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"Women and the Agrarian Transformations"

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Women and the Agrarian Transformations

Critical agrarian studies have seen a significant surge of interest in gender as a central category of analysis in processes of agrarian change worldwide. Much of the most recent waves of this burgeoning literature has drawn on theorizations of social reproduction to illuminate the gendered consequences of agrarian transformations both within and beyond the peasant household. These insights have been generative, deepening our collective understanding of how shifts in rural life, technological adoption, and market integration (or exclusion) produce uneven outcomes across gendered lines. While the theoretical terrain is rich, far less is known about the concrete methods and methodological approaches through which scholars of gender and agrarian change pursue these questions—questions that are vital to advancing the subfield from gendered and feminist perspectives. It is against this backdrop that the present collection assembles critical reflections from scholars and practitioners working with field-based and ethnographic methods across diverse and rapidly changing agrarian contexts. Spanning multiple agrarian worlds and crossing disciplinary boundaries, the essays demonstrate how researchers render visible the gender division of labor within and beyond the household, trace how gendered power relations structure agrarian life and resource access, and attend carefully to how research participants—principally peasant women across differentiated social class positions—interpret and contest their own realities.

The two essays contained in this ASN Bulletin issue grapple with the political and epistemological dimensions of fieldwork and are firmly rooted in the tradition of scholar-activism that has become a defining feature of critical agrarian studies. Essay 1, by Lorena Rodríguez Lezica, Gabriela Veras Iglesias, Nat Tommasino Comesaña, and Alicia Migliaro González, introduces the method of *Body-Territory Mapping*, developed through feminist critical outreach work in Uruguay. Researcher-facilitated yet rigorously participant-centered, this method foregrounds the embodied dimensions of territorial dispossession and equips communities with analytical tools to articulate such experiences on their own terms. In a similar vein, Essay 2 by Patricia Retamal advances *cartographies of social reproduction* as a methodological tool through which participants trace and render visible the entanglements of reproductive and productive labor. This approach extends debates on the porous boundaries between the two, particularly in Southern agrarian contexts, by providing applied

methodological traction to what is often treated as an abstract conceptual problem.

Together, these contributions center the importance of feminist engagements with questions of epistemology and methodology in the study of agrarian change. They highlight the value of field-based and direct forms of engagement while simultaneously—and even if at times subtly—cautioning against the tendency to transpose the researcher's self into contexts where local communities are primarily preoccupied with the struggles of everyday survival. What emerges across the essays are methodological practices rooted in long-term commitments to participant communities that seek not only to document but also to resonate with these communities' own struggles. In doing so, they resist both the allure and the impossibility of total ethnographic immersion in agrarian worlds, while offering promising pathways for future feminist and critical agrarian scholarship.

Dhouha Djerbi

Body-Territory Mapping and Feminist Critical Outreach: Lessons from Uruguay

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1. *Introduction*

In Uruguay, mirroring a trend also observed in other countries of the Global South—particularly in Latin America—a series of transformations have taken place that threaten the sustainability of family, peasant, and community-based agriculture, agroecology, and careful ways of inhabiting territories, in the face of the dominant extractivist model. These are contexts in which extractivist practices have caused varying degrees of harm to the fabric of life—impacting communities and the ways in which relationships between human and more-than-human lives are built. We understand extractivism and the dispossession of land and water as contemporary expressions of an imperial order that structures territories and organizes land, water, bodies, and labor according to its own needs. This is a capitalist, patriarchal, and racialized order that continues the colonial tradition of territorial appropriation, producing structural dependencies and dispossession. Such a process drives and sustains the multiple social and environmental crises we are experiencing today.

Focusing on social struggles in recent years, we observe that resistance to dispossession and structural crises is becoming increasingly central. In particular, the leading role of women has become more visible in defending life, the health of territories, land, and water—denouncing contamination and poisoning in the hands of agribusiness, as well as land concentration in the hands of real estate speculation[i].

It is in light of this scenario that we have asked ourselves: What are the concrete, material realities of the women living in these territories? How does this model impact the body-territories of women? What kinds of community networks are these women weaving within their territories? What role do women's knowledges play as a historical strategy of self-care and resistance? These questions led us to develop and carry out an experience that we share here.

These words are written by compañeras who straddle both academics and activist domains in Uruguay, and who—together with various collectives and organisations across different territories in the country—are guided by a shared concern about the assaults on life

brought by the advance of agribusiness, and by the need to sustain practices of self-care in the face of multiple forms of violence: physical, emotional, psychological, and institutional.

Our aim has been to make visible the ways in which life is sustained and territories are inhabited through the networks woven by the women with whom we have been working. We understand these networks as ties and spaces of encounter built throughout their lives. These networks reveal alternative ways of living—through practices, ancestral knowledges, ways of being and relating, of being affected, and through forms of solidarity and reciprocity that challenge the neoliberal logics of capitalist subjectivation. They enable those who are part of them to collectively meet multiple and diverse needs[ii].

A second objective has been to engage in dialogue with fellow compañeras from the collective *Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* (Critical Perspectives on Territory from Feminism – MCTF), of which two of us are members. The collective MCTF was founded in 2012 in Ecuador, when some of its current members were pursuing graduate studies in Quito and felt the need to come together outside of the institutional spaces that brought us together at that time, in order to think and act from the perspective of accompanying struggles in territories threatened by extractivism. Today, it is made up of nine diverse women based in Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, Peru, Brazil, and Colombia, who have self-organized to think, imagine, and defend dignified and collective life through the defense of diverse, free, and autonomous body-territories (territorioyfeminismos.org/)

Through collective dialogue and construction—either as part of or in accompaniment with struggles taking place across different territories in Abya Yala—the MCTF collective develops methodologies to confront territorial and gender-based violence. Among these is body-territory mapping, a central methodological and pedagogical-political tool in the experience we share here.

2. Body-territory mapping

Body-territory mapping is a methodology developed and systematised by the MCTF collective (MCTF, 2017). The body-territory mapping is an embodied, methodological, pedagogical, and political practice involving subjectivity, body, memory, and emotions. It is a practice of collective reflection and consciousness-raising, a transformative experience that enables the collective construction of embodied knowledge.

Behind its conception lies an ethical and political positioning: feminist, community-based, and decolonial. It was born in the heat of women's struggles within community political-pedagogical processes in Abya Yala, and from conceptions that do not separate the body from the territory.

In its introductory pages of the booklet *"Mapping the Body: A Methodological Guide for Women Defending Their Territories"*, it presents an understanding of the body and territory not as separate entities, but as intertwined dimensions of a shared life experience—shaped by memories, meanings, violence, and resistance. It highlights the role of meaning, memory, and emotion; the interplay between violence and resistance, between sorrow and joy; the possible and desirable dialogues between feminism and environmentalism; and the potential of tools rooted in lived experience to collectively create strategies of resistance with a transformative horizon.

> We understand the body as our first territory, and we recognise the territory within our bodies: when the places we inhabit are violated, our bodies are affected; when our bodies are harmed, the places we inhabit are also violated. These teachings have been shared with us by compañeras from many parts of Latin America, particularly from rural and Indigenous communities.

We seek to reclaim the wisdom of our ancestral women, who believed our bodies are full of sensitivity—because they give life and carry memory. Through our senses, we connect with the territories: we hear what the river tells us, we speak with the ponds, the milpas, and we laugh with the birds; in other words, it is through the senses that we become connected to the land.

There is no doubt that what happens in the territories is imprinted on the body: the sadness of exploitation, the anguish caused by pollution—but also the joy in our hearts for being part of building other worlds in the face of so much violence.

We try to weave bridges between feminism, environmentalism, nature,

> and territory, allowing us to see the world more fully and more sensitively. We want to transform our lives. The tools we propose here have helped us because they aim to connect lived experience with reflection, and together seek collective strategies of resistance (MCTF, 2017, p. 7).

In search of a methodology that acknowledges the body and affects—often overlooked or marginalised by traditional methodologies grounded in scientific rationality—we have embraced body-territory mapping, as it enables us to make visible the assaults suffered by our territory (the land) and how we experience them through our bodies. This approach breaks the dichotomy between human bodies and land-territory, recognising that we are territory, and that what happens to the land shapes our embodied selves[iii].

Our work from Uruguay is situated within a shared *knowing-doing*, rooted in a common practice and perspective: *feminist critical outreach*. The four compañeras writing here work as university lecturers, engaging in careful, collaborative, and politically committed research processes alongside women's struggles. Feminism runs through our activism, our classrooms, our fieldwork, and our territorial interventions with others. While university outreach is one of the most feminised functions within the academic sphere in Uruguay, there is far greater visibility of feminist research than there is of feminist outreach. This is partly due to the androcentric bias that persists within university extension practices, and to the gendered division of labour in outreach work—manifested in women's bodies sustaining care work and multiple organisational tasks. Yet this feminisation of labour has not led to a feminisation of the academic references or frameworks within university outreach[iv]. It is in the face of this challenge that we write these words: to name what we do, to make visible the standpoint from which we act, and to contest the ways in which knowledge is produced within the public university.

As part of an experience developed during 2025, we held four workshop-style gatherings, using methodologies that engaged the senses, memory, and emotions—placing body-territory mapping at the centre as a key tool. This dynamic allowed us to share ways of seeing and being in the world. The gatherings were carried out in collaboration with four experiences in four different territories across Uruguay.

Two of these experiences took place in the southwest, northwest and northern regions of the country (in the departments of Soriano

and Paysandú), areas that share similar issues related to the soybean and forestry agribusiness model: impacts on health, land concentration and foreign ownership, droughts and floods, among other expressions of the dominant production model. Along the southern and eastern coast (departments of Canelones, Maldonado, and Rocha), other collective experiences face problems such as contamination of watercourses, poisoning of the soil, and indiscriminate clearing of riparian forests—linked to agribusiness and real estate speculation. In the eastern region (mainly Rocha department), within a landscape dominated by rice monocultures, where herbicides are routinely sprayed from planes over water sources and homes. While traditional family farming is in decline, a few rural families continue to resist through small-scale livestock farming. In the following section, we elaborate on each experience.

3. *Women's Narratives of Resistance*

Hum Pampa Indigenous Women's Collective

The *Hum Pampa* community is a group of women descended from the original Charrúa nation (the Charrúa nation inhabited the territory that is now Uruguay, part of western Argentina, and southern Brazil). It is a collective organised in a decentralised manner across the country, with members living in various towns and departments, primarily concentrated in rural and peripheral areas. From their localities and networks, they have been reclaiming and keeping alive the memories of their lineages and ancestors through the practices of their rites and exchanges of knowledge about natural medicine.

Part of their struggle is to resist in a territory that denies Indigenous memory. The colonial and patriarchal wound has produced the image of a country "without Indigenous people," founded by European migration—an image that still persists today. The bodies and voices of these women repeatedly declare that they are still alive, that their ancestors resisted the persecutions of the Nation-State. They seek to reconnect the threads between the present and the past, listening to those who came before them and reproducing their lives in deep contact with the territory they inhabit. With the name of the collective, they evoke a way of inhabiting the territory. *Hum* means "everything that I am," and *Pampa* refers to the predominant biome of the country: "it is like an 'I,' but not a personal, possessive, or defined 'I.' It is more like my entire inner territory, everything I carry with me (…) connecting the inner territory—what one brings, one's own history, what makes and composes us—with that external territory" (Rodríguez Lezica & Migliaro González, 2021: 93).

Some members work the land through agroecology, others are park rangers, some make plant-based natural medicines, and others work with children. In dialogue with community organizations, they organize against extractivism and agribusiness. They hold monthly meetings that rotate across different territories, in addition to virtual gatherings. In these encounters, they recover oral knowledge passed down through the lineage of women in their families, knowledge of their ancestral culture that the colonial order has systematically sought to erase. The ritual of presenting babies to the moon has survived. It represents a bond that unites them and a ceremony sustained over time (Rodríguez Lezica & Migliaro González, 2021).

They also organize to march together on important dates such as March 8, and they hold healing gatherings for both body and land. In their meetings, they devote attention to the defense of water and native forests, and to maintaining the balance in the relationship between human beings and other-than-human beings. They weave themselves together in order to sustain their territories.

Rural women in the northern area of the Rocha department[xi]

In this case, these are women born and raised in the countryside—four of them family farmers, one a rural wage worker and smallholder, one a rural school teacher, and another working as a doctor in the town. They do not form a collective or any specific organization, although all of them are part of groups and organizations linked to family farming and actively participate in the *Mesa de Desarrollo Rural* (Rural Development Roundtable) in the northeron zone as delegates of the groups from their localities. These Roundtables, present in different territories throughouht the country, are spaces for dialogue and advice on public policy regarding the agricultural sector and rural areas. They are non-binding and involve public agricultural institutions as well as social organizations from rural areas. It is within these *Mesas* that they meet periodically and have repeatedly raised their concerns about health in their territory. Beyond this setting, they also meet on various occasions through different activities held in the territory, some of which are organized through university outreach programs.

During the workshop in which we worked with mapping and other methodologies aimed at engaging the senses and memory, they shared certain common elements that contribute to the social fabric they are weaving. The countryside is what they love and defend, and where they continue to choose to live, so their children can "nurse from the roots of the land." For them, what the land offers is the possibility of generating health from the earth. They have formed a

network of women in a rural area where they have experienced hostility, violence, and mistreatment, but also support, care, and protection. They got to know one another in different spaces and at different times. When asked about what they have in common, they emphasise their concern for nature, the use of herbicides, the spraying, the planes flying over schools and houses, as one of them affirms: "What unites us all is strength and struggle, from different places. And there is no one here who wants to give up."

Their voices are present, but they know many people cannot speak out because they are afraid, as agribusiness holds a lot of power in the area. Many people depend directly on the rice companies as a source of employment, either themselves or through family members. Family farmers who still live in the countryside have rice producers as their neighbors. Rural schoolteachers and the family doctor are connected with rice company workers or their children. All of this creates a climate of intimidation that contributes to silence (Rodríguez Lezica, unpublished doctoral dissertation)

During the workshop, they shared their experiences of being women, the necessary adaptation to change, machismo and discrimination in rural life, and loneliness in the face of an empty nest, that is, when children leave home, and regarding the isolation in rural areas, which is often felt as forgotten and very distant from the cities; . They expressed the need for spaces where they can speak, tell their stories, share their words, listen, and be heard—to see themselves reflected in others. "That happens to me too," echoed as they introduced themselves and shared bits of their histories. Their body-territory maps included animals in their daily lives, native forest, and local flora and fauna. Through their maps, they also narrated the death of trees, farms, waters, soil, relatives, and people suffering from cancer and bone diseases, which they attribute to the use of herbicides in rice production in the area. Knees were drawn marked with scars from falls; rocks appeared on the paths; shoulders bore the weight of poisoning caused by pesticides, reflected in the deaths of family members and neighbours. They marked their lungs with symbols denouncing the poisoned air they breathe, while at the same time indicating it is from there that "the inner strength I have when I feel overwhelmed" comes. "I take a deep breath and think ahead, I go out and carry on," explained one of them. The mouth is connected with the colour violet, which crosses different places on the body-territory, symbolising a force that moves through various parts to emerge through the mouth to voice what is unwanted and what is truly desired. "My heart is well in nature," shared one woman, while another said her strength comes from there.

Their drawings also include the sun and the earth: "the sun that gives us life, the earth there that gives us everything." They drew the farm, pointing to it as a place of support, where bitterness turns into joy, and a place they often cannot inhabit or care for as they would like, due to a lack of time. The feet on the earth speak of connection with themselves and with life on that land. "When you step, you connect," one of them repeats, explaining what she means: "When you step, you have to step fully, knowing where we are." Their maps brought to the surface stories of mothers raised in a hostile rural environment, with a hardness developed as a strategy to face violence, and lives sacrificed, as one of them points: "she was a slave to her life, a slave for others." In some stories, hugs and expressions of affection were absent. There are also other women in the maps, forming networks of support and care in difficult moments.

Piñera-Beisso Rural Women's Collective[vii]

The women from the *Piñera-Beisso* collective are located in the south of the Paysandú department (northwestern region of Uruguay). Near the meeting place lies Paso del Salsipuedes, as well as the country's third and largest pulp mill, UPM-2 in Paso de los Toros (Uruguay), which began operating in 2023. Salsipuedes is a site that honours the historical memory of the formation of the Uruguayan nation-state. —a sacred place that allows the restoration of memory of the ethnocide of the Charrúas in our territory, which occurred on 11 April 1831 at the hands of Uruguayan government troops at the time. Although their emergence as a group is linked to the rise of public policies for rural women in Uruguay, they have always fought to find employment opportunities autonomously.

They are a group of adult women whom for the last three years, have been meeting in the new community hall in Piñera, where they gather to spin and weave. They describe the process of carding, spinning, and weaving: "When you shear the sheep, there are scraps left over. So you are spinning, and these scraps appear, and you have to stop, remove them, and you can't do it through the sheep's lock; you have to join them to card—they are carded in order to spin." Carding, spinning, and weaving are images that allow us to draw a parallel with what they do to care for their communities. They develop collective strategies to circulate their knowledge, facing today the challenges of marketing their products. Their actions have been important in making visible the struggles of women in rural areas, highlighting it as a sphere of patriarchal oppression. . They develop collective strategies to circulate their knowledge, currently facing challenges in marketing their products. Their actions have been important in raising visibility of the

struggle of women in rural areas as a sphere of patriarchal oppression.

Faced with the challenges of the current times, with the intensification of extractivism in the country strongly impacting the area where they live, the defence of body-territories takes on different experiences. In the construction of their body-territory maps, their strengths appear alongside their fears of denouncing the various problems in the territories they inhabit. Health issues, access to work, and environmental pollution concentrated in the area are key concerns. As they say, "we make the outside territory sick and we make our own territory sick, because that misuse, poor care of biodiversity brings us health problems." The health of their body-territories, linked to forestry and soybean monocultures, is a topic that stands out in conversation: "they tell you there's no danger, but I went to that nursery and it's covered with plastic. It's a permanent vapour. They say there's no danger. The plant is soaked. Soaked, soaked—you breathe that in. People faint."

Their maps also reflect the devaluation of women's work, even when they are the ones sustaining what capital defines as productive labor . "I was the one left in charge of the livestock, and they never gave me a penny; they didn't pay me, they paid my husband." The same work carried out by women is less recognised, and this is compounded by the invisibility of reproductive work: "the woman is the one at home, caring, cleaning, looking after the children." The community appears in their maps as a conflicted territory that is "increasingly closed off, more inward-looking, not opening up. One thinks that maybe if the community were broader, we would live better, there would be better things." Yet this very community is where their homes, their affections, their relationships with other people and nature are found. They mention birds, plants, and trees in their reflections.

In the drawings of their bodies that make up the maps, their homes are located in the heart. Grandchildren are drawn all over the body, especially on the hand because "I'm always with them, looking after them." The mouth is portrayed as a place of conflict related to whether or not to say what they feel. Knots in the throat, plasters on the arms show that sometimes they spend a lot of time sad. The legs are marked to indicate walking and the difficulties or pains they feel there. Strength is shown in the hands, shoulders, and paths taken to reach the homes of loved ones. The paths they travel: "you have to make paths to reach those strengths. Yes, if you stay still at home you won't be able to get to what you want. You have to make a path."

Las Gurisas agroecological collective[viii]

The agroecological collective *Las Gurisas* emerged in 2018 when they began to dream

of a collective, vital, and productive project that would reconnect them with rural life. At that time, all of them, coming from working-class families from different parts of the country, were studying at university in the city of Montevideo. Their daily coexistence, the affection built day by day, opened the door and the desire to invent other ways of inhabiting. Two years later, the dream took root, and "*Las Gurisas*" moved to the countryside to cultivate agroecological fruits and vegetables and to live together as an organisation.

Las Gurisas shared with us their ways of connecting with the land and community life, their concerns about the equitable sharing of the tasks that sustain life and the bonds that nourish us amid a system that attacks us. Their words and gestures honoured their ancestry, the bonds with the land and food production, being "daughters of family farming." But they also spoke of a quest: to weave themselves into multiple spaces and networks where the way of life they dream of cultivating collectively would resonate.

The journey through their body maps opened new keys for dialogue. It allowed us to understand the complexity of being young and living collectively in a rural area : the twin violences agribusiness and patriarchy traversing their bodies. The hives on the skin and respiratory ailments after fumigations hurt as much as the practices that delegitimise the know-how of a group of four women leading rural lives. The knot in the throat, the emotion that appears, the hands that embrace, the tender words that support—these speak of a sensitivity cultivated through shared experience. A deep conviction runs through their bodies and lives: that of being and doing while caring. Caring for the land, collective processes, others, and oneself. Care, then, as a form of resistance, of sowing, and of future.

These memories, embodied in the four experiences explored, not only name the harms caused by agribusiness but also reveal the intertwining of local violences with the global architectures that enable them. Throughout the exploration of these experiences, we observe how the socio-environmental issues emerging in extractivist contexts encounter resistance in these women's networks, which propose another way of inhabiting space and sustaining life. Their stories bring to life concerns related to fostering community life and generating other modes of social reproduction; needs related to their group process; at the community level, difficulties accessing care, situations of violence, health impacts from exposure to agrotoxins; caring for the land, seeds, water, native forest, and territory; reproduction of life in rural areas strongly marked by agribusiness; the transmission of ancestral practices from generation to generation by women; making visible other

ways of inhabiting and producing in the territory, such as agroecology and shared ways of life. . These concerns, needs, and strategies allow us to read the practices of 'women in struggle' as destabilizing forces against these forms of capitalist accumulation

Weaving the networks

We highlight from the experience with this methodology the power of starting from oneself, beginning with the body, in tune with the feminist slogan "the personal is political." The body-territory mapping starts from personal experience and, when shared with others, becomes collective. It is in this interweaving that the personal becomes politicised, because what happens to us—the violences we endure and also our desires—are not individual or intimate matters in the traditional sense, but deeply political expressions of the contexts and structures we inhabit.

Here, we can see the link between this methodology and feminist practices of self-awareness, inherited from emancipatory movements and, in particular, feminist genealogies. In this sense, body-territory mapping is a tool that not only allows mapping violences or territories but also activates processes of subjectivation, politicisation, and collective agency. By sharing what we feel and what affects us, mirroring occurs: what happens to me may also happen to another. We recognise ourselves in the other, opening the possibility of understanding together why what happens to us happens, identifying the structures that produce it, and at the same time envisioning collective strategies for overcoming it.

Finally, we want to highlight the power of the senses and the connection with the elements (earth, water, air, and fire) and our ancestry. In the methodological practices we have developed, closing the eyes and attending to smell, touch, or sound—senses often relegated in modern rational logic which prioritises sight—enabled the activation of memory and a journey to our ancestral roots. Often, when sharing these experiences, memories, emotions, and common territories emerge, which opens fertile ground for building the collective from feeling.

Body-territory mapping is deeply articulated with the principles of feminist pedagogy and popular education, insofar as it proposes horizontal processes of collective learning. By placing the body at the centre, along with memory, emotion, and speech, the mapping enables the production of knowledge woven from experience, affectivity, and struggle. In feminist critical extension processes, this methodology is not a diagnostic or intervention tool but a transformative pedagogical practice, a political act of self-representation and collective narration, producing critical subjectivities and constructing resistance strategies in the face

of the multiple dispossessions and violences that traverse our body-territories.

Mapping the body-territory has allowed us to name violences, bring memory to the present, resignify it, recognise what is common, and project resistance through mirroring with others in contexts of territorial dispossession. In this sense, we highlight its significance within feminist action research, as well as in militant and collaborative research in the field of agrarian social studies. For us, working with body-territory mapping has been particularly powerful within the framework of a critical and feminist outreach process, and in the pursuit of collectively and contextually constructed transformative knowledge. At the same time, we recognize the risk of depoliticizing it by reducing it solely to a research methodology or a diagnostic tool. In response, we emphasize that the concept of body-territory emerges from the struggles of women in Abya Yala. It is configured as a process of decolonizing the ways of understanding the dispossessions of capitalism, which sustains an imperial order, and of thinking strategies of resistance within the territories. It is precisely from the commitment to and accompaniment of these struggles that the methodology arises, and it is from this same commitment that the authors of this work have shared it.

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[ii] Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017
[iii] Cabnal, 2010; Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo, 2016.
[iv] Tommasino Comesaña y Correa García, 2023.
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Cartographies of Social Reproduction: A Methodology for Analyzing the Work of Rural Women in the Chilean Agro-Industry

Patricia Retamal[1]

Abstract

This article examines the effects of paid work on the social reproduction of low-income rural women in central Chile, using a methodological approach centered on social reproduction cartographies. In contexts shaped by the expansion of monoculture, the commodification of water, and the precarization of agro-industrial employment, the article proposes a situated reading of the productive and reproductive dynamics that shape the everyday lives of rural women. The research combines in-depth interviews with participatory and individual cartographic exercises that visualize both productive and reproductive labor, including the distribution of domestic tasks and the points of tension or overload. These cartographies not only reveal the intersections between wage labor and the reproduction of life but also highlight the strategies of agency and negotiation deployed by women in structurally adverse conditions. The article argues that social reproduction cartographies can serve as a critical tool to transcend dichotomies between production and reproduction, and between public and private spheres, offering a comprehensive lens for agrarian studies from the Global South.

Introduction

Feminist research has introduced the concept of social reproduction to highlight that the production of value is an interdependent process involving both productive labor (whether waged or self-employed) and reproductive labor (which encompasses domestic and caregiving responsibilities). This process is shaped by shifting contexts of economic domination and may give rise to dynamics that either support or undermine women's labor (Massey, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2004). Within this theoretical framework, it becomes essential to examine labor and reproductive dynamics in specific socio-spatial contexts.

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In rural areas, the neoliberal model of the Chilean agricultural sector—characterized by the expansion of monoculture (primarily fresh fruit), the intensification of water commodification, and the precarization of agro-industrial labor—has deeply reshaped the everyday lives of rural women (Caro & Cárdenas, 2022; Radovic-Fanta, 2021; Valdés, 2020). These transformations, far from being limited to the productive sphere, directly affect the organization of reproductive labor (Raynolds & Ipsen, 2023; Tinsman, 2016), exacerbating tensions within daily care arrangements.

In this context, the present article proposes an innovative methodological strategy: social reproduction cartographies. These are conceived as participatory and visual exercises that make it possible to capture the spatial dimension of women's daily productive and reproductive labor, grounded in their own narratives.

Labor and Daily Life of Rural Women in the Chilean Agricultural Sector

The labor of rural women in central Chile, particularly within the agro-export sector—such as the production of fresh fruit—is characterized by high levels of female participation in harvesting, sorting, and packing tasks. This work is predominantly carried out under conditions of informality, seasonality, and limited social protection (Caro et al., 2024; Valdés, 2015). Such conditions have contributed to the deterioration of both labor relations and social reproduction processes. Long working hours, combined with limited access to care infrastructures—such as childcare centers, health services, and schools—have intensified the domestic burdens placed on women. This scenario has weakened community networks and collective forms of organization in rural areas, particularly affecting expressions of class solidarity and labor-based strategies such as unionization in the agricultural sector (Radovic-Fanta, 2021).

Precarious labor opportunities, together with the structural conditions of Chile's agricultural sector—linked to land concentration, intensive resource use, and water scarcity—create a context that constrains the living conditions of rural families, particularly women engaged in agro-industrial labor (Espeter & Retamal, 2024). The main difficulties reported include exposure to climatic extremes, contact with agrochemicals, and limited access to protective equipment, which

results in significant physical demands. This situation does not end with paid employment but continues through reproductive labor. Upon returning home, women must resume domestic and care responsibilities without interruption and with minimal support.

Care arrangements remain shaped by gendered divisions of labor, where women are expected to take responsibility for domestic tasks, while male partners are typically absent from these duties. In some cases, women receive help from sons or daughters. The absence of public services—such as childcare, health centers, or support networks—further increases the demands of reproductive labor and narrows the possibilities for rest, organization, and participation in other spheres.

In this context, it becomes necessary to develop methodological strategies capable of capturing the complexity of women's lived experiences, considering both the forms of labor exploitation and the social arrangements that sustain everyday life. Social reproduction cartographies are proposed as a methodological tool that enables the spatial and dynamic representation of these interconnections through the active participation of the women involved. Unlike traditional interviews, this method allows for a dialogue in which participants can visually portray both productive and reproductive labor, as well as the intersections between the two. Since it is conducted as an individual exercise, it also allows for greater depth in exploring specific themes that emerge within each sphere, making it possible to reveal aspects that might otherwise remain invisible in more conventional data collection techniques.

Social Reproduction Cartographies: A Useful Tool to Identify the Productive and Reproductive Labor of Rural Women

Social reproduction cartographies is a methodological tool developed as part of my doctoral research (2023), which focused on rural women in agro-industrial contexts. The method draws from the frameworks of social reproduction geography (Mitchell et al., 2004; Rodríguez-Rocha, 2021; Winders & Smith, 2019) and social cartography (Ortiz Guitart, 2014; Vélez et al., 2012). The theoretical foundation of social reproduction geography recognizes productive and reproductive labor as two interconnected and continuous forms of work, observable across multiple scales

(Katz, 2001; Mitchell et al., 2004)—such as the household, the workplace, and the broader environment (Rodríguez-Rocha, 2021). From this perspective, the cartographic component enables the identification and analysis of physical and social elements that constitute the spaces in which social reproduction—or the labor of life (Mitchell et al., 2004)—takes place. This framework is complemented by oral narratives, drawings, spatial diagrams, and symbolic elements (such as descriptions of rituals, beliefs, etc.), which together represent the flows between productive and reproductive spaces.

The methodological exercise is structured around three main spheres:
i) productive labor,
ii) reproductive labor—specifically hygiene, health, household repairs, and food provision (Batthyány, 2021), and
iii) geographical context.

For the implementation of the exercise, the productive and reproductive spheres are analytically distinguished. While social reproduction theory understands both dimensions as part of the labor of life (Mezzadri, 2020; Mitchell et al., 2004)—especially in rural contexts (Mezzadri et al., 2024)—their separation responds to methodological criteria that allow for a clearer examination of their specific features (Federici, 2021).

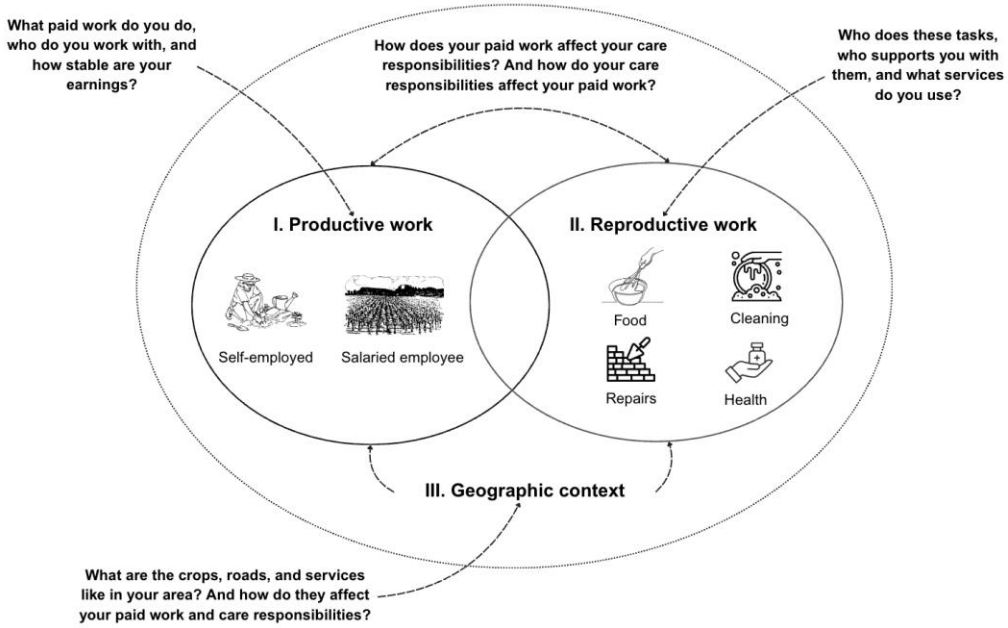
In the first sphere, participants are invited to draw and describe their paid work activities, their daily routes, the actors involved (employers, intermediaries, cooperatives), and the income they receive, including its degree of stability. The second sphere focuses on reproductive labor, where women represent activities linked to the aforementioned dimensions, along with domestic arrangements, support networks, and the availability of services. The third sphere incorporates territorial features such as the presence of monoculture, access to water, road conditions, public transport, or climate variability.

To facilitate both reflection and representation within each of these spheres, guiding questions are used to bridge the visual and the narrative dimensions. In the first sphere (productive labor), the prompt is: *What kind of paid work do you do, with whom, and how stable is your income?*—aimed at identifying economic activities, involved actors, and degrees of labor security. In the second sphere (reproductive labor), the question is: *Who carries out these tasks, who supports you, and what services do you use?*—which helps to make

visible the organization of care, domestic arrangements, and the articulation with public or community-based infrastructures. Finally, in the third sphere (geographical context), the guiding question is: *What are the crops, roads, and services like in your area? And how do they affect your paid work and care responsibilities?*—which encourages reflection on the material conditions of the environment and their impact on both productive and reproductive domains.

These questions not only guide the mapping exercise but also open a situated dialogue about the interdependencies between labor, care, and territory. To better understand the application of this methodological tool, the following diagram is proposed (Image 1):

Image 1: Cartography of Social Reproduction



This approach makes it possible to visualize how productive and reproductive spaces not only coexist but are deeply intertwined. In doing so, it transcends the traditional dichotomy between work and home, offering an integrated reading of social reproduction as a material, symbolic, and political fabric.

Application of the Technique

The implementation of this technique took place in the O'Higgins Region, an area marked by high female participation in industrial agriculture and the prevalence of fruit monocultures. Participants were contacted through key local actors. I first met one woman and shared the project with her; she agreed to participate and speak about her work and domestic life. She then shared the phone number of another worker, and from there I gradually established contact with more women.

Before beginning each session, I explained the project in detail and presented an informed consent form, which clarified that all information shared—both verbally and through the cartographic exercise—would remain confidential.

Although the women had limited time, they were eager to speak. At the end of the sessions, many expressed a sense of relief at being listened to and thanked me for the opportunity.

Key Findings

The findings derived from the social reproduction cartographies are organized into three analytical axes: (i) productive labor, (ii) reproductive labor, and (iii) geographical context. This structure helps illuminate the ways in which rural women articulate various forms of work and how these are shaped by the material conditions of their environments.

i) Productive labor:

The maps produced by agricultural wage workers revealed extended workdays that interfered with household organization, often forcing women to leave their children alone or under the care of neighbors or relatives. In contrast, self-employment activities—such as maintaining family gardens, selling agricultural products, or preserving food—emerged as complementary strategies offering greater flexibility and control over time. However, these activities are typically less profitable and lack social protection. Overall, waged labor remains precarious, and participants noted that working conditions have deteriorated in recent years due to labor shortages and the closure of agricultural industries driven by prolonged drought. These dynamics were expressed in the maps through images of heat, tired and sad faces, and depictions of small children, often associated with sacrifice. That is, women engage in this labor to secure a better future for their children.

ii) Reproductive labor:

The cartographies made visible multiple often-invisibilized tasks that constitute reproductive labor, most of which are carried out by the women interviewed. In line with Batthyány (2021), participants described activities related to household hygiene, family health care, minor home repairs (e.g., fixing roofs, leaks, fences), and daily meal preparation. These responsibilities are unevenly distributed within households—even in cases where women also contribute economically. Some women expressed that they have no time to rest, and must complete household chores either after returning from work or during weekends. Several maps included icons or keywords such as "washing," "cooking," "healing," and "cleaning," which reflect a structural overload that impacts both physical and mental health and significantly affects their quality of life.

iii) Geographical context:

The territorial environment was portrayed in detail in the cartographies. The presence of monoculture, prolonged droughts, poor road conditions, and lack of public transportation were frequently identified as factors that directly affect the organization of work and care. Participants also highlighted the absence of public health services and the closure of primary schools. Many maps featured depictions of dry irrigation canals, deforested hills, and nonexistent buses—illustrating structural precarities that limit access to dignified waged employment and worsen the social reproduction conditions of rural households due to spatial isolation. Women recalled past times when cooperatives and mutual support networks were more common—now replaced by the dominance of agro-industrial enterprises.

Final Reflections

The methodological experience developed in this study confirms that social reproduction cartographies are a powerful tool for making visible the working and living conditions of rural women. These cartographies generate situated knowledge and create space for both individual and collective reflection on the many forms of labor involved in sustaining life.

From an epistemological standpoint, this methodology contributes to decentering traditional categories in agrarian studies by articulating production and reproduction through embodied and territorialized experiences. It enables researchers to capture the spatial inequalities that shape

social reproduction, revealing how the lack of infrastructure and the concentration of economic power differentially affect those living in rural areas.

The women responded as expected. However, the cartography instructions should be simplified—for example, by bringing a printed image with labeled circles indicating "work," "home," and "geography of the area," using concepts that are easy to understand. Additionally, it is helpful to provide colored pencils, as in some cases participants began to illustrate their own drawings.

These cartographies offer a valuable contribution to feminist geography in the Global South by providing a context-sensitive methodological tool capable of representing the complexity of rural lives from a critical, collaborative, and situated perspective.

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