

editorial  
editorial

entrevista  
interview

artigos submetidos  
submitted papers

tapete  
carpet

artigo nomads  
nomads paper

projeto  
project

expediente  
credits

próxima v!rus  
next v!rus

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### Abstract

In this paper, we propose a discussion about the subjectivation process triggered by neoliberal rationality and formulate alternative actions able to counterbalance the competition and efficiency logic, arguing that 'other conducts' can be found in everyday practices of women that live in the self-constructed urban occupations motivated by the caring, sharing and non-mercantile exchanges practices. Such proposition demands the researcher to assume a new posture that implies to be engaged and opened to non-academic forms of knowledge. With this another perspective, employing cartography as a research method, two courses were offered and developed in cooperation with Rosa Leão Occupation women, in Belo Horizonte. Building upon the understanding that self-built urban occupations are always seen from a perspective of precarity and lacking, portrayed as such by the media and the technical status-quo, the objective of such courses was to enhance and provide such vision with a further degree of complexity, giving visibility to other narratives that were created from references and memories of women that inhabit and experience the routine of such territory. Facing the challenge of constructing instruments that could trigger a process both dynamic and shared by the actors engaged in the project, and in addition, bring into evidence possible dialogues between feminist theories and everyday practices of the women from the occupation, we opted for the construction of devices that activated the affective memory of these women. Memories and experiences were narrated, registered and, finally, were turned into supports (posters, banners, book) of an installation for the celebration of the occupation's anniversary. A fabric of memories and knowledge that manifested powerful and subversive subjectivities, announcing paths for the construction of other conducts.

**Keywords:** Neoliberal rationality, Other conducts, Other narratives, Memory, Feminism, Urban occupations

### 1 Patriarchy and the neoliberal reason: subjectivation processes

Among the many power relations existent throughout society, feminists have been drawing our attention to a certain type of power that men exert over women as a whole. The feminist uprising from the 1960's brought up the concept of patriarchy to define such relationship.

*(...) patriarchy indicates a social order in which men detain power, or yet, in a simpler phrasing, power belongs to men. It is, then, almost a synonym for masculine domination or*

*women's oppression. All of these expressions, contemporary of the 70's, refer to the same object, which formerly had been called women's "subordination" or "subjugation", or still, "the feminine condition". (Delphy, 2009, p. 174, our translation)*

With its origin rooted in the notion of father's authority (pater), which designated social relations in ancient societies, the concept was retrieved in order to shed light upon the power of men, although its generality and its trans-historical range are an object of debate. In that sense, some feminists prefer to complement it with the concept of "gender", in order to specify the roles assumed by men and women in specific contexts.

Aiming to expand this debate, we found in Foucault (1977) the concept of power, defined not as a thing or summary of things situated in someone or in some institution, but as a system of relations that articulates truth and law. In order for this system of power to become effective, it is necessary for some devices, both discursive and non-discursive, to grant statute of truth to a certain epistemic order, whilst denying such statute to other forms of knowledge. In another way, knowledge and power are inseparable arenas, a perspective that summons us to analyze the emergence of patriarchy by investigating the devices deployed to grant such statute to masculine knowledge, as well as their relationship with the capitalist mode of production.

Memory is an important dimension of the feminist theory. From this perspective, it is a category that composes political action and the struggle of women towards the transformation of their own material condition of subordination and exploitation. It is a crucial aspect of life, for it is through it that the binding with ancestry is set, with experience and with different forms of life, forms that are not repeatable through time (Paredes, 2013). Memory is always searching for utopias, witnessing frustrations and successes, enabling shifts that disturb History with a capital H. This perspective is produced from the borders, from the underground, and, simultaneously, aims to give visibility to women and other subaltern subjects and to constitute itself as legitimate in the process of knowledge production (Nocioni, 2017). In that sense, memories are a form of political resistance that modifies the possibility of storytelling. Resisting is also the capacity of narrating oneself.

A key question for approximating the feminist debate to that on capitalism and its effects is comprehending that gender-related oppressions are interlinked to many other dimensions, such as racism and class oppression. Thus, it is necessary to apprehend the experience of each subject as a multidimensional one.

In fact, patriarchy has different effects on the totality of women and, in order to avoid essentializing arguments, we must consider the multiple intersections. This is especially relevant for an investigation that aims to comprehend gender relations in a territory inhabited mainly by black and poor women.

The crossing between oppressions was a central concern for the black feminist movement since its origin. However, the concept of intersectionality was first conceived by Crenshaw (2002), focusing on the standpoint of black women

*Intersectionality is a problem conceptualization that aims to capture the structural consequences and the interaction dynamics of two or more axis of subordination. It concerns specifically the way in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create the basic inequalities that structure the relative position of women, races, ethnicities, classes and others (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 177, our translation).*

The author considers that the main problem with identity politics is not that it explicit differences, but that it is unable to deal with differences within groups (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw, following the track of feminist intellectual Mari Matsuda, defines her methodology as 'a politic of making other questions' about phenomena. In that sense, she intends to comprehend a problem that appears to be class-related as something that may also be sustained and informed by race and gender issues.

As Matsuda suggests, many times, in a situation identified, for example, as an obvious product of racism, for example, more could be revealed if as a routine we posed the following questions: Where is sexism in that? What is its class dimension? Where is heterosexism? And aiming to expand these questions even further, we could ask: In which way is this issue informed by regionalism? By the historical consequences of colonialism? (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 183, our translation)

Since we agree with the idea that capitalism cannot be separated from patriarchy, we are confronted by another question: How does this relationship work in a context of neoliberal capitalism? What are the "new" power devices, both visible and invisible, that now reproduce both systems? According to Dardot and Laval (2016), the neoliberal system is more than just an economic system but, in foucauldian terms, a rationality, which shifts our conception of public goods, historically associated with citizenship and political democracy, to a logic of consumption. This affects the democratic system in such a way that, according to these intellectuals, we have entered a post-democratic era, where the main actor is the entrepreneurial subject. Such individual, an entrepreneur of himself, is fully inserted in the logic of competition and individual accumulation, and not only his desire is affected by these parameters, as he or she is also the producers of this way of life. "The desiring being is not just the point where power is applied; it substitutes the conduct directing devices". (Dardot and Laval, 2016, p. 327, our translation)

Apparently, the new neoliberal game is open to everyone, as long as we learn the rules to join it. However, if we recall that these rules were built and legitimized through power devices and that such devices are each day more subordinated to the logic of capital and efficiency, we cannot find any actual freedom. We are all subjected to an "imaginary illusion of total pleasure". "Everything is equivalent", affirm Dardot and Laval (2016), everything "has a price and is negotiable". However, if everything appears to be possible, on the other hand, everything is doubtful, everything is suspicious, "because nothing is law to no one".

Hence, if the capitalist game was already unequal between men and women, the perverse logic of domination only increments it and the insertion of women in this system is only possible whilst they enter the masculine game of competition.

## 2 The processes of production of “new conducts” and the urban occupations self-built by women

As possibility of counterbalancing the neoliberal rationality, Dardot and Laval assert the necessity of creating a new reason – a ‘counter-conduct’ capable of presenting an opposing alternative to the conducting procedures of the status quo, both towards oneself and towards others: “The counter-conduct as a form of resistance towards that [neoliberal] governmentality must correspond to a conduct that is indissociably a conduct towards oneself and a conduct towards other people” (Dardot and Laval, 2016, p. 400, our translation).

We risk affirming that such conduct already exists; it is feminine and feminist, it is engendered in the production of collective spaces and cooperative neighborhood networks, it is helmed by principles based on caring, sharing and non-mercantile exchanges. It is compatible with what De Certeau (1994) identified as the practice of everyday life, which prevents everything and everyone to be captured by the web of power. Such practices are subversive exactly because they are popular everyday procedures, silent (or even tiny) – at least to the eye of institutionalized practices.

Foucault himself, before giving relevance to power devices, had already announced in *The Will to Knowledge* (1979) the bilateral nature of a power relation: “where there is power there is resistance and, however, (or rather, due to that), resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1979, p. 90, our translation). In dialogue with such perspective, Deleuze (2006) points that forms of resistance may rise not only inside the power-knowledge dynamic, but also in a different dimension, distinct but coexistent with the former. While this does not cancel the hegemony, it prevents the emergence of a deadlock. Pelbart accurately summarizes such dynamic, and finds a concept that indicates the positivity of such force, “biopotential”, that is, the potential of life (Pelbart, 2011).

It is possible to identify these counter-conducts in the self-built urban occupations, organized from the needs and possibilities of those who occupy and who, collectively, transform them in a territory full of meanings and economic conditions. Through this process, they build houses, streets, urban structure and collective equipment that facilitate their own processes of community organization, which has an immense importance for the residents. A large amount of these actions is led by women that inhabit the occupation, whose strong presence in the community organization is allied with the rise of networks of support and mutual strengthening.

This paper will focus on the production of space in the Rosa Leão Occupation, one of the Izidora occupations, situated between Belo Horizonte and Santa Luzia, in a region of real estate expansion where a new regional was planned to be constructed. Since 2013, there are three big urban occupations in the zone, Rosa Leão, Esperança and Vitória, which add up to 8.000 families, according to data from the social movements. The region was called Isidoro, but after the land occupation, it was renamed to Izidora, paying homage to a black woman who fought for freedom and against slavery in the region. Isidoro corresponded to the last great green area of Belo Horizonte city, located in the north quadrant of the city, an area of major real estate expansion, driven by high investments in construction such as the Cristo Rei Cathedral and the Administrative City of Minas Gerais State. The International Eviction Court, an organism that advises the United Nations, considered Izidora’s case as one of the world’s biggest socio-territorial conflicts.

Urban planning was historically thought taking into account the necessities of capitalist production and of a universal subject – male, autonomous and free from any ties. The political participation of women in the formulation of urban policies was always limited and made difficult by a series of factors. However, in the self-built urban occupations, we have a radically distinct scenery. In this context, planning is made mostly by black and poor women, which represent the vast majority of the political coordinators of such territories, and who, in order to guarantee their rights, must face different dimensions of oppression: The dispute against neoliberal urbanism, political exclusion, inequality they face as workers, sexist violence, racism and patriarchy in their communities.

## 3 Academy leaves academy: deterritorialization processes

Once we admit the value and the potential of counter-conducts that emerge from subversive everyday practices, including those referents to the production of space, researchers and intellectuals are faced with the challenge of building means and instruments that do not reproduce the logic of power-knowledge, in which knowledge is located and limited to the academic environment.

*The intellectuals recently discovered that the masses do not depend upon them to know; they know perfectly, clearly, much better than they do; and they can express it very well. However, there is a system of power that (...) invalidates this discourse and this knowledge. Power that (...) penetrates deeply, subtly in the entire societal weft. Intellectuals themselves take part in this system of power, the idea that they are “conscious” and discursive agents is also a part of this system. The intellectual’s role (...) is rather to fight the forms of power exactly where he is, at the same time, object and instrument, in the sphere of knowledge, of ‘truth’, of ‘consciousness’, of ‘discourse’ (Foucault, 1979, p. 71, our translation).*

In the specific case of urban research and intervention, the very notion of planning and project, be it in the scale of urban, buildings or objects, is still linked to concepts such as organization, functionality and sectorization, all associated with predefined criteria and references. The various ways people find and decide upon the production and the appropriation of space are usually torn apart and replaced by those defined and sanctioned by the academic scientific norms. However, Lazzarato remind us that Foucault and Deleuze consider the elaboration of a problem one of the main questions of politics and this could be a different path for academic participation, since presenting problems is the same as “introducing new objects and new subjects in the political space and (...) transforming them into guidelines of a controversy and of a struggle”(Lazzarato, 2014, p. 127, our translation).

In that sense, we found in the methodological postulates of intervention research and of cartographical research possible paths for the construction of this new role as researchers. Cartography, as understood by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and their concept of rhizome (Deleuze e Guattari, 1995), may be comprehended as a method that aims to apprehend the existence through the identification of territorial elements, organizational but also potential, from escape lines and creative eruptions. In order for this to happen, the researcher has to be generously implicated, affecting and letting himself to be affected by the reality he or she is investigating.

Cartography as a methodology takes research as an intervention device that produces events opened to the unpredictable dimension of action. In that sense, the encounter between researcher and those who are researched will create destabilizations, unleashing the production of new forms of knowledge and new subjectivities. In this approach, the observer-researcher alternate movement, at a time towards the process he or she aims to analyze, at others retreating from it, destabilizes the separation between subject and object, transforming everything and everyone involved in the process into political subjects. That way, every voice and every knowledge are shareable and, due to that, they all may be transformed. It is, then, an open attitude towards the unknown, not only concerning matters of theory, writing and systematization – considering that the very construction of a thought takes us to unpredictable terrains – but also, and perhaps most importantly, to field research that necessarily conduct us to a process of constant deterritorialization.

#### **4 Memory and method deviation: processes of multi-territorialization.**

The course Emergent Cartographies <sup>1</sup> had as one of its objectives to map feminism in the Rosa Leão Occupation, in Izidora<sup>2</sup>. The first question we faced was about what constitutes a feminist manifestation produced in this territory. This was followed by the question on how to map it, without assuming the fallacious neutrality of a field researcher.

Hence, initial discussions dealt with these topics. Although field trips were preceded by lectures and discussions, we had to seek in a theoretical level a relation between theory and experience in which the latter was not a mere example of the former. In another way, it was necessary that theory functioned as an overture to the observation of gender relations, and not as a pursuit for the feminist ideal subjects. Practicing an open and generous listening and observation, deconstructing essentialized feminist images and taking women into account within the multiple intersections that compose their life were valuable gestures that subverted the traditional role assumed by orthodox academic studies.

*The relationship between «Women», a cultural and ideological Other compound constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic, etc) and «women», real and material subjects of their own collective histories, is one of the central questions that feminist academic practices aims to address. The connection between women as historical subjects and Women's representation by the hegemonic discourse is not a direct relationship, nor a simple correspondence or a simple implication (Mohanty, 2008, p. 121, our translation)*

The first question that arose was: Where are the women of the occupation, what are the functions they perform and what are their preoccupations? Since the first field trip, it was possible to notice that women are in the frontline of all projects that the group had contact with: In the fight for access to health treatments, on the construction of community space, on implementing community vegetable gardens, on the preservation of environmentally protected areas, on mobilizing for implementing an ecumenical space, in meetings with the public power for negotiating fundiary regularization. Women were the majority - and repeatedly represented the totality of community activities - bearing an important decision power.

This fact challenges an area of studies that is very dear to the feminist theory: The division of society in public and private arenas as one of the fundamental aspects for gender role construction. Inaugurated in modern times, the division between public and private spheres, separated and dichotomic, defines the public arena as that of reason, politics and, for that, as a masculine arena. Women belonged to the private arena, which was characterized by caring, affection and domesticity. However, these roles, configured in this specific way, refer to the experience of some women in a specific historical context, and they cannot be generalized for the totality of women. That by no means indicates that there are not any displays of masculine power within the community, but in reality that its configurations are complex.

Once we registered the important role women assume in community organization, we were faced with a second question: How to map it? The organization had already engaged in two major efforts of giving visibility to the actions of women. The first was the very choice of the name of the occupation. Rosa Leão was an important community leader in the region that passed away. During the listening processes, we realized that, despite the homage, they knew very little about her. Secondly, the community space that was under construction was going to be named Zoca, a homage in life to another important figure in popular resistance that lives in an occupation near Izidora.

However, even though feminine presence and the biopotential of practices in the community are unequivocally strong, the narratives about the Izadora's occupations pointed towards a non-recognition of their value within their domestic environment, both inside and outside the community. The speeches of these women accounted for the judicial actions, the protests, the police actions, but they never accounted for the everyday practices of women, that through sharing and caring, make it possible for the reproduction of life in this territory. Stigmatization and criminalization towards the occupation's inhabitants promoted by the police power, agents of public power and the media, appeared as a constant nuisance during conversations.

A third issue that concerned the dynamic of the course was the agency, that is, how to make it possible that women from the occupation and a group of students could connect and share experiences and emotions, inhabiting a common territory. How to deal with differences within groups that are intensified by the place occupied by the university as a producer of legitimate knowledge, which supposedly produces technicians that pose themselves as problems-solvers?

Facing such challenge, we found an important reference in the artwork "First Love", by Rivane Neuenschwander<sup>3</sup> considering the displacement proposed by the artist in the role of a sketch artist towards a poetic version, by inviting the visitors to portray their first love. The search is not after a reliable portrait of a regular criminal, but after that who someday 'stole' the heart of that visitant. Trustworthy and untrustworthy memory, crossed by intensities and affectivities, as fictional as truthful.

Another inspiration was the project "100 VezesCláudia" (100 times Cláudia) launched by the feminist NGO Think Olga<sup>4</sup>, when Cláudia Silva Ferreira was killed, shot in a crossfire in Morro of Congonha, in the Madureira neighbourhood, and then dragged by a police car from the Rio de Janeiro's military police. The project was an open call for artists to produce artworks that could rebuild in a sensitive way the image of Cláudia.

Following these ideas, we aimed to create a sketch of Rosa Leão, the community leader that named the occupation, but whom only few people knew of since there were no records of photographic registers of her. Some students started to follow leads that could take to the reconstruction of her story and her image. The searches led to Mrs. Marlene Alves de Matos and Mr. Joaquim Alves, two of the eldest inhabitants of the occupation. Skeptical with the presence of the university, their posture soon changed once the students revealed the motive of their visit. They spent hours talking about Rosa's life, which were rightfully sketched. By the end of the conversation, they found photographic registers of her (Fig. 1). "We have always wanted to register this story", said Mrs. Marlene Alves de Matos.



**Fig. 1:**Portrait of Rosa Leão handed by Mrs. Marlene Alves de Matos. Source: Authors, 2017.

Once we had this material in hands, during classes the group decided to make a banner with the image of Rosa Leão for the new community center (Fig. 2), as the main piece of a big exhibition with portraits of women from the occupation. Opposing the idea of "Wanted" from police slang, the exhibition would be called *Encontra-se* (which translates to Found) (Fig. 3). The photographic register began to work as our device to dialogue with these women. The images would accompanied by a word chosen by the inhabitant, which best described her (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 2:** Picture of the banner produced by the students from the sketch of Rosa Leão. Source: Authors, 2017.



Fig. 3: Photomontage of the "Encontra-se" (Found) exhibition in the Rosa Leão Occupation. Source: Authors, 2017.



Fig. 4: Photomontage of Mrs. Chica's portrait for the "Encontra-se" (Found) exhibition. Source: Authors, 2017.

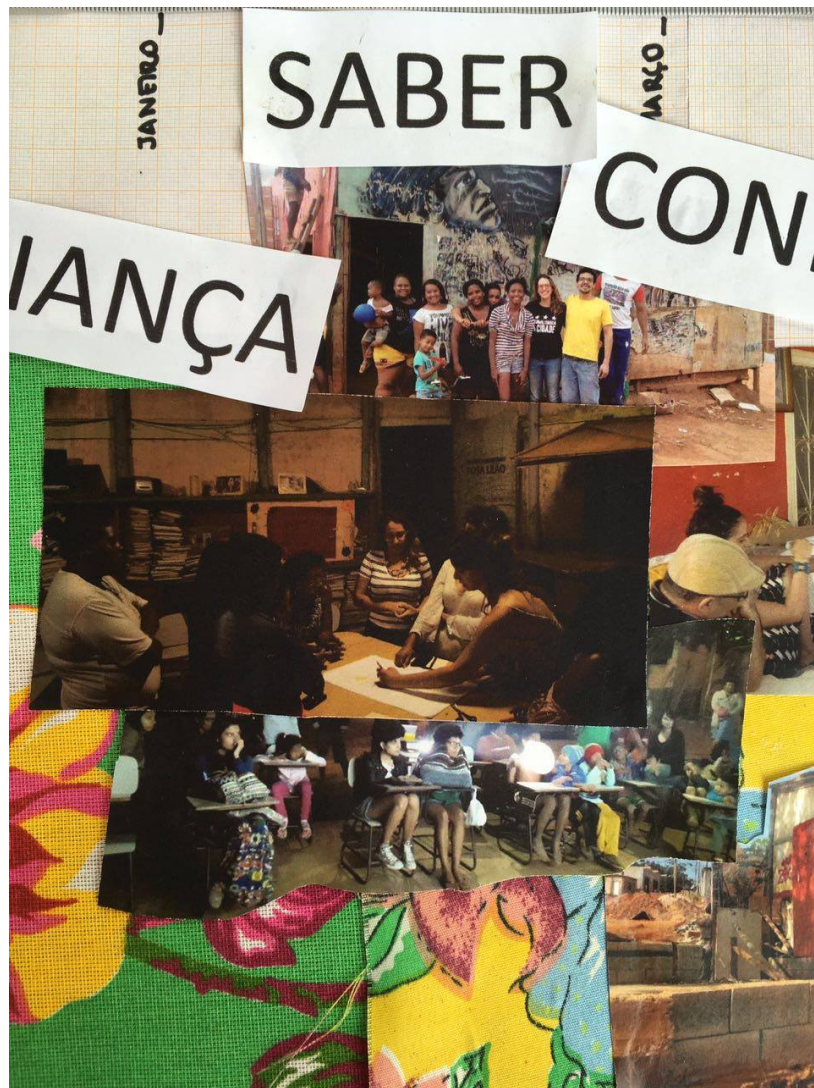
Parallel to this work, a group of students enrolled in the course "Disobedient Architecture" (Flexibilized Projects-Pflex) added up to those from "Emergent Cartographies" to develop a project starting from the reflection on feminism and memory, aiming to reconstruct the history of the occupation from the perspective of women. To do so, they fabricated: The basis of a timeline, diversely shaped women's bodies (short, tall, fat, slim), a collection of words gathered from informal chats with the inhabitants and from the classroom debates (happy, sad, struggle, feminine, household, street, care, sharing, dispute, etc) and a collection of photographs of the occupation, downloaded from the internet. The proposition was that women represented themselves in the timeline at the moment they arrived to the community and at the moment that marked them the most in the occupation, as well as identifying in time moments that were relevant for their struggle, through photographs and words provided by students. In order for this game not to become something sealed and predefined, blank papers were also offered, as well as scissors and colored pencils, so that new words could be written during the process, and so that each woman could insert their marks and histories to the bodies they draw.

The construction of the timeline (and of memory), through colours, props, disperse words, forgotten images, retrieved memories from moments of struggle, of the violence they suffered, of the friendships they made, of their pride on being black

and of the pain of facing eviction threats, that unleashed potent narratives about the feminine and feminists practices of producing a territory not only in the physical sense but, above all, in the affective sense in the Rosa Leão Occupation. (Fig. 5, 6 and 7).



**Fig. 5:** Timeline workshop. Source: Authors, 2017.



**Fig. 6:** Detail of the timeline produced in the workshop. Source: Authors, 2017.



**Fig. 7:** Presentation of products developed by the students from the collective construction of the timeline . Source: Authors, 2017.

And so, from the devices created, memories were narrated and then registered so that, finally, they were transformed into supports (posters, banners, book) of an installation to celebrate the anniversary of the occupation. A fabric of memories and knowledge that manifested powerful and subversive subjectivities, announcing paths for the construction of other conducts.

## 5 Final considerations

Motivated by the uneasiness of investigating contrapositives to processes of subjectivation present in the neoliberal rationality, we found leads in the everyday practices of women who live in the self-built urban occupations, whose practices are centered in caring, sharing and in the reproduction of everyday life. Recognizing such practices as other conducts, both potent and feminist, implied in a displacement in the very role assumed as researchers.

To enable the development of a space of freedom against the imposed knowledge, in order to produce memory, is a challenge, an oppositional exercise, a practice that reveals all those knowledge and experiences that have been placed on the margins. On the other hand, memories are not static, they are constructions of narratives, processes that establish new meanings and socialized interpretations. They are contradictory, for they are constructed, and they may be changed. The potential of memory becomes evident once individual remembrances are collectively discussed.

*Although we know that an individual bears its memories, produces them and shares them, we cannot doubt that memory is rooted and situated there where we share spaces, bonding ties, solidarities and sociabilities (Da Silva Castela, 2010, p. 44, our translation).*

However, classic instruments of qualitative research in the social sciences field would not be sufficient for this task. Thus, it was through art that we found our references. Such fact refers to the relationship between art and politics proposed by Chantal Mouffe (2013) as two fields that should always be thought in articulation. Mouffe argues that art is always political, and the problem lies in the critical capacity of artistic practices, that is, in the different ways they promote visibility to those things that the dominant consensus aims to erase. Hence, they contribute to the rising of various agonistic and plural spaces and, in the last instance, for the construction of a radical democracy. From this perspective, we understand that the proposed mnemonics devices brought to light forgotten narratives and memories, which together reconfigured and updated both the physical spaces of the occupation and the symbolic spaces of women who take part in the everyday struggles.

At the same time, it is necessary to confront the production of knowledge that advocates for a colonialist definition of what may or may not be narrated (Spivak, 2010). To dominate is also to expropriate subaltern subjects of their capacity of self-defining (Collins, 2016). This dominant production presents history as a homogeneous whole, erasing its production marks, as well as the bodies that produced it. Space-time appears here as a linear scheme. Ignoring complexities and narrating from the perspective of an abstract universal subject, without any class markers, nor racialization processes, or sexual differences, naturalizes a male, white, middle/high class and heterosexual subject as the universal one. The universalizing characteristics of occidental thought contribute to placing certain knowledge, cultures and memories in a subaltern spot (Federici, 2017).

Constructing memories produces a rupture in this totalitarian order and retrieves the disorder of intersubjective memories, because social life is constituted of contradictions, incomplete meanings and diffuse forms. At the same time, this appears to be fundamental if we aim to build alternative counter-conducts to the current mode of life as it enables us to listen to voices of those who travel through similar paths.

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**1** Course offered in The Architecture School of UFMG, by the professors Marcela Brandão and Natacha Rena

**2** This work is linked to the master research of Natalia Alves (NPGAU-UFMG)

**3** View in < <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrad/fq1806201012.html> > [Accessed in 20 Jun. 2018].

**4** View in <<http://thinkolga.com/2014/03/19/100-vezes-claudia/>> [Accessed in 20 Jun. 2018].