



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Uneven Divestment of the State: Social Reproduction and Sex Work in Neo-developmental Argentina*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/99369/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Hardy, K orcid.org/0000-0003-0429-2701 (2016) Uneven Divestment of the State: Social Reproduction and Sex Work in Neo-developmental Argentina. *Globalizations*, 13 (6). pp. 876-889. ISSN 1474-7731

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2016.1163882>

© 2016 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Globalizations* on 5 May 2016, available online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2016.1163882>

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

**Uneven divestment of the state:
social reproduction and sex work in neo-developmental Argentina**

Kate Hardy, University of Leeds

Bio:

Dr Kate Hardy is a Lecturer in Work and Employment Relations at the University of Leeds. Her research interests include issues surrounding paid and unpaid work; gender; agency; the sex industry; materialist feminism; collective organising; political economy; the body; disability and theorising work and employment. Her work is widely published in peer reviewed journals (*British Journal of Sociology; Work, Employment and Society; Emotion, Space and Society*) and edited collections, as well as regularly featuring on radio and in magazines and newspapers. She has co-authored a monograph with Teela Sanders, entitled 'Flexible Workers: labour, regulation and the political economy of stripping industry'. Overall, she is committed to developing methodologies which work alongside research participants, in order to undertake socially and politically transformative research.

Acknowledgements: The author would like thank Jane Wills, Cathy McIlwaine and Camille Barbagallo for the formation of early ideas for this paper and Tom Gillespie for comments on a later version of it. She would also like to thank the ESRC for funding this research and Centre for Employment Relations Innovation and Change (CERIC - University of Leeds) for follow-up financial support.

Keywords: social reproduction, sex work; Argentina; prostitution; neo-developmentalism; the state

Abstract

Sex work has been identified as an important dimension of the 'survival circuits' which have developed in the majority world in the context of neo-liberalisation, as a response to the deepening misery of the Global South (Sassen 2002). Yet

while much research has explored the role of sex work in contexts of 'neo-liberal' regimes of capital accumulation, few have paid sustained attention to sex work in regimes which are not purely 'neo-liberal'. Drawing on data with sex workers across ten cities in Argentina gathered between 2007 and 2014, this article examines multiple spaces of sex workers' lives, including the workplace, the home and the state in a context of what has been dubbed 'neo-developmentalism'. It argues that sex work contributes multiple forms of value and subsidies for the state and capital. First, sex work provides a subsidy in the form of the provision of 'employment'; second, female sex workers provide unwaged reproductive labour in the family; and third, in the labour movement. Yet despite these three contributions to the reproduction of the working class and therefore of capital, the state undermines sex workers' capacities through violence and the sustained repression. The article concludes the neo-developmentalism has led to 'uneven divestment of the state' in the reproduction of particular sections of the working class, namely those outside the formal and 'productive' sectors.

Introduction

Sex work has been identified as an important dimension of the 'survival circuits' which have developed in the majority world in the context of neo-liberalisation, as a response to the deepening misery of the Global South (Sassen 2002). An extensive literature dedicated to examining the effects of neo-liberal economic policies and particularly structural adjustment has demonstrated that 'non-capitalist' economic practices, that is, those that do not conform to orthodox wage/labour relations, have been fundamental in guaranteeing the possibility of life throughout capitalist development (Bello 1996; Cerruti 2000; Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa 1999). As 'paracapitalist activities' (Mitchell et al. 2003: 422) become increasingly significant forms of income generation, this raises important questions about the articulation between the state, social reproduction and economic practices that do not conform to orthodox capitalist wage labour relations, such as sex work.

A wide literature exists to demonstrate that neo-liberalism has led to the 'divestment of the state' in the reproduction of the workforce (Federici 2012: 101), leaving the responsibility for care to be taken up by women (Caffentzis 1999; Mitchell et al. 2003; Federici 2012). Most of these analyses have focused on varying contexts of 'neo-liberalism' (cf Bouzarovski et al 2010; Bakker and Silvey 2008), which has 'assumed hegemonic dimensions in the progressive' social science and political economy literature (Robinson and Parnell 2012: 593). Yet for the last thirteen years, Argentina and other Latin American countries have been marked by a shift away from this framework of governance of economic and social relations towards what has been dubbed 'post-neo-liberalism', 'neo-structuralism' or 'neo-developmentalism' (Leiva 2008; Yates and Bakker 2014; Ebenau and Liberatore 2013; Féliz 2012, 2015). Argentina therefore represents an interesting case for understanding what happens to social reproduction and reproductive labour amongst some of the most marginalised in this seemingly differed context, characterised by a more socially inclusive vision of development.

The basis for this article is constituted by data collected over seven years working with AMMAR – the sex workers' union of Argentina - and street sex workers in ten cities across Argentina. Almost 300 (297) questionnaires were undertaken, largely by peer interviewers, with sex workers both active in the union and those outside the union. This was supplemented by in depth interviews with AMMAR leaders (15); union (27) and non-union (34) sex workers; CTA members (7); politicians, civil servants and state workers (8); and civil society actors from other organisations working on issues around gender, prostitution, labour and sexuality (17). I engaged in participant observation, spending time in the offices of AMMAR and attending workshops, schools, activities and social events held by the organisations, I accompanied women as they worked, accompanied on *recorridas* (outreach in working areas) and in their daily lives. I eventually made friends with many of the women, who invited me to shows, dances, for meals and coffee and into their homes.

The article is divided as follows. The first two sections explore both neo-developmentalism in Argentina and the relevance of social reproduction as a conceptual framework. The empirical data is then discussed, focusing on the different subsidies which sex workers provide to the state and capital in the through multiple forms of reproductive labour across the waged/unwaged continuum; the neglect of sex workers by the state; and the active and violent intervention of state into the lives of sex workers.¹ The conclusion connects these sections, considering the relationships between them and what they demonstrate about the relationships between sex work, social reproduction and the neo-developmental state.

I argue that sex workers provide multiple subsidies to the state. First, sex workers relieve the burden on the state (and therefore capital) for providing sufficient and remunerative employment. In this case, sex work can be understood as a para-capitalist economic strategy on which both state and capital rely to ensure the social reproduction of those locked out formal spheres of production. Second, sex workers provide essential socially reproductive labour for their children and other dependents. Third, in their self-organisation and struggle), AMMAR activists have also offered a multitude of other forms of free labour by providing services – most notably - primary education, healthcare provision and sex education – not only to sex workers themselves, but also to the wider community. It is therefore not only in the reproduction of themselves and their families that sex workers have stepped in to provide unpaid labour where the state disappears. It demonstrates that while the state has intervened in supporting some sections of the working classes in the ‘productive’ export orientated sectors, it has largely disinvested from the reproduction of sex workers and their families. Overall, it is clear that although the Argentinean state has not used sex work as a ‘development strategy’, it has certainly leant on it – albeit passively – in the context of ongoing capitalist crisis and attempted

¹ While sex workers do not receive a ‘wage’, it will be used here to distinguish between remunerated sex work which takes place in the labour market and other forms of reproductive labour for which women do not receive an income (ie in the ‘home’).

accumulation. As Rivers-Moore (2009) has argued, while sex work may not serve the nation, it certainly appears to be serving the state.

Neo-developmentalism in Argentina

In 2002, 'Argentina leaped forward out of neoliberalism' (Féliz 2012: 2), following an intense crisis which saw dramatic falls in real wages and a rise in the income poverty rate to over half of the population. The new model that was ushered in was dubbed 'neo-developmentalism'- alternately known as neo-structuralism or post-neoliberalism - and has been seen as part of the 'pink tide' of Leftist governments, which have emerged over the last fifteen years or so in Latin America. While this is considered to be a new mode of development that has emerged following the multiple crises of neo-liberalism, the degree to which neo-developmentalism differs from the earlier epoch is contested. Some see it as little more than 'discursive innovations that operate within the parameters of actually-existing neo-liberalism' (Webber 2010: 227), while others see 'very real changes' most notably in terms of a greater degree of state intervention and also in terms of the class composition of society (Féliz 2012: 5). In either case, it is worth considering the period before 2002, in order to examine the conditions that laid the foundations for this 'new' epoch of social, economic and political governance.

The violent military junta in Argentina between 1976 and 1983 sought to liberalise the economy, following almost three decades of import substitution developmentalism. After the fall of the military regime in 1983, the transition to democracy throughout the 1980s and 1990s was paralleled by an equally transformative process: the 'second stage of the neoliberal period' (Féliz 2012: 2). Aggressive deregulationist policies were introduced in 1991 which privatised public enterprises and social security, decentralised collective union bargaining and heightened regional integration into the Southern Common Market (*Mercado Común del Sur* – MERCOSUR) (Cerruti 2000). Under this drastic economic restructuring, the economic policies through which unions and

previous governments had achieved consensus were withdrawn and replaced with the standard 'neo-liberal' fare of trade liberalisation, fiscal austerity, the privatisation of state enterprises and retrenchment of services.

Despite the fact that, by the 1990s, Argentina was the *wunderkind* of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Young 2008), this period of liberalisation was marked by a recession which saw growth decrease by 2.4% between 1981 and 1990. Although the economy stabilised and growth rose to around 4% during the 1990s, in 1998 the debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remained high (Chant and Craske 2003b), disparities of wealth widened and unemployment rates increased. By the mid-1990s fifty percent of the country's population was living in extreme poverty and 45% of the working population were unemployed or underemployed (Cerruti 2000). Finally, the deregulation of labour standards, coupled with increased controls over the labour movement and an absence of formal work meant that those who were employed were increasingly to be found in the informal economy (Acuña 1995; Murillo 2001).

It was in response to these economic conditions -- and to increasingly powerful and disruptive grassroots movements, as well as a trade and fiscal deficit and falling GDP between 1998 and 2000 -- that policy makers and politicians sought to develop a new form of accumulation. The new mode of development was premised upon a high real exchange rate, higher productivity growth and lower relative real wages (Féliz 2012). It was designed to make domestic capital more competitive in the global economy, particularly through industrial and agriculture exports, and specifically soya. It differed from neo-liberalism in the more explicit interventionist role of the state in some sectors, social policy which sustained consumption amongst some parts of the population and a rhetoric of social rights and inclusion (Colectivo Situaciones 2014).

The apparent success of this greater social inclusion is reflected in a dramatic reduction in inequality and official poverty levels from the neo-liberal period (Ebenau and Liberatore 2013). The impact on labour has also been notable, albeit differentiated between sectors. By 2010, the unemployment rate halved to

8.1% from its 2002 levels (Féliz 2012). Real wages grew, although they remained lower than their levels in the 1990s. Key sections of the working class have been encouraged, through concessions, to abandon conflict and move towards 'consensus' (Webber 2010). This is reflected in a peak of 950 collective agreements a year in 2006 (up from 200 during the 1990s), as well wage rises and the co-optation of some trade unions.

Compared to the orthodox neo-liberal era, such relatively improved conditions have led to more stable worker consent to export-led capitalist development. Yet despite declining unemployment, 'the pervasiveness and persistence of the precariousness of work' (Féliz 2012: 8) has continued to characterize the labour market and experiences of many workers. Almost a fifth of the population continue to face income poverty and the incidence of non-registered (i.e. informal) labour constitutes 39% of those currently in work (CEPAL 2010). These seemingly disparate facts reflect the stark differences that have emerged between formal and informal workers and also between workers in the public and private sectors. Workers in formal jobs saw their wages increase twice as fast (32.5% increase between 2002 and 2010) - partly due to the new accords with private sector trade unions - than those working informally. Similarly, public sector employees saw few improvements in their terms and conditions, as fiscal policy orientated towards repayment of public debts (Féliz 2012).

This 'highly segmented' recovery has meant that a large proportion of the working class remain excluded from the gains made under the new mode of accumulation (Ebenau and Liberatore 2013: 117). Since the informal economy accounts for such an important component in the 'basic dynamics of peripheral capitalism' (ibid: 105), it is important to understand the experiences of workers within this sector within the 'new' development model. Ongoing crisis and neo-liberal 'adjustment' paved the way for the conditions for an expansion of labour available to work in the informal economy generally and the sex industry specifically. As such, exploring sex workers' experiences can shed light both on the specificity of sex work, but may also be suggestive of wider experiences amongst informal workers in the context of neo-developmentalism.

Social reproduction

Feminists have long critiqued Marx' understanding of the production of 'value' in capitalist society and also the continuation of capitalist society itself, by pointing to the lack of attention paid to 'social reproduction' (Fortunati 1989; Dalla Costa and James 1972; James 1975). In essence, social reproduction refers to the labour of individuals to sustain, care for and attend to the survival, well-being and reproduction of themselves and each other. Such reproductive labour (either paid or unpaid), these authors pointed out, reproduces the commodity labour power, which constitutes the source of all surplus value within capitalism (Dalla Costa and James 1972; James 1975). It does this 'by reducing the costs of reproducing socially necessary labour to a level that is lower than the actual subsistence level of the working class' (Barbagallo forthcoming: no page). As such, reproductive labour, which is generally performed by women, contributes a subsidy to capital by reducing its need to pay for the full cost of reproducing workers. While debates continue as to whether or not reproductive labour is directly or indirectly productive of surplus value (Fortunati 1989; Dalla Costa and James 1972), by displacing wage labour and instead inserting social reproduction to the centre of their analyses, these theorists challenged the binaries between productive and reproductive labour, and the labour market and the home (Dalla Costa and James 1972; Fortunati 1989; Federici 1995, 2004).

A renewed focus on social reproduction and reproductive labour has emerged over the last decade, pointing to the ways in which contemporary capitalism in the guise of 'neo-liberalism' has not only reorganised wage labour and commodity production, but also the reproduction of labour power (Bakker and Gill 2003; Bakker 2003; Caffentzis 1999; Dalla Costa 2004). Crucially, these have pointed to a 'disinvestment of the state in social reproduction' (Federici 2012; see also Lonergan 2015). In this sense, authors have charted how new regimes of social reproduction have emerged as possessive individualism and self-help increasingly characterise social and economic policies, removing responsibility from the state for individuals' survival. These have fundamentally reshaped

human and social life beyond the labour market by further 'privatising' responsibility for social reproduction (Bakker 1999; Bakker and Gill 2003; Benzanson 2006). They point in particular to the ways in which such disinvestment, particularly in terms of welfare, health and pensions, has privatised and threatened capacities for social reproduction in the Global North and South alike (Elson and Pearson 1981; Moghadam 1999; Lonergan 2015), ushering in what has been termed a 'crisis of social reproduction' (Caffentzis 1999), or more sinisterly, a 'deadly siege' of capitalist development on reproduction (Dalla Costa 2004).

While much attention has been paid to social reproduction in contexts of neo-liberalism, less is known about the impact of the purportedly more progressive neo-developmental policies on lives of some of the most socially excluded. As such, this article follows Mitchell et al's (2003) project in exploring the changing relationship of social reproduction and those who perform it to the contemporary state. Such analyses depend on detailed, place-based analyses of the specific articulations between specific actors in particular states: in this case, the Argentinean neo-developmental state. This framework is useful for bringing the state into sharper focus in relation to sex work, beyond the more common focus on regimes of regulation (see for example Scoular and Sanders 2010; for an exception see Rivers-Moore 2014). In particular, it is cogent for examining the everyday interactions of state agents with sex workers which help or hinder their access to state resources and social protection.

As such, using the lens of social reproduction enables the development of a 'topography of every day life' (Katz 2004) amongst sex workers in neo-developmental Argentina. To do so, this article examines multiple spaces, including the workplace, the home and the state, examining the conditions in which sex workers live, love and labour and the contribution that they make to capitalist regimes of accumulation.

Subsidy 1: provision of employment

The first subsidy that sex workers provide consists of the provision of income in the absence of sufficient employment. Street sex workers in Argentina, in general, work for long periods of time in the sex industry, with sex work as their only form of income. During the wider economic crisis leading up to 2001, many housewives emerged into the street to sell sex, as their male husbands and partners' had become unemployed and unable to find work. Transience was, however, generally uncharacteristic of sex workers' working lives. Unlike findings in other contexts (Law 2000; Hardy and Sanders 2015), in Argentina, sex work was not generally used as a transitory strategy, but instead was a long-term income generating strategy. As an illustration of this, 61.6% of the sample had worked in sex work for over five years, and 40% of the total had worked in it for more than ten years. A small number (18%) of women had other jobs, meaning that the vast majority of the sample relied solely on sex work for their income, with the majority selling sex every day. The most common 'mainstream' job for women who combined sex work with other waged labour was domestic service, reflecting the insufficient wages provided by such jobs (Chhachhi and Pittin 1996) and the ways in which sex work was intimately linked not only to the need to perform unpaid reproductive labour in the home, but also to it in its commodified form in the marketplace.

Although unemployment levels had fallen to 8.9% by 2010 (Féliz 2012), the predominance of the informal economy and precarious, unrecognised work meant that it was women's sexual labour power that was by far poorly educated women's most valuable resource for commodification. This was particularly true as the majority were single women without access to the subsidy of the male wage. Indeed, if they did not sell their sexual labour through sex work, then they instead often exchanged it in marriage (see also Richardson et al. 2009; Federici 2004). Some women alternated between marriage and sex work as their strategies for livelihood. Others used sex work as a strategy for supporting themselves outside relationships with men and as a way of living together with other women and their children, either in sexual, platonic or familial relationships.

Although all women emphasised their ‘free will’ in working in the sex industry, eschewing narratives of coercion, they simultaneously emphasised the structural conditions in which these decisions were made. Mara simply stated that ‘you look for work and this is what is on offer’. Compared with the alternative on offer, women tended to select sex work for its shorter hours, flexibility and relatively better wages. Yet women reported that it was becoming decreasingly economically viable and many more women were working on the streets, frequently including minors. Many of the women reported working much longer hours for less money and occasionally earning nothing at all. Joana and Isabella said there was less work available in La Plata in 2008, partly because there were fewer clients and also due to increasing competition from higher numbers of workers, both Argentineans and migrants (frequently from Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Bolivia). In Paraná, Claudia also complained that clients were getting less generous. Whereas previously many would tip, people were now simply paying the basic rate and nothing more.

By 2014, this declining viability was intensified by the closure of working premises in order to ‘combat trafficking’, leaving the street the only place to sell sex (Orellano et al. 2014). Law 26.364 relating to the ‘prevention and penalties relating to the trafficking of people and victim support’ determined that any prostitution involving third party constituted trafficking or sexual exploitation (Varela 2012). This has led to the interpretation of all women working indoors as victims of trafficking, regardless of their own assertions about consent or their experiences of their working conditions. It has increased stigma and made it more difficult for independent sex workers to advertise their services and attract clients (Orellano et al 2014). Such measures respond to various non-governmental organisations and pressure groups who claim that ‘Sin clientes, no hay trata’ (without clients, there is no trafficking). AMMAR, the sex workers’ union, responded quite simply instead, that ‘Sin clientes, no hay plata’ (without clients, there’s no money). As such, while women provided a subsidy for the state in the form of provision of employment in the absence of viable alternatives, these practices were increasingly undermined by repressive state practices.

Subsidy 2: reproduction in the home

Reproductive responsibilities, particularly providing for children, was the most commonly cited reason for women working in the industry:

I was one of those that judged... while I was doing fine financially... I'd say "How can they do that? Why do they want to?" ... and [then when] I had nothing to give my son, not even a tea, then I realised how they could do it (Mara).

Forty per cent of respondents were living alone with their children, while only 16.6% lived with both their partner and their children, leaving most of the women often solely responsible for their children and frequently also for other members of the family. Many women also saw sex work as enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities to their families in other ways. Raquel, 46, who had wanted to go into a convent as a teenager, but been prohibited by her parents, was training to be a nurse. She explained the tension between income and childcare that had made her choose to work in sex work:

I have three [children]... that is loads, being single. So I had to go back and work in the street to be able to bring [them] up and be present.... [People say] 'Why don't you do some honest work?' [but] I'd have had to have been away from the house for eight or ten hours a day. I wasn't going to be able to pay a babysitter, pay the rent, pay someone to look after my kids. Anyway, when they were growing up I liked being there at teatime, at lunch, at dinner, taking them to school. And only this work enabled me to do everything, pay the rent, bring up my kids myself. I made a house, a flat for my children. With three hours a day of work I could do all of it.

For Raquel, sex work therefore not only enabled her to provide the material goods necessary to bring up her children, but also allowed her to have close relationships with them by being there at important events such as mealtimes

and school runs. Childcare was prohibitively expensive for most women. Women who left their children with childminders and in nurseries paid up the equivalent of one 'trick' each day. In comparison to other work, sex work offered flexible hours, relatively better wages and most importantly, an opportunity to be able to both *provide* and *care* for their children.

As most women were unable to afford private childcare, they tended instead to rely on family for childcare, with particular reliance on older daughters. This often took the young women out of school and stymied their educational achievement, creating a cycle in which many of the eldest female children were also likely to enter the sex industry. Dependency on older children for financial contributions from participation in the labour market during their teenage years is a common feature across poor households and families in Latin America (Gonzalez de la Rocha 2006), but with forestalled education, in the context of unemployment and with an insider's view of sex work, many of the women begin to sell sex in the same places as their mothers and other female family members. Often this resulted in a large number – or all - of the adult female family members working in sex work. Martina worked in the centre of town in Córdoba. When I asked her whom she worked with, she replied:

Martina: [I work] with everyone, everyone works... my Aunt... my neighbour...my Mum.

Interviewer: Your Mum works as well?

Martina: My Mum, my sister and my aunt... I have two aunts, my sister and Mum... who all work.

Martina was not an exception. Many other women had daughters, mothers, sisters, aunts and grandmothers working alongside them, creating sex working families who reproduced each other not as labour, but as 'surplus populations', surplus to the needs of capital.

Subsidy 3: reproduction in the movement

A key manoeuvre of the Kirchner government upon accession to the *Casa Rosada* was to quell the growing power of the unemployed movement (the *piqueteros*) through the establishment of a series of state benefits. *Planes Jefes y Jefas de Hogares Desempleados* (Heads of Unemployed Households Plans) were introduced in April 2002, as part of a broader programme for social inclusion in the face of widespread popular discontent. These *planes* broke the traditional link between welfare, employment and trade unions (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007), meaning workers without official union affiliation could be eligible. However, few sex workers have been able to secure these benefits. In 2008, most women reported that they had not had access to state benefits such as *planes familiares* (Family Programmes) or *planes trabajar* (Work Programmes). Even for the few who received such support, they were often insufficient. *Planes familiares* were equivalent to only one third of the cost of the basic food basket, meaning they still had to work in order to generate sufficient income (Petras and Veltmeyer 2005). As such, women tended to remain wholly outside state systems of income and employment support.

As unrecognised workers, women had no possibility of contributing to or receiving from a pension scheme. Aging was particularly problematic. Older women continued to rely on sex work as their only method of income generation, but as their health needs increased just as their ability to command high prices decreased, they were often left with few avenues for survival. The oldest of the respondents interviewed was seventy years old and was still combining sex work with petty trading in a small *plaza* in Córdoba. Luisa, a woman in her early fifties, had a hip injury and was unable to walk without support, but as the lone parent of five children she had no option other than to continue to go out to work. There was a general consensus amongst the respondents that older women were in the worst situations of deprivation. As such, anxiety about growing old and the uncertainty of survival coloured many participants' narratives. Adriana asked 'what will happen to me when I am old, apart from the

fact I am ill and I won't be able to work? What will happen to me?' Lydia expressed similar fears:

I've worked for thirty-six years ... I would like to retire, but I don't have any kind of support, I don't have anything and I see these people and I don't want it to be me tomorrow...

Accessing healthcare was also a predominant problem. AMMAR estimate that 88% of sex workers do not have access to healthcare plans. As AMMAR's *Personería Jurídica* status did not enable them to provide union run *obras sociales* (healthcare plans), women were left to navigate the chronically under-funded public healthcare system. Although public healthcare was free, sex workers faced an additional series of obstacles in accessing it. In particular, the need to wait overnight to get a hospital appointment clashed with their hours of work. As Susana Martinez, General Secretary of AMMAR-La Plata explained, before they established an AMMAR run healthcare centre in La Plata:

We didn't have accessible healthcare... because if I leave work at four in the morning ... it could be very cold. I don't want to go if I'm cold that day, if I didn't eat, if I didn't work... [So] I go straight home. First of all to see how the children are... the doctor can wait.

With limited childcare, seeking medical attention meant a hard decision; to take the children and to miss work or to make a judgement about the severity of the illness. Additionally, once inside the system they frequently faced serious discrimination. Many reported being made to wait until last and encountering doctors and nurses who refused to examine them or treated them disdainfully. Telma recalled that:

In hospitals, they are discriminatory against prostitution. I realise because when I say to the gynaecologist 'I prostitute myself', she touches my body differently. I feel it.

As such, spaces of assistance, particularly those resourced by the state, experienced as benign or altruistic by others, became malign experiences once women identified themselves as sex workers. In addition to overt discrimination, to be forced to wait for healthcare or for social security payments, as Auyero (2012) points out, is an act of domination, a process through which political subordination can be manufactured and compliant subjects produced.

In response to this broad disinvestment of the state in the reproduction of sex workers and their families, AMMAR have responded by developing a set of resources from which to provide healthcare, education and a safety net to sex workers. In the area of healthcare, AMMAR activists have also taken on the responsibility of becoming *multiplicadoras de salud* (health promoters) in their local communities. In these roles, women are provided with condoms by municipal and provincial HIV programmes and the women distribute them during their *recorridas* and workshops. In addition, activists have worked with medical workers and used funding from the Global Fund Against Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria to arrange appointments at suitable hours and testing (often in AMMAR offices). In Córdoba, the organisation arranged appointments in the afternoon at the Hospital Rawson, through contact with the Director of Infectology.

Most notable is the establishment of a Health Centre in La Plata, a joint initiative between AMMAR and the Buenos Aires Province Ministry for Health. It created a space for sex workers in which all their healthcare requirements could be addressed directly alongside other personal needs. Supported by money from The Global Fund, the centre attends to a thousand sex workers a month and is also open to members of the public. As well as sexual health services, women can see a psychologist and get advice about other medical issues.

AMMAR has a policy of political organising and, in general, AMMAR activists were opposed to politics of *assistencialismo* (welfarism). They sought to avoid the clientalistic practices for which many labour organisations have come to be infamous in Argentina (Auyero 2006). However, they also recognised the levels

of deprivation and poor living standards that many of the women faced and as such, did seek to provide some forms of welfare. AMMAR-Córdoba established a *guardería* (nursery) for women to leave their children in while working or participating in the union. Furthermore, with the assistance of social workers working with AMMAR, around fifty sex workers were eventually able to get '*Planes Jefes y Jefas*' (welfare payments for unemployed male and female heads of households). Other women accessed municipal support, such as the *Ciudadanía Porteña* which provided small items such as food and toiletries. While in Buenos Aires, the Ministry for Social Action provided the materials and machines for a micro enterprise making towels, sheets and t-shirts.

At times, when situations were desperate, there were small pots of emergency money that activists could give out on discretion. In other times of crisis, the women were more self-provisioning. In Córdoba, a *compañera* who had six children and no partner had been ill and unable to work for three months. In the absence of other avenues of support, another *compañera* made a cake and it was raffled for a peso a ticket. Most strikingly, when a *compañera* was shot in a neighbourhood dispute in Córdoba, all of the women in the union were called upon to donate blood, as the hospital was in short supply. Thus, the union not only offered a space for pooling resources in times of crisis, but this went as far as quite literal mutual inter-corporeal sustenance through sharing one of the most basic elements of survival: blood.

The violent state

The absence of the state in redistributing goods and resources and the reproduction of female sex workers means that the women have had to contribute significant labour to reproducing their families and each other. Yet, although sex workers were routinely invisibilised and excluded as legitimate subjects for welfare, pensions and union rights, they were simultaneously rendered highly visible by certain state practices. Local ordinances were used routinely to arrest women arbitrarily. They were frequently kept in cells in police stations for up to thirty days, in which time they did not eat if their family did not bring them food, breastfeeding women are denied the opportunity to

feed their children. The conditions in the *calabazos* (police cells) were poor and women reported spending hours in detention without being given food, cigarettes or phone calls. The police rarely made exceptions and did not take into consideration factors such as age, drug dependency, poor health or menstruation, which may have rendered women more vulnerable. Martina described one time that she had been detained:

We spent the whole night in there, with the cold. At seven in the morning they let us go, me and another girl that was there... with problems with drugs... poor thing... she was ill, menstruating... they don't have compassion for anybody.

Not only were factors such as ill-health not taken into account during arrest, but they were exacerbated through time in police cells. In the short term, this meant more illness, absence of care for children and conditions associated with withdrawal from drugs. Additionally, a number of women reported long term health problems which they attributed in part to repeated detention. Often, in place of detention, police blackmailed and elicited bribes from women in order to allow them to carry on working, demanding sexual favours in return for freedom to work and physically, sexually and psychologically abusing them. Such abuse is of course not unique to Argentina but similarly reported across Latin America and much of the world (Wright 2004; O'Connell-Davidson 1998).

Women were not only arrested while working, but also as they ate in restaurants, chatted to friends or took their children to school. Choco was in her 60s and had been arrested on numerous occasions:

They've taken me for nothing before. I was sitting with another woman in a mattress shop... on the corner... [We were] just talking, and they arrived... they say that "you are scandalous", what a lie! How am I, an old lady, going to go around scandalously? With what?... They take you for no reason.

Due to Argentina's federal system, sex work was decriminalised in the state of Entre Ríos and the city of Buenos Aires, but remained regulated by local ordinances in other provinces. Where it remained criminalised, police practices discouraged large numbers of women working together in the street. Instead women worked alone or in pairs, in spatially dispersed areas. Many women anecdotally reported the involvement of police and judiciary in indoor prostitution, at a minimum paying monthly quotas to avoid police interference. Others, however, intimated that the set-up was more formalised and that the police were not simply bribed, but the police and judiciary were in fact the owners of many of the working premises and that political campaigns were paid for with money generated there. Women argued that more coerced and exploitative forms of prostitution generally took place indoors, although they stated that this is not uniformly the case and some women testified that they opted for indoor work for reasons of security, anonymity and protection from police harassment.

These violent state practices are perhaps surprising in light of the subsidies to that the women offered to the state (and therefore to capital). Despite these three contributions to the reproduction of the working class and therefore of capital, the Argentinean state undermines sex workers through violent actions. These repressive tactics undermine women's capacity for self-provisioning, thereby attacking the very process that has freed the state of a series of material responsibilities. Rivers-Moore (2014) has demonstrated the ways in which the neo-liberal state in Costa Rica oscillates between the spectacle of immigration raids and neglect of sex workers, particularly through complicating access to healthcare. In Argentina, the state is similarly contradictory, shifting registers not only between spectacle and disinvestment, but also by enacting mundane, quotidian violence against sex workers. However, there is also a manner in which these can be viewed as complementary. Whereas it is possible to cast sex workers as 'entrepreneurial individuals' in contexts of neo-liberalism, sex work presents a discursive blot on the landscape in the socially inclusive language of neo-developmentalism. Cleansing the public space of sex workers and identifying malevolent individuals (traffickers) as responsible for the existence

of sex work, in part functions to wipe away a very visible manifestation of both the state's (and the broader economic system) failure to distribute wealth, opportunities and well-being.

Conclusion

Sex work, in the context of a neo-development regime of accumulation provides three contributions or 'subsidies' to the state and to capital. First, through the provision of income, second through the reproduction of labour in the home and third through labour within the sex workers' labour movement. In many ways, this represents little difference to the ways in which sex work is constituted in neo-liberalism (filling in the gaps of un- or under- employment and reproducing workers). Since neo-developmentalism in Argentina represents a new mode of *capitalist* development, rather than a break from it, it is capitalist social relations which continue to shape the lives of female sex workers. Since these policies have led to the 'consolidation, legitimisation and furtherance of the process of capitalist restructuring initially set in motion by neoliberal ideas and policies' (Leiva 2008: xxvii), this has also led the deepening of a crisis of social reproduction in which sex workers become responsible for multiple forms of reproductive labour, within and outside the wage.

While the social conditions in which some 'productive' work takes place have been somewhat reconfigured in neo-developmental Argentina, continuity between these two regimes of accumulation remains in terms of the social relations in which social reproduction is carried out. Specifically, the privatisation of the responsibility for reproductive labour continues unabated in the context of Argentina, amongst particular sections of the working class which have not been incorporated into the new social consensus. Informal workers and reproductive workers, such as sex workers, remain firmly outside the safety nets and benefits which neo-developmentalism has brought for 'productive' workers. This is a deeply gendered process, which reasserts the centrality of male/productive work, while relegating and invisibilising female/reproductive work. As such, wherein neo-liberalism has widely represented a wholesale

'disinvestment of the state' in the reproduction of labour, in a context of neo-developmentalism this is markedly 'uneven' and deeply gendered.

Crucially, the progressive overtones of the neo-developmental state have meant that the empirical fact of a section of labouring life opting into a highly exploitative working conditions cannot be accounted for in the discursive premise of social inclusion and cohesion. While neo-liberalism could to some degree abide sex work because it could attribute 'entrepreneurial' characteristics sex workers and assert the 'freedom' of individuals to engage in it, the socially inclusive narrative of neo-developmentalism does not allow space for this. As a result, far from benefitting from an increasingly inclusive social model, not only have sex workers largely not benefited from the social developments of neo-developmental Argentina, but a desire to erase the most visible weaknesses and failures of the model has meant that sex workers have faced increasing levels of direct state violence and social and political exclusion. Yet despite these regressive conditions for sex workers, through extensive and committed collective struggle and organisation they have begun to reclaim 'control over the material conditions of [their] reproduction and creat[e] new forms of co-operation ... outside the logic of capital and the market' (Federici 2012: 111). In doing so, they have established important autonomous sites for enacting the mutual care, relationality and positive affect from which they have been - and continue to be - excluded by both the neo-liberal and neo-developmental state alike.

Bibliography

Acuña, C. H. 1995. Politics and Economics in the Argentina of the Nineties. In *Democracy, Markets and Structural Reform*, ed. W.C. Smith, C.H. Acuña and E.A. Gamarra. Florida: North-South Center Press: 17-66.

Auyero, J. 2006. Protest in Contemporary Argentina: A Contentious Repertoire in the Making. In *Out of the Shadows: Political Action and the Informal Economy in Latin America*, eds. P. Fernandez-Kelly and J. Shefner. United State of America:

Pennsylvania University Press: 165-194

Auyero, J. 2012. *Patients of the state: the politics of waiting in Argentina*. Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Bello, M. V. 1996. Women organising under the structural adjustment programme. In *Confronting state, capital and patriarchy: women organizing in the process of industrialization*, eds. A. Chhachhi and R. Pittin. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan.

Bakker, I.. 2003. Neo-liberal governance and the reprivatisation of social reproduction: social provisioning and shifting gender orders. In *Power, production and social reproduction: human in/security in the Global Political Economy*, eds. I. Bakker and A. Gill. Basingstoke: Palgrave: 66-82.

Bakker, I. and S. Gill. 2003. *Power, production and social reproduction: human in/security in the Global Political Economy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Bakker, I and Silvey, R. 2009. *Beyond states and markets: the challenges of social reproduction*. Routledge, New York.

Barbagallo, C forthcoming, unpublished thesis: Reproducing the Global Factory: gender, work and home.

Benzanson, K. 2006. *Gender, the State, and Social Reproduction: Household Insecurity in Neo-Liberal Times*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bouzarovski, S., Stenning, A., Smith, A., Rochovska, A. and Swiatek, D. 2012. 'Domesticating neo-liberalism: spaces of economic practice and social reproduction in post-socialist cities' *Area* 44.1: 127-128.

Caffentzis, C. G. 1999. On the notion of a crisis of social reproduction: a theoretical review. In *Women, Development and Labor of Reproduction: Struggles and Movements*, eds. M. Dalla Costa and G. Dalla Costa. Trenton: Africa World Press.

CEPAL. 2009. Statistical yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2009. Santiago de Chile: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Chant, S. and N. Craske. 2003. *Gender in Latin America*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Colectivo Situaciones (2014) 'Crisis, governmentality and new social conflict: Argentina as a laboratory' *Ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 14 (3) 395-409.

Cerruti, M. 2000. Economic Reform, Structural Adjustment and Female Labor Force Participation in Buenos Aires, Argentina. *World Development* 28 (5): 879-891.

Chhachhi, A. and R. Pittin eds. 1996. *Confronting state, capital and patriarchy: women organizing in the process of industrialization*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan.

Dalla Costa, M. and S. James eds. 1972. *The power of women and the subversion of the community*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press.

Dalla Costa, M. and Dalla Costa, G. (1999) *Women, Development and the Labour of Reproduction, Struggles and Movements*. Trenton (NJ), Africa World Press.

Ebenau, M. and Liberatore, V. 2013. 'Neo-developmental state capitalism in Brazil and Argentina: chances, limits and contradictions' *Der modern staat – Zeitschrift für Public Policy, Recht und Management*, 6(1): 105-125.

Federici, S, 2004. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. New York: Autonomedia.

Federici, S. 2012. *Revolution at point zero: housework, reproduction and feminist struggle*. PM Press, Oakland.

Féliz, M. 2011. 'The Macroeconomic limits of incomes policy in a dependent country: the need and possibilities for radical reform in social policies in Argentina after the crisis: 2001-2008' in *Strategies Against Poverty: Designs from the North and Alternatives from the South* eds. Mutis, A.P. and Ong wen Okuro, S. Buenos Aires, CLACSO.

Féliz, M. 2012. Neo-developmentalism: beyond neoliberalism? Capitalist crisis and Argentina's development since the 1990s. *Historical materialism*. 20: 2: 1-19.

Féliz, M. 2015. 'Limits and barriers of neodevelopmentalism: lessons from the Argentinean Experience, 2003-2011' *Review of Radical Political Economics* 47 (1): 70-89.

Fortunati, L. 1981. *The Arcane of Reproduction: housework, prostitution, labour and capital*. Autonomedia, Venice.

Gonzalez de la Rocha, M. 2006. Vanishing assets: cumulative disadvantages Amongst the Urban Poor. In *Out of the shadows: political action and the informal economy in Latin America*, eds. P. Fernández-Kelly and J. Shefner. Philadelphia: Penn State Press.

Grugel, J., and M. P. Riggirozzi. 2008. The Return of the State in Argentina. In *Working Paper Series*. London: World Economy and Finance Working Programme, University of London.

Hardy, K. and Sanders, T. 2015. 'The political economy of lap dancing: contested careers and women's work in the stripping industry' *Work, Employment and Society* 29(1): 117-136.

James, S. 1975. *Sex, race and class*. Falling Wall Press, London.

Katz, C. 2001. 'Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction'. *Antipode*. 33(4): 709-728.

Law, L. 2000. *Sex work in Southeast Asia: the place of desire in a time of AIDS*. London: Routledge.

Leiva, I. 2008. *Latin American Neostructuralism: the contradictions of post-neoliberal development*. Minneapolis, Minneapolis University Press.

Lonergan, G. 2015. 'Migrant women and social reproduction under austerity' *Feminist Review* 109: 124-145.

Mitchell, K., S. Marston and C. Katz. 2003. Introduction: Life's Work: An Introduction, Review and Critique. *Antipode* 35 (3): 415-442.

Murillo, M.V. 2001. *Labour Unions, Partisan Coalitions, and Market Reforms in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Connell-Davidson, J. 1998. *Prostitution, power and freedom*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Orellano, G, Varela, C and Daich, D. (2014) Políticas anti-trata y vulneración de derechos de trabajadoras sexuales. Published by AMMAR. Available here: <http://www.ammar.org.ar/IMG/pdf/informe-ammar.pdf>

- Parnell, S. and Robinson, J. (2012) '(Re)theorizing Cities from the Global South: Looking Beyond Neoliberalism' *Urban Geography* 33(4): 593-617.
- Petras, J. and Veltmeyer. 2005. *Social Movements and State Power: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia and Ecuador*. London: Pluto Press.
- Richardson, D., M. Poudel and N. Laurie. 2009. Sexual trafficking in Nepal: constructing citizenship and livelihoods. *Gender, Place & Culture* 16 (3): 259-278
- Rivers-Moore, M. 2009. 'Getting Ahead in Gringo Gulch' *PhD thesis*. Cambridge: Murray Edwards, University of Cambridge.
- Rivers-Moore, M. 2014. 'Waiting for the state: sex work and the neoliberal governance of sexuality' *Social Politics* 21(3): 403-429.
- Sassen, S. 2002. Women's Burden: Counter-Geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival. *Nordic Journal of International Law* 71 (2): 255-274
- Scoular, J., and T. Sanders. 2010. Introduction: Special Issue: The Changing Social and Legal Context of Sexual Commerce: Why Regulation Matters in Journal of Law and Society. *Journal of Law and Society* 37 (1): 1-11.
- Varela, C. 2012. Del radico de las mujeres al trafico de las politicas. Apunts para una historia del movimiento anti-trate en las Argentina (1998-2008). *Publicar - Año X N° XII - Junio de 2012 - ISSN 0327-6627 - ISSN (en línea) 2250-7671*
- Yates, and Bakker, K. 2014. 'Debating the post-neo liberal turn in Latin America' *Progress in Human Geography* 38 (1): 62-90.
- Young, B. 2008. Financial crises and social reproduction. In *Beyond states and markets: the challenges of social reproduction*, eds. I. Bakker and R. Silvey. Abingdon: Routledge.

