide in Latin America or the electoral fronts with social-liberal parties in Europe or the USA), inviting a new generation to seek anti-systemic (or seemingly anti-systemic) ways out. This is the basis on which Bolsonaro in Brazil, Trump in the USA and Milei in Argentina are built. But this is also the basis for updating the possibility of an anti-capitalist horizon. This implies the democratic debate, among all the movements in struggle, about how we want to reproduce our lives, what level of confrontation it implies with the “rules of the game” marked by the reduction of our labour power to a commodity to be used and discarded, and what are the strategies to achieve it. This is the urgent debate: let’s have it ■

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