



IC 2020

The new rise of the women's movement

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"In order to change the conditions of life we must learn to see them through the eyes of women." Leon Trotsky, *"Against Bureaucracy, Progressive and Unprogressive"*, in **Problems of Everyday Life**, Monad Press, New York, 1979, p. 65.

Introduction

In recent years we have noted a new rise of feminist movements that in a number of countries have taken on a mass character, and in parallel, an increased participation and leadership of women in mass broad protest movements and popular uprisings. From this point of view, we consider, given the different paradigms of struggle from that of the late 19th and early 20th century and the 1960s and 1970s, and their development at the same time as other processes of massive international mobilizations, that we are seeing a new wave of the women's movement that will have a lasting effect on the forms and demands of the class struggle.

1. The context

Our 17th World Congress text underlined the general geopolitical chaos and crisis existing today. This crisis particularly affects women and is engendering a generalized backlash against what is often called the

"longest revolution", which led to the increase of women's rights during the last century.

The contradiction between (young) women's aspirations to a worthwhile life on the one hand and the worsening of their actual situation on the other underlies the new rise of women's mobilizations and explains the comprehensive nature of the platforms that have often emerged and the development of the feminist women's strike as a method of action symbolizing a rejection of the system as a whole.

1.1 Neoliberalism

Capitalist globalization, financialization, and the increasing internationalization of production lines have reduced the capacity of governments to implement economic policies in the collective interests of the ruling classes. Imperialist countries still try to ensure favourable conditions for capital accumulation, but global capital operates more independently than before. The financial crises of 1997-1997 and 2007-2008 revealed the contradictions inherent in capitalist globalization with major consequences: political, social and structural - including the debt explosion.

Unemployment, under- and precarious

employment and a massive reduction in basic services (housing, education, welfare etc.), together with crises in agriculture, have had a massive impact on the ability of millions to survive.

All this particularly impacts on women both in paid and unpaid work. More women are in precarious employment, the informal sector or in areas where unemployment has soared. Cuts in services increase the amount of domestic labour needed to reproduce the household - a disproportionate amount of which falls on women.

1.2 Rise of far right, religious fundamentalism, authoritarianism, anti "gender ideology"

The rise of far right, authoritarian and religious fundamentalist currents, which while often linked are not always identical, has specific and disastrous consequences for women.

The renewal of the radical right strengthens a reactionary thrust that aims to undermine the rights of women and LGBTIQ people; abortion, family law, and triggering witch hunts against LGBTIQ people. They particularly target women who experience both racism and sexism. In many western countries they use Islamophobic propaganda, especially against Muslim women. Aggression

against women wearing the veil is increasing.

While some movements clearly attack women and LGBTIQ people, often presenting homosexuality and LGBTIQ rights as imperialist exports, others use homonationalism and femonationalism: under the pretext of defending women and LGBTIQ people. They attack groups like migrants or Muslims, accusing them of rape, or claiming that Islam is against homosexuality. As a result, the far right can experience tensions between those who want to appeal to the sexism and heterosexism of its base and those who instrumentalize women's and LGBTIQ rights in the service of Islamophobia and anti-immigrant prejudice. However, in fact they reinforce each other.

These practices impose oppressive power relations on women's bodies and lives. Religious legal codes heavily depend on the family unit and the segregation of gender roles which endanger women's lives.

Other far right currents emerge as religious fundamentalism in all the "great" religions (or "national religious" fundamentalism such as the Zionist far right). They influence governments as important as the United States and Brazil and play a central role in some East European countries. Whether as evangelism or Roman Catholicism, extremist Christian currents are wreaking havoc in Latin America and Africa with deeply reactionary policies concerning women - notably on the question of abortion and women's right to choose - and LGBTIQ people with anti-gender ideology which seeks to prop up traditional male and female roles and attack LGB and particularly trans rights. The Muslim world has no monopoly; but has a particular international dimension, with "cross-border" movements like the Islamic State or the Taliban. Theofascist movements use systematic sexual violence against women and minors in the territories they control, mostly in the form of rape and sex slavery. They use this to recruit members and fight against other groups.

Neoliberal conservatism that aims to strengthen the patriarchal family has

dramatically increased violence against women. Besides impunity for the perpetrators, cuts in material support to those experiencing this violence creates a social environment that encourages male violence.

1.3 Climate disaster

The climate disaster announced for the future is already present in many regions of the globe.

Indigenous peoples, peasants and youth are at the forefront of environmental struggles, and women play a leading role in these three sectors. This situation is the product of their specific oppression, not their biological sex - as the non-essentialist ecofeminists have shown. Patriarchy imposes social functions on women directly linked to "caring" and places them at the forefront of environmental challenges.

Women produce 80 per cent of basic food in the countries of the South, they are thus directly confronted with the ravages of climate change and agribusiness. Similarly, they take on most of the child-rearing and home maintenance tasks and so are directly confronted with the effects of environmental destruction and poisoning on the health and education of their communities. The self-organization of victims of climate chaos and their defence are part of the climate struggle, women in their communities are at the heart of these mobilizations.

1.4 Massive migration

There are significant population displacements: 250 million international migrants, 750 million internal migrants (displaced persons...) often due to structural economic changes with significant regional disparities. There is also permanent displacement due to wars, and now climate change. Two-thirds of international migration is between countries of a comparable level of development.

Women's migration in the context of crisis deepens and increases oppression and impacts on women's exploitation. The context is extreme impoverishment and loss of rights.

Women migrate in search better living conditions for themselves and their families, or because of political persecution, or as a consequence of wars. In this context women face gender discrimination, racism and exploitation. Women are also suffering "new" forms of work practically akin to slavery: confinement, prostitution and being trafficked.

Industrialized countries could easily welcome migrants but instead those forced to leave their homes have often become the target of xenophobic campaigns that are used to present them as enemies. This has especially significant consequences for women as repressive laws are used to break up families.

1.5 Crisis of reproduction

Capitalism has always had to ensure the reproduction of the labour force without which it could not function: reproduction of labour power is an integral part of the cycle of valorization of capital.

The patriarchal capitalist family form, reinforced by notions of the "breadwinner wage", throwing onto women within the family the responsibility for the tasks of reproduction, enabled capitalism to ensure this reproduction at least cost to itself.

This was an uneven process not only because the growth of capitalism itself was uneven, so that today we see pre-capitalist remnants remaining in some parts of the globe, but because for both economic and political reasons different patterns developed in different situations.

When capitalism needed the mass of women to be a part of the labour force - notably in the post war boom of the advanced capitalist countries - it was compelled, in different ways depending both on the relationship of forces and the precise nature of the local economy, to provide some services through the state: education, healthcare, housing, childcare etc. The paid work that resulted, seen as female because it corresponds to women's role in the family, was and is low paid and overwhelmingly performed by women, often ethnic

minority and/or migrant women.

But as capitalism has gone into deep economic crisis, it has been compelled to attack those very services through austerity; aiming to retain women in the labour force, but trying to further drive down their wages and conditions. The contradictions thus unleashed have increased the burden on many women, compelled to do the work that previously the state had covered. They have also pushed many women out of the labour market or into even more precarious work. They have further created an increasing demand for even worse paid and more precarious women - including undocumented migrants - to do this work to enable other women to keep their place in the labour market. This in turn throws an increasing burden on the women family members of those migrant women to care for the families left in the country of origin. This also poses a contradiction for capitalist states with their desire to limit migration.

2. What are the factors that caused this rise

2.1. Gains of the previous waves

The new generations have been able to benefit - in an uneven but combined way - from the achievements of the women's and LGBTIQ movement of previous waves: first, in formal rights, changes in family and legal codes, women's access to education and health, second, in reproductive and sexual rights and freedoms, and third, in openings in the professional, academic, cultural, political and media worlds. In several countries socialist (class struggle) feminist tendencies have successfully fought in - and with - the labour movement to improve labour rights.

2.2 Feminization of labour

Women work everywhere more than men... but part of their work is invisible: women continue to account for more than three-quarters of the world's unpaid care work. (In the countries of the global South, women

work on average 9h20 per day as against 8h07 for men, but they are paid only 5h10 against 6h40 for men. Women and men therefore work 4h10 and 1h30 unpaid respectively. In the North, the figures for women and men are respectively 8.10 and 7.40 hours of daily work, of which 3.30 and less than 2 hours are unpaid.)

Nevertheless, women are increasingly accessing the global labour market even if the gap with men persists.

Between 1980 and 2008, 552 million women entered the labour market. Globally, 4 out of 10 workers are women. In this period there was a significant increase in the female labour force in Latin America: from a quarter to a third in Central America and two fifths in South America.

In areas of a traditionally low rate of paid work for woman, such as North Africa, the percentage increased from 20 to 26; and in Western Asia from 23 to 27. The percentage has not changed much in Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where it was already over 40%, as well as in Southern Africa: 40%. This trend continues but has weakened in the 21st century.

And they have access to lower quality jobs!

Everywhere women are more likely to be obliged to work part-time. This underemployment can reach up to half of total female employment. Globally, nearly half of all women workers are in what the ILO calls "vulnerable employment", particularly in agricultural enterprises, handicrafts and trade. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, this exceeds 70%. (Underemployment can reach up to 40 or 50% of total female employment: 52.4 in Madagascar, 35 to 40% in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Indonesia, more than 25% in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Paraguay.)

Neoliberal globalization has profoundly changed the structure of the economy and jobs

Overall, employment has shifted over the past twenty years from agriculture to industry and then to services, which employ about half of the workforce.

A quarter of the world's female workforce still works in agriculture, which remains the main source of employment for women in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. But economic policies favour export-oriented sectors, mostly male, at the expense of food crops. As women constitute the majority of the world's small-scale farmers, their situation is still fragile.

The presence of women in industry has declined since 1995. In general, they are concentrated in sectors such as textiles and clothing. In special economic zones (free trade zones), export industries employ a majority of women, often very young, and combine low wages with lack of social protection, dramatic working conditions and gender-based violence.

From 1995 to 2015, the share of services in women's employment became predominant on a world scale. Women everywhere are concentrated in certain sectors of activity: trade in middle-income countries, health and education in high-income countries. Overall, the high presence of women is associated with a high frequency of part-time work and relatively low wages, especially in sales, cleaning and catering. Their over-representation in health, education and social work is directly linked to gender stereotypes that devalue the qualifications required in these fields.

But more generally, flexibility and special conditions of hardship, including the ability to perform a variety of tasks and emotional involvement, require "typically feminine qualities" that shape new forms of servility.

The wage gap between women and men, on a global average, is estimated at 23%. Almost 40% of women do not contribute to social protection. As a result, 200 million women who have reached retirement age have no pension at all. A total of 70% of the world's poor are women.

The "feminization" of work concerns all workers

This must be understood not only as the increasing numerical participation of women in the labour market but also in the sense that, under the

impact of neoliberal policies, the characteristic conditions of the situation of women at work: precariousness, instability, vulnerability, underemployment, lack of rights and social protection, low unionization rates... tend to extend to the entire proletariat. The precariousness of employment is constantly increasing, accounting for almost half of total employment. So does the share of the informal economy, which concerns more than six out of ten workers and four out of five companies in the world.

The boundaries between paid work and leisure tend to blur - as in reproductive work - (you have to be at the service of bosses 24 hours a day) as well as those between personal and professional life. The use of feminized capacities and characteristics such as a conforming to their idea of attractiveness, flattering their egos, doing social reproduction chores such as shopping for them which are not part of the job, empathy, multitasking are required... at the service of the company.

2.3 The increase in gender-based violence

Violence against women, socially constructed and then normalized by the state, enjoys impunity. Violent deaths occur in a complex web of discrimination and exploitation of women, by gender, and also by class, ethnicity, multiple risk situations, marginality, insecurity, militarization, migration, among others.

More than a third of the world's women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lives. (WHO figures for 2013: 35.6% at the lowest level) The majority of women killed are killed by a partner or former partner. There is an escalation of gender-based crimes further aggravated by the 2008 crisis. The increasing economic, psychological and sexual independence of young women makes them the object of "reprisals" by male members of their families. Hate crimes to "correct" the behaviour of women, lesbians, trans people, or indeed anyone who "betrays" conservative codes are legitimized by the right-wing political and religious opinion makers.

The neoliberal world order destabilizes all societies and social relations. In particular, the destruction of public services and social protection has an impact on family structures, increasing the tasks and responsibilities of care for women and reducing the opportunities to escape violence.

At the same time, austerity policies tend to reduce funding for centres and shelters for women victims of violence.

Femicide, today recognized as one of the extreme forms of gender violence, is the murder and death of women resulting from diverse forms of violence: physical, sexual, psychological, family, labour, institutional. This new form of extreme violence originally appeared in Ciudad Juarez in Mexico in 1993, it then increased throughout the country and is now recognized as a global and regional phenomenon in Latin America. The slogan Ni Una Más! coined by Mexican women, which became the slogan Ni Una Menos of the Argentine women 22 years later - today taken up throughout the world - is the palpable evidence of the persistence and the increase of this form of misogynist and macho violence and of the impunity and violation of human rights. Women in many countries organize to search for their disappeared daughters and to demand state justice in cases of femicide. By taking the name of the victims these campaigns often become emblematic cases.

The MeToo movement, detonating in the United States, has had a global impact. Women have publicly denounced sexual harassment in different cultural, professional and social spheres and harassment at work thus breaking the silence and at the same time showing the obstacles they face in doing so in a formal framework, and began to establish a legitimacy for public denunciation.

A new generation of young feminists has responded and reacted to sexual violence in universities by confronting university authorities and demanding responses and mechanisms to deal with sexual assaults.

In many countries, women are

disappeared to be used as sexual slaves by trafficking and organized crime networks.

In many conflicts, rape is used as a weapon of war. There are a variety of motives behind this, from community humiliation to ethnic cleansing and the terrorization of civilian populations.

The tendency to reduce the labour force, as a result of capitalist globalization, increases women and children's migration (including children traveling alone). Migrant women have a higher rate of unemployment than men. Their conditions of labour and employment are linked to traditional gender roles.

This makes women more vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual violence, disappearances, prostitution, trafficking, extortion, separation from their families (many travel with children), arbitrary detention, illness, accidents and femicide. As they are often responsible for children traveling with them, they become double targets and the difficulties increase because their status as undocumented workers makes it more difficult to obtain employment or services for them and their children.

In the last two decades, under the pressure of the feminist movement demanding that the state assume responsibility and establish new legal frameworks to deal with violence, many countries have introduced legislation and public policies to confront inequality and address violence against women and femicide. However, in practice they have not been able to eradicate violence. On the contrary it is increasing while also becoming more visible through the energy and determination of women in denouncing it.

The obstacles faced by women who experience violence in accessing justice are related to gender discrimination, prejudices of inferiority of women and stereotypes that sustain a systemic culture and ideology. Women activists, human rights defenders, feminists who fight for the defence of women victims of violence face hostility and threats, are

criminalized, and in some cases forced into exile.

2.4 The increased role of women in society and social movements

Women have always been active participants in movements challenging the established order, revolts for bread (or its equivalent), battles against exploitation and tyrannies. But it is in recent decades that women as political subjects have clearly emerged at the forefront of mobilizations of all kinds. From the environmental and territorial defence battles, led by peasant and indigenous women, but also within urban movements, against the predatory and devastating action of multinationals on questions of land and water; in the struggles for human rights and against state and paramilitary repression, mobilizations against racism and the criminalisation/exclusion of migrants...

Just to name a few: Maxima Acuña and her battle against mining in Peru; Berta Caceres, human rights defender in Honduras; Alaa Salah, leader of the democratic revolt in Sudan; Black lives matter in the USA; Greta Thunberg in the young global movement against the climate change Fridays For Future. Dayamani Barla, Jharkhand, India, leading a mass mobilization against the largest steel company ArcelorMittal, the Maasai Women's Pastoral Council in Loliondo, which leads the struggles for land. Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA), a grassroots organization of Latina immigrant women in San Francisco Bay that played a key role in the approval in 2013 of the law on domestic workers' rights.

Women lead community resistance such as the women's march demanding protection of land, health and education belonging to more than 100 indigenous peoples in Brazil. Or the leading role of indigenous women in Ecuador, outraged by the economic measures that sought to end fuel subsidies, impacting their daily lives.

We are thus seeing a phenomenon of women's increasing active and leading role in the social and political movement, entering fully into the national political process, as has been the case of Brazil against Bolsonaro, in

the United States against Trump, in Ecuador against the IMF, and in other countries against the multiple attacks on neoliberal policies.

If we look more closely, we see that these are in fact struggles linked to the question of the defence of life, of social reproduction in the ecological, economic, social, cultural and sometimes spiritual sense.

These struggles go hand in hand with an increased awareness among the protagonists of the prevailing gender inequality in their own environment and in society in general. Structural male violence against women is becoming all the more unbearable.

The new feminist upsurge and the increasing important role of women in social movements have allowed the apparition of a new type of female political figures. The election of Ada Colau and our comrade Teresa Rodríguez in the Spanish State, the new (non-white) speakers from the left of DP in USA like Alexandria Ocasio Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, or Marielle Franco in Brazil, are some examples.

2.5 The antecedents of the new wave

During the previous wave of the women's movement efforts were made for international coordination. In the late 1970s, the International Campaign for Abortion Rights was founded, which evolved and became the still active Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights. The first of the ongoing biannual Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentros were held in Colombia in 1981. It was that conference decided to mark 25 November as a day against violence against women, this was adopted in 1995 by the UN as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

The World March of Women against Poverty and Violence was born in 1998 in the wake of the 1995 Beijing UN Women's Conference but directed to grass roots women and street action. It had a certain success during the period of the Social Forums and still exists in some countries.

These attempts at international

coordination went alongside moments of the rise of aspirational social movements on an international level and suffered from the same decline as those movements. However, the NGOization of the women's movement has enabled a certain international coordination to continue. There have been international meetings of rural women on the issue of food sovereignty (Nyeleni - Mali 2007); and the growing feminist positioning of Via Campesina, the major international peasant network, has developed.

At the same time, all the social revolts or revolutions that have broken out in recent decades have seen a strong participation of women who have developed their own framework for analysis and action within their movements: from the women's law of the Zapatistas movement, to the presence of women in the movements of Tahrir Square, Occupy, 15M, in the "Arab spring" and last but not least, the stunning example of Kurdish women combatants. In all these movements, it is no longer a question of prioritizing struggles, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, democratic, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal, but on the contrary, an intersectional feminism that approaches all oppression in a combined way is beginning to emerge clearly.

2.6 Overcoming liberal and reformist feminism

Meanwhile, in highly industrialized countries that had experienced a certain degree of welfare state during the postwar boom, liberal and reformist feminism have emerged as a by-product of the second wave of feminism.

Reformist feminism is characterized by the incorporation of feminist demands and often activists into social-democratic and other reformist parties, notably when they are in local or national government, adopting policies and giving funding for projects inspired by the women's movement but with little or no self-organization.

Liberal feminism focuses on the feminization of enterprises, administrations and mainstream culture, without questioning their

class and racial character, and on the contrary acting as an alibi for the exploitation of other social classes: immigrant, racialized, poor... This is what Nancy Fraser calls "lean in feminism" and has worked as a brake on new generations and other layers of non-privileged women identifying with feminism. It led to many illusions about the idea of the gradual integration of women - which women? - in the governing bodies, by breaking the famous "glass ceiling".

In the so-called Third World countries, the phenomenon of "NGOization" has developed i.e., the conditioning and progressive neutralization of women's movements within NGOs and within the framework of UN meetings, financed and professionalized by them to the detriment of their radicality and self-management.

Given the worsening living conditions and precarity following the 2008 crisis, in contrast to these gradualist illusions, the movements born in the 2010s have developed in clear opposition to this approach.

3. What are the specificities of this movement

The current cycle of mobilizations has its own characteristics, derived from the context in which it is occurring. On the one hand, we find questions that are specific to the historical period (of the crisis of the left, of the political subjects, of the neoliberal individualism that creeps into all spheres, of the distrust towards the political, of the loss and re-encounter with concern for strategy, etc, etc.) and, on the other hand, we find ourselves with our own forms of struggle, with a new grammar of the feminist movement. We start from the idea that at this moment the feminist movement is a creative movement that is able to put on the table new debates and new tools to change the world.

3.1 Geographical spread

The mobilizations have spread throughout the planet, acquiring greater resonance in Latin America

and the periphery of Europe. Argentina, Brazil, Spain and recently Mexico are leading these mobilizations that have spread and are spreading elsewhere. The struggle for the right to one's own body, for the right to decide and the decriminalization of abortion as well as the struggle against macho violence (and in particular against feminicide and sexual violence) have been the main axes of mobilization.

The Feminist Strike has become a central articulating axis of the feminist movement at the international level, extending to the whole planet. But the most important thing is to understand how this feminist strike connects with a moment in which women are in the front line, as vanguard, of the fightbacks against neoliberal policies, and to understand that these fightbacks have their own form in each country. In the U.S., it is articulated around the rejection of Trump. In North Africa and the Arab region the role that women are playing in social and political mobilizations is undeniable.

The struggle against macho violence has also succeeded in articulating the movement at the international level, creating links, from Latin America to India and Europe. Although initiatives such as #metoo stand out due to the media coverage obtained, this identification with others and the focus on sexual violence has gone beyond these initiatives, in a continuous activity to make visible, denounce and self-organize in the face of such violence.

3.2 New generations

The irruption of young women in the mobilizations is growing and these new generations bring with them a new way of understanding feminism and political work, starting from their own personal experience of daily macho violence. In many cases, youth have come hand in hand with a questioning of hegemonic institutional feminism, while mobilizations arise from a crisis of the answers given by that feminism to our problems and needs.

This starting from the personal is not new in the feminist movement, where

the personal has always been political, but it does have to do with how the younger generations relate to politics and construct themselves as subjects, how they reaffirm their individual and collective identity, what they expect from the self-organized structures of the movement, how they build spaces of mutual support for feminists. All this has to do with the need for a feminist subject who responds to current challenges, who incorporates these demands, who questions herself, who reinvents herself, etc.

3.3 New concerns

This focus on the personal is expressed in new concerns such as the need for spaces for mutual support within feminist organizations, on the details of debating and decision making, of building inclusive and participatory spaces, etc. and on questions of identity: the importance of sexual and emotional relationships, our gender identities, how we live our identity, valuing our daily lives, rethinking the way in which we relate to each other, etc... in the last instance of putting our lives at the centre, of the importance of affection, of care... Debates about motherhood, about everything that has to do with our bodies and sexuality, about how we use our time and much more. These reflections may have postmodern drifts (with the consequent strategic loss), but on other occasions they contribute to placing in the centre issues that have been present but not central in feminism, and generally absent from the rest of the social and political movements.

New concerns also arise insofar as new subjects have burst onto the social and political scene, such as the trans movement, and are claiming their space. It is not that they did not exist before, it is that today they have a greater political visibility achieved by their own trajectory as a movement.

There is also a concern to incorporate and give visibility to women who have not had a visible role, taking on board questions of racism, racial/ethnic identity, and sexuality and gender identity as well as other issues such as disability, mental illness, elderly, rural

vs. city, etc.

3.4 New methods of struggle - feminist strike

The feminist strike appears as the new method of struggle of this cycle of mobilizations, not only for its articulating power but fundamentally for what it means by questioning and broadening the strike as a tool of struggle. The feminist strike breaks the division between the productive and the reproductive, pointing out the connections between the two, and putting the emphasis especially on the reproductive sphere as a strategy to put life at the centre.

The classic strike has never been free of the reproductive aspect: to maintain a strike you need provisions, in an insurrectionary general strike you need to articulate mechanisms of supply, of reproduction of life, of organizing life in another way. Lengthy struggles such as the British 1984-5 miners' strike, which also saw the self-organization of women from those communities to support the strike, do partially reveal many of these issues. That potential of the strike to build an alternative power, to constitute a parallel society with forms of organization of the workers in each and every one of the spheres of life, has much of that dimension of reproduction. However, it has never been recognized as such.

The feminist strike is rethinking the strike as a tool incorporating not only what until now was invisible but also putting on the table what has been elaborated by the feminist movement.

The initiative of the International Women's Strike in 2017 meant a new proposal for international articulation, although women are not organized around the strike proposal in all the different contexts. The new rise of women's mobilization has very diverse organizational expressions in different countries, strongly rooted in the demands and struggles of indigenous communities and nationalities.

3.5 New theoretical understandings (theory of social reproduction, ecofeminism)

The contributions of anti-capitalist

ecofeminism and feminist economics theorize how capital clashes with life and how feminism, by reorganizing time and work, can break with that logic and question the system (or set of systems of oppression), proposing another way of relating to nature and satisfying our vital needs. This rejects the equation made by "essentialist" ecofeminism that women have a special relationship with nature because they give birth. The way in which capitalism has historically responded to its need to ensure the reproduction of the labour force, the assignation of women to this reproductive work, makes women more aware of the needs of life and of material limits and bases. Social reproduction theory develops on this point, on capitalism's need for reproductive labour, while not falling into the trap of the "Wages for Housework" theorists.

Work, time, body and land/nature thus become the central elements of theories that are currently being elaborated, starting from what has been learned from being in the front row of suffering neoliberal attacks (precarization of life, privatizations, environmental depredation...) and from a theoretical effort to extend the critique of capitalism, to capital accumulation and to the reproductive dimension.

4. What is its strategic importance

In recent years there has been a substantial change in the role of the international women's movement. At present it can no longer be understood only as one that takes up only sectoral issues (demands and proposals that affect a specific part of the population) but there is an attempt to express a certain totality. As feminists and Marxists we need to analyse this change, give it the correct importance and readjust our strategic understanding of the feminist movement.

4.1 Leading resistance of the dominated classes as a whole

As discussed elsewhere in this document, the new feminist movement emerges in a context of a strong crisis of social reproduction. We know how the economic and financial panic of 2007-08 served as an excuse to deploy a whole series of measures focused on the recovery of the rate of profit through the socialization of the risks of the accumulation process (socialization of losses through the state purchase of private debt, among other mechanisms) and the re-privatization of the risks of the process of sustainability of life: cuts in social aid, privatization of important parts of the health systems and care for dependents, increase in school fees, generalized increase in the cost of living and so on.

The immediate consequences of this double process are twofold: the generalization and worsening of precarious living conditions, which affect more and more people, and in more severe situations, reducing the margin between precariousness and exclusion; and the appearance of a crisis of social reproduction in the countries of the global North similar to that which already existed in the countries of the South, linked to a phenomenon of "peripheralization of the centre". It is women who have endured the crisis and woven the safety nets of last resort, in many cases at the cost of their own exhaustion and the lifelong limitation of their opportunities to develop as full and autonomous beings. It is on these margins, in the spaces linked to social reproduction and the increasingly precarious sustainability of life, that the main battles are currently taking place and a new cycle of struggles is being articulated.

We speak, therefore, not only of a rise of the feminist movement, but also of a phenomenon of "feminization of protest". Broadly speaking, there are five fields in which women are leading the struggles and fightbacks: for public services (and, in Europe, against the dismantling of welfare states); for decent housing; for food sovereignty and for the right to land (which have intersected in recent months with the new movements for climate justice and against extractivism); for the improvement of working conditions and the obtaining

of rights in what until now were the “margins of the labour market” but which in the current phase of capitalist crisis are expanding and constituting more and more the norm (precarious sectors, informal, zero hours, geographically displaced, etc.), as well as in reproductive jobs; and resistances to the new neoliberalisms.

The consequences of this happening alongside the consolidation of the feminist movement as a fundamental mobilizing vector in many countries, capable of bursting forth in moments of strong ebb and dissolution of social ties bearing profoundly anti-capitalist implications, are multiple. One of the main ones is that the dynamics of permanent mobilization and networking have turned feminism into a school of activist education for many women, who quickly become politicized and can intervene in other fields, generating female references and strong women who exercise diverse models of leadership. It is also worth highlighting the articulation of concrete demands and struggles that are not strictly feminist but much more global: against borders as spaces for systematic humanitarian massacres, against the destruction of land by industrial farming, particularly of livestock, and extractivist multinationals, in defence of civil liberties against extreme right-wing or authoritarian governments, of response and resistance to structural adjustment policies, and so on. The programme of the international women’s strike in the different countries gives a good idea of this.

4.2 Does it lead us to reconsider our strategic understanding of the role of the women’s movement?

We agree with the intuition, increasingly widespread within the women’s movement, that feminist perspectives are an extremely useful point of view for analysing conditions of contemporary exploitation. We might add that they also constitute a privileged point of view for experimenting with new forms of organization and struggle. What is certain is that everything analysed so far has important strategic consequences. Thus, we maintain that feminist strikes and women’s strikes can be considered a central

experience in thinking about how most effectively to organize not only women but the bulk of the working class. And on the other hand, the way in which feminist mobilizations for the right to abortion or against femicide and macho violence are being articulated opens up a whole field of direct confrontation with the state of the class enemy and its institutions: Justice, the Army, and so on.

The feminist movement allows a process of democratization of the strike tool that is likely to have long-term consequence: breaking with the monopoly of trade union bureaucracies over legitimately calling strikes. The 8 March mobilizations of the last two years have allowed a non-negligible layer of women workers to organize a strike, in many cases for the first time in their lives. Self-confidence, empowerment, accumulated experience and the networks established by thousands of women can mean a qualitative leap for the whole class that can only be evaluated with the passage of time. The other element of democratization is the organization of the strike in sectors too often forgotten by the traditional trade union movement, such as care or consumption, which nevertheless were important in the labour movement of the beginning of the 20th century: the strikes against high prices or rents are good examples. In this sense, the democratization of the strike allows us to experience this tool on the margins of the labour market that we mentioned earlier, and reinforces the idea that these activities are also and above all work.

The use of the strike tool, the centrality of the struggles for social reproduction, the aspiration to understand the processes of production and reproduction as an integrated whole, and its functioning as a vector of politicization and radicalization of the masses, make this new feminist movement itself a process of class consciousness (becoming a class for itself). On a global scale, the feminist movement is redefining antagonisms and becoming a feminist class struggle. The potential of women to fulfil this role in the current historical moment does not depend on any essential identity, but

starts from our role in the process of social reproduction, which makes our interests coincide with the interests of humanity.

This does not mean that previously feminism was not related to the class struggle, nor that Marxism and feminism have become one single thing, nullifying the autonomy of the latter. Rather, in the current context of capitalist crisis, historically concrete forms of reproduction of capital contradict the social sustainability of life in more and more regions of the world and are incompatible with basic feminist demands, making any feminist consciousness end up confronting the pillars of capitalist accumulation.

One of the strategic challenges of the moment is reflecting on how feminism is allowing the rediscovery of slogans such as jobs sharing – this time in the plural, the drastic reduction of the working day linked to the socialization of reproductive work, rethinking which jobs are socially necessary, but also which economic activities should cease because they are destructive for people or the planet, etc. In the face of capitalist irrationality and the waste of resources and human energy that it generates, we must propose a reorganization of the work in an ecosocialist and feminist direction. This is a fundamental task in the phase we are in. The processes of accumulation and the crisis of neoliberal governance have opened a new, virulent, and in many cases violent, cycle that seeks to redefine the mechanisms of exploitation, domination and oppression. Disputing that redefinition will be key to its outcome.

5. What is our orientation and what are our tasks within the movement ?

We stand for building a broad mass inclusive movement and fight to preserve the broadest possible unity; however this does not imply we do not

fight for a political orientation for the movement.

5.1 Demands that address the needs of the most oppressed/exploited while building unity between (a) the broadest women's resistance against the right, (b) feminism for the 99% (women's strikes etc.) and (c) revolutionaries.

While the fundamental demands for women's rights are in the interests of all women, ensuring that they become a reality for all women means that we have to pay attention to demands for the necessary funding and resources so that they become a reality even for the most deprived and marginalized women. Thus, while we fight for example to win legal gains concerning the right to abortion or for justice for women victims of violence, we have to also fight for resources for the health, legal and counselling services that help women access these. We also have to fight for non-discriminatory rights to access such services, without any discrimination against women for reasons of legal status, resources, ethnic or migrant background, sexuality or gender identity.

We thus fight to ensure that demands that come from the most marginalized groups are championed by the movement as a whole, as well as opposing discriminatory behaviour within the movement itself.

At the same time we fight to demonstrate in practice that the current system is incapable of truly satisfying women's demands so that women's organizing is an ongoing process of politicization and radicalization.

5.2 Mass self-organized action

This process of politicization and radicalization is also strengthened by the experience of grassroots self-organization, whether in the neighbourhoods, the rural areas, the workplaces or places of study. We therefore place the emphasis on collective action, organized by those concerned. When campaigns are launched by small groups or collectives of feminist women, we fight to turn them towards the mass of

women in the neighbourhoods, the workplaces etc by popularizing demands using appropriate means to reach out (leaflets, street theatre, flash mobs, open discussions, petitions, social media) and proposing actions (pickets, demonstrations etc) that are open to and encourage participation from all women. Where contact with institutions is necessary, we fight for representatives to be democratically chosen and for them to be accountable through reporting back in a democratic forum to the women involved.

The proposal of the feminist/women's strike enables such an orientation of mass action to address all women, those in the workplaces, in the informal sector, at home, by touching on all aspects of women's lives in both productive and reproductive work. We call on men to support the women's strike, by assuming - at least for 8 March - the invisible care work so that their partners, friends and colleagues will not be limited in their participation to all the actions planned during that day. In workplaces means participating in the strike in order to do that. As revolutionary Marxists we also explain, and hope to show in practice, the weight of collective action in workplaces in the fight to build a favourable relationship of forces.

5.3 Importance of international coordination

In a world where our opponents - the capitalist system, the rising authoritarian, far right and fundamentalist forces, the multinational climate destroyers - are internationally organized, the women's movement too must build and strengthen its international links.

The lack of structural organization, while a strength of a radical movement, makes international coordination - requiring as it does money and resources - difficult to achieve, thus building a real international coordination between the radical and self-organized movements developing today remains a task to be achieved. As an international current we should be in the forefront of building links and promoting all opportunities for

international coordination.

5.4. Intersection (articulation) with other social movements

We must not fall into the trap of making a catalogue of movements as if the women's movement is separate and unconnected from the workers' movement, the climate movement, the peace movement, the revolutionary processes underway in Algeria and Sudan, movements against racism and more. Women are in the forefront of these movements and within them are raising the question of the place of women in them - for example challenging the sexual violence used against women.

It is necessary in the women's movement as well as in all other movements to build links between all those who share the same aspiration: to change society so that it is organized in the interest of the many and not the few. This means pointing out how climate change, how racist and migrant policies, how imperialist wars, how austerity policies, how denial of democratic and workers' rights, all affect women in particular and particularly severe ways and seeking to engage the women's movement, or sections of it, in their actions.

It also means fighting in other movements, and in particular the organized workers' movement, that women's specific demands are also demands of those movements.

6. Our internal tasks

Women's liberation work is not simply a sector of work in itself but something that must influence every other area of our work and our entire organization.

Although we can legitimately claim to have been in the forefront of revolutionary Marxists in taking women's questions seriously - starting from our 1979 resolution, our 1991 resolutions including on women in the party, and subsequent contributions - this has been the result very often of a very voluntarist effort by a small

number of comrades.

Our women's work must continue to be organized on an international basis combining regional (continental) coordination with international coordination and a strong link with the international leadership bodies -

through the IC Women's Commission, regular women's seminars and other appropriate forms. This must reflect organized work at national level.

Our history has shown us that without specific bodies to organize our women's work it tends to decline

alongside the decline of the strength of the movement. Our commitment to the importance of women's liberation in a programme for a socialist future has to be matched by our commitment to continue political activity and education within our own ranks on the question.

Proposal for a programmatic debate

30 July 2020, by Jan Malewski

1. TINA (There is no alternative). As the British philosopher Mark Fisher rightly pointed out, "if one is critical of capitalism - they'll say, 'Well it might not be the best system, but it's the only one that works.' One can think of it as a belief, but it's also an attitude, an attitude in relation to that belief, an attitude of resignation and defeat." [1] This attitude of resignation and defeat is of course linked, as this author says, to the inability of the political currents dominating the workers movement (but also of those who, like us too often, limited themselves to a criticism of these currents) to take up the challenge to "produce their own version of post-Fordism" which entered into crisis during the 1960s.

But it is also the product of the collapse of post-capitalist societies, claiming to be "socialist" or called "communist", which left "orphans" the majority of those who, in one way or another, identified themselves with the project of a socialist society (idealized or not). The end of the USSR and Yugoslavia, the restoration of capitalism in China (and, which will further increase the dominant defeatism, the steps forward in the restoration of capitalism in Cuba), have reinforced the impact of TINA.

The climate crisis and reflections (including our own) on ways to fight it is an additional element that requires a "re-foundation" of our conception of an alternative society (the comrades of the Ecology Commission have made progress on

this subject and their text will soon be available...). Because in the absence of development of political thinking on this, the attitude of resignation and defeatism still scores points.

Finally, when the Communist Manifesto was formulated in the 19th century, at least in Western European societies, the dominant ideology was that of "progress". In this context, since at least the French Revolution, egalitarian utopias existed. The responses of the Manifesto were part of this ideological environment and therefore relevant - they mobilized....

As Bernie Sanders recently said, one of the elements of this resignation is that "people are working longer hours for stagnating wages, and worry that their children will have a lower standard of living than they do", without the formulation of a "hope", widely shared even by an active minority, that "we have solutions". On the contrary, even among radical youth, the dominant idea at the moment is that "we have no future". [2]

2. If Marx - at that time rightly in my opinion - defined the communist project as neither "a state that must be created, nor an ideal on which reality must be regulated" and if for them communism was "the real movement that abolishes the current state" whose "conditions (...) result from the premises that currently exist" [3], this definition is no longer sufficient since the attempt to "build socialism" has failed and "progress" is no longer part of the dominant

ideology.

On the contrary, to speak of socialism - or of an alternative society to capitalism, whatever its name may be - is today to go against the current. Of course, "the first steps" currently exist even more than they did in Marx's time. But the dominant ideology, which integrated and digested the failures of the workers' movement and the 20th century revolutions, and allowed that "energies that were released by the kind of struggles against capitalism on the left then became diverted into this neo-liberal project" (M. Fisher), cannot be fought effectively today without a hope of another possible society at a mass level. And it is not enough - as the decline of the global justice movement has shown - to affirm "another society is possible" if it is not given an understandable content.

This content cannot just be a reaffirmation of values. Of course, they must be reaffirmed, as do those who manage to make themselves heard/understand sectors of the masses. But today we need a real debate, as broad as possible, both on what is our history - revolution and counter-revolution in Russia, but also on the attempts of other social/production relations and past discussions on this subject as well as the "solutions already explored" within the framework of capitalism - and on the lessons we draw for the future. [4] In short, to fight against the resignation that the dominant ideology spreads in the ranks of the proletariat,

it is necessary to reimpose the idea of an alternative society, thus reintroducing imagination into the public debate, i. e. to make imaginable what new social relations could be. And after 200 years of the workers' movement and its cumulative failures, it is not enough to have grandiose utopian flights (very penetrating, that is not the question) scattered throughout Marx's texts: "The reign of freedom begins only where one stops working out of necessity and opportunity imposed from the outside (...) freedom can only consist in this: the associated producers - the socialized man - regulate in a rational way their organic exchanges with nature and submit them to their common control instead of being dominated by the blind power [of] exchanges." [5]

3. The majority of the workers' movement - or what remains of it today in some countries - remains in defensive positions: it is necessary to "defend the gains" continuously dismantled by the bourgeoisie. The problem is that these "achievements" were possible in the capitalism of the "post war boom" (Fordist), that they were the crumbs that Capital could then grant, but that it cannot and will not continue to grant. As Sanders rightly put it today, "While the authoritarian axis is committed to tearing down a post-World War II global order that they see as limiting their access to power and wealth, it is not enough for us to simply defend that order as it exists." It is necessary, he continues, to "look honestly at how that order has failed to deliver on many of its promises, and how

authoritarians have adeptly exploited those failures in order to build support for their agenda. We must take the opportunity to reconceptualize a global order based on human solidarity, an order that recognizes that every person on this planet shares a common humanity, that we all want our children to grow up healthy, to have a good education, have decent jobs, drink clean water, breathe clean air and to live in peace. Our job is to reach out to those in every corner of the world who shares these values, and who are fighting for a better world.Â»

4. "Reconceptualize a global order" is not only trying to enrich discussions about the past and diverse experiences - which is a necessary foundation. It means moving towards formulations (cautious, of course) on what the new social relations could be, on how to move towards, in short, an imaginary transition to a democratic, egalitarian, solidarity-based society... in short, on what would be "the socialization of the human being".

To do this is to give ourselves the goal of writing a pamphlet (or "manifesto") about the society we want. A text that could be adopted at our next World Congress, if we manage to write it...

I therefore propose to open a debate - which will essentially be in writing, and therefore public, but which, in my opinion, should begin with a common "thinking aloud" reflection in one of our meetings. And which would be followed by exchanges - oral and written - on how questions and

answers could be formulated on some essential elements of a future society:

- Politics (i.e. institutions, law, the question of ownership and its overcoming, in short the State... as long as it has not withered away);
- Humanity/nature relations (on this subject work has already progressed within the Ecology Committee, it must be extended...);
- The satisfaction of needs (therefore also what the needs are/could be...) and how to achieve it...
- Production-distribution (i.e. planning, if it is possible to overcome market relationships and how, centralization/decentralization, etc.)...
- ...and probably many other elements that we will need to clarify if we wish to make progress in our contribution to the "reconceptualization" of an alternative global society.

It is not, of course, a question of formulating a "catechism" on what the future society could be. In my opinion, it is a question of enriching a social project (and what says project, says modifiable...) by analysing the historical attempts of the movement for socialism - and their failures -, of integrating it into the process of criticism of the current evolution of humanity dominated by Capital, of drawing from this critical process the existing premises of the real movement which abolishes the current state.

Paris,
12 October 2018

Some notes to contribute to our debate on the future society.

30 July 2020, by **Fourth International Ecology Commission**

Our project for a future society must imperatively articulate the dimension

of social and political emancipation with the imperative to stop the

destruction of life, the climate change, the collapse of biodiversity ... and the

need to repair as much as possible the damage already caused.

“There is no solution to the ecological crisis within the framework of capitalism, a system entirely devoted to productivism, consumerism, the ferocious struggle for ‘market shares’, to capital accumulation and maximizing profits. Its intrinsically perverse logic inevitably leads to the disruption of ecological balance and destructions of ecosystems.” [6]

The abolition of capitalism is an indispensable, but by no means sufficient condition. Overcoming the ecological crisis requires going beyond criticism of the capitalist mode of production. A cultural revolution is necessary, which will have to continue far beyond the abolition of capital.

Deconstructing property, building the commons

Capitalist groups in the sectors of energy, the chemical industry, banking and credit, transport, agro-industry, construction...are responsible for the increase in greenhouse gas emissions as well as the destruction of biodiversity.

The logic of accumulation through dispossession is constantly being extended to new lands (water, forests...).

Privatisation/merchandisation is even presented as a means not only of optimising production but also of preserving resources: the market for rights to pollute, intellectual property on living things, etc.

The expropriation of capitalist groups and the abolition of private ownership of natural and knowledge resources are necessary. But beyond that, the question of what socialisation is needed? Which systems (energy, transport, agricultural...) are renewable, decentralized and efficient, according to ecological and social imperatives? What common and democratic management of resources according to real human needs, while respecting the proper functioning and renewal capacities of ecosystems?

These questions lead us to deconstruct the notion of ownership in favour of a conception of the common. The common is a social process and not a natural given that would make certain domains inherently common. It is first of all a democratic construction, (an institution) the fruit of a democratic process of deliberation to define what uses? for whom? but also, for example, for land, water, forests... what obligations to take care of, to repair? It is a social construction infinitely richer than exclusive ownership, which puts democracy back at the centre and breaks with the commodification that standardizes everything it touches by reducing it to a marketable, quantifiable and interchangeable value.

Radically transforming the productive apparatus

The productive apparatus is not neutral, it is entirely constructed, organized for capitalist accumulation, imperialist plundering...

Technologies are indeed destructive (nuclear, armament, biocides, petrochemicals, industrial breeding ...), sectors of activity are useless and destructive like advertising ... and the expropriation of capitalists will not change anything!

It is not only a question of expropriating and socializing the productive apparatus, but of radically transforming its conception. Agriculture is an example of the break necessary to move from industrial agriculture to an ecological, peasant, proximity agriculture that ensures food sovereignty and the protection of biodiversity.

The demands for localization of production and food sovereignty are part of a self-management and internationalist perspective.

“Extending anti-

capitalism to objects” (Razmig Keucheyan)

In all areas, it is a question of moving from the production of goods (exchange value) to the production of democratically determined use values. And that changes everything: instead of being disposable with programmed obsolescence, wasteful and energy-consuming, objects would be robust, dismountable/repairable, reusable, and at the end of their life (if end there is) recyclable. These objects could also be beautiful by resolving the division between art and life in a kind of “luxury communism”!

Extension of the sphere of gratuity (free access)

Decommodification also involves extending the sphere of free services, understood as free and equal access to goods (basic food products) and services (public transport, education, health care...) while assuming social and ecological choices: free energy and water for basic needs and, beyond this threshold, strongly progressive pricing according to consumption to combat waste.

Working less

The massive and collective reduction of working time is consistent with the reduction of material production and transport (even if some productions such as agriculture for example will require more lively work). It should be accompanied by some form of sliding scale of working time to distribute useful work. It would free up time for social, political, recreational, artistic, erotic and other activities... The “Reign of Freedom” according to Marx.

The division of necessary work must be conceived from the outset as including the sphere of social reproduction. Today, women take on most of the reproductive work within

the family free of charge, and this work is invisible because it does not pass through the market. Another organization of work will have to de-feminize, de-privatize and recognize the essential place of caring for children, the sick, the elderly and globally to care for/repair the living.

Changing work

But it is not enough to reduce working hours, it is also necessary to challenge the purpose, content, organization and division of work, to attack work that is forced, alienated, what Marx calls work "virtually devoid of quality". Employees endure not only physical wear and tear, but also the suffering generated by this poorly done, meaningless work.

In order to put an end to the dispossession of workers from the control of their work, to give back all their place to concrete, practical and real knowledge of the work process, to collective and individual know-how, it is necessary to get out of salaried work as a social relationship of domination, to build a real self-management of the production units.

To produce differently is also to get out of the infernal circle of "alienated work, alienated leisure and alienated consumption".

Articulating self-management and planning

Production, distribution and consumption must be organised not only by the "producers" but by society as a whole. Democratic planning must enable men and women to reappropriate as citizens, inhabitants, users, the major social choices relating to production, to decide what to produce. This level of economic and political democracy must be articulated with another level, that which allows us as workers and producers to control the management and organization of our work unit, to decide how to produce. It is the combination of these different levels of democracy that allows cooperation

and not competition, a management that is effectively rational from an ecological and social point of view, fulfilling from a human point of view, on the scale of the workshop, the company, the branch... but also of the municipality, the region, the country and even the planet!

On needs

Capitalism is constantly creating new artificial needs, harmful, both unsustainable and alienating. At the same time, vital needs are not/no longer satisfied.

Consumerism, like productivism, is inherent in this system. Consumerist addiction is deeply ingrained in all of us. How do we get out of it? How do we define the needs that need to be met for a good life? Taking into account that these needs must be "universalizable" and not reserved for a few people, or for certain parts of the world.

The motto of capitalist society is: "What is good for everyone is worthless, you will only be respectable if you are better than others," Gorz proposes another motto: "Only what is good for everyone is worthy of you. Only that which neither favours nor demeans anyone is worthy of being produced." The deconstruction of artificial needs and the definition of the needs to be satisfied must be the object of collective deliberation.

Being rather than having

"Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom,..." (Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, Chapter 48). The reign of

freedom begins beyond work, therefore beyond the sphere of production. True wealth does not lie in the infinite increase of goods - having - but in the reduction of the working day, and the increase of free time - being. This implies renouncing the joker of abundance and assuming that freedom lies in self-limitation and not in the unlimited, which is necessarily alienating.

Countrysides, cities... slums...

For the first time in the history of mankind, the urban population exceeds the rural population. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only one person in ten lived in a city, a hundred years later, more than one in two do so. According to forecasts, the urban population could reach 70% of the world's population by 2050. Almost half of urbanization today takes place in slums, especially in the poorest regions of the world.

Beyond the imperative to break land speculation, to free the city (not only) from the car in favour of public transport, recreational spaces and soft mobility (spaces reserved for pedestrians and cyclists), and to "de-artificialize" it (urban agriculture and community market gardening, restoration of biotopes embedded in the urban fabric), the question arises of a long-term policy aimed at rebalancing urban and rural populations and overcoming the opposition between town and country. There is also the question of preserving and/or rebuilding livable, sustainable human communities on a scale that allows for real democracy.

Human/non-human

It can be said that in order to put an end to the abject treatment inflicted on animals but also for health, the reduction of GHG emissions, the preservation of biodiversity... we must radically reduce meat consumption and put an end to the meat industry, industrial fishing... But this does not exhaust the question of relations

between humans and non-humans.

We have not (yet) made collective progress on this issue. It is rather a question of nourishing our reflection. This passage is thus made up of various contributions, it owes much to the work of Daniel Tanuro.

For Daniel Bensaïd in an article from 2003 (*Un monde À changer*, collection La Discorde, Textuel): "One can however wonder whether it is indispensable to approach responsibility towards animals from a moral point of view (difficult to found), and not simply from an ecological point of view. Why moralize ecology to the point of resurrecting transcendences that evoke ancient natural theologies and the sacralization of the living? Isn't it playing one anthropocentrism (that of the human privilege of being able to think the world in moral terms) against another (that of a selfish humanism placing humanity at the summit of creation)? Would it not be wiser to conceive of the interdependence of beings in the ecosystem and their reciprocal responsibilities from the point of view of the immanent and profane ethics of a critical ecology?"

At least two questions:

- How do you live with animals?

We can explore the path proposed by Jocelyne Porcher ("Living with Animals: A Utopia for the 21st Century") for whom animals should not be seen as "work tools" but as special collaborators in "the human world of work". It is not only a question of welfare but also of recognising what animals specifically bring to work. "It is therefore basically a question of establishing a kind of labour (or work) law for pets, which would lay the basis for our obligations towards them in terms of the work we expect of them and what they expect from us. A labour law that implies "also offering animals the living conditions that best suit their own world and tastes", integrating the fact that, "as for employees, there is a life outside of work and after years of work".

- Learning to think in two again

Based on his work with the Ruma, the

anthropologist Eduardo Kohn (*How Forests Think: Towards an Anthropology Beyond the Human*, University of California Press (2013)), puts forward the idea that the extreme complexity and permanent danger of the Ecuadorian forest have made the ability to interpret the signs produced by non-humans a condition for the survival of humans in this particular environment.

It invites us to assume our duality as a species that is "an unnatural by nature". Made "too human" by modernity, we must learn to "think in two" again. And he argues for an "arduous process of decolonization of thought" aimed at "making room for another kind of thinking - a broader kind of thinking that embraces and sustains the human". "The type of thinking that thinks through the lives of people like the Runa (or others) who interact intimately with the living beings of the forest in a way that amplifies the distinctive logic of life. This type of thinking cannot exist without contact with other forms of life, plants and animals. Kohn is not looking back to the mythical "good old days" but to a future to be built urgently, and it is in the name of human interest that he argues against anthropocentrism: "If we want to survive the Anthropocene, this indeterminate era of ours, in which the world beyond the human is increasingly transfigured by the too-human, we must actively cultivate these ways of thinking (...) learn to pay attention to the kind of lives that exist beyond the human, so as to allow the logic of life beyond the human to work within us".

Anthropologist Philippe Descola explains that for the Achuars of the Amazon "non-humans were anything but nature. They were social partners who were neither divinized nor sacralized since they were hunted and eaten, plants and animals alike. Nevertheless, they were endowed with a dignity of subjects that allowed for subject-to-subject communication."

Humanity-Nature

During the twentieth century, the countries of so-called "really existing socialism" were unable to offer an

alternative to the productivist destruction of the environment, to which they contributed significantly.

The record of the USSR, China and the countries of the East cannot be attributed exclusively to bureaucratic degeneration and Stalinist counterrevolution.

On the ideological level, it was favoured in part by the permeation of the revolutionary movement by mechanistic scientific conceptions. These conceptions, which must be analysed in their historical context, determined a vision of the environment as an element to be dominated, which could be shaped at will and without limits. These ideas were present in most tendencies of the workers' movement, even in the left-wing opposition to Stalinism.

For Philippe Descola: "Nature does not exist. Nature is a concept, an abstraction. It is a way of establishing a distance between humans and non-humans (...) that took its definitive form with the scientific revolution. (...) a metaphysical device, which the West and the Europeans invented in order to highlight the distance between humans and the world, a world that was then becoming a system of resources, an area to be explored and whose laws we are trying to understand." He adds: "Capitalism needs this underpinning that I have called naturalism; that is, this clear distinction between humans and nonhumans, the overseeing position of humans vis-à-vis nature," and proposes "to invent alternative forms of inhabiting the Earth, alternative forms of organizing among humans and maintaining relations with nonhumans."

It is a question of developing step by step a new ecological awareness, a new cosmogony [theory of the origin of the universe], a new culture developing values of respect, care and prudence. Humanity has caused much ecological destruction, but there is no reason to think that human intelligence and sensitivity cannot allow us to relearn what mechanistic conceptions of nature have made us forget, to take care of the environment, to rebuild what can be rebuilt and, in so doing, to invent a

new culture of our relationship with the rest of nature.

The vision of “true nature” as nature without human beings is ahistorical and misanthropic. It offers no real solution, since this “true (virgin) nature”, does not exist anywhere on the surface of the globe. In the face of this impasse, the cosmogony of the indigenous peoples (Mother Earth) is a source of inspiration for another

conception of the relationship between humanity and nature, one that is free from the monomania of value and instrumental rationality that is characteristic of the “icy waters of selfish calculation”. But it is a source of inspiration, not an export product. A classless communist society will be similar in some respects to so-called “primitive” societies, but will be quite different, given the level of development of the productive forces.

Likewise, such a society will develop a conception of human-nature relations which will probably resemble in some respects that of indigenous peoples; but will nevertheless be different. A conception in which the ethical notions of precaution, respect and responsibility, as well as wonder at the beauty of the world, will constantly interfere with a scientific apprehension that is both increasingly refined and clearly incomplete.

Feminist notes for thinking about our project of society

30 July 2020, by **Fourth International Women's Commission**

*“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.

Future society - remarks from the LGBTIQ commission

30 July 2020, by **Fourth International LGBTIQ Commission**

Thesis 1

Part of developing and explaining our vision of the socialist society we are fighting for includes integrating a

vision of LGBTIQ liberation within it, opposing oppressive, limited conceptions of masculinity, femininity and sexuality - beyond the gender binary. We work towards a society in which gender will no longer be a

central category for the organization of social life. and in which the concepts of 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality', to the extent they exist, will not have any legal or economic consequences.

To achieve such a transition would include actively campaigning against stereotypes perpetrated throughout society - through families, community organisations (particularly many religious ones), mass media and through state institutions - particularly education systems. Such campaigning would continue to be a task for some time after the socialist revolution.

This will also include tackling stereotypes of racialised people which are often based on derogatory images of the bodies and sexuality of racialised people - often at least to some extent on the basis that they are seen to 'deviate' from what is promoted as the 'civilised' norm as well as the erasure of the rich legacy of same sex sexuality and of challenges to the gender binary in many pre-imperialist and indigenous cultures.

It also means challenging the fact that disabled people are often denied the right to have a sexual life or are ridiculed and discriminated against when they demand the right to do so.

Thesis 2

LGBTIQ liberation is part of a broader, human sexual liberation we are fighting for. We seek to free human sexuality from what the 1979 resolution on women's liberation called 'the framework of economic compulsion, personal dependence, and sexual repression' in which it is now too often confined. Sexual activity that is freely consented and pleasurable to all those taking part in it is its own sufficient justification.

We work towards a society in which our bodies, desires and emotions are no longer things to be bought and sold, in which the range of choices for all people - as women, men, sexual beings, young people, old people - is greatly expanded, and people can develop new ways to relate sexually, live, work and raise children together.

We want a world in which people's (especially women's) bodies and sexualities are no longer viewed as possessions; in which happiness is no longer seen as hinging on acquiring

the 'right' partner; in which everyday life is eroticized and sensual rather than walled off in a domain of sexualized leisure and consumption. We want a society in which all people (notably women) enjoy sexual autonomy, while being part of a community. We want a world in which love is understood as profoundly social.

It is impossible for us, who have been formed by the alienated society in which we live, to envisage how sexuality will develop in this context, and therefore it is important to avoid making predictions based on our own individual aspirations.

The fight against any form of sexual violence, physical and/or psychological, is an essential part of this struggle. The explosion of movements such as #NiUnaMenos and the greater exposure of violence against children and young people not only with the family but in institutions - often religious ones - can be important allies in this vision. At the same time we ally with those forces, particularly young people, fighting for a 'sex-positive' outlook.

Thesis 3

Full LGBTIQ Liberation implies a withering away of the capitalist family as an institution and challenging the heterosexual norm imposed by the capitalist state. The Fourth International sees complete equality and freedom for women, LGBTIQ people and young people as requiring socialised alternatives to the functions of the family, which can be fully achieved only with the overthrow of capitalism. '

Thesis 4

We work towards providing socialised alternatives to the different functions currently served by the family: diverse forms of collective, community responsibility for care of children and the infirm; an economy which does not force people to migrate from their local communities; diverse forms of households and of cooperation within local communities; and diverse forms

of friendship, solidarity and sexual relations.

Within this overall plan we recognise that ideally individuals and small groups should be able to exercise as much choice as it is materially possible to provide. So for example the provision of communal canteens in both residential and workplace settings should not preclude an individual being able to prepare and eat breakfast on their own or share food they have prepared with a small group. Similarly while high quality communal childcare should be freely available in neighbourhoods, spending time in small groups which include children should also be possible and valued.

Thesis 5

In most cultures sexuality and sexual activity are still aspects of our being as humans which are treated as dangerous or as the 'property' of the society - often delegated to either or both male family members and religious institutions - not the individual. But revolutionary advances in reproductive technology in the 1950s and 1960s contributed greatly to the emergence of aspirations for sexual liberation and further separated sexuality from reproduction. A cultural radicalization emerged in the 1950s and 1960s among young people and students in the imperialist countries which began to challenge, among other things, the traditional classification of gender. These new challenges to the traditional culture included new approaches to sex.

Thesis 6

The struggles for abortion rights and accessible birth control, like the struggle for LGBTIQ rights, directly challenged the traditional notion that equated acceptable sex with reproduction, marriage and the family. New perspectives on sex and sexuality promoted a new valorisation of sexual pleasure in general, but especially for women, who in many cultures were not socialised to have an expectation of sexual pleasure. When the women's movement advanced demands for women's sexual health and

information, it did so with the fundamental idea that women are sexual beings, and have the right to the sexual pleasure and control of their sexual relationships men have historically enjoyed. One of the main messages promoted in this struggle for women's sexual autonomy was that there was no one right way to sexual enjoyment, but in fact there were a plurality of possibilities.

Amongst men who have sex with men, sex workers and LGBTIQ communities more generally the development of HIV changed the extent to which sexual practices between same sex people are discussed more openly than before than previously in many societies. States were forced by campaigning organisations such as Act Up in various countries and the Treatment Action Campaign in South

Africa to extend sex education in schools and colleges and to advertise the availability of sexual health services (which deal with a wider range of issues than HIV) and promote safer sex practices. The gains from such activism were however uneven in different parts of the world, in different communities (because of lack of material in relevant languages for example) and at different times. Today with the strengthening of far right and religious fundamentalist forces in many parts of the globe this bigger issue than at the height of AIDS activism.

Thesis 7

We are working towards a world in which the grassroots democracy of everyday life is rooted in multiple forms of self-organization. There will

be the need for organisations that represent the oppressed to continue to organise in post revolutionary societies. Women's liberation movements, racialised peoples movements, disabled people's movements will need to be active alongside neighbourhood and workplace organisations, because oppressive, repressive and discriminatory ideology is more long standing than the economic structures that gave them birth as is the under representation of the most oppressed. At the same time, we fight for specific representation of LGBTIQ people alongside other oppressed groups inside neighbourhood and workplace committees to give such organisations the best possible chance of inclusivity. We also recognize that the shape of such movements will vary enormously in different parts of the globe.