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# Politicizing Homemaking: Towards Feminist Recognition of Subaltern Filipino Women's Everyday Resistances[1]

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**ABSTRACT**

This study offers necessary interventions to render visible urban subaltern women's everyday politics as primary home carers within regimes of neoliberal dispossessions. Drawing from social reproduction theory, and cognizant of the home as a site of exploitation and resistance of women, I contribute to feminist conversations by re-embedding notions of care work within subaltern politics to politically mark anti-neoliberal enactments of subaltern women homemaking using two case studies in the Philippines. Incapable of care commodification and outsourcing, subaltern women reframe the home from a neoliberal reproduction space as a political site, redistribute care and production work, provide activist education, and perform conflict resolution to family members. In supporting their partners' public-political work, subaltern women's everyday homemaking acts against the reproduction of the disciplined and docile labor and patriarchal family norms. This intervention is a discursive counterpoint to

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constructions of women's emancipation as chiefly the disarticulation from the private sphere to ensure fuller economic participation that renders invisible subaltern women's anti-neoliberal political contributions.

The paper draws from participant-observations and storytelling sessions among women activists leading the defense of their slum community, and among male activist-leaders and female homemaking companions of a predominantly male social organization resisting dispossessions in the public jeepney sector in Metro Manila.

Keywords: Subalternity, women's everyday politics, homemaking, crisis of care, neoliberal dispossession

> "I also want to struggle for the welfare of drivers. Because the problems of men are also problems of women."[2]
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> — Raquel, homemaker, partner of a PISTON leader *Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide* (United Organization of Drivers and Operators Nationwide)

> "Wives' support, their understanding of the male's [political] work is important…men's struggles will be stronger…women know [these struggles] are for their children."
>
> —Cely, PISTON National Treasurer

> "If our kitchens are outside of capital, our struggle to destroy them will never succeed in causing capital to fall."
>
> —Sylvia Federici, 2012

In this study, I draw from social reproduction theory, supplemented with insights from homemaking, care work, and critical urbanism scholarship to offer necessary interventions to recognize the politics of

[2] The story-telling sessions were all conduced in Filipino. Only the English translations are shown for readability.

everyday of urban subaltern[3] women as primary home carers within regimes of neoliberal dispossessions. These scholarships coalesce when subaltern women resist the "crisis of care" (Fraser, 2017) arising from habitation and livelihood dispossessions accompanying elite accumulation. Cognizant of the home as a site of exploitation and resistance of women, this paper contributes to feminist conversations by re-embedding notions of care work within subaltern politics and offers preliminary thinking to politically recognize anti-neoliberal enactments of subaltern homemaking using two case studies in the Philippines.

Social reproduction sustains capital accumulation. It physiologically replaces and sustains labor; it is crucial for producing the cooperative and disciplined labor. The disciplining for wage labor and the internalization of neoliberal rationalities begins at home. The home as a social reproduction site, where women are constructed as primary care workers, underpins the continued grinding of the capitalist machinery. However, there is an insufficient marking of the home as a political site. This inattention reflects the public-private sphere separation, where males are construed fit for public-political work and women are relegated to private-reproductive chores. As a result, the effects of neoliberal dispossessions on and counter neoliberal enactments in the home—the necessary home care support performed primarily by women that makes possible public-political work—is misrecognized. These contribute to the continued political marginalization of subaltern women.

If, as Fraser (2017, p. 21) highlights, "without [social reproduction] there could be no culture, no economy, no *political organization*," I ask if subaltern women perform politics in their everyday homemaking to sustain the public-political work of males? When outsourcing of care work is mostly

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[3] The use of subaltern here draws from the works of Antonio Gramsci and the Subaltern Studies Collective. Subalternity is a condition of subordination (Spivak, 2005), devoid of citizenship rights, agency, and history. Considered as inferior and not possessing "grammars of knowledge" (Sandos, 2008), subaltern subjects are constructed as unworthy to be listened to in a way that matters. Their history is silenced and subsumed within master narratives (San Juan, 2008). Yet, this shared condition of silence and exclusion is also considered a potential liberative foundation for collective politics and liberative consciousness (Burawoy & Holdt, 2012). For Gramsci (1971), subalternity is a class-in-formation. This liberative potential inspired subaltern studies to mark a "history from below" (Guha, 1984) and the "politics of the people" (Chakrabarty, 2000).

not possible due to poverty, a re-linking of the home to public-political work leads to better recognition of subaltern women's contribution to counter neoliberal enactments, even as males may perform the latter.

## POLITICIZING HOMEMAKING AND CARE WORK

Neoliberal globalization facilitates intense wealth generation and concentration by opening new sites of markets and resources often in the South, that dispossess the working poor and increase livelihood informality (Harvey, 2004). State-provided services, including housing and transport are proffered as avenues for private accumulation (Harvey, 1989). Slums are demolished (Brickell, Arrigoittia, &Vasudevan, 2017) to free up high-value in-city land for foreign investments. Privately-produced socialized housing located mostly in low-value peri-urban land is sold to the evicted via credit (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014; Palomera, 2014). Capital-intensive modes of transport increasingly replace the traditional, often under state modernization or environmental programs, at the expense of transport workers and poor commuters (Famer & Noonan, 2011; Norcliffe, 2011; Rizzo, 2011; Grengs, 2005).

These dispossessions heighten the sufferings of subaltern women. The privatization of social services increasingly passes on care work to families, resulting in a "crisis of care"—increasing social reproduction constraints on families and communities. This has consequently produced a class-based "dualized organization of social reproduction" (Fraser, 2017, p. 32). Upper-class women outsource care work to poor women to free up time for "self-investments" in education and skills-trainings, and access better remuneration and working conditions (Brown, 2016). In so doing, they are able to "balance" self-improvements and labor market participation with mothering and care work (Rottenberg, 2018). For subaltern families whose livelihoods are barely enough for sustenance, care work reduction is mostly unfeasible (Rottenberg, 2018). Poor women are burdened with increased care work (Falth & Blackden, 2009), taking on previously state-provided services.

Subaltern families are resisting these dispossessions. In studies for housing and livelihood, scholars located subaltern resistances in the everyday and private (Roy, 2011; Bayat, 2007; Chatterjee, 1998; Benjamin,

2008; Holston, 2009). Bayat (2007), for instance, recognized the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" where subalterns go under state and property rights owner's surveillance to encroach city spaces and construct homes for their families. These everyday enactments were previously unrecognized within dominant frames of organized movements in the political and legal spheres.

Feminist and social movement scholars also earlier underscored women's political contributions against neoliberal dispossessions. Women were observed to do politics differently (Waylen, 1992), drawing from their triple function in reproductive, productive, and community work (Moser, 1989). They extended domestic chores and symbols to protests, for instance, doing community cooking as a response to economic crises and using kitchen equipment as protest tools (Jaquette, 1994). They moreover politicized the home—organizing housewives to boycott consumer goods (Feijoo, 1994), limiting fertility and protesting against state repression and human rights violations to protect family members (Westwood & Radcliffe, 1993). By making porous the private and public sphere and acting against neoliberal dispossessions, they contributed to feminist calls to recognize women's unpaid care work (Folbre, 2018), subverted the sexual division of labor (Waylen, 1996), and struggled against increasing dispossessions and poverty of families.

Recently, feminists marked women's critical yet unremunerated care work and advocated for its reduction and redistribution and public re-investment in care services (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2018; Folbre, 2018; Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014; Razavi, 2007). However, some feminist scholars observed that many advocacies against unpaid care work within neoliberal economies aspire for better and equal participation of women (Rottenberg, 2018) via reduction and redistribution of care work only within the private sphere (Fraser, 2017). McRobbie (2013) calls these feminisms "unapologetically middle class" as these advance notions of empowered women—able to speak and act within male-dominated political and economic spaces without regard for less privileged women—to facilitate *their* economic autonomy (Razavi, 2007).

While these advocacies must continuously be celebrated against the patriarchal notions of politics and the sexual division of labor, the

"neoliberalization of feminist advocacies" against unpaid care work (Rottenberg, 2018) erases subaltern women's political agency. If women's emancipation is still chiefly constructed as the disarticulation from the private sphere to ensure fuller participation in the economic sphere (Cornwall, 2018)—"engagement in the same activities as men" (Scott, 2011, p. 33), then subaltern women are doomed to remain politically invisible. Subaltern women's everyday struggles to exist, and carve a livelihood and sustainable and socially-just futures, notwithstanding the crisis of care and dualized social reproduction organization, are not only unmarked but deemed unimportant.

Building on the recognition of subaltern and women agency from critical urban and feminist social movement scholarship, respectively, I draw from social reproduction theory to better mark subaltern women's everyday politics against neoliberal dispossessions. Marxist feminist scholars highlight the co-constitution of exploitation in the workplace and the home (Federici, 2019; Elias & Rai, 2019; Fraser, 2016). Advancing the unpaid care work discourse yet countering a decoupled analysis of gender and class exploitations, these scholars argue that "social reproduction…the daily and generational reproduction of labor that occurs within households…sustains the drive for accumulation" (Ferguson, 2015; Battacharya, 2017). Reproductive work involves the "upkeep of living spaces and domestic goods, care of the health, education and psychological needs of the family members, and the maintenance of social relationships" (Picchio, 2003, p. 22).

With increasing livelihood informality forcing many poor women in the South to engage in daily sustenance while performing care work, the non-recognition of activities outside of economic production means that "much of the world's population is irrelevant to capital accumulation" (Federici, 2019, p. 56). Luxton (2006, p. 37) noted that the "majority of people subsists by combining paid employment and unpaid domestic labor to maintain themselves" and thus recognize that "both labors are part of the same socio-economic process." In social reproduction theory, the re-linking of gender and class neither embed feminist struggles within class politics nor merely recognize the intersection of the two different categories of exploitation. Rather, it marks that women's and workers'

exploitations *co-constitute* each other—in the production process, surplus value is extracted, yet in reproduction, the worker's insufficient and insecure remuneration is most felt and is where the rule-following worker is produced. It is in the home that notions of entrepreneurship, individualization, and marketization of social needs are first passed on and internalized by the working class.

Battacharya (2017, p. 77) argues for the recognition of counter neoliberal politics performed within social reproductive sites: the "very acts where the working class strives to attend to its own needs can be the ground for class struggle." She underscores that "it is utterly unclear why *only* the economic struggle for wages and benefits at the workplace must be designated as class struggle. Every social and political movement tending in the direction of gains for the working class as a whole, or of challenging the power of capital as a whole, must be considered an aspect of class struggle" (2017, pp. 85-86). Similarly, Federici (2006) reframes reproduction as a "terrain of struggle, and…an anti-capitalist struggle against reproductive labor that would not destroy ourselves or our communities." Thus, political empowerment and action cannot be construed merely in the economic and public sphere. Rather, struggles within the home—the preservation of family welfare **and** the efforts against the reproduction of the neoliberal worker—can contribute to counter neoliberal struggles.

The politicization of social reproductive work calls for re-scaling feminist politics to the home, a critical site of care provision. Following feminist geographies of homes (Blunt & Dowling, 2006), I advocate for the re-centering of the home as a site of feminist contestations and subaltern politics (Baxter & Brickell, 2014; Brickell, 2012). What is often considered personal and private, spatially confined within the home, is co-constituted and entangled within broader politics, and is continuously re-formed. I lay down four interrelated assertions to marking subaltern women's everyday political enactments in the home. These are located within and cannot be detached from subaltern realities.

First, homes of the poor are affected by neoliberal economic and political developments (Baxter & Brickell, 2014). Not only is the destruction of poor people's homes acutely central to neoliberal gentrification (Brickell,

Arrigoitia, &Vasudevan, 2017; Harvey, 2012; Soederberg, 2014), care work is increasingly marketized (Ferguson, 2010; Mies, 1982), and workers' economic marginalization translates to a loss in family welfare and care work crises (Fraser, 2014). To survive, subaltern women find creative ways to supplement wage incomes, often informally, while bearing the burden of increased care work.

Second, without the patience, support, sacrifice, ingenuity, and perseverance of women in care work and informal livelihoods, activist households' anti-neoliberal enactments are difficult to sustain. When women take on activist functions, they ingeniously balance this with care and livelihood work, and sacrifice personal time (Moser, 1989). When feasible, women-leaders redistribute care work. In many cases where the male partners are publicly political, women partners take on a greater burden of the care and productive work to sustain their partner's activist duties. The redistribution of care and productive work for activist duties is difficult, requiring patient negotiations and the transformation of personal values among family members.

Third, the defense of the home and family welfare is fundamental in women's political enactments. Primarily located within the home, poor women understand neoliberalisms' dispossessions as a crisis of care, and thus frame resistances to defend the dignified future for families and transform the home as a political space.

Fourth, women bring to protest movements different skills, strategies, and symbols drawn from their everyday homemaking (Jacquette, 1994; Feijoo, 1994; Waylen, 1992). Traditional women's roles as mothers and care work activities such as cooking, financial management, and ensuring family welfare are carried over into social movements and protest work.

These four assertions underpin the paper's provocations towards recognizing the everyday politics of urban subaltern women as primary home carers within regimes of neoliberal dispossessions and care work crises. I ask if, under subaltern conditions where women are mostly incapable of care commodification and outsourcing, increased care work and homemaking sacrifices critical anti-neoliberal enactments, even as the latter are performed dominantly by male partners, can be considered political?

The co-constitution with neoliberal economic exclusions of poor women's sufferings and care burdens and their struggles have been increasingly marked in Philippine feminist scholarship (Ofreneo & Illo, 2020; Hega, Alporha, & Evangelista, 2017; Oxfam & We-Care, 2017; Taguiwalo, 2015). In her study of domestic violence, Chew (2018) observed how social movement organization interventions in the "private" space of domestically-abused Filipinas can facilitate women's political empowerment for anti-imperialist struggles. I add to these conversations, mainly to render more visible the feminist subaltern Filipino women's homemaking and care-work in anti-neoliberal politics.

The argument forwarded here does not engender a passive notion of women's politics—that since subaltern women contribute politically through care work, the gendered division of labor need not be altered. I am cognizant of the home as an oppressive site for women—marital and child abuse, multiple burdens, and unpaid care work. The political recognition of these everyday enactments is contingent on the very marginality suffered by poor women. In so far as gender wage and employment gaps exist, it may remain "rational" for subaltern families to maintain the male-breadwinner and female-carer homemaking arrangements (Esquivel, 2013). Thus, for many poor families, even for those politicized, male partners often perform economic-public-political work, leaving many women in charge of home-care. The recognition of women's everyday politics must be situated within actual conditions of possibilities. Instead, I aim to push the advocacy for feminist homemaking critical to sustaining alternative economies and polities.

I build the argument in a two-fold manner. I first briefly highlight the co-constitution of care work, its reduction, and redistribution, with grassroots activism among urban poor women leaders defending their homes. Building on the notion that the politicization of the home and the reduction and redistribution of care work is necessary towards sustaining women's political enactments, I render political the greater burden of care and production work borne by women to sustain anti-neoliberal enactments within conditions of subalternity.

The study is based on participant observation and storytelling sessions among women activists defending their slum community against

forced evictions and demolitions, and women homemaking partners and male jeepney driver activist-leaders struggling against the neoliberalization of the Philippine public transport sector. The selection of research participants is described in the subsections below. Thematic analysis was done on the collected stories and observations.

## CO-CONSTITUTING CARE WORK AND HOMEMAKING WITH PUBLIC-POLITICS: THE STRUGGLE OF SITIO SAN ROQUE WOMEN AGAINST GENTRIFICATION

In the Philippines, forced evictions and relocation to off-city resettlements are the primary technology for urban gentrification—usually within regimes of public-private partnerships (Ortega, 2016) coupled with the commodification of socialized housing (Arcilla, 2018). The Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor counts 620,743 families who suffered evictions and relocations from 2008 to 2016 alone.[4] The case of Sitio San Roque and the Quezon City Central Business District (QCCBD) provides an apt background to recognize the co-constitution of care work and public political work against forced evictions. Data for this section is taken from storytelling sessions conducted with six female leaders (Ka Inday, Ka Lourdes, Nanay Basyon, Miyu, Ka Malou, and Ate Fe), all involved in organizing protests in different years. These stories are supplemented by the author's almost seven years, from 2012 to 2019, of engaged ethnography and life-history work among slum leaders struggling against forced evictions and demolitions.

San Roque is a 29.1-hectare slum community in the northern part of Quezon City, facing relocation, forced evictions and demolitions. The slum clearing makes space for a joint venture agreement between the National Housing Authority (NHA), the landowner, with property giant Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) to develop a component of the QCCBD. The QCCBD is envisioned as a "globally competitive destination for information, communication and technology outsourcing and health and wellness tourism." Based on a 2008 NHA Census, 14,356 informal settler families were to be relocated for this development.

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[4] This statistic only includes reported cases and does not include the number of families who are everyday driven-off streets and other public spaces.

At present, members of the local Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY), mostly women, struggle for onsite development of urban poor communities. KADAMAY is a national alliance of urban poor, workers, women and youth groups based in urban poor communities. Established in 1998, KADAMAY "aims to primarily arouse, organize and mobilize urban poor…to fight for their basic human rights" including the right to adequate housing and development.

The defense of slum communities relies mainly on women as homemakers for two reasons. First, women as primary care workers are often present in communities and thus burdened with organizing resistance activities. Second, resistance is framed as a defense of the right to decent and affordable housing and development. By development, what is referred to by the poor is access to sustainable livelihood opportunities and social services, primarily education, health and public utilities. For urban poor families, the house is a home only when livelihood and social services are accessible.

Many mothers in San Roque join KADAMAY in protest to defend family welfare. They know that relocation to the government's off-city resettlement sites will impoverish their families. Many of the earlier relocated families have returned to the slum. They organize many protests—community meetings, educational discussions, rallies and community barricades—and develop capacities to effectively engage in their onsite development plans. These activities require enormous efforts and sacrifices.

To continually act in KADAMAY, members balance care and livelihood work, and sacrifice personal time. Activist assignments are collectively decided and delegated depending on women's capacities and care work duties. Meetings and activities are scheduled when homemaking duties, such as cooking, marketing, preparing children for school and partners for work, and cleaning, are done—often after lunch and on weekends, at the expense of personal time for needed rest and leisure. During meetings, many mothers bring their children. Wet-nursing mothers breastfeed their babies. Meetings often end as women participants would say, "Let us go home. I still need to cook." During day-long training or meetings, KADAMAY members are assigned as babysitters to enable mothers to focus on discussions and learnings.

More committed members redistribute, and occasionally even refuse, care work. They negotiate with their male partners, relatives and neighbors, sometimes with difficulty, on the importance of participating in collective resistance. During breaks in many meetings, women-leaders share stories of male partners complaining of the unattended or redistributed care work. A usual reason for non-participation: "My husband is getting angry!" When asked about her husband's perception of her activism, for instance, Ka Lourdes, a local KADAMAY chapter leader, said her husband "does not open up his thinking on what is happening" and often reminds her of what to him are misplaced sacrifices: "You no longer take care of yourself. Look at them [neighbors who do nothing]…Why are you a hero for them? They do not care!" For years, Lourdes calmly negotiated care work with her husband to fulfill her leadership duties. A new leader, Ate Fe, notes the difficulties of combining care work with KADAMAY duties. Other leaders, Ka Basyon and Ka Malou, noted that they were fortunate their husbands understand their activist duties and take on additional homemaking chores, albeit with occasional disagreements, particularly during financially challenging times.

These care work reconfigurations involve difficult personal emotional struggles against being considered "inadequate mothers." KaInday, an activist leader icon in San Roque and single parent, often guiltily sighs at her inability to economically provide for her two young children's sustenance and education. I witnessed her youngest child complaining of and blaming her community leadership for the lack of transport allowance to school. When their struggle takes its toll, she thinks about giving up her activist duties to attend to her children's needs. She asked, "What if I went back to vending to support my children? But what about the struggle?" Her situation is similar to Ka Malou and Miyu, who sacrificed their homemaking duties to lead a community barricade. Ka Malou's children learned to fend for themselves, and some stopped their schooling. Miyu, a young mother and activist leader, sighs about her husband's complaints and is sad that her daughter is left under her sister's care.

These accounts portray the difficulties faced by many women leaders who perform public-political work. The feelings of inadequacy, grief and even guilt, reveal the necessary and difficult emotional labor women endure

as they reconfigure care work for community work (Fisher, 1984). In the next section, I explore as political the homemaking and care-work of subaltern women, as their male partners engage in anti-neoliberal public politics and ask why these sacrifices are not rendered political?

## SUPPORTING MALE ANTI-NEOLIBERAL PUBLIC-POLITICS: WOMEN'S EVERYDAY POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AGAINST THE PHILIPPINE JEEPNEY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM'S DISPOSSESSIONS

Jeepney drivers' struggles against the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) provide a suitable context to mark subaltern women's political enactments in the home where males are dominantly responsible for public-political work. Launched in 2017, the PUVMP mandates that jeepneys older than 15 years be replaced by new environmentally-friendly units to cut down emissions and upgrade public transport. These units will cost around Php1.4 to 1.6 million to be paid over seven years via credit at a 6% interest rate (UNTV News and Rescue, 2017). Fleet franchises will be consolidated and issued to cooperatives or owners of at least 15 units (Mettke, Guillen, & Villaraza, 2016).

A national alliance of jeepney operators and drivers, the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper and Opereytor Nationwide (United Organization of Drivers and Operators Nationwide [PISTON]), counters that the PUVMP facilitates elite accumulation at the expense of small drivers and operators, and commuters. As local manufacturers are not equipped to produce Euro-4 engines, the new units will be sourced abroad, providing significant profits to importers and foreign manufacturers. The loans will effectively benefit individuals or corporations with substantial financial capacity given the franchise consolidation and higher unit costs. The loans will also put in debt small drivers and operators. According to the Crispin B. Beltran Resource Center, around 500,000 drivers and 300,000 operators, and their families will be adversely affected. The higher unit costs and loan interest will be passed on as higher fares. Other livelihoods that depend on the jeepney industry, such as rag-selling, dispatching, auto supply retailing, auto mechanic services, and food vending, will be displaced.

In place of the "fake" PUVMP, PISTON calls for a "genuine" modernization program where local firms supply the needed units, manufactured using inputs from a national steel and manufacturing industry, and financed with affordable state credit. This is to be part of a larger transport modernization program where car use and importation are decreased, and state investments in public transport, including trains and buses, increased. PISTON believes only collective resistance can stop the PUVMP. It launched several nationwide strikes in 2018, compelling several senators to call for further studies before full PUVMP implementation. PISTON National Spokesperson, Ka Modi, claims, "The transport sector has gained substantial success. If not for the protests and strikes, as early as 2016, there should have been no more jeeps in the Philippines."

The data here are drawn from participant observations and storytelling sessions with drivers in 2018 and 2019. Six male leaders and nine women-partners/relatives participated in individual storytelling sessions. Five collective storytelling sessions were conducted in different jeepney terminal sites. The male participants are leaders and organizers of the national office and local jeepney associations in Metro Manila. As most jeepney drivers are male, PISTON is a predominantly male social movement organization. Women participants are partners or relatives who share homemaking duties with male PISTON leaders. They have diverse levels of involvement: PISTON National Treasurer (Cely); a PISTON National campaign staff (Susan); a partner who fears for her husband's safety and acts as a security guard (Neng); a single jeepney operator and former jeepney association president (Susan2); a highly supportive wife of a former local PISTON president (Raquel), and homemakers who are not very knowledgeable about PISTON's activities (Linda, Rose, Nurly and Irene). Their diverse commitments with PISTON and care work duties provide a fertile setting for exploring everyday political enactments. Participant observation was done on organizational and protest activities and jeepney terminal sites.

The time spent for PISTON work translates to decreased family incomes—income loss from not plying the jeepney routes. While the main problem affecting jeepney drivers nationwide is the PUVMP, local associations also deal with stringent and "unreasonable and undemocratic"

local traffic policies with severe monetary penalties. During intense PISTON protests, such as nationwide or local jeepney strikes, leaders can lose days-worth of income, ranging from PhpP500 to PhP1,100 per day, depending on the route, time spent in driving and traffic flow. Leaders lament on many occasions that their earnings are sufficient "only for paying debts." Despite the economic sacrifice, many leaders remain active in campaigns and protest actions. Jess, a 64-year old PISTON local leader, declared, "I am always in mobilizations…Never mind the income. What is important is that we expose the exploitation by government of drivers." During these times, many leaders or their partners have to borrow money for family needs.[5]

In addition to foregone earnings, political involvement redounds to reduced care work. Despite the mostly macho talk, stories in jeepney terminals reveal a growing recognition among the male leaders of their social reproduction duties, constrained by the drudgery of the public utility jeepney economy and the difficulties of PISTON organizing. Many leaders persevere in contributing to care work. Liloy, a PISTON-National Capital Region (NCR) leader, collects water from a pump for his family in the morning before leaving, and sometimes even washes clothes. Mao, a 70-year old, who was a union leader and activist during the latter part of Marcos' Martial Law regime and is now a PISTON organizer, balances house and political work: "Housework…can be shared…Depending on the need…one must do housework…I do the laundry. I also do my work with PISTON." Despite these efforts, leaders admit that traditional male housework tasks such as plumbing and electrical repairs are often neglected. When asked about his parenting and husband duties, one leader said, "You do only what you can." Another leader added, "Upon arrival at home, one can only rest." If the repair work cannot be delayed, such as leaking roofs or ruptured water pipes, it is outsourced given available funds. Thus, to continue to perform PISTON duties, they mostly rely on their female partners or family members for care work. In several instances, I heard drivers conversing on the phone with their partners to resolve domestic issues while at work in jeepney terminals.

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[5] Local PISTON chapters are struggling to develop an honorarium system drawn from the collective contributions of association members where leaders who sacrifice daily incomes are provided minimal financial assistance for their family's sustenance.

With the economic sacrifices and necessary care work redistribution critical for performing PISTON responsibilities, discussions of male leaders with homemaker female companions can be heated. These intense discussions reflect the necessary and difficult negotiations with not-so-docile women to balance and redistribute political, productive and care work within the family. Mao's story is illuminating. His two deceased wives (he remarried after his first wife passed away) did not accept his politics. Despite his efforts to earn an income from truck driving then and at the same time do organizing work to somehow "ensure [family income] sufficiency," his first wife always reminded him of the inadequate income. "We would always fight when I was working [on organizing]. 'Eat your principles!' I told her, when you met me, I was already involved in PISTON. Maybe I will die involved. I cannot resign…Let us understand each other! As you work, I will organize." Notwithstanding the difficulties and little time he spent with family, his wife augmented the family's finances for a while through manicure services and being a housemaid, without which Mao would have found organizing much more difficult. They eventually parted ways.

When their female partners insist that they spend more time with the family and limit sacrificing daily incomes, several male drivers respond, "Just accept it." In one of my visits to a jeepney terminal, one of the newly-elected PISTON local leaders was emphatically telling his co-leaders that he may need to resign due to his wife's constant reminder of the family's financial needs. The local president smiled and advised him to persevere, telling him that political work required constant sacrifice and that they all are in the same situation. After several months, the new leader had not resigned. PISTON leaders know that they need to educate their partners on political work and organizing.

The political education of family members is a continuous and painstaking process. One local chapter leader always reminded his wife, "We are helping"—referring to PISTON's work as contributory to drivers' collective welfare. Jess explained to his family, "PISTON helps the exploited. We need to struggle for what is right." Despite believing in PISTON's politics, one partner, Neng, admits, "We fight [about money] frequently…But there is nothing I can do…I do not want to yell at him

always, the more he will not work…How will the family be supported? How do we buy food? How do we buy rice? Particularly when he does not drive."[6]

Notwithstanding these heated discussions with their partners, all of the women interviewed understand that PUVMP will negatively affect their family welfare. Jeepney driving is their main source of livelihood. Susan2, who is also a single-jeep operator, declared, "We will die" if the PUVMP pushes through. Rose said, "I will not agree [to the PUVMP] because that is the source of my husband's income…that is the source of our livelihood." Linda declared, "Many will suffer, many will lose their livelihoods."

Livelihood losses will lead to family sufferings. "Many children will maybe not be able to go to school; many will have no homes, no rental money. No more work," said Raquel. "Their [wives'] happiness as well as the children's happiness when their husbands arrive [home], will vanish," she added. Nurly prays, "[Jeepney driving] is their source of food, electricity, water. If the jeep is removed, what will happen to the drivers? They are already old, they can no longer apply for other jobs." Susan2 notes the potential of the PUVMP to tie families down in debt: "Our grandchildren will still owe money…We already have a (jeepney) unit, why will we be borrowing money?" She jokingly added that she will probably separate from her husband: "We will probably separate. He does not know of any other work—only as a driver."

Because of the ill-effects on family welfare of the PUVMP and other stringent road regulations, many women companions believe the PISTON campaigns to be necessary to protect their livelihood and families. All of the women participants declared that PISTON takes up the cudgels for poor drivers and provides a space for their husbands to do good for other people, even as some are not knowledgeable of the particularities of PISTON work. Rose declared, "My husband helps others in his work, while he earns. That is why he does not want to get out from PISTON." Many of the women said that, through PISTON, drivers' local problems were addressed.

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[6] PISTON plans to launch political and organizing activities for drivers' wives and children with the help of other progressive organizations.

Women directly support PISTON's campaigns in various ways that reflect different levels of political consciousness. These, however, draw from their capacities and knowledge developed as primary care workers. Some women-partners participate in rallies despite not being members of any political organization. They often help in food preparation and distribution to PISTON members. Raquel agrees with her husband Jess' description of the protests their family has participated in: "Many…I can no longer count…They are also on the streets." All of the women who joined protests did it for the protection of family welfare. Nanay Rose said of joining rallies, "Difficult…but fulfilling…We struggle. We shout…We fight for their livelihoods!" Even children go to the rallies despite being unorganized, especially when their fathers are there. Rose continued, when the children and grandchildren ask, "Is Papa there? Yes. I will join the rally. They would travel [from Bulacan to Manila]." Many women-partners even converted their homes as a space for protest preparations, particularly for food preparations during nationwide jeepney strikes. One wife said she and her children regularly even painted placards at home for PISTON.

Beyond assisting in food and political paraphernalia preparations, the home is converted as a political education site. Learning from discussions with their partners, many women explain to other family members the necessity of collective movement to resist the PUVMP. Raquel, who volunteered with her husband in the PISTON National Office, has never attended educational discussions, yet knows the drivers' problems as her husband always explains the issues to her. In turn, she helped explain these issues to their children, one of whom is now helping in PISTON organizing. Jess, her husband, explains why their upbringing at home contributes to his political involvement: "[My children] see the plight of drivers. They are part of the struggles of PISTON. Especially as I [their father] am a driver. This is where they were raised…they are affected by what happens to my livelihood. That is why they do not disagree." To this, Raquel said she was supportive "100%."

Some homes even bear pictures, symbols and posters containing the political calls of PISTON and its allied organizations, addressing wage increase, security of tenure, national industrialization, etc. On Neng's

cabinet is a sticker calling for "Decent Wage for 8-Hour Work." Their entire family, even the grandchildren, has joined protests. Sometimes her neighbors join them. She says, "It is joyful" that one of her grandchildren now shouts, "Down with Duterte!" and had even had an uncle make him a PISTON Partylist flag.

In addition to family members' political education, some women partners do conflict resolution between fathers and children to ensure convivial family relations in the midst of financial inadequacy, absentee male-parenting and worries about personal safety. When asked if the children support their father's political involvement, Neng said, "they support it…but there are questions, especially when their father does not drive and our finances are not enough. [I tell them] Children, do not…let him be. That is what he wants." She talks to her children privately and pacifies them, saying, "Let your father be. He has started this. He can no longer turn his back. If you are annoyed that we do not have money, let us leave it to God." Neng, upon knowing that her husband was receiving threats, began accompanying him in driving at night. She acts as his "security" detail, helping ensure his safety and, at the same time, acting as a fare collector. She worries about the illegal arrest of activists.[7] Nevertheless, she remains strong. She shared her fears, "When he says his name is on the list…I keep quiet…I think about…What will happen to us? What will happen to our lives?... At this time, when I suffer from bodily pains, will I still work? Can I still work? I tell him…pray, and always be safe." Care work as the protection of family welfare may even take the form of risking one's own life.

The support of many women for PISTON work is not just for the defense of family welfare, but also arises from the change in their husbands/siblings' behavior particularly in sharing care work. They are now better companions and parents. When her husband joined PISTON, "He learned transport issues…He stopped drinking," said Raquel. Another participant said her husband now spends less time with his friends drinking. Rose declared that her husband, who is a jeepney dispatcher

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[7] Leloy, her husband, told her of a surveillance incident when he was tailed from the PISTON National Office, which compelled him to take a detour to a place where there were many activists, as there was a protest encampment.

and also a PISTON leader, now has time for the home. "He stays here in the house…he now has time for me. When I have work, he takes care of housework." Neng's husband used to be involved in brawls, was one time injured from a knife stab, and was verbally offensive. When he became a local PISTON Leader, he changed—more reserved and responsible. Neng is very thankful that he is now with PISTON.

To supplement the limited incomes accompanying PISTON work, all of the women perform competent financial home management, and many find ingenious ways to generate income while still taking care of the home. To decrease food expenses, they wake up as early as 2:00 to 3:00 in the morning to prepare breakfast for their husbands and find ways to cook cheaper menus—often replacing meat-based diets with vegetables. They sell various goods—beauty products, embotido, cooked merienda (ginataan, palitaw, biko) and viands, wallets, coffee, noodles—within their immediate neighborhoods, or act as housemaids to augment the family income. They apportion daily incomes for utilities, food, transportation, schooling and even medicines. Despite these economic innovations, resorting to credit often happens to supplement inadequate incomes. Being at home most of the time and able to cultivate friendly social relations, many wives access credit from neighbors, relatives, and even loan sharks during emergencies. Such knowledge and practices were developed in response to the drivers' irregular and insufficient incomes due to heavy traffic, unexpected vehicle breakdowns and repairs, and apprehensions for traffic violations. Applying these alternatives allows their families to eke out modest lives and make possible the continued activism of their companions for PISTON.

Women who are willing and able are assigned larger PISTON tasks. These more significant responsibilities are often extensions of the skills developed in the everyday, such as financial management. After mere *sama-sama* (going along) in rallies and assisting in food preparation, Susan decided to devote more of her time and skills to PISTON as a national campaigner, as she now better understands the "correctness" of PISTON's struggles. A human rights advocate and activist since the Martial Law era, Cely is the PISTON national treasurer and ensures that local organizations pay their dues and accounts for the necessary expenses. Her entry into PISTON was as a treasurer of a local PISTON organization near their home.

For the women who have committed more significant time and skills to PISTON activities, the political work requires substantial redistribution and sometimes the reversal of care work duties. Being PISTON National officers, Cely and her husband, Ka Mody, share housework. In contrast, Susan only goes home monthly. Her family understands her PISTON work as she has politically-educated her children and husband. One of her daughters is a member of an activist-cultural group. Cely and her husband never fight about her political work even as he has taken on most of the care and productive work. Her husband, a PISTON driver, plies his route daily. On the way home, he passes by the market to buy food and other necessities. He cooks, cleans, and takes care of their children. When asked how her husband views her PISTON work, Susan said he responds, "'I do not disagree with your political work, (although) we struggle for our livelihood…but we cannot continue like you, what will happen to our family? What about our children's education?' He supports me…He understands." At the same time, she admits the necessary care work sacrifice, "Totally, I was not able to pay attention to my other kids because of…work…My children know of my sacrifices…They are aware that, even if I do not support them considerably, my work is all for them. I do not hear them say 'Mom is all work'…I also tell them…'let us help each other.'"

The women who are more knowledgeable of PISTON work recognize women's and children's political contributions and potential. They call for the need to organize families. Cely says, "The mothers are there [in the protests]…at the onslaught of the [PUV] modernization…they knew why they were there, even those that were not our members were there, with their children." Having participated in many rallies, Raquel suggested to many jeepney drivers' wives, "It would be good—for this [PUVMP] not to push through—if we could mobilize, we and our children. We must unite. We will go [to the streets] to show our suffering. Maybe the government will show mercy to us parents and our children." Susan adds, "We should bring our families in the middle of the street, bring them to Malacañang. Let us encamp there." Some are apologetic for not being able to contribute more. Despite helping in cooking and volunteering in preparations for PISTON Congresses and protests, Neng confessed, "That is my contribution. I cannot yet do other work."

The everyday support of women partners for PISTON political work is recognized as critical. Cely declared, "Wives' support, their understanding of the male's [political] work is important… men's struggles will be stronger…women know [these struggles] are for their children." Even PISTON National Spokesperson, Ka Modi, testifies to their political contribution. "Women have a huge role. Foremost, mothers problematize homemaking. Because of their partners' limited incomes, they have to manage the family needs…We do not separate the drivers' partners from the struggle, even their children…The fathers' loss of income is a loss of income for the entire family. That is why they are part of the struggle, the entire family…This is not a struggle only of those who are on the road; this is a struggle of the family."

These stories provide evidence that subaltern women engage in re-distributional claims of care work **and** the structural problematization of family welfare. They acknowledge the PUVMP dispossessions and contribute to PISTON's politics by consciously ensuring their family's welfare even as their male partners sacrifice time and income for organizing work. They accept the necessary redistribution of care and productive work even as they clamor for more male involvement—thus, the heated discussions for and appreciation when their male partners take on increased care work. These women understand that reforms towards inclusive transport development are critical to ensuring decent futures and, if resolved, will hopefully allow their male partners to spend more time with family. Even for those who do not see themselves as activists, their support for their male activist partners is based on the hope for a more just and inclusive economy.

Perhaps the politicization of the home—its transformation as a protest preparation site, and the political education of and the conflict resolution with children—is an unassailable contribution of subaltern women to anti-neoliberal enactments. These are not present in homes of non-politicized subaltern women.

For these subaltern women, the reduction and redistribution of care work and the crisis of care within the home are imagined resolved by increasing the poor's share within the productive economy to allow males to share a greater burden of care work and homemaking. These enactments support anti-neoliberal feminist calls for "caring masculinities"

within inclusive economies. Indeed, this care work "subsidizes" the public sphere (Esquivel, 2013; Picchio, 2003) and is critical to the sustenance of collective movements.[8]

## TOWARDS A POLITICAL RECOGNITION OF SUBALTERN CARE WORK AND HOMEMAKING

The recognition of subaltern women's political agency is better marked with the re-centering of the home as an analytical scale and locating it within co-constitutions of class and gender politics in the South. Public-political work requires redistribution of care work. In this paper, I marked the everyday politics of urban subaltern women as primary home carers within regimes of neoliberal dispossessions and care work crises. Unable to afford care commodification and outsourcing, subaltern women endure increased care and productive work to facilitate male public-political work against neoliberal dispossessions. Subaltern women reframe the home from a neoliberal reproduction space as a political site where care and production work are redistributed, activist education is provided, and conflict resolution performed with family members. In support of the public-political work of their partners, subaltern women's everyday homemaking acts against the reproduction of the disciplined and docile labor, and mark the "possibility of gaining a measure of separation or detachment from capitalist control, imposed norms of gender and sexuality and traditional standards of family forms and roles"

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[8] A methodological caution here is necessary. As earlier observed by Caldiera (1990), "in the politics of everyday life" women may not see their activities as political in a non-subaltern sense, akin to "middle-class" feminism, even as these are contributory to public-political struggles to protect family welfare. The danger of romanticizing care work as political calls for more ethnographic research to better mark the imaginations and practices of the everyday of subaltern women. Ethnography allows an analysis of situations where verbalizations and enactments may not correspond. Indeed, some women do not ascribe politics to their everyday, yet their taking on of increased care and productive work certainly ease the difficulties of anti-neoliberal political work. A detailed time-use account, coupled with ethnographic data, can provide richer empirical evidence on the critical everyday political contribution of subaltern women. At the same time, ethnography can locate these everyday enactments within home situations and provide a situated understanding of why and how some women, despite their subalternity, politically act within the "public" sphere.

(Weeks, 2011). Indeed the home is "a quasi-private space from which non-formal actors can plan and coordinate acts of resistance at different scales" (Brickell, 2012, p. 584). Such recognition resounds with calls for transforming communities and families as sites of anti-neoliberal and feminist organizing and resistances (Harvey, 2012; Federici, 2019). Only when the home is reconsidered as a social reproduction space within "actually existing neoliberalisms" can political organizing be sustainable and responsive to conditions suffered and endured by subaltern women.

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