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# Social Resistances and the Creation of Another Way of Thinking in the Peripheral “Self-Constructed Popular Neighborhoods”: Examples from Mexico, Argentina, and Bolivia

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**Abstract:** This study refers to urban social movements, creative social resistances, and the collectives that are emerging today in “self-constructed popular neighborhoods” (“barrios de auto-construcción popular” in Latin-American, Spanish bibliography; “quartiers d’auto-construction populaire” in French bibliography and “self-help housing” in Anglophone bibliography), with a special focus on the new characteristics of these movements and the poetics of their daily practices. Firstly, a cartographic approach is explained through the concept of eco-landscapes; a qualitative analysis follows based on interviews and a review of the secondary literature. In particular, this research focuses on cases of movements and collectives in *villas* in South Greater Buenos Aires, *barrios* of Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl in the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City, and *barrios* of El Alto in the Metropolitan Area of La Paz. It shows that the poetics of creative resistances question the symbolic power of territorial stigmatization.

**Keywords:** urban social movements; other societies in movement; *autoconstrucción popular*; self-help housing; change habitus; urban banishment; Mexico City; La Paz–El Alto; Buenos Aires; creative social resistances

## 1. Introduction

This study refers to urban social movements, creative social resistances, and the collectives that are emerging today in the peripheral “self-constructed popular neighborhoods” (self-help housing), with a special focus on the new characteristics of these movements and the poetics of their daily practices. It examines whether these struggles, through the creation of another way of thinking in everyday life (beyond the mainstream frames of reference), contribute to reversing:

- (a) the biopolitical [1] state practices [2] in the peripheries of Latin American cities;
- (b) the “fatal triangle of stigmatization of the urban precariat” [3]; and
- (c) the politics of neo-colonial “urban banishment” [4].

It focuses on neighborhoods in El Alto (Metropolitan Area of La Paz), Nezahualcóyotl and (Metropolitan Area of Mexico City), and the South of Greater Buenos Aires. Firstly, it analyses the concept of “neighborhoods or settlements of spontaneous origin” [5] or “neighborhoods of self-help housing,” or “barrios de autoconstrucción popular” focusing specifically on Latin American cities. Then, it presents the notions of “urban social movements” [6] and “habitus” [7]. Finally, it poses the question of whether “creative social resistances” and “other societies in movement” [8] actually contribute to transforming the habitus, and whether they therefore constitute “crack capitalism” initiatives [9]. The paper presents a comparative approach of urban social movements in these

neighborhoods and a synthesis of the new characteristics [10] of contemporary “creative resistances.” In this study, the concept of “creative resistance” refers to all those collectivities that offer not only an anti-systemic logic but, also, that express creative action in everyday life. Specifically, I argue that a transformation in aspects of the habitus is possible, if *creative resistances* acting in these neighborhoods relate to the “tradition of rebellion” and “other worlds in movement” as well as ideas of anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial, and ecological global social movements. The term “creative resistances” has been also used in some texts in a different way that attributes to it a more conciliatory approach relative to the dominant ideology of the culture industry. The present text will not enter this debate.

## 2. The Concept of “Self-Constructed Popular Neighborhoods” Focusing Especially on Latin American Cities

*We are not the poorest. We are the ones who, like Maldonado, have chosen not to live subordinate.*

—Mario from Villa 23, “Garganta Poderosa” [11]

In the international literature, the term “self-constructed popular neighborhoods” reflects different views of the authors and complex procedures that vary from country to country, from city to city, but also from district to district. The precise meaning of this term varies qualitatively according to what we are referring: the relation with legislation, social characteristics, historical particularities, and colonial or neo-colonial points of view on forms of urbanization and modes of planning. For example, in the Anglo-Saxon, French, and Spanish literature we can find the terms “spontaneous settlements” (mode of space production with poor houses without urban plan), “squatters’ settlements” (mode of space production with land squatting), “irregular settlements” (mode of space production without legislation, not only for poor people), “slums” [12] (poor settlements or neighborhoods in the center or the periphery of the city), “colonias populares” (social production of the space) “bidon-villes” (trash-materials of construction in the first period of construction) and the specific terms about neighborhoods (initially land squatting) such as “favelas” (Brazil), or “villas” (Argentina), etc.

Self-constructed popular neighborhoods are variously called:

- In the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City, “colonias populares” (referring to the work position and the type of labor force of the population), “asentamientos irregulares” (referring to the urban planning legislation) and “ciudades perdidas” or “bidon-villes” (referring to the first period of occupation); they are located in what was previously suburban space.
- In the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (Greater Buenos Aires), “villas” and “asentamientos irregulares” and actually, in the first period of squatting, “villas de emergencia”; they are in the South and West periphery of the city.
- In the Metropolitan Area of La Paz–El Alto, “barrios populares” and “asentamientos urbanos irregulares”, although, in most cases, the irregularity is related only to construction “outside of the urban plan”, without “building license/permission.”

In Latin America, the generation of such districts is historically intertwined with the acceleration of forced urbanization, especially during 50’s. During this decade, self-constructed popular neighborhoods (self-help housing) were officially considered marginal (a quite erroneous position insofar as most of the inhabitants constituted the main workforce in the city). The predominant idea of “marginality” is supported by Lewis’s theory of “culture of misery”. Such a perception stigmatizes the social and moral life in these neighborhoods.

The stigmatizing definition of such settlements as “malignant tumors” [13] has served the criminalization and suppression of urban social movements and other radical organizations developed in these areas, especially during periods of dictatorship (1976–1983, in Argentina and 1964–1982 in Bolivia), as well as during the period of squatting repression in Mexico (1976–1985). In contrast to this stigmatizing discourse, Liberation Theology played an important role in supporting self-constructed popular neighborhoods [14].

In the same period, many urban social movements and organizations, with either Maoist, Trotskyist, Guevarist or Anarchist/Libertarian influences, propose and participate in the organization of squatting and the neighborhoods' construction by communities themselves. Liberation Theology supported this new type of autonomy of "social housing" in self-constructed popular neighborhoods.

During 1968–1985, urban movements in these neighborhoods organized a strong Latin American Coordination against mass repression. The influence of ideas of urban movements in the academic works is important:

- Turner (1976) recognizes the freedom of self-help housing and focuses on the element of self-management [15]. Finally, Habitat I, the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (1976), accepted self-help housing practices as a possible response to accelerated urbanization.
- From a populist approach, the so called "commodification debate" proposes the regularization of the urban situation of informal settlements and the transformation of their inhabitants to smallholders.
- Neo-Marxist approaches are very critical to understanding self-help construction practices, and the support that this process produced: that is, the manipulation through debt and the illusionary adoption of a middle-class ideology (*embourgeoisement*) by inhabitants. Emilio Pradilla Cobos [16] and Rod Burgess [17] see the limits of this urban process and propose a national housing politics controlled by the working class.
- On the contrary, Turner [18] proposes the idea of self-help social housing (in HABITAT II) and the organized self-management of neighborhoods. "Turner's central thesis argued that housing is best provided and managed by those who are to dwell in it rather than being centrally administered by the state" [19].

In Latin America, the neoliberal policy of the Chicago School (Freedman) officially began with the Chilean and Argentinean dictatorships. After the dictatorships' fall and the crises in the mid-1980s, the policy of commercial and political integration was implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and other mechanisms of transnational actors. These institutions have implemented the 10 neoliberal guidelines of the so-called "Washington Consensus" (a concept introduced by economist John Williamson in 1989). Harvey's concept of "accumulation by dispossession" constitutes a critical approach to this neoliberal proposition [20]. In 2001, the Argentinean crisis led to the questioning of this model [21]. Revolts and regime change in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela have contradicted these directions [22], whereas progressive Brazilian governments have not substantially disputed them [23]. In the same period, World Bank policies followed the following directives:

- In the 1980s, World Bank proposed a sort of "laissez faire" urbanization with essential support being provided directly to the inhabitants, through microcredit loans, programs administered by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or local government funding, mostly without an urban plan. The populist politics of many Latin American parties regarding cities were both the basis of this proposition and accelerated the process of informal (but not self-managed) settlement construction.
- In 2003, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank proposed the liberalization of land markets that, they claimed, could "reshuffle roles of public and private sectors" [24,25]. This was a newer neoliberal politics that clearly abandoned any state support of "social housing".

In reality, the contemporary global crisis of the capitalist system has led to a new situation of mass deprivation and devaluation through which entire populations are converted into "impoverished masses" [26], which usually reside on the outskirts or interiors of cities, as in urban slums, and in remote rural areas. Attempts to control the masses are not new; yet, modern methods, developed through new technologies, have introduced transformations in the control process. After the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York (September 2001), neoliberal policies have been complemented by totalitarian biopolitical control policies. The so-called preventative control practices and the

interventions by special army forces that were initially adopted in United States cities (especially in ghetto and meta-ghetto areas [3]) were then generalized throughout the globe, especially in the self-constructed popular neighborhoods. Thereafter, through mass media propaganda, these same neighborhoods have been criminalized, throughout Latin America, particularly in Colombian, Chilean, and Brazilian cities.

Despite the repression, self-help construction and self-management processes continue ([27], p. 217). Many urban social struggles change the everyday conditions of life in these neighborhoods. During 1990s, and contrary to the “culture of poverty”, a “culture of resistance” has been developed, created at the core of social movements and of collective life. This “culture of resistance”—influenced by various radical artistic movements [28]—becomes of particular importance in the era of globalization [29].

“Understanding the evolution of these neighbourhoods requires a dialectical linking of their internal processes with the historical development of their country and region, as well as with international processes that variously favoured or limited their development. These neighbourhoods keep changing all the time (visually as ‘landscapes’, economically, socially, and culturally), but also include several elements of a ‘tradition of rebellion’ or of ‘servitude’ that marked their emergence. So, they often figure in our minds as an allegory: how we talk about them and what we take them to mean depends on what we are looking for. In fact, their description is basically related to their landscape: small simple houses on small land parcels with unpaved roads made without the necessary infrastructure. It is a landscape that changes at different rates depending on the intervention of social movements, the state, or, in most cases, the solidarity among families” (Petropoulou [5], pp. 816–826).

This process of construction, except for its first stage, is not totally “spontaneous”; today, these settlements constitute an organic part of the city, with two or even three-story houses, retail and basic social services, and social diversity (comprising poor and lower-middle class people of different ethnicities). For all the above-mentioned reasons I define these neighborhoods as “settlements of spontaneous origin” [5], or self-constructed popular neighborhoods.

In this text, the term “auto or self-constructed popular neighborhoods” is chosen (the translation of the term used in the Spanish-language literature, “autoconstrucción popular”), and refers to the construction of neighborhoods in a collaborative way, which are not just single-family residences). I prefer this to the term “self-help housing” (from the Anglophone literature) because the latter is more individualistic (and reflects a colonial perspective; for a critique of colonialist philosophy see: Dussel [30]), referring to the type of housing rather than the resident himself. Moreover, it does not immediately refer to the construction of a neighborhood by a community.

This work focuses on “self-constructed popular neighborhoods” in neighborhoods that have a “tradition of rebellion” (see: Damianakos, definition [31]) and in which the important contributions of urban social movements transformed the significations of the landscape. It is important to understand that the inhabitants of these districts are not only poor; they are mainly those of the poor and the newly impoverished middle classes who refuse to live in blind obedience.

In all cases of organized squatting by urban social movements I prefer to use the definition “communally constructed neighborhoods” or “squatting and neighborhoods’ construction by communities themselves”. That is the cases of MTST in Sao Paulo, Francisco Villa, UPREZ and Asamblea de Barrios in Mexico City and other urban social movements and organizations in different Latin American cities.

### **3. From “Urban and Regional Social Movements” to “Urban and Regional Societies in Movement”: Contributions in the Transformation of Aspects of the Habitus**

According to Manuel Castells, urban *social* movements differ from simple urban movements in that the former can change the signification of urban space. Urban social movements are “vehicles of urban-spatial processing”, or social movements which, opposing the “meaning” of a given spatial

structure, create experiences of new “urban functions” and new “forms” [6]. These movements differ from the mobilizations of citizens who are organized around particular issues. When urban movements consciously construct “the rethinking of urban signification” they become “urban social movements”; today, they are part of what Wallerstein defines as “new social movements” [32].

Contemporary social (urban and regional) movements have a deeper role than previous simple urban movements, because they reinvent the values of freedom, dignity, solidarity, and social rights, through various local groups and networks [33]. They reinvent the notion of the *common* and gradually build other collective values (Stavrides [34] and Petropoulou [35]). One of these values, “the right to the city” (Lefebvre [36]), includes all those people who have not officially been considered “citizens” in the past: immigrants, many autochthonous nations, women, and children, among others. Particularly in Latin American cities, where a long tradition of indigenous peoples’ (first nations’) rebellion exists, the right to the city possibly includes the right to the living well (*sumak kawsay*, *buen vivir*) of all living beings. As Harvey ([37], pp. 1–2) has pointed out, it is not the right to the existing city that is demanded, but the right to a future city. Contemporary urban social movements, then, do not only demand the right to the city but they seek to realize it now in everyday life, as in “nowtopias” (see: Carlsson C. and Manning F. definition [38]).

There are quite a few different approaches taken to analyzing the new characteristics of contemporary social movements and initiatives. Claudia Korol [39], Ana Esther Ceceña [40], and Ouviaña H. [41] each defines the new social movements using the terms “popular movements” or “emancipators”. In *Crack Capitalism*, Holloway [9] considers that these are “new different worlds”. Zibechi [8] argues that there are no longer any social movements in the traditional sense of the term (following Tilly’s definition of social movements) but rather “other worlds” or “societies in movement”. Sitrin [42] broadly defines them as “societies on the move”. Some authors refer to the “prefigurative politics” of movements under the influence of a neo-Gramscian approach (Ouviaña [41]); others, from post-hegemonic perspectives, refer to their horizontal prefigurative politics (Kiouпкиolis [43]; Cornish, Haaken, Moskovitz and Jackson [44]). Maeckelbergh argues that it “is not possible to separate out ‘prefiguration’ from ‘other’ forms of political activity” [45].

This research does not only deal with those collectives that, through a prefigurative politics, consider themselves to be the precursors of another society. This approach about new social movements is different of the Eurocentric approach of Donatella Della Porta and Mario Dianni [46]. In this study, the concept of “creative resistance” refers to all those collectivities that offer not only an anti-systemic logic—such as the new movements to which Wallerstein [32] refers that emerge after 1968; but, also, to those that express creative action in everyday life (Lefebvre [47], Vaneigem, [48]). “Here is the essential role of creative social resistance ... A society within society that is capable of overturning the existing models in the collective imagination” (Papi [49] and Varcarolis [50]).

The essence of this concept, is used, by some alternative groups [51], to describe social collectivities, and alternative urban and artistic practices related to “everyday life” [52]. The rhizomatic qualities of these creative resistances—and, in particular, the principles of connectivity, heterogeneity, multiplicity, non-signifying rupture, cartography, and decalcomania of the rhizome (Deleuze, Guattari notions [53])—can show how fluid identities are in “a constant state of flux owing to their permeability, creating new territories of engagement” ([54], p. 2). In this sense, the point of departure is not *rights* but *necessities* there is an everyday need to create places of free experimentation.

Is it possible to change aspects of *habitus* in an urban space? Let us further examine the concept of *habitus*, one of Pierre Bourdieu’s fundamental contributions to sociology, and one of the key terms of his theoretical framework. By *habitus* Bourdieu implies the set of generative schemes from which subjects perceive the world and act on it. *Habitus* is the Aquinian and Boethian Latin translation of the Aristotelian concept of ἑξις (*hexis*).

*Habitus* is defined as “a system of durable and transferable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures”, that integrates all past experiences and functions at

all times as a structuring matrix of perceptions, judgments, and actions of agents facing a conjuncture or event, which they co-produce ([7], p. 178; [55]).

In this paper, I argue that, in the self-constructed popular neighborhoods, it is possible to change aspects of habitus through the construction of another way of thinking. These neighborhoods have a long history of rebellion, but this alone is not enough: it is possible to change aspects of habitus if “creative resistances” enacted in these neighborhoods are connected with “other worlds in movement” and “new global social movements”. I suggest that this process can change the both the self-image of the neighborhood and contribute to its decriminalization by its exterior. In many historical instances we encounter “heroic neighborhoods” that were once “stigmatized neighborhoods”.

In the following section, I present three examples, drawn from areas of Mexico City, La Paz–El Alto, and Buenos Aires. These regions have been selected because they feature a long tradition of presence in social resistances and movements. That is, these regions have been characterized by the participation of their inhabitants in struggles, whether over local issues, or over political or labor issues, or over issues of feminist rights; hence, they have a “tradition of rebellion” (see Damianakos’ definition: [31]). These political traditions are related to oppressed social strata, which have been marginalized due to their various “unruly” cultural practices; from the point of view of the dominant system, they are “dangerous classes” (see Hobsbawm’s definition: [56], p. 82). In this text I do not explore the influences of tradition of rebellion in popular culture. This is the theme of another text (forthcoming).

#### 4. Methodology and Selected Areas of Study

This paper results from a larger research project realized in various Latin American cities in 2015–2017, using oral and videotaped open-ended interviews. The participants have been assigned pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity, except in cases where they themselves requested to be eponymous in the research.

##### 4.1. Interviews and Participate Observation

For the purposes of this research, I selected districts with a tradition of rebellion. The interviews focused on collectives that create “commons” in public space. Some of them share a different lifestyle, a decolonial perception of life, and various practices through which they attempt to create new worlds beyond and outside the capitalist system of production, human exploitation, and ecological disaster. Based on the above characteristics, the following city areas were selected:

- The municipality of El Alto in the Metropolitan Area of La Paz and in particular the districts of Ceja and Villa Ingenio.
- The southern district of Buenos Aires (in particular the neighborhoods of Villa 1-11-14, Villa 21-24, Zavaleta, Villa Soldati, Bajo Flores, Nueva Pompeya, Este Baracas), in Greater Buenos Aires.
- The Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl Municipality in the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City, and in particular the Flores neighborhood.

In the Metropolitan Area of La Paz–El Alto, the neighborhoods of Villa Ingenio (in construction), Villa Dolores and Ceja (formerly central mid-urbanized neighborhoods of popular architecture now combined with low-rise buildings), I interviewed members of FEJUVE (Federación de Juntas Vecinales); ALBOR popular theatre; “Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia”; a researcher at “Centro de Documentación e Información de Bolivia”; as well as three professors and three students of the National University of Bolivia.

In the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, I interviewed members of Chilavert (a historical, recuperated factory with an important relation to the district of Nueva Pompeya); members of “Pañuelos en Rebeldía” (the historical Cultural Centre Pompeya—“Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo” in the same district); and members of some of the major organizations operating in Villas and participating in Carpa Villera: “Frente Popular Darío Santillán”, “Movimiento Popular

La Dignidad”, “La Poderosa”. The last two organizations participate in CETEP. Members of these organizations also participate in CVI. More specifically, the interviews were carried out in statistical units C1, C4, C7 and C8 of INDEC, 2010 [57].

In South Grande Buenos Aires in Villa 21-24 and near Dario-Maxi (Avellaneda) train-station, I interviewed two teachers from the self-administrated state-owned Lyceum, which follows Paulo Freire’s principles; two workers from the self-managed Polo Textil cooperative; four members of self-managed collective kitchens, recycling centers, and Club Popular El Dari (a youth cultural center); and two representatives from a hip-hop group and a graffiti crew with which they collaborate in various actions.

In Bajo Flores, Villa Soldati and Nueva Pompeya (South City of Buenos Aires), I interviewed members from two recuperated factories and cultural centers; one social clinic to Villa 1-11-14; the CVI [58] fire-fighting team; the waste collection and sewer cleaning team; the education and political discussion group of CVI; the popular theatre and the collective kitchen in the same Villa. In Villa 31 (C1 unity near the port of Buenos Aires), I interviewed a teacher, a nurse, and a solidarity artist. Various publications in the “La Garganta Poderosa” magazine, the website and a video related to the everyday living conditions in Villa were used as well [11].

In the Metropolitan Area of Mexico, I interviewed members of historical urban movements, such as: Unión Popular Revolucionaria Emiliano Zapata (UPREZ), Asamblea de Barrios (2 different groups) and Francisco Villa (3 different groups) and political alternative groups of artists, poets and teachers participating in social movements.

In the neighborhoods of Maravillas, Flores and Benito Juárez of the Ciudad Nezhualcóyotl (a self-constructed district in the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City, where in 2015 according to INEGI, inhabitants numbered 1,040,000) interviews were conducted with 3 members of “poets under construction” as well as with 2 mural artists; 2 members of cultural Nahuatl groups; 2 representatives of cultural centers; one journalist in a local cultural newspaper; and 3 students and teachers of the school and the University of UPREZ. I also used participatory research methods and conducted interviews in the “El Molino de Iztapalapa” neighborhood, and “Santo Domingo de Coyoacán” in Mexico City (In this paper, I use complementary information from interviews and participatory research in Coyoacán and Iztapalapa: in Santo Domingo Coyoacán, I interviewed members of the Zapata School and the “Centro de Artes y Oficios Emiliano Zapata” and in El Molino de Iztapalapa district (a district that has been built to its greatest extent by urban movements organizations through the three-stage process of occupation, legalization, and construction), I interviewed 2 members of UPREZ and 3 of Francisco Villa (three of its subdivisions) as well as 3 members of community cooperative gardens and several residents (see [59]).

#### 4.2. Organization of Interviews

To analyze the image of the Municipality of El Alto, Nezhualcóyotl, South of Buenos Aires, presented through the press and Internet, two newspapers were explored for each local website, as well as hashtags on social networks, and studies presenting the social construction of the image of the above districts or municipalities. Finally, a review of the secondary literature was conducted in 4 languages (Spanish, English, French, and Greek).

Interviewees were selected through social networks to find those who would like to talk about the actions of their collectives in videotaped interviews. Where this was not possible, the research remained at the level of participatory responsive observation [60] with the agreement of the respondents. The key questions raised in open interviews, and which emerged in the narrations of research participants are summarized below:

- Presentation of the history of the land question, self-help neighborhood, urban and social history and of the collectives’ or urban movements’ main goals and history.

- Location of collective, its relationship with the neighborhood, its relationship with other collectives of the similar or divergent thematic foci, and participation in networks at local, national, and international levels.
- Issues of housing, environment, health, nutrition, social welfare, education, and culture.
- Presentation of the key activities in organizational processes and the way in which decisions are taken (participatory or representative democracy, or otherwise); the role of women in the organization and its actions.
- Presentation of key issues of discrimination against and criminalization of neighborhood residents.
- Presentations of the actions taken to overturn the image of these neighborhoods given by dominant mass media.
- A critical presentation of the major social struggles in which the collectives participated and their outcomes today.
- A few words about the contribution of the arts to “poetic movements” through actions that change their everyday life: theatre, poetry, visual arts, music, cinema, and dance (among others).

Questions raised by the open interviews:

- Presentation of collectives’ relationships with worker-occupied “recuperated factories”, the alternative education system (inspired by Paulo Freire and other thinkers); indigenous and feminist movements; anti-mining movements; and movements against hydroelectric plants, oil factories, and major infrastructural projects.
- Presentation of their relationship with other major contemporary revolutionary movements (such as the Zapatistas), Latin American social revolutions (in Cuba, Bolivia, and elsewhere), as well as with progressive governments in Latin America.
- Theoretical issues, such as: How do community members construct, and how does the collective perceive the concepts of the “commons” and of “buen vivir”? Do they consider creating prefigurative models for another society? If so, how does this happen?

## 5. First Comparative Approach

Most of the movements discussed in the present study were created out of necessity to meet basic daily needs and then became politicized. While in the 1960s left (mainly Maoist, Trotskyist, or Anarchist/Libertarian) political organizations created collectives, which they aspired to turn into urban movements, after 1968, new movements seem to emerge in these neighborhoods, and then, leftist collectives attempted to find a role in the emerging new movements. Since 1989, with the beginning of neo-liberalism and the collapse of the so-called socialist bloc, these organizations have been undergoing a crisis. New subjects appear to have emerged mainly from anarchist politics, the indigenous movement, and the anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist feminist movement. Major movements are born, experimenting with horizontal and vertical hierarchy structures, which, while seeming to overcome traditional left wing and anarchist organizations, nevertheless act within them but without being able to control them. On the contrary, a series of changes in the daily lives of participants in contemporary movements seem to have started to influence the discourse and practices of both political organizations and anarchist collectives.

Neoliberal politics, since

- 1985 in Bolivia (with the intervention of the IMF and the liberalization of the economy that rendered El Alto as a “city in alert” in 1990 [61]);
- 1986 in Mexico (following the admission of Mexico in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the liberalization of economy, and the intervention of the IMF and World Bank);
- 1989 in Argentina (with the intervention of the IMF and the realization of directives of the *Washington Consensus*).



In combination with the political disorganization of leftist groups (following the decline of the “socialist bloc” 1989); the Zapatista movement starting in 1994; and the mass social movements in Argentina, Bolivia, and Mexico during 2001–2006 produced a new politicization of urban movements that questioned the role of leftist parties and their strict, hierarchical structures. The role of women and indigenous peoples within urban movements gradually became important. The processes through which urban social movements were and continue to be created in the above-mentioned three Latin American cities—and, in particular, in some of their most characteristic self-constructed popular neighborhoods—is presented below.

### *5.1. Urban Movements and Self-Constructed Popular Neighbourhoods in Mexico City*

We can distinguish certain important periods in the development of Mexico City’s self-constructed popular neighborhoods, and urban movements, considering the internal structure of and the political situation in the country.

From the beginning of the 20th century until 1914, Mexico City was a “bourgeois city” and then, a modern city, but only for its oligarchic class. After the social revolution of 1910, the 1919 and 1923 assassinations of Zapata and Villa respectively, and the 1928 decision to concentrate local power in the federal state, until 1934, the city was in disorder. The Revolution (1910–1920), and Mexica, Zapotec, Mixtec, and Maya revolts (among others), create an important tradition of rebellion in everyday life.

The period between 1934 (when Lázaro Cárdenas became President of the Mexican state) and 2 October 1968 (when the Tlatelolco massacre occurred in the center of Mexico City [62]) saw a boom in urban development, and the emergence of small and dispersed urban movements. The role of the working class was important in this transformation. In this period, self-constructed popular neighborhoods multiply; but these slums remain invisible both in maps and in social policy and legislation. Mexico City may be “a city for all”, but at the same time it remains, to a large extent, socially and spatially segregated [63,64].

In Greater Mexico City, between 1968 and 1988, we observe the creation, prosperity, and decline (1968–1980) of MUP (Urban Popular Movement) and CONAMUP (National Coordination of Urban Popular Movements, 1980–1988), and, similarly, the decline of the independent, radical, and politicized urban popular movement [65]. Although strictly speaking, not living under dictatorship, Mexicans face severe daily repression. After the 1968 revolt, many students, together with older activists started participating in urban movements. The fusion of urban movements with students’ movements produced alternative cultural spaces [29] such as “Escuelita Zapata de Santo Domingo Coyoacán” and many more. During the six years of Luis Echeverría’s presidency (1970–1976), the Mexican state undertook profound urban reforms [66,67]. During this period, habitants from Mexico City arrived in Nezahualcōyotl. The first political and cultural interventions in popular neighborhoods began to change habitus and produced the first urban cultures of resistance. In 1969, we observe the first urban movement “Movimiento Restaurador de Colonos (MRC)” in Nezahualcōyotl for political reasons related to the interests of the fractionators. The Nezahualcōyotl municipality administratively belongs to the State of Mexico, created in 1945 and officially in 1963 (Secretaría de Gobernación, 1999). The inhabitants of this municipality at the beginning came from the southern regions (Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán) and from other municipalities and from the United States (rejected from the “Bracero program”), and in 1971, the “strike of payments,” in which 200,000 residents participated. This movement “represented a new type of movement and responded to the open political opportunity of the 1968 student movement” [68]; it squatted land to construct schools and markets. It created a system of collective transportation, 10 productive cooperatives, and then started “regularizing” the situation of the neighborhood. The movement was weakened by severe repression and internal divisions. In 1975, in Ciudad Nezahualcōyotl, a new stage began in the history of popular urban movements, with the contribution of leftist groups. Liberation Theology has had an important role in the self-help neighborhoods (barrios).

The decade 1975–1985 was the period of squatting repression. The financial crisis of 1982–1985 (with the revalorization of the *peso* and the nationalization of different enterprises), followed by the big earthquake of 1985 in Mexico City have the effect of multiplying collectives and urban movements [69]. The political organizations of the radical left and other independent groups played an important role in the construction of a dignified life in the city (e.g., alternative schools, canteens, local buses, etc.). Urban popular movements such as “Unión Popular Revolucionario Emiliano Zapata”, “Asamblea de Barrios, Unión Popular Francisco Villa” and many more, played an important role in newly communally constructed neighborhoods, along with the contributions of students and architects [29,69]. At the same time, the anarcho-punk scene, inspired by the movements of 1968, came to the fore [70].

Starting in 1986, neoliberal politics [66] in combination with the political intervention of leftist groups have the effect of politicizing of urban movements, yet function with strict, hierarchical structures. Although the role of women and first nations or indigenous peoples’ role was important, they themselves and their ideas lacked visibility. In 1988, many urban movements in the Greater Mexico City decided to support the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the Labor Party (PT); those movements were transformed into interlocutors with local governments.

Between 1994 and 2006, many divisions were created—and, therefore, much frustration—within various urban movements, because of the participation of their members in different political parties. Economic integration initiated by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993, and the financial crisis of 1994 (“efecto tequila”) change the situation of many urban movements. Beginning in 1994, the gradual influence of the ideas of the Zapatista movement (EZLN) on these movements has led them to reconsider issues of autonomy from political parties, and to reposition women’s, indigenous, and ecological issues, as well as to experiment with participatory democracy. Parts of such movements have become independent through the creation of new structures; but it is only after 2006 that these ideas have become really important within these movements as a whole.

Since 2006, in the periphery of Greater Mexico City, urban fragmentation and self-help housing are still in progress; although the new legislation is very strict in the interior of the Mexico City (CDMX) (called Federal District DF before 2006) it is not so in all of the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City (AMCM) [71]. The role of narcotics traffickers in traditionally working class neighborhoods has become important. Many homeless people have appeared in the center of the city and have tried to organize politically. During the same period, urban and regional movements have become social movements or “societies in movement” such as the Atenco movement (2006) and the Oaxaca Commune (2006). Liberation Theology does not appear to have an important role among young people active within these movements, which was not the case for other movements such as “The Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity”; however, indigenous cultural traditions do have an important cultural influence. After their continual repression, newer movements such as “Yo Soy 132” and “Ayotzinapa”, as well as many new collectives have emerged in traditional self-help housing *barrios*. These have changed the discourse to include issues related to anti-patriarchal ideas, indigenous cultures, the concept of *buen vivir*, etc. Small cultural initiatives (such as “poets in construction”, SECOS, muralists, “Neza Arte Aca” and musicians among others) play a very important role in the process of habitus change and therefore could be considered as “creative resistances” within a “tradition of rebellion”.

*“In Nezahualcóyotl we live in circumstances of everyday persecution of young women and considered ‘different’ young people, and of a systematic depreciation of cultural origins, as well.”* says Maria [72] (muralist, research participant).

*“With public community-level intervention using mural art, we change the identity of the place and we reclaim the space. Art is not for the museum but for the public space. In a deeper sense, all the people are artists.”* says Martín Cuaya [73] (muralist, research participant).

## 5.2. Urban Movements and Self-Constructed Popular Neighbourhoods in La Paz–El Alto

We can distinguish various distinctive periods of development of self-constructed popular neighborhoods, and of urban movements in the Metropolitan Area of La Paz.

At the beginning of the 20th century, La Paz was first the colonial city, and afterward, the modern city of conquerors who dominated the mainly indigenous region. However, the Aymara revolution (such as the siege of La Paz by Túpaj Katari, Bartolina Sisa, and Gregoria Apaza in 1781), the revolution of 1952 and the 1953 rural reforms, bequeathed an important tradition of rebellion to everyday life that has affected the city and has left its mark on new urban landscapes.

The years 1953–1964 saw extensive urbanization, with large migratory flows from the provinces to the capital. The legislative framework related to town planning issues in the peri-urban area of the city was more tolerant toward or did not deal with the issues of the out-of-town building design. In this period, the El Alto Municipality was being built, next to La Paz; the Consejo Central de Vecinos (The Central Council of Neighbors) was officially created in El Alto in 1957.

During the dictatorships (1964–1982), a second wave of immigration took place. Faced with the rise in housing prices in La Paz city center, and under intense political pressure, new city residents, as well as former miners (who, having struggled intensely, were persecuted in 1967, at the same time that Che Guevara was assassinated by the CIA) from the surrounding areas settle in El Alto while commuting to work in the city of La Paz. For this reason, some writers refer to El Alto as the “worker’s dormitory city” (Paula Diaz, 2016). In 1960–1970, only a few small demonstrations of urban movements occurred, since the authoritarian political regime did not allow any protests. The inhabitants of the working class neighborhoods actively participated in the 1979–1980 uprisings against the dictatorship. The first Assembly of “Federación de Juntas Vecinales de El Alto” named “FEJUVE–El Alto” was formed in 1979. Their mode of organization is based on the Aymara/Quechua concept of “Ayllu”, an Aymara/Quechua word that refers to a “collective process” and “territoriality”, is a pre-colonial structure that characterizes many pre-Columbian peoples’ participatory democracies—to put it in our own terms—underlying the so-called “micro-governments” [74] that played an important role in the water and gas wars in Bolivia, and in many uprisings in Peru and in Ecuador. “Ayllu” was a means of organization rather than a solely spatial unity in the Inca Empire. According to Prada [75], it has ancient roots in the green revolution in the Andes, when the inhabitants began the systematic cultivation of certain plants, changing the very structures of society itself. The rotation of community representatives and of power, which obey the instructions of the community relates to a structural feature of the society: the availability of labor power and the need to rotate it through various tasks [75]. Contemporary Ayllus have created structured structures (as Bourdieu would say) in the broader Bolivian society (not exclusively in Aymara/Quechua communities) on which the tradition of rebellion is based (as Damianakos [31] would say).

Between 1982 and 1985, Bolivia undertook the restoration of democracy. Nationalization of public utilities (water, gas, oil, and certain mines) progressed rapidly. At the same time, the pressure for democratic representation and the creation of a separate municipality in El Alto was extensive; until 1985, its inhabitants had representation in the municipality, while in 1989 El Alto was institutionalized as a separate municipality and “juntas vecinales” acquired more powers. In the years 1985–1989, the situation was changing rapidly within the context of the economic crisis, which laid the ground for the IMF’s intervention.

In 1989–2003 neoliberal development models were applied, starting with the IMF’s intervention in 1989, and the implementation of the Washington Consensus Guidelines until the crisis in 2001, which ended with the 2003 uprisings. The period was characterized by the generation of the first new forms of self-organized struggles in working class neighborhoods. In the following period, occupations were multiplied, to meet the urgent housing needs of the unemployed, poor social strata.

FEJUVE-El Alto preserved its autonomy from political parties, organizing a large urban social movement in 1987; although it had a limited role in the “Black February” uprising of 2003, it played a very important role in the so-called “Gas War” or “Red October” of 2003 (see [75,76]). Since 2006,

the integration of certain members of FEJUVE in different political parties possibly produced the basis for a division in the movement. Part of this Assembly became an interlocutor of local government, while another part kept a critical, radical point of view.

The “Gas War”, or “Red October”, was characterized by mass barricades, collective kitchens, and celebrations, as well as conflicts in many areas of El Alto city (see [75,76]). This mode of simultaneous action in many different places has been named by Zibechi as a “multiplicidad” of “society in movement” [8]; it is a mode of action leading to the dispersal of state power [77], not to its renewed establishment, or as Gutiérrez Aguilar R. would say, “disorganization” [78].

From 2006 to the present time, the so-called progressive government favored the strengthening of small businesses, the formation of a new middle class, and massive urban development; these processes brought great changes in the structure of urban movements and in the coordination of “juntas vecinales”.

The city extends to the archaeological site Tiwanaku (capital of old empire of Tawantinsuyu) and to Lake Titicaca, without urban planning; rather, houses built with columns of “reinforced concrete” and sometimes using special designs inspired by Aymara traditions, challenge the European architectural tradition.

El Alto is currently inhabited by 650,000 habitants (INE, 2012) and is characterized by significant social diversity. Mariela Paula, [61] questions the academic and official hegemonic discourse on the presumed homogeneity of the city of El Alto.

Fourteen years after Red October, the goals of social struggles are interpreted differently: the current representatives of the Movement for Socialism (MAS) consider them to have been fulfilled, insisting that only the nationalization of water and gas constituted the core demand of the October 2003 struggles. On the other hand, those holding a critical leftist perspective believe that the goals of Red October have not been fulfilled. Mirko Orgáz [79] and other authors agree that only part of the nationalization program has been completed. As Fernando, an interviewed representative of FEJUVE–El Alto, says:

*“We are struggling to implement the October agreements. We made these deals because we had no confidence in any representative who could then change political position.”* [80].

Thus, although the big structures have become almost entirely fragmented, many smaller structures involving young people have emerged, especially in the fields of art and culture, feminism, ecology, and indigenous culture, which can be considered as “creative resistances” with a “tradition of rebellion”. A typical example of new collective actions that change everyday *habitus* is the “Theatre of the Oppressed” and the “ALBOR Theatre”, in operation since 1997.

*“We have been living hunted for many years now. Our life was constantly under persecution” . . . “We had something to do to talk about our values, and our heroes such as Bartolina Sisa and Túpaj Katari” . . . “Faced with such a situation we began an effort through poetry. We went out to the squares, reading poems, playing music, trying to show that it is possible to sing, dream, to publicly expose a new culture of young people through poetry and other arts”* says Willy Flores [81] (ALBOR theatre [82]).

### 5.3. Urban Movements and Self-Constructed Popular Neighbourhoods in Greater Buenos Aires

We can distinguish distinctive periods of development of self-constructed popular neighborhoods and of urban social movements in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, and, in particular, in South Buenos Aires. The first period is from the beginning of the 20th century until 1946. This period can be divided into two major sub-periods: city-capital (1880–1916) and modern city (1916–1946), in which there is still no discussion of self-constructed popular neighborhoods outside of the urban plan, despite the fact that they exist (e.g., near the port and in *Retiro*). These areas are inhabited by many rural European immigrants, many of whom lived in the so-called *conventillos*, or tenements, while poor people lived in the first villas. In the 1910s and 1920s, a new tradition of rebellion was being developed

in the city, directly related to workers' movements and to those of the so-called lumpen-proletariat; it is expressed in many forms of art such as tango [83]. Between 1930 and 1943—the Infamous Decade (“*Década Infame*”) comprising the first dictatorship and fraudulent democracy, industry was growing rapidly, the migratory flows from Europe were multiplying, and the city was expanding and modernizing; yet, at the same time many self-constructed popular neighborhoods (“*villas miserias*”, “*barrios precarios*”) are inhabited by those workers who, through their labor, “build” the bourgeois city. After the great strike of 17 October 1945, with the participation of workers and inhabitants of working class neighborhoods of South Buenos Aires, “a new political stage is opened, with new social actors. Since then, the labor movement will intervene permanently in the process” ([84], p. 30).

Between 1946 and 1955 (during government of Juan Perón, which supported trade unions), the first discussions of opening the city to the poor, and creating social services began, but these remained unfinished.

The period from 1956 to 1976 is one of continual alternation between dictatorial and democratic governments. This period of great urbanization is characterized by large migratory flows from rural areas, but also from Europe to Buenos Aires. In 1956, about 33,900 residents lived in the villas; by 1976 they numbered 218,000 ([85], p. 76). At that time, the socio-spatial segregation of the city was intensified, and the anti-communist organization regularly attacked the slums (such as the 1974 assassination of Carlos Mujica in Villa Luro).

Even though the 1968 uprisings in Europe and America found Argentina in a period of dictatorship (1966–1973), in May of 1969, large labor and student struggles broke out in Cordoba, [86] Rosario, Neuquén and other cities (such as Cordobazo, Rosariazo and Neuquenazo). “The consequences of the Cordobazo would be glimpsed with the more solid development of a combative current, whose aim was not only the confrontation with the employers but with the traditional union leaderships linked to Peronism” ([84], p. 58). These struggles (coupled with the development of Liberation Theology) have decisively influenced the development of urban movements in working class neighborhoods, particularly in the Buenos Aires [87] villas, where many social resistances developed, demanding the legal recognition of neighborhoods and the provision of social benefits. In addition, in the slums, many members of the movement of the Peronists, the Montoneros (PJ) and the Trotskyist—Guevarist “*Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*” (ERP-Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores) acted. All these struggles contributed to the overthrow of the dictatorship in 1973, and to the establishment of a culture of rebellion in the city (e.g., sixties rock scene, theatre, cinema, etc.) [88]—particularly in the peripheral neighborhoods. However, according to my interviews, despite the new ideas coming from Cordobazo, the structures remained highly hierarchical; ecological and indigenous issues were not discussed; women's role, although considered important, was not recognized outwardly, and religion continued to have a dominant say.

The period of the dictatorship from 1976–1983, marked by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and IMF's support for Operation Condor, is a dark one: 22,000 people were assassinated and 30,000 were disappeared. It was particularly tough for the city's neighborhoods, as many persecuted militants were involved in the anti-dictatorial struggle. The organization of the World Cup in Argentina in 1978 gave the authorities a good opportunity for their first attempts to criminalize the villas—in particular, villa 31, which was the closest to the city center and the port. Nevertheless, the most important politicized occupations of land by homeless people seem to have started in 1981, under very difficult circumstances that led to the murder of militants. At the same time, the labor movement, as well as the movement of mothers and grandmothers of missing children (Madres de la Plaza del Mayo) were developing. All these struggles, in combination with the Falklands (Malvinas) War (1982) helped to overthrow the dictatorship in 1983.

The post-dictatorial period from 1983 to 1989 is characterized by the demarcation and restriction of villas, while at the same time a densification and a vertical development in the interior of already existing villas from two-story to four-story buildings (with or without mechanical design) take place. At that time, urbanization policies are promised, but not delivered. Many political exiles returned to

Buenos Aires. Until 2003, there was still impunity for those who committed crimes against humanity while following orders (“Leyes de impunidad”).

Since 1989, with the intervention of the IMF and following the directives of the Washington Consensus, a neoliberal policy has been implemented. Between 1991 and 2001, based on census data, socio-spatial segregation was intensifying; the city was becoming increasingly polarized, with the poorest living in the South of Buenos Aires ([89], p. 21, chart). Unemployment reached 15%, work in the informal economy accounted for almost one half of all salaries, and poverty reached 40%. The villas were increasingly occupied by impoverished social strata, although many of them (the oldest) maintain mixed socio-economic characteristics.

Since 1992, young people have begun attempts of social self-organization based on horizontal structures and have thus started challenging the hierarchical and patriarchal relationships of the family and the church by participating in new struggles [90]. In 1996 the “*piqueteros*” movement, born in Neuquén, Salta, Córdoba, and Matanzas [91]. This movement was generalized during the 2001–2003 Great Depression by unemployed people, students and residents of the poor neighborhoods of the district of the cities that made more than 4000 pickets: closing roads with self-organized structures, assemblies, food, cultural actions, etc.. The stigmatization-criminalization of this movement by the mass media did not undermine its influence in the popular neighborhoods. These struggles culminated in the 2001 rebellion in Buenos Aires and in other cities, which involved mostly unemployed young people and students from working class neighborhoods.

The traditional left initially had a critical attitude in relation to this movement, since it considered it to be of a “marginal lumpen-proletariat”; later, however, the traditional left became involved in it. As a matter of fact, as the left became more and more involved in the “*piqueteros*” movement, some of its components have changed radically, such as Movimiento Territorial Liberación (MTL) [92] and, especially, Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados (MTD) ([90], pp. 114–121), both of which claim to have adopted horizontal forms of organization. A significant part of the *piqueteros* is still organizing today, in movements that emerged from the 2001–2003 uprisings, and later participated in the cooperative organizations of the popular economy and on other fronts.

The period from 2003 to the present is characterized by an upsurge in the number of unemployed and redundant workers who are looking for housing without any social policy provisions. The new temporary self-housing “*nuevos asentamientos*” [85], which eventually turned into permanently degraded or impermanent residences. The recuperated factory and enterprises movement, (in which workers recover factories in bankruptcy, or those that have been abandoned or downgraded for various reasons) also characterizes this period. Some factory workers played an important role in neighborhood assemblies. A typical example is the recuperated Bauen Hotel in the city center (which hosted many assemblies and their members from the province), and the recuperated Chilavert printing factory. Recuperated factories multiplied, having reached 367 in May 2016 [93].

The change in government in 2003, and the prolonged dominance of the progressive Kirchner government did not seem to improve the conditions in these neighborhoods; rather, they became much more militarized. After several struggles (including a major hunger strike at Carpa Villera), some jobs were offered. In December 2010, hundreds of families renting small apartments in villas living in absolute poverty (many of them immigrants from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay) decided to occupy an area of 130 hectares in the “Parque Indoamericano”, south of Buenos Aires. The police force of Mauricio Macri (mayor of Buenos Aires between 2007 and 2015 and the current Argentinian president) responded to this occupation with massive repression (resulting in 3 deaths); the families were incarcerated and maligned in the media. The need for co-ordination led to the decision to organize the coordinating body “*Corriente Villera Independiente*” (CVI) through a large assembly in May 2012 in the symbolic square of Plaza de Mayo. One of its most important actions to date was the 53-day hunger strike, which started on 21 April 2014 in the city center ([94], pp. 27–29), and in which women played a particularly important role ([95,96]). This movement became known as “*Carpa*”

Villera". Following the hunger strike, the movement influenced the passage of the Social Emergency Law ("Ley de Emergencia Social").

Self-organized cooperatives of the popular economy and recovered factories operate largely in parallel, with the exception of meetings at conferences (for instance, the Economy of Workers International Gathering in 2017 (see VI International Gathering, <http://laeconomiadelostrabajadores.wordpress.com/>), or joint local actions. This process has been very severely hit by Mauricio Macri government: the non-implementation of commitments in the "Emergency Law"; the reprivatization of public goods; the stigmatization and militarization of villas. At the same time, the number of recovered factories increased, despite the government's efforts to stifle the alternative economy and criminalize their struggles [97]. Faced with this new government, new movements are emerging, and new alliances are being created among the multiple collectives that emerged in previous years.

Some of the major organizations operating in Villas and participating in Carpa Villera that members have been interviewed are "Frente Popular Darío Santillán"; "Movimiento Popular La Dignidad"; "La Poderosa". The last two organizations participate in CETEP, which brings together many organizations working in the popular economy. Their actions include running collective kitchens, local and alternative clinics, and people's cooperatives; constructing and maintaining housing; conducting urban planning consultations; cleaning; fire-fighting; and organizing cultural activities—including Theatre of the Oppressed, political hip hop, capoeira, reggae, anti-FIFA actions, as well as publishing activities and organizing alternative schools (following Paulo Freire's ideas [98]).

Thus, these collectives must certainly be considered as "creative resistances" with "tradition of rebellion". At the same time, many of the participants in these collectives either keep an intellectual search or are at least aware of the actions of major new Latin American movements—the Zapatistas, the MST and MTST movements, the ecological and indigenous movements, the "Guevaristas"-ALBA movement, the alter-globalization forums, the anarchist, ecological, and feminist movements, etc. There is, therefore, an osmosis of values occurring in everyday life, that slowly changes habits and habitus. Art contributes decisively to this process. However, this is an issue to be explored in a distinct article.

As Maria and Juan (hip-hop and graffiti creators, research participants) say:

*"the politics of repression and violence (gatillo facil situation) produces an everyday fear for all the young inhabitants in 'popular neighborhoods' . . . the solution is to organize ourselves on the path to understand our culture and our body. Art does not change the world, but art is a great companion in the struggle for this change . . . Popular education is a way to self-educate as working class, young, free people where we all learn from all. Hip-hop has it as a tool for social change" [99].*

Radical hip-hop plays this role today as it is addressed to everyone, but especially to young people, who embrace it with their lifestyle and appearance.

## 6. Conclusions and Reflections

The self-constructed popular neighborhoods are districts that were initially ignored (up to 1950) and then integrated (during 1950–1960). Since the 1960s, they have been politically exploited to control people by means of customer relations and microcredit, thus attempting to prevent the emergence of radical movements and collectives within them. Nevertheless, so-called "dangerous" collectives have been created.

It is significant that, in almost all the cases I have examined, the areas under study are socially diverse and not socially homogeneous. They gather people from different regions, Indigenous Americans, mine workers, and young women, introducing to the communities the attitude of everyday autonomous or self-organized life.

Residents in many of these neighborhoods have found ways to meet their everyday needs through shared activities and a collective processes of commons creation (*commoning*); especially those who have been refugees are recreating their lives in the middle of ruins. Many of them have chosen these

neighborhoods to have a chance to a dignified life and to enjoy greater freedom, compared to their prior social status.

When walking around these neighborhoods, there are few visible signs that show their history (such as some eco-landscape features); this history can be found only in the narratives of members of creatively insurgent collectives.

If, during the 20th century, there was a great debate about the so-called “communist threat”—because of the first social revolutions that ended with the oligarchical order (e.g., Mexico, 1910; Bolivia, 1952), socialist revolutions (e.g., Russia, 1917; China, 1949; Cuba, 1959; Nicaragua, 1979) and many other failed revolutions—nowadays governments implementing neoliberal policies are afraid of the so-called “self-organized threat”: forms of social organization that do not have a command center, which could be manipulated directly or by biopolitical methods. Thus, they prepare their political audience for the repression of social movements by enhancing a vague fear of “difference” and try to prevent inhabitants’ self-organization.

In all three Latin American cities in this study, many “creative resistances with a tradition of rebellion” exist, which relate to new movements (societies in movement); they make an important contribution to crack capitalism in everyday life and to slowly transforming the habitus. The rhizomatic way through which their ideas and actions are being propagated is fed by the aforementioned rebellious cultural-poetic actions that favor community and solidarity rather than deep hierarchical structures. Therefore, we could characterize them as “creative resistances” with a “tradition of rebellion” and a rhizomatic way of spreading. Their actions are based on the principles of direct democracy while taking advantage of complex activist practices to guard against malicious infiltration.

Therefore, my reflection, on the issue of what kind of elements could characterize the existence and actions of a network of creative resistances that could change the habitus, concludes with the following basic principles that question the existing dominant codes:

- Independence from political parties and private economic interests;
- Systematic presence through media;
- Openness and free interaction with other social movements and collectivities;
- Participatory Democracy and combination of “horizontality” with other forms of governance through the most immediate possible ways in the internal (anti-hierarchical) dynamics of these movements;
- Trade unionism from below, recuperation of the means of production;
- Cultivation of a different relation with the land and all life (eco-balanced living), ecological gardens, “pacha mama”, “buen vivir”;
- Contestation of mega-projects and the privatization of commons (mines, oil tankers, water, gas, etc.);
- Recognition of different gender relations, and a critical stance to patriarchy, (feminism, LGBTQ movement);
- Collective processes of commons creation (*commoning*);
- Use of a poetic language as a signifying practice;
- Practice of artistic actions that come from the heart of city’s inhabitants and are not just ornamental;
- Interaction between local and global inspiration of creative actions (creative glocality);
- Understanding of “the other” difference. Respect for the different cultures and specifically for Indigenous and Afro-Indian culture;
- Acceptance of sensitivity as a drive not for condemnation but as a creative force of the social movement;
- Understanding of personal time as a special key to coexistence with the other;
- Encompassing rage—whether organized or not—but, if possible, in a poetic and creative way;
- Genuine relationship bonds in daily life and self-sufficiency to meet basic survival needs;
- Recognition that small everyday things play an important role.



All the above elements could be considered as implementing the general principles or basic drives of a “poetic social movement” [33,100].

The structures created in these neighborhoods are neither solely horizontal nor solely vertical. In most cases, these structures alternate. In emergency cases, they become highly hierarchical (military structures), while during peaceful periods, when there is requisite time, they implement horizontal decision-making.

As Sitrin argues drawing on Bourdieu, cultivating horizontalism is not just a matter of changing consciousness, but of undoing ingrained *habitus* through practice [42]. That people can do this is certainly inspiring. However, it also means that horizontalism cannot just spread like an infectious idea. It must become a practical context, as Sitrin points out, within some kind of autonomous territory, whether a factory, a communal kitchen, or behind a barricade.

From a decolonial point of view, through a study of ethno-territorial struggles in Latin America, Arturo Escobar [101] argues that the ontology of another way of thinking constitutes a defense strategy of relational worlds, and the knowledge developed in them, by communities and activists, embodies a far-sighted strategy for the perseverance and fostering of the *pluriverso*.

Finally, the most creative future-change seems to be the embodiment of the attitude “let us all be poets in the present” ([35], p. 570). A reflection on the potential of creating a poetic urban social movement within the space of self-constructed popular neighborhoods, and urban movements is presented in previous texts [33]. These places gave birth to many social movements and to a “culture of resistance” [28]. This reflection can be enriched by the study of actions and practices of various groups such as “Poets in construction” and “CECOS” in Nezahualcóyotl City (Mexico), Theatre ALBOR of El Alto and the Theatre of the Oppressed to the South of Buenos Aires, and their relationship with the neighborhood residents. These groups insist on the importance of constructing a neighborhood “cultural identity” (e.g., cultura Neza, cultura El Alto, etc.)—thereby questioning the mass media’s image of the “barrio”. This “cultural identity” is opposed to the official representation of “barrios” where the iconic stereotypical representations of ‘barrio life’ are produced for a white middle and high social class consumer public.

Can “creative resistances” build another way of thinking?

Based on Raúl Prado’s approach, I argue that the answer to the above question depends on the “structure of the events” and on the degree of connectivity between “societies in movement” (see: Zibechi [77] and Sitrin [42]) and “creative resistances” in a very large process of “social movements in the everyday life” (see: Psimitis [102]). The poetic, as an important element of “societies in movement” and “creative resistances” as well, will play a crucial role in the making of such connectivity, as it can, over the years, change aspects of *habitus*. Due to the capitalist system, colonialism, and neo-colonialism, many poor people living in a perpetual banishment from rural or urban spaces (see: Roy [4]), internalize the condition of exclusion; they face difficulties in escaping this *habitus* of marginalization. Contemporary movements create new ways of life [42], and new politics in “new worlds” [77], out of this vicious condition of exclusion.

Holloway [9] notes the limits of Marxist theory on the comprehension of contemporary collectivities and proposes a new approach to understanding them: the process of *crack capitalism* coming to the fore through multiplication of anti-capitalist actions in everyday life. In this paper, I propose that this process of anti-capitalist actions in the everyday life can crack the biopolitical systemic sphere and perhaps change aspects of *habitus*—if this process relates to the tradition of rebellion and, at the same time, with “societies in movement”, ideas of global anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial, and ecological movements.

In Mexico, the emergence of this process is visible in “societies in movement” such as the Zapatista movement in Chiapas (1994–present); also evident is their connectivity with a multiplicity of creative resistances and urban-regional and feminist movements such as Oaxaca [103], Atenco [104], Cheran (from 2006 and after). The influence of creative resistances and their contribution to questioning the stigmatization of popular peripheral *barrios* is very important.

In Argentina, the influence of *piqueteros* movement, of the factory recuperation movement and of many other urban and feminist movements contribute to a process through which dignity can emerge in the daily life of peripheral popular neighborhoods and villas; they also contribute to the creation of a multiplicity of creative resistances and “societies in movement” that profoundly question biopolitical state practices.

In Bolivia, the Cochabamba Water War and the Gas War in La Paz–El Alto changed the stigma of the “dangerous neighborhood” and proposed an alternative way of urbanization based on the Aymara/Quechua concept of *Ayllu* (as we have seen, an indigenous mode of organization based on autonomous local assemblies)—therefore becoming actually dangerous for the elite state authorities. During the periods of uprisings, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) stated it considers the Assembly of “Juntas de Vecinos de Bolivia en El Alto” (“FEJUVE–El Alto”) a terrorist organization due to the organizing practice of *Ayllu*. This, combined with other actions, led to USAID’s withdrawal from the region in 2009 at the request of the Morales government. It proposed state intervention, along with the institutionalization of local assemblies and strict control of social structures, combined with some improvement in living conditions for at least some social strata [105].

Hence, the important role of *Ayllu* to cracking capitalism in everyday life, and to gradually changing the habitus is clearly revealed. Raúl Prada Alcoreza highlights this process: “The place we are talking about is then the social organization. Not the social structure of Émile Durkheim, but the organization, that is to say, the disposition, the order, the articulation of the social form. With Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, we would say, the abstract machine” ([75], p. 22) in a assemblage—agencement). *The definition of the French word agencement does not simply entail heterogenous composition, but entails a constructive process that lays out a specific kind of arrangement.... (w)ith their conditions, their elements, and their agents, or what Deleuze and Guattari call their “abstract machine”, their “concrete assemblage”, and their “personae”.* Thomas Nail [106].

The struggle over authenticity, legitimacy, representativeness, territory, and self-determination continues and the role of social construction of *Ayllu* continues to be important [107]. In all these cases, and the heritage of each of these movements is important in a multiplicity of creative resistances such as poetry, theatre, mural, dance, ecology, new squats, social centers, etc. The connectivity and interaction of all these social actors with other global social movements is underway. Vanden, Funke, Prevost ([108], p. 5) highlights new dynamics of new movements: “powered democratic participation (the new politics) as they unfold in varied . . . ways across the world”.

This research reveals that the poetics of creative resistances question the symbolic power of territorial stigmatization. A “subversive habitus” ([109], p. 47) and a process of commoning ([110], p. 125) are underway. Perhaps the so-called “dangerous” [111] and “reflexive” [55] social sciences can explore in depth this process.

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