



FEMINIST CITIES: CARE AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR ECOSYSTEMS

Women and Habitat Network – Latin America and the Caribbean
(RMyH ALC)¹

Document by the Women and Habitat
Network – Latin America and the
Caribbean²

Women's worlds are based on care: for our dignity and self-respect, for our daughters' and sons' welfare, for the earth, for its diverse beings, for the hungry and the sick. Taking care of them is the best expression of humanity. The future belongs not to the merchants of death, but to Women who Care after Life.

Vandana Shiva. *"Abrazar la Vida"*





CONTENTS:

Introduction	3
1. Where we come from	5
1.1. The Women and Habitat Network – Latin America and the Caribbean	5
1.2. The RMyH ALC and GRRIPP alliance	8
1.2.1. Project: “Ecosystems in gender-based disaster management during the COVID-19 pandemic”	9
1.2.2. Project: “Cities and territories that care: gender-based local care systems”	11
2. Where we are now	18
3. Where we are headed	24
3.1. Concept outline – The feminist fabric	24
3.2. Methodological outline – Women weaving	29
3.3. Political outline – Weaving alliances	31
3.4. Final reflections – Ana Falú	33

¹<https://www.redmujer.org.ar/>

²This text is based on the following documents by RMyH ALC:

Systematisation document for the project “Ecosistemas en la gestión de desastres con enfoque de género en contexto de pandemia por el COVID 19” (Ecosystems in gender-based disaster management during the COVID-19 pandemic”) in Brazil, El Salvador and Guatemala (RMyH ALC, 2023).

Systematisation document for the project “Ciudades y territorios que cuidan: sistemas locales de cuidado con enfoque de género” (“Cities and territories that care: gender-based local care systems”) in Argentina, Chile and Colombia (RMyH ALC, 2023).

Concept note for the Care Systems roundtable at the “Ciudades feministas: cuidados y sostenibilidad de los ecosistemas” (“Feminist cities: care and sustainability in ecosystems”) forum (Olga Segovia, 2023).

Concept note for the Ecosystems in Cities and Territories roundtable at the “Ciudades feministas: cuidados y sostenibilidad de los ecosistemas” (“Feminist cities: care and sustainability in ecosystems”) forum (Maité Rodríguez, 2023).

Appendixes:

Appendix 1: Glossary

Appendix 2: Systematisation document for the “Ecosystems in gender-based disaster management during the COVID-19 pandemic” project

Appendix 3: Systematisation document for the “Cities and territories that care: gender-based local care systems” project

Appendix 4: Concept outline for the Ecosystems in Cities and Territories roundtable at the “Feminist cities: care and sustainability in ecosystems” forum (Maité Rodríguez, 2023)

Appendix 5: Concept outline for the Care Systems roundtable at the “Feminist cities: care and sustainability in ecosystems” forum (Olga Segovia, 2023)



INTRODUCTION

Four decades ago, women, professional women and activist organisations created the Women and Habitat Network – Latin America and the Caribbean (from now on, RMyH ALC), aimed at producing gender-based knowledge regarding access to land and housing, urban services, urban safety, development and local management, as well as defining urban infrastructure policy and underscoring the poverty and inequality impacting women. The focus was on women's contributions, needs and struggles in city design, construction and management, since these issues are traditionally addressed from a patriarchal, male-centred approach which is out of touch with women's daily life, their needs and their considerable ethnic, cultural, class, rural/urban diversity, as well as their particular situations and contexts, such as disability or age.

The RMyH ALC approach, focused on the habitats' situated conditions, together with an intersectional outlook, favours a principle of reality that supports a theoretical, methodological and political progress keen on sharing with other social and women's organisations, as well as public entities, in the countries it works in. It aims to help women to come closer to the full exercise of their citizenship, to their right to the city.

The global telluric movement that was the pandemic put on the forefront structural issues that feminism had long ago laid on the table. The effect of care and its precarious nature, at a personal, family, community and social level; proposing an approach to care that no longer considers it women's almost exclusive responsibility, becoming instead a universal ethic system that falls to all of us; the need to care for cities' food systems; the individual, collective and global responsibility regarding the use of water; seeing the home as an ecosystem we inhabit, live in and coexist in. These matters deal, in short, with the sustainability of life in the planet.

A strategic alliance between organisations from six Latin American countries that participate in RMyH ALC and the UK Research and Innovation Collective Fund – Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (from now on, GRRIPP) helped to weave the ideas and practice within the RMyH ALC organisations, as well as strengthening GRRIPP activities in Latin America.



Within the framework of this alliance, during 2021 and 2022 the following projects were carried out: “Ecosystems in gender-based disaster management in the COVID-19 pandemic context”, by El Salvador’s Colectiva Feminista para el Desarrollo Local (Local Development Feminist Collective), Guatemala’s Fundación Guatemala (Guatemala Foundation) and Brazil’s União dos Movimentos de Moradia de São Paulo (Housing Movements Union – UMM-SP), and “Cities and territories that care: gender-based local care systems”, promoted by Argentina’s CISCSA Ciudades Feministas (CISCSA Feminist Cities), Colombia’s Fundación AVP para el Desarrollo Social (AVP Foundation for Social Development) and Chile’s SUR Corporación. As part of this initiative’s activities, on April 17, 18 and 19 the “Feminist cities: care and sustainability in ecosystems” forum (from now on, the Forum) took place in Bogota. In the Forum, conceptual, methodological and political progress was shared, in order to give an account of the powerful collaborative work in the region. Likewise, dedicated women working in municipal public administration shared experiences that resulted from a masterful coordination between different social actors as an expression of the work methodology furthered by RMyH ALC in all its interventions.

This document is composed of three chapters. The first, “Where we come from”, presents a gathering of RMyH ALC experiences. The second, “Where we are now”, gives an account of the progress and challenges that we as a network have encountered in the context of the region’s political moment in regards to the issues here addressed. A third chapter, “Where we are headed”, presents the reflections and the challenges we find in the conceptual, methodological and political aspects, with the purpose of contributing to the constant dialogue that is characteristic of the practices suggested and carried out by feminism.

We hope this outline will add new voices to the polyphony of perspectives, reflections and perceptions of people such as the members of RMyH ALC, who work in concrete spaces with individuals, particularly women, who contribute daily in the territories to the invention and reinvention of Latin American cities.





1. Where we come from

1.1. The Women and Habitat Network – Latin America and the Caribbean (RMyH ALC)

The Women and Habitat Network – Latin America and the Caribbean is an organisation comprised of institutions, women's organisations, professional women and activists committed to furthering women's rights and advancing gender equality regarding habitat, territory and city.



Its main objectives are:

- **Creating gender-based knowledge** regarding access to land and housing, urban services, safer cities and local development and management, underscoring the poverty and inequality issues impacting women.
- **Influencing the design and implementation of public policy and programmes with gender equality**, through the sensibilisation and bolstering of capacities in government institutions, education centres and women's organisations.
- **Contributing to the betterment of women's quality of life**, by developing programmes and projects, in conversation and alliance with local governments and community organisations.



It works, among others, in issues regarding coexistence and safety in the city, violence against women in the private and public spaces, urban housing and soil, access to land and housing rights, daily life and urban infrastructure, time use and care, climate change and risk reduction, and community resilience and disaster prevention.

spaces, urban housing and soil, access to land and housing rights, daily life and urban infrastructure, time use and care, climate change and risk reduction, and community resilience and disaster prevention.

The RMyH ALC designed, with the participation of its benchmark organisations in six countries, the Women for the City Regional Agenda in Latin America. For a shared city, with rights and gender equality. This agenda aimed at influencing a perspective on territory that acknowledges women's rights, in all their diversity, and one that includes a gender and intercultural perspective in its planning.



Photo RMyH ALC in the "Feminist Cities" forum from left to right: Marisol Cabrera (Fundación AVP, Colombia), Rosy Bonilla (Colectiva Feminista, El Salvador), Maite Rodríguez (Fundación Guatemala, Guatemala), Olga Segovia, (Corporación Sur, Chile), Lucy Cardona (Fundación AVP, Colombia), Marisol Dalmazzo (Fundación AVP, Colombia), ANa Falú (Cisca, Argentina) y Graca Xavier (Uniao por la Morada Popular, Brasil)

The Regional Agenda is the result of participation processes of observation and reflection by groups of diverse women, from social organisations in the territory, civil society and the political sphere. The Regional Agenda is a proposal that structures and shines a light on citizen demands to guarantee that women are able to exercise their rights in the city. It is an instrument for public awareness that contributes to establish agreements between political, social and local actors.

The Agenda identified essential issues to address gender inequality and improve quality of life among the women in the region's cities:

Producing knowledge, strengthening capacities and territorial impact

Through the process of developing different programmes, as well as local and regional projects, the organisations comprising the network have produced knowledge about the inequality affecting women, and formulated proposals for policies and actions for the fulfilment of their rights. Likewise, actions to bolster capacities addressed to women's and civil society organisations, as well as local institutions (www.redmujer.org.ar).

It works, among others, in issues regarding coexistence and safety in the city, violence against women in the private and public

- A safe city, free from violence against women
- Gender-based urban transport
- Urban services and infrastructure for daily life
- Financial autonomy for women
- Gender-based housing policies and programmes
- Parity as horizon: women's participation in politics
- Social integration of migrant, displaced and refugee women



The main actions carried out by the network organisations in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala and Chile during the pandemic were the Leadership Schools for women's rights to the city and the territory, in coordination with local alliances between women's organisations and universities, and the online forums Feminist readings on cities and territories.

The contents in the Leadership Schools implemented by each organisation were designed based on a general proposal, which took into account the following: the presentation of the region's context and concepts on gender and urbanism; the issues addressed in the Regional Agenda; local governments' responsibility (regarding international and national commitments to women's rights and their relationship with the territory and urban policies); new approaches to and experiences in territorial planning; the role of social organisations and of women; methodologies to build capacities for participation and influence.

The online forums addressed the following issues: inequalities during the COVID-19 pandemic; women's territory-based experiences and proposals; care and livelihood; the challenges local governments face in a COVID-19 post-pandemic world; rethinking housing rights from a feminist perspective.

From the lessons learned at the presentations and experiences gathered at the forums emerged public policy guidelines: facing violence against women, especially domestic violence (which had increased, and had forced many women to be in lockdown with their abusers); addressing care and women's financial autonomy in their urban context, as well as their relationship with local governments; responding to the need for suitable housing. Even if the urgency to alleviate the pandemic's effects was underscored, we should keep in mind the pending issue, in the mid- and long term, of creating a gender-based and feminist urban planning proposal.



3. The four forums had an average attendance of 1200 people. Among them were indigenous women, women of African descent, Black, LGBTI, urban and peasant women, as well as women leaders from Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa.



1.1. The RMyH ALC and GRRIPP alliance



During 2021 and 2022 the RMyH ALC, in cooperation with Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (from now on, GRRIPP) furthered actions aimed at contributing to a suitable design and implementation of gender-based and territory-based policies and care strategies, as well as consolidating processes for the sustainability of the territories' ecosystems, regarding drinking water, food sustainability and housing access.

The projects were led by a vision of safe, inclusive cities, adapted to its population's differentiated needs, taking into account mechanisms to prevent violence against women and girls. Therefore, reflections on the necessary inclusion of a gender and feminist perspective in an analysis of our cities and in rethinking the urban and territorial planning processes can be seen as essential for furthering a paradigm change, which implies acknowledging our societies as unequal and gender relationships as shaping that inequality, hence structuring the organisation of social life that manifests in the territory.

The organisations presented projects based on a diagnosis predicated on the confirmation that women inhabit cities differently than men. This is expressed in the differences in the way women use and have access to services, transportation and public spaces, as well as differentiated risk modalities and security perception.

The experiences analysed covered the following spheres, noted in the document "Community care in Latin America and the Caribbean" (UNDP, 2022), which presents an interesting assessment of a diversity of experiences in the region, and underscores the significance of the community sphere as care provider, as well as its main features.

- **Beyond the home:** Experiences that go beyond the relationships and dynamics in the home. That is, they outline care for people, animals, homes and common assets.
- **Beyond people:** Experiences that, even if they include caring for people, stand out as care undertaken by diverse collective and formal organisations. There is an "us" and a horizon of common action, with a high presence of both in-person and online networks.
- **From the territory:** Experiences that centre the territory – as a physical, social and symbolic space – which is essential for understanding specific and concrete community care work.
- **Beyond remuneration:** Experiences that – even if there may be a monetary remuneration – operate mainly through exchange mechanisms, with a low presence, or an absence, of monetary retribution.

The global crisis unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced in the organisations in charge the importance of care in the territory, shining a light on how essential it is to provide community care. The state perspective has become 'territorialised'; it is in the territory that the role of local governments gains relevance, in coordination with civil society and women's organisations, especially regarding the provision of public services and economic reactivation.

The debates around care and urban development present particular challenges for territorial and urban policies. For decades, women's collectives have made visible, through their actions and mobilisation, the need to change the way in which the city and institutional structures respond to the



necessity of providing and receiving care (Falú, 2014).

These debates have centred the issue of care in these last years, even more so in the context of the pandemic. This has been reflected in numerous studies and research (see Rico and Segovia, 2017; UN WOMEN – ECLAC, 2020; GOLD, 2022; Dalmazzo – ECLAC, 2017; Tacoli, 2012). Physical distancing, public spaces, means and conditions for moving around the city are closely related to people’s capacity to make care chores compatible with the time required to carry out other aspects of their life. Difficult access, expensive services and transportation and, in certain cases, high violence rates and insecurity perception, add a disproportionate burden on people responsible for care, especially women.

1.1.1. Project: “Ecosystems in gender-based disaster management during the COVID-19 pandemic”

It works, among others, in issues regarding coexistence and safety in the city, violence against women in the private and public spaces, urban housing and soil, access to land and housing rights, daily life and urban infrastructure, time use and care, climate change and risk reduction, and community resilience and disaster prevention.

This project was carried out by civil society organisations (CSO) from three Latin American countries that participate in the Women and Habitat Network – Latin America and the Caribbean: El Salvador’s Feminist Collective for Local Development (Colectiva Feminista para el Desarrollo Local), in alliance with Fundación Guatemala and Brazil’s União dos Movimentos de Moradia de São Paulo (Housing Movements Union – UMM-SP).

The project took place during the second half of 2021 and the first months of 2022, jointly and simultaneously in Brazil, Guatemala and El

Salvador. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic led to its being online, which made it possible for beneficiaries from the three countries to share this space for training and sharing at the same time.

The project aimed at bolstering local women actors in their resilient fight for their right to the city, for access to housing and water, for bolstering food systems, for the protection of ecosystems and for an improvement of their livelihoods.

Part of the specific objectives was designing actions to further the specialised training of community women leaders carrying out actions in the territories related to the right to the city and gender-based disaster risk management in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this purpose, the course “Ecosystems in gender-based disaster management in the COVID-19 pandemic context. Weaving feminisms” was designed.

The course was backed by Universidad de El Salvador’s Gender Studies Centre, and was designed and taught jointly by the three organisations that carried out the project in alliance.

Training consisted of three modules:

Module 1

Sustainable agriculture

Module 2

Women and housing, water and feminism in the territories

Module 3

Women’s political participation in the territory

4. See Appendix 2 for more on the project’s outcomes. Systematisation document for the “Ecosystems in gender-based disaster management in the COVID-19 pandemic context” project. Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala.



Throughout the project there was a systematisation of the experiences of women participating in gender-based community risk management in their territories in Guatemala, Brazil and El Salvador, aimed at protecting ecosystems with an ecological and feminist approach. The experiences were related to community management of water and sustainable organic agriculture, as key strategies to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to address domestic and care necessities in daily life. Addressing housing as one of the systems which sustains life is exemplified with the housing self-management experience in Brazil. Likewise, the experience of the Guatemalan Caribbean and Izabal Lake Artisan Fishermen Network (Red de Pescadores Artesanales del Caribe Guatemalteco y Lago de Izabal), as an essential strategy for managing and saving water resources. Lastly, El Salvador's experience regarding kitchen gardens was systematised, as part of the lessons on sustainable agriculture to ensure food sovereignty for the territories' communities.

The second part of the project was designing the outreach campaign "Weaving feminisms in cities and territories. Feminisms for well-being in cities and territories" ("Tejiendo feminismos en las ciudades y territorios. Feminismos para el buen vivir en las ciudades y territorios"). This strategy aimed at addressing Guatemala, El Salvador and Brazil's common context; the three countries have diverse ecosystems that big business is interested in exploiting and expropriating in order to trade on its natural resources, which damages biodiversity as well as the life of women, their families and the territories' communities. The campaign's broad purpose was to shine a light on the importance of women's right to have access to diverse, inclusive and sustainable ecosystems.

Tejiendo feminismos
para el buen vivir
en las ciudades y territorios

Las políticas públicas de acceso a vivienda deben garantizar la accesibilidad a las mujeres, como una forma de disminuir la violencia de género, empobrecimiento y como una práctica restaurativa de las sobrevivientes de violencia intrafamiliar.

Tejiendo feminismos
para el buen vivir
en las ciudades y territorios

Tejemos feminismos para denunciar al sistema capitalista y patriarcal que oprime, explota y expropia los cuerpos de las mujeres y los territorios que habitamos.

Tejiendo feminismos
para el buen vivir
en las ciudades y territorios

Las mujeres tejemos feminismos para la defensa de las comunidades y los territorios en su diversidad, diversos para que el agua sea accesible para nuestros hogares, la agricultura y los animales

Logos of partner organizations: Red Mujer y Hábitat, Alianza Feminista, UNIAO, and GRRIPP.



Reflections and challenges:

The project underscores the experiences of local actors in their resilient fight against socio-economic and gender adversity, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted, particularly, that, faced with biosecurity and health measures, their responsibilities were increased, and they were overburdened with chores and care, in communities lacking drinking water services. This leads to even more unpaid labour for women, which, in a macro level, is expressed in an increase in the feminisation of poverty in our continent.

The organisations involved in the project decided to delve on the role government, education and university institutions play in the territories where they are located, since their interventions have had a low impact, taking into account their significant potential for the protection of natural ecosystems faced with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beyond research and protocols as purely academic products, establishing relationships with the communities is encouraged, since, particularly they have – particularly in the case of universities – an extension work component that includes field interventions based on an integration of multi-disciplinary teams. In this sense, alliances with women’s organisations, local authorities and grassroots women leaders are encouraged, from a human rights, gender and multi-cultural approach. In order to lay these reflections on the table, as part of the project, creating relationships with academic institutions was established as part of the project, in order to carry out jointly the “Weaving feminisms” outreach campaign, aimed at bringing awareness to women’s contribution to the right to water and environmental protection. This is based on an understanding of alliances as an essential strategy, and of women’s organisations as able to transfer to university and municipal institutions the lessons learned through their experiences in their territories, in order to bolster ecosystem-related interventions.

1.1.2. “Cities and territories that care: gender-based local care systems” project⁵

The project carried out by CISCSA Feminist Cities (Argentina), AVP Foundation for Social Development (Colombia) and SUR Corporation (Chile), in collaboration with local governments, social organisations and universities, had the purpose of contributing to the design of gender-based and territory-based care policies and strategies, ensuring people’s right to care and be cared for, based on local experiences in four cities in the region: Bogota (Colombia); Cordoba and Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Santiago de Chile (Chile).

The project planned activities favourable to creating knowledge on community care, based on care necessities and demands at a territorial



Photo: Sur Corporación, Agrupación vecinal 10, Santiago de Chile



Photo: Sur Corporación, Agrupación vecinal 10, Santiago de Chile

5. See Appendix 3 for more on the project’s outcomes. Systematisation document for the “Cities and territories that care: gender-based local care systems” project.



level. The work was carried out using participatory methodologies through a coordination with women's and territory collectives, including governments and local actors, as well as universities, in the analysis, reflection and guideline development for sustainable local proposals that contribute to centre care as a relevant issue in public policies, academic research and urban collectives' activities. It established strategic alliances with the Bogota, Santiago de Chile, Cordoba and José C. Paz municipalities, as well as Universidad del Rosario (Colombia), Universidad de Santiago (Chile) and Universidad Nacional de José C. Paz (Argentina).

In Colombia, the project centred on analysing Bogota's District Care System (Sistema Distrital de Cuidado – SIDCU), carried out at present by the municipality. This initiative resulted from a lengthy negotiation process between women's networks and organisations and local authorities. Specifically, the Bosa care block was studied, since it was one of the first to be carried out. This work was undertaken by AVP Foundation for Social Development, together with local organisations and Women's Advisory Council (Consejo Consultivo de Mujeres), with the purpose of assessing its implementation, guiding adjustments and supporting sustainability, understanding the system as an extremely important factor in the improvement of the region's care policies.

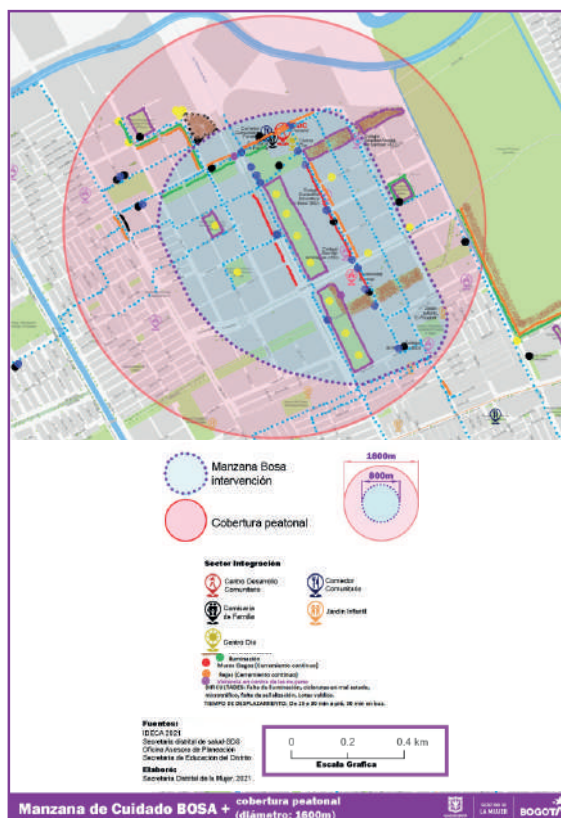
Reflections and challenges:

The quantitative research, through surveys in Bosa, showed that a large percentage in the community is not aware of the existence of care blocks (58.28%) and a large majority has not participated from their benefits (91.84%). We must take into account the fact that they were implemented in 2020-2021, in the height of the pandemic. Therefore, outreach was very limited.

However, qualitative research, with focus groups and geo-reference, with the services' users, revealed they graded it 4.5 out of 5, which shows its great impact.

The women users who participated in the focus groups and geo-reference consider that present services could be complemented with the following: Flexible work opportunities. Care for girls and boys older than 5 and teenagers. Free transportation routes for women, the elderly or people with disabilities. More training for women. Access to higher education. Extended hours for the services, including nights and weekends. Safe public spaces for women in the surrounding areas. Support for small businesses.

Georeferencing in the Bosa care block:



Source: Georeferencing carried out with 25 female users of the Bosa city block, Bogotá, Colombia.

6. It is an advisory, technical and political organisation representing the needs and interests of women in the Capital District, taking into account their differences and generational, cultural, ethnic-racial, territorial, socio-economic, ideological, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability diversity. The purpose of the Women's Advisory Council is to be an advisory instance for analysing, designing and formulating proposals for issues regarding public policy to advance women's and gender equality and eradicate the inequalities and discrimination affecting women due to their gender, as well as strengthening and sustaining the women's rights, differential and gender approaches in this policy.



From an institutional standpoint, one of the challenges faced by Bogota's Care District System is expanding it to the entire territory, creating a 'care network' mainly in areas with an infrastructure deficit.

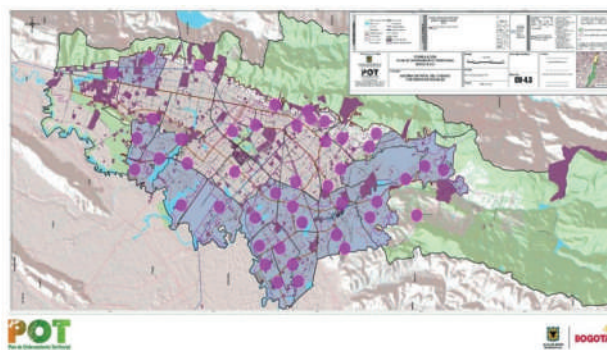
The research underscored the following challenges:

- Devising a care system where women are not beneficiaries of public policy, or targets for a programme, but subjects of law, with agency.
- Calling on women to be active participants in the construction and sustainability of the SIDICU objectives, acknowledging their knowledge and territory-based experience.
- Implementing safe public spaces: for women and girls, and the entire community, to have access to services and improve their lives, not only through them but also through the "city that cares". Plus, transportation for care: "circular care transportation" for carers and people requiring care.
- Formulating public policy together with grassroots community organisations.
- Improved outreach for SIDICU and Care Blocks.

The approval of the Territory Organisation Plan – Regrowth for Bogota 2022-2035 (Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial – POT – Bogotá Reverdece) by mayor Claudia López was an important step towards the sustainability of the District Care System, which resulted of several years of management and influence by networks and organisations of diverse women. This has also been a massive work, of intersectoral collaboration, in order to coordinate the city's care network. For more information, see <https://bogota.gov.co/bog/pot-2022-2035/>

In Bogota we now have 19 care blocks, which will be 20 by the end of the current municipal administration, when 2023 comes to a close.

The Regrowth for Bogota 2022-2035 POT considers a total of 45 blocks. Another significant step forward has been Agreement 893, 2023, managed by Bogota's Women's Advisory Council, which makes official the District Care System and establishes it as a city public policy, giving it a permanent status, regardless of the administration in charge.



Map of the POT District Care System. Image: Mayor's Office of Bogotá

In Argentina, the observation was carried out in Cordoba city (Cordoba province) and José C. Paz (Buenos Aires province). Taking into account a national critical context, from a conceptual framework that takes over from feminist urbanism, the study aimed at knowing the community care tasks and activities undertaken by women carers, working in neighbourhood spaces, and make them visible, as well as inquiring into the experiences of the users of these services and infrastructure in the territories.

Reflections and challenges:

The study's conclusions underscore the importance of distributing women's time use for care in their community, as well as the complexity of this task, which places them in a mediator role between the State and communities, and underscores the need to make progress in public policies that acknowledge the quality of work for women who care for the community, and shine a light on it, giving space for the voices of neighbourhood leaders for policy planning, agenda design and inter-sectoral dialogue.



Photograph: Juan Bautista community garden – Primavera neighbourhood

For many women in impoverished areas, care surpasses the limits of house and family, extending to “caring for the neighbourhood”.

The pandemic context has, without a doubt, worsened the conditions for women workers, overburdening them with unpaid labour and compounding the gender work division, which resulted in the majority of women bearing the responsibility for community kitchens and soup kitchens.

It is necessary to advance towards comprehensive public policies that acknowledge, shine a light on and improve work quality for community workers, and it is



Photograph: Cisca, Juan Bautista community Garden, Barrio primavera, Argentina.

necessary to place, give space, listen to and give a space to the neighbourhood leaders in public policy planning, agenda design and inter-sectoral dialogue.

Acknowledging the contribution of community services within the institutional structure of policies and care services is an urgent matter, as is including and acknowledging in many of these organisations their location and service provision in the Care Federal Map.

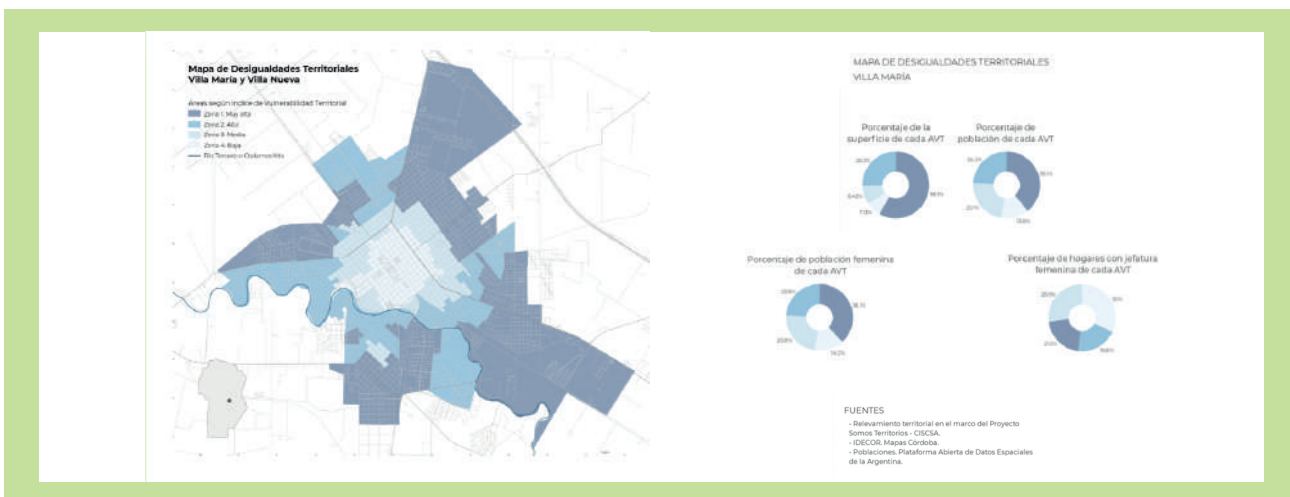
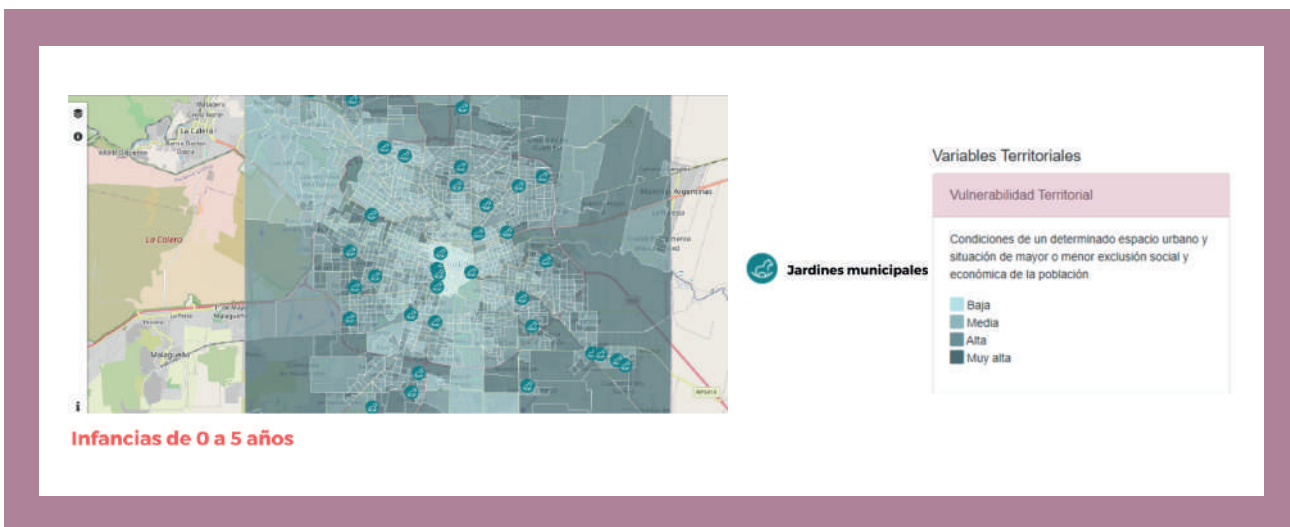
Providing state support for the recognition of women carers is necessary, as well as contributing material resources for the management of community care services, such as food, teaching aids, cleaning and sanitation supplies, among others, in addition to improving the place’s material conditions, without this meaning, as community leaders say, “losing the sense, the identity of community”, or depending on and becoming part of the state’s orbit, thus losing their autonomy.

Care must be conceived of in a social, collective and supportive spirit, in order to end the individualistic, patriarchal logic impacting women and feminised identities. This means, on the one hand, attacking the deepest cultural foundations for inequality, and outlining emancipatory proposals for those who at present carry the burden of care. On the other hand, it signifies making the public and private actors, as well as civil society organisations, responsible for a gender-based response. Neighbourhood community services can be key in this regard, since they contribute to socialise care outside the private sphere of the home. However, there is the risk that care chores remain women’s responsibility, without there being an economic and social compensation for their work. Without a distributive public policy improving their work conditions, “care collectivisation”, centred in community, damages and overburdens once more the most impoverished women.

CISCA prepared an instrument for policies, “the territorial vulnerability index”, based on



economic, social and demographic variables. It is useful for acknowledging territorial inequalities, as well as the location of care services and infrastructure, both public and private. Progress was made in geolocating in territorial care maps not only the location and quantity of public and private supply (care commercialisation), but also the supply created by collective action in low-income neighbourhoods.



In Chile the study centred in Neighbourhood Association 10, in the Santiago commune, in an environment near to the historic centre in Chile’s capital. The project aimed at creating knowledge about care needs and demands, as well as current initiatives in the territory, with the purpose of contributing to an analysis and further proposals in key issues regarding care.

The study’s territory is defined by an active association of diverse objectives and a strong presence of supportive networks, with an



Photograph: South Corporation, Mayor Irací Hassler in the final plenary session of the expanded workshop with organizations from the territory to raise care demands (2021), Santiago de Chile.



essential role in community development. These have played a pivotal role – and still do – in supporting daily life. However, organisations have not addressed the issue of care expressly, or regarded it as a priority. Likewise, there are no organisations for women in care or related areas.

Reflections and challenges:

The case study has allowed an approach to the complex situation of women community carers in the territory. They are a group of neighbours who are quite alone, not organised, and outside the information networks regarding support and public management in the territory. Regarding daily time allotted to care during the previous two months, taking into account commuting time and food, among others, 34% of the women in the survey assign 24 hours a day to care, and 63% assign more than 8 daily hours to caring for others.

In Santiago, the crisis unleashed by the pandemic allowed the municipality to shine a light on a diversity of issues among families with dependants, which had remained hidden in previous stages. This, undoubtedly, opened up new opportunities to design and project support programmes for these groups. Simultaneously, it made manifest the lack of strategic information regarding who has a demand for it, where they are and what it is they need.

The conclusions underscore the need to better equip care services in the territory, especially destined to assist the groups that need them the most, and support carers; the importance of support networks' active associativity acknowledging the demand for care in the sector, creating relationships with women carers; the need to strengthen the care system in Santiago and, lastly, the urgency of listening and responding to carers' needs, through policies and public programmes.

Women carers note the need to have preferential attention in different municipal services – not only in health services, as is now

the case, in accordance to current legislation –, which could take the form of a carer ID card that allows prompt attention when doing municipal paperwork. This is complemented with the need for company when doing the paperwork to receive benefits and rights for carers and for themselves.

Building comprehensive care systems is an essential factor to attain women's empowerment and their autonomy, and to further gender equality. Likewise, it is a key element for socio-economic recovery, becoming a direct and indirect job generator, and allowing other sectors of the economy to work properly. This is an urgent matter in the reference territory, where significant groups of neighbours were strongly impacted socio-economically by the pandemic's direct and indirect effects, especially in the case of informal workers and vendors, as well as women and the migrant population, which has a high presence.

The infrastructure providing care services, especially destined to provide assistance to the groups most in need, should be increased in the study area. In a future local care policy, the municipal space of the former Asilo de Ancianos de las Hermanitas de los Pobres nursing home could be a strategic place for care services and activities, with specific offers for each group, as well as for carers.



Photograph: South Corporation, final plenary session of the expanded workshop with organizations from the territory to raise care demands (2021), Santiago de Chile.



The study showed that care takes place mainly in the home, by family support networks. This not only shows a low social co-responsibility regarding care, but also that this situation is partly due to the issue being made invisible, even among carers themselves.

In the case of people looking after people with disability, it was discovered that this is a full-time job, offering no respite and making the possibilities of working permanently outside the home enormously difficult; it allows only for part-time jobs or survival activities that can be carried out at home.

In order to understand the needs of carers and of people receiving care, it is important to include an intersectional approach. For migrants, facing these issues is much more complex, if we take into account the lack of family networks, the dire necessity of having a job and the problem of undocumentation as a gap that hinders access to State benefits and support, and to more formal jobs.

As an interviewee said,

Since my daughter was born, with a disability, I have devoted myself to her and her therapy... She has made great progress... Since I arrived in Chile, I've only been able to work in a part-time check-out job in a supermarket, Líder... I've made ends meet, cleaning departments, selling Natura [beauty] products... But when there is a person with a disability in the family, everybody's world revolves around them, and, truly, it has been really tough to keep on working. (Focus group with women carers, 2020)





2. Where we are now⁷

Neo-liberal policies and the logic of the capitalist and neo-colonial production system have led to a systematic degradation of the environment, which has caused a global ecological crisis. This has endangered the sustainability of people's lives and of the ecosystem. These dynamics promote extractivist processes to meet disproportionate, thoughtless consumption. This prevailing logic is compounded by an anthropocentric culture according to which "nature is understood as that which surrounds human beings, the periphery and not the centre; thus, it can't be considered subject to law, an entity having an absolute value in itself" (Ferry L. 1992).

When talking about extractivism, it is usually in relation to mining, deforestation and the exploitation of resources such as water. The RMyH ALC expands the perspective to urban extractivism, which tears people from their habitat. In Latin America, a continent characterised by enormous inequalities in the access to rights and resources, these people are invariably the poorest, among them, women. There is a deep "urban extractivism" in the cities, meaning the city characteristics that derive from the neo-liberal model, in relation to cities' housing, social and, above all, environmental issues. Faced with this situation, it is essential to understand that, on the one hand, people are eco-dependent, since we depend on the planet's physical limitations, and, on the other, that humanity is increasingly at risk, since we are vulnerable bodies. This means that everyone, sooner or later, will be dependent in some way, and require care, be it when we are born, during our childhood and even in our adult life, due to illness, different levels of physical autonomy or functional diversity.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only created a series of impacts and a demand for care

resources and services, but also made socially evident what, for women, especially the most vulnerable, is a daily experience: being overburdened with unpaid or badly paid care work, and the insufficient and precarious availability, access to and control of drinking water, appropriate and safe housing and to food and food sovereignty. The pandemic also shone a light on the scarcity of resources to carry out life reproduction work, as well as the persistence of violence against women, a lack of access to work and a labour market that is more precarious for women.

The economic, social and cultural post-pandemic effects do not take place in a vacuum. They happen in specific territories and are concentrated in high-vulnerability sectors. In the economic sphere, the COVID-19 pandemic compounded a deceleration of the economy, an increased external debt and the generalised weakening of currency in Latin American countries. Faced with this situation, political systems remain extremely weak in their capacity to properly address the great inequalities in the region.

For women, given the lack of shared gender responsibility, the gap in the time assigned by women and men to domestic chores and unpaid work persists. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women devote 33 weekly hours to unpaid work, in contrast with men's 17.5 hours. Likewise, the most impoverished women face more obstacles to access suitable, safe and appropriate housing, furnished with basic services.

Women's economic situation is different from men's. They represent the majority in the informal market and among those looking for a job. Their situation, in contrast to men's, is one of informal, precarious work, and they are solely responsible for their homes in an increasing percentage in the entire region.

⁷ This chapter is based on the two systematisation documents and concept outlines produced through the RMyH ALC and GRRIPP alliance, which can be found in the Appendix section.



This leads to multiple transportation patterns, both in the neighbourhood and in the city. These dynamics affect and determine the social configuration in working-class neighbourhoods, as well as their processes; in these territories it is usually women who know how the construction of a market, school or hospital was achieved, since it is them who inhabit the territory and lead these demands on government institutions.

Water supply is a structural issue in poor neighbourhoods in Latin America, as was made crudely evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has a direct impact on people's daily lives, and on the development of the most vulnerable communities. In our region, water is a resource not everybody has access to, and is

an indicator of inequality. Faced with this situation, women are the first to feel the impact, since they are the ones who mostly bear the burden of housework and care work, and must therefore find alternative ways to get water, be it going somewhere to get it or buying it, which means investing more resources, such as time and money. In rural, semiurban or peripheral city areas, access to water is scarce and irregular. On the other hand, many women work outside the home during the day, and when they get back home they do not have water for their personal hygiene or for housework. Women living in homes without access to drinking water dedicate between 5 and 12 more hours than those who live in houses without this scarcity (ECLAC 2020).

“Las políticas públicas deben contribuir a la **gestión justa y sostenible de los recursos naturales para las comunidades** principalmente aquellas con mayor desigualdad.”

Josefina Miculax, 2023
Fundación Guatemala, Guatemala

In Guatemala, even though there is an abundance of this resource, there is a scarcity of drinking water in the city's outskirts and in rural territories. According to Josefina Miculax (Guatemala), “in spite of the issue's gravity, more than seven legislative initiatives to regularise water supply for the entire population have been archived and in the present electoral process, this issue is not included in the agenda of any of the candidacies.”

(“Feminist cities: Ecosystem care and sustainability” forum. Bogota, April 23)





The demands for social and economic justice for the populations most impacted by the capitalist economic model, and particularly women in their nearest territories (neighbourhood, rural properties) still present a risk for their lives and integrity. In Latin American countries, many women are threatened and displaced, disappeared or murdered, for their fight to protect the territories.



The present model of social organisation for care is no longer sustainable, and has driven societies to what is known as a “crisis of care”. This model is based on families (in their diverse expressions, often mono-parental) and is sustained by women’s unpaid work, with insufficient state and market mechanisms to assume social responsibility regarding care (CEPAL 2019). This fact, which hides care’s social aspect, is functional for the reproduction of an unequal society. The critique towards a sexual division of labour, which is in the foundations of feminist thinking, questions the assumption that this division is born with capitalism, and links it with even earlier patriarchal societies (Montaño and Calderón 2010).

According to Olga Segovia, “The sustainability of care systems faces two great challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean: structural inequalities and care governance”. In Colombia, for example, as Natalia Moreno, manager of Colombia’s National Care System, said in the “Feminist cities: Care and Sustainability in ecosystems”, ...care supply is very unbalanced. 19 million women carry out care activities, of which 7 million do so full time, women devote 4 more daily hours than men. Only 28% make contributions toward a retirement pension. 70% of men and 65% of women remain convinced that women are the better carers, and that men do not know how to care after others.





Colombia’s Vice-Presidency is promoting the creation of a National Care System that contemplates forming a National Care System Inter-Sectoral Commission, with the participation of 10 ministries. It also proposes forming an external advisory committee. A district care system is in place in Bogota; it started out in priority territories with a high index of dependency and low institutional presence.

“Feminist cities: Care and sustainability in ecosystems” forum, Bogota, April 23

In Chile, progress has been made towards a diagnosis process carried out by UN Women, aimed at creating the National Care System bill. As Rosario Olivares, head of the Santiago Municipality Gender Department, points out, this diagnosis remains significantly centred on people with disabilities. For Santiago’s case, care was conceived as “City of Care, a community of care, rather than merely a service. This required rethinking the concept” in order to create de Neighbourhood Care System, placing life at the centre, encouraging dialogue between the different existing programmes.





“Presentamos a la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos una opinión consultiva para que se pronuncie acerca del **cuidado como un derecho humano y, a su vez, la interrelación con otros derechos.**”

Ayelen Mazzina,
Ministra de las Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad, Argentina, 2023

In Argentina, as Ayelen Mazzina, Women, Gender and Diversity minister, said in the forum, there is a bill being promoted to enable the creation of a national Comprehensive Care System. The initiative was presented to Argentina’s Congress, and its legislative treatment is awaited. However, in order to make progress towards policies and actions regarding care, the aforementioned ministry promoted during the present government the creation of an inter-ministerial care board.

In this regard, Ana Falú, member of RMyH ALC, noted that “Argentina’s Public Works Ministry created the Inter-ministerial Care Board and has pledged 8.5% of its budget to building care infrastructure in the country; some are already under construction.” In Argentina it has been assessed that, regarding demand, more than 16 million people require care, mainly people in early childhood and with disabilities. Argentina’s Government asked for an advisory opinion early this year to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, to pronounce itself regarding care as a human right and its interrelation with other rights.

Ana Falú also underscored the significance of the Buenos Aires Pledge⁸, ...acknowledging care as a right and the right to care, to time that enhances the value of care work. Crucial aspects are included, such as self-care, community care and care in private companies. Likewise, it invokes the promotion of measures to overcome the sexual division of labour that endures and is a decisive factor in women’s burdens and time. Although the Buenos Aires Pledge is not binding, it is proposed as a duty of the states of Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to go towards a care society, with a fairer social organisation, and promote a new development including gender in the economic, social and environmental spheres.



⁸Buenos Aires Pledge: approved in the 15th Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Conference on Women, organised by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Government of Argentina. The event took place from 7 to 11 November 2022.



In Guatemala there is yet no express care system. There is support for care, but progress is slim. Issues related to food sovereignty or care for indigenous seeds are still undeveloped institutionally.

In Brazil, institutions still address care in a fragmented manner, and with a tight budget. Article 9 of the “My house, my life” law (“Mi casa mi vida”) is seen as progress; from a differential standpoint, it proposes housing access for women who have been victims of violence.

At present, the institutionalisation of care systems through their inclusion in public policies and national development plans is still in its early stages. In a territorial level, progress can be seen, especially in capital cities. This is explained by the fact that it is in the territorial level that care dynamics are made manifest. Care infrastructure can be an instrument for budget redistribution at a national level, but it is necessary for political will to be expressed through national design in the countries, as well as in assigning budgets that may complement municipal budgets.

Care infrastructure must include, in addition to collective institutional infrastructure, measures to ensure appropriate and dignified housing for women, especially carers, with dependents.

It is essential to reflect upon care cities and territories. To conceive safe cities and territories for women and girls, with designed public spaces, with proper upkeep, well lit, accessible, with information and signage, with multi-modal transportation for care. In effect, care goes beyond services and infrastructure. Care systems are closely related to care for the planet and ecosystems, for water, for forests, for seeds, for the earth.

Institutions must also have the support of academia and its perspective on cities, as well as the knowledge of women and organisations working in the territories, for their institutional design and for carrying out policies.



3. Where we are headed

From the constant and persistent work carried out by organisations participating in RMyH ALC in their territories, together with other social and women's organisations, progress has been made towards positioning women's right to the city as a macro right, including issues such as ecosystems in their different scales and with the components of care, food sovereignty, water and housing, among others. One of the strategies – bolstering organisations – has contributed to strengthening women's leadership in an exchange with local and national governments, with the aforementioned results. What we now have is the result of a long journey of commitment, reflection and practical knowledge exchange in the territories, with the women that inhabit it day to day.



Coordinated work that goes beyond specific projects boosts progress, through the exchange between organisations, by which experiences in a certain territory become valuable and can be adapted to the specificities in others.

Our actions facing the concrete realities in the way women and diversities inhabit the city and the territories, as well as the proposals to advance towards them being complete citizens, is supported by the RMyH ALC principles, and in a dynamic interaction between the conceptual, the methodological and the political spheres. We have some certainties, but each interaction brings new

doubts, questions and possible answers that appear with change, both in the macro and micro levels, in cities, territories and populations.

3.1. Concept outlines. The feminist fabric

Even if RMyH ALC is centred on women, our essential interest is the sustainability of life. Hence, our standpoint is women's realities and demands, in order to shine a light on inequality and discrimination, as well as showing paths and possibilities for everybody to live a dignified life.

The projects presented are within the conceptual framework of diverse women's right to the city and the territory, centred in ecosystems related to the development of life, understood as the system in which the community and the natural medium coexist, taking into account the specific characteristics in each territory, and to the home itself as an ecosystem.

Our work in the territories shows how city design leaves out the specific needs of the women and diversities that inhabit it, not only as individuals, but also as people who support others: children, the elderly and people with disabilities or illnesses, among others, without taking into account, for example, the journeys that make up women's day-to-day life (to and from schools, markets, social services such as daycare centres or health centres). In this regard, women present the challenge of collectively building more caring, resilient and safe cities for themselves and for everybody else, and demand equitable spaces where everyone may reclaim their right to the city.

Talking about feminist cities means conceptually addressing women's right to the city, acknowledging and valuing the daily



reproduction of life and questioning the conditions in which reproduction takes place, both in the private and the public spheres. Thus, a perspective on ecosystems related to the development of life arises, as well as a concern for the place and the social organisation of care, availability, control and access to resources, assets and services that sustain life and wellbeing. Likewise, it means acknowledging the interdependent relationship between the community, the environment, the socially constructed territory and the public space, ecosystems which we inhabit, where we live and coexist. We are interested in delving into an understanding of the right to water, to housing, to food within the framework of the right to the city, and underscore the way in which women take on the fight for these rights.



Photo: Cisca, Georeferencing, Marechal neighborhood, Córdoba, Argentina (2022).



Photo: AVP Foundation, Georeferencing of the Bosa city block, Bogotá, Colombia (2021).

A feminist approach to territories also contemplates the processes and leadership of women and other social organisations. The structural nature of the factors that hinder access to the right to the city and territories by women is countered by the resilience in the territories by women who take on leadership roles, beyond their real situation as people in increased vulnerability due to inequality, discrimination and a disproportionate share of responsibility in care work. Likewise, it is possible to observe women's specific role facing environmental and social disasters in the territories, acting in risk management and in care chores, as well as supporting life and preventing violence against women, girls and diverse people.

Our societies' patriarchal and heteronormative gender template was consecrated, historically and culturally, with a conceptual and physical division between productive and reproductive work. This contributed to the latter's invisibility and depreciation (Durán, 2018). In fact, the main obstacle to women's full insertion in the work market is their being overburdened by domestic chores and unpaid care work. When



we talk about cities that care, we not only propose the necessary acknowledgment of reproductive work by women, since this would mean perpetuating this overburden of care work as their sole responsibility (Segovia, 2023). A liberating approach to care implies shared responsibility by the State, social organisations, men and women.

The RMyH ALC experience, both in regards to ecosystem care and the assessment of institutional and social care systems in specific territories in different countries, has allowed us to diagnose these critical obstacles for care: structural gender inequalities, poverty (both economic and regarding use of time and space) and aspects related to governance, with significant differences between the Latin American countries.

It was likewise possible to detect two regional tendencies that have a crucial impact on the care load: the increase in life expectation in the region, which has an essential impact in the burden of caring after the elderly, and an increase in migratory population, which adds a vulnerability factor, especially for women with children and other dependants.



Another priority factor in care issues, and which has had an increased relevance in the social agenda in these past years, are socio-environmental disasters, in their different expressions. They are becoming more frequent due to climate change, and have a particular impact in the care work burden, since their effects can be felt differently not only due to factors such as gender and age, but also ethnicity and race, which hinders the capacity to prepare and response to disaster risks. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) acknowledges the need to adopt an inclusive and participatory gender approach to the reduction of natural risks, giving special attention to people that are impacted disproportionately by disasters (Rodríguez, 2023).

We propose the need to acknowledge care as a right, a proposal presented to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights by the Government of Argentina. This means including standards and principles, as well as actions, policies and programmes, and assigning resources, to the way states act, as well as organised communities, in concrete



• **Decommodify**

Moving away from the idea that “those who can pay can have access”. Having access to care services is a way of reducing social inequalities, by ensuring the rights of those requiring care and those who provide it.



situations, based on human rights principles. In essence, care must be intersectional. According to Diane Elson (2008), acknowledging care as a right means recognising, redistributing and reducing unpaid care work taken over by women, as well as representation and promoting a dialogue between women carers, social collectives in the territory and municipal policies.

The following challenges need to be addressed for women to fully exercise their right to care:

• **Defeminise**

Deconstructing gender roles, making care an option, and including in social protection those carrying out unpaid care work.

• **Democratise**

Promoting shared responsibility between the State, the market, the community and families, and advancing a balance between men and women in the home.

Economic justice for women has been identified as a core focus in institutional and social policies regarding care. An approach from the standpoint of remuneration and compensation is proposed, with the purpose of avoiding the danger of perpetuating the normalisation of care among women. We want recognition in order for work to be valued, and this is why we talk about a care economy.

Issues such as the perspective from rural areas towards urban areas are being laid on the table by women’s organisations living in the cities’ peripheries and rural places. This is the case of Usme, in Bogota, where, as was mentioned in the Forum, women organisations are bringing complexity to traditional outlooks to rurality from an urban standpoint, by encouraging city planning processes to include the concern that, from “the outside”, sees how the city is draining up its locality’s water. Another issue arising in cities such as Bogota with an institutional care system is the difficulty of setting it in motion in rural spaces, due to distances and costs, as well as different population dynamics.



The different approaches to care caution about the danger of seeing women as users, rather than subjects of law, who in addition to receiving services provide them collectively, questioning institutional work and giving numerous contributions, through theory, approaches, behaviour and methodologies, to make care as a right, not as a service, a reality. During the Forum, Maité Rodríguez underscored the case of the Ixtapalapa Utopias (Utopías de Ixtapalapa) care experience in Guatemala, where the great difference regarding other institutional systems is that women see these utopias as their own.

Women in the territories ask themselves how to include men's participation, taking into account that they interact more within the political sphere, while, in general, women are in charge of direct, day-to-day management.

Another important question regarding security and protection for women acting in the territories is how to protect women leaders promoting care actions for the ecosystem, people and communities in high social conflict

areas, such as Latin American cities, where many of these women have been murdered or are being threatened.

Taking into account the interrelation between care systems and environmental crises in the cities, it is considered essential to mainstream not only a gender approach, but also care sustainability. In Argentina, for example, according to Rocío López Arzuaga (CISCSA Argentina), it was noted that, in the recent crisis in the sewerage system, solutions had to take as reference the waste management usually undertaken by women incorporating, empirically, to their chores the vision of the environment where they live as an ecosystem that must be looked after. The need for delving in surveys into the time women allocate to housework and community work was also noted.

During discussions in the Forum, a strategic issue that arose was the need to deinstitutionalise influence. Relations with public administration are not limited to a dialogue with institutions; it is often the case that actions are required to push towards decision-making. As Luz Marina Lurduy remarked, It was women who said a system was needed, and now with France, women negotiated an



Photo: RMyH ALC, Feminist Cities Forum, Care and Sustainability of ecosystems, Bogotá, Colombia, 2023.



agreement so both bet on the care system. In the Development Plan we are stressing the need for a budget and that it becomes an article; otherwise, it dies there. I say this after listening to you yesterday talk about making influence official; I was thinking, establishing alliances with institutions is very important, but institutionality does not meet women's demands. We feminists have made demands nobody had seen before in this society.

3.2. Methodological outlines. Women weaving

Even if ensuring women's right to the city must have a material manifestation for each individual woman, another of our methodological premises is giving priority to **collective work**. In this regard, during the Forum, Ana Falú, from RMyH ALC, warned that we must be careful, in every interaction in the territories, that these interactions do not contribute to overburden even more women's unpaid labour. As she pointed out, This is why feminism has made progress towards proposing a political, theoretical, conceptual objective: what is collective prevails over what is individual. We want water collection or a kitchen garden in each home, but we must think collectively; we don't want more individual kitchen gardens in each house so the woman can make progress, own a washing machine, but spaces and vectors in time, space and cost.

As a methodological priority for RMyH ALC we underscore **process work**. In this regard, Maité Rodríguez has pointed out in the Forum that "Our work is not project-oriented; we work with processes. Lessons don't end when projects end. A project is specific." This ensures the processes' necessary continuity; a horizontal relationship with the communities they interact with, and depth both in personal relationships and in the knowledge of the issues and resilience mechanisms of the territories' inhabitants. This boosts the projects' specific results. As Paola Blanes (Argentina) says, The fact that a micro-project works due to the



Photo: Paula Triviño's exhibition at the Feminist Cities Forum, Care and Sustainability of ecosystems, Bogotá, Colombia, 2023.

existence of a previous experience and a legacy is very valuable. This network logic pertains to RMyH ALC; working in the territory, seeing myself reflected in the experience of the other, is a feminist practice and methodology, and also appertains to RMyH ALC. It is an accumulation, and we are always surprised by the power of working in a network.

Certain processes, such as the Central America Leadership Schools (Escuelas de Liderazgo de Centroamérica), in addition to specific objectives, contribute to maintaining relationships between participants in different processes, as well as knowledge exchange. Likewise, the organisations that compose RMyH ALC do not exist due to the projects; it is the projects that exist because of organisations, and contribute to ensure their continuity. This is the case, for example, of FUNDAC, which for more than four decades has worked constantly for Bogota women's right to the city, or the many women organisations that for more than 15 years have fought for abortion rights in Argentina. The Leadership School today has continuity beyond the project that fostered it, through a WhatsApp group where the participants keep exchanging experiences, as well as keeping alive their friendships and support ties. This has



enabled an international expansion of their members' influence activities and reports.

The possibility of **jointly carrying out the RMyH ALC's projects and actions** in each of the countries and territories, through permanent online meetings – and, when possible, in-person – is essential to bolster collaboration in a network, and to strengthen processes through an exchange of experiences and knowledge. During the implementation of the Leadership School in Latin America, the experience of managing rural orchards in Guatemala encouraged women fighting for housing in Brazil to create urban kitchen gardens. According to María de Fátima Dos Santos, from the Housing Movements Union, in São Paulo, Brazil, “Thanks to this course, we have several colleagues creating kitchen gardens for our comrades in the Housing Movements Union, and producing home remedies.” In turn, the women in Guatemala who worked in water purification projects enhanced their political perspective on this resource when they heard the experiences of El Salvador, the Amazon and Brazil's Southeast regarding water pollution due to mining. Likewise, the political influence work to defend women ecosystems in El Salvador contributed significant instruments for this fight, as well as influence strategies for women in other countries.

The organisations that take part in RMyH ALC are always in a **relationship based on trust** in women's work. Thus, intervention processes come from women. It is they who know their reality well, who know what they need and can provide any possible solution to their problems.

Virtuality as a tool has been reassessed by RMyH ALC, due to the need engendered by the social isolation brought on by the pandemic. Online work, especially in regards to the Leadership School, allowed participants to become familiar with social media, as well as a wide range of online communication media. Likewise, this medium made it possible for RMyH ALC to include a larger number of women to the school, encouraging an

exchange between women in El Salvador, Brazil and Guatemala, which would have been costly had it been in-person. In Colombia, for example, virtuality connected the Leadership School to women leaders from municipalities far from centrality, and with difficulties for in-person meetings. Today, they have received training in women's right to the city and the territory, certified by Universidad del Rosario.

We include, at this point, **alliances with academia** as a methodological strategy. Even if we work from a standpoint that strives to establish the links between the ethical, the political and the practical, our priority, guided by feminism, lies in creating situated, empirical knowledge. We are conscious that behind every good practice there is a theory that supports it. In this sense, we consider our coordination with academia to be valuable, for the opportunity it provides to reflect, direct and systematise our actions. Likewise, and in more pragmatic terms, in the case of the Leadership School, the validation of this



Photo: RMyH ALC, Norma Choc and Graca Xavier, Feminist Cities Forum, Care and Sustainability of ecosystems, Bogotá, Colombia, 2023.

process by universities in El Salvador and Colombia was highly stimulating for the women who participated.

The guideline for the work methodologies prioritised in the “Cities and territories that care” framework was creating knowledge in the territory. In this sense, producing social



maps is an exceptional instrument for comprehending the immediate reality in which women's lives unfold. The geo-referenced maps made by women allow them to organise their perceptions and thoughts regarding what goes on in their territories, aided by gender-based action plans to negotiate with political and social actors, as well as local authorities, that may further women's equality in cities and territories. To this was added the construction of specific instruments, particularly the "Territorial vulnerability index". It was designed and applied to analyse care service provision in Cordoba and José C. Paz, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. With this purpose, population, economic and spatial/urban variables were crossed, in order to assess the specific needs of vulnerable people.

Systematisation is itself a methodological commitment, enabling an exchange with other countries, as well as the local recognition that allows the work to continue.

Permanent outreach campaigns.

Self-care as a daily practice is an aspect that straddles the methodological and the political. We present it here as an aspiration or self-criticism. It is hard for us women to let go of the tendency to do too much, to get in over our heads, even at the cost of our physical and mental health. It is important to reflect on this issue, in order to take care of ourselves, avoiding the incongruence of working for our cities to be spaces that care, for the ethics of care to be adopted as a social and political reference point, at the cost of our own well-being.

3.3. Political outlines. Weaving alliances

Working "on processes" has allowed RMyH ALC to have an accumulate of long-existing political and social relationships in the territory. Over time, feminism, as a political horizon and daily practice, has created slender and strong threads uniting women from social and

political organisations and feminist women that are at present in strategic roles in local and national public administrations. This has created 'consummate alliances' woven through time. Thus, women can count on a deeper commitment, as well as the guarantee that, being in strategic roles, these women will place our demands and use the knowledge we have gathered over time, as well as our proposals, that may be incorporated to plans and policies for women's right to the city.

Working on the territory has allowed us to note that, in addition to close relationships with women's organisations, it is necessary to expand these alliances to include different territorial organisations. The work in Santiago, Chile, on community care practices shone a light on organisations such as soup kitchens, as well as professionals and organisations from the informal sector that could feed people, and without whose organisation capabilities and expertise in managing catastrophic situations the pandemic's effects would have been devastating. This confirmation led us to seek strategies to further a conversation between the care women carry out individually, community care and institutional care systems. In Bogotá, for example, women's organisations that have traditionally worked in community care systems at present comprise the Women's Advisory Council, demanding an increased participation as experts in the design and implementation of care policies, beyond being taken into account only as users of the care supply.

The need to promote and increase the ties between these organisations and women carers was also noted. In effect, these women, restricted to the domestic sphere, are seldom aware of the value of their work, which has been normalised as a feminine role.

This interaction between the private, the community and the public spheres in relation to care demands a complex approach. Even if community services given by neighbourhood organisations contribute to socialise care outside the private sphere of the home, they



present the risk of these tasks remaining mostly women’s responsibility, without an economic and social recognition of their work. Without a distributive public policy improving their working conditions, the ‘collectivisation of care’ in the community sphere may continue to damage and overburden women, especially those in vulnerability situations.

On the other hand, it is important to continue the work of striving to bridge the appropriation gap of women burdened by care work in the home, bringing them closer to a feminist premise: the private is also political. As Ana Falú (Argentina) said in the Forum, “women talk about putting our homes in order, and we can do the same in the territory, with the challenge of owning the narrative of territorial order.”

We can observe demands and needs that surpass the limits of the home: the community territory, the city, urban green spaces. It is essential to bolster the political and social participation of organised women in the territories; this will allow them to exert their perspectives and demands, as well as ensuring

that, once policies favourable for care and the defence of ecosystems are achieved, they may be able to monitor their fulfilment. For this purpose, high-quality qualitative and quantitative data is necessary. Linda Baquero (Colombia) underscores the need for public outreach regarding RMyH ALC’s work: “Many women don’t know about the networks, about collective processes in the territories, and they are great allies; this could allow them to enter spaces they haven’t before. Women citizens must know they exist.”

Regarding the political positioning of care as an issue pertinent to public policies, a favourable outcome in the local and national spheres where it has been applied was observed in Latin American countries. Information such as that supplied by the care project in Bogota, where it could be confirmed that childcare support for children older than five is a significant demand among women, is a qualified reinforcement for the inclusion of this need in the National Care system that is being promoted from Colombia’s Vice-Presidency.

In the international sphere, RMyH ALC calls for strengthened alliances. As Maité Rodríguez





(Guatemala) said in the Forum, it is essential to “build alliances not only at a national level, but also with people reporting on human rights, housing and violence, since they are heard by dictator regimes, or at least they are listened to more.”

3.4 Final reflections. Ana Falú⁹

What distinguishes RMyH ALC from other feminist networks is that we work on the territory's conditions, on the situated conditions of the habitat, of housing, of urban services, of accessibility. And, of course, the fact that our work has, historically, been defined by this: even if all women are deserving of public attention and of public policies, we must be very clear that there are some that have a much higher need. Over time, this distinction is a constant we delve into more and more. There are new, more defined, more straightforward intersections, regarding ethnic-racial, age, disability, sexual identity, territory of origin and population diversity, among other variables.

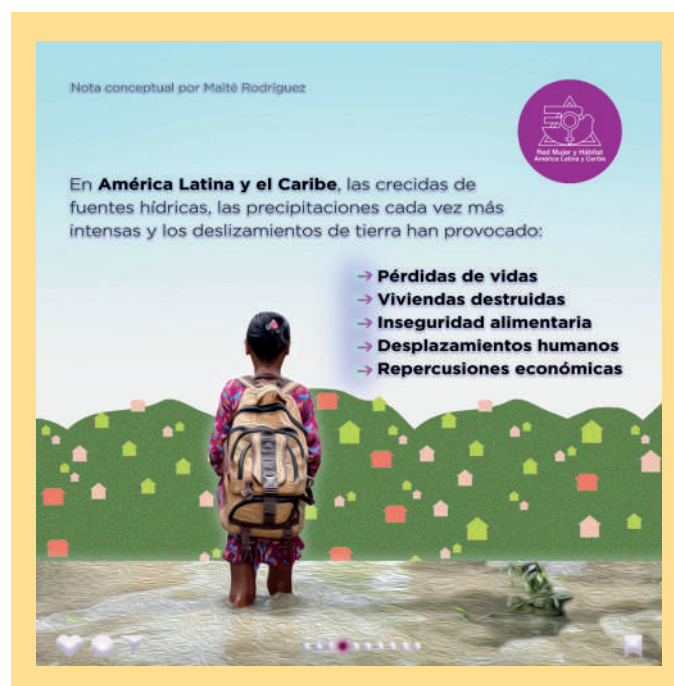
However, our central intersection consists of territories, and this has been the driving force behind our work. The women's territorial vulnerability index is a very specific contribution that tells us much about women and their diversities, about migrant women, about indigenous women, about Black women, about elderly women, among others. This is our central intersection, there is no other concern. This is why we have ties with local governments, this is why we want to influence territorial policies, local policies, territorial organisation plans, territorial budgets. Because it is this what makes a multi-cultural, territorial difference: territory as central variable, territory as active variable.

Focusing on women in increased vulnerability situations defines our outlook. Analysing climate change, food sovereignty, care society issues with this approach guides us, since care doesn't look the same in the rich neighbourhoods of our Latin America (that are

as rich as the richest in so-called developed countries) than in poor neighbourhoods. This is why we talk about territories dispossessed of this urban condition of citizenship.

Work on the impact of food systems by organisations in territories whose knowledge and journeys can be transferred to others include knowledge reasoning lines that have strengthened RMyH ALC organisations, among others. We can refer to the voices of these diverse women, based on their territories, striving to give an account of the impact of climate change in their own realities, of the alternatives the initiatives propose in order to influence political agendas.

Vandana Shiva says that water and the soil are not merely resources, but complex systems on which we must work in order to preserve humanity. This is our shared vision. From Latin America and the Caribbean, we are interested in looking at ourselves in the crisis itself, within this framework. In talking about these voices resisting depredation in Latin America. In talking about extractivism. RMyH ALC is delving into the concept of extractivism,



⁹Intervention by Ana Falú, director of RMyH ALC and advisor for GRRIPP in the forum “Feminist cities: care and sustainability for ecosystems”. Bogota, April 2023.



which, speaking plainly, takes away everything and leaves nothing behind. We are talking about a population left without water because of mining, about agricultural production extracting so much that it leaves behind a desert. This is extractivism on water, on minerals, on the soil. We at RMyH ALC have always said that extractivism begets only poverty, and we have learned already that when there is poverty, the losers are always women, as happened with the crisis unleashed by the pandemic (we have always said this, but interestingly, now ECLAC is saying it too). Those who were managing to rise above poverty before the pandemic were dragged down under the poverty line again. So we know now that when there is extractivism, when there is expulsion, when there is poverty, women are the first to suffer the consequences.

This predatory and fragmenting idea that is made manifest in the territories demands a perspective on the concept of urban extractivism, related to the financing of urban assets and housing, as well as the displacement of impoverished sectors towards the city's outskirts and margins.

In Argentina, as is the case in all of Latin America, in recent land invasions the majority of participants have been women with children. This is a concerning issue and it is linked to what we have said. Women's right to the city, as Lucía Villafañe says, must take into account the inter-relation between all of these aspects, in order to attain a political perspective on these processes, and see how we can ensure a real influence on governments, how we can include policies, how we can include regulations.

Women's right to the city is the great conceptual umbrella; the right to its material use, the right to its instruments and its management elements, the right to break with this intangible world of the symbolic that perpetuates violence against women. We can witness it in daily matters, such as traffic lights showing an icon of a man, or street and square

names, or these statues of sirs brandishing swords on horses in every public space, and not a single female nurse, or midwife, there being so many valuable women who have contributed so much. This is why we strive to ensure women's rights, to go deeper and coordinate among ourselves in order to strengthen leadership, to put in place processes for ecosystem care. This is why we strive to influence the policies. And care is an important reference point we have been working on, and into which we have delved for many decades.

In the '90s the main concern was childcare. That was the main focus, since we were convinced that if women had no way of being autonomous regarding this task, that means caring after a little person from morning to night (since humans are the only ones who take so long to become independent), we knew we could not have autonomy. Later, life showed us how complex care is, and feminism led us to other approaches. In addition, in the fourth World Women Conference we attained a significant achievement: for the first time, Latin American and the Caribbean states had statistics disaggregated by sex. They didn't exist before, but we discovered a significant qualitative leap there: working on time use.

Since the late '90s and early 21st century we increased the number of official statistics institutes in every country in the region, which took on this challenge. This is a product of the region; it was not given to us. We won it through hard work. What we did from RMyH ALC was contribute to this time use the aspects of space and territory. Thus, when we analyse variables such as time, space, territoriality, material costs and symbolic costs of care in women's lives from the intersection of territories they show a reality: territories are not homogeneous. This is why we are working on the territorial vulnerability index, on how these territories respond, how these conditions are addressed or worsened, both social and natural situations.

As we were able to confirm, that time, that



cost, that inequality in the territories regarding roles due to sexual division show us every day that cities are conceived and built for an adult, working male. Therefore, they are uncomfortable and hostile for those who are not male, are not adult and are not employed. This is what we are questioning: this andro-centric city, conceived in a masculine key; this city that does not think of women. A city that doesn't care has no housing, no dignified shelter, because if there is no housing there are no rights. Housing is the entry point to rights, as our colleagues from the São Paulo Housing Movements Union say.

The RMyH ALC reaffirms and insists upon making the collective a priority, and it is in this territory that we can think of care infrastructure as a real instrument for social levelling. The more we prioritise inequality territories, the more we will level the field and create autonomy. It is imperative for feminists to shine a light on care, as we have done with violence against women. Care is also a feminist agenda issue on which we must insist, because defeminising, decommodifying and depatriarchalizing are powerful demands we must repeat over and over. They will be hard to attain, we know that well. This is why a commitment by women, cooperation agencies, GRRIPP and foundations to the concrete actions of feminist organisations, of collective grassroots women's groups to support women in leadership is essential, in order to advance towards this deconstruction.

This cannot be done from top to bottom. We need the commitment and the political will from above, no doubt, and the resources, but we must bolster the processes to insert this issue and make it a public concern, a topic of public opinion. We have long debated about this, because we say that when it is a public issue, it means we will have succeeded in putting it in the agenda; let nobody think they have a right to say something like, "Well, if women are mothers, aren't men fathers?"

These basic concepts regarding the sexual division of labour – regarding this idea of care

upon which we have reflected and advanced towards, but that is not inserted in the social collective – once we have succeeded in including them from the foundations of communities, of neighbourhoods, of organisations, that is when as a society we will have understood that we cannot talk about a productive world without talking about the reproductive world. We will understand that they are on a continuum, just as we talk about private and public violences as a continuum.

We must talk about care, reproduction and production as each demanding something from the other. This is what Marta Lamas says; that it will be the way for women to really be able to escape the reproductive sphere. Our responsibility and the territory have much to do with this. This is something we who work on territory know very well. Where are houses located? How is the house (the place of daily life, of social reproduction) located regarding production areas? This is why the city, as a concept, is conceived more from a productive standpoint, while the neighbourhood is seen from a reproductive perspective. The neighbourhood is in the domestic, feminine scale, it is the place where relationships are weaved, where care takes place.

The state has a responsibility, but so have society and the communities. We must demand clear subsidies from the State, straightforward, transparent support.

These are the aspects that have emerged as issues, as lines that deepen a debate, and that are related to territories. Because they have to do with these commuting costs on life, particularly women's lives, and how a city is conceived of functionally. A city, a neighbourhood that acknowledges and values women is one that redistributes care work for dependent persons, but also community and collective work. When there is a need for water, for an orchard, that is when these issues cross; it must be a collective, public and social responsibility.

The accumulate of relationships in a group of



networked organisations such as RMyH ALC based on joint experiences, on paths travelled, is not fortuitous. It has an enormous value as a concrete achievement in each concrete exchange with feminist women that are including our reflections and demands in the public agendas of municipal administrations. It is the value of what we have achieved in each moment and each concrete exchange. In this sense, RMyH ALC must support initiatives such as the Government of Argentina presenting a consultive opinion for care to be considered a legal right to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Colombia's initiative to create a

National Care System is also promising for the country and the region, as is the work taking place in the Bogota City Hall with the District Care System. The project in Santiago to locate the headquarters of its proposed municipal care system in a historic heritage building has a symbolic meaning; transforming it into the house of care has a value that goes beyond the material.



Our commitment as feminists, beyond specific projects, is to give processes continuity, to keep on working together, to keep on weaving, as a network.





BIBLIOGRAPHY

Contreras Hernández, Paola; Trujillo Cristoffanini, Macarena (2017). “Desde las epistemologías feministas a los feminismos decoloniales: aportes a los estudios sobre migraciones”. In: Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social. Vol. 17, num. 1, pp. 145-162. Athenea Digital. Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Dalmazzo Peillard, Marisol (2017). Quién cuida en la ciudad. Oportunidades y propuestas en Bogotá. ECLAC. <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/42428-quien-cuida-la-ciudad-oportunidades-propuestas-bogota-colombia>

Durán, María Ángeles (2018). La riqueza invisible del cuidado. València: Universitat de València.

ECLAC, (2020). América Latina y el Caribe ante la pandemia del COVID – 19. Efectos económicos y sociales. <http://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/45337>

Elson, D. (2008). “Recognize, Reduce, and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work: How to Close the Gender Gap. New Labor”. In: Forum. Vol. 26, issue 2, pp. 52-61.

Falú, Ana María (2014). “El derecho de las mujeres a la ciudad. Espacios públicos sin discriminaciones y violencias”. In: Vivienda y ciudad 1, pp. 10-28. <https://bit.ly/3r3C95T>

Ferry, Luc (1992). “La ecología profunda”. In: Vuelta, pp. 31-43. <https://www.uv.mx/mie/files/2012/10/SEION4-9Sept-Ecologia-Profunda-Ferry.pdf>

GOLD (2022). Caminos hacia la Igualdad Urbana y Territorial. Estrategias locales de transformación para combatir las desigualdades. Barcelona: Global Observatory of Local Democracy and Decentralization. Unidos United Cities and Local Governments.

Lozano, Betty (2010). “El feminismo no puede ser uno porque las mujeres somos diversas. Aportes a un feminismo negro decolonial desde la experiencia de las mujeres negras del Pacífico colombiano”. In: La manzana de la discordia, 5(2), pp. 7-24. Recovered from <http://manzanadiscordia.univalle.edu.co/volumenes/articulos/Vol5N2/art1.pdf>



Montaner, J. M. and Muxí, Z. (2011). Usos del tiempo y la ciudad. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona.

Montaño, Sonia and Calderón, Coral (2010). El cuidado en acción: entre el derecho y el trabajo. ECLAC notebook N° 94 (LC/G.2454-P). Santiago: ECLAC. Recovered from: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/27845/1/S2010994_es.pdf.

UN WOMEN, ECLAC (2020). Cuidados en América Latina y el Caribe en tiempos de COVID-19: hacia sistemas integrales para fortalecer la respuesta y la recuperación. Recovered from: <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/45916-cuidados-america-latina-caribe-tiempos-covid-19-sistemas-integrales-fortalecer>

Pascual Rodríguez, Marta and Herrero López, Yayo (2010). “Ecofeminismo, una propuesta para repensar el presente y construir el futuro”. In: Boletín ECOS N° 10 (CIP-Ecosocial), January-March 2010. Madrid: Centro Nacional de Recursos Ambientales. Recovered from: https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ceneam/articulos-de-opinion/2010_06pascualyherrero_tcm30-163649.pdf

Piazzini, Carlo (2014). “Conocimiento situado y pensamientos fronterizos: una relectura desde la universidad. Geopolítica(s)”. In: Revista de estudios sobre espacio y poder, 5(1), p. 22. http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_GEOP.2014.v5.n1.47553

UNDP (2022). Los Cuidados Comunitarios en América Latina y el Caribe: Una aproximación a los cuidados en los territorios. Recovered from: file:///C:/Users/Owner/Mi%20unidad/Doc%20sept%202017/Consul%20tor%20CC%2081as/AVP%20cuidadores/doc%20cuidado/Cuidados_Comunitarios_09112022.pdf

RMyH ALC (2023). Documento de sistematización – Proyecto: “Ecosistemas en la gestión de desastres con enfoque de género en contexto de pandemia por el COVID 19”. Red Mujer y Hábitat de América Latina y el Caribe. Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala.

RMyH ALC (2023). Documento de sistematización – Proyecto: “Ciudades y territorios que cuidan: sistemas locales de cuidado con enfoque de género”. Red Mujer y Hábitat de América Latina y el Caribe.



Rico, María Nieves and Segovia, Olga (2017). ¿Quién cuida en la ciudad? Aportes para políticas urbanas de igualdad. Santiago de Chile: ECLAC.

Rodríguez Blandón, Maité (2023). Nota conceptual – Mesa sobre Ecosistemas en las Ciudades y los Territorios.

Segovia Marín, Olga (2023). Nota conceptual para debate Mesa de Diálogo Sistemas de Cuidado.

Tacoli, C. (2012). Urbanization, gender and urban poverty: paid work and unpaid carework in the city. Urbanization and Emerging Population Issues Working Paper, N° 7. New York: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) / United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Villafañe, Lucía (2022). Document for RMyH ALC.

Zibecchi, C. (2020). “Cuidar a los chicos del barrio: trabajo comunitario de las cuidadoras, expectativas y horizontes de politización en contextos de pandemia”. In: Sanchís, N. (comp.). El cuidado comunitario en tiempos de pandemia... y más allá. Buenos Aires: Asociación Civil Lola Mora.

Graphic pieces made by María del Mar Caicedo, with photos owned by RMyH ALC.



The UKRI Fund award "Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (GRRIPP)- Networking Plus Partnering for Resilience" (AH/R005370/1) is funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund and executed by a collective of universities mentioned below.





Red Mujer y Hábitat
América Latina y Caribe

FUNDACION AVP
PARA EL DESARROLLO SOCIAL



www.redmujer.org.ar

