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What future society?

Feminist notes for thinking about our project of society

- Documents of the FI - International Committee - IC 2020 -

Publication date: Thursday 30 July 2020

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In 2019 the IC of the Fourth International discussed a "Proposal for a programmatic debate". Following this it decided to pursue in a broad and open way the discussion on our conception of a new society. In this light it requested three of its commissions that alongside organizing ongoing activity in the existing social movements develop our thinking on the type of society that we want. These three commissions, on Ecology, LGBTIQ questions and women's oppression and feminism, each wrote a short contribution to develop the discussion. We publish these three contributions, along with the original document, in the spirit of promoting such a discussion which is more than ever necessary today. These contributions were of course written before the Covid-19 pandemic.

*"For a world where we are socially equal,
humanly different and totally free"
attributed to Rosa Luxemburg,*

This text is intended as a contribution to the debate that will take place in the next IC, bringing together some reflections that we have been developing from feminism.

1. The sexual division of labour in which women's oppression is sustained, and which serves the interests of capitalism, engenders a separation between the private and the public, the reproductive and the productive. This separation takes on a specific form under capitalism, hence we can define social reproduction as the process by which the domestic and care work that we women perform acquires a political meaning, of production (childbirth) and reproduction of the labour force (assuming all the domestic and care tasks necessary for the working class to survive), making possible the reproduction of capitalism. It is an essential condition for their survival. It is this logic that we want to overcome: this is at the root of the inequalities that we women suffer.

The need for structural changes in the economic, political and social spheres implies a reorganization of jobs and time that will bring about a radically different society. Capitalism, hand in hand with patriarchy, takes over our work (inside and outside the home) and our time, shapes our life rhythms, organizes the spaces in which we live (our houses, our neighbourhoods, our cities...), the way in which we build our identities, determines the way in which we relate to each other and build our affections, the way in which we feed ourselves, the relationship we have with our environment, etc, etc, etc. Everything is organized around the capitalist and patriarchal logic of capital accumulation. Our logic is the opposite: to put people and their needs at the centre, and this means breaking with the separation between the private and the public, ceasing to make the reproductive aspect invisible and putting people at the centre, thus breaking with the different oppressions and dominations that affect us.

2. What does it mean to put people at the centre? That women stop being in charge of guaranteeing the well-being of the people they care for and making us solely responsible for social reproduction. It also means recognizing ourselves as people, since we do these tasks at the expense of ourselves and our life projects. When we talk about the socialization of these tasks, we are not talking about a collectivization of these tasks, but about rethinking society and how we think about the way we conceive our way of life. It is fundamentally about building strong and comprehensive public services, but also about breaking with the inertia of everyday life. We cannot continue to be the women who mostly prepare breakfast or wash clothes for others. We have to question our routines, our rhythms of life, so that they are more sustainable with our bodies and the planet? Putting people at the centre also means

building cities where people and their needs are at the centre. Redesigning transportation, not to get to the office or the mall fast. Rethinking the use of public spaces, breaking down the gap between the centre and the periphery of our cities or the gap between the rural and urban environment. Nowadays all this has to do with what is important and who does it. It also implies rethinking which jobs are socially necessary and which are not. Our priorities are different.

Likewise, assuming the tasks of social reproduction as something social and political avoids each one of us at home negotiating the distribution of tasks. In the sense that it is currently understood as something individual and personal, outside the political sphere. We know that this negotiation does not take place under equal conditions, due to the role and position that each gender has. The family must stop being the space where domination is reproduced. It must stop being the only way of living together. This implies rethinking the forms of upbringing in a more collective way. It implies abolishing the family as the system's institution of reproduction. It implies politicizing our homes and each of the personal decisions about motherhood and upbringing. We must also reflect on how we understand childhood and the role of the elderly and people with functional diversity in our society, the social relations that we establish with them and how we are capable of breaking with the logic of domination that we have internalized. The squares, the streets, the workplaces, the educational centres and each of the spaces where we socialise must become our own in order to build other social and interpersonal relationships. The way in which we understand our affective relationships must also be questioned, insofar as today they are articulated on inequalities. Questioning monogamy, building other models of relationships. All of this must be done with respect for each person's personal decisions, from the premise that there is no single option or one option that is better than another. Only in this way can we build our life projects, shared or not, with other person or persons, freely and from diversity. In this way we can make room for the diversity of options of being, of expressing oneself, of relating, of building relationships, of choosing between diverse options and breaking with a single way of doing things, from a democratic and plural sense, giving room to individual decision from the dismantling of the hegemonic norms of the current economic-political-social and cultural system.

3. Recognizing reproductive and care work does not necessarily mean recognizing it in monetary terms or converting it into employment (even in parameters different from those of capitalism). The debate on the domestic wage vs. the socialization of care is not new but it is becoming relevant again. Our commitment to the socialization of care does not only involve thinking about a network of public services that guarantee this work, it also involves rethinking public services themselves from a democratizing, more decentralized, more participatory, less authoritarian, less rigid and more communitarian point of view.

4. When we think about these profound changes we should not forget that this forces us to rethink our most intimate existence, how we behave and relate to ourselves, to our body, to our sexuality and to other people. The sexual division of labour is not only based on the separation of the productive and the reproductive, but also on the complementarity of the genders, of man and woman, stereotyping them and excluding other possibilities of being, establishing norms that limit us. Our project of society must include as something central and strategic the break with the binarism of gender and the normativity (heteronormativity and cisnormativity). How we live our desire and pleasure, how we construct our gender identity and our sexual orientation, and how we express it, is intimately linked to this sexual division of labour, and also forms part of the patriarchy that we seek to overthrow. It is necessary to build a new culture that is opposed to the culture of rape, one that recognizes the bodies of all women, cis or trans, and their desires, that recognizes them as subjects capable of deciding about their bodies, their lives, and their sexuality, that makes visible the fact that there are a thousand ways of being a person and feeling and expressing our gender and sexuality. Not as something complementary or secondary, but as a fundamental part of our strategy, insofar as the accumulation of capital also passes through the dispossession of our bodies and our sexuality insofar as it serves its own logic and survival.

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