The illustration features three women in the foreground, looking towards the right. The woman on the left has grey hair and wears a blue top with a yellow and pink necklace. The woman in the middle has long dark hair and wears a green top. The woman on the right wears a wide-brimmed hat and a colorful striped shawl. Behind them is a large, colorful parrot with yellow, green, and blue feathers. In the background, there are green mountains and a blue body of water. A red line graph with an upward-pointing arrow is overlaid on the scene. In the bottom left, there is an oil pumpjack, and in the bottom right, there are industrial smokestacks.

**URGENT
ACTION
FUND**
Latin America &
the Caribbean

Extractivism, the pandemic, and other possible worlds

Economic recovery and alternatives from the women
defenders of territories in Latin America

URGENT ACTION FUND FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE SPANISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN - UAF- LAC

A Publication of the UAF-LAC Women and Territories Program

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1.- Colectivo de Dirección: Colectivo de Dirección is a UAF LAC's shared collective leadership space composed of the three Senior Coordinators and the Executive Director. It was created in 2019 as a feminist commitment to build collective leadership and to act as key support to the Executive Director. Since January 2021, and later after the sensible passing of Tatiana Cordero, former Executive Director, the "Colectivo de Dirección", has been in charge of the executive management of UAF LAC.

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(K'ak'ak 'Na'oj Women's Development Association) – Guatemala

Asociación por el Desarrollo de la Península de Zacate Grande ADEPZA
(Association for the Development of the Zacate Grande Peninsula) – Honduras

Asociación de Mujeres Campesinas y Populares de Caaguazú AMUCAP-C
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Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de Tejutepeque ADIT
(Association for the Comprehensive Development of Tejutepeque) – El Salvador

Asociación de afectados por el proyecto hidroeléctrico el Quimbo ASOQUIMBO
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Associação União Quilombola Araçá Cariacá
(Quilombola Union Araçá Cariacá Association) - Brazil

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(National Council of Indigenous Women) - Argentina

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(Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) - Honduras

Consejo indígena Maya Ch'orti' de Olopa, Chiquimula
(Maya Ch'orti' Indigenous Council from Olopa, Chiquimula) – Guatemala

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(Collective for Autonomy/Local Knowledges) – Mexico

Comisión de Mujeres Víctimas de la masacre de Curuguaty
(Women Victims of the Curuguaty Massacre Commission) – Paraguay

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(Defenders of Life and Pachamama Association, Cajamarca) – Peru

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(Carmen de Chucurí Resistance Movement Against Mining and Extractives) - Colombia

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Movimento Pela Soberania Popular na Mineração MAM
(Movement for Popular Sovereignty in Mining) - Brasil

Movimiento de Mujeres de Santo Tomás
(Women's Movement of Santo Tomás)- El Salvador

Asociación de Mujeres Ambientalistas de El Salvador AMAES
(Environmentalist Women's Association of El Salvador) - El Salvador

Mujeres del Pueblo Indígena Leco
(Indigenous Women from the Leco People) - Bolivia

Mujeres Changas de Tocopilla
(Changas Indigenous Women of Tocopilla)– Chile

Movimiento de Mujeres por la Vida de Cajibío, Cauca
(Women's Movement for Life in Cajibío, Cauca) – Colombia

POPOLNA- Nicaragua

Red de Mujeres Campesinas del Valle Aguán
(Campesinas Women's Network of Valle Aguán) – Honduras

Saramanta Warmikuna- Ecuador

Mujeres Kichwa de Sarayaku-
(Kichwa Indigenous Women of Sarayaku) - Ecuador



We honor their transformative power.



Extractivism, the pandemic, and other possible worlds:

Economic recovery and alternatives from the women defenders of territories in Latin America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

11 **PREFACE**

PART 1

Extractivism and economic recovery in Latin America in the Covid-19 pandemic context

18 **Chapter 1**
Extractivism, development and the continuation of processes of globalization and fragmentation of nature

22 **Chapter 2**
Two sides of the same coin: traditional extractivism and green extractivism

22 2.1. Old and well-known extractive projects
26 2.2. “Green” extractivism: expansion and diversification of extractivism
30 2.2.1. Extractivism related to the transition of the energy matrix, industrialization, and conservation
39 2.3. Prioritization of extractivism, state investment and concentration of wealth

42 **Chapter 3**
Extractivism in Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of Covid-19

43 3.1. Covid-19, economic crisis and inequality in Latin America
45 3.2. National perspectives: economic recovery and deepening of the extractive model
56 3.3. Regional perspectives: multilateral organizations and proposals for recovery

62 **Chapter 4**
Community responses to extractivism led by women

Part 2

From the visible world to the possible world: women defenders, extractivism and Covid-19

66 **Introduction**

69 **Chapter 1**
The impacts of extractivism on the lives of women

69 1.1 Violence against women defenders of territory
71 1.2 Economic insecurity
73 1.3 Impacts on the health of women and children
77 1.4 Denial of socio-cultural rights
79 1.5 Obstacles to the participation and organizing of women defenders of territory

84 **Chapter 2**
The multiple types of violence faced by women defenders of territory in times of Covid-19

84 2.1 Increase in domestic violence during the pandemic
87 2.2 Violence and fear as devices of state control
90 2.3 Information as a device of control
91 2.4 Structural racism and precariousness of public services amid a health crisis
95 2.5 Selective quarantine and economic precariousness

102 **Chapter 3**
Community alternatives: the multiple forms of resistance of women defenders during the Covid-19 pandemic

105 3.1 Of garlic, herbs and ginger: health in our hands
111 3.2 Economic sustainability of women and their communities
116 3.3 Community mechanisms for communication
120 3.4 Prevention of contagion and community protection mechanisms
121 3.5 Collective care and sustaining resistance

126 **BIBLIOGRAPHY**



PREFACE

The journey of UAF-LAC

The Urgent Action Fund for Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is a feminist fund, whose mission is to support the protection and care, sustainability, and transformative power of women, trans and non-binary people who defend human rights and their territories in Latin American and the Caribbean region. To do so, it is essential to understand their experiences, as well as the problems and structural inequalities that they experience in their fight for rights. Since our founding in 2009, we have understood that extractivism has profound impacts on the lives and bodies of women, feminized and non-binary people in the region. Similarly, we have learned from various feminist perspectives about the clear relationship between the exploitation of nature and the exploitation of women in the mode of operation of extractivism, as well as its patriarchal nature.

In 2013 we created the Women, Territories and Environment Initiative, which in 2016 became a program. During these years, we have strengthened our actions to support the defense of territories and rights of indigenous, *campesinas*, black, fisherwomen, *riberena*², and *quilombola*³ women from the region by facilitating spaces for exchange and joint action between Women human rights defenders (WHRD), collectively constructing knowledge, and consolidating our Strategic Support,³ a funding mode that seeks to strengthen women-led organizations and movements in defense of territories. In addition, we have embarked on a path to support with greater understanding and depth the intersection between sexual and gender diversities and defense of territory, recognizing the contributions of trans and non-binary people in these processes.

Over the years we have been inspired and have come to know more deeply the realities and resistances of women defenders, seeking the best ways to contribute to their struggle for rights. In 2019 we held our third regional meeting of women land defenders in Colombia, in addition to other meetings for experience and knowledge exchange among the organizations that we have supported. We have also joined the demands of territory defenders through specific actions including advocacy, communication, and participation in collective initiatives and networks. As part of our contribution to the construction of knowledge on these issues, we share reflections and tools that can be useful for the territorial defense processes of the groups we support. This publication is a fruit of that mission.

2.- Communities traditionally living near the edges of rivers and which mobility, livelihoods and economy are directly interlinked with those.

3.- Afro descendent population whose actions involve resistance to black slavery through the construction of rural and urban communities and free cooperative labor.

Our reflections are nourished by the work of various actors committed to the understanding of Latin American socio-environmental conflicts from diverse ambits. In this sense, we use as our starting point the reflections and experiences of the women defenders we accompany, as well as the contributions made by other women's and feminist funds, organizations and social movements in Latin American and the Caribbean.

Our perspective has also been nourished by the contributions of various academics in Latin America, the Caribbean and other regions who have worked on the conceptualization and criticism of extractive logic. We highlight the contributions made by academics committed to local struggles such as Maristela Svampa, Astrid Ulloa, Diana Ojeda, Martina Careta, and Sofía Zaragozín, among others. In addition, we have studied and incorporated the perspectives of diverse feminisms, including community, black, and decolonial feminisms, which deepen our understanding of the intersections of struggles in our region. We have learned especially from their reflections on the elimination of racism, classism, ableism, lesbo-trans-homophobia, and from their integral vision between body and nature; we highlight the contribution of Guatemalan community feminism in the category of *territorio cuerpo-tierra* (body-earth territory).

The reflections recorded in this text are inspired by the work and experiences of all of them. We honor them for their courage, creativity, and critical perspective in the face of socio-environmental conflicts and the various oppressions that they experience, as well as their struggles for justice, equality, and equity.

Why this publication and why now?

Extractivism and the paradigm that supports it continue to pose a threat to the survival of communities and the sustainability of territories in our region. The dynamics it imposes leave deep scars on the bodies and lives of women and peoples. In addition to being an existential problem that runs through the daily life of the people directly impacted, it is also a global problem that supports the systemic logic of production and consumption, which involves in varied ways peoples, communities, corporations, governments, and international organizations.

This global nature of extractive logic, however, does not stop women defenders of territories, who are moved by a vital force to protect their land, their community, and future generations. In the face of non-systemic reforms and false solutions to the inequalities generated by capitalism, women defenders embody daily resistances as they develop other possibilities and alternatives to the impositions placed on their bodies and territories. These initiatives rethink and propose alternative logics in the relationship with nature, self and collective care to sustain life in all its forms.



In 2016 we launched the publication **Extractivism in Latin America: Impact on Women's Lives and Proposals for the Defense of Territory** in which we highlighted the differentiated impacts of extractivism on women, including the deepening of all forms of violence against them, precarious working conditions and no recognition of necessary caring activities, loss of economic autonomy and food sovereignty, violation of the rights to health and participation in matters related to the environment and in community processes, increase in networks of sexual exploitation, loss of cultural identity, weakening of women's community and ancestral roles, and the unfolding of multiple attacks on the lives and integrity of women defenders of territory. Today, 5 years later, we launch this publication with our updated analysis including the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is our intention that this publication will serve as a useful tool for those

who face extractive projects in their territories as well as for those who accompany them.

The need to rethink the logic of power and our relationship with the planet was already evident with the ongoing humanitarian, socio-economic and environmental crises, and has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The effects of the pandemic were and continue to be highly differentiated among countries and social groups, reflecting deeply rooted structural inequalities in Latin America, which mark differences in access to public services between urban and rural populations and as well as by class, race, and gender.

Far from rethinking the destructive dynamics that brought us to this point, state and economic powers are planning paths forward, focused exclusively on an economic recovery centered on deepening exploitation of nature. This not only worsens the multidimensional crises that we face as humanity and as a region, but also presents an intensification of the threats to the peoples and communities that have not stopped, even during quarantine.

With this publication, UAF-LAC seeks to contribute to the understanding of the economic context of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and to share useful information for women's organizations and movements related to the financial dynamics that contribute to the intensification of extractive activities in their territories, as well as the plans of governments that support and facilitate these projects. The analysis contained herein does not claim to be exhaustive, and places a greater emphasis on the countries of Central and South America, given that this is where the Women

and Territories Program has had a major activity, and as a result, is where we have more in-depth knowledge of the reality of women's organizations and local contexts.

Women defenders of territory facing extractivism in times of the pandemic

The language of economic policy is an inaccessible language for many women because it is part of a universe dominated by rich and white men. This information is not intended to be accessible to communities impacted by extractive projects, who are directly implicated in these processes. For this reason, **the first part of this publication**⁴ represents an effort, supported by Catalina Quiroga – a Colombian expert researcher on the subject – to present tools for analytical and political discussions on large-scale extractivism. Both old and new forms of exploitation and possible future trends of extractive activities in the region are analyzed, in light of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We know that women defenders are the primary experts on how extractive industries operate at the local level, however, their efforts to hold corporations accountable for the damage they cause often go unanswered, while at the same time they receive no support from public bodies that are responsible for guaranteeing their rights. There is a large gap between what moves women to act for their territories and the interests that drive actors involved in extractive projects. This is why knowing the universe of meanings through which such actors mobilize and organize presents the possibility to expand resistance strategies against the advance of extractivism and to combat their capitalist, patriarchal, and colonial operational logics. Our objective is to provide inputs to strengthen strategies of mobilization, organization, and resistance.

The second part of this publication focuses on what motivates women to act for other women, their communities, and their territories, recognizing the possibilities that arise from other ways of viewing life and relating to the land. Far from presenting a romantic and idealized vision, we want to evidence the transformative strength of women to build other realities that are palpable in their territories and that continue to respond to the contexts that oppress them, sowing other possibilities from their identities, knowledges, and experiences based on care of nature and life.

4.- This publication was built from secondary sources where the following stand out: documents produced by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, documents produced by the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, as well as press releases and national legislation of several countries from the region. Another source for the development of this section were the reports and documents produced by Latin American observatories of mining and extractive activity, social organizations, and civil society interested in the issue.

At the same time, it is also our obligation to make clear that these proposals emerge from realities that are often harsh and difficult, especially in critical moments such as the one we are currently facing as humanity. The second part of this publication reflects this duality, through an exercise that seeks to weave the voices of indigenous, black, *campesina*, fisherwomen, and *riberaña* women, carried out with the support of Elizabeth López Canela, a Bolivian researcher with a long career in theorizing and denouncing the effects of extractivism on the lives of Latin American women.

Our journey is inspired by the desire to make possible these other worlds proposed by women and communities in resistance. Such proposals emerge from the often hard and difficult realities of women in the region who use the reality of their contexts as a transforming force to build other tangible realities in their territories, sowing other possibilities from their identities, knowledges, and experiences of care for land and life. We invite everyone to get to know the two universes that this publication presents – two visions of the same reality, which when compared and contrasted, can be useful to broaden reflections and possible paths towards justice, freedom, and transformation in *Abya Yala*.

UAF-LAC Work Team





PART 1

**Extractivism and Economic
Recovery in Latin America in the
Covid-19 pandemic context**

CHAPTER 1

Extractivism, development and the continuation of processes of globalization and fragmentation of nature

Extractivism is a phenomenon with colonial roots based on the exploitation of large amounts of natural resources. Despite its predatory nature, extractive activities have occupied a central place in the economic policies of countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean for several centuries, and currently affect all countries of the region. Extractivism has been reinforced at the cost of the intensification of damage to nature and to communities and their territories, both in rural and urban contexts.

There are four characteristics that, considered in a comprehensive manner, allow us to understand extractivism as a phenomenon that keeps transforming and affecting the access to the right to a dignified life. These aspects allow us to deepen the analysis of the relationships and interdependencies among various forms of extractivism, and to reflect on their possible manifestations in the framework of economic recovery during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Extractivism is a project anchored to development discourse

To understand the relationship between development discourse and the extractivist project, it is necessary to recognize the way in which societies with industrial economies have built their relations with countries of the Global South, imposing a historical model on the interactions between work, nature and forms of production and reproduction of life (Patel and Moore, 2017).

Development discourse took force on January 20, 1949, when Harry Truman, then president of the United States, labeled Latin America and the Caribbean, and other countries of the Global South, as a pantry of raw materials and unskilled labor for the world, in need of foreign intervention⁵ (Escobar, 1998). **From that moment, and supported by this discourse, multilateral organizations, economic powers, and companies dedicated to the exploitation of nature began to invest in strengthening the primary sector as the economic engine of countries of the Global South.**

5.- Excerpt from speech: "I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development. Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens" (Truman, 1964).

This white and capitalist way of thinking about relations and the international distribution of work was later translated between the 1970s and 1990s, into what Svampa calls the "commodity consensus"⁶. This process was characterized by consolidating a new economic and political order sustained by the increase in international prices of raw materials. This boom, it is assumed, would provide economic advantages to countries that produce this type of material. However, this process, based on development discourse, generated new socio-environmental asymmetries and inequalities throughout the Global South, including Latin America and the Caribbean (Svampa, 2013).

2. Extractivism implies processes of fragmenting nature

Fragmentation processes turn nature into a "natural resource", stripping it of previous local meanings and relationships (Shiva, 1996). **"Putting a price" on nature, which is, turning it into a data or figure, impedes a complex reading of the socio-ecological relationships within nature.** For example, fragmentation separates water from rivers and turns it into liters, or the sun from plants and turns it into volts, or coal from the earth and turns it into tons. **In short, extractivism turns nature into a series of exchangeable commodities for monetary value in international markets.**

3. Extractivism implies processes of globalization of nature

Extractive activity has been adapting to the forms of supply and demand of so-called raw materials worldwide (Gobel and Ulloa, 2014; Ulloa, 2014). Buying and selling processes on an international scale created relations between places so called producing peripheries and others called trade centers (as we mentioned in the first section, in this world order, Latin America and the Caribbean constitute producing peripheries). This type of productive chain leads to the deepening of inequalities and economic dependence of the peripheries on the decisions made in trade centers (Slipak, 2014).

6.- Commodities are all the goods of nature that become merchandise. Commodities are characterized by having an exchange value in international markets. Rice, wheat, gold, and oil, among other forms of nature characteristic of extractivism are known as commodities.

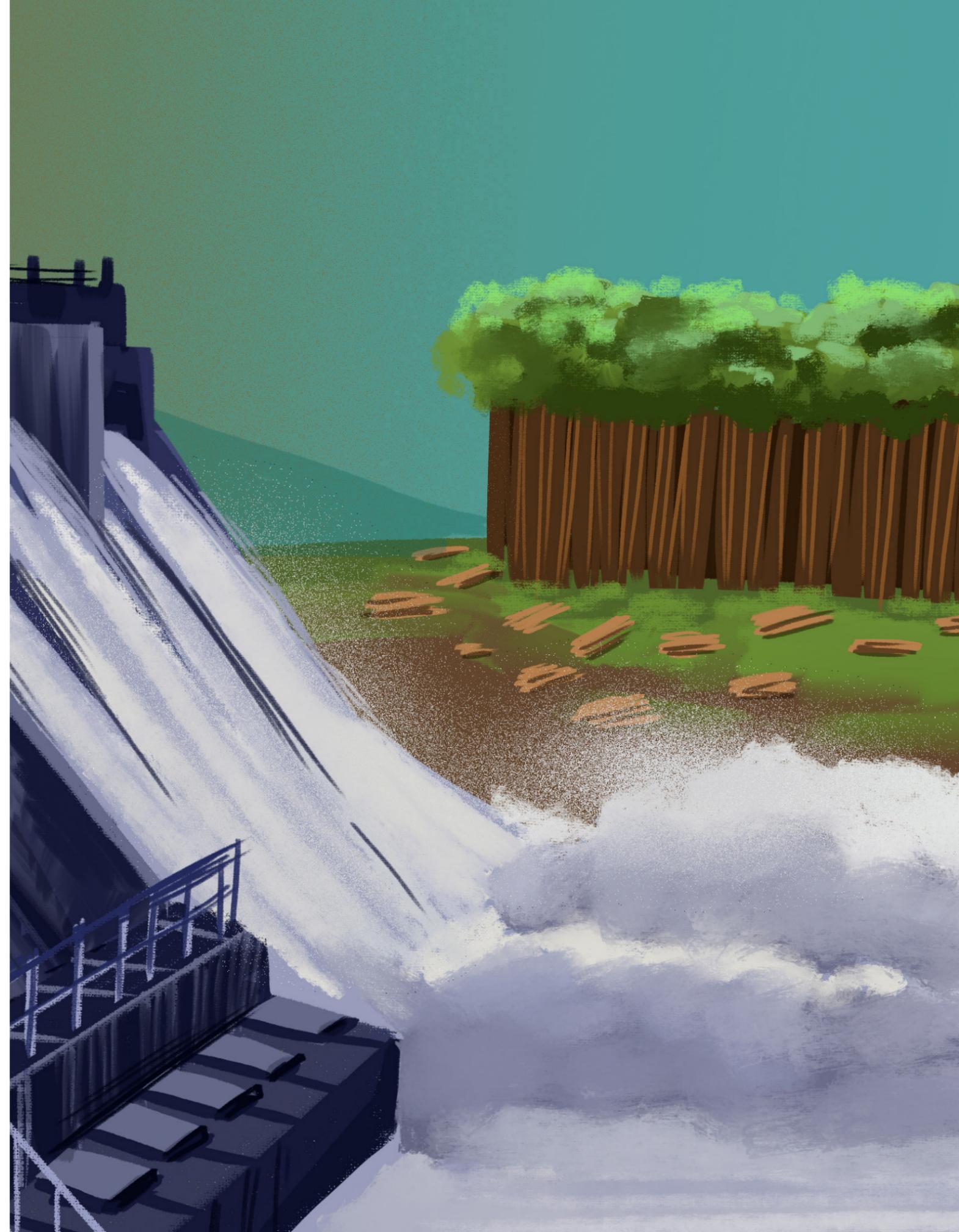
4. Extractivism implies a dispute between different forms of knowledge production

The fragmentation and globalization of nature are based on Western technical knowledge that excludes other ways of relating to nature. This knowledge is supported by narratives of “expertise” that understand human relationships with nature to be solvable via scientific, technological, and economic techniques. Thus, extractivism favors the idea of controlling nature through applied science (Altvater, 2016). The problem is that the process of technification results in the discreditation of local demands and know-how (Godfrid et al 2020; Budds, 2012).

Taken together, these four characteristics of extractivism help to understand why, while extractive activities mean progress or money for some, for many communities they imply the dispossession of daily logics, autonomy, and forms of reproduction and care of life. **The socio-environmental conflicts that derive from extractivism are a dispute between these ways of understanding relationships with nature, paired with unequal power relations that superimpose one vision of the world on others.** To analyze the implications of extractivism in everyday life, it is important to recognize these conflicts along with the loss of autonomy resulting from the imposition of extractivism in territories, which configures a series of dispossessions.⁷

“Dispossession is a violent process of socio-spatial reconfiguration, and in particular socio-environmental reconfiguration, that limits the ability of individuals and communities to decide their livelihoods and ways of life. Dispossession implies a profound transformation of the relationships between humans and non-humans that results in restrictions to access resources. This often translates into the impossibility of making decisions related to territory, life itself and one’s own body; dispossession is associated with loss of autonomy” (Ojeda, 2016; 34)

7.- See Ojeda, 2016; Composto, 2012; Seoane, 2013. For them there are various forms of dispossession ranging from loss of land and displacement of communities, to loss of cultural tradition and ways of relating to nature.



Chapter 2

Two sides of the same coin: traditional extractivism and green extractivism

Here we want to characterize, on the one hand, a few of the most frequently documented forms of extractivism present in Latin America and the Caribbean and, on the other, certain forms of extractivism anchored in “green”⁸ discourses of sustainable development that are gaining increased force in the region and the world’s economic discourses. Likewise, we address the connections between old and well-known forms of extractivism and *green transitions* driven by discourses of environmental sustainability. **It is important to mention that there are interdependencies between several types of extractive projects, hence, in many places, communities face not only one extractive activity but several.**



We do not intend to make an exhaustive study of extractive activities in the region, rather we want to offer an overview of projects that can be characterized under the umbrella of extractivism. Additionally, it is important to mention that this publication characterizes **large-scale extractivism** and does not include local forms of exploitation of nature, since these, in addition to being vital for sustaining daily life, are not part of the dominant economic paradigm to which we refer.

2.1. Old and well-known extractive projects

Old and well-known extractive projects are those activities related to the extraction of raw materials to meet energy needs through the use of oil, gas, and coal (fossil fuels) and food needs through agro-industries, as well as those dedicated to the production of metals and materials for construction, technology, and luxury industries (mining). In these forms of extractivism, nature is part of the market, and the process of exploitation is a necessary activity to sustain capitalism. In other words, nature is a pantry that seems to have no limits.

The following diagram presents the three main types of extractivisms that belong to this first category. To these three activities is added the construction of infrastructures for the connection of markets and the necessary logistics for their export. It is important to mention that, since they are interdependent, these activities are related and cyclical processes. For example, mining requires energy for exploitation as well as infrastructure for export.

Illustration: Old and well-known extractivisms, interconnections and affectations



These types of extractivisms are interconnected and respond to a global demand for raw materials

8.- We use quotation marks because the effects of these processes are far from being sustainable for territories and communities.

Source: Own elaboration.

Specifically, the exploitation of hydrocarbons is related to the usability of oil deposits and natural gas, which can also be associated with coal deposits. This type of exploitation has been one of the most widespread in the Latin American context. Even progressive governments have used revenues from hydrocarbon exploitation to promote social policies (Gudynas, 2010). Additionally, oil is the basis of the current energy matrix; its use is essential to produce the energy needed by industrialization and international connection processes in the region.

For its part, mining, which can be carried out underground or on the surface, is the extraction of minerals, metals, and construction materials from the subsoil that range from coal to precious metals and, more recently, rare materials associated with the technology industry, such as coltan. This type of exploitation implies the intensive and localized use of nature. Agribusiness is also an old and well-known form of extractivism. This activity is based on historical inequality related to access to land and a logic based on monoculture for export and labor exploitation. High rates of inequality in access to land in the region intensify urbanization processes, generating new displacement and transformations in the daily life of rural communities.⁹ The indigenous, black and *campesina* communities that decide to remain in the countryside have seen how agribusiness has gained ground, affecting their food sovereignty.

Some countries in the region have focused their agricultural development policies on strengthening monocultures to produce biofuels. This state investment has been accompanied by the flexibility of environmental policies in most countries. Consequently, in addition to the deepening of inequalities related to land tenure in rural areas, this activity has been one of the main causes of deforestation and loss of biodiversity.¹⁰ Large-scale extractive activities also include raising of animals for consumption, such as the livestock industry and fish and poultry industries, as it reproduces the logic of exploitation of labor relations, local territories, nature, and of the life and bodies of non-human beings.

Finally, old and well-known extractive activities would be impossible without the construction of roads, airports, dams, ports, and other infrastructure projects that connect exploitation enclaves with international markets. It is important to mention that the construction of such works is traditionally the

Some countries in the region have focused their agricultural development policies on strengthening monocultures to produce biofuels. This state investment has been accompanied by the flexibility of environmental policies in most countries.

9.- According to OXFAM (2016) the Gini coefficient for land in the region (an indicator between 0 and 1 where 1 represents the maximum inequality) is 0.79, with 0.85 in South America and 0.75 in Central America. These values indicate that land ownership in the region is in the hands of a few. At the local level this implies that rural populations do not have access to land, which affects their lives and food sovereignty.

10.- Commercial agriculture – mainly cattle ranching and soybean and palm oil cultivation – is estimated to have caused 40% of regional deforestation. According to the FAO report on Forests (2020b), around 420 million hectares of forest have been lost since 1990 (FAO, 2020b).

responsibility of subsidiaries of the companies that carry out exploitation and, in most cases, the projects are paid for by States with public money or with money related to the acquisition of debt at the national level.

The markets associated with mining, agribusiness, and hydrocarbon exploitation, as well as the construction of infrastructure, continue to exist and are central to investment decisions of governments of the region. As we will see in the next section, these forms of exploitation transition or combine with new “green” tendencies of exploitation, fragmentation, and globalization of nature, deepening inequalities and dispossession of communities.

We recognize that the climate crisis is closely related to the logic of development, modernization, and prevailing ways of life in society. Therefore, it is important to clarify that we consider it necessary and urgent to promote measures and public policies focused on mitigating climate change, with the decarbonization of economies also being key.

For this reason, we find it worrying that solutions to global socio-environmental problems are coordinated and centralized by the actors and logics that brought us to this critical juncture. The initiatives and mechanisms that are being proposed by financial institutions, States, and multinational corporations for the energy transition and the decarbonization of the economy, for the most part, follow the same logic of old types of extractivism operating in our region. For this reason, we consider that the solutions to the climate crisis have ignored other paths, types of knowledge, and logics in relation to land that could be effective in curbing or slowing down the destruction of nature.

For this reason, we consider it essential to raise the alarm about the initiatives that, from the paradigm of sustainable development, continue to reproduce processes that do not care for life from a collective perspective, that do not consider local logics and knowledges, that do not respect the times of nature and of communities, and that ultimately advance with great strides the destruction of life on Earth.

2.2. “Green” extractivism: expansion and diversification of extractivism

The extractive activities known as “green” are supported by discourses associated with technological and “sustainable” solutions to the environmental crisis, particularly climate change and the need to move towards new forms of energy production. Although the path of implementation of these forms of green extractivism began after the signing of the Kyoto protocol in 1997, it was not until 2015¹¹, with the signing of the Paris Agreement and the adoption by the United Nations of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, that green extractivisms began to gain greater relevance and visibility in global political and economic agendas.

This push for new “green” forms of extractivism has been made possible through foreign investment in impoverished countries. Therefore, these transitions do not imply radical transformations of the economic system, but rather integrate new parts of nature into the international commodities trade (United Nations, n.d., web), resulting in the expansion of the extractive frontier and the deepening of dependency and debt on other countries and large corporations.

Green extractivism continues to generate effects similar to those produced by the old and well-known forms of extractivism. We highlight the way in which they impose themselves upon territories, affecting the autonomy of local populations as well as the relationship between communities and nature. Additionally, green extractivism deepens inequality in land ownership, daily dispossession of land, water pollution, and the precariousness of rural life, among others.

In this sense, so-called “green” extractivism¹² deepens and diversifies the forms of exploitation of nature, given that they integrate new elements into the exploitation catalog such as biodiversity, new metals such as coltan, and monocultures such as oil palm and sugarcane to produce biodiesel as an alternative to oil combustion.

11.- Prior the Paris Agreement, the progress made in the Rio+20 Convention should be highlighted.

12.- The concept of “green imperatives” allows us to approach this type of green extractivism. Ojeda (2014) defines “green imperatives” as those “hegemonic narratives about the environment and its effects on the production of spaces and subjects that are often involved in the configuration of deeply unequal geographies of capital, mobility, and security” (Ojeda, 2014, 255).

Energy matrix: a key concept to understand the “green” transformations of extractivism

The energy matrix is the combination of different primary sources to produce energy. As a project associated with the mitigation of climate change, the transformation of the energy matrix implies reducing the use of energy produced by coal, oil, and gas (decarbonization), whose burning is the main culprit of carbon emissions that cause climate change. The idea behind this transition is to promote clean forms of energy production – with less CO₂ emissions – such as wind energy, solar energy, or energy produced by hydroelectrics and biofuels. Electromobility¹³ in this transition process is central to thinking about the energy future.

Without an environmental justice approach, the energy transition proposed from hegemonic technical knowledge deepens the implementation of old and well-known extractivisms, given that, on the one hand, it requires the use of metals such as copper, cobalt, or lithium to improve the performance of batteries and for circuits that allow efficient distribution of wind and solar energy. And on the other hand, this process requires that companies dedicated to the exploitation of fossil fuels expand their markets and integrate new forms of green extractivism that are key to sustaining capitalism.

However, despite the rise of the energy transition process, Latin America and the Caribbean’s energy matrix continues to be anchored to two sources, one that is supposedly “green” as well as an old and well-known form of exploitation. The first of these is hydroelectric energy, which by 2020 contributed 55% of the total energy consumed in the region and, the second, non-renewable thermal energy – energy that is produced by fossil fuels – which in 2020 represented 41%. It is important to highlight that only 2% of the energy consumed in the region was produced by renewable energies, such as wind or solar energy (SieLAC-OLADE, 2020).

To fulfill the global agenda associated with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, some of the old and well-known forms of extractivism have transformed and expanded the forms of exploitation of nature. The following tables present how, along with the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals, these transitions to green forms of extraction have occurred, and how they are considered key to closing gaps and promoting sustainable development in impoverished countries.

It is key to recognize that these transits do not imply that the old forms of extractivism are on the way to extinction, rather that they are associated with new forms of extractivism and anchored to the discourse of sustainability.

13.- With electromobility we refer to the change from the use of cars that use fuels such as gasoline towards electric automobiles.

Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Interference in the emergence, fusion, and transformation of extractivism
 SDG 2: Zero Hunger	Within the international agenda, mass food production continues to be a key element for closing inequality gaps. This massive production affects local forms of production and local diets.
 SDG 4: Quality Education	Based on the assumption that access to technology is necessary to reduce inequalities related to quality education. Thus, this goal seeks to generate technological advances to guarantee digital inclusion for access to education and the modernization of educational institutions.
 SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	Includes a goal of decarbonization of the energy matrix, hence its centrality in the transition processes from old and well-known forms of extractivism towards green forms of non-polluting energy production.
 SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	Requires technological advancement that expands the storage capacity of clean energies, which translates into the need for batteries that require metals in their production. Additionally, this goal seeks to promote diverse forms of energy that can sustain cities as an ideal form of land use.
 SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	Is central to thinking about the transformations of extractivism focused on forms of consumption of nature and energy production to produce interchangeable goods. It promotes the transformation of traditional forms of consumption and green and localized consumption, which are materialized in the dispossession of natural resources of local communities, for example, in relation to tourism.
 SDG 13: Climate Action	Is key to the energy transition process and the emergence of new extractive forms under the umbrella of sustainability. Action focused on tackling the climate crisis that brings together several of the arguments for the transition from old and well-known forms of exploitation to new forms of exploitation of nature.
 SDG 15: Life on Land and Ecosystems	Promotes and provides the general technical bases for conservation and preservation. As will be seen later, this objective encompasses forms of extractivism such as those associated with ecotourism and REDD+ projects.

Own elaboration

Transformations and connections between various forms of extractivism

Own elaboration

Sector and extractive practice	Old forms of exploitation	Sustainable Development Goal: demands for a process of transformation	Green transformations
Mining	Surface mining: (i) Gold and precious metals (ii) Coal as part of the basis of the old energy matrix		Some minerals necessary to develop these technological advances are: • Lithium • Copper • Zinc • Coltan Mining for fertilizer production: Potassium carbonate for the expansion of the agricultural frontier
Hydrocarbons	Exploitation of elements such as: • Oil and natural gas as the basis of the old energy matrix		Energy production based on: • Biodiesel that causes the expansion of the agro-industrial frontier • Construction of hydroelectric plants • Wind and solar energy
Agribusiness, livestock industry and the fishing industry	• Monocultures for mass food production • Production of supplies, such as soybeans, for raising livestock		• Food and mass production • Production of supplies for raising cattle • Expansion of the agricultural frontier to produce biofuels • Transformation of production systems that are friendly to conservation. Food production and preservation must go hand in hand.
Tourism and conservation	• Globalization of spaces of nature, culture, and local ways of life • Expansion of the international market		• Sustainable tourism • Ecotourism • Projects associated with REDD+
Infrastructure for development	State construction of public works such as: • Hydroelectric plants • Roads and highways • Airports • Shipping ports		



SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 15: Life on Land and Ecosystems

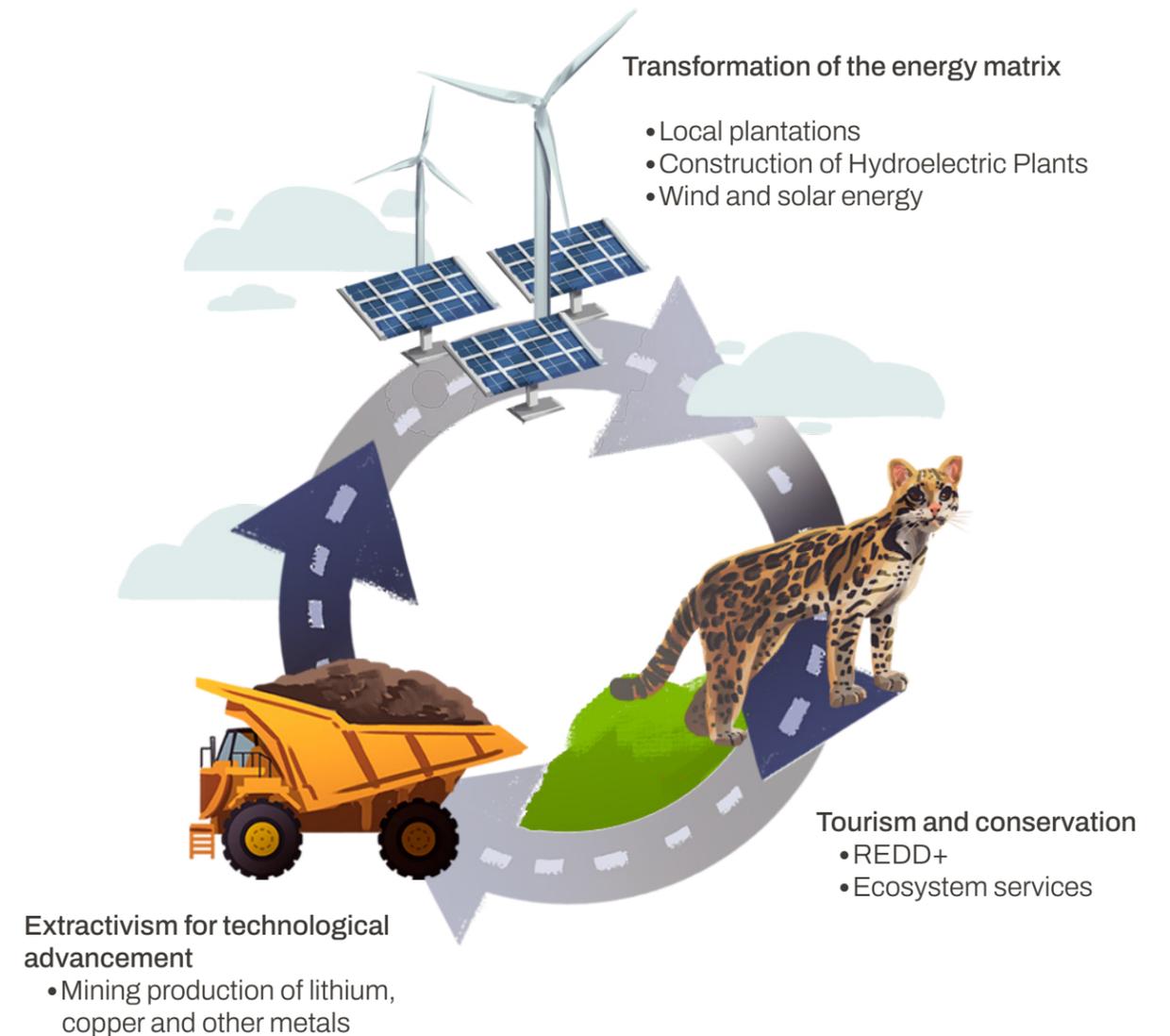
Faced with the transformations and mergers associated with the discourses of sustainability, social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as the World Movement for Forests (2019) mention that “the dirty secret of this transition is the exponential expansion of mining in the Global South, which is necessary, for example, to satisfy the massive demand for ‘green’ energy in the form of electric vehicles” (Movimiento Mundial por los Bosques [World Forest Movement], 2019: web). Other criticisms related to the energy transition indicate that the participation of communities in decisions about energy production should be guaranteed as a fundamental right.

In any case, the debate surrounding the green extractive market and the energy transition is becoming increasingly relevant in conversations about extractivism in the region. Faced with the accelerated importance of green extractivism, old forms of extractivism began to transform. For example, the Glencore company has already announced the withdrawal of its investments in the El Cerrejón coal mine in northern Colombia¹⁴ and has strengthened its international production and logistics business for the transport and sale of monocultures under the name of Viterra, which today has investments in soybean production in Argentina.¹⁵

2.2.1. Extractivism related to the transition of the energy matrix, industrialization, and conservation

The following diagram presents some of the possible green forms of extractivism that already exist or may emerge in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that may become a trend as part of the economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic. Within this type of extractivism, activities related to the transition of the energy matrix, mining of key materials for technological advancement, and activities associated with tourism and conservation stand out.

Green extractivism: transitions towards other forms of exploitation of nature



These types of extractivism are interconnected and respond to a global demand associated with sustainable development

14.- For information on changes in the Glencore company, see: El Colombiano (2020). Glencore anunció su retiro de Colombia (Glencore announces that it is leaving Colombia). Retrieved from: <https://www.elcolombiano.com/negocios/empresas/glencore-se-va-de-colombia-porque-su-operacion-minera-no-es-rentable-GH14575344>

15.- For more information about Glencore Agriculture businesses see: <https://www.viterra.com/What-we-do/Exploring-our-network>

Source: Own elaboration

Forest plantations, monocultures for biofuels, and climate-smart agriculture

These types of extractivism are characterized by the implementation of monocultures or control of crops that result in the expansion of the agricultural frontier, one of the main causes of the loss of biodiversity throughout the world, as well as other imbalances in ecosystems. Forest plantations include the cultivation of timber species, generally non-native, for commercial use and, may be related to large companies' environmental compensation, through reforestation projects. Within forest plantations, we highlight the cultivation of trees such as teak, pine and eucalyptus, which are characterized by high water consumption and causing soil erosion. Among the plantations to produce biofuels, transgenic corn, soybeans and sunflowers, as well as palm oil, sugar cane, some timbers, and cellulose stand out.¹⁶ These require large amounts of land and water for their production, in addition to chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which generate health problems for people and neighboring crops and impacts agri-food diversity.



The expansion of monocultures to produce biofuels has intensified worldwide, due to the influence of the sector on national laws and international treaties. The United States signed the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA Law) and in 2015, with the Paris Agreement, the European Union established that, to fulfill the promises set forth in the international treaty, by 2020 it would increase by 10% the use of renewable fuels.¹⁷ These international policies generate an increase in the demand for biofuels, which implies that producing countries relax their environmental and agricultural policies and create programs to promote these types of crops.

One of the central crops for production is palm oil, called African palm in some countries. This monoculture is used to produce biofuels and is also used in the food industry. In other words, this product is anchored to both the old and well-known extractivisms and to the transition towards green extractivism. Currently, Asian markets meet the high demand for oil palm products, and it is estimated that, by 2050, world demand will be at 310 million tons (Meijaard et al 2018). The high rates of deforestation and loss

16.- Biofuel Federation of Colombia. <https://www.fedebiocombustibles.com/nota-web-id-923.htm>

17.- For more information on the actions of the European Union regarding the transformation of the energy matrix and the Paris agreement, see: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/climate-change/paris-agreement/>

of productive lands that Asian countries have suffered due to the cultivation of palm oil are displacing the expansion of this monoculture towards Latin America and the Caribbean. Today, this monoculture is current in Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Brazil, Honduras, and Costa Rica¹⁸.

Finally, we highlight the incentives given to “climate-smart agriculture” by organizations such as FAO and the World Bank in the mid-2010s. These mechanisms seek to adapt agricultural production to climatic adversities and to increase its efficiency. They often promote the widespread use of non-native and genetically modified seeds so that crops adapt to climate change and production rates remain high. This is part of the fulfillment of the second Sustainable Development Goal, related to Zero Hunger. Faced with programs for the unification and normalization of crops, the declaration of the Peoples' Summit (2014) mentions that the use of transgenic seeds “ready for the climate” deprives peoples of their fields, their autonomy, their *campesina* economies, and food sovereignty. These “climate-smart” mechanisms are a solution based solely on technical knowledge, the objective of which is to continue the expansion of monocultures, in many cases at the hands of large multinational corporations. In addition, it places the effort to reduce emissions only in the countries of the producing periphery, instead of encouraging the reduction of consumption in the countries of the Global North.¹⁹

Construction of hydroelectric plants

Hydroelectric plants are infrastructures linked to the transformation of the energy matrix. In 2019, Latin America was the second region in the world with the highest existing capacity to produce hydroelectric energy. This production was concentrated in Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru (in descending order). Brazil ranks second in hydropower production in the world, after China. The International Hydropower Association (IHA) estimated that in 2020, of the world's total energy production generated by dams – about 1,308 Gigawatts –, Brazil contributed 109.06 Gigawatts (IHA, 2020).

The construction of mega infrastructures to produce energy constitutes a form of extractivism that supports both old and well-known exploitation systems as well as new “green” methods of producing energy. Many hydroelectric plants, in addition to generating energy, are also the fundamental source of water for mining ventures or for the expansion of

18.- The Inter-American Development Bank states that: “Latin America not only has the greatest potential for crop expansion, but also faces the great challenge of improving production per cultivated hectare. In the region there are countries such as Guatemala, which has the highest yield in the world (an average of 5.41 tons of crude oil per hectare [t/ha])” (Ordoñez, 2018).

19.- To see more about Climate Smart Agriculture, see: <https://br.boell.org/pt-br/2014/09/18/agricultura-climaticamente-inteligente-problemas-e-mitos>

agro-industrial frontiers. It is key to recognize these alternative functions of hydroelectric plants to be able to analyze their impacts.

The flooding of lands, almost always fertile and productive, for the construction of dams has displaced entire communities, and their construction has involved human rights violations throughout the region, including the persecution, criminalization and murder of defenders of territory.²⁰ In fact, this type of infrastructure is one that produces the greatest socio-environmental conflicts, as evidenced in the construction and commissioning of the Belo Monte dam in Brazil, considered the third largest in the world.²¹ The construction of this dam, in addition to affecting the flow of the Xingú River, its tributaries, and the dynamics of its entire ecosystem, impacted several local communities, generating an increase in the rates of violence, femicides, sexual exploitation, and the loss of food sovereignty (Marcelino and Fernandez, 2020). It is worth mentioning that its operation dries up the Xingú watersheds, leaving the riverside and indigenous communities without access to water, changing local logics for subsistence.²²



Similarly, for more than 12 years the communities of Antioquia, Colombia, have firmly opposed Hidroituango, a large-scale hydroelectric project. The project profoundly affected the Cauca River, impacting the living beings that inhabit the water basin and the relationships of the communities that depend on its ecosystems. Likewise, it deepened the dispute over land tenure and increased violence amid the armed conflict, with local leaders suffering threats, attacks, and murders. Such attacks worsened in 2018²³, the year in which the construction of the dam suffered serious reversals related to errors in the planning and management of the risks associated with its construction.

In summary, “green” projects associated with the production of hydroelectric energy fragment nature, as they do not consider the whole river basin including interconnected rivers, and value water only as a unit of measurement, converting it into liters for energy production, irrigation,

20.- <https://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/BrazilianEnvironmentalDefenders.aspx>, <https://riosvivoscolombia.org/activacion-de-alerta-temprana-urgente-sobre-situacion-de-riesgo-inminente-para-integrantes-del-movimiento-rios-vivos/>

21.- <https://co.boell.org/es/2020/04/20/la-hidroelectrica-de-belo-monte-problemas-sociales-fracasos-del-estado-y-la-lucha-de-las>

22.- <https://amazoniareal.com.br/o-rastro-de-destruicao-de-belo-monte/>

23.- For more information see: Publications of the Historical Memory Center on the case of Hidroituango at: <https://centrodehistoriahistorica.gov.co/tag/hidroituango/> and Peligro para defensores ambientales en 2018: el caso de Hidroituango en Colombia de Mongabay Latam (Danger for environmental defenders in 2018: the case of Hidroituango in Colombia by Mongabay Latam) in: <https://es.mongabay.com/2019/01/hidroituango-defensores-2018-colombia/>

and other extractive activities related to these large infrastructures, such as large-scale mining. Hydroelectric plants are large-scale projects that have irreversible impacts on the territories and the dynamics of the communities that live along the rivers.

Wind and solar energy production



Wind energy production uses wind currents and solar energy uses the sun's rays to produce electrical energy. In this research we consider the extractive nature of these energies, classified as clean, when their production is structured in large wind or solar farms that occupy large areas of land and require large-scale exploitation of minerals such as copper and lithium for their installation. These metals are key for the operation of electrical circuits of panels and mills, as well as for storage and transport of these energies.

With an eye towards climate solutions, the world supply to produce these energies is increasing. According to the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC), Latin America installed 13,427MW of onshore wind power capacity in 2019, 12% more than in 2018. In the region, the countries with the highest production are Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil; Chile and Colombia are emerging

markets. For its part, the Caribbean is projected as a strategic territory to produce solar energy, which is reflected in the investment projects of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for the coming years.

These two types of energy production involve extensive land use due to the installation of large-scale infrastructure, including storage plants and power lines for the transport of energy. This has displaced rural, indigenous, and black communities, affecting their territories and their relationships with the land. In most cases, these projects are installed without consulting or considering the people who live in those places.²⁴

24.- Problemática en torno a la construcción de parques eólicos en el Istmo de Tehuantepec (Problems around the construction of wind farms on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec), Revista Desarrollo Local Sostenible (Sustainable Local Development Magazine), Grupo Eumed.net y Red Académica Iberoamericana Local Global (Global Local Ibero-American Academic Network), Vol 4. N° 12 www.eumed.net/rev/delos/12. Viewed at: <http://www.nacionmulticultural.unam.mx/mezinal/docs/4797.pdf>

Lithium in Latin America: new minerals, the transformation of the energy matrix, and technological growth

Electromobility, the improvement in batteries for technological devices such as cell phones or laptops, and the installation of energy storage plants produced by wind or solar energy are just some of the “clean” energies that use lithium. Due to its wide use in “green” technologies, the demand for this mineral is increasing.

Currently, the value of the international lithium market is around 2 billion USD, with an optimistic projection of 7.7 billion USD for the year 2022 (Hernández, n.d.). Given that its extraction reproduces the traditional form of mineral extractivism, this is an activity with a wide impact on territories and communities.

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), lithium is found in reserves of seventeen countries, with 53% of world reserves located in a region called the “lithium triangle”, which consists of northern Argentina and Chile and southern Bolivia. One of the key places for the promotion of this sector is the Salar de Uyuni, considered a natural paradise and a crucial place for the life of local fauna and migratory birds. Lithium is presented as a strategic resource in Latin America’s role as a key supplier of raw materials for the transition of the energy matrix and the promotion of electromobility.

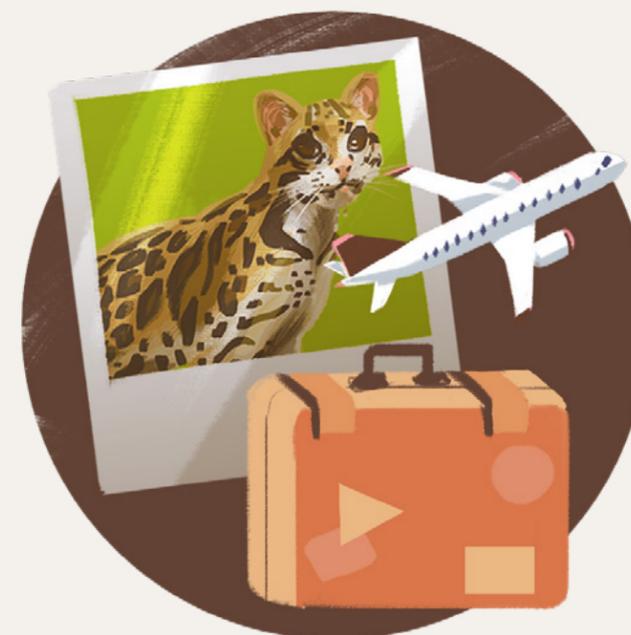
Regarding the role of States in the exploitation of lithium, it is important to mention that Argentina is the only country where any private company can access the reserves of this mineral in exchange for a royalty of less than 3%. In Bolivia and Chile, lithium was declared a “strategic resource”. Chile decided to grant exploitation contracts to two transnational companies and Bolivia created the state company YLB (Bolivian Lithium Deposits) (Nacif, 2020).

Even beyond the impacts on the specific sites where the facilities are located, the large footprint of cables and power plants to transport energy impacts numerous communities along their route, these communities are not usually considered as impacted populations in the environmental licensing processes of such projects. Finally, it should be noted that most of the territories where these projects are installed do not have access to electricity and do not benefit from the implementation of wind or solar farms. This implies that despite the installation of the projects, precarious conditions continue, and structural inequalities and injustices deepen.

Tourism as a form of extraction²⁵

Although there are few studies on this topic that cover all of the Latin America and the Caribbean region, we recognize that the region, and especially Caribbean countries, have prioritized tourism as an economic engine. In 2019, the tourism economy, which includes tourism registered with national entities²⁶, represented 26% of total GDP in the Caribbean and 10% in Latin America. In addition, it accounted for 35% of employment in the Caribbean and 10% in Latin America (ECLAC, 2020: web).

These figures, much higher than those produced even by the hydrocarbon exploitation sector in countries such as Costa Rica²⁷ and the Dominican Republic, invite us to observe the characteristics and ways in which tourism affects many communities and their territories. Even countries whose GDP depends on the export of hydrocarbons, such as Colombia, have turned their gaze towards tourism as a source of wealth. In 2018, the president of Colombia, Iván Duque, said that “tourism is Colombia’s new oil. I do not say this with the intention of speaking ill of the traditional oil sector. It is the new oil because it is a generator of employment, investment and opportunities” (El Tiempo, 2018).



In some cases, tourism is associated with the promotion of the Caribbean and Latin America as natural paradises, where the bodies of Latin American women and other feminized bodies are traded as a commodity. Additionally, large-scale tourism concentrates economic income and privatizes public spaces such as beaches, forests, and mountains, depriving communities of important spaces in their relationship with the land and also generating precarious working and living conditions²⁸.

25.- When we speak of extractive tourism, we refer to tourism promoted by international or national chains that usually require the construction of large hotel infrastructures to support the massive flow of tourists. Local tourist activities that constitute community and environmental alternatives for economic sustenance are not included, because they are promoted autonomously by the communities themselves, guaranteeing a sustainable relationship with their territory.

26.- This figure includes all tourist activities registered with the entities in charge of regulating tourism in each of the countries. This means that if a community project has achieved commercial certifications, it is included in this figure. Other unregistered local projects are not included in these international figures.

27.- To see the general contribution of tourism for countries like Costa Rica, see: <https://www.hacienda.go.cr/content/12542-sobre-costa-rica>

28.- An example of these processes can be consulted in the work carried out by Diana Ojeda and Jordi Gascón titled: Turistas y campesinado. El turismo como vector de cambio de las economías campesinas en la era de la globalización (Tourists and rural workers. Tourism as a vector of change in small rural economies in the era of globalization). See: <http://www.pasosonline.org/Publicados/pasosoeedita/PSEedita12.pdf>

REDD+ and the reduction of Greenhouse Gases

The REDD+ strategy stands for “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation”, with the + symbol implying a component of sustainable forest management with the participation of local people. The strategy was promoted at a global level by the projections of the “green economy” as an alternative to conserve forests and strategic ecosystems, through financial support to local communities that depend on these biomes, or under the logic of CO2 “compensation”. In any case, the initiative can transform the ways in which local communities relate to nature by placing a monetary value on its conservation and on ecosystem services, including the production of oxygen and the reduction of CO2. Until 2014, a total of 117 of these projects had been registered in Latin America, mainly in Brazil, Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador (ECLAC, 2014).



However, social movements, such as the World Rainforest Movement²⁹, consider that the strategy derives from a political claim of countries of the Global North to control strategic ecosystems and the lands of local communities by integrating them into international markets, which implies the globalization of nature (Carrere, 2011). In these cases, including local forests and communities in the carbon credit market constitutes a type of extractivism, since conservation prohibits the productive use of forests by local communities, imposing a commercial logic that breaks the relationship between people and the forest³⁰. Furthermore, this strategy holds communities responsible for its success or failure, without considering that external interests are often the cause of large deforestation in community territories.

In conclusion, this “green” strategy constitutes an imperative that depraves local communities of their traditional ways of relating to nature (Ojeda, 2014), as it is based on a vision of conservation from the Global North. In this view of caring for nature, forests are viewed as being devoid of people and human interactions and it is believed that interaction should be limited to the management and preservation of biomes, denying the socio-environmental relationships already existing in forests.

29.- Carrere, R. (2011). Una visión crítica de REDD. Cambio climático y justicia ambiental. Una introducción (A critical view of REDD: Climate change and environmental justice. An introduction). Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales (ILSA, Latin American Institute of Legal Services), Bogotá, 229-241. Accessed via https://www.ecologiapolitica.info/novaweb2/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/039_Carrere_2010.pdf

30.- Some documented cases on the effects of REDD+ projects in local communities in Ecuador, Peru, and Costa Rica, can be found compiled in the book produced by a coalition of organizations against the mechanism, titled: NO REDD!. See: <http://no-redd.com/espanol/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/REDDreaderES.pdf>

One of the major criticisms of this strategy is that in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change the very definition of forest does not distinguish between primary forests and forest plantations. Thus, companies that promote plantations of timber trees such as eucalyptus, pine, acacia, and rubber can enter the global market for carbon credits, despite the deforestation of native plants that these plantations may have caused. Additionally, the initiative allows polluting companies and industries to use vast areas of forests to offset their carbon emissions, which instead of reducing their emissions means that they expand their control over forests.

2.3 Prioritization of extractivism, state investment and concentration of wealth

The interconnection between the chains of extractive activities seen above concentrates wealth in a few hands. At the national level, in Latin America and the Caribbean, these activities do not represent a source of wealth for public coffers, as profit remains in the hands of private companies who are responsible for the exploitation and commercialization of “natural resources”. This only excludes cases such as Venezuela and some operations in Argentina and Bolivia in which the countries nationalized extraction companies. Despite this, national governments continue to bet on the growth of the sector³¹, although recent indices (2018) show that earnings from the export of natural resources did not exceed 10% of the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product in any country in the region.³²

This prioritization of the extractive sector generates economic dependence of the region's markets on international capital and increases its vulnerability to changes in the distribution of economic powers. **Thus, extractivism, in all its forms, is positioned as a key activity for governments, yet its returns are insufficient to consider it an important activity for the growth and sustainability of the region's economy. Additionally, the prioritization of these types of activities affects regional economies in the long term and deepens socio-environmental inequalities.**

The following table shows the contributions of extractive activities to national economies in 2018.

31.- In fact, according to ECLAC, the low productivity of the region responds to the productive and export profile that concentrates the generation of wealth in a reduced number of extractive activities (ECLAC, 2019), a scheme that is beneficial for international corporations.

32.- It is important to mention that activities related to the export of national goods and services, such as the industry for the export and sale of technical and professional services, represents between 26% of the Gross Domestic Product in most Latin American countries. Of that 26%, only 10% is contributed by extractivism.

Economic contributions of extractivism to National GDP (Gross Domestic Product) (2018)

Country	Total contribution of export of goods and services to GDP	Main economic sources related to extractivism	Total contribution of export of natural resources to GDP
Argentina	17.29%	Export of oil and natural gas, forest rents	2.24%
Bolivia	24.97%	Export of oil and natural gas	7.79%
Brazil	14.32%	Export of oil and natural gas	4.64%
Chile	28.20%	Metals, copper	12%
Colombia	15.89%	Oil and coal export	5.51%
Costa Rica	33.75%	Agriculture	0.82 %
Ecuador	23.39%	Oil export	7.71%
El Salvador	29.54%	Forest rents	0.6%
Guatemala	17.70%	Forest rents	1.68%
Honduras	26%	Agriculture	12%
Mexico	39.06%	Export of oil and natural gas, forest rents	3.48%
Nicaragua	45.11%	Forest rents	2.82%
Panama	42.54%	Agriculture	2.24 %
Paraguay	34.67%	Forest rents	1.2%
Peru	24.19%	Export of oil and natural gas, mining, and forest rents	8.90%
Dominican Republic	23.67%	Agriculture	1.45 %

Source: Own elaboration using World Bank data, retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/commodity-markets#1>



Chapter 3

Extractivism in Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of Covid-19

The Covid-19 epidemic was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020. Since then, governments around the world have taken steps to prevent the spread of the virus. Latin America and the Caribbean is the second region in the world with the highest number of infections, with an estimated 18.82% of the total reported cases. The countries with the highest number of infections are Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Chile respectively (IDB, May 2021, web).³³

In this section we illustrate how extractive activities were positioned as a priority over concern for the lives of peoples in situation of higher vulnerability, who were attended by governments with limited resources or were not attended at all. Both for the promotion of extractive sectors and to generate policies to assist the health emergency, States of the region were dependent on international debt mechanisms. In this context, **extractivism was positioned as an alternative for generating money during the health crisis and as a form of economic recovery promoted and designed with the support of large international corporations.**



33.- <https://www.iadb.org/es/coronavirus/current-situation-pandemic>

3.1. Covid-19, economic crisis and inequality in Latin America

The health emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic deepened pre-existing social, economic, political, and cultural inequalities in the region. Added to these inequalities, the entire region is facing an unprecedented economic crisis: the worst in the last 120 years, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). **According to the same organization (2020), some of the reasons for this critical situation have to do with dependence on international markets, corruption, lack of transparency of institutions, incomes below the world average, precarious, informal, and unpaid work, and weak health care and social security systems.**

In fact, according to World Bank figures (2020), regional economies will not grow in a significant way with respect to the contractions presented in 2020. Proof of this is that, for example, at the regional level in 2020 there was a contraction of the production of wealth of approximately -8.1%. The countries most affected by the economic contraction in the framework of the pandemic were Peru (with -13.6%), Argentina (with -11.8%), and Ecuador (-11%). The World Bank (2020) mentions that, although significant growth is expected for the year 2021, this is due to a rebound effect³⁴ of the economies and that, in any case, this growth will not recover the losses produced by the pandemic in the economic agendas of the region. Some non-governmental entities such as Oxfam (2020) mention that the region will need approximately 10 years to recover its economies.

In any case, and in the face of an unpromising future in economic terms, countries of the region tend to continue with projects already installed regionally, many of which are anchored to extractivism in all its forms, as **they tend to strengthen the sectors in which they have already been working and sectors that access higher rates of international financing or private investment. Additionally, given that international markets are turning towards green economies, the insertion of green extractivism will be an important part of the region's economic agenda in the future.**

Thus, in the context of the economic and health crisis, extractivism constitutes a strategy for economic recovery, even when the economic contributions of the sector have been insufficient to cover the needs of the population and to provide compensation for environmental damage

34.- Rebound effects are the effects of the accelerated movement of money to try to recover losses after an economic paralysis once restrictions are lifted. This effect is temporary and does not imply a constant trend since it is characterized by immediate measures to solve the crisis that cannot be sustained over time.

when it occurs. It also does not solve the socio-environmental conflicts caused by exploitation and does not respond to the demands of affected communities.

The following table presents the contributions to the Gross Domestic Product of the export of raw materials associated with the old and well-known forms of exploitation in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent decades. It is interesting to see how the regional incomes of the old and well-known extractivism for 2020 were below 5% of the total regional Gross Domestic Product.

Contributions of extractivism to the Gross Domestic Product of the Latin American and Caribbean region

Natural Resources	1970	1980	1990	2000	2020
Agriculture and food products	11.76 %	9.33 %	6.85 %	5.18 %	4.69 %
Coal	0.03 %	0.03 %	0.01 %	0.05 %	0.06 %
Natural gas	0.03 %	0.10 %	0.07 %	0.16 %	0.16 %
Petroleum	2.78 %	4.37 %	2.00 %	3.61 %	2.41 %

Own elaboration based on data from the World Bank

During the pandemic, the agribusiness, mining, and oil sectors experienced a fall in their price, like other sectors of the formal and informal economy in a relatively paralyzed world. But, unlike other sectors, these activities were quickly reestablished, due to the perspective of States that view such sectors as “essential”, despite not being essential to meet the needs of the population in times of crisis, as we will see later. In addition, **since they are considered strategic sectors for the economy of States, governments prioritize economic aid to encourage the reactivation of such industries.**

Agribusiness, for example, was one of the activities least affected by mobility and production restriction measures because it was declared an essential activity, since it is the beginning of the world’s commercial food chain. In addition, financial institutions, and multilateral organizations such as the Development Bank of Latin America and FAO incentivized the intensification of its production.³⁵ This applied only to large

35.- See recommendations of the Development Bank for Latin America: <https://www.caf.com/es/actualidad/noticias/2020/08/covid-19-los-desafios-de-america-latina-para-reanimar-las-agrifood-chains/>

agri-businesses, and on the contrary, small producers experienced difficulties in transporting their products and selling them at fair prices because of restrictive measures.

Despite the fluctuations in demand associated with the global economic crisis due to the pandemic, the international demand for green energy and technological development – and the incentives of States to maintain these sectors – make viable the export of raw materials related to green extractivism, positioning them as key to national economies. Economic decisions at the national level are made based on economic data that are read by governments as technical truths, while ignoring other forms of knowledge that contradict the supposed relationship between price increases and state policies of economic prioritization. These trends allow us to foresee what type of products will be classified as strategic and, therefore, will have state and private support. Products such as ethanol, copper, and gold are some of the commodities with the best prospects for recovery, according to projection data from the World Bank.³⁶ Curiously, all such products (except gold) are anchored in what we call green extractivisms.

As a result of this prioritization of extractive products for large markets, the territories, communities, and activists that defend them will face greater risks. **Considering that Latin America is the most dangerous region in the world for defenders of territories and the environment, and that violations against them largely occur in contexts of conflict generated by extractive activities, it is quite worrying that a worsening of this context is expected.** Furthermore, the continued prioritization of large markets for economic expansion will continue to deepen socioeconomic inequalities in the region.

3.2. National perspectives: economic recovery and deepening of the extractive model

Below are the decrees by which the countries of the region determined what types of activities were considered essential for national economies within the framework of mobility restrictions and other measures to control the spread of the virus that causes Covid-19. In countries that did not declare mandatory quarantines such as Nicaragua, Guatemala, or Mexico, the companies dedicated to extraction continued to work, despite the health risks that such activities imply.

36.- <https://projects.bancomundial.org/es/projects-operations/project-detail/P048851?lang=es>

Determination of essential activities within the framework of quarantine and mobility restriction measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19

Country	COVID-19 decrees	Economic and extractive activities declared essential during the COVID-19 health crisis
Argentina	Decree 297/2020 Date: 03/19/2020	Agriculture, fishing, oil, gas, and electricity sectors. Nuclear Power Plants. Mining was later (04/03/2020) included on the list.
Bolivia	Decree 4229 Date: 04/29/2020	Industrial, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors. Mining and construction were included later (OCMAL, 2020).
Brazil	Presidential Decree 10.329/2020	The Brazilian national government has not established restrictive measures for any sector in the country. However, a presidential decree in April 2020 establishes the agricultural, hydrocarbon, mineral, energy, mining, and infrastructure sectors as essential services.
Chile	Supreme Decree N° 104 Date: 03/18/2020	Agricultural, hydrocarbons, infrastructure, energy sectors and service provision, mining (export and import).
Colombia	Decree 749 de 2020 Date: 05/28/2020	Agricultural, hydrocarbons, infrastructure, energy sectors and service provision, mining (export and import).
Costa Rica	Executive Decree 42227-MP-S Date: 03/16/2020	The country declared a state of national emergency, which allowed taking measures on monetary transfers and actions to solve the crisis. Agro-industrial activities continue their execution justifying the contribution to the food chain. Since 2010, due to law No. 8904, Costa Rica is a country free from surface mining.
Ecuador	Decree 1074 Date: 06/15/2020	Investment in fishing, agriculture, and livestock to guarantee the chain of food production.
El Salvador³⁷	Decree No. 1. Date January 30, 2020 and Executive Decree No. 22 of the Executive body of the health branch (05/13/2020)	Agroindustry, agriculture, livestock, poultry, swine, and fish farming sectors. Electric energy activities were also allowed.

37.- Information on Central American and Caribbean countries can be consulted at the following link of the Central American Integration System: <https://www.sica.int/coronavirus/observatorioSICACCOVID19/medidas/Costarica>

Guatemala	Government Decree 5-2020, 6-2020 & 7-2020	Not specified. There was no total quarantine.
Honduras	Executive Decree Number PCM-021-2020	Agri-food industry, agrochemicals, and energy.
Mexico	Emergency Law 13/2020 Date: 05/07/2020	Construction, car manufacturing, and mining began to operate without restriction from June 1. In Mexico, quarantine was voluntary.
Nicaragua	Statement on the non-establishment of quarantine measures Date: 03/16/2020	There was no official quarantine decreed by the government.
Panama	Executive Decree Number 472 on 13 March 2020 Decree Number 33 on 18 March 2020 Law 139 on 2 April 2020	Agri-food industry, energy industry, agricultural industry, and cargo industry. General measures were declared to ration the use of resources. Restrictions and security measures for maritime vessels. The only prohibited activities are those that involve crowds.
Paraguay	Decree 3576 Date: 05/03/2020	Agricultural, poultry, fishing and forestry production and civil works.
Peru	Supreme Decree N° 094-2020-PCM. Date: 05/22/2020	Water, sanitation, electric energy, gas, fuel, telecommunications and related services, freight and merchandise transportation and related activities, including all activities related to exports. Regarding mining production, opening dates were defined: in May, the production of non-metallic minerals and the production of paper opened; large-scale underground mining and medium-scale surface mining started 100% operation in June and medium-scale underground mining in July.
Dominican Republic	Decree 134-20 and Decree 136-20 Date: 03/26/2020	The movement of people and vehicles linked to the industries and commerce of food, energy, water, electricity, telecommunications, ports, airports, and other basic services were allowed.
Venezuela	Decree N° 4.160 Date: 03/13/2020	The State of Alarm is decreed throughout the National Territory. Electric power production and distribution companies, activities that make up the distribution chain and availability of perishable and non-perishable food at the national level and activities related to the National Port System.

Own elaboration. Source: Official pages of National governments.

In almost the entire region, export-related activities were declared essential from the beginning of the restrictions, including agribusiness and biofuel production. Mining, for its part, is one of the activities that attracts the most attention in the decrees: it was declared essential from the beginning of quarantines in countries such as Colombia and Chile, while countries such as Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina ended up integrating this activity as essential after a few weeks or months of prohibiting it. The inclusion of mining activities as “essential” in Argentina, for example, was motivated by the possible contribution of this activity to the national economy³⁸. This means that the mining sector continued to function in almost the entire region at a time when there were greater restrictions on civil society and other sectors such as commerce, tourism, or services in general, as reported by indigenous, black, and *campesina* communities (OCMAL, 2020).

The continuation of mining put the workers of the companies, families and communities that surround the mining enclaves at risk of contagion. The Observatory of Mining Conflicts of Latin America (OCMAL) (2020) reports that as of July 2020, at least 8,048 cases of infected mining workers had been documented, with Chile contributing 5,000 of those cases, Brazil with 1,850, Peru with 905 and Argentina with 58. There are no similar data on infections and diseases for other countries in the region. Additionally, for July 2020 OCMAL obtained the report of 79 deceased workers in the sector throughout the region.³⁹ The mining companies of BHP, Glencore and Anglo American presented cases of contagion in Peru, Colombia and Chile (OCMAL, 2020), although according to their pages and international reports they were complying with biosafety protocols to ensure the continuity of production.⁴⁰

The lifting of restrictions on extractive companies is closely related to the economic recovery plans declared by each of the countries in the region. Within these plans, common elements stand out:

- Investment on fiscal robustness through lines of credit designated for companies deemed to be strategic for national economies;
- boosting the infrastructure construction sector;
- strengthening of export activities of essential elements, such as some agro-industrial products, especially cereals and biofuel production,

38.- For more information on the prioritization of this activity, see: Panorama Minero (mayo 2020) “La minería, como actividad esencial, tiene la posibilidad de aportar a la recuperación de Argentina” (Mining, as an essential activity, has the possibility of contributing to the recovery of Argentina). Recovered from: <https://panorama-minero.com/noticias/la-mineria-como-actividad-esencial-tiene-la-posibilidad-de-aportar-a-la-recuperacion-de-argentina/>

39.- Report of the Observatory of Mining Conflicts of Latin America (OCMAL): Conflictividad Minera y Covid 2020 (Mining Conflict and Covid 2020), consulted at: <https://www.ocmal.org/conflictividad-minera-y-covid-2020-2/>

40.- It is important to draw attention to the possible underreporting of contagion data related to extractive sites. Local communities report a higher rate of contagion than that officially declared by the companies, as will be seen in the second part.

or those declared as strategic, such as lithium and copper in the Southern Cone;

- the strengthening of internal tax collection systems and modernization of the State in technological terms, which indirectly implies the strengthening of mining sectors that produce minerals and metals used in technological services; and
- the strengthening of tourism sectors, especially in Central America and the Caribbean, with no specific mention about community tourism or ecotourism.

It is also highlighted that the economic reactivation in most countries is a combination of support for old and well-known extractivism and those associated with the transition of the energy matrix. In fact, following international recommendations from organizations such as the UN, FAO, the IDB, among others, most countries classify their plans as sustainable and economically profitable. It is also noteworthy that only in Argentina, Costa Rica, and Colombia are credit lines for small production included as part of economic recovery plans. For other countries in the region, these lines are not part of the future economic recovery plan but are part of an immediate program to overcome the crisis.

It is vital to highlight that recovery plans, except from Argentina, Costa Rica, and Chile, have been presented through statements on the national media or presidential speeches. Each of the countries, at their own pace, has presented some general elements about the recovery plans, although many depend on international lines of credit.



Summary of general elements of economic recovery plans in Latin American and Caribbean countries

General elements of the recovery plan related to extractive sectors

MEXICO Recovery plans focus on improving foreign relations and international trades on raw materials (including agribusiness), and industrialized products. Intentions to improve investment in technological development are mentioned. Projects such as the Dos Bocas oil refinery and the expansion of an airport and a train system stand out. Additionally, the country leads renewable energy projects and green transition through the use of green bonds.



HONDURAS Mentions related to economic recovery focus on the infrastructure sector and export of products derived from agriculture and food production.



EL SALVADOR The plan focuses on strengthening the three sectors that generate the most wealth: construction, industry, and the sale of services and exports. It is unclear which products are included in the last activity.

GUATEMALA The plan has three general points: recovery and employment generation, attraction of strategic investments in sectors such as infrastructure, and the promotion of foreign trade.



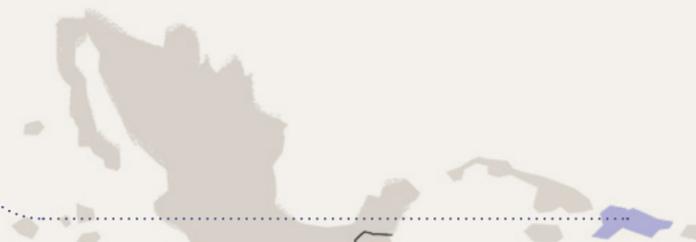
NICARAGUA The country did not go into quarantine, therefore there is no reopening plan. The economy is expected to grow through the strengthening of strategic activities such as infrastructure construction for development and agriculture. There is no specific program.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC Given that one of the vital national economic sectors is tourism, recovery plans focus on generating a gradual and safe reopening of all tourist logistics in the country. Additionally, the government proposed to promote production transformation plans and investments with a cluster approach, especially in the sectors most affected by the crisis, namely the manufacturing, agricultural, and energy production industries. President Luis Abidaner (2020) said that the objective is “to minimize the effects of the pandemic and promote a responsible recovery that prioritizes health, maximizes the potential for employment creation and economic growth, and encourages the [tourism] sector to continue developing in a sustainable way”.



COSTA RICA The presented plan integrates the strengthening of the agricultural sector, especially monocultures such as pineapple, bananas, and palm oil. It includes the implementation of participatory plans with indigenous communities with the support of the United Nations. Another key axis of economic recovery has to do with promoting projects associated with green growth and low-carbon development. Measures include accelerating the deployment of low-carbon technologies and increasing the resilience of the national energy system.



*Own elaboration based on Latin American press

PANAMA The country's recovery plan includes programs to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as the Panama Agro Solidario (Agro Solidary) Program. It also contains the presentation of bills to promote national development via Multinational Companies for Manufacturing (EMMA, according to its Spanish acronym) and the process of equipping infrastructure. The plan also aims to encourage the development of agroindustry. The promotion of the canal's operations is the fundamental basis of the entire national economic policy.

COLOMBIA The plan focuses on strengthening agricultural sectors at different levels, from large entrepreneurs to family farming. It proposes promoting civil construction and housing projects, and private investment, and employment on strategic sectors such as extractive industries. Additionally, it seeks to promote employment, the economy of knowledge, and international electronic commerce, although it is not specific on how it will achieve these goals. The vice president announced that the basis of the plan "is not to find out how we can see more of our products, but how we produce more of what the international market demands, what the world wants to buy."

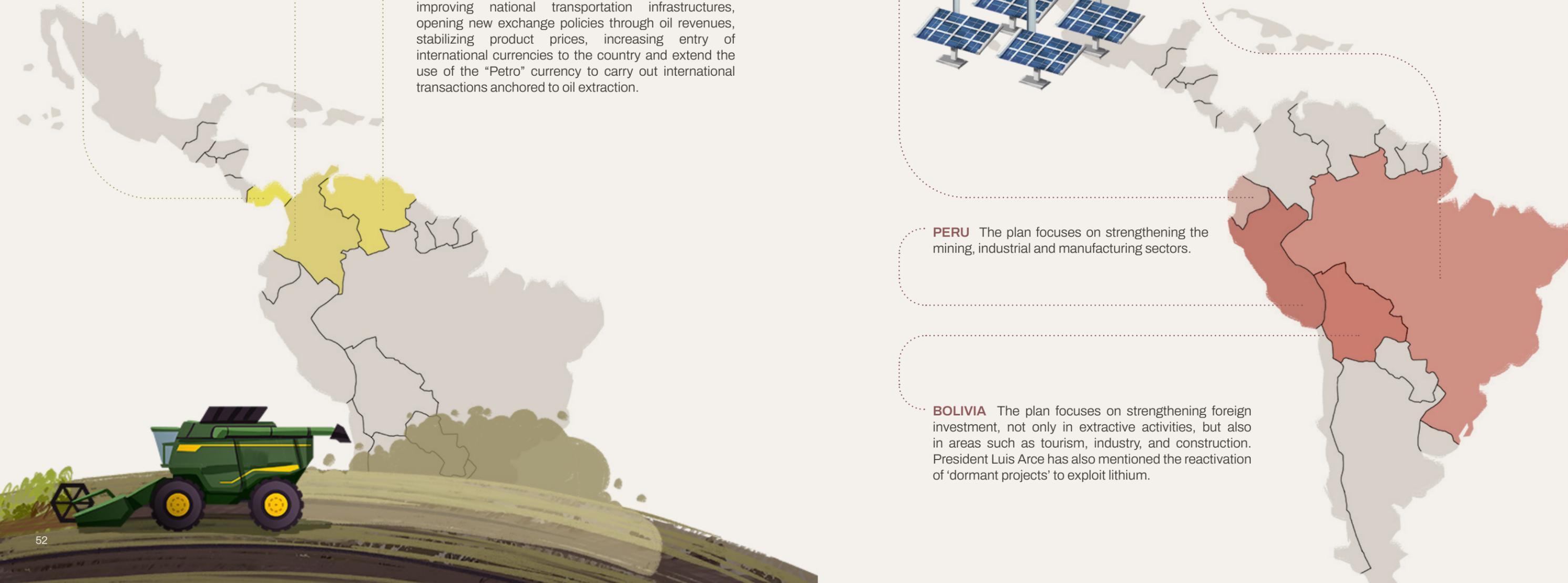
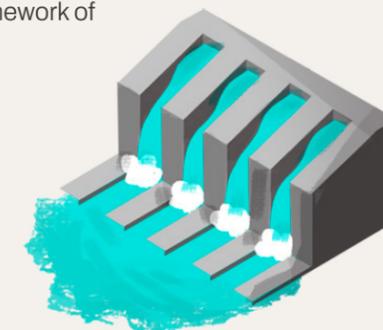
VENEZUELA The bases of the Venezuelan economic recovery announced by President Nicolás Maduro include establishing fiscal balance and tax laws, improving national transportation infrastructures, opening new exchange policies through oil revenues, stabilizing product prices, increasing entry of international currencies to the country and extend the use of the "Petro" currency to carry out international transactions anchored to oil extraction.

ECUADOR The plan focuses on the promotion of public-private alliances to produce strategic sectors associated with industry and exports and the strengthening of the construction sector. One of the key raw materials for the Ecuadorian economy is the export of bananas. The good prices of this commodity lead the government to prioritize this sector to receive support in the framework of the recovery.

BRAZIL Some trends can be seen, such as the strengthening of industry and construction, energy-producing sectors (including oil, gas, and hydroelectric power) and large food producers of international interest. As part of Mercosur, trade agreements with countries such as Canada, India, Lebanon, Singapore, and South Korea are advancing.

PERU The plan focuses on strengthening the mining, industrial and manufacturing sectors.

BOLIVIA The plan focuses on strengthening foreign investment, not only in extractive activities, but also in areas such as tourism, industry, and construction. President Luis Arce has also mentioned the reactivation of 'dormant projects' to exploit lithium.





PARAGUAY The plans include strengthening the housing construction sector and foreign trade related to raw materials, as well as promoting the country's industrialization. As part of Mercosur, it advances in trade agreements with countries such as Canada, India, Lebanon, Singapore and South Korea. Additionally, credit packages for commercial agricultural production were announced.

CHILE The plan focuses on taking advantage of the possibilities in the future for elements such as copper and lithium, as well as strengthening companies in strategic extractive sectors to recover employment through strengthening industry and exports.

ARGENTINA The plan focuses on measures for pig, fishery, and aquaculture development, compensation and incentives for small and medium soybean producers, reduction of withholdings on mining exports, and a national development plan for suppliers of energy, mining, health, automobile, naval, and rail industries, among others. Another key element is to promote civil works and integrate sustainable and environmentally friendly growth. On May 19, the government set a local crude oil price of \$45 per barrel for local consumption to support producers.



3.3 Regional perspectives: multilateral organizations and proposals for recovery

The expenses necessary to solve the economic and health crises have led countries to request loans, international credit, and technical assistance to meet various internal needs, especially those related to infrastructure, development projects, and attention to health emergencies (ECLAC, 2020)⁴¹. The debt constitutes not only the possibility of integrating a greater financial flow to countries, which would generate “economic growth”, but also becomes the only option to recovery industry and rebuild business capacity. Thus, **understanding national and private indebtedness, especially that related to promoting business and infrastructure investments, is key to mapping the extractive plans that may affect territories in the future.**

Debt constitutes the largest expense in Latin American economies⁴², illustrating the central role that debt plays in the hegemonic development discourse which assumes that, through debt mechanisms, countries classified as poor will “develop”. It is important not to lose sight of the historical dimension of external debt in Latin America. The first debts in the region were contracted to pay for liberation armies and for the consolidation of independent republics. From the beginning, the logic for reconciling debt was to encourage the export of raw materials, continuing with the colonial legacy of land and work that still operates today in the productive chains of modern extractivism, even with forms of modern slavery. Since the payment of debt is based on exports, the credits and interests that constitute it depend on the fluctuations of the market, specifically of the times of boom or contraction of the economies of the Global North. Thus,

Latin American economies are totally dependent on the world's largest economies.



Although the debt mechanism has maintained its colonial character, over the years it has also been transformed and new actors have become involved. **Today, a main actor in the processes of debt, promotion, and support of the extractive sector are International Financial Institutions (IFIs).** IFIs are multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as national government initiatives that seek to generate foreign or internal investment such as the banks of Brazil and China.

41.- For more information see: <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46710-financiamiento-desarrollo-la-era-la-pandemia-covid-19-despues>

42.- The external debt of Latin America would amount to 81.6% of the total gross domestic product according to the following source: <https://www.larepublica.co/globoeconomia/deuda-de-america-latina-seria-816-del-pib-segun-fondo-monetario-internacional-3073941>

IFIs not only provide financial services to countries. **These entities also play a very important role in the generation of public-private alliances, provide technical advice to countries and private actors, and intervene in the strengthening of business capacities. For this reason, they play a crucial role in promoting extractive projects in the region.** Most of these institutions have project monitoring systems and some of them have spaces for citizen participation in environmental terms, known as safeguards.

Effective citizen participation in IFIs and other strategies of citizen pressure

Although spaces for participation exist, they result excluding for the participation of grassroots organizations or local communities, given that, the possibility of influencing such spaces, demands material conditions and investment of time and effort that many communities do not have. Even so, the presence of civil society does not guarantee the inclusion of local perspectives, or development criticism on such projects. In general, participation is limited to the presentation of disclaimers and does not constitute a measure of repair or transformation of local realities.

In this sense, it is necessary for organizations with access to safeguard spaces to permanently understand the realities of grassroots organizations, and to facilitate their participation whenever possible. Only in doing so, they will be able to establish a dialogue between IFIs and local realities.

Likewise, it is important that grassroots organizations from impacted territories interested in creating strategies to influence the development of extractive activities stay aware of the possibilities of reporting and monitoring of the social and environmental obligations of IFIs. It is also important that such organizations seek to get directly involved in participatory spaces, and also identify partner organizations whose work focuses on this type of advocacy to build collaborative networks.

An important step is to know the IFIs, how they operate and what projects they finance. UAF-LAC, along with other allied organizations in the Count Me In! Consortium, has supported the development of a toolkit that helps grassroots organizations to know and develop strategies that target actors who finance extractive projects. The guide is available free of charge at the following link:

<https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/es/recursos/documentos-activismo-sostenible/detras-del-extractivismo-dinero-poder-y-resistencias-comunitaria/>

The following table presents the general interests and lines of credit offered by some of the IFIs considered in this study, selected for their importance in Latin America.

Summary of credit lines and support from International Financial Institutions

Name of the IFI	Interests and related credit lines
 <p>IBRD-WB International Bank for Reconstruction and Development - World Bank</p>	<p>Founded in 1944, the initial objective of this international cooperative was the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War. This is a development bank, and in this sense, its credit lines are focused on modernization projects for countries in producing peripheries that require assistance to improve services, encourage increased private investment and promote innovation and exchange of solutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>
 <p>IDB Inter-American Development Bank</p>	<p>Created in 1959, the IDB is one of the main sources of financing in Latin America and the Caribbean. The main lines of financing mentioned by the bank are social inclusion and equality, productivity and innovation, and regional economic integration. In addition, its transversal axes are gender equity, inclusion, and diversity; climate change, environmental sustainability and fostering institutional capacities and the rule of law.</p>
 <p>CI Inter-American Investment Corporation (Now known as IDB Invest)</p>	<p>Considered the private investment arm of the IDB, it focuses on projects to support "sustainable development". In this sense, it supports projects related to clean energy, modernization of agriculture, strengthening of transportation systems and strengthening of lines of credit defined with each of the countries.</p>
 <p>CAF Development Bank of Latin America (formerly Andean Development Corporation)</p>	<p>Anchored to the principles of "sustainable development", CAF provides financial and technical support to the public and private sectors. Some of the lines of action are access to basic services, support for quality infrastructure and increased productivity, modernization of the State in favor of transparency, accountability and physical, commercial, and financial integration of Latin America.</p>
 <p>BNDES National Bank for Economic and Social Development of Brazil</p>	<p>Founded in 1952 in Brazil, it is constituted as a national bank with regional financing projections. Strategic objectives include strengthening public-private partnerships, projects that generate employment and incomes, and projects that focus on public services. They also support small businesses and projects related to infrastructure.</p>
 <p>BDC China Development Bank</p>	<p>Founded in 1994, it supports Chinese companies around the world and projects in which the country is interested, especially in key economic activities such as infrastructure construction, manufacturing, agriculture, and power generation.</p>
 <p>BEIC Export-Import Bank of China</p>	<p>The bank aims to strengthen China's trade relations across the world. Within the strategic sectors for financing are all businesses that involve commercialization (import and export) within which energy, agricultural, and infrastructure projects for connection stand out.</p>

Own elaboration. Source: primary pages of each of the financial entities.

The table above highlights the differences and similarities between international funding agencies and those based in China and Brazil. It is evident that multilateral development banks have an emphasis on the idea of development anchored in extractivism as a common future to which countries should reach, and that at the same time represents their own economic interests.

Banks such as the IBRD-WB, IDB and IDB Invest, CAF and even BNDES, include in their projects and base their actions in the region on the logic of the claims and objectives of sustainable development. For example, in the context of the pandemic, and in a regional context of social emergency, the World Bank approved financing amounting to 7.8 billion dollars for 67 operations in the region (World Bank, 2020).⁴³

Additionally, during the crisis, the World Bank issued for the first time more than 1.3 billion USD in multinational catastrophic bonds among Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.

All these programs focused on the need to produce economic growth through strengthening productivity and competitiveness, instead of focusing on closing social gaps that deepened during the pandemic and that require immediate attention to avoid worse violations of human rights.

All these programs focused on the need to produce economic growth through strengthening productivity and competitiveness, instead of focusing on closing social gaps that deepened during the pandemic and that require immediate attention to avoid worse violations of human rights.

Another illustrative example is the intervention carried out by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), one of the key IFIs to understand the future of extractivism in Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of post-pandemic economic reactivation.⁴⁴ During 2020, the IDB approved 21.6 billion USD for aid and development operations throughout the region (IDB, 2020: web). With this money, a total of 658⁴⁵ economic and technical assistance agreements were advanced between the IDB and various countries, either individually or by region. Most of the projects included in these agreements have a direct relationship with the modernization sector of the State, followed by projects related to social investment and health. It is worth noting that several credit lines are also related to environmental issues, such as climate change mitigation, energy production, and even

43.- For more information on the World Bank's operations in the region see: World Bank (2020) Supporting countries in unprecedented times, 2020 annual report. Retrieved from: <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/about/annual-report>.

44.- In this study framework, special attention has been paid to this bank because, in the evaluation carried out by the Regional Group on Financing and Infrastructure (2018), it was classified as regular due to the fact that it presents some gaps in relation to access to information; additionally, this bank is dedicated solely to the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

45.- Of the 658 projects, there are 185 projects at the regional level, that is, they can be managed by different countries. Among these types of projects, we highlight security, migration, and climate change mitigation issues. Colombia (67), Brazil (49), Mexico (28), Paraguay (26), and El Salvador (26) respectively are the countries that most signed loans or technical assistance with the IDB in the 2020 term.

“green bonds”.⁴⁶ This last sector is especially important to understand the relationship between debt and extractivism, since in this credit line, interest rates for companies are reduced if they demonstrate that they have reduced their carbon emissions.

Throughout 2020, the bank approved **a total of 45 projects in several Latin American and Caribbean countries related to the energy sector (IDB, 200: web)⁴⁷, mainly with what in this report we have called “green extractivism”**. Countries such as Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Colombia each signed two projects with the IDB; Brazil, El Salvador, Peru, and Nicaragua each approved one project; Chile, Ecuador, and Paraguay each approved four projects. Among the approved projects are investments to **change the energy matrix, electromobility, the replacement of fossil fuel production, and the installation of solar panels as an energy alternative. At the regional level, eleven energy integration and transportation projects were approved for transition of the energy matrix.**

Additionally, in February 2021, the IDB generated a sector framework document to promote extractive industries in the region (IDB, 2021).⁴⁸ Although the bank states that these industries must overcome certain challenges that include promoting environmental sustainability and transparency in the use of derived economic resources, they also insist that extractivism plays a strategic role in the social, environmental, and economic development of the region.

It is possible to see how the transition of the energy matrix, as we have seen, constitutes a very important axis to leverage the economic growth of traditional extractive sectors in the face of problems such as the environmental crisis, climate change, and the general fall in energy prices related to fossil fuels.

It is worth mentioning that many of the IDB's projects are related to technical advice and support for the development of public policies, which later provide the basis for negotiations with extractive companies. This means that it is a crucial moment for civil society to pay attention to possible

46.- Green bonds are characterized as lines of credit focused on strengthening sectors related to renewable energies, energy efficiency, pollution prevention and control, and sustainable infrastructure (CAF, 2020). These bonds condition their interest rates on the performance of corporations to reduce their carbon emissions. This type of loan and lines of support have been prioritized by the Inter-American Development Bank as a way out of the health and economic crises associated with covid-19. The IDB suggests that by 2021 bonds for 500 billion USD may be issued. In 2019, green bonds in the region invested 14 billion USD. Mexico, Peru, and Colombia are the largest green bond issuers and the countries that have shown the most interest in these investments (Ferro and Frisadi, 2020).

47.- To see in detail the history of loans and technical assistance provided by the IDB to the region, see: <https://www.iadb.org/en/projects-search?country=§or=&status=&query=&projectTypeCobmo=&fund=&finCurrency=&yearFrom=&yearTo=&financialProd=&ESIC=&financingOver=&financingUnder=&projectNumber=>

48.- To view the report, see: BID (2021) Documento de Marco Sectorial de Industrias Extractivas (Extractive Industries Sector Framework Document). Retrieved from: <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=EZSHARE-1695735402-50>

flexibilities in the legislative sphere created to allow the advancement of green extractive projects.

Despite being signed within the framework of emergency plans declared in all countries of the region, these projects follow a series of strategies previously signed between the IDB group and each of the governments. Such strategic lines are a good reference to analyze the investment priorities of each of the countries. These include the promotion of private sectors in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia, together with investment in the construction of infrastructure for connection and economic growth in the countries. In turn, they promote policies that allow the implementation of projects related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, especially in Caribbean countries.⁴⁹

We believe that, although each country has specific forms of government and political tendencies, governments in Latin America recognize extractivism as an important way out of the health and economic crises caused by the pandemic. Furthermore, we could say that regionally there are pressures from financial entities on two main fronts, namely: a) the expansion of infrastructure projects that deepen extractivism; and b) investment and technical support for supposedly sustainable forms of production and consumption that allow building a zero-carbon society.

49.- BID and BID Invest, 2016; BID, 2016; BID, 2019; BID, 2019a; BID and BID Invest, 2018; BID, 2015; BID and Corporación Interamericana de Inversiones (Inter-American Investment Corporation), 2017a; BID, 2019c; BID and BID Invest, 2019a; BID by BID Invest, 2019b; BID and Corporación Interamericana de Inversiones (Inter-American Investment Corporation), 2017b



Chapter 4

Community responses to extractivism led by women

The information gathered in this section tells us how extractivism has turned Latin America and the Caribbean into producing peripheries through the imposition of predatory forms of relationships with nature, which are opposed to local ways of thinking, building, and defending territories. With indignation, during this research we found that, regardless of the changes in national governments and their different political leanings, the colonial perspective that conceives Latin America and the Caribbean as an exporter of raw materials continues to shape the economic agendas of the region.

Worse still, the preponderance of neoliberal governments at the present moment further intensifies the extractive industry and its freedom to settle in the different territories of the region, even when communities face a situation of vulnerability in the face of social, environmental, and health crises without precedent. Data obtained from various secondary sources, academic studies and documents produced by social organizations, show that the governments of the region are prioritizing extractive economic activities for the post-Covid-19 future. **In other words, large-scale extractivism does not constitute a predation of nature that pushed socio-ecological cycles to their limits in the past, but rather continues to be a political, economic, and social commitment for the insertion of Latin America and the Caribbean in international markets.**

In this scenario, as UAF-LAC we continue to support the work of women's organizations in defense of territory, who were affected by the pandemic in specific ways, as a result of the intersection of different structural inequalities. The arrival of the virus and the various socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic in their territories made their possibilities for continuing to sustain life even more complex.

The obstacles imposed by the pandemic are inescapable realities that lead to new reflections on autonomy, self-nutrition, care for life, and the sustenance of ancestral knowledge about health, in addition to demanding new ways of understanding the collective protection of bodies and community territories, maintaining solidarity as the basis of social fabrics.

The prevailing economic model is unsustainable, and in the face of the pressure to maintain it, it is important to recognize the knowledges that, from everyday life, local research and community resistance exercises, counteract the current panorama of globalization and fragmentation of nature. Systematizing local alternatives to large scale extractivism is essential to propose concrete possibilities that can help us to think about a radical and collective transformation of the extractive paradigm.

People who are not experiencing the realities of extractivism in their territories are also invited to rethink the paradigm shift; theoretical contributions and the production of knowledge are not the only contributions to the resistance of women and their communities. In a destructive logic, where everything is disposable and where economic gain is the only thing that matters, awareness of the model and change of practices are also key to its dismantling. Building awareness that this economic model is not viable involves knowing the realities of those whose lives are most impacted and recognizing that we are all involved in this system.

As we will see in the second part of this publication, violence has been a key strategy to guarantee the implementation of extractive projects. The voices of women defenders who, surviving such violence and impositions on their territories, continue to produce community forms of relationships with nature based on care, invite us to reflect on current resistances and possible futures. For this reason, we close the first part of this publication with an invitation to listen to the voices of women defenders of territory. The data recorded here take on a new meaning and relevance by recognizing the concrete implications of this model on the lives of communities, and by making visible other ways of thinking and building territories of resistance.



PART 2

**From the visible world to
the possible world: women
defenders, extractivism
and Covid-19**

Introduction

In the first part of this publication, we delve into the dimensions of extractivism in Latin America and the Caribbean, and how such processes result in the loss of autonomy of communities over their territories, common goods, and ways of life. In this second part, we are interested in delving into how different types of extractivism directly and differentially impact women defenders of territories.⁵⁰ For this, we have spoken with rural, indigenous, black and *campesina* women from 24 organizations that face extractive activities in their communities and are organized in defense of their territories in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru.

To the direct impacts of extractivism, new emergencies and vulnerabilities unleashed by the Covid-19 pandemic were added, making it so that actions to resist extractivism coexist and intersect with plural concerns that this new context has implied in the personal, familial, and community spheres. These are difficult times for women defenders. We join their voices to affirm that the unequal logic, which was already operating in these territories prior to Covid-19, explains the high levels of rights violations in the ongoing period of the health crisis.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the second region in the world most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is estimated that approximately 18.82% of the total cases reported worldwide have occurred in the region (IDB, May 2021, web). It is important to mention that the high rates of infection in Latin America are due, among other reasons, to problems related to access to health systems and other fundamental rights, a high rate of urbanization, and precariousness of life in the countryside. UN Women (2020) estimates that 80% of the region's population lives in cities and 17% is concentrated in six megacities with more than 10 million inhabitants each. Additionally, the same entity calculates that in these cities one out of every five inhabitants lives in marginalized and impoverished neighborhoods. This means that the pandemic reached a region with profound existing inequalities.

Covid-19 quarantines have had particular impacts on the lives of indigenous, *campesina* and black women in Latin America. Quarantines have transformed their economic and survival activities and along with it, their social and cultural relationships. Similarly, they have meant a change in dynamics of organizing and resistance to extractive activities present in

50.- Explanatory note: The Women and Territories Program of the Urgent Action Fund has been providing strategic grants since 2016. Thus far we have supported organizations that self-identifying as women's organizations, some of which have been interviewed for this research. For this reason, we refer to women specifically, although we recognize the contribution that trans and non-binary people make to territorial struggles from their own experiences, also recognizing that there are differentiated impacts for people who identify with other gender identities.

their territories. The defenders reiterate that **there are no isolated impacts, given that several occur simultaneously.**

Although we recognize the importance of the guidance of international health organizations on the prevention of contagion, local governments did not always consider the realities of rural peoples and traditional communities to understand and address the impacts of the pandemic. Our research shows that these official measures were insufficient to address the crisis in territories, and therefore, community initiatives for collective care and protection have been more viable and effective solutions in many cases.

The actions to respond to the health emergency proposed by the women's organizations that participated in this research do not separate the needs of the body from the ones of the collective territory. In addition to being a reaction to specific emergency situations, they are proposed as alternative routes in the face of profound and structural conditions.

In this section, we will walk along these paths hand in hand with women defenders. They have shared with us their experiences and reflections about this moment in which collectivity is interrupted and transformed. We join their condemnation of the situations that communities, and especially women, experience, and we reinforce our political stance regarding the unfeasibility of the extractive model for our region and its inability to solve the social and economic inequalities that it has created and exacerbated throughout history. We highlight possible alternatives, which have long been constructed by women and their communities, but which gain new dimensions and are even more necessary in a world whose operational logic is in crisis.



CHAPTER 1

The impacts of extractivism on the lives of women

In our first publication “*Extractivism in Latin America: Impact on Women’s Lives and Proposals for the Defense of Territory*”⁵¹ we present the main aspects of the impacts of extractivism on the lives of women from a feminist perspective. Despite being published almost five years ago, the panorama presented in the publication is still valid in many local realities in the region. For this reason, we return to analyze and reflect on the challenges and problems that persist and run constantly through the lives and bodies of women who live in contexts of extractive activities.

1.1 Violence against women defenders of territory

Without a doubt, violence against women is one of the most worrying aspects of extractive contexts, manifesting itself in different ways and posing a unique and elevated threat to women defenders who oppose or resist these projects. The risks and attacks faced by women defenders of territory have increased in recent years; Latin America continues to be the most dangerous region in the world for human rights defenders. It is also the region with the most cases of attacks and killings of land and environmental defenders (Global Witness, 2020).⁵² According to the database on human rights violations carried out by the Center for Research on Business and Human Rights, between 2015 and 2020, at least 243 women defenders of territories have suffered some form of violence, ranging from persecution and criminalization to physical and sexual violence, intimidation, and murder. All of the cases are related to the resistance of women and their communities to the extractive expansion of mining, oil, agribusiness, and hydroelectric activities.

The judicial investigation processes in cases of extreme violence and murders are slow, insufficient, and deeply flawed, which leads to high rates of impunity. In the cases of women defenders, re-victimization is common, given that their role as activists is delegitimized throughout the process,

51.- Urgent Action Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean, “Extractivism in Latin America: Impact on Women’s Lives and Proposals for the Defense of Territory”, 2016. https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/site/assets/files/1346/extractivismo_en_america_latina-1.pdf

52.- Defender el Mañana (Defending Tomorrow). Global Witness Annual Report 2020. <https://www.globalwitness.org/es/defending-tomorrow-es/>



minimizing the seriousness of the incidents, and even blaming them for the violence they experienced.⁵³

There are specific ways in which gender-based violence manifests itself against women who resist extractive industries. Women from the *Movimiento de Mujeres de Santo Tomás* (MOMUJEST, Movement of Women of Santo Tomás), in El Salvador, denounce that they have suffered sexual harassment, kidnapping, rapes, and telephone threats for their opposition to the imposition of urban expansion over their areas for agricultural production. The women report that in actions to protect their territory,

"[...] we were attacked by the police; especially young women, they were attacked on one of the days that they had to guard the entrance of the [urban development] project and they were pushed, insulted, attacked."



53.- Regional report: Impunity for violence against women defenders of territories, common goods and nature in Latin America, Urgent Action Fund for Latin America, 2018. <https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/es/recursos/documentos-activismo-sostenible/informe-regional-impunidad-de-las-violencias-contra-mujeres-defensoras-de-los-territorios-los-bienes-comunes-y-la-naturaleza-en/>

For the colleagues of MOMUJEST, the violence they suffer is not limited to physical abuse by state authorities, but is structural and institutional, given that “there is a naturalization of gender-based violence” that excludes them from the political sphere and perpetuates chains of poverty and marginalization. Gender-based violence is also expressed in the way their romantic partners or other members of the community, including state authorities, explicitly and tacitly impose roles on them that confine them to household chores and family care, and blame them for their participation in community and political spaces. At the same time, it is a common experience among women defenders to face emotional, physical, psychological, economic, or sexual violence by their male counterparts in social struggles.

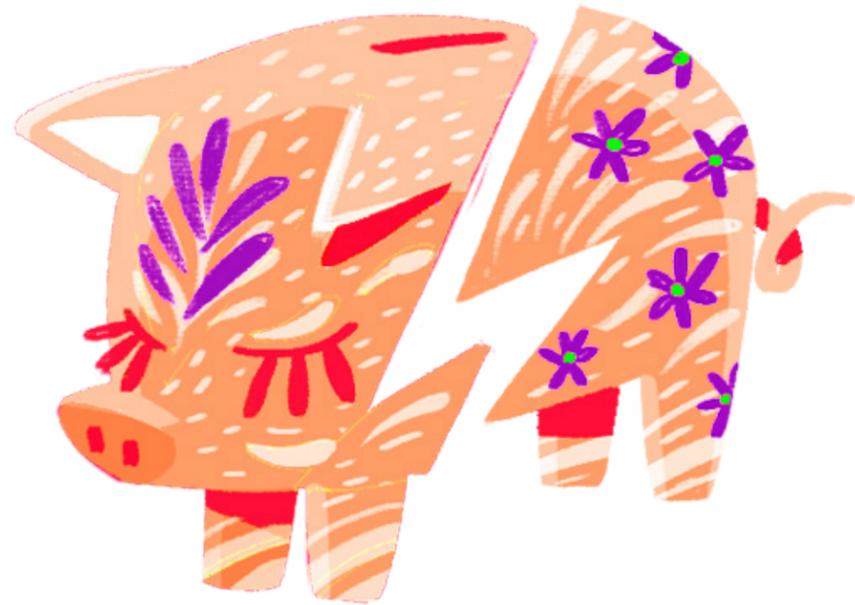
It is also important to highlight that women defenders of territory are mostly indigenous and black women, and that they also experience violence directed at racialized subjects in a continent deeply marked by racism. It is fundamental for us to frame the different oppressions that women suffer from an intersectional perspective to understand how violence against them adds to existing oppressions and to highlight that violence against their bodies is more tolerated by society. A practical example of how structural racism operates is the particularly brutal and repressive manner in which police forces act against racialized populations in their territories. In contexts where communities protest against an extractive project or company, for example, security guards do not usually consider forms of dialogue and negotiation, which should be part of their action protocols, but instead use violent repression against the entire civilian population, including minors, who should enjoy special protection within the framework of human rights.



1.2 Economic insecurity

One of the main impacts of extractive activities is that they forcibly restructure all economic relationships where they are installed. Companies enter territories and completely transform local economies, leaving communities much more dependent on activities related to extractive projects. They also change social dynamics, making women more likely to experience violence (due to the increase in the sale of liquor and networks of sexual exploitation, for example), and generates a differential economic insecurity for women, exacerbating historical gaps around property ownership and economic autonomy, that make them more vulnerable in their territories.

The *Grupo en Resistencia a la Minería del Carmen de* (Carmen de Chucurí Resistance Movement Against Mining and Extractives), in Santander, Colombia, was formed in 2015 with broad participation and leadership

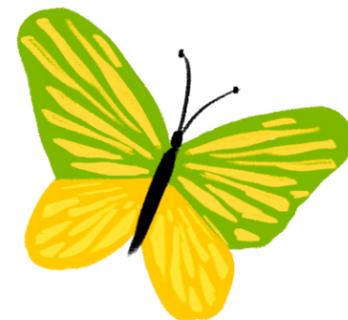


of women to denounce the impacts of coal exploitation. Despite their continuous efforts, for which they have suffered various attacks and threats, they currently face projects that deepen extraction through fracking (hydraulic fracturing) in coal seams to obtain gas.

In addition to environmental impacts, the mining activity in Carmen de Chucurí has deteriorated the living conditions of women, not only because 100% of the workers are men, but also because access to water and land has been reduced. The women defenders of Carmen de Chucurí affirm that women “do not make a living from mining,” but rather sustain themselves by cultivating a variety of products, as well as livestock and fish farming activities.

The expansion and new methods of mining and exploitation of hydrocarbons, such as fracking, leave women and communities without their traditional livelihoods. In many territories, the impact of extractive activities on local economic logics culminates in forced migration to cities, where their economic situation worsens. Displacement also has specific impacts on women, since they have more difficulty inserting themselves into the labor market, which forces them to accept precarious working conditions in informal markets or, in some cases, to depend on the salary of their male partners.

In the cases in which women manage to join the productive chains of the extractive industries, salary hierarchies continue to privilege men. In Guatemala, *campesina* and indigenous women from the *Asociación de Desarrollo de Mujeres K'ak'ak' Na'oj* (ADEMKAN, K'ak'ak' Na'oj Women's Development Association), who defend Lake Atitlán, comment that on agro-industrial farms, “(...) women's wages are still very low, simply due to the fact that they are women, even if they do the same work as men...”. The lake's water is required for the irrigation of the sugar agroindustry through the construction of a mega pipeline and water transfer. The government



has openly declared the importance of the project for the macroeconomy of the Central American country, despite the opposition of the surrounding communities. If the dispossession of the lake's water continues, women and their communities will be forced to migrate to other regions, possibly in precarious and marginalized conditions.

Furthermore, when women engage in activities classified as “traditionally male” they face harassment, violence, and economic inequality. In Tocopilla, a commune located in the Antofagasta Region, in northern Chile, the Changa (indigenous group) women who practice artisanal fishery, face the challenge of competing with their male counterparts. They, unlike the men in their communities, must fish at night, because that is when the men have completed their fishing and when the women have completed household work. The women report that their work requires strength and temperance, but they also admit that they have suffered physical violence more than once for fishing in the areas where men fish.

Finally, the insertion of women in the labor market does not imply a reduction in household work and family care, as part of the traditionally established gender roles. Many live the exhausting situation of being economic actors without experiencing a redistribution of the basic responsibilities of care and household work among the members of the family.

1.3 Impacts on the health of women and children

Extractive activities generate serious impacts on the health of communities, which, although they affect all people and the environment, have specific implications for women for various reasons. In the case of mining, the first reason is their proximity to mining activities. Although few women are directly linked to mining extraction, they inhabit the exploited territories and are more exposed to passive environmental pollution, which refers to the pollution that remains in water, soil, air, and ecosystems even after mines operations end. Due to the care roles imposed on women, they have daily contact with water to irrigate gardens, prepare food, bathe children, wash clothes, and clean the house, accumulating over time a greater concentration of pollutants in their bodies.

Similarly, it has been shown that women pass heavy metals to their children in pregnancy, which can cause spontaneous abortions or affect the health of their babies, causing particular stress and emotional burden on women (Arana, 2010). On the other hand, studies carried out in the mines of Potosí, in Bolivia, conclude that women take care of the members of their families with health problems derived from mining contamination, doing so in precarious conditions and without the necessary resources and knowledge to face heavy metal detoxification and bioaccumulation processes (Tapia, 2009).

The *Asociación de Defensoras y Defensores de la Vida y la Pachamama de Cajamarca* (DEVICAPAJ, Defenders of Life and the Pachamama Association of Cajamarca), in northern Peru, explains that the impacts of mining on health are immeasurable. The population of Cajamarca has waged a struggle for more than 25 years against the transnational mining company Yanacocha, owned by the Newmont Corporation, a North American company, which has built the largest open-pit gold mine in Latin America, on high mountain areas where rivers are born. The impacts of the intensive exploitation of gold and the use of lethal chemicals have contaminated the region's water resources, directly affecting nearby populations who have suffered a series of health effects due to the ingestion of the waters contaminated with heavy metals.⁵⁴

In the case of the impacts due to the urban expansion in Central America, women from the *Asociación de Mujeres Ambientalistas de El Salvador* (AMAES, Environmentalist Women's Association of El Salvador), denounce the seizure of water by companies and urban condominiums,



54.- Studies carried out by the Centro Nacional de Salud Ocupacional y Protección del Medio Ambiente del Instituto Nacional de Salud (National Center for Occupational Health and Environmental Protection of the National Institute of Health) of Peru, have concluded that there is a presence of arsenic, lead, mercury, and cadmium in residents of the communities of Hualgayoc and Bambamarca in Cajamarca, and have found the same chemicals in the water sources of these and other local communities. See more information on: <http://www2.congreso.gob.pe/Sicr/Prensa/heraldo.nsf/CNtitulares2/905ecc388ab6ec96052582fe0001851c/?OpenDocument>

which generates pressure on livelihoods of rural communities. This situation has forced women to travel longer distances to obtain water, which results in greater physical exhaustion, fatigue, muscle aches and anxiety, in addition to reducing time for rest and other activities. On the other hand, women of MOMUJEST, also in El Salvador, denounce that pollution from the dumping of sewage and solid waste from private residences directly affects the water sources they use to irrigate crops. Direct contact with these waters produces a series of skin and gastrointestinal conditions, primarily in children.

In the case of agribusiness, the health impacts from the use of pesticides are also alarming. This is the case of the *Asociación de Mujeres Campesinas y Populares de Caaguazú* (AMUCAP, Campesinas and Popular Women of Caaguazú Association) in Paraguay, which brings together *campesinas* and indigenous women from the province of Caaguazú and promotes the development of sustainable and ecological agriculture, organizing with national and international networks of small local rural production. Near its territory there are Brazilian businessmen that use planes to fumigate their monocultures of wheat, soybeans, corn, and sunflower for export. The colleagues have made several grievances in local media about how the use of pesticides has had serious impacts on the health of their communities:



"We have found many diseases, such as the deformation of fetuses. They are born dead, they are born with an open skull that does not close, with tumors on their bodies (...) animals also, for example, chickens do not lay any more eggs. They all become fragile, for example, female cows and goats abort, the pregnant animals lose the animals that are going to give birth to".

Even though they have achieved a historic sentence against an agro-industrial businessman for causing the death of an 11-year-old boy, Silvino Talavera, and the intoxication of his family in 2003⁵⁵, the family has not yet received the compensation established by the Paraguayan justice system from the soybeans producers. The Paraguayan government, as we have mentioned in the first part of this investigation, continues to bet on agribusiness and does not control the actions of landowners and companies, despite the repeated accusations from the women defenders of AMUCAP and other rural organizations in the country.

55.- <http://www6.rel-uita.org/agricultura/agrotoxicos/silvino.htm>

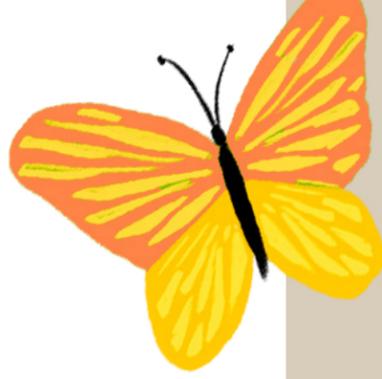
Another important aspect of the impact of extractive activities is related to the access to health care mechanisms and structures for women defenders and their communities. The lack of assistance and services has complicated the situation of rural communities, mainly indigenous and black communities, infected by the Covid-19 virus, as we will address later.

Women defenders make important reflections on the relationship between access to health and extractive activities in their territories, given that companies directly or indirectly influence the presence of services that should be public and accessible. This is what happens in Tocopilla, a coast region in Chile that has suffered the industrial extraction of fish species of the coastline with such aggressiveness that, in 2012, companies left the region due to limiting supply of fish. This case exemplifies a reality that is repeated continuously: far from improving the living conditions of the local populations, extractivism raises the costs of living and makes territories attractive sites for investment, generating a fictitious bubble of economic movement. However, such regions remain impoverished after the inevitable abandonment of the region when resources run out. Investment is no longer attractive, resulting in waves of migration, especially from geographically isolated areas.

This is a key factor that “has facilitated the flight of human and financial capital, resulting in the failure of the few reactivating projects”⁵⁶ in the case of Tocopilla. In this context, health systems respond to the conditions described and to the economic interests of companies and States. According to the *Changas Women*, in Tocopilla there is a modern hospital, however, it does not have permanent medical personnel: “(...) the doctors do not come to work in Tocopilla, they arrive, they stay a few days and the following week they are gone, we do not have doctors to treat us.”

For women defenders, the relationship among extractive logics, increased health risks, and the reduction of basic services for their communities is clear. This causal relationship shows how the promises of local development present in the speeches of governments and companies are not effective in practice.

56.- More information on the subject can be found at <http://tocopillayshistoria.blogspot.com/2011/10/el-subdesarrollo-economico-de-tocopilla.html>



1.4 Denial of socio-cultural rights

One of the most important and least recognized dimensions of extractive activities are the impacts on the cosmovision of women and peoples. Such activities affect the identity and cultural ties with which black, indigenous, and traditional rural communities relate to and build their territory.

For the *campesina* and indigenous women who protect Lake Atitlán, in Sololá, Guatemala, the greatest impact of the pipeline and water transfer project for agribusiness is that,

“(...) it would take away our space, it would cut off our spirituality. They take the energetic contact that we have [with the lake]. I do not know how to express it, but I feel that the damage that they would cause to the population and especially to women is very deep. We feel that the lake is the place that listens to us and that lulls us with its wind, its waves, its tranquility ... it is all, I have no words to explain the significance of seeing our beautiful lake, it would be gone, and they would take away our gathering place.”



For the women, the lake is not only a water resource. It is a meeting place for women and a place where they feel safe and protected. Extractive projects do not consider their possible impacts on the visions of different cultures of nature, much less the vision of women, who have particular connections and relationships with water and land.

In the case of the Arhuaco people in Colombia, this non-mercantile or utilitarian vision of the land is translated into the type of “use” they make of it. The women say that 30% of the territory is worked to satisfy the needs of the community and 70% is left for the regeneration of the forest.

“(…) The mountain knows what it has to do, normally 70% is left for regeneration. Many people misunderstand this and say that the Arhuacos became lazy, because they give us a farm producing at 100 percent and when they come to see it, only a small part of it is being used for production and the rest is full of weeds. People confuse this issue of reforestation. They say it is careless, (but) each forest knows what must grow there, what must be born is born. That is a cultural policy.”

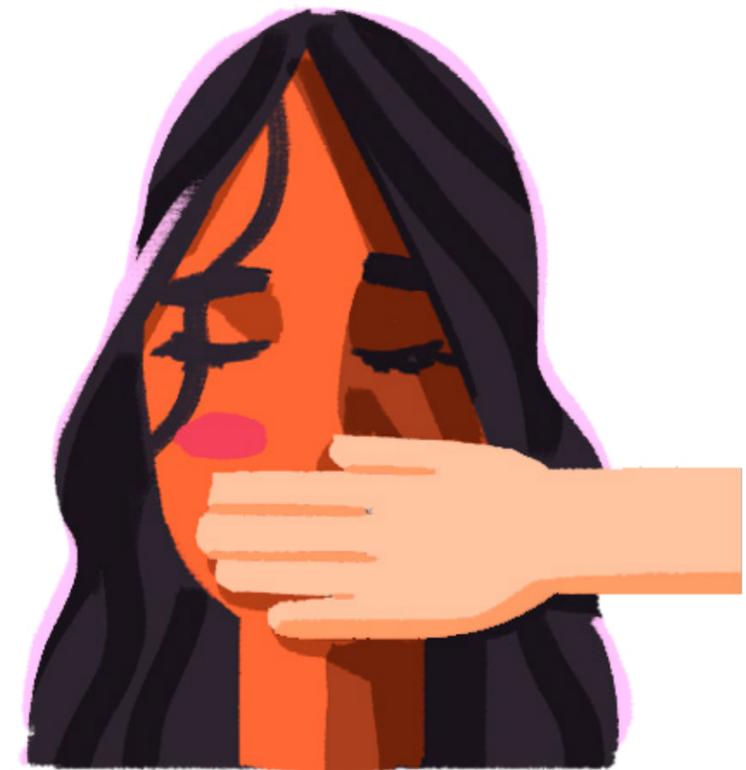
These forms of relationships and understandings of nature and territory are absolutely contrary to the vision of the hegemonic development model that we have described in the first part of this publication. For this reason, for women and their communities, the defense of their territories is deeply linked to the defense of their knowledge, cosmologies, and ways of life, elements that are not relevant for States and companies.



1.5 Obstacles to the participation and organizing of women defenders of territory⁵⁷

We know that to move forward with extractive projects, States and companies use different strategies to repress manifestations of communities, destabilize resistance, and implement activities without the proper participation of people. One of the main strategies of mining corporations is to break social cohesion and generate divisions through the co-optation of male and female leaders who they persuade with job or economic offers, with the aim of avoiding opposition to the installation of their projects.

The persuasion logics of companies are more geared towards men, mainly because, on the one hand, the jobs offered are mostly held by men; and on the other hand, because it is men who are usually in decision-making positions in organizations, as well as in economic and community spaces. In this way, extractive companies reinforce sexist structures and schemes in which the voices and needs of women continue to be ignored.



57.- For more information on this area, we invite you to consult the publication of the Urgent Action Fund: Patterns of Criminalization and Limitations on the Effective Participation of Women who Defend Environmental Rights, Territory, and Nature in the Americas at: <https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/es/recursos/>



Hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal logics hinder the effective participation of women and can be found beyond the dynamics of the companies themselves. In many cases, they can be found in the very forms of community organizing for resistance, that is, within the grassroots organizations and social movements themselves.

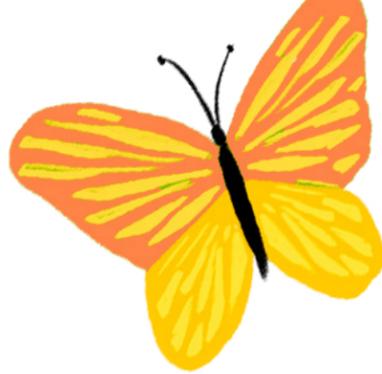
The *Colectivo por la Autonomía del Occidente de México* (Collective for the Autonomy of the West of Mexico), in Jalisco, is a mixed organization that since the end of the nineties has worked with indigenous people and rural communities for the defense of collective territories, native seeds, and the common well-being. In 2010, the region was declared an “agri-food giant” due to the expansion of monocultures of avocados and sugar cane, which has generated a profound transformation of traditional agricultural production, the primary livelihood of local populations. Although both men and women defend territory, in the last 5 years, the *Colectivo por la Autonomía del Occidente de México* has made a feminist political commitment, initiating a training process for women, who have been historically and systematically excluded from deliberative processes due to a lack of access to technical terminology, speaking only in their own languages and having low levels of education.

Gender-based violence is also another historical obstacle to the political participation of women, as we are told by the colleagues of ADEMKAN, in Guatemala, whose defense of Lake Atitlán stems from a process of collective reflection that relates the protection of territory with the protection of women. Our colleagues define themselves as a “small organization of indigenous women” that was born

“(…) from domestic violence; but, as we worked and organized ourselves, we realized that domestic violence was an extremely detrimental problem for our participation within decision-making spaces, especially within the structure of Guatemala.”

The example of ADEMKAN demonstrates that women’s community and organizing relationships are also marked by power relations that influence the bodies and lives of women. The commitment to organize among themselves is one of the answers that women have found throughout the region.

Organizing among women is not only a response to a system of exclusion and violence, but also a commitment to the construction of another way of life and social pacts. For this reason, women openly question the inequality present in social organizations between men and



women that prevents them from developing comprehensive projects for effective collective benefit. In this sense, a difficulty in working with men is the lack of a holistic view of the problems faced by their communities, as the companions of MOMUJEST, in El Salvador, tell us:

“[...] in the community boards, the majority are men. There have been few of us women who have been able to participate [...] the boards are always proposing things for the streets, such as courts, you know? Those things that are practically only used by men. They do not seek the integral development of the communities, the equitable development of men and women, girls and boys”.

For the MOMUJEST colleagues, women’s organizations are important spaces where they can reflect on the conditions of subordination to which they are subjected and, based on this awareness, propose actions and agendas according to their interests and expectations. They are also spaces where they are trained and strengthened to participate actively in other community and decision-making spaces.

“Participating in mixed spaces is important because you have to contribute to the debate, right? You have to influence those mixed spaces, but it is necessary to strengthen ourselves, to gain strength from sisterhood, solidarity among women, to accompany each other in those mixed spaces where it is hard to participate, because they question you, invalidate you, put you aside.”

Far from being an idealistic statement, the truth is that women lead many of the sustained processes of struggle and resistance in Latin America, a reality that has been accentuated in recent years, when women’s spaces have flourished along the region. This process is not easy given the conditions described, as the women of the *Consejo Maya Ch’orti* (Maya Ch’orti’ Indigenous Council) in Guatemala note,



"(...) The women are the ones who have always been at the front line, they are the ones who react, the ones who respond... it is complex, because although they have all the obligations that belong to a woman in the community, which includes housework and children, added to that, parallel to that, they have also been acting on the social, political and legal side. Because they are those who participate in this path, those who go to the mayor, those who demand, those who are supporting, those who are resisting, those who are also preparing food for the resistance, those who are there, in the front line".

In Metapán, a Salvadoran municipality located in the department of Santa Ana, the *Asociación de Mujeres Ambientalistas de El Salvador (AMAES, Environmentalist Women's Association of El Salvador)* was born after a process of analysis and reflection on the participation of women in mixed rural movements. According to the colleagues, mixed organizing spaces invisibilize the multiple forms of violence against women and do not consider them to be protagonists in community processes of resistance.

The women of AMAES also criticize the hegemonic feminist movements of their country, which do not include the claims of indigenous and *campesina* women, such as the defense of their territories. For this reason, the organization has promoted the consolidation of an Eco Feminist Movement that represents them and encourages the construction of alliances with other women's groups.

Faced with the "dismantling of the social fabric" that extractive companies and States provoke in communities due to their ways of operation, it seems pertinent to speak of the "rearticulation of the social fabric" that is being promoted by women defenders in their territories, which although it does not exclude men, requires them to leave their state of comfort, rethink the logic and forms of resistance, and integrate the struggles for gender equality as a guideline and concern for everyone.



CHAPTER 2

The multiple types of violence faced by women defenders of territory in times of Covid-19

As we have discussed in the previous chapter, women defenders of territory already lived in contexts of vulnerability before the arrival of the pandemic. These risks and threats, which are unfortunately very present in the daily lives of those involved in resistance to extractive projects, have not disappeared with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the contrary, some of these scenarios have become more complex, as new risks and challenges have emerged in addition to previous vulnerabilities. This has caused the prioritization of some demands, as well as rethinking strategies to continue resistance, amid unforeseen situations and emergencies.

The colleagues from the 24 organizations that were part of the fieldwork of this publication have agreed on several challenges and issues that became more urgent because of the Covid-19 pandemic. **In this chapter we systematize the main challenges identified by women defenders of territory during this time.**

2.1 Increase in domestic violence during the pandemic

Women and girls in Latin America are one of the populations most impacted by the effects of the confinement and the economic and health crises caused by Covid-19. Unfortunately, the lack of data makes structural violence against them invisible. Several Latin American organizations and regional institutions have reported a significant underreporting of cases of gender-based violence in the context of the pandemic.

The little data available from some countries include the increase in calls to emergency telephone lines. In Argentina, for example, there was a 32% increase in calls to emergency lines after the government-imposed mobility restrictions (Pérez-Vincent et al, 2020). In Peru, the increase in emergency calls related to violence against women was 48% (Agüero, 2020); in Mexico, 60% (France 24, 2020) and in Colombia, the increase was 142% (Vice-presidency of the Republic, 2020). In addition to these



data, the *Mundo Sur* organization reported a total of 2,487 femicides in the region during 2020 (Mundo Sur, 2020).⁵⁸

It is important to mention that in many of the contexts where women defenders of territories live, there are no services such as those mentioned above, therefore, the role of accompanying women who experience domestic violence in their communities, as well of in their organizations, falls on women defenders themselves. The confinement necessary to stop the contagion of Covid-19 makes this work even more complex, since it prevents women in situations of violence from traveling to the offices that provide attention to victims of violence, and limits close-proximity accompaniment, while also making relocation to shelters even more complex than usual.

The testimony of the members of the *Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de Tejutepeque* (ADIT, Association for the Comprehensive Development of Tejutepeque) of El Salvador, and other collected testimonies that have not been included in this text, show the increase in gender-based violence and the difficulties in dealing with such cases in the times of the pandemic.



58.- The figures provided by *Mundo Sur* were constructed with information provided by local organizations in Latin America or obtained from territorial maps whose data are freely accessible. Figures are updated as new records become available. Despite this statistical effort, they always consider a significant underreporting of cases.

- "We have personally attended to five women who had the courage to tell us. [In other cases] we found out from other colleagues who told us "Look, this woman is being abused", but when we asked, she said no, always out of fear of her attacker. We have attended to five very specific cases in rural areas, where the women have told us "I can't stand it anymore ... I can't stand being at home anymore. I can't stand it anymore because my partner hits me." We managed to file complaints in three cases, but we only managed to conclude the process with one, the other two no longer wanted to continue. We understand that it is because their aggressors threatened them. So, it [domestic violence] has increased. The other problem that also worries us is pregnancy in girls and adolescents. In fact, yesterday we approached the health unit asking for information related to how many pregnancies there are in girls and adolescents in the municipality, and they told us that to date, 32 girls aged 10 to 17 are pregnant. The truth is that this has left us very concerned, it has left us extremely concerned and we will see what we can do from now on."

Gender-based violence is undoubtedly an element that runs through the experiences of women throughout the world. In the case of women defenders of territory in Latin America, in addition to the structural violence they experience such as intrafamily violence and pregnancy in girls and adolescents, their communities and territories are devoid of assistance services for women. They also experience violence related to their resistance to the dispossession of their territories. It is important to consider that, as we have mentioned, the fragility of the social fabric in some communities caused by extractivism increases the vulnerability of women.



2.2 Violence and fear as devices of state control

Fear is a natural reaction to Covid-19, since the pandemic places society in the face of the unknown, in the face of a new disease that presents unanswered questions, along with an escalation of reports of death, and devastating scenes transmitted by mainstream media. In addition, the recurrent speeches by Latin American governments declaring a "state of war"⁵⁹ against a common and invisible enemy, the Coronavirus, unleashed a structural fear in the people related to the perception of the external and threatening "other".

In the context of the pandemic, fear acted as a control device, since the discourse of fighting the "enemy" and containing the spread of the virus justified the development of institutional strategies such as laws, administrative and exceptional measures, rigid quarantines, exemplary sanctions for those who violated the restrictions, the use of the military apparatus to control the population, and the militarization of territories, which is akin to a relative state of war.



59.- Just to cite an example, we highlight the words of the President of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández: <https://presidencia.gob.hn/index.php/gob/el-presidente/7617-mensaje-de-aliento-del-presidente-herandez-esta-guerra-solo-la-ganamos-unidos>



The activation of such control devices was especially palpable in Central America, where the military enforced quarantines. In the case of women resisting extractivism in Guatemala, militarization brought back memories of the 1980s, when the government committed genocide against the Mayan people with the aim of expropriating their lands and expanding agribusiness. The quarantine generated fear, especially in the rural population. The *Comité para el Desarrollo Campesino* (CODECA, *Campesino* Development Committee), which works for the rights of *campesina* and indigenous communities in Guatemala, maintains that the government's intention was precisely

"(...) to create terror and panic in the population. Because one [thing] is that they bring out the PNC [National Civil Police]. I mean, it could be the police, but the army? With the big tanks in the streets, guarding the streets, intimidating the population, that was not easy for people..."

The state of exception has suspended the civil rights of populations in Latin America and has deployed excessive use of police and military forces to enforce the imposed restrictions. These measures, far from creating a sense of security, triggered a state of collective fear and insecurity.

In Petén, Guatemala, where the women of the organization *La Otra Cooperativa* (The Other Cooperative), which brings together activists in defense of collective rights and against all forms of discrimination and injustice, note that a Covid-19 care center was installed in a military base because of the lack of health centers and because it is a border area with Mexico. Faced with this situation, people said "I'm not going there, why would I go there, to be killed?" or expressed: "I prefer to stay at home with my teas, my herbs, I won't even take a look over there."

The use of military paraphernalia to "combat" Covid-19 not only resulted in a symbolic display, but also in the implementation of a series of extrajudicial measures and excesses in the use of police force, as reflected by the ADIT colleagues in El Salvador, who consider that the measures taken

"(...) violated people's rights of movement. We even had a case in the country in which, on May 10th, which is when Mother's Day is celebrated here, a woman who is not from our municipality went out to do her shopping and was killed by the security forces."

ADIT is a women's organization that since 1998 has worked with youth and women in the city of Tejutepeque. Their work consists of promoting agroecology from an ecofeminist perspective. Much of their work is directed at *campesina* and indigenous women with varying degrees of vulnerability. Precisely for this reason, the death of a young mother at the hands of the police affected them in a direct and significant way. The fear of going out and suffering repression has hindered not only their daily survival, but also the possibility for solidarity and support among them.

The use of force is intimidating for the population in general and for women in particular, due to the perception of vulnerability of their bodies in instances of violence. In this context, the police, who should be there to guarantee the rights of citizens, are the face of repression. In the name of "protection" they intimidate the population, including through the use of extreme forms of violence such as killings, for instance, which has also been reported in other countries such as Argentina and Peru⁶⁰.

Communities with a long history of opposition to extractive projects have shown us that in these contexts – which are highly racialized – the use of repression and violence occurs constantly. This reinforces the colonizing and racist nature of the actions of those who support extractivism in the region. As recounted by the *Asociación para el Desarrollo de la Península de Zacate Grande* (ADEPZA, Association for the Development of the Zacate Grande Peninsula) of Honduras, the militarization imposed by the government had the dual mission of monitoring compliance with the quarantine and monitoring community actions in their territory, which is in constant dispute with landowners, even hindering access to aid in the form of supplies:

"(...) on one occasion, we even made requests for donations for specific families, and they did not let the goods, the food that we requested, come to us. The issue of militarization increased in multiple ways (...)"

Militarization and fear as devices of control increased the harassment of both female and male leaders, reaffirming the logic of repression and punishment for people resisting in their territories.

60.- For more references to this particular case, see: https://www.clarin.com/policiales/detienen-5-policias-crimen-adolescente-15-anos-cordoba_0_cTLEhX5JJ.html and <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2020/12/17/peru-graves-abusos-policiales-contra-manifestantes>

2.3 Information as a device of control

Due to the global nature of this phenomenon, it is extremely important that societies can rely on official information to understand the situation of the pandemic in their countries. This has been difficult in our region, as some governments have denied the magnitude of the pandemic, presenting partial information and false figures. Some leaders, such as those of Brazil, Mexico, and Nicaragua, have spoken out against quarantines and, although most presidents have not denied the seriousness of the virus, they have turned their efforts and focused their speeches on the economic impact of the virus, instead of developing and disseminating accessible health care measures for their diverse populations.

According to the *Comité de Desarrollo Campesino* (CODECA, *Campesino* Development Committee) in Guatemala, which includes radio communication as part of their strategy, one part of the government's communication strategy was based on repeatedly communicating information about economic loans intended to support the most vulnerable populations to face the problems of the pandemic. However, the CODECA colleagues, who work with grassroots organizations throughout the country, expressed that, contrary to government claims, the resources never reached the people.



The women from Zacate Grande (ADEPZA) indicate a similar situation in Honduras. They affirm that, despite the wide dissemination in the media about international loans and support, the Honduran government has mismanaged the economic resources allocated to the pandemic.

The little financial aid destined for the communities was difficult to access and did not consider the contexts of the populations furthest from urban centers. Governments did not develop appropriate communication measures to officially inform communities how to access such aid. In Brazil, for example, there were cases of Amazonian indigenous communities that contracted the virus when they were required to go to bank headquarters located in populated centers to collect the aid provided by the government.

Some civil society organizations also identify the risk of widespread information control and surveillance⁶¹ led by digital applications and government bodies themselves. In times of pandemic, the collection of personal data of the population can potentially increase surveillance and control over the population.

2.4 Structural racism and precariousness of public services amid a health crisis

Racism is a colonial trait that persists today and that operates in concrete and specific ways in Latin American societies. The communities where black, *campesina*, and indigenous grassroots organizations struggle for their territories are differentially racialized because of their ethnicity and skin color. But, above all, subordinate relationships destined for non-white people are imposed, which can be seen in the conditions of marginality and in the lack of infrastructure and access to public services.

Racism has a central place in socio-environmental conflicts in general, since marginalized and racialized populations most directly suffer the impacts caused by destructive economic and production models. Given that extractivism is one of the main economic activities on which this model is based – if not the most important – it draws on and reinforces unequal racist logics to continue operating and advancing in the territories of black and indigenous communities in the region.

One of the ways in which racism has operated since colonial times is by limiting access and land ownership to *mestizos* and whites. Racialized communities are in a permanent struggle for the legal recognition of their land tenure, which opposes the prevailing logic. The women of the

61. - <https://www.tedic.org/vigilancia-masiva-en-el-contexto-de-un-estado-de-emergencia/>



Associação União Quilombola De Araçá Cariacá (Quilombola Union Araçá Cariacá Association) of Brazil, and other organizations with whom we spoke, recognize that the absence of public policies is related to the territorial conflicts they face, leaving communities in a greater situation of vulnerability:

"We do not have ownership of our land and consequently we do not have the living conditions to remain on it. Our fight is guided by an interest in changing public policies, in this fight we have the desire to remain on our territory while fighting for the entitlement of our land."

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, structural racism became more evident as the vulnerability of indigenous and black populations was exacerbated by the absence of specific measures for this population, considering the legal framework to guarantee the rights of indigenous and traditional communities. In Brazil, for example, the *quilombola* communities were not even included in the few emergency measures granted by the government. *Quilombola* women from Brazil note:

"(...) the national government allocated emergency resources for the people, and they did not take us into account. When aid arrives, and it hardly arrived, the process [registration deadline for subsidies] had passed, so we have to sustain ourselves in a collective process of solidarity."



The difficult sanitary conditions in which thousands of communities and millions of indigenous, black, and *campesina* women survive in Latin America is another important marker of the lack of adequate public policies for these populations. This is the case, for example, of the Arhuaco people, in northern Colombia, and in the indigenous populations of Rurrenabaque and San Buenaventura in the northern Amazon in Bolivia. In both cases, the indigenous populations do not have health centers in their territory.

Both contexts represent a common problem in the region: the lack of specific public health policies for indigenous populations that include, for example, medical care in the communities, care in their own languages, and treatments that consider the ancestral medicines used by indigenous peoples, which can complement Western medical practice, as well as other concrete measures of access to infrastructure and health services. This absence also extends to rural black communities in the region, such as *quilombolas* in Brazil, *consejos comunitarios* in Colombia, *cimarronas* in Peru, and *garífunas* in the Caribbean and Central America, among others.



In addition to the non-existence or precarious existence of health centers in non-urban territories of racialized communities, another pattern of pandemic management can also be evidenced: the urban-centric vision. Both official speeches and actions have prioritized the quantification and attention of cases registered in urban populations, and as a result, the figures and official records of the number of people infected, recovered, and deceased do not reflect the real dimension of the pandemic, a factor seen in several countries. On the subject, the women of the Maya Ch'orti' people in Guatemala affirm that:

"In the Maya-Ch'orti' community, no cases have been officially registered. In other words... the tests that have been carried out have been in the cities, those tests are not going to reach the community, sadly they are not reaching it".



Another aspect to consider about access to health in marginalized communities is the unaffordable cost of medicines and treatments, as colleagues from the *Otra Cooperativa*, in Guatemala, tell us,

"(...) of course the health issue is a very complex situation because anyone who gets sick from the communities goes to the hospital and they give us medicine that is needed, but they give us very expensive medicines that we cannot afford."

The 24 organizations that participated in this investigation agree that there have been no improvements in the structural problems of access to health in their territories during the period of the pandemic, nor have preventive measures or specific care been provided for their populations. They affirm that the precariousness of health care services was largely responsible for the increase in cases in the communities. Given this, community measures for physical protection of their territories and health treatments based on their own knowledge were essential to cope with the impacts of the pandemic, as we will later see.



2.5 Selective quarantine and economic precariousness

Without wishing to generalize, we can affirm that quarantine measures in many Central and South American countries have paralyzed all so-called non-essential activities such as commerce, education, and festive and recreational activities, among others. Along with them, work and daily activities of the populations have been paralyzed, to different extents. However, as already mentioned in the first part of this publication, not all people and economic activities have been subjected to quarantines with the same intensity.

Defenders question the privilege granted to companies to continue operating, while women were unable to work and without timely contingency plans. In the case of Peru, for example, all productive activities were paralyzed except those considered "essential", including mining.⁶² Similarly, in Honduras, where the defenders of Zacate Grande observed how exporting agricultural companies circulated with police protection, while they were banned from carrying out their economic activities, including small-scale agriculture and cattle ranching. The women of the Maya Ch'orti' Indigenous Council, in Guatemala, question the normal running of the textile factories which, according to their experience, became sources of the spread of Covid-19.

It is worth stopping for a moment to think about what it means for communities whose population depends on the resources obtained almost daily for their subsistence, to be without work, even more so in the context of women's organizations in defense of territory. The rigid quarantine declared in Chile, for example, has had a negative impact on the work of the fisherwomen in Tocopilla, since its members have not been able to freely access the inlets where they collect algae and mollusks, nor have they been able to commercialize their products. Something similar has happened in Honduras, where bay communities accompanied by ADEPZA, which already had difficulties in accessing their traditional fishing areas due to urban expansion, were doubly affected by the restrictions imposed,

62.- In the case of Peru, for example, the state of emergency in force since March 15 with the issuance of Supreme Decree No. 044-2020-PCM, specifies that mining activity can continue, since it is necessary to "guarantee the sustainability of critical operations with the minimum essential personnel". The following are considered critical operations: "exploitation of minerals, closure of mines, construction of mining projects, transportation of minerals by unconventional means, as well as transportation and storage of concentrates and processed mineral products".



"(...) because we are poor communities and there are already limitations to accessing economic resources because there is no access to the beaches. With the issue of Covid, they further limited access for the few beaches where people can usually fish, and limited the little we can do, for example, the collection of mollusks and what the mar blanco (white sea)⁶³ provides us. Additionally, we can't sell our catch because all access points are closed (...)"

Not only have they been denied the selling of their products, but also the possibility of daily food access. This is undoubtedly one of the harshest criticisms of the quarantines, since **it is women who are most likely to live in extreme poverty and have the most precarious income as a result of the pandemic** (FAO and CARE, 2020).

Militarized quarantines have made living conditions even more difficult for women, who experience higher rates of unemployment and poverty compared to men. According to the UN Women report (2020) "for every 100 men between the ages of 25 and 59 living in poverty, there were 113 women in the same situation." According to the World Bank, in the middle of the pandemic 33.3% of women carried out informal and precarious jobs.

63.- Local terminology used to define coastal zones that allow access for artisanal fishing.

This scenario is daunting. The testimonies of the women make explicit the absence of fundamental rights guaranteed by States, which leaves them exposed to low wages and without job security or access to health insurance. The situation is even worse in the territories of the women that are part of this investigation, since they were already suffering a constant situation of violence, harassment and loss of their means and ways of life due to the expansion of extractive companies.

Our intention in this section is not to claim that work and economic support for women is more important than safeguarding their lives in a context of risk due to the contagion of the virus. On the contrary, **we want to highlight that the policies developed by States of the region to safeguard and protect the population do not take into account the realities, needs, and complex situations of women, their organizations, and communities, and how, instead, they prioritize the needs of extractive companies over the need of communities in a context of crisis.**

Another important element about the situation that women face in the context of the pandemic is related to so-called care jobs, which are tasks traditionally assigned to women. In this sense, the defenders **recognize the overload of care work caused by the quarantine.**

For the companions of *La Otra Cooperativa* in Guatemala, the impacts on the emotional health of women related to the overload of work derived from the confinement and the lack of redistribution of care responsibilities in the home have been evident.

"There are colleagues who have said, I am depressed locked up here. The situation has been quite complex, including for those who work outside the home, their work has tripled because they have to work virtually and are in charge of the house and children (...)"

In this regard, colleagues from the *Asociación Colectiva de Mujeres Emprendedoras y Solidarias de Tonacatepeque* (ACOMEST, Entrepreneurs and Supportive Women of Tonacatepeque Collective Association), in El Salvador, agree, pointing out that much of the work around care, especially that linked to children, is the exclusive responsibility of women.

"(...) For us women, Covid, the pandemic, has been a considerable burden because the children are not going to study by themselves. Women make food, clean the house and everything, and have to teach their children to read and write. It's too much work."

Oxfam Intermón's "Time to Care" report (2020) states that around the world, women and girls spend 12.5 billion hours a day on care work. The same report indicates that this number of hours worked is equivalent to approximately 10.8 trillion dollars annually, an exorbitant number. Given this, we believe it is a serious issue not to consider the work around care as part of States' economies.





Chapter 3

Community alternatives: the multiple forms of resistance of women defenders during the Covid-19 pandemic

Black and indigenous women, *campesinas*, women migrants and fisherwomen, among others, are the protagonists of resistance movements to extractive projects, making visible from their territories hundreds of experiences that question the capitalist world-system. **In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the collective responses led by women to face health risks and economic instability demonstrate their ability to sustain communities and their ways of life in an emergency context. Furthermore, women defenders continued with organizing processes in the face of extractivism in their territories, responding to the multiple crises that are developing simultaneously.**



Both within the pandemic as well as in a broader context, women's struggles are linked to the structural (macro-political) dimension and the individual (micro-political) dimension. As players in macro-politics, women question large-scale extractive projects and demand compliance with human rights laws and parameters. The women of the POPOLNA organization in Nicaragua, for example, have been fighting for the rural population's human rights for more than nine years, advocating for the recovery of popular sovereignty in front of the Interoceanic Canal of Nicaragua.⁶⁴ To achieve their goals, they have used both local resistance and the consolidation of networks, as well as the implementation of legal actions at the national and international levels. They are an example of this type of resistance to projects of a structural dimension. In the words of the POPOLNA colleagues, the resistance will be sustained and maintained,

"(...) as long as the entire concession of the canal is not legally repealed and a thorough investigation of the evident acts of corruption that have been involved in the concession takes place. Because the threat it poses to natural resources, the land of *campesinas*, indigenous people, Afro-descendants that are along the project route persists".

Actions such as this are reproduced throughout the region, questioning the macro-politics of dispossession and the impacts and violations of human rights promoted by States complicit with transnational corporations. On many occasions, these strategies include actions that could be considered as micropolitical, since they go hand in hand with initiatives related to people's daily lives, actions that respond to fundamental human needs of communities, or changes in practices and behaviors towards a more sustainable and fairer collective life.

On the Magdalena River, one of the main rivers in Colombia, the construction of the El Quimbo hydroelectric plant by the EMGESA company displaced rural, *campesina* and fishing communities. The *Asociación de Afectados por el proyecto Hídrico el Quimbo* (ASOQUIMBO, People Affected by El Quimbo Hydroelectric Project Association) brings together these communities. The colleagues at the forefront of this resistance say that, although the fight for the restitution of rights is vital, and this is why the association have sustained a 12-year mobilization process

64.- <https://popolna.org/publication/25-verdades-sobre-la-concesion-del-canal-interoceanico-de-nicaragua/> <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/nicaragua680esp2016web-1gg.pdf> <https://www.salvalaselva.org/noticias/6941/por-que-decimos-no-al-canal-charla-y-entrega-de-firmas-en-madrid>

in search of comprehensive reparations, it is no less important to transform the social impacts these projects have on daily life. One of their concerns is precisely the reconstruction of social fabric for displaced peoples through processes of solidarity, productive initiatives and collective care.

These last actions can be defined as the micropolitics of life: **concrete and corporal actions that allow “spaces of freedom to flourish” (Rivera, 2019). In this sense, it is about “re-politicizing everyday life”, transforming it into a space of dispute, interpellation, and transformation.** The reconstruction of the social fabric implies considering the needs of women to reorganize collective agreements that lead to a dignified life. Therefore, part of collective care implies the search for initiatives that allow women’s self-determination and the exercise of their autonomy in all dimensions.



3.1 Of garlic, herbs and ginger: health in our hands

In different communities and cultures there are different ways of understanding health and illness. Some traditional health practices are widely recognized by society, and even incorporated into some medical points of view, for example, in relation to the use and properties of medicinal herbs. Despite the fact that a majority of Latin American countries do not officially recognize it, at least 70% of the population makes permanent use of traditional or ancestral medicine⁶⁵ (WHO, 2002).

Some limitations of traditional medicine in the diagnosis and treatment of certain diseases are recognized by the communities themselves, who also turn to Western medicine and the formal health system or make use of traditional medicines as complementary practices to Western treatments. Beyond this, access to Western medicine continues to be an obstacle for



65.- According to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO), traditional medicine is the sum of knowledge, techniques, and procedures based on both theoretical knowledge, beliefs, and indigenous experiences of different cultures, be they explainable or not, that is intended to maintain health, prevent, and treat physical and mental illnesses. Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization. General guidelines for methodologies on research and evaluation of traditional medicine, PAHO / WHO, 2002. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/67719>

many people due to the lack of infrastructure and the absence of specific measures to serve diverse populations. Given this, traditional medicine becomes the only source of relief for some and the main approach to health for others.

In this section we will talk about the practice of ancestral medicine in the responses of women's organizations to Covid-19. Its use is due to a collective and ancestral knowledge maintained by the communities. We base our reflections on such contexts.

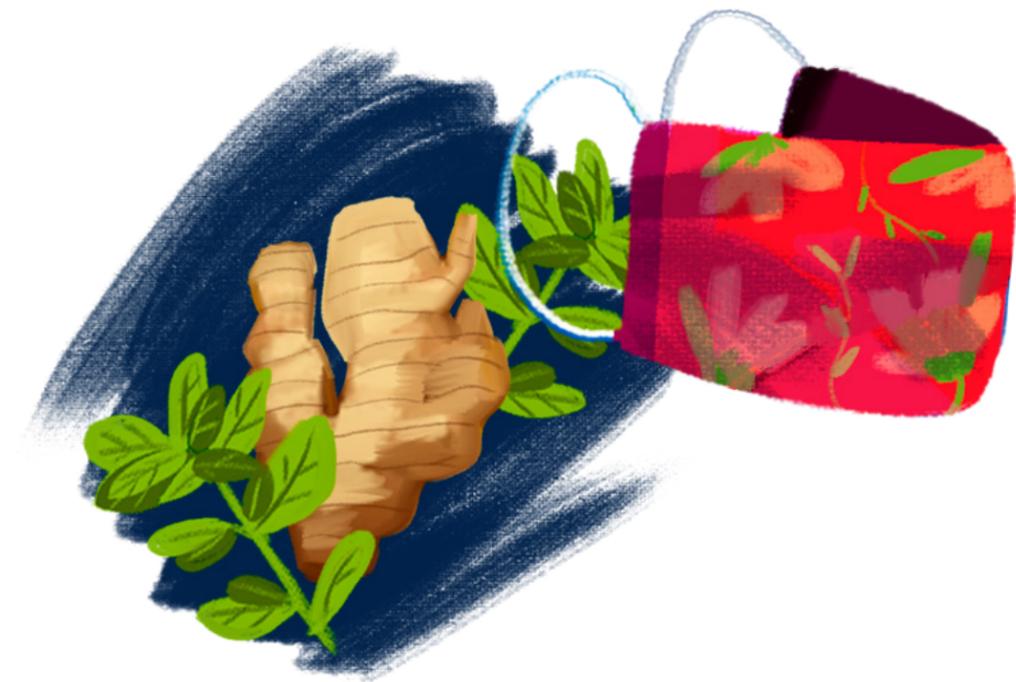
Although the WHO and PAHO⁶⁶ have standardized the concept of "traditional medicine", practice shows that it is permanently recreated, which is why it is not possible to pigeonhole it into one static definition. Women play an important role in the use and propagation of this knowledge, because they are the ones who most often manage health in the context of the home, in such a way that they are "creators and carriers of knowledge that refers to a hybrid practice with roots in traditional medicine" (Zolla and Mellado, 1995; Hernández Tezoquipa et al. 2001, cited by Jorand, 2008). This "hybrid practice" is manifested in the ways in which women incorporate new inputs, such as plants, minerals, or other materials, to the medical practices inherited or learned in communal socialization processes.



66.- Pan American Health Organization

When facing the pandemic, women turned to traditional medicine on a daily basis, making a series of recipes and recommendations for prevention and early care of the disease. For example, in the communities surrounding the Beni River, in Bolivia, they revitalized the knowledge of their grandparents and mothers who formerly used quinine in the preparation of a tea to improve immune system response. Women from *Saramanta Warmikuna* promoted the elaboration of traditional medicines to treat the symptoms of Covid-19, organizing a catalog of medicines on its website as an economic initiative that contributes to the healing women of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The women of the Carmen de Chucurí resistance movement, in Colombia, collected community knowledges for the preparation of a recipe book with the medicinal plants of the region, which you can see in the resources tab of our website:

www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co



In the north Amazon of Bolivia, the indigenous women from the Leco people has denounced that the infections in their community have been introduced by mining companies, who have not stopped operations despite the quarantine. The symptoms that the women observed in those

infected, as well as the two deaths from Covid-19 that were registered in their community at the beginning of the confinement, prompted them to talk about the appropriate use of their knowledge and herbs:

"(...) There have been two casualties in the community, as a group of women we talked about it and realized what [the sick] should take. We have herbs, matico, and honey, with that we have managed to cope even though there were entire families that were infected. There were no resources to go to Guanay [the closest municipality where there are health services]. The locks [doors] were closed, the doctors didn't even want to treat you".

It is visible how such actions are collective and are assumed mainly by women. Health management in indigenous, *campesina*, and black communities includes, in addition to herbal use, the search for an integral healing that involves the care and healing not only of the body, but also of the spirit and emotions. Under this logic, the women of the *Associação União Quilombola De Araçá Cariacá*, in Brazil (Quilombola Union Araçá Cariacá Association), combine traditional medicine to treat the symptoms of Covid-19, with spiritual healing, noting "garlic, roots, rue, and rosemary increase immunity and cleanse our spirit".



The use of healing plants has been complemented with a higher intake of foods that help to improve the immune defenses of women and their communities. This is the case of the *Movimento Pela Soberania Popular na Mineração* (MAM, Movement for Popular Sovereignty in Mining), which is organized at the national level to resist large-scale mining in Brazil:

"We think that healthy eating is the best way to increase immunity, so we have foods like onion, which is used to make syrup, also garlic, and lemon."

MAM promotes productive initiatives that respond to the specific needs of its members. The women of the organization have generated autonomous and self-managed strategies to promote, for example, the planting of vegetables aimed at generating income and improving their diet.

"Currently we do mixed work, we work with men and women, but we have mainly accompanied women farmers. Here in the Rio Grande do Sul region, we have considered working on an agroecology production line as a viable alternative to conventional production with chemicals that many husbands continue to use."

Women have made use of natural medicine and encouraged organic consumption in a conscious manner and as a political stance, long before the arrival of the pandemic. In addition, through agroecological practices, women promote a natural and healthy diet, a fundamental element to improve the response of the immune system to diseases and infections in general, and one of the WHO's recommendations for staying healthy during confinement.

During the pandemic, it was the women who, through their organizations, established early care protocols, which include the use of specific herbs for the preparation of syrups, vapors, infusions, etc. The colleagues report that preventive medicines contributed to the health of families and that infected people who made use of traditional remedies in their communities experienced an improvement in their symptoms. Of course, there are several factors that must be taken into account to understand

the improvement of a patient, such as viral load, the response of the immune system, the genetics of the individual, and the existence or lack of pre-existing illnesses. **In any case, the aforementioned examples show that, in the face of state abandonment and the lack of guaranteed access to health services, women's organizations have taken the reins of the response to Covid-19 in their communities from their knowledge, contributing to the well-being of various population groups.**



3.2 Economic sustainability of women and their communities

As we have already mentioned, when an extractive company arrives in a territory, it usually changes local logics related to the economy and sustainability. First, because they appropriate lands where rural people carry out their agricultural or tourism activities, which leaves the communities dependent on activities that are complementary or indirectly related to the extractive projects, such as cleaning services for the facilities, the feeding of civil servants, or sewing and washing of their clothes. Once the extractive project comes to an end, the companies leave the land devastated because of the destructive techniques they have used, which prevents the communities from resuming their productive initiatives. Companies and States have mechanisms to make local communities dependent on them and the success of the extractivist model has a lot to do with these mechanisms.

Considering the economic impacts caused by extractive activities and the increase in financial vulnerability as a result of the pandemic, women organizations' initiatives take on special relevance to guarantee the survival and independence of their communities via sustainable projects and from a position of deep politicization of the everyday. For example, the *Asociación Colectiva de Mujeres Emprendedoras y Solidarias de Tonacatepeque* (ACOMEST, Entrepreneurs and Supportive Women of Tonacatepeque Collective Association), in El Salvador, has sought alternatives for the women in its organization to generate economic income:

"We have seen what it takes to manage within the pandemic and to change our modalities. If we make cakes and empanadas to sell, we have to learn to publicize them on WhatsApp, so that people realize that there are goods available, that we can send them to their homes (...)"

Other organizations have carried out similar actions, self-managing collective initiatives to generate income and to maintain collective care and learning. Although some initiatives were already underway, they became especially important during the economic crisis unleashed by the pandemic. With the suspension of informal work, limitations in transporting agricultural products of small producers, and the paralysis of the sale of products such as handicrafts, rural women had to make important changes in their means of sustaining themselves; solidarity took a fundamental role.



This is, without a doubt, a type of economic relationship that draws attention because it is not based on the logic of profit generation, nor is it included in State macro-accounts, but is one that reinforces solidarity and reciprocity in daily life (Cusicanqui, 2018). In that sense, it is a type of work with one foot in self-support and the other in the search for sustainability and collective autonomy. It is a way of surviving outside of state services.

The ability to develop new strategies or ways of generating income, however, comes from lessons learned from long struggles that interweave productive initiatives with the defense of territories. In these productive processes, the communities strengthen their organization, which enhances their ability to make decisions regarding their territories and to guarantee the sustainability of life in them.

For example, after more than 20 years of fighting against mining, the colleagues of Cajamarca, in Peru, combine resistance and protest actions with productive initiatives linked to what they call “sensory rescue” – the recovery of ancestral knowledge about the healing qualities of plants.

“(…) We are going to teach people to protect their plants, and apart from that we are going to generate our own resources, which don't amount to much, but they help. Because sometimes people say 'no, the defenders, those instigators who are against the development of the people.' They call us that, right? They say that we scare people so that they are against development, because mining is development”.



The colleagues have started a series of commercial ventures such as the production of medicinal oils, tinctures, syrups, herbal soaps, among other products, to show economic alternatives to the dependence caused by extractive projects. **This activity has allowed them to continue to have collective and individual economic income outside the economic networks of the mine. In addition, it has contributed to community health in times of pandemic.**

The search for alternatives is adapted to the specific conditions and resources in each territory. In Zacate Grande, Honduras, the women of ADEPZA promote the recovery of the coastline through sustainable and organic shrimp fishing and community tourism, under the premise of “not destroying what exists, nor destroying nature.”

“(…) We say that our fight is for the territory and recovery of the beaches, not only for Zacate Grande, but for all of us who are in this country, so that they can come and enjoy it, and so that families can generate resources by offering lodging or food.”

The economic proposals developed by women are based on the realities of their communities, with a vision of collective benefit and respect for Mother Earth. In the department of Cauca, in Colombia, the *Movimiento de*



Mujeres por la Vida de Cajibío (Women's Movement for Life in Cajibío), an alliance of indigenous, black, and *campesina* women, seeks to protect their territories and communities from violence derived from the armed conflict and the disputes over the expansion of illicit crops, which has generated an environment of insecurity, violence, and food shortages that has intensified in times of quarantine. Faced with this, the women formed a group of seed guardians that promotes food sovereignty and local economy.



The “guardians of the seeds” learn about the native seeds from their territory, share knowledge, and protect the seeds to prevent them from being lost. The process ranges from sowing of seeds to the preparation of typical dishes to encourage their use and consumption. These actions are a way of seeking food security and sovereignty outside the logic of the food industry. In addition, due to the context they face, women from Cajibío have also identified concrete protection and self-protection measures for themselves and their territories, such as the strengthening of indigenous, *campesina*, and *cimarrona* guards of women who are present and who monitor what is happening in the territory.

In Santo Tomás, a municipality in El Salvador, where urban expansion projects have encroached on and usurped agricultural lands, eliminating water sources, MOMUJEST's partners are expanding

“(...) agroecological gardens in different communities of the municipality. An experimental center for analogous forests is also being worked on (...) we are reactivating a plant nursery that we had abandoned (...) we have vegetable crops, aromatic herbs.”

Through experiences such as agroecology and analog forestry (reforestation and forest recovery processes with an ecological and food approach, based on native species), women's organizations show that it is possible to combine healthy eating, local economic strengthening, and ecosystem conservation. These forms of production are also a way of life, since they imply a full-time dedication to agricultural work, respecting the rhythms of nature, as opposed to agro-industrial production, which tries to artificially control and maximize natural cycles.

In the economic alternatives proposed by women, individual support is linked to family and community support, as they are understood to be interconnected networks that seek collective well-being. Through these alternatives, women defenders seek to promote the autonomy of women, not only in material terms, but also in terms of decision-making based on their will and independence.

3.3 Community mechanisms for communication

In the context of the pandemic, communities report not having received effective, quality, timely, or culturally appropriate information on the mechanisms of prevention and early care for the disease. For this reason, on many occasions, protocols for care, attention, and prevention were developed by the communities themselves, with appropriate information for their contexts and which was circulated mainly through community and alternative media.

The *Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras* (COPINH, Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) has been fighting for the defense of territorial and environmental rights for 28 years. One of its strategies, already quite consolidated, is popular and community communication, mainly via radio. During the pandemic, COPINH has promoted its own way of informing communities:

"(...) we took part in the preparation of information capsules, informative materials that we worked on and called "Health in our hands" where, on behalf of the organization, we shared very basic concepts about the Coronavirus and the measures to be taken in the communities. This was then replicated through small radio segments."



In this case, the information disseminated is a dialogue between conventional medicine and natural medicine, offering early and available alternatives to the communities. The COPINH colleagues have been informed by experts on the issues and have promoted dialogue between different forms of knowledge. For their part, the ADEPZA colleagues, also in Honduras, have implemented a radio information line with the purpose of reducing fear produced by the excess of "misinformation" on social networks. They tell us that,

"the truth is that the audience we have on the radio has increased. We started with a process of campaigns to raise awareness of what Covid is and another on misinformation, because there is a large amount of [information about] the disease in social networks. In the media we started with a campaign related to not believing in all that type of information."

Due to the flow of people returning to the communities when they are unemployed in the cities, the programs developed by ADEPZA have also included issues related to avoiding "discrimination and stigmatization", because in the opinion of the colleagues, fear affects just as much as the disease itself.



The colleagues of the *Associação União Quilombola De Araçá Cariacá* (Quilombola Union Araçá Cariacá Association), who are located in the municipality of Bom Jesus da Lapa, in the State of Bahia, Brazil, began a collective process of solidarity and information through epidemiological bulletins in their community, where they reported what the disease is and how it is transmitted, as well as the preventive use of traditional medicine. The bulletins have been distributed both in *quilombos* and in urban settlements of people who have left their territories of origin. **This shows us that networks of solidarity and connection exist beyond geographical limits.**

In several cases, women's organizations lead initiatives that are not only limited to the dissemination of information but that also include the use of information as part of longer-term research. The organization *La Otra Cooperativa*, in Guatemala, designed a participatory communication and research strategy:

"(...) we organized 'conversas'⁶⁷ with other groups where we shared this type of information. We made a couple of posters on care and prevention, and it has helped us a lot. During the pandemic we are doing a small investigation on women who have organized, looking at the different ways they have organized themselves during the pandemic, from their homes, from the familial, leaders who have been undertaking very beautiful alternatives. We are in the process of making a documentary that we hope to share."

In this case, the strategy developed to keep the community informed starts from the observation and systematization of information obtained on social networks, and from listening to the women of the community. Beyond campaigns to disseminate information, these approaches to understanding women's concrete reality allow organizations to collect inputs, to understand what has happened to women in this context, and to develop collective actions and grievances to respond to such problems.

In rural contexts, where there is little infrastructure for connectivity to telephone and internet networks and, therefore, a restricted appropriation of digital media, the period of confinement demanded that women interact with computers and the language of the digital world to keep in touch as an

67.- Colloquial way to refer to a conversation or meeting.

organization and to accompany each other across the distance, as well as to support their children with virtual classes. The companions of ADIT, in El Salvador, say that,

"We went into great panic but we supported each other. We organized via WhatsApp, calling our colleagues, calling each other, ... prescribing things to each other saying "this worked well for me", and using our native plants. We also experienced psychological symptoms because of course we were scared, but this process helped us".

Other organizations also reported the use of technology as a tool to keep up to date with the evolution of the pandemic, the needs of their colleagues, the socialization of relevant information, and mutual accompaniment across the distance.

Ultimately, one thing is the bombardment of information without context, the replication of alarmist information, and the political manipulation of the media, and quite another are the demands and needs of specific populations. In this framework, the timely responses from the women themselves and their organizations, who have developed and implemented contextualized information mechanisms, allow us to affirm that **having independent and timely communication alternatives is a key factor in organizational processes, and specifically in self-management of health.**



3.4 Prevention of contagion and community protection mechanisms

In addition to responding to protect their health, some communities have put in place self-managed monitoring and control measures. This is the case of the indigenous women from the Leco people, in the north of the Bolivian Amazon, who, given the neglect of the government and the continued operation of mining activities in their region during the pandemic, decided to isolate their territory and initiate an autonomous process of monitoring and control. **The virtue of this action is that they do not use intimidation measures, but rather such measures are the result of collective consensus based on protection and prevention of contagion.** A similar action has taken place in Cajamarca, Peru, where the *Rondas Campesinas* (Peasant Patrols) have organized a monitoring system for their communities by mandate and consensus. The monitoring of those who circulate in the territory made it possible to collect evidence that the mining company Quellaveco, belonging to the transnational Anglo American company⁶⁸, was violating the quarantine orders established in the state of national emergency.

Actions such as those mentioned question the paternal and colonial nature of the measures taken by the governments, which ignored the governance systems of *campesina*, indigenous, and black communities, who are governed based on their own forms of organization, based on consensus and collective norms.



68.- The peasant patrols stopped a bus that was transporting mining workers without biosecurity measures. Primary references: <https://rpp.pe/peru/actualidad/coronavirus-en-peru-cajamarca-interpon-dran-denuncia-penal-a-empresa-minera-que-envio-trabajadores-desde-moquegua-en-estado-de-emergencia- news-1253029>



3.5 Collective care⁶⁹ and sustaining resistance

Initiatives for care, well-being and physical, emotional, and psychological health are part of the agenda of many women's organizations and have occupied a central place in the organizational processes of women defenders of territory. Many of the practices are related to being together, which has a very important face-to-face and physical dimension for *acuerpamiento*⁷⁰. With the lack of mobility due to the quarantines installed in most of the countries of the region, women experienced the lack of care spaces, as ADIT colleagues report:

"[Before the pandemic] we saw each other, we talked, we really needed it because we listened to each other and told each other our experiences. We felt trust with the group, that we are not going to be judged, that we are going to count on what we can do, and that we are going to find advice and not negative words, we would find more encouragement, motivation, strength ... self-care and collective care are very necessary, they are extremely important. Even more in this current situation, it is the moment when we need these activities".

69.- At FAU-AL we understand care in a broad manner: it is a decision and a set of daily actions, a form of relationship between human and non-human beings and with the earth. It manifests itself in different dimensions, including physical, emotional, spiritual, and digital, and it occurs in various spheres that are interdependent: personal, collective, family, community, organizational and in relation to the land and territory. Caring, as a way of understanding the world and being in it as well as a set of practices, enables the sustainability of the activism of women defenders of territory, whether in women's or mixed organizations. For this reason, without a doubt, we state that care practices, diverse in their forms, are related to the caring of life.

70.- We take up the notion of *acuerpamiento* from Guatemalan indigenous colleagues and community feminists. *Acuerpamiento* is an ancestral practice of solidarity and collective care that means accompanying, surrounding and supporting each other, especially when a partner or organization has suffered an attack, or her situation requires collective action of care and protection.

Unlike mixed settings, where women often report not feeling heard, women's spaces are constituted as moments of dialogue and listening among peers. Therefore, they serve to collectively regain confidence and self-esteem, and provide emotional support in different situations of risk and violence that they experience in their personal life or because of their activism.

Due to the importance of these spaces for dialogue and listening, virtual communication initiatives have become fundamental accompaniment strategies among women since the pandemic began. These were complemented with face-to-face accompaniment actions for single mothers and elderly women, for example, who faced greater difficulties.

Actions for the defense and protection of territory are not isolated from actions to prevent or confront gender-based violence; the body is the first territory to care for and protect. Violence healing practices, shelters, spaces for relaxation, psychosocial and emotional accompaniment workshops, communication campaigns, training workshops, and construction of solidarity networks are examples of how women defenders collectively address and make the most intimate a political act. Healing from violence also includes the violence caused by extractivism, both on land and on bodies, and its physical, psychological, and emotional consequences.

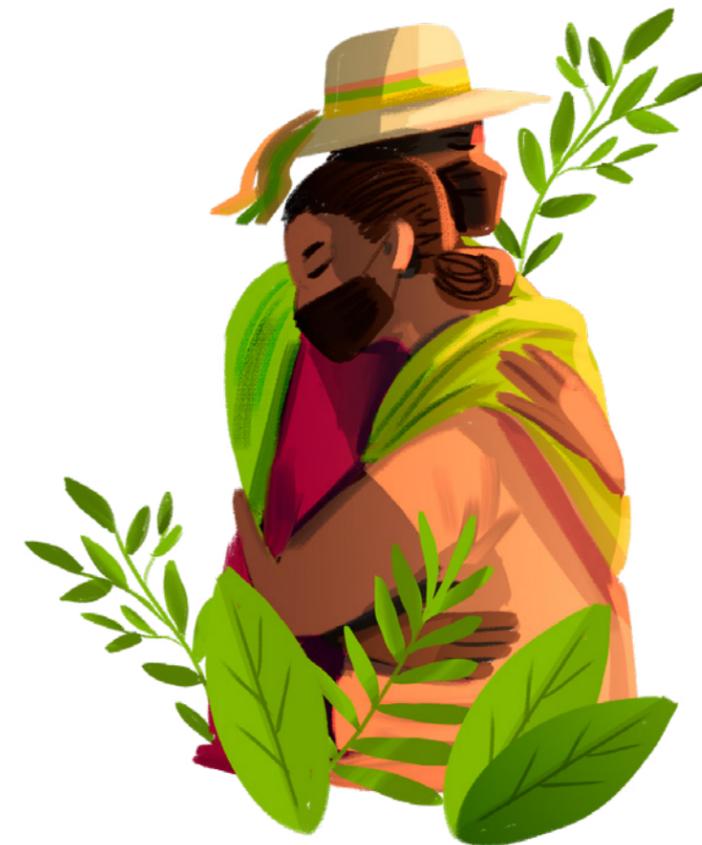


This comprehensive vision of care also embraces interdependence with the natural environment and the elements that compose it from a deep relationship with its territory. In the contexts of the *campesina*, black, and indigenous organizations that were part of this research, the close relationship between caring for the environment and the recognition of other forms of life are reflected, for example, in ways of understanding and relating to illness and disease.

In the specific case of the pandemic, from the ontology of the Amazonian peoples of Bolivia that are part of the *Mancomunidad de Comunidades Indígenas de los Ríos Beni, Quiquibey y Tuichi* (Indigenous Communities from the Beni, Quiquibey and Tuichi Rivers' Association), Covid-19 is considered the "visitor" that offerings should be made to "(...)" so that it passes by, or if it comes, it does not do so much harm." It is not about denying the disease, but on the contrary, recognizing that it exists and dealing with it not only through fear. To allow this process in the community, they performed a ritual that has the function of removing fear, which allows for dialogue about the virus from other points of view and to prepare for its arrival.

As the women of the *Puertas del Mundo* (Gates of the World Foundation) organization of the Arhuaco indigenous people in Colombia explain to us, learning to live with the disease in this case has meant, in their words, initiating "self care and care for the territory." Care is therefore interdependent, extends to the entire territory, and reflects the worldviews and beliefs of the people. Women defend their socio-cultural rights by strengthening their identity and ancestral relationships with their territories, recovering their languages and the knowledge of their grandparents/mothers, sacred places, and traditional practices of care of the land and the body.

From a perspective that links the most elementary acts of life with the great debates that bring us together to think about a society in crisis, of which the pandemic is just a symptom, women defenders of



territory invite us to think about a change in paradigm. When they bring topics considered to be personal to the public debate, putting on the table aspects generally not considered to be advocacy actions, they teach us that collective care of land and bodies can and should run throughout all forms of resistance and existence. **They project resistance to support the permanence of their communities and ways of life when they involve young people in caring for the territory and community relationships.** They teach us that resistance can be humanized when they politicize the everyday and affirm the body as the first territory that must be defended. They show us that local struggles are manifestations of micro-politics that, at the same time, dialogue with the agenda of the global climate crisis.

The initiatives by women defenders of territories in the region are a call to reflect on new forms of activism and resistance, as well as a questioning of the model that led us to the current health, social, economic, and political crises. Learning from the stories and proposals of women defenders for thinking about the present and future, can show us a way to think about alternatives to build environmental and social justice; and how to deal in a more humane and careful way with new possible crises that we will face as humanity.

Care is a way of inhabiting and creating possible worlds, a bet for wellbeing that women defenders put in the center of their activisms



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