

# Social policies, community participation and the deprofessionalization of care\*

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## **Abstract**

The present article seeks to examine the meaning that community work acquires in the context of changes in social policy and in modes of governance that have taken place in Brazil since 2000. Attributing to communities (i.e. to women) an active role in responsibility for local development and social welfare, we examine the Women for Peace (Mulheres da Paz) program in Rio de Janeiro. This program was implemented in the city's favelas as a means of confronting the forms of urban violence that have been historically practiced in Brazil. We analyze State action in deprofessionalizing care work among young "at risk" women. We conclude that the new modes of governance are not linear processes, but complex and ambivalent, involving constant disputes between program managers, operators and the subject population regarding the objectives, contents and meanings of this social policy.

**Palavras-chave:** Care, Gender, Social Policies.

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In recent decades, an extensive literature has appeared regarding neo-liberalism and social policies. that has dedicated itself to studying the adoption of market mechanisms and entrepreneurial models in order to restructure the State and generate new models of governance and subjectification. On a macro-economic level, as Evans and Sewell Jr. (2013) show, these transformations have been quite encompassing and have taken place on a global scale, although according to various rhythms and intensities. Advanced capitalist countries already began reforming their regulatory states in the 1970s, privatizing state companies and loosening controls over capital while deregulating markets and selectively reducing welfare guarantees. The great majority of developing countries altered important elements of their national development strategies over the following decades, opening up to global flows of goods and capital. Going beyond the economic dimension, many authors believe that these changes signal the beginning of a new “art of governing” and thus seek to re-interpret them as a sort of “rationality”, linked to a specific form of governance and subjectivity production (Ferguson, 2009).

Brazil does not follow the precepts of the neo-liberal paradigm to the letter. The country’s political-economic model sports distinctive features which point to the emergence of a new experiment in “social development”, particularly since the 2000s. Among these features has been the expansion of the security system and income transfer programs to the poor (Kerstenetzky, 2010). It has been argued that the Brazilian governments have institutionalized a hybrid political regime: a kind of “liberal neo-developmentism”, which has combined liberal policies of privatization, liberalization and deregulation with the strengthening of full employment and the expansion of social policies (Ban, 2012).

Looking at social policies, the changes have also been significant. Called by many different names – the post-Washington Consensus (Fine et al., 2001), citizen-consumerism (Schild, 2007) or social investment (Jenson, 2009) – Brazil’s new paradigm has been characterized mainly by a redistribution of responsibilities for the

welfare of citizens between the State, markets, communities and the individual citizens themselves.

The present article proposes to examine the changes in the architecture of social policies, as well as in modes of governance, which have recently taken place in Brazil. Even though the current level of debate doesn't permit us to draw conclusions regarding the overall reduction or expansion of the State's investments in social programs, we can certainly contribute to the discussion regarding the quality of the social welfare that has been provided. We thus argue that the changes in modes of governance that have taken place are not linear processes, but are in fact complex and ambivalent, involving constant disputes between program managers, operators and the subject population regarding the objectives, contents and meanings of this social policy.

The focus of our analysis is the Women for Peace (Mulheres da Paz – WfP) Program, which had as its objective the training of women in poor communities to act in preventing violence in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. This Program took place between 2008 and 2013, when it finally ended its activities. The Women for Peace Program was created by the Justice Ministry and implemented in 21 comunidades/favelas in 2008, including some 2,200 women (Sorj and Gomes, 2011). It sought to enable women to act in preventing and confronting local forms of violence, particularly those which targeted youth and women. The focus of the activities of the women in the program was to identify youths between 15 and 25 years of age who were in “situations of vulnerability”, referring them to the Protejo Program (Proteção dos Jovens em Território Vulnerável – Protection of Youths in Vulnerable Territories), which sought to give these youths job training. The women needed to work 12 hours a week in the program and, in exchange, they received a monthly stipend of R\$190,00. The youth selected for the training program also received a monthly stipend of R\$100,00.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The monthly minimum wage in Brazil in 2010 was R\$510,00.

Both Women for Peace and Protejo were presented as an alternative to the forms of confronting urban violence historically practiced in Brazil. In the face of the State and society's history of failure in controlling crime and violence through traditional (predominantly repressive) policies, this proposal sought to ground itself in the principles of human rights, defining its orientation as "emphasizing prevention and seeking to root out the causes violence without giving up social planning strategies and public safety" (Ministry of Justice, 2010). New notions of governance pervaded the proposal, particularly the belief that community participation in public policy is an indispensable means for making policies more effective.

Our analysis of the program, presented below, is based on ethnographic research and interviews. In the first part of the article, we look at the discursive practices that legitimize the decentralization of social programs, removing them from the exclusive control of the State and transferring many of their functions to women in poor communities (who, in this case, were now expected to operate as caretakers of the local peace). In the second part, we analyze what constitutes care work, as performed by the participants of this social program. In the final section of the article, we examine community work practices, focusing on process of deprofessionalization and the informalization of care activity, concluding with some final remarks.

## Part I – Community participation as support for social policy

The notion of "community participation" has recently come into vogue in political discourse, enabling demands for the strengthening of community bonds, rebuilding social capital and developing innovative proposals to meet the needs of local populations. Up to just a few years ago, community participation was understood to consist of protest movements and movements in defense of social rights. More recently, however, this term took on new meanings, referencing the integration of the residents of

poor neighborhoods into projects which aimed at the social development of these territories.

This conceptual reformulation, which presumes the people's participation, is the result of a complex process that has brought together the discourses of several quite different institutional actors. The most prominent of these has undoubtedly been the World Bank, which has played a key role in the discursive elaboration and political imposition of the new architecture that these new social policies were designed to take over. After coming to the conclusion that the State and the market, by themselves, either could not or would not ensure the well-being of people, The World Bank began to recommend the involvement of civil society in development projects. Attributing the failure of many development projects to the ineptitude of state bureaucracies and lack of attention to the specific needs of local populations, the Bank enthusiastically embraced the idea that local culture and social networks should be taken into account in the confection of social programs (Rao; Walton, 2004).

At about the same time that the World Bank was coming to these conclusions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), were taking on their present role as the principal foundational pillars of local social policies. Adhering to a democratic ideal that values political decentralization, "grassroots participation" and "empowerment", NGOs began to see participation in these new social programs as a means of expanding the interventions that they were developing in the communities themselves. The institutionalization and professionalization of NGO political activism put the need to obtain resources for survival on many NGO's agendas. These organizations thus began to approach the governmental sphere and work in local development projects (Landim, 1993).

If "community participation" gives one the impression of a process that includes all of the residents of a given locality, in reality, this term targets a very specific population. Given women's more fragile insertion in the formal labor market and their more intense engagement in social and rights struggles in lower-class

neighborhoods, they end up being the people generally recruited for “community work” (Robles, 2012; Georges and dos Santos, 2012). The sexual division of labor and gender asymmetries are part and parcel of these projects and are frequently the object of disputes and struggles, as we shall see below.

In the specific case of the Women for Peace Program, the idea of mobilizing the women of the community in order to work in caring for “at risk” youth was inspired by the legitimacy the category “mother” acquired in the Rio de Janeiro organizations of women who had lost their children in urban conflicts. The best known of these organizations, the Mothers of Acari, formed when a group of women began a long struggle to learn where the bodies of their sons and daughters had been dumped following their murder by police in July 1990. These women (as well as the other family-oriented groups who sought the legal recourse against police who kill their children) popularized motherhood as a position of moral authority in the creation of spaces of legitimacy and recognition in the political struggle against urban violence (Vianna and Farias, 2011; Araujo, 2007). The mobilization of “mother” as a category involved in political action strengthened social perceptions which associate women, maternity and non-violence. This was clearly reflected in the case under study here, given that the name initially suggested for the group was “Mães da Paz” (“Mothers for Peace”). However, the Brazil's strong feminist movement and the feminist-oriented National Secretariat for Women's Policies (SPM) objected to this name, suggesting instead “Lideranças da Paz” (“Leaders for Peace”), a neutral noun which could also contemplate men. Finally, after many inter-ministerial discussions, “Mulheres da Paz” (Women for Peace) was chosen as the new program's name.

Feminist criticism voiced by the National Secretariat for Women's Policies also challenged the goals of the WfP program. As prepared by the Ministry of Justice, these were limited in scope to the women working to prevent youth involvement in drug trafficking. Challenged by feminists for reinforcing traditional gender norms that exclusively associate women with the role of

mothers and caregivers, the project emerged from its final draft with new goals geared towards women's rights, while also keeping the original objective of women monitoring young people. The project thus made it clear that WfP would involve two types of activities:

Social mobilization to reinforce citizenship, seeking the emancipation of women and the prevention and confrontation of violence towards women; and linking to young people and adolescents, seeking to include them in social programs that promote citizenship and in the network of partner organizations that are able to permanently and the consistently respond to these youth's demands for psychological, legal and social support (Brasil, 2013).

Over the period of its existence, however, the Women for Peace Program would see many tensions and conflicts over these two projects: maternal care-giving for youth and empowerment of women through self-development and the creation of female autonomy.

## Part II – The gender of community care

Tensions between the different understandings of the role that women should play in the WfP Project were present in the first call for interviews for participants in 2008. The objectives set out in the Program's project relating to "women's empowerment" and "confronting violence against women" were simply not presented during these interviews. The function of the participants was presented by the Program's managers as being exclusively dedicated to youth care: "building and strengthening social networks to prevent and confront violence involving young people and adolescents who are exposed to domestic and urban violence", "collaborating in youth organization", "being attentive to the needs of young people" and "explaining to young people the possibilities opened by various social projects" (Darcy Ribeiro Foundation, 2010:13,15). Participants' responsibilities were

specifically presented as selecting and monitoring young people between the ages of 15 and 24 who were at risk or in situations of family and/or social vulnerability. Also included as intended subjects of the Program were former convict youth or youth undertaking court-ordered social-educational measures. Participants were to refer all of these young people to training courses in citizenship and professional skills offered by the Protejo project.

The basic criteria for selecting Program participants involved place of residence (one had to be living in the region where one would be working), age (one needed to be over 18), education (at least to a 4th grade level, or proof of adequate reading and writing skills), and family income (less than twice the minimum wage). The selection tests consisted of reading comprehension and the composition of an essay about the candidates' experiences in community work. According to some of the women we interviewed, the test was quite easy and only sought to assess whether the candidates had a minimum level of reading and writing skills. The women selected were, for the most part, participating for the first time in this sort of program and had learned of it through advertisements, posters and word of mouth. Many were already community leaders active in neighborhood associations, churches, schools, NGOs, or other community-based social projects. Religious networks, especially evangelical churches, played an important role in recruiting candidates. According to a survey of 237 Women for Peace participants (which represented 10% of the program's total beneficiaries), 48% of them were evangelical Christian (SEASDH, 2011). This over-representation reflects the religious beliefs of, Benedita da Silva, then a senator for the Workers' Party and the person in charge of the State Secretariat for Social Welfare, Development and Human Rights (Secretaria Estadual de Assistência Social e Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos, SEASDH), the institution responsible for managing the program at the state level in Rio de Janeiro. This mobilization of evangelical women also indicates that certain pre-existing social networks have a tendency to occupy spaces



intended for so-called “community participation” due to their increased capacity in mobilizing their members.

The first step of participation in the program involved the empowerment of women in courses that focused on topics such as gender and women's rights, human rights, citizenship, violence, risk factors and the prevention of drug addiction. The courses were the responsibility of a feminist NGO that was specialized in such training. According to a program supervisor, the courses encouraged “women to see themselves as participating in their own history and in making history.” The courses, taught by professionals and professors specializing in gender studies or human rights, linked lectures and group dynamics. The feminist group in charge of the process attached great importance to group dynamics as it allowed a less vertical model of education. These dynamics consisted of games that sought to establish connections between class content, local daily life and the biographies of women themselves. In these activities, women were encouraged to build self narratives that situated them as “empowered” individuals, capable of social agency and self-transformation.

The women we interviewed generally agreed that the training course helped open up wider horizons of knowledge for them and that this was useful both in their activities with the Program and in their lives in general. They especially appreciated learning more about the Maria da Penha Law, which criminalizes domestic violence, and they reported disseminating this information in their communities. Several MP participants reported being victims of violence and that they were able to share this experience in the training workshops. Some of these women had the opportunity to change their lives, with the support of their colleagues, separating from aggressive and violent partners or improving their marital relationships. They generally attributed these changes to subjective processes of self-transformation. Many of them made statements such as “it was there [in the Program] that I learned who I was”; “I learned that a man should not hit a woman, that women should not be submissive to men, that women have all the rights that men have (...). I could not break

out of it [before]. I didn't believe in my capacity to do so. The Program gave me the strength to walk"; "Through Women for Peace, I learned to defend myself, to believe that I can – I can."

Learning about the rights and services available to assist women, the participants began to more frequently access public aid institutions. Some of the participants went to the specialized police stations (DEAM – Women's Police Stations), public defenders and the courts for the first time in their lives, and took steps towards divorce or to asking for a fair division of marital assets and child support. While the participants believed that learning and teaching about the Maria da Penha Law was one of the Program's success stories, direct intervention in situations of domestic conflict was reported as very delicate, something which exposed women to the risk of aggression and even physical attacks.

The routine of the Women for Peace in their work regions consisted of 12 hours of dedicated work for the Program per week, between training activities, working with the youth from the Protejo project and community activities. The women received a shirt and a cap, both with the program's logo, in order to facilitate recognition of the group in the community and to produce and strengthen group identity. These items were very much valued for the symbolic and practical power they conferred: distinction, respect, recognition and ease of circulation in the community and in addressing youth, police and public authorities.

One set of activities carried out by the WfP women involved teaching favela residents about the social services available to them. The women visited the civil institutions and organizations in their communities and the surrounding area (such as health facilities, nursing homes, schools and charities) in order to learn about their functions, discover available vacancies, understand the services offered and aid in forwarding claims. They distributed information regarding the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and dengue fever and demanded garbage bins from COMLURB (the city waste authority) while stumping for community waste treatment programs. They distributed information regarding

the Maria da Penha Law and supported the elderly, needy and the victims of floods and landslides. They collaborated in organizing local events, such as those promoting the issuance of replacement identification and other documents, giving legal advice, measuring blood pressure and glucose levels, offering massage, or involving musical presentations. Finally, they helped refer residents to Child Protection Services, Social Assistance Reference Centers (CRAS), Specialized Reference Centers for Social Assistance (CREAS), schools, municipal employment programs and substance abuse treatment centers, among other services.

These activities varied from region to region, with some regions being extremely active and others more idle. Many factors influenced the women's performance: the commitment and capacity of the regional teams and of the women themselves in mobilizing networks and partnerships; personal idiosyncrasies (charisma or leadership skills); prior social capital; the receptivity of the communities to the program; relations with local authorities and power structures (drug traffickers, police); the degree of local provision of services and equipment availability; safety; working conditions (physical spaces, availability of promotional materials); etc.

Public activities were highly valued by the participants. Being perceived as favoring increased self-esteem. In concrete terms, this meant “overcoming shyness”, “feeling good”, “seeing things differently”, having an “open mind”, “being able to communicate” and “earning respect”. A feeling of belonging and identification with the Women for Peace Program was constantly reinforced in the course of events, parties, ceremonies, celebrations – in short, presentations with intense emotional charges which celebrated the women's work in their communities. At the launching ceremony for another program, (Peace Territories) during the National Men's Day to End Violence against Women in the Complexo do Alemão (a favela in northern Rio de Janeiro), which occurred on December 4th, 2008, the then President of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, welcomed the Women for Peace, setting a tone that would recur at other events:

So I want to say to each woman, the mothers of Women for Peace, to each young person, that they should pay attention because you are going to enter into history as the people who taught the government, the mayor, the governor, the president of the republic, the chief of police, that the people who know how to take care of the places where you live are you yourselves. We just have to create the conditions so that you can be the light that this country needs in order to improve the lives of the poor of this country (Brasil, 2008).

The delight caused by the women's participation as mothers and community caregivers was remarkable. Over time, this formulation consolidated itself among the authorities at the highest levels of government. At the local level, however, the program's gender norms became a constantly debated theme and a constant source of tension, as we shall see below.

### Part III – The deprofessionalization of youth care

The main activity of the MP was “rescuing youth” in “situations of risk”. The symbolic construction of this activity, centered around values associated with femininity, raises questions about how the state contributes to maintaining or reinforcing traditional gender norms and the deprofessionalization of care work through social policies.

The notion of “rescue” was founded upon the assumption that women's experiences, especially motherhood, confers upon them the credibility, moral authority and specific skills to perform this function. This assumption was at the base of the program its supposed effectiveness was defended by a senior official of the Secretariat for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights of Rio de Janeiro (Secretaria de Defesa e Promoção dos Direitos Humanos do Rio de Janeiro) in a seminar evaluating the MP Program. Emphasizing the importance of the “motherhood” in rescuing of young people, this official said that no one could do that job better than mothers themselves, since only mothers could

enter into a drug den to pull their child or husband out by the ear while saying “you won’t stay here” with the drug traffickers seeming to understand why.

This approach, which naturalizes and inflates the moral authority of women/mothers over the population involved in drug trafficking, became apparent in Program in two different ways. First, in the lack of specific training to prepare the participants to accompany the progress of the youth they were rescuing and secondly in the invisibility of the emotional labor involved in this sort of work.

In the first case, the substantive training offered to the Mothers for Peace was, in fact, merely a few lessons regarding “conflict mediation”. This was considered to be good enough for their successful completion of their duties. However, the participants did not consider themselves prepared enough to be able to successfully interact with young people. The evangelical Christians in the group reported having to resort to the knowledge they had acquired in church in order to deal with young people and confirmed in their statements the moral authority that Evangelicals can exert on drug traffickers (Teixeira, 2009). According to one interviewee:

I am also an Evangelical and because of this, I know many more tactics I can use in my work because us Evangelicals were trained. We studied in church how to deal with drug people, we dedicated ourselves to it. And we also have a better reception, because when the drug user knows that a person is an Evangelical, they also obey this, they listen to us, right? So we have this reception when we go up to the person, as to how we are going to talk to them, how we can bring them some hope.

With regards to the second point, participants reported the importance of emotional work (Hochschild, 2003) in their duties. Patience, calm and self-control were repeatedly mentioned as qualities that the Women for Peace needed to cultivate in order to interact with youth, as well as a precise ability for observing and

interpreting situations, attitudes and feelings. According to one interviewee:

A lot of things, you think “ah, I know how to deal with it, I know how to talk to people”, and it's not like that. You have to have that way about you, to know how to come up to people, not just the kids, but their families. Because sometimes the problem isn't just with the kid: it's also there in the family. So you have to work in the middle of that whole problem, which is the kid and their family. Working with that there family, knowing how to deal with them, what to do and knowing where you can go, where you begin. You need to work both sides of it.

The MP Program did not explain to the women the meaning and scope of the term “at risk youth”, leaving the participants to create and employ their own classification criteria. In general, a view prevailed among the women that, potentially, all youth in the community could be classified as such, seeing as all residents of the communities are poor, marginalized and have contact with “drug trafficking culture”. According to one interviewee:

The project asked for the most vulnerable youth. But I see it like this: all the youth in the community are vulnerable. Even those in a well-structured family, who are in school. There's a social life that will always fall out of those patterns... For the youth, recreation is booze and sometimes they run off into drugs and all the rest. That's what I saw, and seeing this social side of the youth, I thought that they were all in a situation of vulnerability.

The exception to this general rule can be found with the young people who were linked to Evangelical churches which, once again, points out the importance of the Evangelical religion as normalization vector for local social life (Machado, 1996). Young Evangelicals are seen as more protected from drugs, since they are part of a different community within the favela, which exerts a

strong control over the behavior of the faithful and can counteract “drug dealing culture”. A division between “Evangelicals” and “others” is very common in the women's assessment of the fate of the youth in the favelas. According to one of the women:

What we see in the community is this: if you want to separate them [from drug dealing culture] you need to be radical. If you're lukewarm, you end up becoming part of their daily grind. It's normal to listen to a banned funk song, because you live in the community. You know who the community's boss is. So, automatically, you end up living with it [drug dealing culture], which is very difficult. So either you are radical, an Evangelical who follows what you preach, or you're... like everyone else.

Exemplary cases of “rescue” were recounted with much emotion at public events, meetings and in publications, but the evaluations of the women we interviewed indicate that a significant number of the youth stopped going to the professionalization courses and abandoned *Protejo*. The obstacles these women mentioned that impeded *Protejo*'s success included the economic advantages and prestige gained through participation in drug-trafficking, lack of guarantees of employment upon conclusion of the courses, and the absence of psychological assistance and accompaniment. One interviewee evaluated these difficulties in the following way:

Many left because there are some kids are addicts. It's difficult because there wasn't any minimal level of accompaniment. It was hard for that kid who practically lives in the streets to have a schedule to meet in order to participate in a course like that.

Another woman said “How can you empower a young addict to be a young administrative assistant [one of the training courses offered by the SENAC]? [A kid] who has no psychological or financial counseling or anything?” Young people's withdrawal

from the project had a clear gender bias. For men, the main reason for abandoning the course, according to the MP, was their inclusion in paid work of any sort; for young women, under-represented in the program, abandonment was generally caused by pregnancy.

Much of the work process of the women with Protejo consisted of logistical support actions to school and the contention and control of youth behavior: distributing snacks, controlling drug use in the classroom, mediating conflicts between students, participating in tours and etc. In addition, the women made home visits, seeking to support young people and their families (especially in the case of drug use by adults in the family), updating registries and identifying dropouts.

These tasks were often criticized by the feminists working for the Program as managers and consultants. The feminist critique was that these activities were a sort of “social mothering” that reinforced the sexual division of labor and gender norms. A social scientist later took over as State Coordinator for the Women for Peace Program for Rio de Janeiro, after passing through the Secretariat for Women’s Policies (SPM). She was supposed to contribute to changing the lives of the Program’s women “as women”. Her testimony in the book chronicling the Women for Peace Program expresses the discomfort that feminists felt regarding the care work that the women undertook:

Visiting the Mesquita region, after a meeting with the Women, I was served a snack. While I ate with the regional team and some of the Women, others of the group came into the kitchen carrying big boxes containing boxes of industrialized fruit juice, which they stored in the refrigerator. Other Women were making a ton of sandwiches. Finding that strange, I asked the local supervisor what they were doing. The answer irritated me: “They are preparing lunches for the Protejo kids”. The kids weren’t able to make their own sandwiches?! I immediately suggested that sandwich-making should be a group task and that, every day, two or three of the Protejo boys and girls be



called in to help the women with that job. Everyone was shocked by my suggestion. It seemed “natural” to them that this should be women's work. Minutes later, however, the women were agreeing on how to incorporate the kids in that activity (Rodrigues, 2011:62).

The institutional diversity and decentralization that governed the Women for Peace program widened the possibilities for the definition of and intervention in project direction by institutional actors at different levels of government. The clashes regarding the correct interpretation of the meaning of the concepts of participation and empowerment of women by local managers work to make the Program's dynamics and its results as social policy indeterminate and unpredictable.

Program participants also politicized the notion of women being associated with care work when they formulated work and educational demands. The women demanded the creation of inclusive policies regarding employment and professional training courses which would open new horizons for them, similar to those they being run by *Protejo* to which they referred young people. Comparing their treatment to that offered by the Program to youth, the women reported feeling marginalized by public services. “We have to study, not just be an open door for others”, “To pay bills and have rights as a citizen, you have to have a job”, “A stipend is not a job” were comments often repeated by the women.

The mass entry of women into the job market, the increase of female levels of education and the decrease in Brazil's birth rate have all strengthened women's expectations for decently paid labor. This has been particularly the case over the last decade, when employment has been expanding in Brazil. Job expectations had a strong impact on the availability of women for Program work and on their leaving the program. One interviewee interpreted the reasons many women left the Program in the following fashion:

Look, we understand that the numbers [of women in the Program] went down because many of the women needed to work, understand?! So many left in order to work... The stipend we get is a stipend, not a job. It's a scholarship, a hand up, not employment. So many needed to work and they ended up heading off to work.

Abandonment of the Program was not constant throughout the various Program regions. It happened more frequently in middle class neighborhoods, where job opportunities were more easily found and salaries could compete with the stipend offered by Women for Peace. The monthly stipend in 2010 was slightly larger than the daily wage of a domestic worker in Rio's middle class South Zone.

Another factor that added to women's leaving for employment were the contacts that many of the Program's participants made in the course of their work, in particular with income-generating crafts cooperatives and free professional training courses. Women also became involved as paid representatives in local political institutions, such as the municipal councils for women's rights. They developed, both within and outside of their communities, women's associative groups that sought to improve the collective conditions of life in the communities in which they lived. In various manners, then, the participants in the Women for Peace Program were able to escape the framing that social policy reserved for them as caretakers of local peace, producing new ideas, desires and social relations.

### Final Considerations

The commercialization and professionalization of care work is a trend that, in recent years, has been observed and analyzed by the sociologists of work (Guimarães, Hirata and Sugita, 2012). Analysis of the Women for Peace Program reveals that there are other care work alternatives that can move beyond the dichotomy that separates paid work in the public sphere and unpaid work done in private space, and even the opposition between the

commodified care and unpaid domestic labor. Community work, as created by the social policies analyzed above is not exactly a commodified form of work, but neither is it strictly domestic work. This suggests the need to expand the concept of work and include other forms of expression within it.

The community care work is a political construction engendered by the new architecture of social policies. It attributes to communities and individuals co-responsible roles for development and social welfare. This case study of the Women for Peace Program suggests that, on the one hand, social policies may work against the professionalization, commercialization and formalization of care work. On the other, however, it reveals the presence of a plurality of discourse in the Program's administration and among its participants. Tensions and conflicts emerging from these projects are often invisible in the analysis of neoliberal social policies. Interpreted as moral and political projects that have a certain coherent political rationality which can regulate human conduct and produce subjectivities, these policies are assumed to be able to reproduce themselves in reality without any ambiguities or conflicts.

The present study argues that social policies are a field that is disputed by heterogeneous political forces and actors, and that the results of this conflict are not predetermined. It is precisely the normative ambivalence of contemporary social policies that simultaneously trigger stereotypes about motherhood and female practical knowledge, as well as ideas regarding women's collective participation and empowerment. This ambiguity is perhaps the most distinctive and challenging hallmark of these policies.

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