

## Producing the Commons

Community Weavings and forms of the political<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Over the following pages I intend to do the following: first, to provide an overview of the many lines of thought woven into the shared fabric of our work at the Permanent Research Seminar *Entramados comunitarios y formas de lo político* ("Community weavings and forms of the political"), as part of the Graduate Studies in Sociology Program at the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla's Social Science Institute. Second, I will methodically present some of the partial syntheses that we have reached as a group. My aim is to give an account of our own process of research and training, which is usually presented in dispersed and fragmentary form because of the academic world's demands of individual authorship. Here, by contrast, I would like to present in more or less general terms our group's shared findings and creations.

### Keywords

community weavings; producing the commons; indigenous and popular struggles with community roots; communality; doing.

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### Producing the Commons: Community weavings and forms of the political

Over the following pages I intend to do the following: first, to provide an overview of the many lines of thought woven into the shared fabric of our work at the Permanent Research Seminar *Entramados comunitarios y formas de lo político* ("Community weavings and forms of the political"), as part of the Graduate Studies in Sociology Program at the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla's Social Science Institute (ICSYH-BUAP).<sup>2</sup> Second, I will methodically present some of the partial syntheses that we have reached as a group. My aim is to give an account of our own process of research and training, which is usually presented in dispersed and fragmentary form because of the academic world's demands of individual authorship. Here, by contrast, I would like to present in more or less general terms our group's shared findings and creations.

**I**

The desire to understand and, to the extent possible, put into practice the mixed and heterogeneous community-based forms of regenerating bonds and thoughts cultivated across the Americas is not new. In particular, it is born of a decades-long effort to comprehend, document, support and participate in the many Indigenous and popular community-based struggles, especially in Bolivia, as well as Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Colombia. From these experiences we have learned to discern the community-based traits of specific practices of struggle, which, although always unique and distinct, are at the same time similar and related. We contrast these features, found in a wide range of contexts, with liberal forms of politics; especially with the nexus that we consider to be the backbone of this form of politics: the organization of public activity around the *delegation* of the collective capacity to take part in general affairs that are everyone's business because they affect everyone (Gutiérrez, 2001, 2008).

By contrast, a common feature we have found in community-based politics, and which has become the starting point for all our reflections, is the fact that the *struggles for the commons* (Navarro, 2015) are almost always organized and enacted around collective efforts in defense of the material and symbolic conditions that ensure the reproduction of common life. In this process, the work of Silvia Federici (2013a, 2013b) has been crucial in how we articulate our arguments, and we have had a fertile ongoing conversation with her ever since we were fortunate enough to meet her and dialogue with her ideas. Organizing our reflection around the collective efforts to guarantee the material and symbolic reproduction of life (both human and otherwise) has for us been nothing short of a "Copernican revolution." Since we were accustomed, by the dictates of common sense, to focusing our analysis on the accumulation of capital and the state-centric politics that enable it, we found it hugely important to connect with the 1970s radical feminist perspective that, through multiple paths, has illuminated social (and political) spheres that had been left in the dark by the opaque world of consumerism.

It turns out that if – as is usually the case in capitalist, patriarchal and colonial modernity – we take as our starting point the production and accumulation of capital, and rely on a language crafted to think in such terms, we will find that all the light falls on processes of production and consumption. Accordingly, we then tend to delve into the relationships between the two. Indeed, by taking capitalist accumulation as our starting point, we outright deny and render invisible the vast galaxy of material, emotional and symbolic activities and processes that are carried out and implemented in the spheres of human activity that, even though they exist

under siege and attack, nevertheless cannot be immediately reduced to the production of capital. The creative and productive processes that each day sustain human and non-human life remain hidden and are considered mere “anomalies.” The same is true of activities and tasks aimed at procreation and at sustaining future generations. Humankind’s capacity to generate all sorts of social bonds is overlooked and denied, as this capacity points us far beyond the commercial relations associated with the production of value, to sets of practices that defy the state of siege imposed upon them by the expansively aggressive logic of the valorization of value itself. All of these exuberant social landscapes of collective social practices that sustain everyday life, and which are denied or rendered invisible under the production-centered gaze of contemporary capitalism, have become the starting point for our work.

From these vantage points we have learned to discern and also to express, synthetically, how in the implementation of both the most powerful Indigenous struggles for territory, for the shared appropriation of expropriated material wealth, and for self-government, as well as a sizeable portion of the broad constellation of struggles historically led by women, there is a regeneration and bringing-up-to-date of everyday relationships that are not (fully) intermediated by capital (or patriarchy). We have likewise found ways of producing agreement that pave the way for renewed forms of obligation toward the collective, and of guaranteeing the right to use shared and cultivated material wealth, thereby defying, time and again, the inheritance of colonialism. We are therefore attentive to forms of politics that differ from and contradict – on a wide variety of levels – the particular and rigid liberal “customs” of capitalist modernity.

Thus, in our working group we have found that two traits – the centrality of ensuring the material and symbolic reproduction of collective life, and the multiform community-based political practices that regulate it – are the axes of multiple horizons stemming from communities and from the people, and which build and illuminate paths toward social emancipation on and beyond the logic of the modern state and the accumulation of wealth (Gutiérrez, 2015) (Linsalata, 2016) (Navarro, 2016).

And yet, whereas all these creative and productive processes dedicated to ensuring the material and symbolic reproduction of life have, for centuries, existed under siege, threatened by the unrelenting pressure of the accumulative logic of capital in all of its forms (trade, industry, agribusiness, extraction, cross-border assembly plants, finance, crime), our reflection is aimed at understanding, in all cases, the multiform and heterogeneous struggles against the explicit separations, sieges and attacks that time and again entrap, hinder or break the practical skills and

knowledge that men and women possess – and are capable of cultivating – as parts of equally diverse cultural fabrics.

Based on these premises we have crafted a methodological platform that is open to the ever-renewed collective construction implemented in struggles, and by no means seeks to present itself as a closed conceptual synthesis. Rather, we choose to start *by recording the differences and specificities* of the mixed and heterogeneous social practices of everyday struggle that are implemented along the two main axes mentioned above. The first is ensuring the material and symbolic reproduction of collective life, and the second is the variety of political forms that regulate such tasks. We examine the similarities among these practices, their ambiguities and contradictions, their in-built capacities for resistance and struggle, and the difficulties facing them as they are systematically besieged, attacked, threatened and subsumed by the different processes of (neo)liberal-colonial reconfiguration, intent upon expanding the social geography and life force available to the accumulation of capital, for which purpose it relies on forms of violence that are increasingly extensive and brutal (Paley, 2014).

This perspective has pushed us to graph out our reflections along two analytical axes. One axis is *quality of time*, in both vital and social terms, in both everyday and exceptional times. The other is the quality of the practices connected to the sustainability of collective life and the multiple forms of (self-)regulating these practical sets of social activities. In other words, the constellation of political forms that organize and drive such collective activities.

Our work as educators and researchers therefore takes place on at least four planes that are both intersectional and unique. The first stems from what we have learned from the many struggles led by different Indigenous movements across Latin America (Gutiérrez y Escárzaga, 2005, 2006). We have tracked what takes place in extraordinary times of active struggle, recording the expansive way in which everyday community practices – whose *politicality* is denied by the dominant gaze – have entered the public sphere, subverting and/or blocking contemporary forms of domination and exploitation (Gutiérrez, 2008, 2015).

The second and third planes stem from our line of research based around the meticulous study of the everyday forms of producing and sustaining life in common, understood as the practice and regeneration of self-regulated bonds of interdependence, the cultivation of which is an everyday and reiterated activity, illuminating the differential political characteristics of such collective actions (Linsalata, 2015) (Tzul, 2016). Our most important contribution in this area has been the in-depth study of *communal politicality*, which is learned and cultivated each day through significant and

complex activities carried out individually and collectively, on a reiterated and continuous basis, within multiple networks ensuring the reproduction of life, despite the fact that their eminently political nature is drastically and insistently denied and rendered invisible by the various modern systems of governance and domination. This work has of course fed off of the contributions of two contemporary Latin American philosophers: Bolívar Echeverría and Luis Tapia. From different perspectives, they have both helped illuminate age-old political wisdom found in the multiform – and almost always local – networks of interdependence that from time to time are implemented in the form of powerful struggles of emancipation. We are, therefore, greatly indebted to Tapia's ideas on "wild politics" (Tapia, 2008), as well as to Echeverría's critical reexamination of notions such as "use value" (Echeverría, 1998).

The fourth plane, in turn, centers on investigating *struggles* to ensure the reproduction of collective life in conditions of threat and dispossession. We understand them as recurring *struggles for the commons*, which are cultivated in everyday time, developing practices and political capacities that are then implemented in extraordinary times. We see this, for example, when a group squares off against an imminent threat to dispossess them of goods or property that until now have been held communally (Navarro, 2014) (Escárzaga, Gutiérrez, et al. 2014). This plane has been in constant dialogue with critical or open Marxism, which John Holloway (2010, 2011) and Sergio Tischler (2005) have also worked on in the Graduate Studies in Sociology Program.

All of this work has enabled us to string together arguments that put a name to the *collective capacity of humans to produce the commons* (Gutiérrez, Navarro y Linsalata, 2016), and to reflect on it carefully, understanding it as a *struggle against the expansive imposition of separations and ruptures* upon age-old and newly current forms of reproducing life. Such separations and ruptures are always a vehicle for the accumulation of capital (Navarro, 2017b) and the reiteration of political and social hierarchies that reinforce patriarchal and colonial features in our societies. In dialogue with the assertions of critical Marxism, which nourishes this reflection from a negative perspective (through notions such as "social flow of doing," "social flow of struggle," or rebellion), we have taken up Marxist distinctions analyzed in depth by Echeverría (such as "abstract labor" and "concrete work") when inquiring as to the possibility of bringing to light and expanding the "flows of concrete labor" (Gutiérrez y Salazar, 2015), and as to the conditions of sustainability of doing in common in everyday times, and in spheres both rural and urban (Navarro 2016).

It is from this perspective that we have forged countless dialogues with other colleagues and activists in Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador and Guatemala, as well as in other countries without such a strong fabric of Indigenous, community-based movements, such as Argentina and Uruguay in South America, California and New York in the United States, and Spain and England in Europe. An interesting fact about these broad networks of conversations (to which we have contributed alongside many others), is that our most productive dialogues have been with women scholars, researchers and activists. This has led us, once again, to connect with the more overtly feminist aspects of Silvia Federici's work, an approach referred to in the River Plate region as "feminism of the commons" (*feminismo de lo común*).

This, then, is a broad overview of what we have been doing till now, which, as a working group embedded in a public Mexican university, is ultimately who we are.

## II

We will now present, as concisely as possible, some of the things we have learned.

First of all, the community-oriented and popular struggles of the twentieth century (Linsalata, 2016) (Gutiérrez, 2015) (Gutiérrez, Salazar and Tzul, 2016), many of them with Indigenous roots, unfolding over decades all across the Americas, have challenged and pushed into a state of crisis: i) the amalgamation of colonial-republican-liberal domination and capitalist exploitation organized within the framework of the nation-state; ii) the structure of agrarian property and concrete wealth sustaining age-old relationships of domination and political tutelage; iii) the wave of renewed *multiple dispossessions* (Navarro, 2015) – of material wealth and of political capacities – that has gone hand-in-hand with the right-wing neoliberalism of the last decades.

In the most profound and radical struggles led by Indigenous peoples, these three pillars of domination and exploitation have not been pushed into a state of crisis simultaneously. Rather, out of the parts left standing, the edifice of domination has been rebuilt, almost always as an act of expropriation (and semantic and political seizure) of the deepest desires put on the line in the moments of active struggle. On this topic, and also on the case of Bolivia, Salazar (2015) has studied in depth the "expropriation" of the process of community-based social struggle in order to reinstate a patriarchal-capitalist command structure under the guise of ethnic pluralism.



In recent years we have also focused on recording how the transformative energy regenerated through community-based struggle and emancipation have been brutally attacked via: i) contemporary modes of war and terror that have devastated entire territories and decimated the community networks that inhabit them by murdering and kidnapping their sons and daughters (Paley, 2016) (Reyes, 2017); ii) identity-inflected liberal policies that have erected rigid and sophisticated legal and judicial scaffolding, both to deflect and to capture collective power, channeling it toward the negotiation of terms recognizing the existence of this or that identity, so as to reinstate renewed forms of dispossession and tutelage in combination with ceaseless haggling over unfulfilled rights (Almendra, 2016). These have been the two main paths of a vicious and widespread *expanded counterinsurgency strategy* (Paley, 2016), the heart of which, in our view, has been to obstruct and try to close off the creative streaks of the community-based struggle that is underway, and to partially blur horizons of transformation stemming from communities and from the people (Gutiérrez, 2015).

Another strand intertwined with the foregoing is our research into the memory of these struggles, tracking the tension between what is remembered and what is forgotten, in dialogue especially with E. P. Thompson. A central notion for us in dealing with this topic is the *organization of experience* that is implemented in traditions of struggle, which are almost always rooted in a specific territory (Méndez, 2017). Through language and the activation of memory via the power of a shared remembrance brought back to the present in conversation, not only is the experience of prior struggles recovered, but also shared senses are regenerated, which by "making sense," as it were, enable individual experience to be woven into the experiences of others, contributing to the organization of a common experience. Actually, it is through the shared word illuminated by memory that the experience of what has been done manages to "self-organize" into common experience. Hence the crucial importance of language in the creation and regeneration of bonds.

With this long road behind us – moving from a reflection on the practical reach, contradictions and ambiguities that arise during the extraordinary times of active struggle, toward an understanding of the specific critical politicality cultivated in the community networks that sustain material and symbolic life in everyday and extraordinary times – we have woven together at least three interpretive principles to help us develop a still deeper understanding of what community means.

**Interpretive principle 1: *community-based does not necessarily mean Indigenous, and the Indigenous is not necessarily communal.***

Our discussion of the not-necessarily-Indigenous nature of community has been informed by two different strands. The first was the experience of participating, between 2000 and 2001, in the Cochabamba Water War (Bolivia), which witnessed powerful social coordination between at least three distinct experiences of resistance and struggle. One was community-based (the patchwork of irrigated farming communities from the inter-Andean valleys of Cochabamba), another was popular and union-based (in the form of the Federation of Manufacturing Workers of Cochabamba), and yet another was community and popular-based, made up of men and women who co-produce and share access to autonomously maintained drinking-water systems, spread out especially on the city's outskirts. The political density of these events, when multiple political experiences and practices joined forces both cooperatively and creatively, brought to light unprecedented possibilities not only for producing shared horizons of feeling, but also for articulating different parties who were willing to generate social relations that were fully anti-capitalist and, by extension, anti-state. These struggles illuminated just how powerful the expansive nature of community could be even outside the strictly Indigenous, thus showcasing the strategic quality of its forms of liaising and producing agreements.

The second strand arose out of our critical reflection on the long-denied Indigenous community struggles in Guatemala, which for more than a decade were blocked by the reduction of their most vital and transformative aspects to the recognition of certain cultural rights eked out within the Guatemalan state as reconstructed after the 1996 Peace Accords. These Accords, studied critically by Tzul (2016), denied all demands related to the possession and use of lands and water by the country's various Indigenous peoples, while at the same time overlooking and radically concealing these peoples' unique and varied systems of governance based on the collective production of agreement, political decision-making and authority. This critical approach to these two experiences over time, and our reflections on the scope and limits of the power of Indigenous movements, especially in Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador and, more recently, in Guatemala, to transform (or become trapped in) state structures of political domination, pushed us to discern with clarity two separate factors. On the one hand, there is the externally determined ethnic factor that identifies (and therefore enables state administration of) Indigenous peoples of Latin America. On the other is the community-based ability to subvert and contest the current political and economic order of domination by altering the social textures and meanings of multiple collective actions. It is this second factor



that, from time to time, manages to open a path toward new and unprecedented alliances.

This analytical distinction is by no means intended to deny the fact that it is the Indigenous peoples of the Americas who have shown the greatest perseverance in cultivating the collective capacity to produce and care for the commons. What is more: it does not negate this fact but rather recognizes it, and seeks to learn from the contributions of the historical and contemporary struggles of these Indigenous peoples. However, it does seek to emphasize that the ethnic element of analysis is not necessarily community-oriented, and that community and the capacity to produce the commons are not necessarily founded on ethnically differentiated communities. This distinction pushed us to delve deeper into the meaning of community and of collective capacities to produce the commons.

***Interpretive Principle 2: community is a social relationship, and therefore is practiced and cultivated.***

The community-based (or community and popular-based) element in social transformation has enabled us to make sense of sets of strengths and difficulties in the course of social struggles spearheaded by and large, but not exclusively, by Indigenous peoples that, from any other perspective, cannot be explained or fully understood. This is the case, for example, of Gladys Tzul's (2016) discussion of the political practices and aims of Guatemala's so-called Mayan Movement, which highlights two central features of the political strength of the community networks of Totonicapán. One is the centrality of collective work or *ka'x k'ol*, which reproduces the community network over and over again. The other is the ability of this same network to regenerate its ties on a yearly basis, revitalizing forms of authority from within systems of local governance that regulate how available material wealth is cared for and used. On the other hand, Linsalata's work on independent community drinking-water systems in Cochabamba (Linsalata, 2015) also centers the role of community service work, both collective and creative, as a basic source of commons-producing capacity. Linsalata thus links this work to ensuring the reproduction of life – in this case with specific reference to access to drinking water – and to the cultivation of autonomous political forms.

This is why we have placed more and more importance on the self-produced (autopoietic) aspect of community networks, and on the cultivation of their specific political capacities, as well as the central role of unique figures of collective work connected to the material and symbolic reproduction of life, both to produce the commons (or to care for, use and regenerate that which is shared), and to generate and cultivate forms of regulating and

governing the commons based on the co-production of agreements that in turn necessarily engender non-liberal forms of authority. On this point, we are greatly indebted to Jaime Martínez Luna's (2013: 251) reflection on communal work:

'Communality', as we call the behavior resulting from the dynamic of instances that reproduce our ancestral and current organization, is built upon work, never upon discourse. In other words, decision work (the assembly), coordinating work (leadership positions), construction work (communal labor) and work for pleasure (festivals).

This critical path, which connects with involvement in, recording of and reflection on another broad array of struggles against *multiple dispossessions* (Navarro, 2015) – which more recently have been designated as social and environmental struggles against resource extraction – and which we regard as constellations of struggles for the commons, pushed us to understand the notion of "the commons" (lo común) as not only a social relation, but also a critical category. This journey has likewise been greatly informed by the perspectives of political ecology, especially through the work of Mina Navarro (Navarro and Fini, 2016), which broadened the outlook of our joint research into the intimate dynamics of community networks, prompting us to include factors such as interdependence and self-regulation. This is why, as we have stated in a joint article (Gutiérrez, Navarro, Linsalata, 2016b), we believe that:

*The commons is produced*; it is made among many, through the generation and constant reproduction of multiple associative networks and collaborative social relations that continuously and constantly enable the production and enjoyment of a great many goods – both material and immaterial – intended for common use. Those goods that we tend to refer to as "common" – such as water, seeds, forests, irrigation systems in some communities, certain self-managed urban spaces, etc. – could not be what they are without the social relations that produce them. More specifically, they cannot be fully understood without the people, organizational practices, collective processes of signification, emotional ties, and relationships of interdependence and reciprocity that shape them each day, and that endow them with their commonness.

Our understanding of the critical content of the production of the commons is based on the fact that:

[The multiple and diverse forms of producing the commons], while they coexist in ambiguous contradiction with capitalist social relations, are not produced, or are only minimally produced, in the capitalist sphere of value production.

They are generally produced and reinforced *elsewhere, against and beyond* capitalist social relations, enabling these struggles' very capacity to be

implemented, since we will only be able to generate concrete wealth if we can produce links that are unmediated (or not fully mediated) by the relations of capital.

In most cases, commons-producing social relations tend to emerge out of the concrete and cooperative labor of self-organized groups of humans who craft articulated strategies of collaboration to face common problems and needs, thereby ensuring the reproduction and care of the material and spiritual sustenance of their communities of life. In this sense, we hold that *the commons speaks first and foremost to a social relation, a social relation of association and cooperation capable of enabling, on a daily basis, the social production and enjoyment of concrete wealth* in the form of values of use; in other words, of tangible and intangible goods that are necessary for the proper conservation and reproduction of life itself.

This understanding of the commons has also led us to open up the notion of community to encompass more than just ethnicity or heritage, revealing it as a form of collectively struggling, *doing* and creating. Mina Navarro (2017) in particular has examined the fragility, but also the strength, of *common doing* in cities. Again, we have no desire to downplay the wealth of teachings we have received from the persevering and hard-fought struggles of the Indigenous peoples of the Andes and Mesoamerica. We have merely opened up our understanding of *the commons* as a specifically human (and therefore both collective and individual) capacity to cultivate bonds in order to satisfy desires and needs (the *desesidades* of Pérez Orozco, 2014), to weave networks based on mutual obligation and on the commitment to produce agreements as to how communal creations are to be used and managed. Moreover, we have come to regard the everyday care and implementation of such a *capacity of form* (Echeverría, 1995, 1998) as a key and a guide to understanding social transformation as a systematic subversion of the existing order – one which can regenerate collective bonds capable of sustaining the reproduction of life, against and beyond the colonial and patriarchal order of capital and state.

This overview of our research has led to the emergence of new questions and directions. The first is the need for a critical approach to the eighteenth century notion of “revolution” as a total break with a past that must be torn asunder, and the will to found a new society from scratch. The many variants of this idea, which emerged out of Enlightenment subjectivity and was illuminated by the ethos of Romanticism (Echeverría, 1995), have loomed large in the thinking of the Left (in more or less diluted or distorted forms) until the present. We have paid careful attention to the ever-present tension between, on the one hand, the conservation of inherited and cultivated forms of symbolic and material wealth, and on the other the transformation of the ways in which this material wealth can be politically appropriated (but also renewed and cared for). This has proven a fruitful path for exploring the content of the social transformation developed by and

embedded in the struggles that illuminate horizons of rupture with that which denies the very possibility of producing the commons, while at the same time resignifying the willingness to conserve and care for that which sustains it (Castro, 2017).

Our work on this dialogues with the perspective of *communality*, which expresses the “communal paradox” as striking a balance between conservation and creation. The critical nature of our approach, which simultaneously regards common creation as affirmation and negation, rather than establishing distance, seeks to establish a counterpoint in the conversation about the shared aspects of specific historical experiences embodied in groups of women and men fighting to “keep being who they are, while moving away from the place where the dominant order has placed them,” to paraphrase a saying coined by López Bárcenas about Indigenous peoples.

The second emerging area stemming from the research outlined above, which for some of us has come to occupy the fore, also has a two-fold nature. On the one hand, we have taken on the challenge of reflecting on the commons from the perspective of sexual difference. This means we have included, throughout our arguments, the basic social and natural fact that we human beings inhabit sexually diverse bodies (Gutiérrez, 2014), while bearing in mind the far-reaching social and historical fact of patriarchal domination that, time and again, has imposed and replicated the same sort of loathsome variations of differences and hierarchies between sexed bodies. Returning to the contributions of classical 1960s feminism, we realized that patriarchy also operates time and again in transforming differences into hierarchies. For this very reason, the patriarchal logic of the persistent and radical hierarchization of any given difference grafts so intimately onto the subjugating logic of capitalism. Along this path, one of the most important contributions has been that of the Bolivian group Mujeres Creando, who through the pen of María Galindo (2009) explain the complex ways in which the patriarchal pact is woven into the fabric of colonial countries. We therefore keep our distance from the liberal equality feminism, without signing onto the uncritical notion of *complementariness* between sexed bodies, which is too easily wielded as a means to mask over hierarchies, differential inclusion (Tzul, 2016), and chains of oppression and violence, insofar as it denies the eminently patriarchal features that in different ways structure contemporary societies, both rural and urban, Indigenous and national.

With these elements in hand, and incorporating discussions originating in the field of political ecology (Navarro and Fini, 2016), one of our current tasks is to explore the sex-based facets of doing in *common*, guided by the notion of *forms of interdependence*. It is our view that social relations based

on mercantile exchange, developed by capitalist colonialism (which more than a mode of production is, first and foremost, an *organization of nature* (Moore, 2015) and, for this very reason, an organization of the diverse bodies of which it is composed), are but *one way* of organizing the relations of interdependence that make up social life. Such relations must necessarily occur under imposed conditions of scarcity and precariousness, since the core principle of this economic activity is the recurring expropriation and exploitation of labor and its creations, coupled with the *multiple dispossession* of collectively produced and shared social wealth.

Moreover, in colonial contexts a central part of the historical process of expansion of mercantile-capitalist relations is that the male experience of domination is centered, structuring the reiteration not only of exploitation but also of the domination of feminized bodies in colonized territories (Federici, 2013) (Galindo, 2016). From the notion of interdependence we then explore the *chain of separations* (Navarro, 2017) historically imposed in at least three areas: i) the separation of society and nature, and the resulting exploitation of the earth and its wealth, which is founded on the intermediation of a type of knowledge that is dissociated and objectivizing, and tends towards being privatized and disciplinarian – i.e. science; ii) the separation of the dispossessed from their means of existence (De Angelis, 2012), and their resulting exploitation as nominally free workers, which is the founding principle behind the intermediation of wages and, in general, of money; iii) the separation of women from men and the resulting appropriation (rendered invisible, almost automatic) of a significant part of their work for the reproduction of capital imposed by *patriarchal intermediation* as the backdrop and foundation to other social relations and to the institutional edifice that stabilizes such relations and makes them persist through time.

Through the notion of *patriarchal intermediation* we seek to shed light on and put a name to the female experience (and the experience of feminized bodies) of separation and siege (obstacles, denial, ignorance, deformation, rupture) inflicted *on relations among women, in which their own common, shared words act as the sole intermediaries*. Although the specific figure of lived patriarchal intermediation, which subjugates the experience of women and of those who inhabit feminized bodies, is always situated, specific and particular, we believe that it is also communicable. It can be shared and understood through words that put a name to what is lived and known, opening it up to conversation, and to the generation and regeneration of bonds that are fertile and creative.

Thus, our central concern at present is the study of the separations organized by the aforementioned intermediations (intermediation of the dominant knowledge system, intermediation of money and wages, and

patriarchal intermediation), and especially of the multiple ways in which such separations can be eroded and defied, evaded and overcome. The human capacity to create and regenerate bonds is, therefore, the core aspect of our collective work, in both theoretical and practical terms. So, as a hypothesis, we will summarize our central efforts at present:

### **Interpretive principle 3 (as a hypothesis):**

Commons-producing, always carried out as an activity within a network of interdependence, entails first of all the cultivation, revitalization, regeneration and reconstruction of that which is necessary in order to ensure collective life, against and beyond the separations and negations imposed by the logic of dispossession and patriarchal exploitation of capital, reinforced by the liberal state and its political forms.

From this vantage point, we understand community networks to be an active, specific, sexed and collective subjectivity capable of self-producing renewed forms of interdependence with the capacity to generate concrete wealth – in any of its forms – that perseveres reflectively and critically to ensure: i) the material and symbolic reproduction of collective life, and ii) the persistence and balance of the bonds thus produced, without overlooking issues of sexual difference.

This is why community networks are never a given, and are not only inherited. Rather, they are malleable and diverse collective creations; reiterated attempts at producing stable bonds capable of adopting and preserving, of adjusting and balancing, forms of self-regulation that can sustain their existence through time.

We are aware of the fact that by studying such a broad array of practices and struggles, it may seem that our efforts are vacuous or in vain. We believe, however, that this is not the case; on the contrary, we are committed to discerning with care, in order to name as clearly as possible that which capital and its liberal political forms obscure and deny. We rehearse renewed syntactic forms that allow us to evade the universalist traits of a certain form of logic that structures the colonial language we speak (Spanish), which delimits and conditions what can and cannot be said. For this reason, we challenge the deepest meanings of certain terms step-by-step, disrupting them and opening them up to renewed content. We perceive, with our entire bodies, that our work is worthwhile insofar as it allows us to comprehend the world through the interpretive principle of interdependence, which requires the regeneration sensory and intellectual capacities that at present are broken and segmented. This is why we believe



the practice and study of *the commons*, as a social relation antagonistic to capital on so many levels, is fertile ground.

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## Notes

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