

Kiltra resistance: Doing autonomous politics with street dogs in post-uprising Chile

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journals.sagepub.com/home/coa**Lucia Rončíková¹  and Bob Kuřík¹ **

Abstract

During the 2019 uprising in Chile, free-roaming dogs, so-called *kiltros*, confronting police were turned into symbols of resistance and gained significant attention in studying *kiltro politics*. While this analytical focus is stimulating for scholars, it is also troubling. It may narrow down such politics to rioting during mass protests and lead to the iconisation of *kiltros*. Therefore, we expand the focus by scrutinising less spectacular forms of *kiltro politics* in and after the uprising. Drawing on the ethnographic case of Los Pies del Cerro, an anarchist squat in Santiago, we argue that *kiltra* resistance emerges through cultivating autonomous collectivism in three more-than-human processes: making rules, carrying out reterritorialisations and cultivating affinities. In these instances, daily *compañerismo* (comradeship) of human and dog squatters is forged, allowing us to shift from Harawayan companion to *compañera* species and reframe the popular motto ‘Resist like *kiltro*!’ as ‘Resist with *kiltras*!’.

Keywords

anarchism, autonomy, companion species, Chile, human–street dog relation, *kiltro politics*, more-than-human resistance, squatting

Carolina, Lucia and Lucho place a large pot of bean soup into a shopping cart, preparing to head towards the main square of the *población* (a low-income neighbourhood) San

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Judas Tadeo, located on the outskirts of Santiago de Chile. The door of Los Pies del Cerro, the autonomous squat established in the first months of 2020 through a coalition of young anarchists, street dogs known as *kiltras* and locals, features an unintended hole – perfectly suited to the swift, four-legged bodies of the squat’s nine resident dogs, including Guacha, Ayen and Runa, who sit nearby. With much noise and effort, the humans open the door. Guacha darts out first, walking a few meters ahead of them. Meanwhile, Ayen slips through the gap and positions herself between her human co-squatters as they push the cart. The oldest kiltra of the squat, Guacha, glances back when she pauses on a familiar point of her territory – a small outcrop at the end of the street. A neighbour greets her, ‘Look, here comes the Queen!’ as he clumsily pets her matted blonde curls stirring up a small cloud of dust. Ayen, Guacha’s daughter, momentarily glances at Carolina, ‘her human’, and then, limping slightly on her back right leg, quickens her pace to follow Guacha down the street.

The group separates. Human squatters arrive at the plaza, setting up tables, cutlery and banners to announce the weekly *olla común* (common pot) – a grassroots practice of communal food sharing among families and neighbours living on *tomas de terreno* (squatted lands), especially since the 1960s and revived during the Estallido Social. It’s then that Runa, the third kiltra, catches up. She overtakes people gathering around the pot, sniffing the area and behaving as though she does not recognise the people with whom she bonds in Los Pies, until she finally settles herself next to Lucho and leans her hefty body against him.

Squatters Mauri and Luna arrive in the afternoon and take charge of the olla, while the human part of the affinity group that brought it returns to Los Pies where they re-encounter their kiltra *compañeras*, Ayen and Guacha, and greet each other with pats and jumps of excitement. Carolina accommodates her pace for the limping Ayen, asking her in an unchanged tone of voice where she has been bumming around all day (‘¿dónde macheteaste?’). Abruptly, Ayen starts sniffing restlessly. Carolina pauses the conversation and kneels beside the kiltra, adopting the same position, as she intends to sniff with the same intensity as Ayen. Laughing, she concludes, ‘I don’t know what you smell, but it’s clear – there’s nothing here.’ Upon entering Los Pies, Ayen joins Guacha and Runa, basking in the autumn sun in their favourite spot on the small patio behind the library. Human squatters sometimes mention that, in fact, this place could actually serve better as a space for parkour workshops organised irregularly for the neighbourhood’s youngsters. However, from the very beginning, the Los Pies collective had deliberately refrained from claiming it for human-only use, respecting it instead as a space enjoyed and frequented by the kiltras (Figure 1).

Guacha, Ayen and Runa are street dogs or, better yet, free-roaming dogs known in Chile as *kiltras*, a term usually referring to mongrels. ‘The ones at the bottom of the social hierarchy, whether animal or human,’ adds Lucho, a squatting activist, an important meaning carried in this Mapudungun word.¹ Together with *their* anarchist humans, the dogs form part of a political squat that emerged, along with many other local projects throughout the country, in the aftermath of the Estallido Social. This massive social uprising swept through the streets from October 2019 to March 2020 in opposition to the injustices accumulated through neoliberal forms of governing Chile (Durán, 2020; Jiménez-Yañez, 2020).

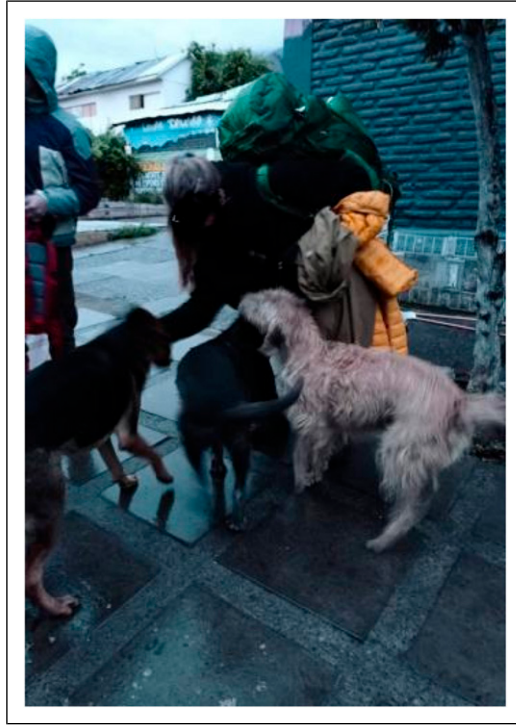


Figure 1. Kiltra goodbye – from left to right, Runa, Ayen, Guacha, and an ethnographer at the entrance of Los Pies del Cerro on the last day of the field research. Source: Photo by Milos. Used with the consent of the author.

Intertwining street dogs and radical activists, the case of Los Pies del Cerro is an example of *kiltro politics*, a term coined by [Bonelli and de la Cadena \(2023\)](#) to highlight the political importance of a *kiltro* figure, in and around the uprising, battling under the motto ‘¡Resiste como kiltro!’ (Resist like *kiltro*!). But it is an unusual example, as the hegemonic form of this figure is the most *iconic* canine, El Negro Matapacos (the Black Cop-Killer), a black male dog with a red scarf barking at and confronting police. In academic literature, *El Negro Matapacos* has sparked a veritable boom of attention. The dog was explored as a symbolic figure of resistance ([Dittus, 2019](#)) expressing the ‘discontent with the social inequalities of the peripheral and popular sectors in Chile’ and representing subaltern identities driving Chile’s resignification ([Habert et al., 2020](#): 69–70). He became a referent of ‘*kiltro* socialism’ ([Ferreira, 2020](#)), a symbol bridging religious and protest iconography, and a ‘memory–activism nexus’, which fostered links to earlier episodes of collective struggle in Chilean memory ([Thygesen, 2024](#): 1131) ([Figure 2](#)).

However, as the introductory vignette makes clear, free-roaming dogs have recently played many other roles in Chilean street politics. Guacha, Ayen and Runa, all female dogs, help us to sniff out a problem here. The meaning of the *kiltro* figure was very much

reduced to the story of El Matapacos. Although we appreciate all the Matapacos scholarly literature, we consider the reduction of these dogs' agency to a confrontational hero figure problematic because it risks overlooking other, less spectacular forms of doing politics in more-than-human ways. Furthermore, it mirrors, we believe, the much more widespread and already well-criticised trouble in dominant accounts of human-centred radical politics: the iconisation of rioting males and combative street tactics overshadowing daily practices of building alternatives and relations of resistance (Razsa, 2015; Winegar, 2012) (Figure 3).²

In order to tackle this problem, we argue that kiltro³ politics need to be analysed not *only* through the excessive event of burning barricades and spectacular confrontations on the Chilean streets (Bonelli and de la Cadena, 2023), but from everyday struggle as well. It is precisely this dimension which is either completely missing in scholarly accounts

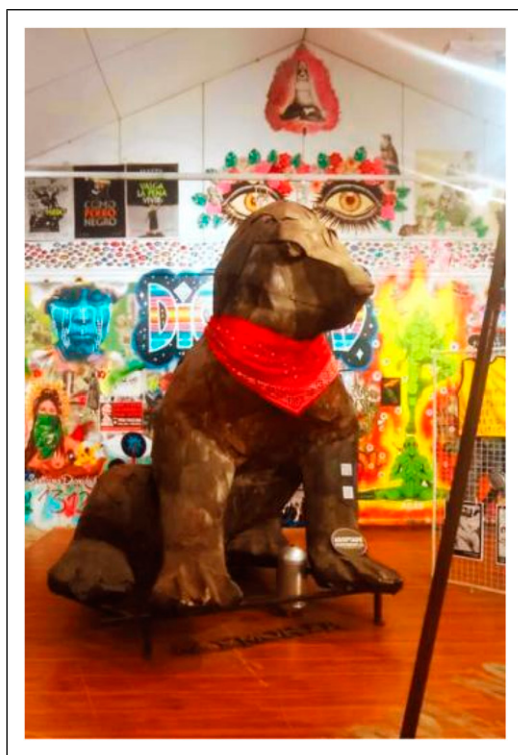


Figure 2. Statue of *El Negro Matapacos* in the Museum of Estallido Social in Santiago de Chile, which was created as a grassroots initiative to document and narrate the memories of the revolutionary momentum from the perspective of those who took to the streets. Between Matapacos' paws lies a tear gas canister, which rioting kiltros would sometimes catch and carry away from protesters. A badge on his paw references the '*Adopta un perro negro*' campaign, which, at the height of the Estallido, promoted adopting stray black dogs from animal shelters. Behind him, posters read '*Lucha como perro negro*' ('Fight like a black dog'). Source: Author's photo.



Figure 3. *El Negro Matapacos* replacing the statue of colonial figure of general Baquedano on the main square renamed as ‘Plaza Dignidad’ in 2021. Source: Rocío Aravena, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia commons.

about kiltro resistance, or present, as in Bonelli and de la Cadena (2023), but in a non-evidenced way, by way of evocation. After all, if the 2019 uprising was about ‘defence of life and against everyday abuse and death in Chile’ (Bonelli and de la Cadena, 2023: 301), then the politics of everyday life ignited by the Estallido Social, we believe, is *also* a proper locus to search for the more-than-human nexus of kiltro politics. Ultimately, this politics is anchored in ‘improvising, accompanying, protecting, caring, altering’, in which the kiltro dog can actually be not only a metaphor but ‘a presence to learn from’ (Bonelli and de la Cadena, 2023: 312–24). In line with the recent turn in anthropology of human-centred resistance to ‘nonevents’, ‘unactions’ and ‘nonmovements’ (Howe, 2016), that is to say, to the social and slow life of organised activism (Babidge, 2021; Krøijer, 2015; Lazar, 2017), the task of this article is to rethink kiltra resistance by scrutinising everyday forms of more-than-human politics in post-uprising Chile. In doing so, we believe, the spectrum of kiltro politics can be extended, opening up new possibilities for research into the synergies between spectacular events and everyday life.

We build our argument over the case of the political squat Los Pies del Cerro, around which Lucia conducted ethnographic research for nine months in 2023, followed by a round of interviews through online platforms in 2024. The squat is anchored in anarchist and autonomous politics. Apart from direct confrontations at the loci of political and economic power, such politics aspire to ‘decolonize everyday life’ (Graeber, 2002; Katsiaficas, 1997) by building collective autonomy, in other words, by organising social life together in ways that refuse to conform to dominant power (Eisenstadt, 2016). In Los Pies, we argue, the building of relational autonomy happens within kiltro politics, where street dogs appear and are related to as subjects of street intelligence, social life and history. In order to highlight this more-than-human dimension, we suggest seeing such a process as a case of building everyday *compañerismo* between anarchists and dogs, as a

case of a *compañero* species, a specifically political variation to Haraway's (2003, 2008) companion species. Street dogs are also 'strange' companions as they are 'not owned', and thus, they are 'companion to many and to none' (Bonelli and de la Cadena, 2023: 311). After all, the term 'compañeras' was frequently used to describe Los Pies's kiltras by their human co-squatters. Although Haraway does mention *compañero* species as a political version of companionship (2008: 17), she does not elaborate on its meaning. Filling this void with our ethnographic material, the next three sections document that such everyday building of kiltra *compañerismo* and autonomous collectivism is established and maintained through three key more-than-human processes evoked in the introductory vignette: making rules, enacting territorialisation and cultivating affinities.

First, autonomous politics, as the Greek etymology *auto-nomos* indicates, strive to work or live by one's own rules, beyond and against dominating rules of actually existing forms of power. As Castoriadis (1987) has it, such rules are collectively created and re-examined on a constant basis (see also Graeber, 2009). We argue in the first section that in Los Pies, kiltras co-create *some* of the rules of the squat, thus partly becoming not only disciples of human rules but also co-squatters. Second, establishing and maintaining autonomy is a spatial matter of reappropriating spaces by re-existing on and with them differently and alternatively – be it communes, squats, quarters or whole regions (Haesbaert, 2020). We argue in the second section that such practices of reterritorialisation in our case not only entail the collective activities of anarchists and dogs, but also a two-sided openness, cultivated within human–canine *compañerismo* in who accompanies whom in such practices. Third, in autonomous *compañerismo*, relations of affinity are maintained, that is, particularly strong and intimate bonds mixing care, love and friendship with political affiliations and organisations (Epstein, 1993; Novák, 2022). We argue in the third section that such relations of affinity are cultivated throughout the more-than-human collective, beyond leads and collars, aiming to question authority in human–dog relations to the benefit of freedom and mutuality, mitigating hierarchy. In order to better capture this extension of kiltra resistance and politics via our case of everyday *compañerismo* in building collective autonomy, we suggest in the conclusion a restating of the motto 'Resist like kiltro!' to 'Resist with kiltras!' (Figure 4)

Making rules in the ex-ratonera

Doing activism with kiltras was not at all planned by the squatting anarchists. There was no political strategy in advance to focus on human–dog relations. However, upon entering, activists discovered that the space was already occupied. There, in the lower part of the ruin, they met Guacha and her daughter Guacha Chica. 'They [kiltras] were from here, and it is us who decided to live with them,' recalls Carolina, adding, 'For me, there is no Los Pies without dogs.' This shared life was not one-sided, as the kiltras, too, decided to stay. Starting originally as visitors in a street dog's home transformed the way the squat was inhabited as a political space. This did not mean a derailment from the squatters' original goals towards becoming an animal shelter with some radical animal rights agenda. Rather, it was an overall improvisation in taking the dogs' interests and points of view in some instances into account – be it in screening newcomers to the squat,



Figure 4. A painting titled *Arpillera Violeta Parra – la cantante calva*, 18.octubre, created by Brandon Miles Camus Quelopana, an artist-activist from Los Pies del Cerro, created in the aftermath of the Estallido Social. ACAB usually stands for All Cops Are Bastards. Source: Used with the consent of the author.

transforming the sunny spot from our introductory vignette into a relaxing rather than parkouring zone, or in adopting a different attitude towards rats.

‘Leave it! Ayen! Stop it!’ Carolina scolds. Luna and the others rush into the library room, where the cries are coming from. Carolina kneels beside the motionless body of a rat, as large as a cat, glaring angrily at Ayen on the other side of the room. When Lucho and Felipe enter the room carrying a shovel, ready to bury the animal, Guacha, on the other side of the room, stares at a hole in the floor, standing still. She sniffs wildly and then freezes her body again, as if she was waiting for a response. After a moment she starts to bark, which mobilises Ayen and Runa to join in sniffing and scratching at the spot. Carolina tries to interrupt them when the seemingly lifeless tail of the rat to be buried twitches. Suddenly, the resurrected critter bolts for its life. Humans scream while Guacha springs into action, with Runa and Ayen joining the chase.

Similar situations were not extraordinary in Los Pies, well-known among locals as *La Ratonera* (the mousetrap). The practice of chasing and killing rats was a strategy introduced by Guacha, who, as an experienced hunter, would pass on this skill not only to her pups, such as Ayen, but also to some other kiltra squatters (both human and canine). This enactment by some kiltra hunters (not all dog squatters would hunt rats) polarised the human squatters. In weekly assemblies, vegans like Carolina argued that it was unnecessary violence, whereas others like Lucho supported the kiltras’ strategy, pointing out the danger posed by the overpopulation of rats as carriers of diseases. Despite the differences, both vegan and non-vegan squatters would not question the legitimacy of the kiltras’ attitude towards the rats. ‘Runa is like that,’ remarked Luna (a vegan), in a conciliatory tone, ‘She is territorial. We knew that.’ (Figure 5)

However, the engagement of human squatters with this practice differed. Vegans made efforts to prevent hunting by placing barriers in rat-prone areas, refusing to accept dead rats as ‘gifts’ in their rooms or giving the kiltras the ‘silent treatment’ after hunts. Others,

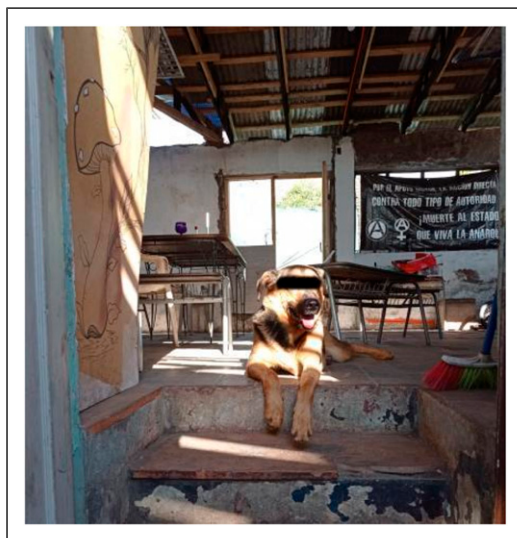


Figure 5. Runa relaxing, enjoying the sun and the view of the city landscape while blocking the path at the Los Pies kitchen entrance. The kiltras from Los Pies are recognised and related to as individuals with names, evolving into unromantic characters, biographies, histories, social lives and anxieties. They are not generic identities or symbolic universals. They represent nobody. Guacha is not an allegory, Ayen is not a metaphor and Runa is not a socialist. They are above all individuals who live, play, die, sleep and resist with anarchists from the Los Pies – something we respect by anonymising both, humans and canines, in the text and pictures. *Source:* Author's photo.

like Lucho and Lucas, allied with the kiltra hunters. Lucho, for instance, follows Guacha's practice, contributing not only to the effort to eliminate potential disease carriers but also because 'Guacha was there tackling the rat problem before we moved here, so she knew the place better than we did.' Human allies, instead of barking, used a distinctive 'shh-shh' sound to alert the kiltras to the presence of a rat, which they would then handle on their own terms.

Thus, in some cases the kiltras became active and, sometimes, even led participants in co-creating the squat's rules and in actively shaping decisions of who to live with, in what relations and how, through their dog practices. In this sense, in Los Pies, kiltras contribute to the transformation of the emerging political space. In doing so, they invite scholars to move beyond the human-centred analysis of autonomous squats and centres (Krøijer, 2015; SQUEK, 2013). Such a more-than-human focus has been taken up only scantily and inadequately before now, either by tackling the partly different stories of forest occupations by activists (Krøijer, 2019) or by scrutinising other-than-human squatting in which a human ally is missing, making the analysis largely speculative (Meijer, 2019: 165–85). What is more, a constellation such as such Los Pies partly exemplifies the kind of approach described by Meijer (2019), who argues in a political-philosophical way for the creation of spaces where other animals can make their own decisions, interact with humans on their terms while humans take a step back. It is precisely in the co-creation of rules, we argue, that kiltras shift from dogs affiliated with human squatters to co-squatters

themselves of these places. We suggest seeing this shift as one of the differences between companion and *compañera* species.

However, such everyday *compañerismo*, we emphasise, cannot be seen as a utopia of multispecies horizontality devoid of hierarchy and inequality. Multispecies violence against rats, after all, disables rash and romanticised conclusions. Instead, such violence calls instead for analysis of not only with whom, but also at the expense of whom, such collective autonomy is cultivated. What is more, in many of the rules about human–dog cohabitation in Los Pies, such as a decision to regularly provide food to dogs, assure veterinary care (including castration) or decide the destination for a common journey, the kiltras were mere recipients of human decisions. Whereas in several instances humans do actually step back (Meijer, 2019), in other cases the human squatters continue to exercise domination over the dogs in decisions. Thus, we suggest viewing Los Pies as diluting rather than purging anthropocentrism. (Figure 6)

Attuning in reterritorialisation

As the olla común event from the introduction indicates, marking one's presence in a locality played a significant role in the activities of more-than-human squatters from Los Pies. Human squatters were acting on a political task to reclaim a communal space, with a particular focus on enlivening the political memory of the Detained and Disappeared during the civic-military dictatorship (1973–90) in the quarter of Peñalolén. In the process, they uncovered the site's expropriation from collective ownership and learned about the forced disappearance of a community leader Zúñiga who once lived in the place they now occupy. On this basis, the squatters asserted their political presence in the neighbourhood, aiming to create spaces where this memory could be shared and weaponised as a political tool: they organised ollas comunes, *mingas* (community work),

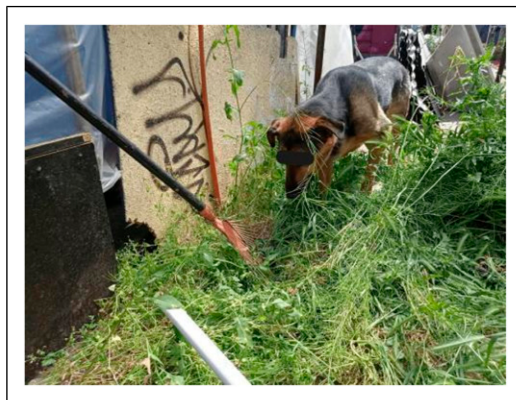


Figure 6. Gardening with Runa, sniffing for rats around the DIY greenhouse under construction. Squatters noted that the kiltras who grew up side by side with humans would *only* chase and kill rats, whereas Guacha and her daughter would eat them whole. Some argued it is because rat consumption had been part of their kiltra diet before the anarchists introduced dog food to Los Pies on a regular basis. Source: Author's photo.

mural sessions, concerts, activities for local children, educational workshops and discussions.

The Los Pies political project was thus grounded in the processes of territorialisation, or better yet, a process of reterritorialisation characteristic of much autonomous politics in Latin America (Escobar, 2008). In such processes, territories are reappropriated (Porto-Gonçalves, 2012) by using and living on them differently (Haesbaert, 2020) and, frequently, through practices of resistance against the state and the market (Zibechi, 2010). Such reterritorialisation is not only about fighting against something but also for collective *re-existing* in alternative social practices (Hurtado and Porto-Gonçalves, 2022). What is more, some critical scholars from Latin America continue to emphasise that such processes are not always exclusively human (Escobar and Harcourt, 2018: 7). Not only may particular territories have political subjectivity on their own (de la Cadena, 2015) but, as Echeverri points out, territorialisation emerges through ‘consultation with nature’ (2004: 264) as other beings territorialise as well (Haesbaert and Mason-Deese, 2020). In the Los Pies case, this is the breach through which kiltras enter the story.

The kiltras follow anarchists in many such territorialising activities. The introductory vignette documents it eloquently. Guacha, Ayen, Runa and other kiltras participate, but more as the companions of humans – partly present, partly absent, as they drift away for other street duties elsewhere in the vicinity. In other territorialising situations, however, the human and the dog roles vis-à-vis who accompanies who were blurred or even switched. ‘Dogs here live like us – you meet them everywhere in the streets – searching for food and life like us. We make a living on the streets by doing street art, they, by roaming other parts,’ says Kian, remarking on the surprising similarities in living off the street through dumpster diving and eating leftovers from garbage bins, a subsistence activity for both groups. Anarchists and kiltras do converge in their reappropriation practices. Territory here becomes a constant, exhaustive and fragile process rather than a fixed area to be owned once and for all (Despret, 2021). In conversation with Rumi about the precarity of living such a ‘kiltro life’, he concludes, ‘You know, sometimes I’d like to be a dog,’ while scratching the belly of his dog compañera Nuez. ‘On the street, she always finds cool spots, and I follow her,’ he adds, hinting at what Echeverri’s above-mentioned ‘consultation with nature’ (2004: 264) may look like in practice.

Through Los Pies, anarchist and street dog forms of territorialisation encounter each other and start to attune towards their goals and needs. In some constellations, like subsistence activities, such attuning is based on resemblances. In other situations, however, differences in territorialisation methods merge – within the squat and in the neighbourhood. While anarchists mark their presence through graffiti, events like olla común or collective mural sessions, kiltras establish canine territorial boundaries (Narayanan, 2017) through howling, barking at unknown people entering Los Pies, occupying favourite spots worn down through constant use or marking areas with urination. Similar practices are recognised by ethologists and others as exemplary territorial behaviours of dogs and other mammals (Cafazzo et al., 2012; Despret, 2021: 21–3). What, though, is then special about the bond between the anarchists (some even calling themselves *anarkistas kiltro*) and kiltras of Los Pies?

In the evening, while the squatters are washing up the dishes in the front of Los Pies, someone urgently calls them to gather in the courtyard. The urgent tone summoned both

human and canine squatters, not due to any potential danger it might have implied, but to witness a massive, breathtaking moon rising from behind the Andes Cordillera. Runa, a kiltra who arrived in Los Pies two years ago supposedly to stay only a few weeks after her previous squat was evicted, is now climbing a cherry tree. She is trying to reach the human co-squatter Mauri watching the moon from the top. After a failed attempt to climb on her own, she starts to restlessly jump, howl and bark out of desperation to get to him. Human squatters gather around to help her to climb – they lift her until she safely settles her hefty body between dense branches. Once she settles, she looks at the moon and starts to howl, deep and long. Anarchists, encouraged by her initiative, joined almost instantly. Nine people and five dogs with their full throats howling at the same moon. Runa's delighted face changes only to catch quick breaths maintaining the chain of more-than-human howling, where each breath picks up as the previous fades. This howling orchestra went on for a few more seconds until another human *compañero* arrived to hush them, irritably stressing to the human part, 'You are not animals!' (Figure 7).

In situations like these, the everyday *compañerismo* present in the anarchist–kiltra relation becomes visible. It lies, we argue, in the combination of two elements. First, there is the mutual propensity to join and make oneself containable in some practices of territorialisation – be it in *similarities* like subsistence activities or in radical *differences*, like howling or organising *olla común*. Such differences can even be verbally reasserted across species boundaries – as is the case in the howling situation ('You are not animals!'). Second, the proper unit of such everyday *compañerismo* is a collective. Groups of anarchists and street dogs merge together through such joint reterritorialisations, forming a loose more-than-human collective. The openness to accompany as well as be accompanied, together with the openness to do so also in a human–canine group is, we believe, what dilutes (but doesn't purge humans of) anthropocentrism in relations within the squat. The one-directional companionship, in which humans predominantly initiate situations for dogs to follow, is loosened towards relations of more-than-human *compañerismo*.



Figure 7. Rising moon behind the Cordillera, silhouetting a cherry tree. Los Pies del Cerro emerged from the territorial assemblies that arose throughout Chile in the context of the Estallido Social (Orellana Águila, 2022). Source: Author's photo.

No leashes, fewer masters

Guacha would leave the squat as she pleased, whereas Ayen, her daughter, was rather afraid of loud streets and would almost only go out in her mother's company. Squatters referred to Guacha as the 're-kiltra' (absolute mongrel) who 'has the street in her body' – a phrase used to describe both humans and other-than-humans with the bodily intelligence and toughness necessary to navigate the dangers of the street. 'For me, a dog that you can tell *has the street* is a dog that wasn't born with a silver spoon in her mouth, like one that didn't have the privilege of someone paying for her or taking care of her, but she had to figure it out on her own,' Carolina explained. Thus, Guacha and Ayen could be out the whole day, *macheteando*, hacking it out on their own and doing their stuff. However, both would always return at night. Carolina noted that it was because 'they knew they had a place where they were loved and fed.' Lucia recalls one of many such returns from times when she was temporarily sharing a room with Carolina and Ayen. It was late, and the squatters were preparing their spots for sleep. Before drifting off with Ayen's snout in her hair, Lucia was awakened by a heavy smell. She glanced at the silhouette of Guacha, still breathing heavily after returning from a full day of wandering the street, non-invasively standing in front of Carolina. Without opening her eyes Carolina unzipped the sleeping bag, and Guacha spooned herself between her and Ayen's bodies (Figures 8 and 9).

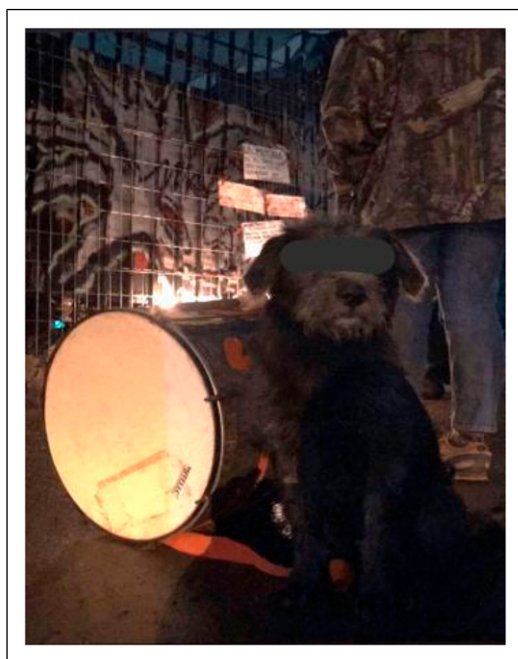


Figure 8. Ayen and a political act of commemoration for the Detained and Disappeared in front of Los Pies del Cerro. Source: Photo by Milos. Used with the consent of the author.

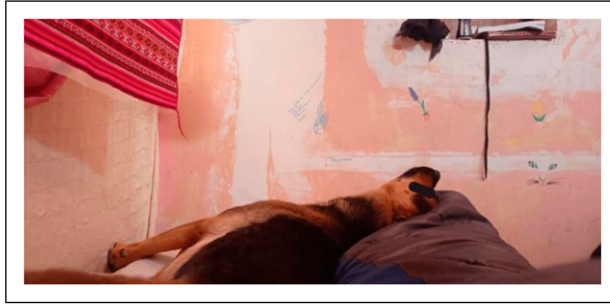


Figure 9. Waking up with Runa in Los Pies del Cerro. Source: Author's photo.

Autonomy and freedom of movement among the squat's kiltras were not prevented by the anarchists, but rather transformed through processes of cultivating affinities, typical of autonomous politics. Affinities, enduring relations of mutual trust, emotional bonds, familiarity, personal ties, camaraderie, love and care (Epstein, 1993; Graeber, 2009; Krøijer, 2015; Novák, 2022; Razsa, 2015), all emerge and are maintained through social processes of intensive attuning and bonding in shared lives among members of autonomous collectives. Los Pies has become such a collective with a heterogeneous web of affinity relations imbued and evolving along human–dog lines. Some of these relations entail cultivating more general, place-dependent and accidental affinities within the broader Los Pies collective. These include encountering and joining each other's path on the streets or just spending time together in the squat; attending to any critical situations among the squat's dogs, such as births, or deadly diseases like distemper, or accompanying almost any of the squat's humans to sleep, warming each other on cold nights. Other affinities, however, are oriented towards human–dog pairs, as is, for instance, the case of Carolina and Ayen.

Carolina and Ayen became part of each other's lives when, as an infant, Ayen was battling distemper while also coping with a genetic deformity in her paw. At that time, Carolina had torn her meniscus while performing acrobatics on the street. She would

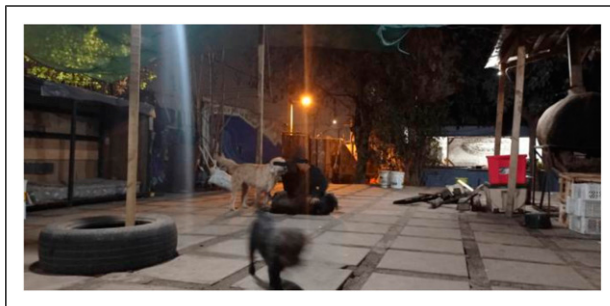


Figure 10. Kiltras Guacha, Ayen, Nuez and Carolina enjoying each other's company on the Los Pies patio. Source: Author's photo.

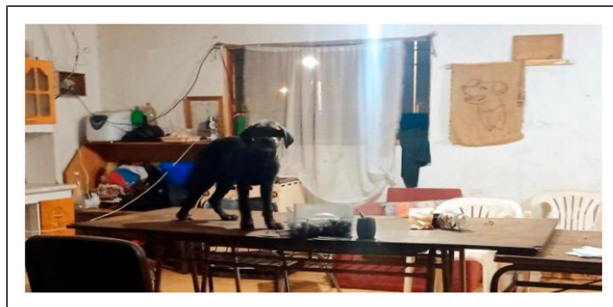


Figure 11. Ayen the kiltra and El Negro Matapacos, the symbol on the wall in the Los Pies' kitchen. Source: Author's photo.

often recall this experience by stating that for her 'it was a moment of emotional fragility', and it was Ayen who would visit her in her room and 'give her something to focus on and lift her spirits'. When she shares the story with Lucia, she concludes by turning to Ayen with a dreamy look and joking tone, saying, 'Todo gracias a ti compañera!' (All thanks to you, compañera!) (Figure 10).

Carolina and Ayen became a couple within the broader affinity group of Los Pies. Whereas kiltras like Guacha or Runa belonged to the squat and the población itself, Carolina and Ayen, apart from that, started belonging to each other. Carolina became 'Ayen's humana', a term commonly used in Los Pies's parlance. Autonomous groups, after all, are cultivated not by erasing individualities, but rather transposing them in collective settings (Graeber, 2009: 130, 330; Krøijer, 2015: 93). In such dyadic constellations, mutual attunement between Ayen and Carolina became a process of negotiating autonomy built on trust. For instance, Ayen and Carolina negotiated their movement through the city to eliminate the need for a leash, which Carolina views as a tool of domination.

Sometimes, it happens that you fall into this hierarchy, where you want the dog to do what you want all the time. But the dog also has her own will – maybe she just wants to stay two blocks behind, chewing on that disgusting, rotten bone she found. In the end, it's all about being a kiltra. I feel like that's part of kiltras essence too – their rebelliousness. That's just how Ayen is. She's not like a golden retriever who'll sit the moment you tell them to, obeying instantly like a robot. She has her own character, her own personality (Figure 11)

What is more, the figure with leads and collars becomes mobilised as an image to be avoided. 'I find it difficult and do not want to have authority over Ayen,' states Carolina. She continues, explaining how that translates into day-by-day conviviality and mutual routines. For example, when Carolina decided to go to the cinema with her human compañero Pablo, he expressed concern about leaving his small, pure-bred street dog, Canela, outside and alone, fearing someone might steal her. Carolina, by contrast, confidently left Ayen outside, knowing she would do her own thing in the street and return when ready. Pablo protested, saying, 'I can't leave Canela outside – someone might take

her.’ Carolina replied, ‘Why not? I can leave Ayen. She’ll wait or come back for me. No one will take her ... because she’s not a “hegemonic” dog – she’s big, shaggy. She is kiltra.’

The pairing in affinity, as described above, differs from the widespread trope of ‘rescuing’ dogs from streets by ‘adopting’ them and giving them homes (Schuurman, 2021), which is often associated with mixing love, care and mutualism with house-training, leash-training and making them give up or heavily regulating their free-roaming through the streets (Demirbas et al., 2014). Whereas challenging such authority and hierarchy may mean learning to walk on a lead as a process of negotiating power rather than merely enforcing obedience or discipline by humans to dogs (Meijer, 2019: 85–110), in the case of Ayen and Carolina, the lead disappears altogether in favour of negotiating autonomy and respecting the free-roaming bodily intelligence to keep navigating the streets in a distinctly kiltra way. By mitigating hierarchy, such mutuality becomes the kiltra anarchist vision of establishing and maintaining coupled as well as broader forms of

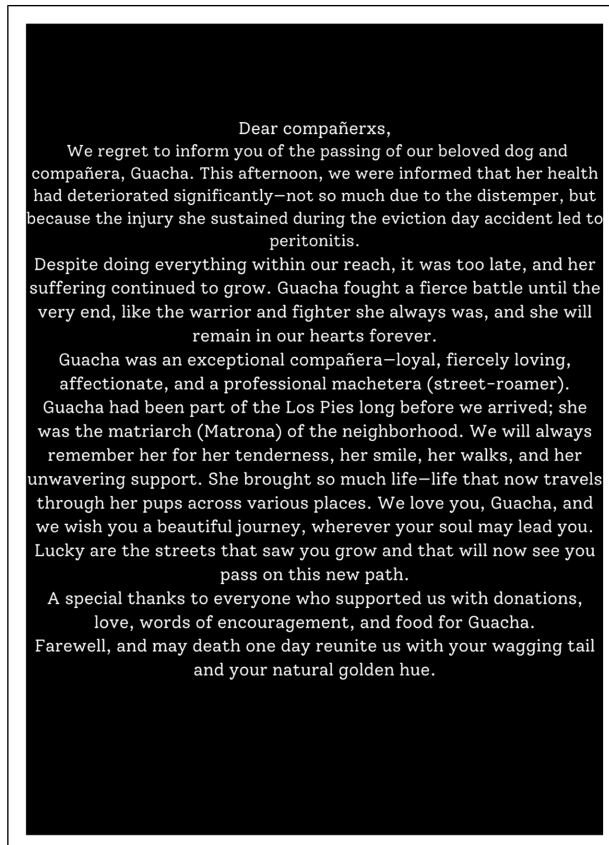


Figure 12. Social media epitaph for Guacha, posted by Los Pies del Cerro collective. Source: Author's photo.

more-than-human collectives. We argue that this targeted dilution of hierarchy in mutualism through the cultivation of affinity and yet autonomous bonds makes anarchist–kiltrás’ relations those of *compañero* species as well.

Conclusion: Resist with kiltrás

‘Resist like kiltro!’ Despite the repeated erasures and new layers of fresh paint, these mottos leak from the walls along the main avenue in Santiago de Chile. Among the most prolific slogans of the uprising, they pierced the urban protest landscape as graffiti, covered clothes and even inked into the tattooed skin of the protesters during the Estallido Social. Strong, clear and didactic, they evoke a kiltro’s capacity to ‘never give up on my fight for life, mine and of those who make me live’ (Bonelli and de la Cadena, 2023: 311). At the same time, however, we believe that analytical work with the phrase is a bit troubling as it disables the capture of kiltro politics in its variability and complexity. The focus on ‘*como*’ (like) is prone to two analytical tendencies flourishing in recent years. The first captures kiltrós as symbols of resistance, be it in general or by summoning El Negro Matapacos (García, 2023; Johansson and Vivanco, 2021). The second tendency highlights relations of humans to kiltrós via processes of likening (Aguilera et al., 2023; Navarrete, 2023).⁴ These analytics are indeed important. Among other things, they make visible the dynamics of iconisation and heroisation through which Matapacos’s ‘mystical and epic aura’ (Rosales Neira, 2021: 405) is weaponised in human stories through analogisation. Yet in such accounts, dogs as dogs, that is, in their ‘fleshly, material-semiotic presence’ (Haraway, 2003: 5), tend to fade into the background in favour of what they represent for human politics.

By targeting the daily work of building a more-than-human autonomous collectivity in a peripheral neighbourhood of Santiago de Chile in the aftermath of the Estallido Social, we highlight different aspects of kiltro politics – those of everyday *compañerismo*, which reach beyond heroic figures from the spectacular frontlines of the riotous uprising. After all, Matapacos’s presence on campus, from which he would join the protests, was also not just about fierce confrontations. As evidenced in the documentary *Matapacos* (Ramírez, 2013), his everyday life was intertwined with that of the *compañerismo*, with the students and others with whom he was co-becoming when roaming through the Chilean streets in search of subsistence, shelter and moments of solitude.

We argue that more-than-human *compañerismo* is maintained in daily life along anarchists–street dogs lines through three particular processes: making rules, carrying out reterritorisations and cultivating affinities. It is through these rather improvised processes, we argue, that more-than-human squatting becomes the example of *compañero* species. However, there are no clear, utopian and ideal forms here that would, after all, go against *kiltraje* (‘kiltrism’), which embraces dirtiness and impurity. In many situations, it is still only the anarchists making the rules about dogs or planning reterritorialisation methods and day-by-day activities to be followed. In other words, in kiltra resistance, the relations of more-than-human *compañerismo* are mixed with all-too-human relations.

Kiltra resistance is not only, we argue, about grand iconisation of all-too-male dogs, the unidirectional identification with canines and the animalisation of human protests. ‘You are not animals!’ is what the human squatter shouted towards the human part of the

howling squatters. The symbolic and identification work is present in our ethnographic case as well. However, it is only partial, non-linear and complemented with situations marked by building autonomous *compañerismo* in differences. ‘Affinity is precisely not identity,’ (Haraway 1992: 318) writes stoutly about the crucial point of coming together as a collective subject while retaining differences.

During the rise of right-wing politics, reinforced by the new anti-squatting law approved that year, Los Pies was raided by police and violently evicted in summer 2023. Guacha was severely injured during the eviction from a metal shard and died two weeks later. Her funeral was arranged by her humans. There, she was praised and grieved as the *matrona* of the neighbourhood canine community (Figure 12). The more-than-human collective of Los Pies recomposed – some affinities, like Carolina’s and Ayen’s, endured, other bonds weakened despite initial campaigns for solidarity with the evicted ones.

Joining kiltras in resistance is not about relating to dogs as companions of human stories but as respected *compañeras* who create territorialising situations to be partaken in; it shapes affinities to be affected by and makes rules to be taken seriously and negotiated. Kiltra resistance is not only about resisting *like* kiltra, but above all, resisting *with* kiltras. Weaving together the lives and deaths of squats, dogs and uprisings, noticing such kiltra resistance invites scholars to target the everyday ordinariness and messiness of improvisations in striving to do autonomous, and, for that matter, any kind of politics in less-than-human ways.

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Notes

1. This term is used in reference to both dogs and people, functioning as a slur with racial undertones or referring to an illegitimate existence. An original form of this term is *quiltro* meaning 'mixed-breed dog'.
2. For sure, there is a possibility to make feminist critique here, as the iconised *El Negro Matapacos* is a male, whereas all main dog characters in our story are females. However, apart from using 'kiltra' and not 'kiltro' resistance, that is the feminine and not the masculine form in the Spanish language, we decided not to elaborate the feminist argument any further as it deserves a whole article built around it.
3. The scope of popular stretching of the kiltro as an icon does not begin with Matapacos either. Since the 1960s, 'Quiltro' has been a name for newspapers, radios, art collectives and political groups in *poblaciones* (Astudillo Espinoza, 2016). Besides, the leitmotif of a street dog is endless in Chilean literature (Sepúlveda, 2013; Uribe, 2020).
4. There are many scholarly texts scrutinising Matapacos as a saint and patron (Johansson and Vivanco, 2021) or a symbol of violence (Aguilera et al., 2023). Other texts analyse the ambivalent processes and transformative ways humans identify with and draw analogies to kiltros as symbols – be it of particular oppressed groups like women identifying with kiltras (Navarrete, 2023) or of protesters as a whole. According to these scholars, the animalisation of the protesters together with the anthropomorphisation of El Matapacos during the uprising evaded the category of species to the benefit of disclosing shared class and race inequalities (Aguilera et al., 2023).

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