

Chapter 3

Body-Territory: The Body as Battlefield

In what sense can women's bodies be thought of as a territory of conquest? Sociologists Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Claudia von Werlhof theorize women as "colonies," as territories to be looted, and from which wealth is extracted with violent force.¹ Based on an analogy between the female body and the colony, they draw connections between what capital exploits as "free resources" from domestic labor, from peasant labor, and from the labor of the inhabitants of cities' slums, explaining that this exploitation is simultaneously colonial and heteropatriarchal. Mies, in turn, formulates the notion of the "domestication of labor" in describing the labor of seamstresses in the lace industry in India. She refers to the milieu of reproductive work in the lowest strata of "productive labor" as a favored arena of colonialism.² In these scenes, the categories of the productive and the reproductive are reconfigured; they do not so much refer to specific spaces, but rather to assemblages under a specific relation of *subordination*. Here a central hypothesis emerges: *domestication and colonization are inseparable*, since they constitute a specific relation both as a way of exploiting the labor force and of subordinating territories. Mies's emblematic study is focused on that relation, explaining the organic relationship between patriarchy and accumulation on the global scale. The subjugation of women, nature, and the colonies, with "civilization" as the watchword, inaugurates capitalist accumulation with the sexual and colonial division of labor as its foundation. The feminist movement, in its different historical moments of growth, traces that same connection, but in a register of *insubordination*. The feminist inversion of domestication and colonization means opening up the question of what practices are capable of *depatriarchalizing and decolonizing* in the here and now, and from an urgently needed *internationalist* perspective.

The task of updating this understanding is currently being carried out by the communities that confront extractive mega-projects (from mining to soy monoculture, from petroleum extraction to forestry), largely led by women. For years, these struggles have been battling against such projects, which have been a fundamental element of the steady relaunch of the neo-developmental discourse in Latin America over the past decade. In turn, their efforts allow us to draw a map that connects the global South with other regions of the planet through extractivism and the systematic expropriation of land, and the ways such structures maintain an "imperialist mode of life."³

These struggles have invented the idea-force of the *body-territory*. The notion ties together a perspective that explains how the exploitation of territories is structured in a neo-extractive mode today, and how that also reconfigures labor exploitation, mapping the ways the dispossession of the commons affects everyday life. That is why it is *strategic* in a very

precise sense: it expands our *way of seeing*, based on bodies experienced as territories and territories experienced as bodies. That image of the body-territory reveals the battles that are occurring here and now, pointing to a field of forces that it makes visible and legible on the basis of conflicts. The body-territory is a practical concept that demonstrates how the exploitation of common, community (be it urban, suburban, peasant, or Indigenous) territories involves the violation of the body of each person, as well as the collective body, through dispossession. There are consequences to stripping a community of its water so it can be used by mining companies. The women resisting the installation of the Rositas hydroelectric dam in the Río Grande basin in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, recount how it forces them to go look for water in the city, paying for the bus there and back, plus a charge for each container that is transported, the effort involved in the trip, organizing child-care or taking children with them, carrying the containers on foot for part of the way. Of course, all of this is done in the name of “development.”

The conjunction of the words “body” and “territory” speaks for itself: it says that it is impossible to cut apart and isolate the individual body from the collective body, the human body from the territory and landscape. “Body-territory,” compacted as a single word, deliberalizes the notion of the body as individual property and specifies a political, productive, and epistemological continuity, of the body *as* territory. The body is thus revealed as a composition of affects, resources, and possibilities that are not “individual,” but are made unique because they pass through the body of each person to the extent that no body is ever only “one,” but always with others, and also with other nonhuman forces.

The compaction of “body-territory” also forces us to recognize that no one “lacks” either a body or a territory. It is not a matter of *lack*. And this allows for the illumination of processes of *dispossession* in another way.

This move inverts the idea of private property, in which one must always acquire what one does not have. A movement that begins from the standpoint of lack hides the *initial expropriation* that produces it, covers it up, and proposes it as an origin. That is why the images transmitted by these contemporary struggles are so strong: they show how so-called primitive accumulation acts in the *present*. That process that Marx described as the inaugural moment of capitalism has been intensely debated precisely in order to think about its *contemporaneity*.

Struggles against neo-extractivist megaprojects demonstrate that *dispossession* is a continuous logic that also includes a second moment: one that has to do with *possession*. Now, we are faced with a “possession” that cannot be reduced to and does not replicate individual and private property and, therefore, does not reproduce the political scientist C.B. Macpherson’s ideas on the limits of “possessive individualism.”⁴ This supposes decentering the individual as the privileged space of dispossession and, in that sense, not taking the individual ego as the starting point. This discussion refers to the psychoanalytic terms that outline the definition of subjectivity, as can be seen in the debate between Judith Butler and Athena Althanasiou on the very concept of dispossession.⁵ The potencia of feminisms that speak of the body-territory is that they propose another notion of possession, in terms of use and not of property. In this way, they demonstrate the logic of the common as the plane of

that which is dispossessed and exploited; and, finally, because this is what allows for the deployment of a political cartography of conflict.

An affirmation that there is no original *lack* of body or of territory is a key point for these forms of feminism, which emphasize the importance of situating themselves: each body is a territory of battle, an always-changing assemblage, open to becoming; it is a fabric that is attacked and needs to defend itself; and at the same time, it is remade in those confrontations, persisting as it practices alliances. Therefore, to join them in a single concept complicates the very notion of body and territory.

What does it mean to have a body? What does it mean to have a territory? First, one “has” a body-territory in the sense that one *is part of* a body-territory, not in the sense of property or possession. “Being part of” then implies a recognition of the “interdependence” that shapes us, that makes life possible. It is no minor detail that the women defending territories are also called defenders of life. The reference to life is not abstract, but rooted in the spaces, times, bodies, and concrete combinations in which that life unfolds, is made possible, is made dignified, is made livable. Therefore, it is not a naturalist, purely physiological, concept of life (which would be mere survival). “Life” refers to a vital register: it involves not only the defense and protection of the common, but also the production and expansion of shared wealth.

There is a hypothesis in operation at the heart of the concept of body-territory. That hypothesis is that the women and dissident corporealities who nourish and are nourished by those struggles produce and situate the body as an extensive territory. That is, not as the confinement of individuality, limited to the boundaries of one’s own body understood as “property” backed by individual rights, but rather as expanded material, an extensive surface of affects, trajectories, resources, and memories.

Precisely because the body understood as body-territory is a concept-image that emerged from struggles, it manages to highlight knowledges of the body (about care, self-defense, ecology, and wealth) and, at the same time, to deploy the indeterminacy of its capacity: in other words, it foregrounds the necessity of *alliance as a specific and unavoidable potencia*. Alliance is not an individual’s rational choice, nor is it a narrow calculation. It is a calculation, yes, but in the sense of calculation as a moment of a *conatus*, a form of perseverance in existence that is always collective and individuated. That *defensive* deployment that is embodied in the names of the coordinators and initiatives of struggle (in defense of land, of water, of life, and so on) is also *inventive*: it gives rise to new modes of organization, of sociability, new tactics of exchange, to the creation of existential territories, points of view. These are practices that defend and invent, that conserve and create, that protect and update, and, in that movement, produce value in a broad sense.

Therefore, the expansion and spillover of the body as a body-territory is the concrete place from which *expanded* extractivism is confronted today: that is, all the forms of dispossession, looting, and exploitation (from the literal extraction of raw materials to digital and financial extractivism) that the machine of capitalist valorization articulates. That the body-territory would be the situation that enables contempt, confrontation, and the invention of other modes of life implies that these struggles put knowledges of the body into play precisely in their becoming-territory. Yet they also make it indeterminate, because we do not

know what a body, as a body-territory, can do. The body-territory is, for that reason, an idea-force that emerges from particular struggles but that has the potencia to migrate, resonate with, and compose other territories and other struggles.

Extractivism as a Political Regime

Berta Cáceres was assassinated on March 3, 2016, in Honduras for leading the struggle of her Indigenous people, the Lenca, through the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) against large-scale infrastructure projects associated with Plan Puebla-Panama: the railways and hydroelectric dams necessary for mining exploitation.⁶ She had explained it clearly: “If women do not speak about their bodies among themselves, if they do not recognize their rights to pleasure and to not experience violence, they will not be able to understand that militarization is a practice of territorial invasion that is linked to violence against women, by using sexual violence as a weapon of war.”⁷ In the majority of these conflicts, women’s leadership opens up tensions within the community itself. Many women indicate that they “put their bodies on the line,” even in cases of direct conflict, but that later they are displaced when it comes to making political decisions, when the politicians and business leaders ask to dialogue with the men of the community or the leaders of campesino unions. This question is key because it also updates the “subversion of the community” historically practiced by women.⁸ Researchers Claudia López and Marxa Chávez, analyzing the Tariquíá conflict in Bolivia, speak of an “oppressive enclosure” to name the power structure that combines violence against women with the neo-extractive advance:

Women have challenged multiple mechanisms of patriarchal mediation throughout their defense, which have been enacted by larger regional and national organizations and state-instructed unionism. These structures attempt to impose and reproduce logics that asphyxiate and permanently block women’s actions and strategies. In this war, there is an expansive dynamic we call oppressive enclosure, a power structure founded on violence against women’s bodies.⁹

Indigenous and community feminisms, by proposing this register of the body-territory, place a demand on all forms of feminism: decolonization as a practical dimension that is inseparable from de-patriarchalization. María Galindo, from the Mujeres Creando collective, puts it clearly: “The colonial structures in our society are patriarchal and the patriarchal structures in our society are colonial; one thing cannot go without the other.”¹⁰ A whole series of investigations deploying feminist perspective are nourishing these debates on the critique of extractivism. Here I will only name a few: Mina Navarro speaks of “multiple dispossessions” in Mexico and the struggles for the commons that confront them.¹¹ More recently in Bolivia, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has detailed the conflict over the construction of the TIPNIS Highway in a register of women’s territorial defense against the colonial-extractivist turn of the Movement for Socialism–led government.¹² In Chile, several analyses present women’s resistance to being treated, in terms of body-territory, as “sacrifice zones,” for example in the regions of Puchuncaví and Quintero.¹³ In Peru, extractivism as a

“biopolitical project” is presented in terms of the conjunction of “patriarchies, sexism, and discrimination based on gender” in mining activity.¹⁴ In Ecuador, perspectives such as that of Cristina Vega and Cristina Cielo have analyzed how the devalorization and intensification of reproductive tasks are the “silent complement of Ecuador’s productive matrix based on exportation of raw materials.”¹⁵ In Colombia, mapping the relationship between illegal networks and criminal groups associated with mining extractivism demonstrates that “processes of violence that specifically affect Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and campesina women have increased.”¹⁶ Lorena Cabnal, based on the conceptualization of communitarian feminism in Guatemala, has long raised the issue of the relationship between mining and sexual violence.¹⁷ And, above all, there has been an enormous collective production of manifestos and declarations, of encounters and meetings, systematizing and updating approaches to various situations and conflicts in the region. The question of extractivism in Latin America, then, goes back to the process of capitalist colonization, but it nevertheless continues through successive reorganizations on the part of the creole elites, due to their rentier impetus and, therefore, the inherently colonial character that is translated onto the republican states. Different historical analyses show how this rentier character has been associated with a modernization project that, time and again, hides the predatory and archaic character of the elites associated with the metropolises of global capital.¹⁸ Today, the feminist critique of extractivist looting recomposes and deepens this critical archive, investigating the ways it is organically linked to violence against women. This has also led Silvia Federici to update her hypothesis on the new witch hunt and the renewed enclosure of common goods and spaces.¹⁹

The sequence of the extraction of raw materials in Latin America spans five centuries, connecting forms of accumulation, specific dynamics of the exploitation of labor power, simultaneous forms of violence, and increasingly large scales of extractive operations. In that sense, we could say that it has always involved a political regime. However, today it is its new elements that must be theorized. Feminist struggles and analyses offer a crucial perspective for highlighting this newness (which is, in turn, part of a historical repetition) by producing a *displacement* from which another vocabulary of *sovereignty* emerges. It is not the juridical principle of the state (the notion of sovereignty deployed to legitimize these extractive projects), but rather sovereignty over one’s own body (understood as body-territory). This idea of sovereignty is conceived in terms of pleasure and resistance against the neocolonial advance, using a grammar that puts another political economy and another, non-state-centric geography (which does not mean it refuses to think about the state) into play. That way of experiencing the extensive body is also what allows us to understand why a war is waged there today. Saying that extractivism is not only an economic mode, but also a political regime, makes visible the articulation between sexual violence and political violence in a machinery of looting, dispossession, and conquest. But it also allows us to think about other dynamics of looting, dispossession, and conquest connected to other territories. Particularly, it enables us to form a link with the territory of debt and consumption, where financial apparatuses expand their frontiers of valorization that (as I will explain in the following pages) are a fundamental part of the *expanded* conceptualization of the extractive

operation. By linking both dynamics—literal extractivism exerted over raw materials and the extractivism of finance, carried out especially against populations that are considered to be “excluded”—we can bridge the forms of *exploitation* that are renewed through a mapping of the heterogeneity of labor in a feminist register.

Open Veins

The best-known image of extractive expropriation was popularized by the title of Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano’s 1971 book *Open Veins of Latin America*. A powerful image of drainage and a medical allegory, the text synthesized for a mass audience both that historically unchanging factor and the framework of dependency theory that proliferated in Latin America in the 1960s and ’70s. When former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez gave a copy to Barack Obama as a gift at the Summit of the Americas in 2009, the book’s sales skyrocketed again, highlighting the lasting validity of the diagnosis. However, this analysis obscures the elements that make the current extractivist moment different and, in turn, it has been adopted as part of an “independentist” discourse that progressive governments in the region have used to try to represent themselves as anti-imperialist in the midst of the neo-extractivist boom.²⁰ An element of novelty in the present period is seen in the primary destination for exports. China’s emergence as a “central country” in terms of demand has led to an intense political debate as it displaces, at least in the imaginary of some interpretations, the imperialist map with which extractivism was associated in earlier historical moments of intensive raw material accumulation. This is not a minor point, since it is closely linked to the political legitimacy that the progressive governments in the region gained by arguing that taking advantage of the historical high in commodity prices (or the so-called commodity boom), from which they benefited, is a geopolitical contribution to the displacement of US hegemony.²¹ A second key argument, in terms of the construction of legitimacy and newness, is that this extraordinary rent that was maintained as an income for over a decade is what has enabled a specific role of state “intervention.” This had fundamental consequences. First, it was the “material” base that maintained the funding of social programs and welfare-benefits packages that were the main part of the interventionist policy, relaunching a whole discourse of recovered national sovereignty, even if these modes of intervention clearly left out public infrastructure.²² Second, this mode of state “intervention” (even funded and focused in that way) was the basis for the rhetoric that claimed to oppose the financial hegemony that had characterized the region in the period running from the military dictatorships through the processes of democratic transition, and that ultimately led to the various crises at the turn of the twenty-first century. The overlap between the effective denationalization of some segments of the state²³ and methods of redesigning national intervention, in others areas, is a synchrony that cannot be understood in terms of the truth or falsity of the state’s capacity for intervention, less so its “independence” from finance (as implied by the slogan “The return of the state” that spread as propaganda in the region). Instead, these overlaps produce new physiognomies of what we could properly call the state. For that same reason, the key point

is the connection between three dimensions that produce the state today and allow for its characterization as “progressive,” “post-neoliberal,” or “twenty-first-century socialist” in different countries in the region, and that are crucial for thinking about their crises today. I am referring to (1) the combination between a dependent and subordinate mode of insertion in the global market, along with forms of intervention in the terrain of social reproduction that express both, (2) a capacity for taking root in de-waged urban and suburban territories through social policies won by social movements, and (3) a relaunch of the forms of valorization through finance that includes the so-called “excluded” sectors. In this register, the region’s “progressive” governments opened up a discussion about possible models of “nationalization” and social organizations that tested, with different outcomes, their capacities to control and manage resources. The social repercussions of terms such as *buen vivir* or *vivir bien* (good living, or living well)—which were quickly associated with the constitutionalization of the forms of the social, solidarity, and popular economies embodied in the constitutions of Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela—must also be understood in that complex intersection. In this discussion, neo-extractivist conflicts must be framed precisely: they are concrete disputes over the management of resources, over the meaning of living well, and over forms of sovereignty. A theorization of neo-extractivism from the perspective of struggles for body-territory, as simultaneously a *logic of valorization* and a *political* (and not only economic) *regime*, allows us to understand the extractivist logic as a new colonial form of dispossession and exploitation. However, doing so requires an expansion of the notion of extractivism, as going beyond raw materials and beyond peasant and Indigenous territories, into urban and suburban ones. This expanded notion of extractivism illuminates a hypothesis: that the extractive logic has become a privileged mode of producing value in the current phase of accumulation, in which finance plays a key role. It is this logic that allows for an update of the very notion of exploitation, and an explanation for why women’s and feminized bodies are a preferred territory of aggression.

The notion of body-territory emerging from struggles led by women territorial leaders is in this sense strategic, because it is a point of analysis and of practical action that explains both the extensive and intensive character of contemporary extraction, as well as the organic relation between capital accumulation and heteropatriarchal and colonial violence. It does so by producing a feminist diagnosis of that conflict based on concrete struggles, which determines the political composition of a multiform antagonism at various scales. The linkage of these struggles by today’s feminist movement is a reconnection of precisely that which seems to be unrelated: aggression against the bodies of women and sexual dissidents postulated as body-territory, on one hand, and on the other, a neo-extractivist political regime that is connected with financial hegemony in a nodal way.

Expanded Extractivism

Today, extractive industries have expanded their focus to go beyond natural resources, be they minerals, gases, or hydro-carbons. We must also add to this list the growing frontiers of *agribusiness*, including soy as well as other important and lesser-known monocultures, such

as palm oil.²⁴ However, the displacement of the extractive frontier also has effects on other social, political, and economic dynamics, for which land (and its depths) is not the sole privileged space. We are referring to an extractive dynamic in contexts of urban real estate speculation (including informal speculation), virtual territories of “data mining” and the operations of algorithms, and, in a more fundamental way, the popular economies whose vitality is extracted through apparatuses of debt. We have used the notion of *expanded extractivism* to refer to this displacement of the frontiers of the “extractive zones.”²⁵ This *expansion* accounts for a two-part movement. On the one hand, it concerns the multiplication of references to extractive language in order to define technologies and procedures that convert elements into “raw materials,” which become strategic for the privileged operation of capital. On the other hand, it demonstrates the need to conceptualize extractivism beyond a specific technical procedure strictly related to raw materials, in order to make it intelligible as a logic of valorization. At the same time, by highlighting the role of finance, this conceptualization opens up a novel reading of the relationship between finance and production. It no longer speaks of the hegemony of finance as synonymous with the end of production (as finance is understood when compared to an industrial type of regime); rather, it highlights the specific productive dimension of finance.²⁶ This perspective does not limit the spatiality of extraction to the multiplication of “enclaves.”²⁷ Instead, it points out the connectivity between heterogeneous spaces. In this sense, when we speak of expansion we are referring to a *dynamic* of the expansion of the frontiers of valorization, in which finance is the common operator or code. However, we must be careful not to make a division between a financial extractivism as what occurs in the “First World,” and an extractivism of raw materials in the “Third World” or “global South.” To the contrary, the analysis of this “expanded extractivism” also seeks to undo that binary that reproduces a *naturalism* of certain regions, as compared to a sophisticated *abstraction* of others. The argument is complex because it supposes that the diversity of the articulation based on the financial dynamic is capable of linking social inclusion, consumption, and debt in social sectors that are usually considered marginal, excluded, or surplus populations²⁸ or, in the philosophical lexicon, as “bare life.”²⁹

Extraction thus becomes an operative modality of capital in which the expansion of the margins of valorization demands a colonization of new areas, sectors, and forms of production that exceed the productive forms *coordinated* by capital’s command. This shows finance in its productive character as much as in its extractive one. In other words, it is not a matter of a fictitious speculation or a non-real economy, as it tends to be characterized by the industrialist discourse to account for a dynamic that does not include the labor force in waged terms. In this sense, we can say that extraction is produced directly upon forms of social cooperation, where finance lands, takes root, and inserts itself into a multiform vitality that it *exploits*. It does so in axiomatic terms: that is, by making a command code immanent.

Finance “weaves” together a “literal” type of extractivism, on one hand, referring to raw materials (even if defined by its constitutive relation with finance through the funding of megaprojects and the manipulation of commodity prices), and on the other, an extractivism in an *expanded* sense: extraction that operates upon popular vitality through mass indebtedness

in urban and suburban territories, as well as other extractive modes, such as the management of data through platforms. In this way, the *extractive* logic is a dynamic that produces value and that is capable of articulating the tendency toward permanent abstraction (capital's utopia: getting rid of the need for *living labor*), with the violence of multiple forms of dispossession (accumulation by dispossession and privatization in general), and the exploitation in the future of an increasingly precarious labor force (the rentier architecture over labor).

The concern about the political form of extractivism leaves open the question of *command* of that process of valorization and its territorial landing, of its link with popular and illegal economies, and of how the role of the state is reformulated. Furthermore, it raises the question of how to think about the relationship between extractivism and violence against women and feminized bodies. *It is the analysis rising from the feminist struggles that allows for the proposal of the simultaneity of those planes of social conflict today.* This analysis does so in two very precise senses: it enables an understanding of how extraction operates (1) *over* bodies and territories (as capture and exploitation) and (2) *against* social cooperation (as hierarchization and privatization) with intense levels of violence. The perspective deployed by struggles understood in a feminist register provides the foundation for thinking about such cooperation beyond the hierarchical binaries between remunerated and non-remunerated labor, production and reproduction, production and consumption, home and labor market. It creates a map of the contemporary heterogeneity of living labor, of all those who persist against dispossession and new forms of exploitation.

“We do not ask for ownership of the land; we are proposing another art of inhabiting the land,” said Moira Millán, one of the Mapuche leaders at the feminist assembly in the Argentinian city of El Bolsón in September 2017. This phrase synthesizes the displacement produced by the notion of body-territory with respect to the grammar of private property. She was referring to the attempt to reduce the debate to property terms, a trick to create individual titles to later enable the (forced) sale of lands. In that type of swarm, literal dispossession is articulated with financial titling. Therefore, today this mode of Indigenous conflict resonates with diverse forms of urban conflict, tracing a complex map of real estate speculation by the large corporations in Patagonia and in the north of Argentina (whether due to agribusiness, mining projects, or hotel complexes), which qualify an increasingly acute territorialization of conflicts in terms of confrontation, and which is also reproduced, in a fractal way, in urban slums. That is, the dynamics of dispossession require ever-stronger thresholds of violence to carry out evictions and displacements, and to orient them through individual titling, or the criminalization of those who do not accept this, and resist.

Therefore, I insist that the notion of body-territory also opens up a debate about the surrounding spatiality that is normalized by individual property. Body-territory can be postulated as an image that is antagonistic to the abstract character required by the individual property owner of (neo) liberal modernity. “Abstract” means no more or less than the masculine naturalized as the universal.³⁰ In other words, if it is possible to abstract the body, it is because that body is marked as masculine. The body-territory is that which does not allow for abstraction from a corporeality that is marked precisely by its impossibility of being governed or defined by mere property law. From the beginning, the body-territory is marked

by its capacity for combat: one of simultaneous care, defense, healing, and strengthening. It is also the site of the beautiful call of the compañeras from the Red de Sanadoras Ancestrales del Feminismo Comunitario Territorial (Network of ancestral healers of territorial communitarian feminism), of Iximulew, Guatemala, to produce *acuerpamiento* (embodiment) based on the struggles.

The Body-Territory in the Abortion Debate

By recognizing the impact of thinking based on the body-territory, we can account for the radical and profound character of the debate over the legalization of abortion in Argentina. After being presented for thirteen consecutive years by the National Campaign for Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion, since 2018 that demand has taken on a mass dimension, unprecedented in the country's history. Here I want to highlight the capacity of contagion, and connection, of certain language and images of struggle that impregnate realities that are very different from those in the places they emerged. I also want to emphasize the feminist movement's versatility in *territorializing* concepts in diverse practices and, at the same time, producing situated experiences of translation, reappropriation, and enrichment of those languages and imaginaries. Finally, I want to provide a concrete image of the transversality of practices that are not homogenized in a singular vocabulary but that allow the meanings of struggles to multiply.

Why did this notion of body-territory become operative in—that is, gain the potencia to name—the debate over abortion? There are several reasons. First, Mauricio Macri's neoliberal government tried to dissociate the dynamic of the feminist strike from the struggle for abortion. They announced that the abortion law would be discussed in the legislature on March 8, 2017 (which was proven false a few days later), thus attempting to minimize the effect of the strike and take abortion off the strike agenda. Even so, in the following months, an unprecedented scene unfolded, in which mobilizations for abortion became increasingly massive and heterogeneous.

This was possible precisely because of the way the struggle for abortion had been threaded together with other feminist struggles that had politically and cognitively linked violence against feminized bodies with a systematic attack on each of us. That systematic attack is the foundation of the heteropatriarchal regime of government. The realization that there is no form of government that does not intrinsically presuppose women's subordination is the a priori that was put in crisis with the struggle for abortion, which went beyond the limits of the individual body and the territory of law.

The overflowing of the parliamentary terrain was made clear through its appropriation by the feminist campaign. For the first time, the public sessions were transmitted live and followed by thousands of people; they included more than 800 voices, becoming a truly public platform of argumentation, confrontation, and exhibition. They forged a pedagogic space, which was taken particular advantage of by the generations of youth who dealt with those arguments in schools and everyday conversations. But they also managed to impose a discussion on the media agenda, thanks to an unprecedented polyphony of debate.

The overflow onto the social terrain was clarified by the mobilization's expansion. This took place, first, through the practice of the *pañuelazos*: mass actions in which participants waved the green handkerchiefs symbolizing abortion. The so-called green tide flooded spaces everywhere, including schools, slums, unions, plazas, and soup kitchens. Through this extension, the body that had been put up for debate also took on a *class* dimension. On the one hand, this occurred because discussion about the clandestine condition of abortion directly referred to the costs that make it differentially *risky* according to one's social and economic conditions. On the other hand, this dimension emerged because the Catholic Church hierarchy attempted to invert the class-based argument, pointing to abortion as something "foreign" and "external" to the popular classes.

Religious leaders and some political leaders focused their opposition on an argument claiming to be anti-neoliberal: that "the poor do not have abortions," that abortion is "imperialist" and a "fad" imposed by the International Monetary Fund, demonstrating the depth of patronization in play. In their pretension to show themselves as the sole anti-neoliberals, the church spokesmen directed this argument particularly toward "poor women": to those who they assume they must protect, those whose decision-making capacity they take away in the name of their social condition, those who they only recognize as resistant when they are mothers. In that way, the Vatican attempts to trace a class distinction that would justify the notion that poor women have no other option than Catholicism and conservatism, because their only option is maternity. Thus, the church attempts to reduce having an abortion (that is, making decisions about desire, maternity, and one's own life) to an eccentric gesture of the middle and upper classes (which, of course, can make use of different economic resources). Their objective is to *invert* the class-based argument: for them it functions as justification for the clandestine condition of abortion. For the church, the right to decide must be kept away from the popular neighborhoods. This crusade to infantilize "poor" women is its spearhead, because if it is disarmed, the church itself would be left without its "faithful." What is most brutal is the way, in order to maintain this position, that they must turn a deaf ear to what the women of the slums themselves and their organizations have to say. Those women have mobilized around the slogan "Stop speaking for us." They have retaken and narrated their own experiences of having clandestine abortions, rejecting the moralization of their practices, and have woven coordinated actions, including the *pañuelazos*. It was the transversality of feminist politicization that allowed for an expansion of the discussion into sites where it had not previously reached, even as abortions were a massive, albeit secret, reality.

In the struggle for the legalization of abortion, the body in dispute thus exceeds the conquest of individual private rights. The massive mobilization demanding legal, safe, and free abortion overflows the request for legislative recognition at the same time that it calls for it. This is due to the fact that it reveals the dispute over the sovereignty of a body-territory that allows for the connection of anti-extractive struggles with those for abortion. In those days of mobilization, in a conversation with *compañeras* from the Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero (MOCASE), they recounted how, for the first time, they were debating in peasant communities what had been a taboo topic up until then. In conversations in assemblies, a link was drawn between abortion rights, the subjugation of the land, and the

impossibility of autonomy that this implies.

The debate went beyond the sole framework of public health and abortion as a preventative question of undesired pregnancy, to open up the question of desire. With the slogan “Maternity will be desired or it won’t be” and the demand for comprehensive sexual education in the educational curriculum, the campaign deepened debates about sexualities, corporealities, relationships, and affects that displaced the question in a radical way. This even allowed for variations on the slogans in support of legal abortion, not only in the hospital, but also in vindication of autonomous networks like the *socorristas* (life savers, a national network of health care and social workers who provide information and support for safe abortions in Argentina), who have been practicing abortions “anywhere”; not only of sexual education, but also the discovery of one’s sexuality; not only of contraception for the purposes of preventing abortions, but also for the purposes of pleasure; and not only an abortion that would prevent death, but one that would allow you to decide.

The weft between the dynamic of the strike, on one hand, and the green tide, on the other, forged a connection between the modes of differential exploitation of feminized bodies. It wove a register of intelligibility between non-remunerated (or poorly remunerated) labor and expensive and unsafe abortions, tying together the forms of precarization of our lives, the modes of control exerted in the name of labor market democracy, and the ecclesiastic condescension of desire and autonomous decision making.

What Spatiality Does a Body-Territory Create?

We already discussed the body-territory as a concept that is antagonistic to the abstract character required by the individual property owner. I will add a second thesis: the becoming-territory of the body is a spatiality that appears in opposition to domestic enclosure. This is because the body-territory is that which flees the individual environment (and thus the contract as the privileged political bond), that of citizenship that is always retracted, of exploitation always hidden as a natural service. Therefore, the body-territory drives the invention of other “existential territories,” to cite Félix Guattari’s beautiful formation.³¹

To translate this into spatial terms: we have already left the domestic enclosure. Additionally, other domestic territories are constructed that do not bind us to unrecognized free labor and that do not demand a promise of fidelity to the husband–property owner. We take over the street and turn it into a feminist hearth. The occupations, assemblies, and massive vigils, carried out on the streets while Congress debated abortion, invented another type of spatiality: one where the place of politics was reorganized and reinvented under the open sky. At the same time, such a politics is not constructed in opposition to “the domestic,” but rather to its restricted formulation as a synonym of “enclosure.”

This spatial inversion marks a new type of political cartography. It dismantles the traditional opposition between the household as a closed space and the public as its opposite: new architectures are constructed, for these homes are open to the street, the neighborhood, communitarian networks; they are a roof and walls that shelter and host without enclosing or

cloistering. This is a practical balance that emerges from a concrete reality: many households, in the heteropatriarchal meaning, have turned into hell. They are the most unsafe spaces and the site of the majority of femicides, along with countless acts of everyday “domestic” violence.

With this new mode of constructing politics, it is almost too obvious to chant that those legislating do not represent us. A feminist version of “They all must go,” which synthesized the 2001 crisis,³² seems almost unnecessary. We have already surpassed that threshold. It was made clear that the regime of representation that is maintained with its back to the streets has nothing to do with the feminist way of doing politics and making history. But more than that, we showed that politics is already being carried out in other spaces, ones that have the force to produce a non-patriarchal domestic sphere. Thus, the question is: Why is it that the domestic must be kept private?

My hypothesis is that the so-called domestic scene deploys, and in turn contains, two situations that were made visible in the debate around abortion. The first occurs in the Argentine Senate, where senator Rodolfo Urtubey of the Justicialist Party argues that there can be “rape without violence,” when, and perhaps also because, it occurs within the family. What does that mean? That the home, in its patriarchal meaning, is the place where rape is permitted. Because the home is constructed as “private” when it legitimizes men’s violent and privileged access to women’s bodies and feminized bodies (which includes children). The private, then, is what guarantees the secrecy and legitimacy of violence. It is also what permits the famous “double morality.” Here we are in the heart of what theorist Carole Pateman has analyzed as the *patriarchal pact*: the complicity between men based on hierarchy that, in our democracies, is converted into a form of political right. This corporative male complicity, which Pateman denounces, is *foundational* to the modern political regime, which is organized based on the subordination of women and feminized bodies.³³ Therefore, any issue related to the sexes is a directly political question.

With this we see that even in Congress—supposedly a space belonging to the public sphere—they are legislating to preserve the domestic space as one of confinement, as a place of secrecy. What Congress is legislating is no more or less than the desperate attempt to maintain the home as the patriarchal reign, in the face of an emerging politics that constructs other spatialities and dismantles the division between the public and the private that is responsible for the hierarchy between the “realms.” Therefore, when the Senate votes to reject the legalization of abortion, what it sanctions is male power over women’s bodies, the foundational scene of which, I insist, is rape.

The second situation is the contempt shown by Congress toward the masses in the streets clamoring for the legalization of abortion. From the congressional perspective, because the street is occupied by women and sexual dissidents, it loses its public character and is thus treated as if it were a domestic space. How so? With regard to the mass mobilization, representative power repeats the same historical pattern of nonrecognition that it did with feminized tasks. Just as it has invisibilized the ways in which we produce value, by doing practically everything that allows for the world’s production and reproduction, feminized and dissident ways of weaving sociability and collective care have been systematically excluded

from the accounts of all democracies. The maneuver of ignoring the masses in the street seeks to render invisible a multitude that shouts, “Now that they see, the patriarchy is going to fall!” The maneuver of nonrecognition aims to enclose the open space of the street. It also shows how *mobile* the categories of the public and the private are, or rather, how the geometry of power that makes them function as a grid operating according to sexual difference is translated into political hierarchy.

This invisibilization—which is a specific regime of visibility—is created at the cost of expropriating the *potencia* from our bodies while, at the same time, “exploiting,” benefiting from, representing us. August 8 thus presented a twofold scene: Congress discussed rape in the domestic sphere as a justification for maintaining the clandestine, illegal, and unsafe status of abortion, while trying to ignore what was taking place on the streets, as if the street were no longer a public space when taken over by the feminist masses. This scene offers historical clarity on an already-inverted power: there can be no compliance in the face of such belittlement. No submission to invisibility. No resignation to going uncounted. There can be no accommodation to once again not being part of, or being the infantilized part of, democracy, and therefore under bondage. The body-territory expresses the disobedience of a distribution that is simultaneously political, economic, and affective, as well as critical of the patriarchal public-private geometry whose counterpart, as we will see in [Chapter 5](#), is the distinction between the social and the political.

Disarming the Domestic Enclosure

A metaphor has been circulating that considers the home as a new feminist space. More precisely, it asks us to consider: What would a non-heteropatriarchal home look like, given that the very definition of home seems to eclipse this very possibility?

There are two scenes from this discussion in Argentina that I want to highlight. The first is that of the “former” daughters of the men responsible for genocide during the country’s last military dictatorship, which lasted from 1976 to 1983. The dictatorship was one of the most brutal and cruel in the region in terms of state terrorism, with the disappearance and murder of more than 30,000 people through a system of concentration camps, in which those kidnapped were tortured under clandestine conditions. The daughters of the men responsible for these crimes against humanity publicly “came out of the closet” at the *Ni Una Menos* march on June 3, 2017, where they told their stories, denounced their progenitors, and debated the constitutional premise that has barred them from testifying against their fathers.³⁴ The force of their public words was constituted around a hypothesis: state terrorism traced a line of continuity between the concentration camp and the family homes of the men committing genocide, in such a way that their children lived in an extension of that camp. This idea supposes that there is no state terrorism without its intimate ties to the patriarchal family. It therefore corrects a fairly widespread idea that many military officers were “good” or “affectionate” within their homes, “objectifying” their actions as something having to do with work (the idea that they “were just doing their jobs”), which was external and corporate. It is precisely that border between domestic life and public life that disappears.

On the other hand, what some narratives reveal today is an attempt to transfer “family” and domestic dynamics onto the concentration camp. Florencia Lance, the daughter of an army pilot accused of carrying out death flights,³⁵ recounts a striking scene. Starting in preschool, they would celebrate her birthday in the Campo de Mayo concentration camp: “The ritual was that a green bus, one of those big Mercedes-Benz, would come by to pick us up, and my friends would get on to go spend the entire day in that place.”³⁶ Another story is told by Andrea Krichmar, invited by her school friend to “play” at “her dad’s job.” Her friend was the daughter of Rubén Chamarro—alias the Dolphin—vice-admiral of the navy, director of the Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA), and directly responsible for the Task Group 3.3.2.³⁷ Additionally, the families were routinely convened for mass and ceremonies in the barracks. For example, Mariana Dopazo, the former daughter of Miguel Etchecolatz—police chief during the dictatorship and now serving a life sentence for crimes of homicide, torture, illegal detention, and infant kidnapping—recalls attending birthday parties “in some Police Circle of La Plata.”³⁸

The patriarchal function of the repressive system is seen both in domestic spaces that are assumed to be “preserved” from violence, and in the attempt to normalize the spaces of horror through “familiar” presence. These former daughters have worked to publicize the imbrication of state terrorism with the patriarchal family. They are the ones who have shown that home can be hell, as many survivors have named the ESMA concentration camp. The first to defiliate was Rita Vagliati, former daughter of Buenos Aires police chief Valentín Milton Pretti. She wrote: “Nor can I stop feeling the relationship between their crimes and what existed in my family. I cannot forgive him for wanting to torture and kill and for having touched me and my siblings. That he held us or caressed us.”³⁹

There would be no way for the dictatorship to have combined civic, ecclesiastic, business, and military action without operating under the banner of “saving” the West and Christianity. They presented the threat of “subversion,” in reference to the guerrilla, as a civilizational threat. It would have been impossible for the spatiality of the concentration camp not to have been reaffirmed in the homes of the men responsible for the genocide. But today there is a new voice of enunciation, a collective force.

They, the former daughters, chose the Ni Una Menos march to make their public appearance as an act of defiliation. Each one of them had been personally and legally negotiating their situation in different ways. But the spatiality of the feminist streets is what enabled the defiance of the family history, understood as a mandate of complicity with the aberrant, based on a *collective* voice. Such spatiality has also created an atmosphere for further scenes of justice. The previous step had been organizing a repudiation, which wove them together as a collective, against the judicial attempt to grant impunity to military officers who had already been tried, known as the two-for-one law.⁴⁰

Now we enter into, with the bravery of their narratives, the “domestic” horror. If the violence that was experienced in the homes of the men who committed genocide can be told in the first person, recounted and denounced by their former daughters, it is because violence analyzed in the heat of the feminist experience provides a new perception and makes that *continuum* audible. It is thus a first person that also becomes collective. Their testimonies are

interlinked with the expansion of the field of trust for listening to abuses, inaugurated by the experiences of #YoTeCreo (#IBelieveYou) and others that created that form of speaking and narrating.⁴¹ The former daughters' personal and collective story of defilement establishes a new way of demanding justice and punishment, based on disobedience to patriarchy.

The second scene is also connected to the link between Ni Una Menos and the historical human rights struggles in Argentina. It is a trajectory that also has a militant, non-liberal genealogy, and is led by women: the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Thanks to the feminist movement, this genealogy has been revived, tracing new connections between the types of cruelty and torture that were inflicted in especially merciless ways on the bodies of politically active women. Today we know that sexual torture was intensified against women as a way of punishing their disobedience to a model of the family, which their practices questioned through the reinvention of other affective ties and other modes of life.⁴² The intervention in this living memory by Ni Una Menos as the “daughters and granddaughters” of their rebellions in the recent anniversaries of the coup d'état (March 24) puts another form of filiation into play: rebellion as that which creates kinship.

This type of intervention into memory in the present tense also makes it possible for leaders of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, such as Nora Cortiñas, to now consider themselves feminists. This demonstrates a *temporality that emerges from the struggles that reopens history*, encompassing memories, archives, and narrations.

What I want to emphasize is that the feminist movement has harbored a double displacement, made by women and in a collective voice, in relation to the cruelty associated with the patriarchal mandate and its organic link with state terrorism. On the one hand, the former daughters of genociders, moved to defilement from their parents, which is a way of imploding the image of the home and childhood as something protected from the concentration camp. On the other hand, the daughters of the militants of the 1970s invented a mode of nonfamily filiation, outlining kinship based on rebellion and, in that way, making visible the other families and bonds of love with which the militants sought to experiment. Both movements account for an anti-patriarchal register of the struggles for human rights and against the dictatorship that had not, until now, had to confront this strength or this feminist perspective.

The church hierarchy also condemned and attempted to invert this rebellion. In the midst of the debate about abortion, one of the most famous priests who work in the *villas* (slums) evoked the women who were detained-disappeared in ESMA to say that those women, even in that extreme situation, chose to give birth. With that image, not only does he neglect to mention the appropriation of their children, in which they were considered “spoils of war,” where the Catholic Church played an important role; he also falsely recalls those women who were imprisoned and tortured as simply self-sacrificing mothers. The priest connected the kidnapped women forced into maternity in the concentration camp with the women of the *villas* who, according to him, also must give birth in extreme conditions, but should do so nevertheless.

Let's return to the question of contested spaces. What else does this analogy between the concentration camp (ESMA) and the *villa* say? That the *villas* are today's concentration

camps? That the women in either space have no choice but to engage in maternity, at the cost of their own lives? What is clear is that the church, through its male spokespeople, is on a crusade against the rebellion of women and feminized bodies that are reinventing modes of autonomy and desire, and that are renarrating history (I will return to this in [Chapter 7](#)).

Excursus: A Materialism Based on the Body-Territory

We know from several references that Gilles Deleuze was preparing a book about Marx before he died. It seems that not much remains of that impulse, but the work of Deleuze—along with his and Félix Guattari’s collaborations—is full of valuable references to Marx. To take one example that recalls the Spinozist question of what a body can do: the idea that bodies are not merely organic matter, but that life is a nonorganic phenomenon—one in which we can detect the presence of the virtual in the actual. At stake here is nothing less than the very idea of surplus value, where we can see the differential of a body that receives recompense for its actuality, but is taken advantage of in its virtuality, in its generic power of doing. Deleuze and Guattari’s language of flows cannot be understood outside of the fact that these potencias refer to flows of desire and production (which allows for the situation of Marx and Freud on the same plane). But, Deleuze adds, what characterizes capitalism is that production is always attributed to a “sterile or unproductive instance”: money.

This means that money, as a form of command, hides its condition as an abstract representative of what is created by bodies, through use of financial apparatuses. Thinking about money as command also reveals its concern for potencia, for what bodies can do—that is, for the foundation of all surplus value as the *indeterminate* element of bodies of labor, of desire, of vital potencia.

Today, resistance is confronted with a dynamic that constantly attempts to read and capture it due to the axiomatic functioning of capital. Capital’s axiomatic dynamic, as Deleuze and Guattari theorized it in *A Thousand Plateaus*, highlights the tension that inheres in the flexibility (or versatility) of capture and exploitation by capital. At the same time, it demonstrates the need to distinguish operations through which that machine of capture subsumes social relations and inventions that also resist and exceed the diagram of capture/exploitation. When Deleuze refers to the axiomatic dynamic of capital, he makes his connection with Marx’s *Grundrisse* explicit, referring to “economic-physical” processes that convert another body, that “sterile and unproductive body” of money, into something *more*. What this reference tells us is that the problem of the axiomatic dynamic is related to a question involving desire, economy, and politics. Here a question of the limit is also always in play: on the part of capital, in the expansion of scale, and in the expansion of the frontiers of valorization in the extractive register I have discussed. To do so, first capital must internalize the limit through an immanentization that works in the differential relation between flows—containing them, codifying them, recuperating their escape toward the outside. The role of the axiomatic, Deleuze says, is “to compensate the limit, to return things to their place,”⁴³ but in that operation of recuperation, it is forced into a new expansion each time. Additionally, there are always flows that escape: those that appear in the schizophrenic

migrations of characters such as those in the plays of Samuel Beckett.

Particularly when Deleuze works with concepts of Michel Foucault's, it becomes clear that he placed importance on the articulation between the formation of territories, practices of desire, and diagrams of power (in their classic forms: sovereignty, discipline, and control, and their co-functioning). It is impossible to understand today, from a materialist point of view, the economies that organize new forms of exploitation and value extraction—their assemblages, their financial dispositions, their forms of obedience, and the proliferation of forms of power that accompany them—without that architecture that is capable of identifying multiple dimensions that converge on a single plane.

Let's turn to what we could propose as idea-forces of a materialism capable of creating existential territory—body-territory—against the current forms of exploitation. That materialism has two premises: First, there is the very idea that subjectivities are expressed in practice, with structures that are articulated practices and with discourses that are always a dimension of practice (“foci of experience,” Foucault would say), and that, therefore, cannot be reduced to and do not privilege rational spirituality or consciousness. Second, there is an understanding of the production of value as the production of existence, which is seen in the concept of labor power, in its failed and impossible conversion into a commodity, due to an impasse that is impossible to surpass between the potencia of human practice and the effective task. The materialism that concerns us, that problematizes the diverse bodies of labor and common goods (and their expression in different territories and conflicts), is one that combats a specific kind of abstraction—one that operates through the conversion of body-territories into the sterile and unproductive body of money.