

Cruz Armando González Izaguirre

Women's Right to the City

The Family as a Dispositive in Urban Settlements in Mexico



Nomos

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Introduction: tracking an intermittent presence within a shifting trajectory

Throughout its process of research and development, this work has been named various titles as well as encountered significant changes in its content. It may be more pertinent to merely explain the work's current name and content of this study at its final delimitation, however I prefer to also show the research project's trajectories, inflections, and vanishing inertias which have influenced the ultimate development of the work. In this manner, I will offer a more precise perspective of how I identified women's political participation in connection to the family as an essential category in order to research the creation of irregular urban settlements in Sinaloa, Mexico.

In the early stages of the research, I considered developing a comparative study to demonstrate the differences and similarities in the construction of feminist discourses in the context of urban social movements in Sinaloa and Mexico City. The first title of the research was "Feminism and women's political participation in the Mexican urban popular movement: a comparative study between Sinaloa and Mexico City, 1980-1988." I intended to show how during the 1980s, women in feminist movements and women in urban low-income settlements developed a co-creative discussion about what feminism meant from their perspective and how they experienced it as a practice. I selected this time period because, at that time, feminists in academia, political parties, and civil organizations worked with women in poor urban settlements in Mexico City. Similar conditions were taking place in Sinaloa at the same time, when left-wing groups and feminist groups participated in creating and supporting irregular urban settlements. However, after my first field trip to Mexico, I discovered that the feminist discussions that took place in Mexico City did not emerge in the same terms in Sinaloa, where, comparatively speaking, the presence of feminist groups in the settlements was considerably limited.

In a second realization, after recognizing the difficulties in carrying out a comparative study, the process of conducting interviews allowed me to identify that women in low-income urban settlements in Sinaloa played a significant role in the regularization of these spaces. I then decided to focus on how women became politically involved, individually and collectively, in so-called public spaces to obtain legal possession of their land

plots. As a result of this new focus, I changed the research title to “Struggling for a piece of land: Women’s political involvement in the regularization of squatter settlements in Sinaloa, Mexico, 1976-1988.” However, after conducting more interviews around Sinaloa during my second field trip, it was clear to me that the majority of women did not consider themselves involved in political participation in the sense of taking part of the formal realm of politics. When they did, it was not during the entire regularization process, nor had they intended to gain a formal political position. Contrary to that, almost all the interviewees affirmed that they had been in need of a piece of land for their family and that providing housing for their family was the main rationale of their participation.

These statements caught my attention because, although there was no mention of the family in the semi-structured interview format that I used, the interviewees consistently referred to their involvement in the settlements as a matter of financial need and a struggle in the name of their families. As I began to focus on both aspects, I found constant references to the particular uses and practices related to the family as a category that authorities, diverse political agents like left-wing groups, and the settlers themselves utilized to gain control over settlements. These references appeared especially in personal accounts when interviewees narrated why they decided to seize land and live in the open plots. These reasons were also present beyond personal accounts, for example, during the settlement’s development of moral codes, mechanisms of access, and leadership regulatory practices which established that only families, not individuals, could be allocated plots. I located the intermittent emergence of the family in the broader field of public policy, since marriage was a requirement in certain governmental housing programs and authorities usually only allotted plots to families. Thus, I decided to change the first sentence of the working title of the dissertation to “Struggling for a piece of land *for the family*.”

Based on my gathered material, I decided to adopt this new approach that allowed me to review literature and sources from a different perspective. As I paid attention to the presence of the family in the interviews, I also noticed that in much of the bibliography related to the development of low-income settlements and women’s involvement in this type of community in Latin America, the family was present; however, there was a lack of systematic reflections about its role. On the one hand, I noticed that urban studies have paid more attention to the general process of accessing housing, but they have not delved into how gender roles concerning the family allowed settlers to participate in that process. On the other hand, after reviewing gender studies literature in the region, I realized that

despite the long tradition of studying how the family and related gender norms developed in the household, little attention has been paid to the family as category at the level of the settlement and in the political process of regularization of low-income neighborhoods.

Departing from the interviews, I was able to identify what I consider a gap in the interconnection point of both urban and gender studies in the region. Below I will give an overview of how the analysis of the interviews and review of theoretical and empirical works allowed me to delimitate the focus of the research. Proceeding this way, I will expose how I reviewed and reflected on the bibliography regarding women's participation in low-income settlements that contextualized the research by providing background information on the topic at hand.

As some scholars point out, there is a rich tradition of urban studies in Latin America, particularly regarding the process of urbanization of low-income neighborhoods,¹ which Connolly refers to as the “the Latin-American popular habitat paradigm.”² The production of the popular habitat or popular urbanization belongs to the studies of the general process of urbanization in the region. The theoretical frameworks and concepts developed in the region refer to how urbanization has changed in the 20th century until the present (from the theory of marginality to irregularity). However, as some scholars assert, the theoretical discussions have mainly revolved around the practices “to make the city” developed by people living in low-income areas, which have been key aspects in the configuration of the Latin-American urban spaces.³

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- 1 Samuel Jaramillo, “Acerca de La Investigación En Mercados de Tierra Urbana En América Latina,” in *Teorías Sobre La Ciudad En América Latina*, ed. Blanca Ramírez Velazquez and Emilio Pradilla, 1 (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2014); Emilio Duhau, “La Investigación Urbana y Las Metrópolis Latinoamericanas,” in *Teorías Sobre La Ciudad En América Latina*, ed. Blanca Ramírez Velazquez and Emilio Pradilla, 1 (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2014); Omar Varela and María Cristina Cravino, “Mil nombres para mil barrios. Los asentamientos y villas como categorías de análisis y de intervención,” in *Los mil barrios (in)formales: aportes para la construcción de un observatorio del hábitat popular del Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires*, ed. María Cristina Cravino, 1. ed (Los Polvorines, Buenos Aires: Univ. Nacional de General Sarmiento, 2008), 45–64.
 - 2 Priscilla Connolly, “La Ciudad y El Hábitat Popular: Paradigma Latinoamericano,” in *Teorías Sobre La Ciudad En América Latina*, ed. Blanca Ramírez Velazquez and Emilio Pradilla, 1 (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2014).
 - 3 Samuel Jaramillo, “Urbanización informal: Diagnósticos y políticas. Una revisión al debate latinoamericano para pensar líneas de acción actuales,” in *Irregular: suelo y mercado en América Latina*, ed. Clara Eugenia Salazar Cruz (Colegio de México, 2012), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt14jxpwm>; ed. Teolinda Bolívar,

The diverse theoretical approaches developed since the mid-20th century have problematized the dualistic construction of terms such as modern/marginal, legal/illegal, formal/informal, and regular/irregular, thus highlighting the plurality of meanings and nuances of the status of low-income settlements in urban areas.⁴ These theoretical approaches intersect diverse disciplines (such as geography, architecture, sociology, anthropology, political science) and multiple perspectives (such as juridical, economic, and political, among others), which are also intertwined with diverse ways of understanding the nature of poverty in the region.⁵

Probably due to this diversity of approaches, there is no singular consensus concerning what elements constitute the popular habitat or irregular settlements.⁶ This is also because its features change from one country to another (even from one city to another); in the different national legal regulations and housing policies in each country; from one time period to another; and shifts in the theoretical discussions have affected the ontological

Marcelo Rodríguez Mancilla, and Jaime F Erazo Espinosa, *Ciudades en construcción permanente: ¿destino de casas para todos?*, 2015.

- 4 María Laura Canestraro, “¿Ilegales, Irregulares, Informales...? Aportes Para Un Debate Sobre El Suelo,” *Nómadas. Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas*, (June 3, 2013), https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_NOMA.2013.42351.
- 5 Peter M. Ward, “The Lack of ‘Cursive Thinking’ Within Social Theory and Public Policy: Four Decades of Marginality and Rationality in the So-Called Slum,” in *Rethinking Development in Latin America*, ed. Charles H. Wood and Bryan R. Roberts, 1. paperback print (University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2006), 275; Sonia Álvarez, “La Producción de La Pobreza Masiva y Su Persistencia En El Pensamiento Social Latinoamericano,” in *Producción de Pobreza y Desigualdad En América Latina*, ed. Alberto D. Cimadamore and Antonio David Cattani, Biblioteca Universitaria (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina: Bergen, Noruega: Siglo del Hombre Editores; CLACSO; CROP, 2008), 79–123.
- 6 See: Virginia Miranda Gassull, “El Hábitat Popular. Algunos Aportes Teóricos de La Realidad Habitacional de Sectores Desposeídos,” *Territorios*, no. 36 (January 30, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/territorios/a.4440>; Samuel Jaramillo, “Reflexiones Sobre La ‘Informalidad’ Fundiaria Como Peculiaridad de Los Mercados Del Suelo En Las Ciudades de América Latina,” *Territorios* Núm. 18-19 (2008): (Enero-Diciembre); *Mercados Inmobiliarios Populares*, (2010), <https://revistas.urosario.edu.co/index.php/territorios/article/view/826>; Paula Boldrini and Claudia Gómez López, “Participación Popular En La Producción Del Hábitat: El Caso Del Área Metropolitana de Tucumán-Argentina,” *Revista de Geografía Norte Grande* (2014): 67–82; Mariela Paula Díaz, “Hábitat Popular y Mercado Laboral: El Desarrollo Urbano Desigual de La Ciudad de El Alto (Bolivia),” *Revista INVI* 30, no. 85 (November 2015): 111–46, <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-8358201500030004>.

and epistemological approaches regarding how people in low-income settlements produce the spaces where they live. However, despite these difficulties and the different modalities, names,⁷ and processes of installation, construction, and paths to obtain legal possession, low-income settlements frequently share a lack, if not an absence, of public services⁸ and an ambiguous legal status.⁹ As Connolly points out, “popular” is probably the adjective that best defines them, which maybe is vague, but demonstrates its complexity and ambiguous meaning in the regional context.¹⁰

The first attempts to explain the presence of low-income settlements were developed during the mid-20th century during the regional transition from a rural-preindustrial model to a capitalist production model, alongside attempts to establish a welfare state after WWII.¹¹ In this scenario, a rationalist-functionalist paradigm of modernization prevailed to explain regional development and city development.¹² This approach is what Jaramillo refers to as the right-wing marginality approach,¹³ which was

7 For instance: “conventillos,” “inquilinos,” and “villas miseria.” Varela and Cravino develop a more extensive categorization which includes the low-income settlements produced or supported by the state: “Mil nombres para mil barrios. Los asentamientos y villas como categorías de análisis y de intervención.”

8 François Tomas, “Los asentamientos populares irregulares en las periferias urbanas de América Latina,” in *El acceso de los pobres al suelo urbano* (2013), 11–34; Pedro Pérez, “Los Servicios Urbanos En América Latina,” in *Teorías Sobre La Ciudad En América Latina*, ed. Blanca Ramírez Velazquez and Emilio Pradilla, 1 (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2014); Bolívar, Rodríguez Mancilla, and Erazo Espinosa, *Ciudades en construcción permanente*; Emilio Duhau, *Hábitat popular y política urbana*, Las ciencias sociales (México, D.F: Univ. Autónoma Metropolitana, 1998).

9 Jorge Montaña, *Los Pobres de La Ciudad En Los Asentamientos Espontáneos: Poder y Política*, 1. ed, Sociología y Política (México, D.F: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1976), 107; Nora Clichevsky, “Informalidad y Regularización Del Suelo Urbano En América Latina: Algunas Reflexiones,” *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Urbanos e Regionais* 9, no. 2 (November 30, 2007): 56–57, <https://doi.org/10.22296/2317-1529.2007v9n2p55>.

10 Connolly, “La Ciudad y El Hábitat Popular: Paradigma Latinoamericano.”

11 Mercedes Lentini, “Transformaciones de La Cuestión Social Habitacional: Principales Enfoques y Perspectivas. El Caso de Argentina En El Contexto Latinoamericano,” *Economía, Sociedad y Territorio* 8, no. 27 (August 2008): 661–92.

12 Rafael López Rangel, “Las Teorías Urbanas, Un Tema Transdisciplinario No Neutral,” in *Teorías Sobre La Ciudad En América Latina*, ed. Blanca Ramírez Velazquez and Emilio Pradilla, 1 (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2014).

13 Jaramillo, “Urbanización informal: Diagnósticos y políticas. Una revisión al debate latinoamericano para pensar líneas de acción actuales.”

criticized by Marxist scholars, or the left-wing marginality approach as the same author refers to it.¹⁴

The marginality approach has a precedent in Oscar Lewis' work regarding the culture of poverty in Mexico.¹⁵ In his work, the author asserts that certain cultural patterns hinder people who migrate to urban areas from adapting to the modernization project that cities supposedly promote.¹⁶ At the methodological level, the author focuses on the family unit to analyze the culture of poverty, asserting that it is within the family that the culture of poverty is reproduced.¹⁷ The idea of the culture of poverty was an influential element in Gino Germani's marginality approach, according to which a modern and a traditional sector coexisted during the modernization process in underdeveloped countries. The latter, due to its particular values and personal and familial behavior patterns, could not be included in the modernization process. Thus, the family acted somehow as a "transmission belt" of the marginal conditions.¹⁸

In the Marxist reflections about social exclusion during the urbanization process, the family was not as relevant as it was in Lewis' anthropological analysis and Germani's sociological works. In this approach, the capitalist relations of production became the focal point of analysis and thus the family became less relevant at the theoretical and methodological levels. Specifically, Marxist scholars criticized the determinist cultural argument, according to which people living in low-income settlements were responsible for their exclusion due to their cultural patterns and lack of ability to integrate into the social dynamics of the city. On the contrary, they argued that the surplus workforce in urban spaces in the region was a result of inequality in terms of access to means of production in the context of a process of industrialization. For instance, Nun coined the term marginal mass (*masa marginal*) instead of using the traditional term of "reserve army of la-

14 Jaramillo, "Reflexiones Sobre La 'Informalidad' Fundiaria Como Peculiaridad de Los Mercados Del Suelo En Las Ciudades de América Latina."

15 Oscar Lewis, *Antropología de la pobreza: cinco familias*, trans. Emma Sánchez Ramírez, Primera edición en español, Sección de obras de antropología (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1961); Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," *Scientific American* 215, no. 4 (1966): 19–25.

16 Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty." The author identifies "70 traits that characterize the culture of poverty."

17 Ibid.

18 Gino Germani, *El Concepto de Marginalidad. Significado, Raíces Históricas y Cuestiones Teóricas, Con Particular Referencia a La Marginalidad Urbana* (Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1973), 102–3.

bor” to differentiate the broader sector of the society, which the capitalistic system could not assimilate into the workforce labor and thus was not functional to the system.¹⁹

Turner’s work in Peru in the 1970s regarding “self-help housing”²⁰ proposes a framework opposing the first version of the theory of marginality thus framing the inhabitants of low-income neighborhoods as proactive agents in the development of these spaces and urban areas. According to Turner, their condition of poverty is a *transitory* stage which could improve considerably if they had “freedom to build”²¹ and thus solve their housing needs. The self-help housing model was influential in Peru and the region’s housing policy, even during the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1976 (HABITAT I).²² The author’s methodology consists of 25 in-depth case studies (households), presenting families in each household as an economic unit and their housing practices as a set of actions to cope with the difficult economic condition they faced. This approach focuses mainly on economic aspects and overlooks other socio-political dimensions of the family in the creation and de-

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- 19 José Nun, *Marginalidad y Exclusión Social*, 1. ed, Colección Popular 591 (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001) [1969]. Other Marxist scholars also attempted to integrate the term marginal/marginality in a theoretical approach that aimed to explain the underdeveloped situation of the region due to its economic dependency to the first world nations. See: Aníbal Quijano, “Dependencia, Cambio Social y Urbanización En Latinoamérica,” in *Cuestiones y Horizontes: De La Dependencia Histórico-Estructural a La Colonialidad/Descolonialidad Del Poder: Antología Esencial*, ed. Danilo Assis Clímaco, Primera edición, Colección Antologías (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2014), 75–124; Aníbal Quijano and Danilo Assis Clímaco, *Cuestiones y Horizontes: De La Dependencia Histórico-Estructural a La Colonialidad/Descolonialidad Del Poder: Antología Esencial*, Primera edición, Colección Antologías (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2014); Manuel Castells, “La Urbanización Dependiente En América Latina,” in *Urbanización y Dependencia En América Latina*, ed. Martha Scheingart (Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1973), 70–92.
- 20 John Turner, *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments*, 1st American ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
- 21 John Turner and Robert Fichter, *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).
- 22 Raúl Fernández Wagner, “Los asentamientos informales como cuestión. Revisión de algunos debates,” in *Los mil barrios (in)formales: aportes para la construcción de un observatorio del hábitat popular del Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires*, ed. María Cristina Cravino, 1. ed (Los Polvorines, Buenos Aires: Univ. Nacional de General Sarmiento, 2008), 24; Fernando Carrión, “La Investigación Urbana En América Latina. Una Aproximación,” *Nueva Sociedad*, no. 114 (July 1991): 113–23; J. C. Driant, *Las barriadas de Lima: historia e interpretación*, Travaux de l’Institut français d’études andines, t. 60 (Lima: IFEA DESCO, 1991), 12.

velopment of *barriadas*.²³ Thus, although the self-help housing model aimed to criticize the marginality theory and its assumptions, it did not analyze the central role of the family in the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the marginality theory. Moreover, the self-help housing model used the family in its methodological and conceptual analysis of the housing practices of the inhabitants of the low-income settlements without reflecting on this category.

During the 1970s, the import substitution model with state participation, which had produced an accelerated urbanization in the region since the 1940s, also showed signs of decline.²⁴ The optimistic assumption that low-income neighborhoods were in a transitory stage towards modernization was criticized by a new theoretical approach. It considered the low rates of economic growth and economic dependency of underdeveloped countries produced precarious economic conditions in the region.²⁵ This new theoretical approach was denominated the theory of dependency²⁶ and one of its areas of research aimed to explain the supposed particularities of the urbanization process of the region in relation to its peripheral condition in the capitalistic accumulation pattern in the world.²⁷

In this context, following diverse threads of the dependent theory, different scholars argued that people in a situation of poverty, far from passive and “marginal,” developed economic and social strategies to cope with difficult economic situations. From an anthropological framework, the

23 Turner, *Housing by People*, 38, 54.

24 Pérez, “Los Servicios Urbanos En América Latina”; Emilio Pradilla, “La Economía y Las Formas Urbanas En América Latina,” in *Teorías Sobre La Ciudad En América Latina*, ed. Blanca Ramírez Velazquez and Emilio Pradilla, 1 (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2014); Blanca Ramírez and Emilio Pradilla, “Presentación,” in *Teorías Sobre La Ciudad En América Latina*, ed. Blanca Ramírez and Emilio Pradilla, 1 (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2014); Pedro Abramo, “La Ciudad Com-Fusa: Mercado y Producción de La Estructura Urbana En Las Grandes Metrópolis Latinoamericanas,” *EURE (Santiago)* 38, no. 114 (May 2012): 35–69, <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0250-71612012000200002>.

25 Castells, “La Urbanización Dependiente En América Latina,” 72–91.

26 Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) [1971]; Ruy Mauro Marini, *Dialéctica de la dependencia* (México: Era, 1991) [1972]; Raúl Prebisch, “The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems,” *The Economic Bulletin for Latin America* VII, no. 1 (February 1962): 1–52; Quijano, “Dependencia, Cambio Social y Urbanización En Latinoamérica.”

27 Quijano, “Dependencia, Cambio Social y Urbanización En Latinoamérica.”

works of Perlman on the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro,²⁸ Lomnitz on the shantytowns of Mexico City,²⁹ and Safa on the *barrios* of Puerto Rico,³⁰ aim to expose how the population of low-income settlements were part of the development of urban areas.

The anthropological perspective of these works brought the family and familial networks to the forefront as a central element for the strategies developed by people in low-income settlements to overcome or at least cope with their situation of poverty. They criticize Lewis' work and his interpretation of the culture of poverty as a set of pervasive cultural traits that the family transmits and perpetuates a situation of poverty.³¹ On the contrary, they frame family relations in the low-income settlements as a fluent set of social relations marked by positive interchange and collaboration (particularly, *compadrazgo* ties and extended family).³² Hence, Lomnitz reports that there was no proof of a higher level of gender-based violence against women than in other groups, as commonly assumed by the marginality approach.³³

Interestingly, as these works systematically reflected on familial networks, women's conditions and roles in the low-income settlements, especially as head of household, emerged. Lomnitz reports that families with female heads of household perceived a lower income and relied more on child labor.³⁴ From a different perspective, Safa and Peattie analyze the relevance of matrifocality in the organization of low-income settlements, arguing that "the family" hardly seems to exist in these spaces as a social unit within discrete boundaries.³⁵ The household as a space for woven net-

28 Janice E. Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

29 Larissa Lomnitz, *Cómo sobreviven los marginados* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1975).

30 Helen Icken Safa, *The Urban Poor of Puerto Rico: A Study in Development and Inequality*, Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974).

31 *Ibid.*, 33; Lomnitz, *Cómo sobreviven los marginados*, 24–25; Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, 115.

32 Lisa Redfield Peattie, *The View from the Barrio* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985 [1968]); Lomnitz, *Cómo sobreviven los marginados*, 186–87; Safa, *The Urban Poor of Puerto Rico*, 49; Aníbal Quijano, "La Constitución Del 'Mundo' de La Marginalidad Urbana," *EURE- Revista de Estudios Urbano Regionales* 2, no. 5 (1972): 89–106.

33 Lomnitz, *Cómo sobreviven los marginados*, 35.

34 Peattie, *The View from the Barrio*, 46; Safa, *The Urban Poor of Puerto Rico*, 29.

35 Peattie, *The View from the Barrio*, 41; Safa, *The Urban Poor of Puerto Rico*, 36–37.

works of support is the center of their analysis; the scholars consider that their difficult economic condition is what intensifies collaboration within the extended family.³⁶

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period of generalized economic crisis and inflation marked the beginning of the “lost decade” in Latin America. Diverse social movements emerged in the region, resisting the structural adjustment policies that cutback funding for social programs, affecting mainly the poorest sectors of society;³⁷ they also opposed authoritarian regimes and demanded political rights.³⁸ In this context, as some scholars assert, the crisis of the developmental approach and Fordist accumulation model influenced research agendas to concentrate on two main research lines. One was the popular urbanization, which lacked basic services and was developed mainly through processes at the margin of the juridical framework, a research line with a long tradition in the region; and second, the formal urbanization process ruled by the formal housing market, which was strongly influenced by the intensification and extension of the economic neoliberal model in which the nation state reduces its participation in urban planning.³⁹

The first approach was led by an orthodox Marxist approach which criticized both the marginality theory and the dependency theory. This orthodox Marxism argued that inequality and unemployment are an integral part of the capitalist system and not a temporal problem that will be solved with the inclusion of people in a situation of poverty into the modernization project. Nor is it the result of an atrophied development explained by external factors, such as a constant succession of different types of depen-

36 Lomnitz, *Cómo sobreviven los marginados*, 11.

37 Jane S. Jaquette, ed., *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy*, Thematic Studies in Latin America (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 185.

38 Gisela Espinosa Damián, “Feminismo Popular. Tensiones e Intersecciones Entre El Género y La Clase,” in *Un Fantasma Recorre El Siglo: Luchas Feministas En México 1910-2010*, Primera edición (México, D.F: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco, 2011), 277–308; James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*, In-Formation Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 238.

39 López Rangel, “Las Teorías Urbanas, Un Tema Transdisciplinario No Neutral”; Duhau, “La Investigación Urbana y Las Metrópolis Latinoamericanas”; Pérez, “Los Servicios Urbanos En América Latina”; Ana Núñez and Jorge Roze, “Las Palabras y Las Cosas En La Ciudad Latinoamericana. Obstáculos Epistemológicos En Políticas Urbanas Argentinas,” *Cadernos Metrópole* 16, no. 31 (June 2014): 61–88, <https://doi.org/10.1590/2236-9996.2014-3103>.

dency relations with developed countries.⁴⁰ Drawing on the classical Marxist concept of “the industrial reserve army,” some scholars criticized terms such as “marginal population,” which they considered functionalist to the capitalist system.⁴¹ Additionally, they argued that self-help building, instead of “giving the freedom to construct,” reproduced the exploitation of workers.⁴² Moreover, this housing model forced the settler (*and their family*) to extend their working hours in order to build their house, thus investing a larger amount of time and resources in a plot without public services and usually an ambiguous legal status.⁴³

In the Mexican context, Alonso criticizes Lomnitz’s work and argues that the social networks developed by the inhabitants of low-income settlements helped them to survive in a difficult economic condition, but they did not change settlers’ condition of exploitation within the capitalist relations of production.⁴⁴ Interestingly, Alonso focuses his analysis on a group of families in a low-income settlement to show that their strategies to survive did not favor the acquisition of a class consciousness.⁴⁵ Other Marxist scholars from this approach also overlook the political role and cultural relevance that the family held in the development of low-income settlements; they merely see the family as a reproductive economic unit which divides the public from the private sphere.⁴⁶

40 Paul Israel Singer, “Urbanización, Dependencia y Marginalidad En América Latina,” in *Urbanización y Dependencia En América Latina*, ed. Martha Schteingart (Buenos Aires, Argentina: 1973), 93–122.

41 Jorge Alonso, ed., *Lucha Urbana y Acumulación de Capital* (La Casa Chata, 1980), 443, http://www.libros_mexico.mx/libros/31366; Oscar Núñez, Emilio Pradilla, and Martha Schteingart, “Notas Acerca Del Problema de La Vivienda En América Latina,” *Demografía y Economía* 13, no. 3 (1979): 382; Emilio Pradilla, *El Problema de La Vivienda En América Latina* (Quito, 1983), 83; Juan Manuel Ramírez, “Los movimientos sociales urbanos en México: elementos para una caracterización,” *Nueva Antropología. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 24 (1984): 23.

42 Emilio Pradilla, *Capital, Estado y Vivienda En América Latina*, 1a ed, Fontamara 27 (México, D.F: Distribuciones Fontamara, 1987), 96–101.

43 *Ibid.*, 171–73.

44 Alonso, *Lucha Urbana y Acumulación de Capital*, 20.

45 *Ibid.*, 266.

46 Ricardo Hernández, *La Coordinadora Nacional del Movimiento Urbano Popular, CONAMUP: su historia 1980-1986*, 1a ed. (Coyoacán, México, D.F: Equipo Pueblo, 1987); Pedro Moctezuma and Bernardo Navarro, “Proletariado, estado y reproducción de la fuerza de trabajo en las colonias populares,” *Nueva Antropología. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 24 (1984): 15; Emilio Pradilla, *Contribución a La Crítica de La “Teoría Urbana”: Del “Espacio” a La “Crisis Urbana,”* 1. ed, Colección Ensayos D6 (México, D.F: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Xochimilco,

The crisis of the Fordist model with state intervention, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the rise of neoliberal politics brought a crisis of theoretical paradigms and the emergence of new ones.⁴⁷ The notion of informality/formality, adopted from the International Labour Organization (ILO), was used to denominate a sector of the economy⁴⁸ and gained momentum in debates about urban development in Latin America.⁴⁹ Drawing on liberal perspectives,⁵⁰ this approach argues that inadequate state intervention and an ineffective legal framework obstruct subjects in a situation of poverty from solving their housing problems. Thus, this approach advocates for giving citizens the opportunity to develop their own housing practices and to accompany these practices with housing policies; these policies could include regularization campaigns and regulations in urban planning in order to promote dynamism in the real estate market.⁵¹ It is important to note that this model emerged in a period where, on the one hand, governments in Latin America were not able to establish a long-term policy towards the irregular urban settlements while, on the other, the neoliberal model was in process of being established.⁵²

This emphasis took place particularly from around the 1980s when the neoliberal accumulation pattern was imposed in the region and terms like “neoliberalism” and “globalization” gathered momentum in academic dis-

1984), 59, 94; Armando Meza, “El movimiento urbano popular en Durango,” *Nueva Antropología. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 24 (1984): 91.

47 Jaramillo, “Urbanización informal: Diagnósticos y políticas. Una revisión al debate latinoamericano para pensar líneas de acción actuales”; Pradilla, “La Economía y Las Formas Urbanas En América Latina”; Duhau, “La Investigación Urbana y Las Metrópolis Latinoamericanas”; Jaramillo, “Acerca de La Investigación En Mercados de Tierra Urbana En América Latina.”

48 Varela and Cravino, “Mil nombres para mil barrios. Los asentamientos y villas como categorías de análisis y de intervención,” 47; Canestraro, “¿Ilegales, Irregulares, Informales...?”

49 Fernando Ostuni and Jean-Louis van Gelder, “‘No sé si legal... ¡pero legítimo es!’ Percepciones sobre seguridad en la tenencia y títulos de propiedad en barrios informales del Gran Buenos Aires,” in *Los mil barrios (informales: aportes para la construcción de un observatorio del hábitat popular del Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires*, ed. María Cristina Cravino, 1. ed (Los Polvorines, Buenos Aires: Univ. Nacional de General Sarmiento, 2008), 203.

50 Milton Friedman and Rose D. Friedman, *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*, 1st ed (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 109–12.

51 Hernando de Soto, *El otro sendero: la revolución informal*, 1. ed., 2. impr. mexicana (México, D.F: Ed. Diana, 1987), 317.

52 Tomas, “Los asentamientos populares irregulares en las periferias urbanas de América Latina,” 12.

cussions; this was a shift that some scholars, particularly from the Marxist field, considered as a way to mask the social inequality and hegemonic capitalist discourse.⁵³ Some Marxist scholars criticized this model because it disregarded the academic discussion in the region concerning urban issues beginning in the 1960s; it proposed informal housing practices as an act of liberty, ignoring that in most cases they were a survival strategy of disadvantaged urban sectors.⁵⁴ Other scholars pointed out that the formal/informal dichotomy misses the nuances of the socio-spatial reality⁵⁵ and assumes that every person has a natural tendency for commercial exchange, accumulation, and investment. Additionally, it proposes a homogeneity in relation to the individual's ontology and considers people in a situation of poverty as "entrepreneurs."⁵⁶

Moreover, the juridical construction of the dichotomic opposition between formal and informal is not a neutral one, as some agents have more power to shape urban laws and regulations and thus decide what is legal or illegal, regular or irregular, and formal or informal.⁵⁷ Finally, as the approach of formality and informality gained considerable attention in the discussion of the configuration of urban spaces in the region, many scholars criticized the ambiguous definition of the concept. As some authors point out, terms such as informal, illegal, and irregular are used as

53 Jhon Williams Montoya, ed., "Geografía urbana: trayectorias epistemológicas y agenda contemporánea," in *Lecturas en teoría de la geografía* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, 2009), 177–79; Pradilla, "La Economía y Las Formas Urbanas En América Latina."

54 Emilio Pradilla, "El Mito Neoliberal de La 'Informalidad' Urbana," in *Más Allá de La Informalidad*, ed. José Luis Coraggio et al. (Quito, Ecuador: Centro de Investigaciones CIUDAD, 1995), 49–50.

55 Varela and Cravino, "Mil nombres para mil barrios. Los asentamientos y villas como categorías de análisis y de intervención," 47.

56 Diego Aulestia, "Medios de Vida Urbanos y Vivienda En Ecuador," in *Inter/Secciones Urbanas: Origen y Contexto En América Latina*, ed. Jaime F. Erazo Espinosa, 1a. ed, Colección 50 Años (Quito: FLACSO Ecuador: Ministerio de Cultura, 2009), 200.

57 Canestraro, "¿Ilegales, Irregulares, Informales...?"; Nora Clichevsky, *Regularizando la informalidad del suelo en América Latina y el Caribe: una evaluación sobre la base de 13 países y 71 programas* (Santiago de Chile: Naciones Unidas, CEPAL, Div. de Desarrollo Sostenible y Asentamientos Humanos, 2006), <http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/4/26584/LCL2474P.pdf>; Edésio Fernandes, "La Influencia Del Misterio Del Capital de Hernando de Soto," *Land Lines* Volumen 14, no. 1 (January 2002): 6.

interchangeable concepts.⁵⁸ Moreover, as Azuela points out, the spatial practices carried out by people in low-income settlements usually equate to the only form of informality,⁵⁹ thus omitting the irregular, illegal, and informal practices carried out by members of the middle and upper classes.⁶⁰ Notwithstanding these critics, there is a fruitful academic research field regarding informal land markets which incorporates political, economic, social, and cultural aspects, thus developing a more complex interpretation of how people in a situation of poverty access housing.⁶¹

Many works related to the analysis of informal/formal markets, specifically what Ostuni and Van Gelder denominate the “titling debate” (*el debate sobre los títulos*),⁶² mention the family at different levels without fully reflecting on this category. For instance, low income families are the object of regularization campaigns aimed to incorporate them to the formal housing market and guarantee their rights over their properties.⁶³ Having a family defines who can be considered a subject for the legalization of irregular properties; being head of a family was a requirement in some housing

58 Julio Calderón, “Algunas Consideraciones Sobre Los Mercados Ilegales e Informales de Suelo Urbano En América Latina,” Reporte de investigación (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1999), http://www.lincolninst.edu/pubs/dl/736_calderon_99b.pdf; Canestraro, “¿Ilegales, Irregulares, Informales...?”

59 Antonio Azuela, “Los Asentamientos Populares y El Orden Jurídico En La Urbanización Periférica de América Latina,” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 55, no. 3 (July 1993): 133, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3540926>.

60 Varela and Cravino, “Mil nombres para mil barrios. Los asentamientos y villas como categorías de análisis y de intervención.”

61 see: Aduato Cardoso, “Irregularidad Urbanística: Questionando Algunas Hipótesis,” *Cadernos Metrópole* 10, no. 2^o sem (2003): 9–25; Pedro Abramo, “Mercado informal y producción del hábitat: la nueva puerta de acceso a los asentamientos populares en América Latina,” in *Los lugares del hábitat y la inclusión*, ed. Teolinda Bolívar and Jaime F Erazo Espinosa, 2013, 29–58; *ibid.*; Jaramillo, “Reflexiones Sobre La ‘Informalidad’ Fundiaria Como Peculiaridad de Los Mercados Del Suelo En Las Ciudades de América Latina”; Jaramillo, “Urbanización informal: Diagnósticos y políticas. Una revisión al debate latinoamericano para pensar líneas de acción actuales”; Abramo, “La Ciudad Com-Fusa.”

62 Ostuni and van Gelder, “‘No sé si legal... ¡pero legítimo es!’ Percepciones sobre seguridad en la tenencia y títulos de propiedad en barrios informales del Gran Buenos Aires.”

63 Fernando García, *El Desarrollo Estratégico Del Suelo En El Estado de México: Políticas Gubernamentales y Perspectivas* (Toluca: Gobierno del Estado de México, Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Obras Públicas, Subsecretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda, Comisión para la Regulación del Suelo del Estado de México, 1998), 26, 81, 123, 130, 175.

governmental programs,⁶⁴ Family is also framed as the agent of the construction and physical improvement of irregular housing.⁶⁵

Currently, besides the permanent topic of researching the process of regularization, the research about the *hábitat popular* has been assimilated to the study of urban segregation,⁶⁶ social inclusion,⁶⁷ and, in some case, familial survival strategies.⁶⁸ The family appears as the basic unity for the workforce reproduction,⁶⁹ the space that divides the public from the private,⁷⁰ as a unit of measurement to define the dimension of low-income settlements and obtain recognition from authorities.⁷¹ It is also a level of

64 Clichevsky, “Informalidad y Regularización Del Suelo Urbano En América Latina.”

65 Canestraro, “¿Ilegales, Irregulares, Informales...?”; Ostuni and van Gelder, “No sé si legal... ¡pero legítimo es!” Percepciones sobre seguridad en la tenencia y títulos de propiedad en barrios informales del Gran Buenos Aires.”

66 Laura Paniagua, “Disputas Urbanas: El Espacio y La Diferenciación En El Barrio,” in *Dimensiones Del Hábitat Popular Latinoamericano*, ed. Teolinda Bolívar and Jaime F Erazo Espinosa, 1a. edición, Hacedores de Ciudades 2 (Quito, Ecuador: Buenos Aires, Argentina: Quito, Ecuador: FLACSO; CLACSO; Instituto de la Ciudad, 2012); See: Danilo Veiga, “Desigualdades sociales y fragmentación urbana: obstáculos para una ciudad democrática,” in *El rostro urbano de América Latina: o rostro urbano da América Latina*, ed. Ana Clara Torres Ribeiro and Augusto Barreira, 1. ed, Colección Grupos de trabajo de CLACSO (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2004), 193–210; Julia Virginia Rofé, “Hábitat popular y políticas públicas sobre tierra y vivienda en la ciudad de Buenos Aires, a partir de 2000,” in *Producción inmobiliaria y reestructuración metropolitana en América Latina*, ed. Paulo Cesar Xavier Pereira and Rodrigo Hidalgo, Serie GEOlibros 11 (Santiago, Chile: Inst, 2008), 273–96; María José Pérez, “Construcción de La Vida Asociativa: Estudio de Caso de Las Políticas de Vivienda Social En La Comuna de La Pintana,” in *Inter/Secciones Urbanas: Origen y Contexto En América Latina*, ed. Jaime F. Erazo Espinosa, 1a. ed, Colección 50 Años (Quito: FLACSO Ecuador: Ministerio de Cultura, 2009), 175–94.

67 Jaime F. Erazo Espinosa, ed., *Inter/Secciones Urbanas: Origen y Contexto En América Latina*, 1a. ed, Colección 50 Años (Quito: FLACSO Ecuador: Ministerio de Cultura, 2009).

68 Aulestia, “Medios de Vida Urbanos y Vivienda En Ecuador.”

69 Jaramillo, “Urbanización informal: Diagnósticos y políticas. Una revisión al debate latinoamericano para pensar líneas de acción actuales.”

70 Patricia Ramírez, “La Ciudad Desde El Espacio Público y Las Prácticas Ciudadanas,” in *Teorías Sobre La Ciudad En América Latina*, ed. Blanca Ramírez Velazquez and Emilio Pradilla, 1 (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2014).

71 Juan Fernández, “Pobreza urbana y políticas habitacionales en Chile (1990-2005). ¿De la exclusión social a la integración?,” in *Procesos de urbanización de la pobreza y nuevas formas de exclusión social: los retos de las políticas sociales de las ciudades lati-*

analysis for researching about social vulnerability and how settlers developed networks to cope with their difficult economic situation.⁷²

Interestingly enough, from the perspective of this work, the family is also often framed as the *subject* or principal agent in the diverse stages of low-income settlements.⁷³ In some cases, families are framed as the subject that initiated the land take overs,⁷⁴ when families were gradually allocated

noamericanas del siglo XXI, ed. Alicia Ziccardi, Biblioteca universitaria. Ciencias sociales y humanidades. Temas para el diálogo y el debate (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo del Hombre Editores; CLACSO, 2008), 99–122; Isabel Rodríguez and Eloy Méndez, “Paisajes y arquitecturas de las nuevas tendencias inmobiliarias fronterizas: el caso de Tijuana,” in *Producción inmobiliaria y reestructuración metropolitana en América Latina*, ed. Paulo Cesar Xavier Pereira and Rodrigo Hidalgo, Serie GEOLibros 11 (Santiago, Chile: Inst, 2008), 211–30.

- 72 Maria Gabriela Hita and Luciana Duccini, “Exclusão social, desafiliação e inclusão social no estudo de redes sociais de familias pobres soteropolitanas,” in *Procesos de urbanización de la pobreza y nuevas formas de exclusión social: los retos de las políticas sociales de las ciudades latinoamericanas del siglo XXI*, ed. Alicia Ziccardi, Biblioteca universitaria. Ciencias sociales y humanidades. Temas para el diálogo y el debate (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo del Hombre Editores; CLACSO, 2008), 181–212; Juana Martínez, “Periferia urbana y pobreza en la zona metropolitana de la ciudad de Cuautla, Morelos,” in *Procesos de urbanización de la pobreza y nuevas formas de exclusión social: los retos de las políticas sociales de las ciudades latinoamericanas del siglo XXI*, ed. Alicia Ziccardi, Biblioteca universitaria. Ciencias sociales y humanidades. Temas para el diálogo y el debate (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo del Hombre Editores; CLACSO, 2008), 277–94.
- 73 Norma Lacerda, Julia Morim, and Mauro Barros, “Funcionamento do mercado de habitações nas áreas pobres da Região Metropolitana do Recife. Uma primeira aproximação,” in *Producción inmobiliaria y reestructuración metropolitana en América Latina*, ed. Paulo Cesar Xavier Pereira and Rodrigo Hidalgo, Serie GEOLibros 11 (Santiago, Chile: Inst, 2008), 234–42; Roberto Briceño-León, “Introducción,” in *Casas de Infinitas Privaciones: ¿germen de Ciudades Para Todos?*, ed. Teolinda Bolívar, Mildred Guerrero, and Marcelo Rodríguez, 1era. edición, Ciudades de La Gente, volumen 1 (Quito, Ecuador: Buenos Aires, Argentina: Caracas, Venezuela: Cuenca, Ecuador: Abya Yala; CLACSO; Universidad Central de Venezuela; Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, 2014), 29.
- 74 Daniela Soldano, “Vivir en territorios desmembrados. Un estudio sobre la fragmentación socio-espacial y las políticas sociales en el área metropolitana de Buenos Aires (1990-2005),” in *Procesos de urbanización de la pobreza y nuevas formas de exclusión social: los retos de las políticas sociales de las ciudades latinoamericanas del siglo XXI*, ed. Alicia Ziccardi, Biblioteca universitaria. Ciencias sociales y humanidades. Temas para el diálogo y el debate (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo del Hombre Editores; CLACSO, 2008), 37–70; Driant, *Las barriadas de Lima*, 14.

with plots which usually lack of basic services and legal certainty.⁷⁵ In some cases, the issue of plot possession persists until today, as plots that were never legalized have become sources of conflicts among family members.⁷⁶ In these studies, the family appeared in an intermittent but constant manner.

Contrary to emphasizing the economic dimension of the regularization approach, a second approach highlights the cultural aspects that motivate people to live in illegal settlements and the relevance of cultural aspects in their housing practices. Moreover, it considers that legalization is not a central motivation for inhabitants, as the proponents of the regularization approach advocate.⁷⁷ Although these works highlight cultural aspects in the development of settlements, as some scholar assert, comparatively speaking the juridical and economic aspects regarding the housing practices in low-income settlements have prevailed over the research of sociocultural elements.⁷⁸

One approach that I found extremely valuable was Varley's work, which underlines how the economic dimension of building a house is secondary to the importance of the family during the self-help housing process. Moreover, the author asserts that "*the failure to attend to the importance of the family undermines the ability to predict the outcome of formalization.*"⁷⁹ Most residents she interviewed asserted that they decided to build

75 Emilio Duhau and Angela Giglia, *Las Reglas Del Desorden: Habitar La Metrópoli*, 1a. ed, Arquitectura y Urbanismo (México, D.F: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Azcapotzalco: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, n.d.), 331; Clichevsky, "Informalidad y Regularización Del Suelo Urbano En América Latina"; Antônio Veríssimo, "Programas de Regularización y Formación de Las Plusvalías En Las Urbanizaciones Informales," in *Dimensiones Del Hábitat Popular Latinoamericano*, ed. Teolinda Bolívar and Jaime F. Erazo Espinosa, 1a. edición, Hacedores de Ciudades 2 (Quito, Ecuador: Buenos Aires, Argentina: Quito, Ecuador: FLACSO; CLACSO; Instituto de la Ciudad, 2012), 45–68; Tomas, "Los asentamientos populares irregulares en las periferias urbanas de América Latina," 12.

76 Edith Jiménez, Heriberto Cruz, and Claudia Ubaldo, "El regreso a la irregularidad de las colonias populares. Títulos de propiedad y sucesión," in *Irregular: suelo y mercado en América Latina*, ed. Clara Eugenia Salazar Cruz (Colegio de México, 2012), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt14jxpwmm>.

77 Ann Varley, "Private or Public: Debating the Meaning of Tenure Legalization," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26, no. 3 (September 2002): 449–61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00392>.

78 Duhau and Giglia, *Las Reglas Del Desorden*, 331; Alejandra Massolo, "Las Mujeres y El Hábitat Popular: ¿Cooperación Para La Sobrevivencia Para El Desarrollo?," *Hojas de Warmi*, no. 10 (1999).

79 Varley, "Private or Public," 457–58. Emphasis added.

in an illegal settlement in order to have “something to leave to the children.”⁸⁰ As the author points out, “People equate building a house with building a family, and the home symbolizes the union of the family group.”⁸¹ In this process, gender roles played a significant role in the recognition as an owner of a property, since their possibility of owning a house is *conditioned to their roles as mothers and wives and not as a subjects of rights*.⁸²

I found this approach interesting because it resembles what I discovered in my interviews and sources I analyzed. A particularly contradictory scenario emerged for women: the entrance to settlements and formation of internal committees opened up a possibility for political involvement in terms that the formal political arena could not offer them. However, this political participation was based on a struggle for their families, reducing their full recognition as political subjects. As I focused on the relevant role that the family as a category had in the development of settlements, women’s role as agents of development in their communities seemed to be obscured or pushed to the background, although they did not passively assume the gender roles and confinement to the private sphere.

Thus, I encountered difficulties in framing the mutual implication between women’s agency and the family as a relevant category for their political claims. Due to this situation, I decided to analyze the literature on women’s participation in low-income areas, trying to find theoretical and empirical works that forefront this interrelation. Below I will summarize the main discussions around female involvement in the organization of low-income settlements from the 1970s to the present as it exposes the gap I found between regional urban and gender studies in the region; I will also offer a clearer historical background of the Mexican context.

In Mexico, the economic crisis that marked the end of the “stabilizing development” model at the end of the 1970s produced an economic contraction which affected the poorest sectors of society.⁸³ The fall in real wages provoked people to take to the street, among them a considerable

80 Ann Varley, “Neither Victims nor Heroines: Women, Land and Housing in Mexican Cities,” *Third World Planning Review* 17, no. 2 (May 1995): 172, <https://doi.org/10.3828/twpr.17.2.f001n72556611908>.

81 Varley, “Private or Public,” 457–58.

82 Ann Varley, “Modest Expectations: Gender and Property Rights in Urban Mexico: Gender and Property Rights in Urban Mexico,” *Law & Society Review* 44, no. 1 (March 2010): 67–100, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5893.2010.00396.x>. Emphasis added.

83 Martha Zapata, “Feminist Movements in Mexico: From Consciousness-Raising Groups to Transnational Networks,” in *Feminist Philosophy in Latin America and*

number of women,⁸⁴ many of whom led grassroots organizations.⁸⁵ In this context, women had to develop survival strategies related to traditional gender roles to cope with the primary responsibility for reproducing labor power.⁸⁶ These survival strategies rapidly caught the attention of feminist scholars since the women taking part in these social movements played a significant role in these organizations, but their claims were radically different than the key struggles of western feminism.

Spain, ed. María Luisa Femenías, Value Inquiry Book Series 189 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 4.

- 84 It is important to note that women's political involvement in urban struggles took place mainly at the end of the 1970s and onwards. However, women had previously participated in rural and union struggles as well as in movements against political repression such as the National Committee in Defense of Imprisoned, Persecuted, Disappeared, and Exiled Politicians. See: *Ibid.*, 3. For instance, this committee introduced imaginative forms of politics for struggling for Human Rights in the context of the Mexican authoritarian regime in a similar vein as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (*Madres de Plaza de Mayo*) in Argentina. See: Joann Martin, "Motherhood and Power: The Production of a Women's Culture of Politics in a Mexican Community," *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 3 (August 1990): 472, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1990.17.3.02a00040>. Two factors were relevant to the rise of these social movements: The first was the economic crisis and structural adjustment policies that resulted in cutbacks in social programs mainly affecting the poorest sectors of Latin American countries. See: Jaquette, *The Women's Movement in Latin America*, 185. The second factor was the political scenario in which social movements voiced their dissatisfaction with the authoritarian regimes of the region. See: Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*, 238.
- 85 Ana Lau, "Emergencia y Trascendencia Del Neofeminismo," in *Un Fantasma Recorre El Siglo: Luchas Feministas En México 1910-2010*, ed. Gisela Espinosa Damián and Ana Lau, Primera edición (México, D.F: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco, 2011), 171; Lilia Rodriguez, "Barrio Women: Between the Urban and the Feminist Movement," *Latin American Perspectives* 21, no. 3 (July 1994): 32–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X9402100303>; Marta Lamas, "Algunas Características Del Movimiento Feminista En Ciudad de Mexico," in *Mujeres y Participación Política: Avances y Desafíos En América Latina*, ed. Magdalena León de Leal, 1. ed, Académica (Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia: TM Editores, 1994), 150; Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd ed., *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 246.
- 86 Lynn Stephen, "Women in Mexico's Popular Movements: Survival Strategies Against Ecological and Economic Impoverishment," *Latin American Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (January 1992): 74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X9201900104>; Patricia Taylor, "Prologue," in *The Autobiography of María Elena Moyano: The Life and Death of a Peruvian Activist* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 3.

Far from supporting the key struggles of western feminism like legalizing abortion and fighting against sexual violence,⁸⁷ women struggling in the urban social movements and housing movements organized around the struggle for economic subsistence. They usually used their traditional gender roles as mothers, wives and daughters to legitimate their political involvement in social movements. Some examples of this involvement are activities like founding communal kitchens and negotiating with the authorities for the introduction of public services, like schools.⁸⁸ Some scholars argue that this involvement for economic survival reinforced the sexual division of labor and gender roles that reduced women's social participation to the domestic sphere. According to a well discussed analysis, they were aiming for gender "practical needs" (housing and survival) and not for gender "strategic needs," like women's subordination in society.⁸⁹

Opposing this interpretation, other scholars argue that poverty and survival strategies might merely be a departing point which initiates a personal process that plays a significant role in the reformulation of oppressive gender roles.⁹⁰ As Massolo states, through their participation in urban movements, "they learn to express grievances and rebelliousness... they acquire information and self-management abilities, and the notion and practice of citizen rights."⁹¹ This was also an experience that allowed women to recognize their self-confidence, self-esteem, and sense of personal rights.⁹² Moreover, the dichotomic understanding of practical and strategical inter-

87 Eli Bartra, "Tres décadas de neo feminismo en México," in *Feminismo en México, ayer y hoy*, ed. Eli Bartra, Anna María Fernández Poncela, and Ana Lau Jaiven, 2. ed, Colección Molinos de viento Serie mayor/Ensayo 130 (México, DF: Univ. Autónoma Metropolitana, 2002), 48; Lau, "Emergencia y Trascendencia Del Neofeminismo," 48.

88 Virginia Vargas, *Feminismos En América Latina: Su Aporte a La Política y a La Democracia*, Colección Transformación Global (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Fondo Editorial de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales: Programa Democracia y Transformación Global: Flora Tristán, Centro de la Mujer Peruana, 2008), 71.

89 Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 2 (1985): 227–54, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177922>.

90 Alejandra Massolo, "Querer y Poder: La Participacion de Las Mujeres En Organizaciones Del Movimiento Urbano Popular de Mexico," *Revista Interamericana de Planificación*, no. 114 (1997): 44, 50, 53; Georgina Waylen, *Engendering Transitions: Women's Mobilization, Institutions, and Gender Outcomes*, Gender and Politics (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 59.

91 Massolo, "Querer y Poder," 47.

92 *Ibid.*, 199.