

Considering domestic institutions and *householding*. A necessity for building a feminist solidarity economy

Feminism and solidarity economy.

International webinar organized by the scientific committee of RIPESS Europe, the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Foundation and the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra.

March, 8th 2021

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Considering domestic institutions?

Lessons from AMESOL, Association of Women
in the Solidarity Economy of São Paulo (Brazil)

AMESOL as “real” solidarity economy

- AMESOL women’s discourses:
 - AMESOL as the place they have been “recognised as women”.
 - Where “real solidarity economy” is practiced.
- Context:
 - An association of round 50 women in craft and cooking activities, organized since the 2010’s.
 - A monthly solidarity economy fair.
 - Exchanges of information, know-how, raw materials, etc. within the association.
 - Political training and logistical support from SOF, a feminist Brazilian NGO.
 - Origins in both the feminist movement and in solidarity economy public policies.
 - Different ages, family situations, regions of the city but one common feature: living in the periphery of Sao Paulo.
 - Care and domestic work as women’s responsibility.
 - Generating an income as a necessity.
 - Unequal and precarious access to social services.
 - Living with violence (domestic, criminality, drug trafficking...).



AMESOL women before AMESOL

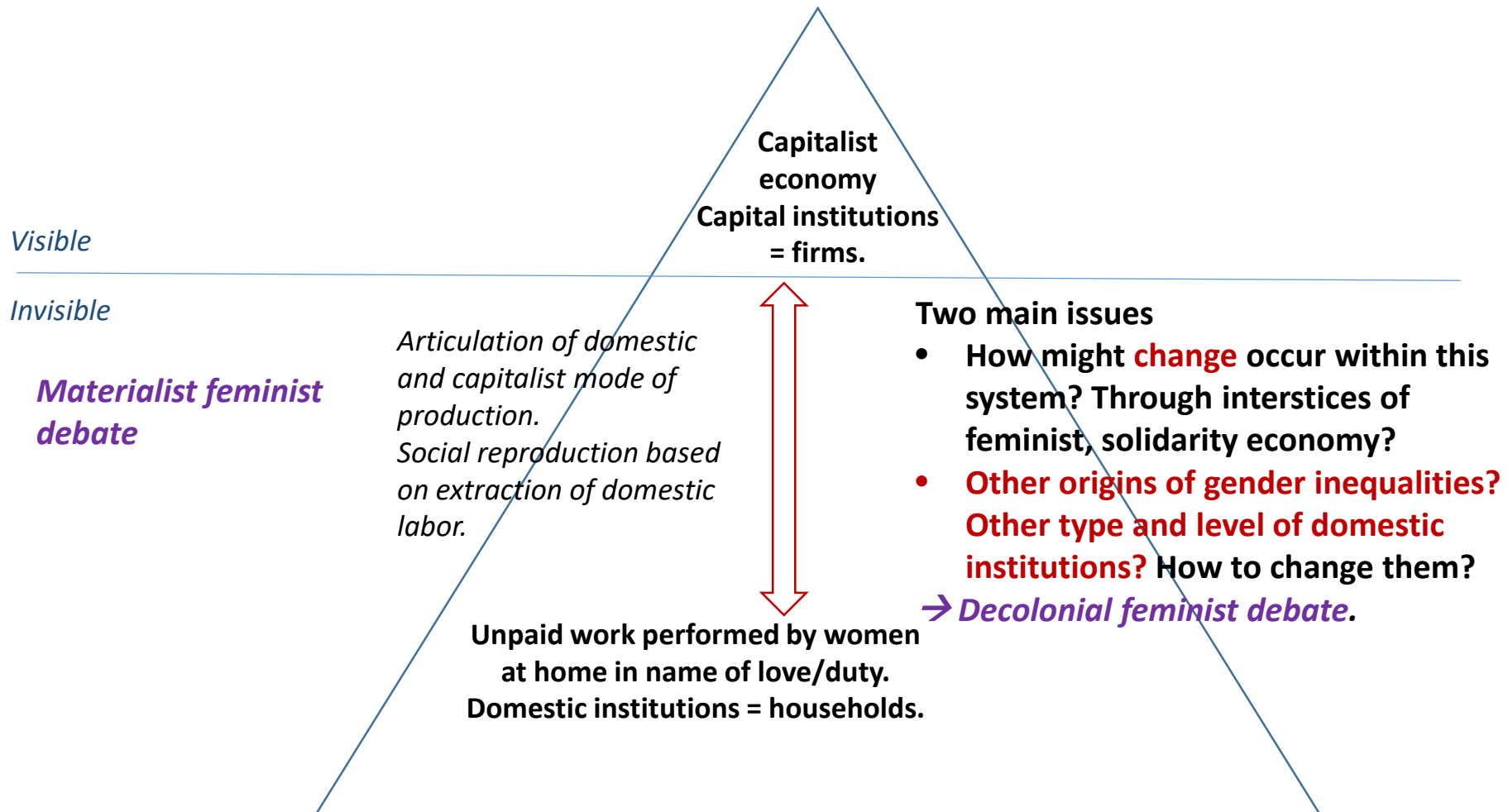
- Experience of the labour market: exhaustion, humiliation, exclusion.
 - As self-employed workers, domestic workers, workers in factories, vendors on informal markets etc.
 - Facing discrimination as (mostly) black women.
 - Having to juggle with working hours, long journeys and domestic responsibilities.
- Experience of solidarity economy in local public policies: autonomy / persistent invisibility of domestic issues.
 - Meaning of work, sense of autonomy in income generation and decision-making through self-management, self-esteem and inclusion in political self-help networks.
 - Policies connected to social assistance and targeting women, yet no consideration of gender roles and power relations.
 - A model of daily work, with fixed working hours, in permanent, supra-familial organisations incompatible with women's responsibilities: "to show something that does not exist".



Considering *householding*?

Lessons from producers' associations in rural communities of Batallas, Bolivia

Looking beneath market economy: diversity of economic institutions



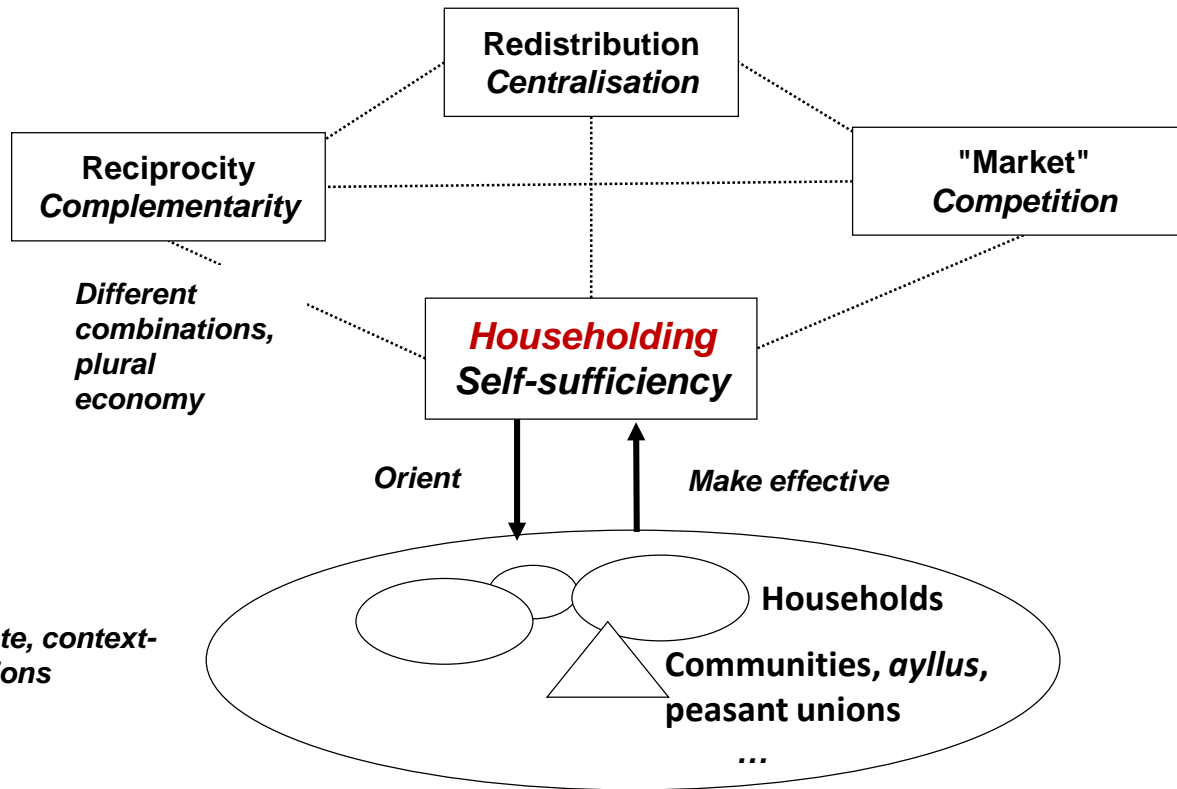
Other gender relations and domestic institutions

- E.g. rural indigenous communities in Bolivian Altiplano.
 - Gender inequality comes from exclusion of women from **local political spaces** (*ayllus* or peasant unions) (Harris, 2000; Choque Quispe, 2007; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010).
 - These spaces reproduce community norms geared towards **self-sufficiency**, regulating the penetration of market logics and capitalist accumulation (Harris, 1983).
 - These spaces **exclude the domestic issue** from local political debate. Women's overwork and the inadequacy of social services are not addressed. The only part dealt with is that of domestic violence.
 - They are the primary domestic institutions here.
 - In this configuration, women's participation in solidarity economy (ex. producers' association in Batallas) is limited.
 - Mix associations ignore gender inequality and women's "private" issues.
 - Women only associations discuss it privately but are generally unable to change it (Farah, Hillenkamp, Ruesgas and Sostres, 2021).
 - Building solidarity economy requires a complex process of shifting domestic institutions towards more egalitarian forms of protection and self-sufficiency, without destroying them.



Considering householding as a principle of economic integration

Principles of economic integration (ideal-types)



Institutions

Diversity of concrete, context-dependent institutions

Householding:

- Same level of **generality** as the market, reciprocity and redistribution in economic analysis.
- Based on **self-sufficiency** (rather than autarky - Polanyi, 1944 - more restrictive).
- Allows for a **diversity** of domestic institutions.
- Issue for feminist solidarity economy: **democratization** of all four principles and corresponding institutions.

Building feminist solidarity economy

Achievements and challenges of RAMA –
Agroecological Network of Women Farmers of
Barra do Turvo, Brazil

Transforming householding in practice

- Enhancing the level and value of self-sufficiency through a women farmers' agroecological network.
 - RAMA : network of around 70 women in 9 rural communities in Barra do Turvo (Vale do Ribeira, SP, Brazil). Organized since 2015 under the impulse of SOF.
 - Increase and diversification of women's production for self-consumption.
 - Food in kind and processed foods, medicinal plants and phitosanitary products, handcraft.
 - Invisible work: unpaid and considered as an extension of women's domestic duties.
 - Disputing the value of this work through specific instruments and the network.
 - Agroecological Notebooks.



Building solidarity economy sales channels

- Sale of the surplus of the diversified production: 250 to 300 different products each month.
 - Here market is subordinate to householding.
- Sales at fairs, networks and institutes linked to the solidarity economy movement.
 - Adjustment of demand to offer.
 - Pricing through debates within the network (single price) and with consumers. Central element of reciprocal relations over the long term.
- Different modalities of redistribution
 - Subsidies at local level (e.g. truck provided by the municipality of Barra do Turvo).
 - SOF's support through resources from public policy / international development cooperation.
 - Consumer's donation campaigns for vulnerable populations during the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Challenge to democratise the sources of redistribution, avoiding dependence on discretionary decisions.



Achievements and challenges

- Democratization of economic relations.
 - Based on solidarity at different level: local groups, RAMA, SOF, consumers, social movements.
 - Starting from householding.
 - Putting production for self-sufficiency at the centre of the network.
 - Disputing the value of unpaid work for self-consumed production.
 - Continuing with sales on market submitted to democratic decision.
 - Decisions in “local public spaces” of debate within RAMA and with consumers.
 - Respect of production for self-consumption as a primary objective.
 - Leading to recognition of women’s work and income at family and community level.
 - Women’s new autonomy of decision on sales and production.
 - Some men stopped working outside to “help” the women with agricultural work – a reversal of the relationship, and a start on transforming the agricultural division of labour.
 - Domestic and care work continues to be divided mainly between women.



Photo: @RAMA



Photo: I. Nillekamp



Photo: @RAMA

Conclusion

Conclusion

- The solidarity economy cannot stop at the borders of paid work and market production.
- The challenge for the full participation of women and for gender equality is to **democratise simultaneously domestic institutions**, which guide the economic process in the same way as associations, cooperatives, markets, etc.
- These institutions are **diverse**.
 - The home, as place where women's free labour is extracted in the articulation between domestic and capitalist modes of production, constitutes a central but not unique configuration.
 - Other domestic institutions, which can also be oppressive, (co-)exist.
- **Householding** as a principle of economic integration makes it possible to grasp the diversity of domestic institutions which contribute to self-sufficiency.
 - These institutions define different ways in which self-sufficiency is ensured.
- The analysis of the **four** economic principles - householding, reciprocity, redistribution and the market - makes it possible to envisage the democratisation of the economy **as a whole** and thus the construction of **feminist solidarity economy**.



Photo: @RAMA