

Reflections from the Confluencia Feminista Assembly, part of the WSF of transformative Economies

Edmé Dominguez R and Anna Fabbri

The Confluencia Feminista of the [World Social Forum of Transformative Economies](#) held its final online assembly for 2020 on 5 November to articulate feminist alternatives among examples of social and solidarity economies. In the midst of the pandemic many issues that feminist and women's rights organisations have been saying for decades became very evident, underlying the urgent need for feminist alternatives. WIDE+ was represented by Edmé Dominguez, who introduced WIDE+ activities and perspectives on the creation of feminist alternatives.

This was an event that followed a long sequence of alliance building among women's rights and feminist groups all over the world. Most of the participating organisations are located in Latin America but at this meeting, organisations from India and Africa participated as well. The meeting will result in a final Manifesto. Below follows an impression of different perspectives articulated.

Feminist Networking and coalition building now needed more than ever

The assembly saw an intense discussion about the pandemic. Particularly, many participants highlighted the role of COVID-19 in revealing the centrality of care in our economies. One of the main issues underlined by participants is the necessity to **develop more research about care economy and promote these conclusions** in public debates. In this regard, **Amber Parkers**, from Oxfam, in the UK, announced that her organisation has recently developed a new toolkit to measure women's care work, called Household Care Survey¹.

As explained in the website, the toolkit provides guidance on using Oxfam's Household Care Survey (HCS) methodology part of the WE-Care Initiative, a project with the purpose to address unpaid care and domestic work. Specifically, the Household Care Survey is a quantitative survey tool to investigate care work and the main elements which influence people's unpaid responsibilities, such as the access to care services, infrastructure and social norms.

¹ Rost, L., Parkes A., Azevedo A. (OXFAM, 2020) "*Measuring and Understanding Unpaid Care and Domestic Work: Household Care Survey Toolkit*" <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/measuring-and-understanding-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-household-care-survey-621082>

Several participants underlined that feminist alternatives demand alliances to create time and resources to work together. Such are the objectives of the South Feminist Futures, represented in this occasion by Nancy Kachingwe, an African-Malawian-Zimbabwean feminist.

As Kachingwe explains, *South Feminist Futures is a transnational network* of feminist scholars and activists working especially across the Global South. The purpose of the network is to theorise and act on feminist and decolonial visions to create moments and resources in order to take action together and challenge hegemonies. Recently the network organised the South Feminist Future Festival², which took place from the 7th to the 11th December 2020, a week dense of art and activism with the purpose to reflect, celebrate and dialogue about resistance to slavery, colonialism, white supremacy, imperialism, capitalism racism and cisheteropatriarchy.



Post from the [Confluencia Feminista instagram](#)

Similar experiences emerged also in other parts of the world as demonstrated by the intervention about Sri-Lanka of **Kumi Samuel**. Kumi Samuel is a DAWN Executive Committee member, and an activist for human rights and peace: her activism started with her participation in the Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE)-a leading umbrella organisation composed of several movements within civil society including women's rights activists as a response to the concerns about free trade zones and liberal economy's consequences on women's and labour rights.³

Today Samuel heads DAWN's Political Restructuring & Social Transformation analysis team and she is the co-founder of the Women & Media Collective. Moreover, she is a member of several working groups, including UN Women's Civil Society Advisory Group for Bhutan, the Maldives, India, and Sri Lanka.⁴ According to Samuel's experience about COVID-19, in *Sri-Lanka rural*

² More information can be found in the website of South Feminist Future Festival: <https://southfeministfuturesfestival.org> last time accessed on 2020.12.14

³ Community of Democracies "Women in Peacebuilding: Stories. Kumi Samuel Sri Lanka" <https://community-democracies.org/women/kumi-samuel/> last time accessed on 2020.12.14.

⁴ Kumi Samuel (2020) "Dawn Talks on Covid -19. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era. The Exception Cannot Be Made the Norm" available at https://dawnnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/20200819_DAWN Talks ON-COVID_19_Kumi-Samuel.pdf last time accessed on 2020.12.14.

peasant women shared products and distribute them, creating networks which in some cases grew consistently. After the lockdown women continued to stay in these channels of distribution and some of these were organised and widespread in the rural areas. These kinds of experiences constitute valid examples of a feminist alternative.

Socio-economic measures targeting women and marginalized groups

Promoting women's and non-conforming people's access to the labour market is a central element in the building of alternatives and requires more initiatives to enable access to decent work. In this regard, the vast political experience of Sandra Morán in Guatemala offers an example.

Sandra Morán is a Guatemalan feminist politician of the party *Covergencia*.⁵ She has been elected deputy in the Congress in the elections of 2015 where she is working for manifold initiatives to support women's economic development and LGBTQI+ rights. Her intervention was focused on her parliamentary work, such as new legislative initiatives to create laws to help young and older women to reach the labour market and to create credit programs for these groups of women.



Other instagram post of Confluencia Feminista

Feminist alternatives need a specific emphasis on education, as Purnima Gupta underlined in the assembly. **Purnima Gupta** is an Indian activist, member of Sahjani Shiksha Kendra (SSK)⁶, a feminist organisation empowering women and adolescent girls through literacy and education.

According to Gupta, in India unemployment disproportionately affects women, increasing gender based violence. Furthermore, the activist highlights that the number of girls and women leaving school is increasing. This phenomenon is associated with a cut of resources, which will lead to a growth in the influence of private corporations in education. In Gupta's opinion, there is a need to transform education beyond the concept of employability.

⁵ Gamazo, Carolina (2016) "Sandra Morán, una feminista en el Congreso"
<https://www.plazapublica.com.gt/content/sandra-moran-una-feminista-en-el-congreso> last time accessed on 2020.12.14.

⁶ More information can be found in the website of the association Sahjani Shiksha Kendra (SSK):
<http://ssklalitpur.com> last time accessed on 2020.12.14.

COVID pandemic also a crisis of the neo-liberal capitalist system

A precious intervention about the pandemic and how it affected communities' economy is reported by **Dalida Vazquez**, a feminist activist in Guatemala, one of the leaders of the association Madre Tierra⁷, an organisation that advocates for the full and equal access to land for rural and indigenous women in La Lupita community. Land rights are guaranteed on paper but denied to Guatemalan women through several barriers in practice.



Also from the Confluencia Feminist instagram

As for many people in the world, ***the pandemic represented a crucial moment, which can be used to challenge previous structures.*** In fact, as Vazquez underlined, during this pandemic most rural communities could not take their products to the market and women organised together to find solutions: while unfortunately the income of the sale of food was mostly lost, these actions changed and offered an alternative to these women.

Another important intervention in the assembly was the one of **Graciela Lopez**, part of REMTE, Red boliviana de Mujeres Trasformando la Economía,⁸ an organisation based in Bolivia whose

⁷ JASS, Building Women's Collective Power for Justice (2018) "Rural Women lead the fight for land in Guatemala" <https://justassociates.org/en/article/rural-women-lead-fight-land-guatemala> last time accessed on 2020.12.14.

⁸ More information can be found in the website of REMTE Red boliviana de mujeres transformando la economía: <http://remte-bolivia.org/index.php/acerca-de-la-remte/remte-bolivia> last time accessed on 2020.12.14.

aim is constructing alternatives and economic policies improving women's circumstances, particularly of the most marginalised.

Lopez highlighted the ***crisis of the capitalist system, which damages nature and increase the power of the medical-pharmaceutical alliance***. According to Graciela Lopez, the recommendations of the government to stay at home and wash hands were not applicable for some parts of the population who could not access clean water nor had housing. In this regard, Graciela Lopez ***underlines the importance of the communities and of city sectors which organised broader forms of solidarity***. In fact, according to Graciela Lopez, it was urgent to strengthen feminist anti-capitalist, ecological and solidarity economies.

The future of Confluencia Feminista

Gina Vargas, an activist from Peru's biggest women organisation Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristan⁹ and Member of the International Council of the **World Social Forum of Transformative Economies**¹⁰, reflected on the future of this created coalition/space. According to Gina Vargas, it is necessary to broaden the forum and reinforce the feminist axis. She underlined the will to strengthen the forum, inviting all the participants to be part of this process of renovation. In January 2021 there will be a new virtual World Social Forum and they are programming a face to face forum in Mexico at the end of 2021.

The Confluencia Feminista virtual general assembly gave us an insight into diverse feminist organisations all around the world, into their work and into their ambition to create new alternatives of hope amid the enormous crisis we are going through. This work will necessarily continue as networking is at the base of a movement that strives to change not only women's situation but the one of humanity.

⁹ More information can be found in the website of Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristan: <http://www.flora.org.pe/web2/> last time accessed on 2020.12.14.

¹⁰ More information can be found in the website of World Social Forum of Transformative Economies: <https://transformadora.org/en/inici> last time accessed on 2020.12.14.