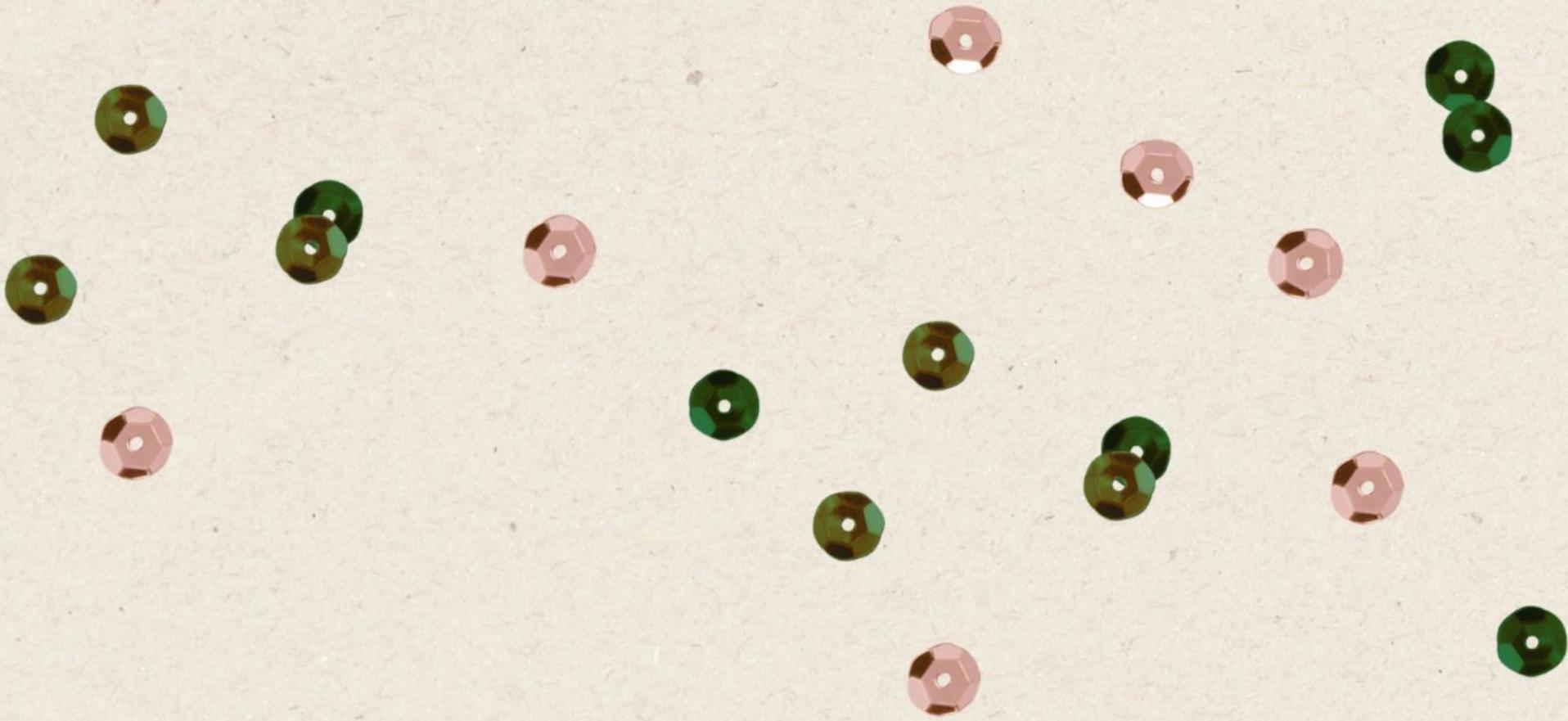


inhabiting

body-territories

in the datafied city

a Zine about embodiment



November 2024

Text & Design by Rafaela Cavalcanti de Alcantara

This is a *Open Source* document. Please spread it around.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 873119.



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# a b o u t

Dear reader,

This is a fanzine. A fanzine, or zine, is a self-published material inspired by the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) idea. I have produced this fanzine to disseminate what I learned and found from my two-month research stay at Instituto Mora, located in Mexico City, thanks to the support of the PRODIGEES project.

I was in Mexico from July to September 2024 to exchange with researchers, social movements, and activists so that I could elaborate further on the concept of body-territory as a tool to understand how data-driven urbanism enacts different bodies in the cities.

Inspired by workshops I attended during my research stay, I make this fanzine a digital collage of notes, references, ideas, insights, and, why not, affections and memories. Those pieces put together a collective learning process around the topics I was dedicated to.

This is a summary of reflections on the possibilities brought by the increasing datafication of cities. In this sense, this work claims that departing from the body as the first scale of territoriality is an essential starting point for thinking about urban data.

As a Latin American researcher in diaspora, I hope this humble work also crosses borders and boundaries, breaking walls to foster a dialogue about other ways of living in the big data era.

I hope you enjoy reading it. We keep in touch.

Rafaela Cavalcanti de Alcantara  
Vienna, Autumn 2024



Here, you find a view from a body,\* my body. Thus, the following considerations are informed by the fact that I am a Latin American female who has migrated to Central Europe. Like everybody else, I have my world views and political positions, which also inform my research activities. Presenting research findings as a fanzine is also influenced by the idea that every scientific and/or technology production is situated and partial. Thus, Science and Technology will always be socio-politically informed, even if this is not confessed.

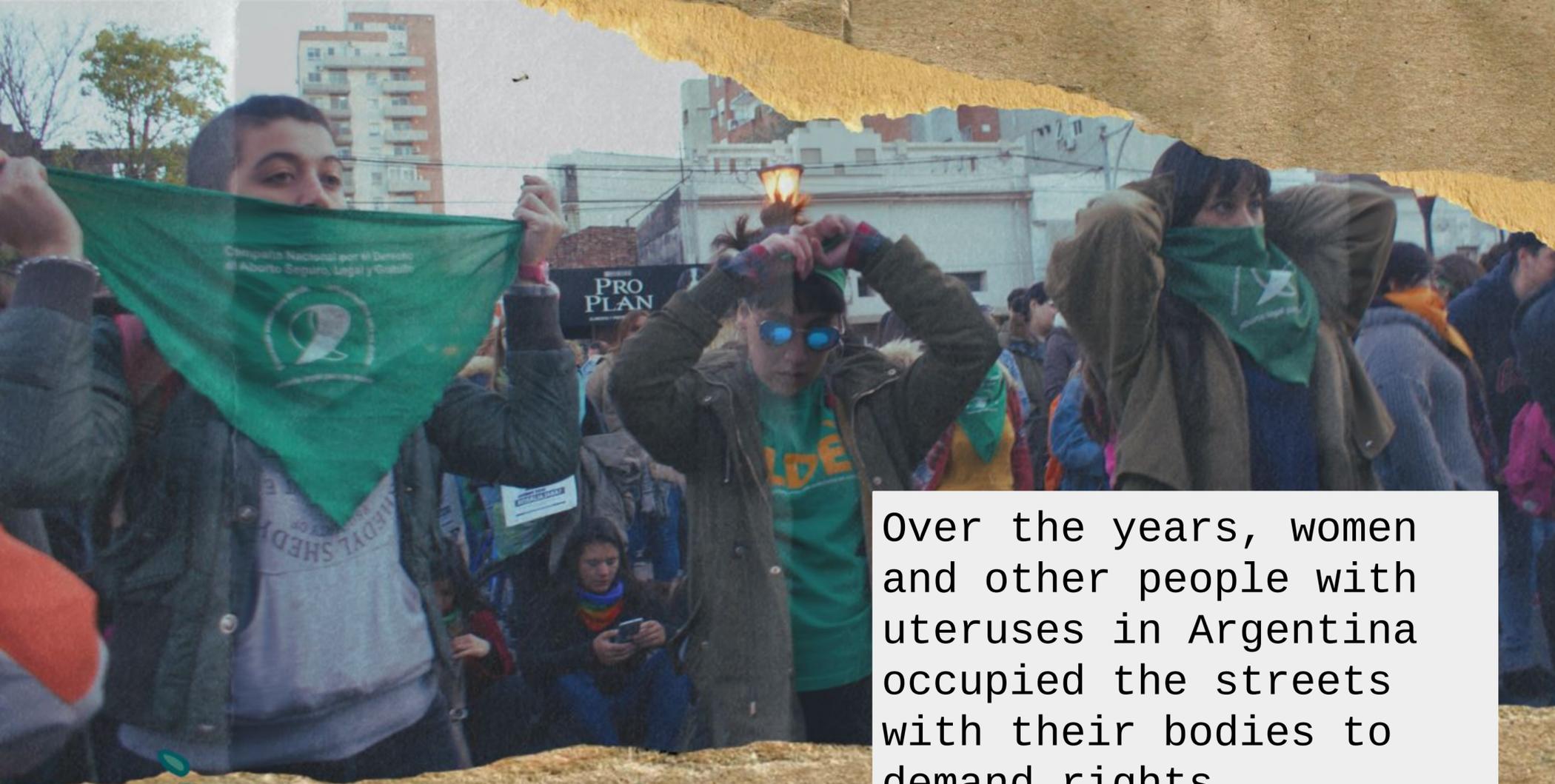
\* see Haraway, 1988



what places  
does one  
occupy in the  
world?



Living is occupying places: cities, lands, streets, neighbourhoods, homes. Even if it is dangerous, even if it is forbidden. Those who migrate do so by occupying places beyond borders and boundaries. One has to occupy land to live, find shelter, and be with their loved ones. One has to occupy the world to work even if not adequately paid for the work done. Historically, groups have occupied streets to claim rights, demand laws, demote laws, question power, fight governments, complain about governments, stand for their positions, denounce, complain, mourn, and party. And also to celebrate their lives and to express joy & love.



Over the years, women and other people with uteruses in Argentina occupied the streets with their bodies to demand rights concerning those very bodies. In December 2020, the right to a legal abortion was approved by the Senate.



The use of green pañuelos marked the protests that occupied the streets, so the movement is also known as the green wave in Latin America.



both photos taken in Santa Fe, Argentina (2018)

The bodies making the green wave illustrate the body as each one's first territoriality to struggle for. These are the bodies that need to fight to exist, to occupy the world, and to move around. The majority of the bodies of the world are involved in struggles of this kind, although those journeys are often erased or invisibilized.

## **collective bodies**

Here, I am echoing feminist claims. There is no such thing as an 'abstract' human being because those abstractions lead to an imagined-essentialized-person or group of people. Likewise, there is no such thing as an idealized urban citizen living in the urban world. On the contrary, (different) bodies form collectivities with (specific) necessities and capabilities when inhabiting a city.



Picture of a #NiUnaMenos march in Lima, Peru (2016)

I am referring to materialities. So, I call attention to the bodies that do not have easy access to *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*; the bodies that are seen as the 'others,' whose needs are placed on the margins.

"Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indigenous on the streets of San Cristobal, a Jew in Germany, a Romani in Poland, a Mohawk in Quebec, a pacifist in Bosnia, a single woman on the Metro at 10 p.m., a peasant without land, a gang member in the slums, an unemployed worker, an unhappy student and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains." – Subcomandante Marcos

*From Chiapas, Subcomandante Marcos' words refer to the complexity and relationality of living in the world. In a poetical-political manner, the Subcomandante illustrates the transnationality of Zapatista's claims.*



Graffiti in  
El Mourouj,  
Tunis,  
Tunisia (2012)

DE CAMINO A  
CASA QUIERO  
SE~LIBRE~  
NO VALIENTE  
#NIUNAMENOS

"On my way home  
I want to be  
free not  
brave," says a  
intervention in  
Rancagua, Chile  
(2019)

Thinking that there is no standardized inhabitant in the city is remembering that people inhabit the city firstly through their bodies. But why is it important to consider this?

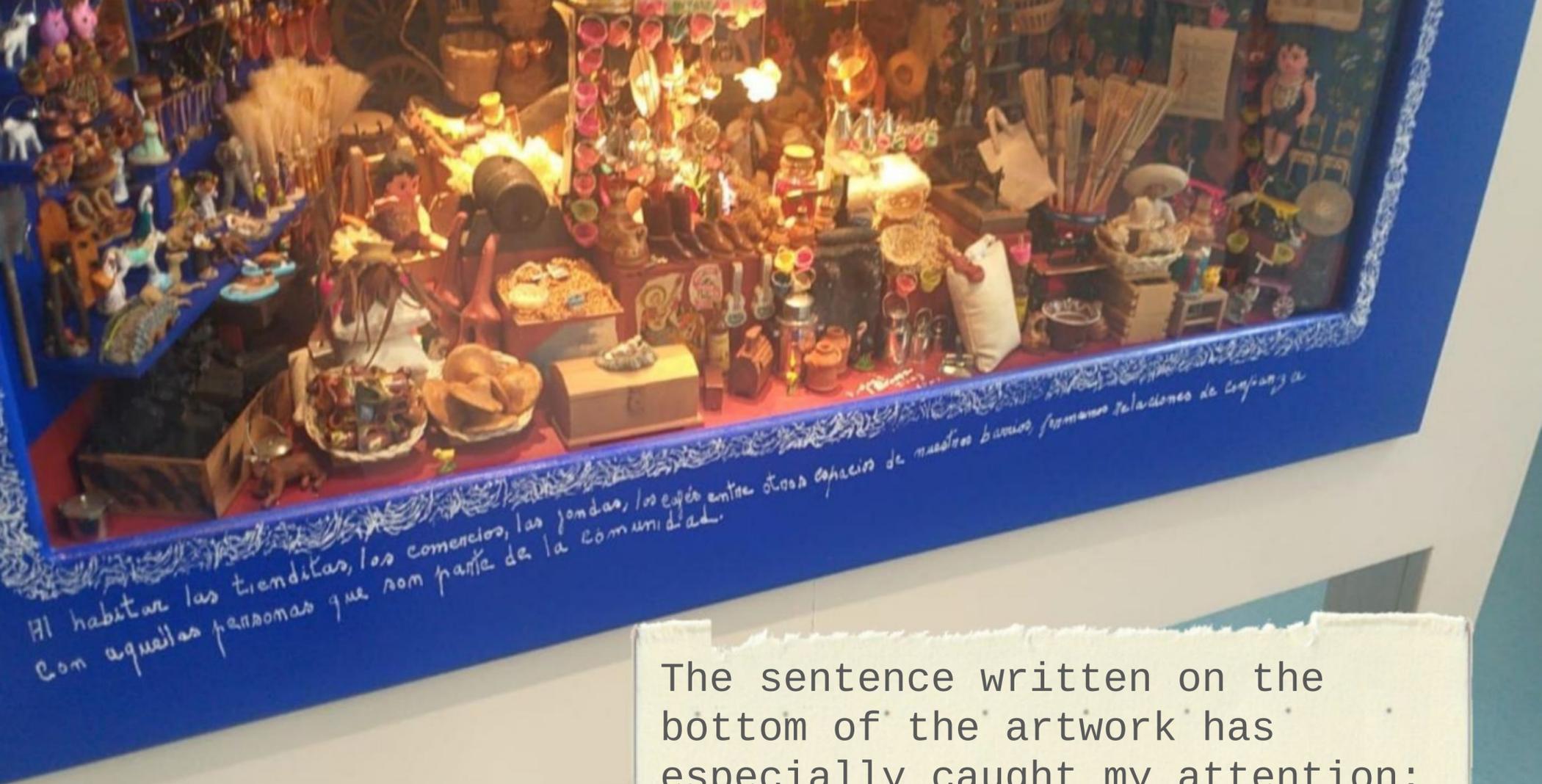
Because bodies are diverse, carry out different activities and have specific needs in the urban space. Trans, nonbinary, racialized, female, feminized, and queer bodies have different perceptions of safety and freedom when walking on the street or taking public transportation at night. Because bodies that carry out sexual, informal, or low- and unpaid work will have specific needs in the common spaces in the city. Because bodies marching may be violently repressed. Because some of the bodies are labeled and targeted by State forces.

**Living in the urban world  
is also embodying the city.**

Body-territory is a call, idea, and epistemology from Latin American indigenous struggles. The term exposes how the exploitation of the common - like the land and the water - affects each person's body and the collective body. Body-territory also remembers that both body and territory are not neutral categories.

## **on body- territory**

If occupying the city with the body generates an entanglement of meanings, demands and necessities, body-territory calls attention to the centrality of the community. In this sense, body-territory challenges the liberal idea of the individual, also thinking about the collective effects of extractivism(s) - which may include, for instance, data extractivism.



Al habitar las tienditas, los comercios, las fondas, los cafés entre otros espacios de nuestros barrios, formamos relaciones de confianza con aquellas personas que son parte de la comunidad.

*La tienda de la esquina,*  
by Rafael Álvarez Díaz.  
National Museum of Housing (Museo Nacional de la Vivienda - Munavi), Mexico

The sentence written on the bottom of the artwork has especially caught my attention: *Al habitar las tienditas, los comercios, las fondas, los cafés entre otros espacios de nuestros barrios, formamos relaciones de confianza con aquellas personas que son parte de la comunidad* [As we inhabit the small shops, stores, *fondas*, cafes and other spaces in our neighbourhoods, we form relationships of trust with those who are part of the community].

Inhabiting creates a familiar connection to pieces of the city: places, communities, people. Therefore, there is a mesh of relations flourishing from inhabiting.

*While living in a city, each body touches diverse human and non-human worlds. Those connections are related to the possibilities of working, studying, struggling, organizing, getting pleasure, and enjoying the urban space.*



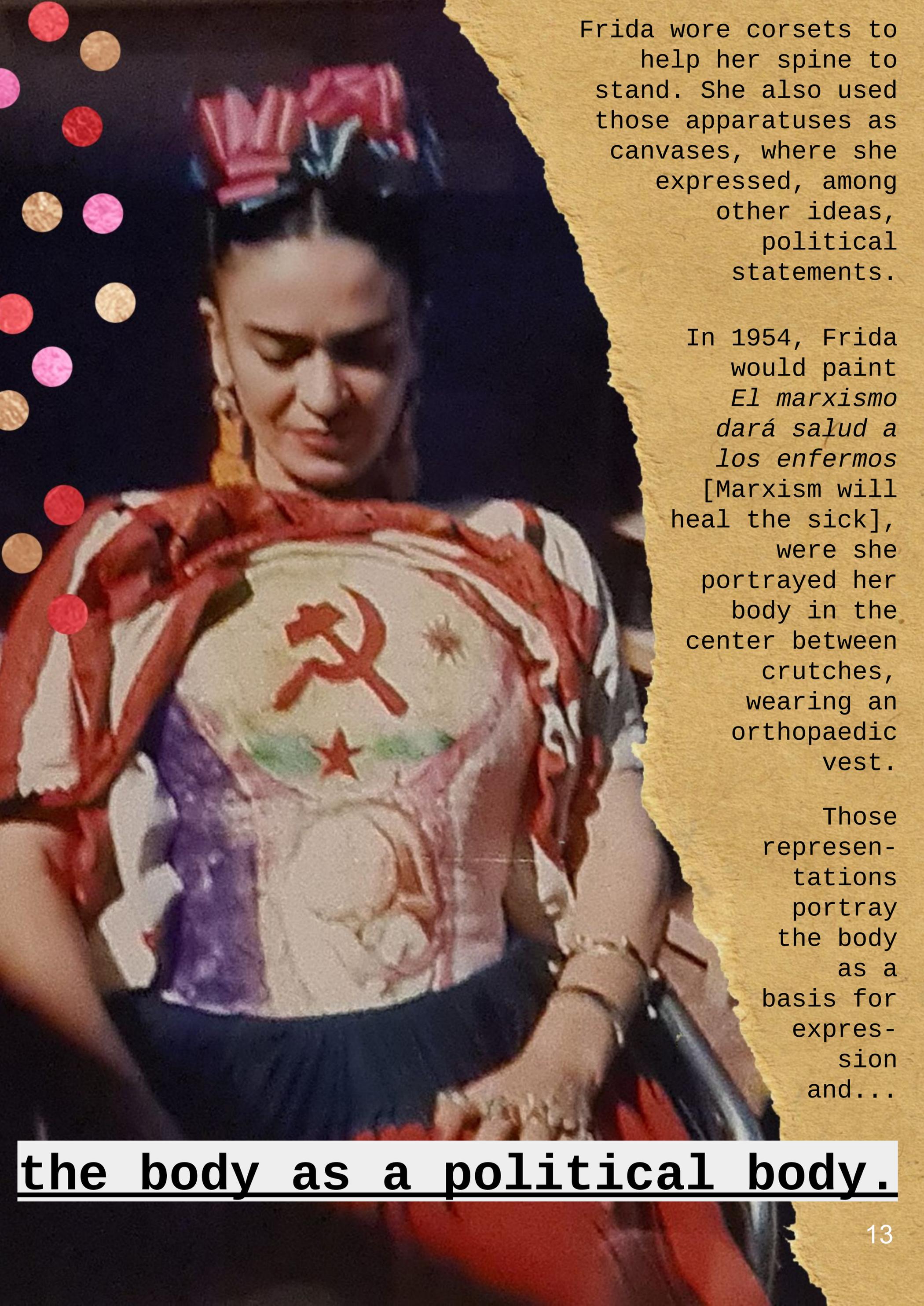
I also had the opportunity to visit Frida Kahlo's museum, *la Casa Azul*, the artist's home for most of her life. The museum's narrative approached some of the places Frida inhabited.

According to the museum, the house consisted of "a window to the world." It helps to visualize the position from which Kahlo stood and inhabited through feelings, arts, studies, and pain.

Moreover, the museum advances towards the body Frida inhabited, emphasizing how her embodied conditions informed her life, work, and relationships.

Some of Frida's prosthetics and orthopaedic corsets are exhibited there. A leg prosthesis Frida wore is displayed, followed by a quote from her diaries: Pies para qué los quiero si tengo alas para volar [Feet, what do I need you for when I have wings to fly].



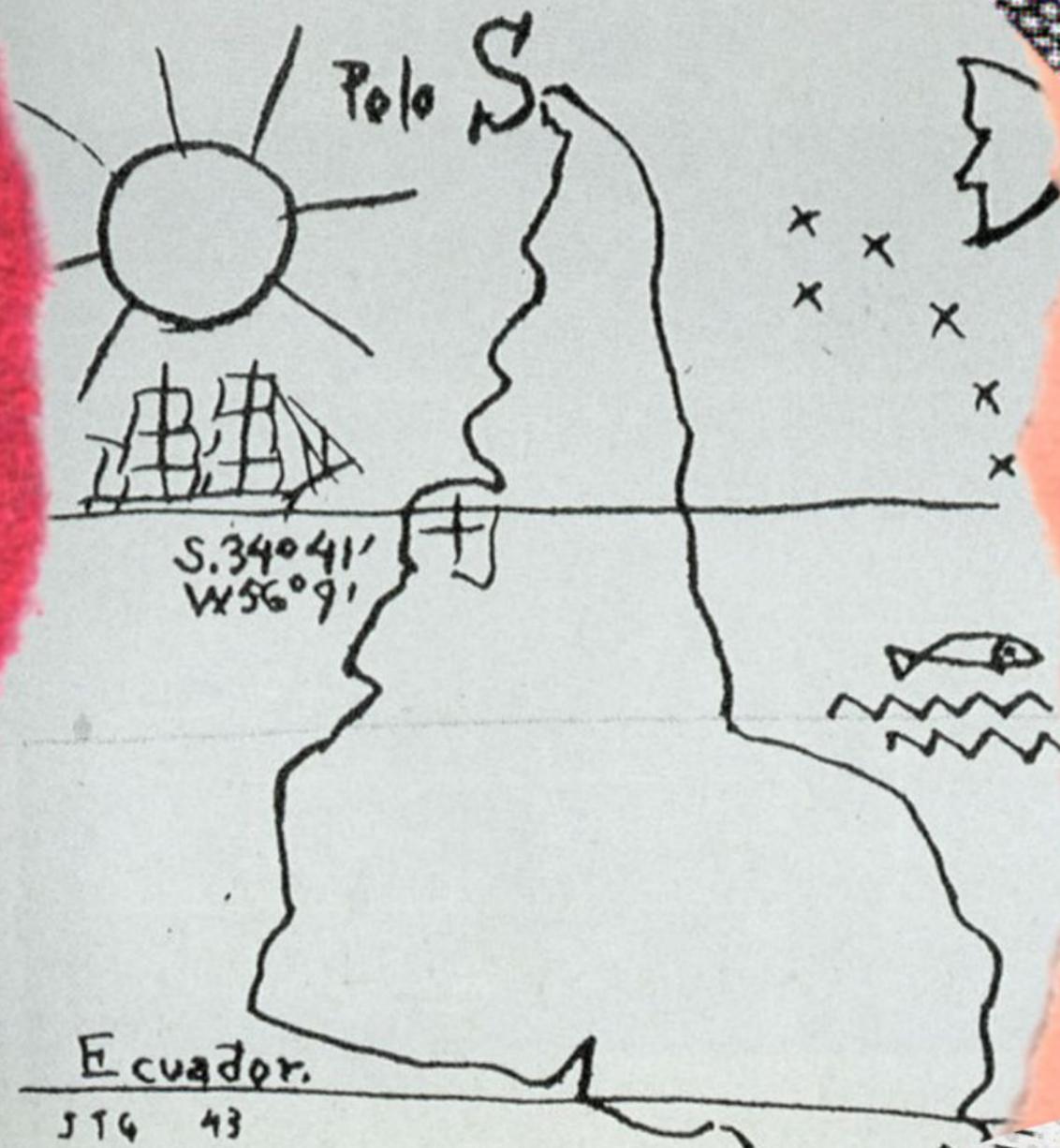


Frida wore corsets to help her spine to stand. She also used those apparatuses as canvases, where she expressed, among other ideas, political statements.

In 1954, Frida would paint *El marxismo dará salud a los enfermos* [Marxism will heal the sick], where she portrayed her body in the center between crutches, wearing an orthopaedic vest.

Those representations portray the body as a basis for expression and...

**the body as a political body.**



*America Invertida*, by Joaquín Torres García (1943)

The possibility of building a city according to the people we want to be is one of the ideas of the Right to the City.\*\* Thus, I am referring to the possibilities of interfering in the urban space.

Data always been informing urban policies.\*\*\* But I am talking here about *big data* - the every-moment generation of large amounts of data about various aspects. I also note the abstractions, seductions and illusions emerging from big data hegemonic narratives.

Body-territory is about a gaze, a position, a way of seeing.\* If we think about inhabiting a datafied city, it is necessary to consider something that applies to disputes around living in the urban space. Body-territories are political, just as the choices that shape urban policies. So, since cities are not neutral spaces, there is no single way to use big data on them.



From online digital dashboards accessed via portable computers to operations rooms where hundreds of people work 24/7, choices that impact body-territories in the city intend to translate urban life into data.

Databases may try to represent the traffic, crowds, public transportation, or faces to be identified.



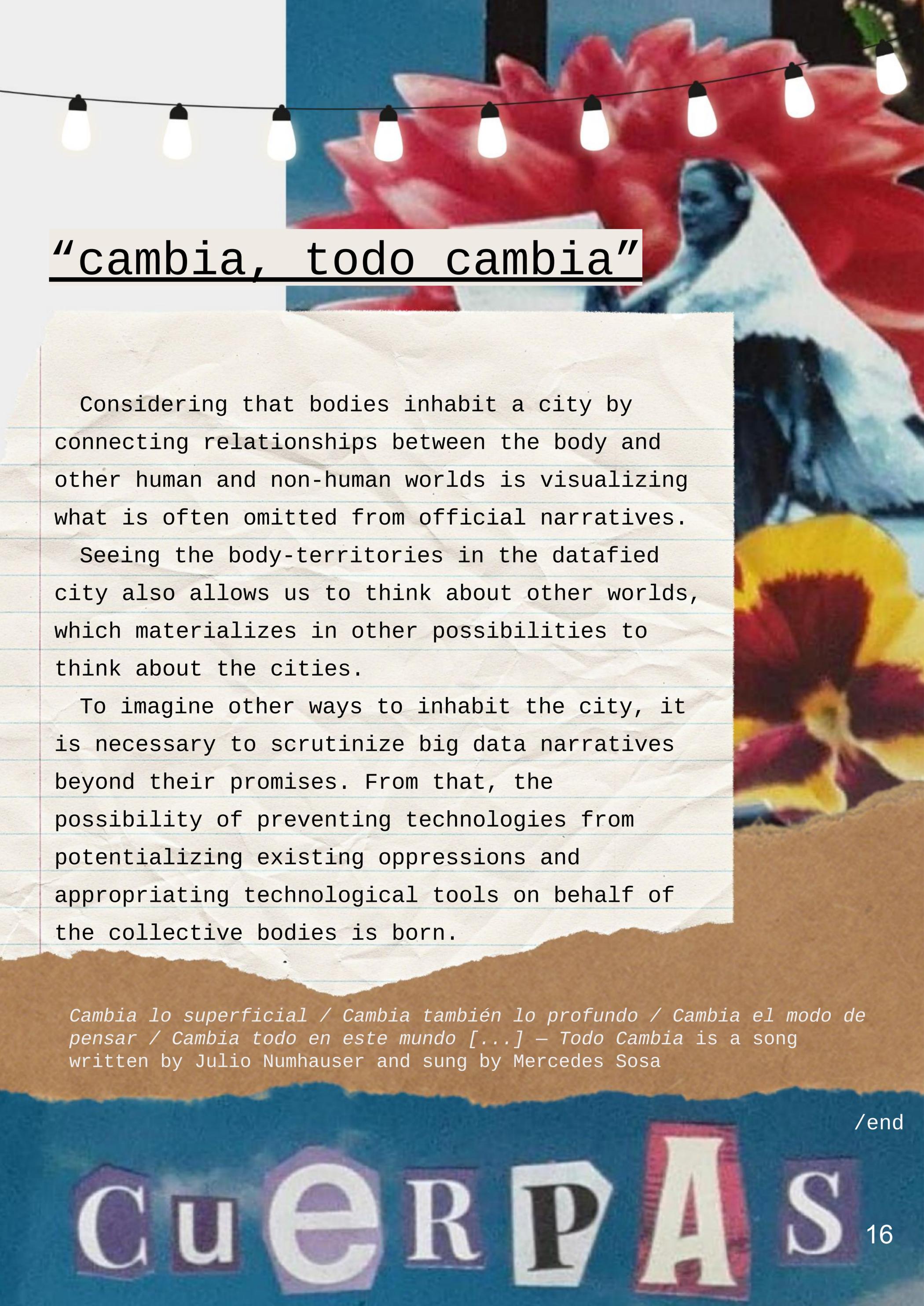
## bodies in datafied spaces

When people *inhabit* a place, knowledge about this place is produced. Inhabiting generates an understanding of the city we live in and the changes we want to make.

Thus, some questions must be asked before taking for granted that big data is the most accurate way to represent reality.\*

How are the databases situated? Who manages those databases? On behalf of whose interests? Do body-territories in the city have the opportunity to debate and choose how big data will inform urban policies? Is (big)data-based knowledge prioritized over other kinds of knowledge?

\* See Ricaurte 2019



## “cambia, todo cambia”

Considering that bodies inhabit a city by connecting relationships between the body and other human and non-human worlds is visualizing what is often omitted from official narratives.

Seeing the body-territories in the datafied city also allows us to think about other worlds, which materializes in other possibilities to think about the cities.

To imagine other ways to inhabit the city, it is necessary to scrutinize big data narratives beyond their promises. From that, the possibility of preventing technologies from potentializing existing oppressions and appropriating technological tools on behalf of the collective bodies is born.

*Cambia lo superficial / Cambia también lo profundo / Cambia el modo de pensar / Cambia todo en este mundo [...] – Todo Cambia is a song written by Julio Numhauser and sung by Mercedes Sosa*

/end

CuERPAS

## references

- Cruz-Hernández, D. T. (2016). Una mirada muy otra a los territorios-cuerpos femeninos. *Solar*, 12(1), 35-46.
- Gago, V. & Mezzadra, S. (2017). A Critique of the Extractive Operations of Capital: Toward an Expanded Concept of Extractivism. *Rethinking Marxism*, 29(4), 574-591. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2017.1417087>
- Gago, V. (2020). *Feminist International: How to Change Everything*. Verso.
- Galaxina, A. (2017). ¡Puedo decir lo que quiera! ¡Puedo hacer lo que quiera! Una genealogía incompleta del fanzine hecho por chicas. Bombas para Desayunar. Retrieved from [https://issuu.com/andreagalaxina/docs/puedo\\_decir\\_lo\\_que\\_quiera\\_puedo\\_hac](https://issuu.com/andreagalaxina/docs/puedo_decir_lo_que_quiera_puedo_hac)
- Galaxina, A. (2017). Haz un fanzine, empieza una revolución: Guía personal y transferible para hacer fanzines. Bombas para Desayunar. Retrieved from [https://issuu.com/andreagalaxina/docs/andreagalaxina\\_hazunfanzine\\_bombasp](https://issuu.com/andreagalaxina/docs/andreagalaxina_hazunfanzine_bombasp)
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066>
- Harvey, D. (2008). The Right to the City. *New Left Review*, 53, 23-40. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii53/articles/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>
- Holmer, C. (2023, February 15). *All about zines: A different kind of conference report*. Reflections - Blog of the STS Department at the University of Vienna <https://blog-sts.univie.ac.at/2023/02/15/all-about-zines-a-different-kind-of-conference-report/>
- Kitchin, R. (2018). Data-driven urbanism. In Kitchin, R., Lauriault, T. P., & McArdle, G. (Eds.). *Data and the City* (pp. 44-56). Routledge.
- Ricaurte, Paola. (2019). Data Epistemologies, the Coloniality of Power, and Resistance. *Television & New Media*, 20(4), 350-365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476419831640>
- Thatcher, J., O'Sullivan, D., & Mahmoudi, D. (2016). Data Colonialism through Accumulation by Dispossession: New Metaphors for Daily Data. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 34(6), 990-1006. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775816633195>

# acknowledgements

The findings summarized in this fanzine could only be elaborated on with the generosity of many interlocutors. In this sense, I thank those people who, directly or indirectly, helped me to navigate my research stay in Mexico City. Thus, I am profoundly grateful:

To people who kindly gave me directions while I was moving around in Mexico City, one of the most amazing places I have been. Also, I express my gratitude to the fellow anonymous interlocutors I exchange ideas with on the streets or during workshops.

To the staff at Instituto Mora, who kindly supported my stay and made it even more meaningful. In this sense, I especially thank Citlali Ayala Martínez, Constanza Larenas, Dr. Isela Orihuela, José Félix Farachala, Dr. Juan Carlos Domínguez, Dr. Kristina Pirker, Dr. Luisa Fernanda Rodríguez Cortés, Dr. Mateo Crossa Niell, and Selene Acosta. I also thank the staff members responsible for keeping the institute's facilities clean and organized.

To the Center for Gender Researches and Studies of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de Género - CIEG, UNAM), especially Dr. César Torres Cruz, Dr. Fabiola Buenrostro, and Gisel Tovar, in addition to the colleagues I met during CIEG's activities. I cannot imagine my stay without your workshops, Fanzinoteca, and friendly generosity and attention. *Mil gracias!*

For the talks, recommendations, and insights I have had while talking to Dr. Andrea Vera Gajardo, Dra. Elsa Muñiz García, Dr. Raúl Cabrera, who kindly offer their time to listen to me and share fruitful considerations about my research goals.

To the staff and instructors of the museums I visited as part of my research stay. In this sense, I want to mention the super kind staff of the National Museum of Housing (Museo Nacional de la Vivienda - Munavi).

To the PRODIGEES team at IDOS, in the name of the project manager who has been supporting my activities directly, Benjamin Stewart.

To Barbara Saringer-Bory, Benedikt Wildner, Dr. Doris Allhutter, and Dr. Mahshid Sotoudeh, who amazingly supported my research visit from ITA. And my colleagues Saskia Favreuille and Sara Ortega Ramirez, who kindly exchanged ideas with me about my fanzine endeavours.

**Every knowledge production is a collective work, but please note that any mistakes or incorrections this fanzine may present are my sole responsibility.**

# credits

## Cover

Digital collage made on Canva.com; background by Heather Green, retrieved from Pexels.com, user @heather-green-1125370

## Page 2

Digital collage made on Canva.com

## Page 3

Background by Heather Green, retrieved from Pexels.com, user @heather-green-1125370

## Page 4

Digital collage made on Canva.com with a public domain illustration of a woman with binoculars retrieved from PublicDomainFiles.com

## Page 5

Digital collage made on Canva.com

## Page 6

Digital collage made on Canva.com with photos retrieved from Wikimedia Commons - authors: Romi Pecorari ([link](#)) & Agustina Girardo ([link](#)), respectively. Both pictures were edited by me

## Page 7

Digital collage made on Canva.com using a photo by Lorena Flores Agüero, retrieved from Wikimedia Commons ([link](#)). The picture was edited by me

## Page 8

Digital collage made on Canva.com with a photo by Wael Ghabara, retrieved from Wikimedia Commons ([link](#)). The picture was edited by me.

## Page 9

Digital collage made on Canva.com with a photo by SrArancibbia, retrieved from Wikimedia Commons ([link](#)). The picture was edited by me.

## Page 10

Digital collage made on Canva.com

## Page 11

Digital collage made on Canva.com with a picture taken by me at Munavi. Photo reproduced here for personal purposes only

## Page 12

Digital collage made on Canva.com with pictures taken by me at Frida Kahlo's Museum (Casa Azul). Photos reproduced here for personal purposes only

## Page 13

Digital collage made on Canva.com with a photo retrieved from Wikimedia Commons ([link](#)). The picture was edited by me

## Page 14

Digital collage made on Canva.com with a drawing by Joaquín Torres García, retrieved from Wikimedia Commons ([link](#)). The picture was edited by me

## Page 15

Digital collage made on Canva.com with a photo (of cameras) by Mathias Reding, retrieved from Pexels.com, user @matreding

## Page 16

Digital collage made on Canva.com using parts of an analogue collage made by me using materials cut out from different magazines

## Page 17

Digital collage made on Canva.com

## Page 18

Digital collage made on Canva.com

## Page 19

Digital collage made on Canva.com

## Back cover

Digital collage made on Canva.com; background by Heather Green, retrieved from Pexels.com, user @heather-green-1125370

