

Theme 1

Conscious and diverse leadership focused on collective care in social organisations



Radix

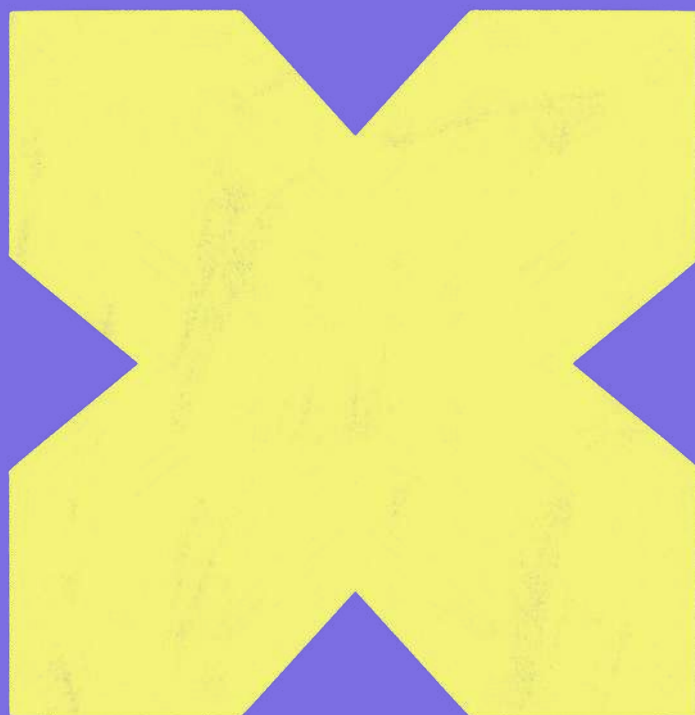
At the Escuela Radix school, we strengthen feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations by promoting meeting spaces and horizontal community learning, and by encouraging organisations to build networks.

Theme 1

Conscious and diverse leadership focused on collective care in social organisations

Module 1

What does collective care mean?



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LINSÒLITA
Xarxa de cooperatives feministes



What does collective care mean?

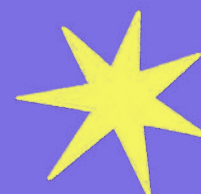


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Introduction

Introduction and objectives



The social organisations working to transform society are not exempt from creating internal environments with hierarchical, exhaustion or exclusion dynamics that often contradict the limits of justice that they outwardly promote. This training arises from a shared urgency: one of rethinking our organisational practices, and in particular leadership, from structural coherence, mutual care and sustainability ethics. It is not just a matter of changing the ways of naming or theorising power, but of experiencing it in another way: with awareness, listening, sharing and shared responsibility.

We are driven by the conviction that it is possible to build other types of leadership that are not measured by productivity or sustained by individual sacrifice but that are woven into a network, based on recognising the multiple forms of support, influence and decision that coexist in any collective. Types of leadership that are nourished by the diversity of the team members, that welcome pressures without destroying them, and that are at the service of processes and the sustenance of life together, not of the individual people who embody them at that moment. We bet on a situated and coherent political practice, that does not idealise care, but rather structures it, makes it concrete and makes it possible.

This training proposal is based on knowledge accumulated over years of accompanying various organisational networks and collectives, in which we have been able to verify that profound change does not only occur when new methodologies are incorporated, but when relationships and their organisational culture are transformed; when spaces are opened up for differences to be seen as organisational wealth; when discomfort is named without feeling that we are in an unsafe space, accepting our fears as part of the process; and when well-being becomes a shared responsibility. Only from there can we build for everyday life: accessible, replicable tools for care adapted to the specific conditions of those who are for and sustain social projects.

General objective

- Strengthen the capacities of conscious, diverse leadership (which includes diversity in its practice and in active participation) that is focused on collective care in teams of social organisations, with a feminist, intersectional, decolonial and human rights perspective.

Specific objectives

- Identify and question the dynamics of exclusion, overload, and lack of care in organisational life, as well as recognising current organisational cultures and their limits in terms of collective well-being and shared responsibility.
- Facilitate collective reflection processes on the organisational cultures that we aspire to build, aligned with values of justice, sustainability, and shared autonomy.
- Provide practical tools for sustainable, widespread, and transformative leadership, which strengthen the capacity for collective agency.
- Promote organisational strategies for conflict management, collective self-care and shared responsibility, with intersectional and contextualised approaches.
- Combine the creation of protocols and practices applicable to various contexts as part of a conscious exercise of cultural and political transition.

Content-centred approach



This proposal stems from a clear conviction: conscious leadership and collective care are not optional add-ons in social organisations, but fundamental pillars for their sustainability and political coherence. The members of this team have been co-leading trans-feminist projects for years, such as La Raposa del Poble-sec, La Creatura and NUS Cooperativa, as well as developing a shared leadership model for La Insòlita, a feminist cooperation network in Barcelona.

La Insòlita is a second-degree collective that currently groups 10 feminist organisations from the city that vary in their trajectories, work fields, sizes and political journeys. For 18 months, we embarked on a rigorous and deeply human collective process to build together a governance model that responded to that diversity. Through many work sessions, we spun conversations about collective well-being, shared leadership practices, the place of care, the links between organisations and commercialisation from an anti-capitalist way of thinking, understanding that the productive part is not the root that moves us politically; and that far from seeking uniformity, we explored how to keep the similarities from the differences, embracing all our diversity, away from classist or welfare-supporting rationales. In this sense, we want to be careful with «godmothering» so that we can question each other's agency, taking into account symbolic and material realities based on social class and other intersections. This journey was captured in the document ¿Com es consolida aquesta xarxa tan diversa? («How is this diverse network consolidated?»), which includes both the keys to the model and the tensions experienced and the shared learnings, from a deeply transformative, demanding and collaborative work, which today feeds the foundations of this training.

From that embodied experience, we are proposing a type of training that combines theoretical frameworks and practical tools, along with driving questions that invite each organisation to rethink itself from a feminist, intersectional perspective that is committed to lives.

This proposal has been put together focusing on seven key dimensions:

- **Feminist and intersectional perspective**

Power and oppressions are not abstract ideas: they manifest themselves in our daily relationships. That is why we are addressing leadership and care from a perspective that recognises intertwining inequalities relating to gender (identity, orientation, body), race, class, age, disability or administrative situation. This perspective allows us to build forms of widespread, sensitive and sustainable leadership, based on what many people are already experiencing: unequal times, non-horizontal decisions, and devalued bodies; under the understanding that naming these inequalities is the first step to transforming them.

- **Care culture as a political practice**

Care is not just emotional or individual: it is organisational and structural. It is about how we organise ourselves, how we manage rhythms and conflicts, how we rest and how we take responsibility for the impacts we generate. We need to invest in a care culture that is not

idealised but built on editable practices, agreements and boundaries, as part of a political strategy to sustain the community.

- **Relational justice and sustainability of life**

We want organisations where political discourse is embodied in fair and emotional bonds. That is why we offer tools to observe how power circulates, how differences are managed and what place emotions, listening and reparations occupy within organisations. The sustainability that we are proposing goes beyond the economic and environmental: it includes the relational, the political and the emotional; without cared-for people, projects dry up.

- **Situated learning and critical methodologies**

Each organisation is unique, so we work from a situated learning approach, based on the real experiences of those who participate. Our shared experience allows us to identify patterns, share strategies and support processes with empathy. We are not offering recipes, but open questions, accessible theory, everyday examples and adaptable resources. We want to open up possibilities, not impose paths.

- **Decolonial and critical approach to knowledge**

We reject hegemonic models that do not engage in dialogue with the situated knowledges of territories and social movements. We are advocating for a decolonial approach that recognises as valid knowledge built in practice, through conflict, joy, desire, and error. We describe ourselves not as external experts, but as companions who walk from lived experience and collectivity.

- **Anti-racism**

Let us start from the recognition of structural racism and anti-Romani discrimination as exclusion mechanisms that are also present in community spaces. Beyond generic categories, we are promoting situated listening of the specific types of violence that migrant, Black, Moorish, Romani, Asian communities, and communities of African descent suffer. We are incorporating tools to dismantle racial and epistemic hierarchies, based on our commitment to anti-racist and Romani movements.

- **Languages and accessibility: anti-ableism and neurodiversity**

We want a transmission of knowledge that neither excludes nor standardises. We are proposing a radical accessibility that takes into account different ways of being, learning, and participating. We are incorporating principles of anti-ableism and sensory justice: easy-to-read materials, subtitles, sign language interpreting, access to Braille, respect for different rhythms, and non-pathologising languages.

This methodological approach aligns with an expansion of human rights from the feminist ones: the right to care, to one's own time, to a life free from violence, to recognised dissenting bodies, and to true political participation. We are proposing an accessible, emotional and attentive approach to structural inequalities, where the teaching method matters as much as the content.

Our proposal is rooted in the struggles for defending life, without leaving out those who have been historically marginalised: migrant, racialised, Romani, neurodivergent people, or those with precarious administrative trajectories. A type of training woven from the common, the situated, and the sensitive, with clear, visual, and suitable materials because transformation also needs desire, humour, and beauty.

Details of the training content



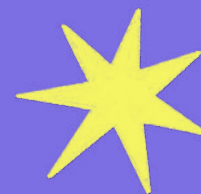
The training is structured into four complementary modules, designed as stages on a journey towards organisations that promote a more sustainable, conscious, and cared-for internal culture. Each module answers a key question, and work is done in an experiential and situated way, starting from the body, emotions, words, and also the history of each organisation.

The division into modules follows a progressive logic, which accompanies organisations from reviewing their current practices towards building more sustainable structures, through the redistribution of power and the collective approach to conflict and care.

The methodological design combines different tools adapted to the virtual environment, including guided reflection exercises, spaces for collective dialogue, work with collaborative mind maps, narrative or creative writing, visualisations and audiovisual resources, small observation tasks or internal interviews, as well as situated analysis of cases and experiences. In each module, a specific task or production is planned, so that what is worked on translates into useful, replicable and adaptable resources over time.



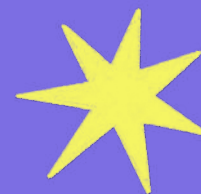
Module 1
What does
collective care mean?



Collective care as an ethical and organisational foundation

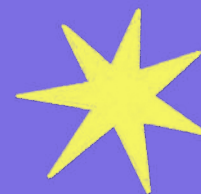
This module starts from a fundamental premise: all organisations, without exception, whether explicitly or implicitly, generate forms of care. Some are visible, shared and managed fairly, while others are made invisible, are unequal or, in many cases, fall disproportionately on the same people. In some groups, care becomes a normalised practice but is often not recognised or managed suitably.

We are inviting you to reflect on how care is provided in each organisation, questioning both formal and informal care structures. We take a transfeminist and community-based approach as our starting point, understanding that care not only encompasses emotional well-being but is also deeply connected to the emotional and material conditions that determine our relationships. We are aiming to analyse care as a political practice that must be made visible, questioned, and transformed to be sustainable, fair and collective.



What will we explore?

- What we understand by collective care from a transfeminist and community-based perspective.
- How care is expressed in our daily practices, beyond discourse.
- Structural obstacles: precariousness, self-exploitation, confusion between life and work, intensive activism.
- Differences between care as a structure (organisation of tasks, responsibilities and protocols), and as a link (emotions, legitimacy and reciprocity).
- Difficulties and limits to sustain care in contexts of wear and tear.
- Conditions for real and safe participation: who can speak, decide and be heard in our spaces.



1 Where we start when talking about care

If we look from the Western world and especially from the era of modernity, care has been built from a hegemonic and presumptuously universal narrative where the management of life's well-being has been relegated to the private sphere and associated with the role of the white woman first, since the rest was left out of the definition of «woman», configuring the sexual division of work, devaluing the social function and promoting the structure of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism as hermetic layers that sustain it and that assign living bodies according to their exclusive categorisations. In this way, the idea that we are interdependent and vulnerable beings by nature and that, therefore, care is necessary and clearly vital for our survival is made invisible and eliminated.

From this narrative, female and male stereotypes have also been created, culturally defining what is «expected» of each person, oppressing and turning invisible any other expression that does not meet what is expected. In the field of care, we have been given the idea that by nature the feminine should be associated with giving, sacrifice and solidarity without limits, especially towards family and the immediate environment. This generates feelings of guilt in those who fail to meet these expectations and can even give rise to social punishments within their networks and close bonds.

From a transfeminist and intersectional perspective, it is key to dismantle this essentialist association between femininity and care. Care is not natural or exclusive to cis women, nor is it a biological or moral quality that should be exercised unconditionally. It is, rather, a political practice that sustains life, and which has historically been delegated, become precarious and turned invisible at the margins of the system: migrant women, poor workers, feminised or non-normative bodies or people generally put in uncertain positions by the system.

At the same time, many current conversations about care, even within academic or institutional European feminism, have reinforced an individualist vision of self-care. It is a vision that, while important for the sustainability of organisations and activism, risks becoming a neoliberal version of «everyone for themselves» centred around one's own well-being, which is disconnected from community ties or responsibility towards other dependent people, whether occasional or continuous.

That is why from anti-ableist, decolonial, anti-racist and community transfeminist points of view, care is understood as a situated, relational, co-responsible and collective practice, which cannot be separated from the political, emotional and material conditions of those who care and are cared for. Caring should not be a moral burden imposed on certain organisations (especially feminised or racialised), nor should it be an emotional obligation based on sacrifice, but a shared responsibility, which requires a radical redistribution of time, energy and resources. Thinking of care as a global, structural, organisational, community practice is key to ensure that it does not

always fall to the same people or groups. It requires political will, regulatory changes, cultural transformation and sustained commitment from all members of society, not just those who are already caring. At the same time, it is necessary to decentralise the mandate of motherhood as the single exemplary form of care, by recognising other types of bond, responsibility and mutual support that exist between friends, neighbours, dissident networks, older people, people with disabilities, or groups that have historically been excluded from hegemonic family models. This involves broadening the view of care beyond the private domain, beyond the feminine, and beyond the normal.

Recently, we have observed a narrative around the need for care ethics in organisations that goes beyond the private domain has been built, but this narrative is nourished by the more liberal logic of retaining talent and promoting individual well-being, rather than promoting collective well-being. In this way, the idea that everything we want can be achieved solely through personal effort has been established, almost as if we had to become superheroes or goddesses with powers and miraculous recipes for managing our lives. This distances the possibility of imagining and building a type of collective care that supports the interdependence of life and provides us with a true network of mutual support.

If we analyse how care has been incorporated into organisations linked to the social, caring economy in Spain, we can observe that, after a journey spanning more than thirty years, it is presented today almost as an «economy for life», in clear contrast to the logic of the hegemonic economy. However, upon delving into what we really understand by an economy that takes care of us, from our experience we see that there is still a lack of coherence between the discourse and everyday practice. Care is often reduced to an attractive adjective, almost a marketing slogan, without realistically taking charge of the investment of time, structures, spaces, debates, reflections, and people required to integrate it into daily and priority initiative management.

We could say that from theory, it seems that the words «well-being» and «care» are more present in our daily lives and outside the private domain. In this sense, we must recognise an enormous amount of work and organisations that have run the risk of claim discomfort and a lack of rights in this constructed society, where it was necessary to vindicate the lack of centrality that caring for people's lives had as a target and not as an instrument. Even so, we see that these words have been emptied of content and political practice, that is, they have been manipulated to reconfigure and continue with the inscrutable layers that protect capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy as elements of control over living bodies and territories. Consequently, this assigns an unequal distribution of which lives and bodies are cared for and which lives and bodies are left in mere survival at best.

In fact, for some time now, we have been living through an international care crisis, in which there are global care chains: women from the denoted Global North work outside the home and turn to women in the denoted Global South to manage the care of their home(s) and dependent beings (children, elderly, animals and so on). In many cases, it is migrant women whom the Spanish immigration law excludes from the regulatory labour market, for example, by not standardising their titles or recognising their knowledge. This relegates them to precarious jobs that limit them and deny them other opportunities for development in the country, contributing to them being trapped in what is called the «sticky floor»¹. This survival strategy, in turn, places them in a paradox: they must neglect care in their own homes and delegate it,

1 For more information on the term «sticky floor», see references by BERHEIDE, Catherine; YAP, M. and Konrad, A. M.; RODRÍGUEZ, Corina.

in most cases, to other women —such as grandmothers or neighbours— who can take on that responsibility.

In this context, it is also important to mention what has been denounced by various decoloni-
altypes of feminism as «white saviour syndrome»²: the idea that white women from the Global
North, from positions of privilege and humanitarian discourse, can or should «rescue» other
women in racialised, precarious or colonised contexts. This paternalistic narrative reproduces
the same colonial logic that it claims to combat, because it positions some women as active
subjects who know what the needs and desires of the whole are, and it positions others as
passive recipients of those imposed desires or needs. Recognising and questioning this is key
to dismantling the lack of universal care and to understanding it, not as charity or as a moral
imposition from above, but as a horizontal, situated practice of shared responsibility.

Reality shows that, although care is a vital need for our survival, it is still not considered a
priority in the systems that rule and organise the world. In fact, it has been commercialised
or relegated to the family environment, either by precariously paying those who perform care
duties, or by expecting care duties to fall to the female roles within our closest relationships.
In any case, the result has been the same: to detract from care and deny its magnitude as a
fundamental social need.

Before embarking on this journey through knowledge that has been displaced by colonial
modernity and the rationales of the capital, we feel it is necessary to clarify where we are co-
ming from. Those of us who have written this text do not belong to the populations, cultures,
or genealogies that we are going to name here. We are white, European, cis women, rooted
in organisational frameworks that, although critical of the system, do not entirely escape its
inertia. We do not speak from authority or from expert knowledge, but from a listening that
wants to be attentive, respectful, and from a deep desire to forge alliances. What we share
here are glimpses of other possible worlds that have reached us through books, through
friendly voices, through collective processes, and through references that we respect. We
are not seeking to explain them or to appropriate them, but to open a situated conversation
about how this knowledge, embodied by specific people, has helped us to question the way
we understand (and experience) care.

This training module aims to break away from this hegemonic and Western construction of
care, and to focus on recovering precolonial knowledge that has been attempted to be erased
in order to reconstruct the concept of what is understood as care, and specifically about com-
munity care. Given that in this first approach to the concept of care we have not delved deeper
into all knowledge and practice that would not protect that other construction of «developed
society» being erased in this hegemonic construction since colonisation, bodies, territories and
extracted materials have been exploited to accumulate improper riches with which we have
been taught «how to be civilised, progressive or developed».

From here we can feel how not caring for (neglecting) the living in the face of capital care di-
rectly impacts specific organisations and territories. That is to say that, although we would like
to escape the preconceived idea that we do not need to focus on care, in reality we would be
deceiving ourselves for two reasons:

2 For more information about «[white saviour syndrome](#)» in Spanish.

- There will always be «something» that we are taking care of, prioritising or attending to. Perhaps, it may be something material or structural and, therefore, there may be other things that we are neglecting consciously or unconsciously.
- As human beings we need care throughout our whole lives; we need to build relationships, be seen and recognised by others. Our bodies require care every day and if we do not attend to them our body emits signals to warn us until we fall ill.

In the face of this, we want to bring other voices, from which we recognise learning and with which, from our own community and organisational practices, we feel that we can forge alliances. We know that there are many more experiences, stories, and ways of caring that we cannot name here. What we are presenting are just glimpses of some paths that have resonated with us over the years, with the awareness of unlearning what we have learned under the rationales of Eurocentric capitalism. A process that never ends, but that becomes more alive and fruitful when it is travelled in company, sharing horizontally, listening and letting other territories, languages, and methodologies transform us.

Sumak Kawsay, inhabited bodies and living care practices: a dialogue between ancestral knowledge and nearby territories

In various Andean and Amazonian worldviews, the *Sumak Kawsay* or *Buen Vivir*³ («Good Living») is not understood as a utopia or an abstract theory, but as a daily practice, deeply rooted in spirituality, politics, and community life. It is a way of being in the world that links body, land and community, in a reciprocal relationship with the goddess *Pachamama*. In this framework, care is not conceived as a function relegated to certain bodies or genders, but as a relational principle, where giving and receiving are balanced in a life form. Earth, water, word, and time accompany and sustain each other, because everything is alive and deserves care.

This conception – which comes from Andean indigenous worldviews, and can also be found in other ancestral traditions of the Global South – invites us to move away from the Western, modern mindset that separates human beings from nature, and that fragments care into functional or productive categories. As African-Colombian philosopher **Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui** points out, from indigenous epistemologies «life is an indivisible set of relationships» and that is why care is not reduced to an individual responsibility but is «a way of existing in community with the Earth».



From the perspective of community feminism, care is not articulated as a task or an assigned role but as an embedded practice that links body, community and land. The body – especially the body of indigenous women – is a «political territory» and a space for memory, experience and resistance, which challenges the patriarchy, colonialism and extractivism. It is not just about biology, but about an embodied, continuous and situated identity, indivisible from the land we inhabit, and from which the practice of care emerges. As **Lorena Cabnal** argues, bodily autonomy is intrinsically connected with defending territory, both of which are in dispute within structures of domination that must be

3 For more information on the philosophy of **Buen Vivir** in Spanish.

confronted comprehensively, and this entanglement of body, territory and care is framed within an eco feminist vision that conceives these spaces as places of life and mutual support.

In dialogue with this worldview, the *Kichwa* concept of *Suma Qamaña* or «living life to the full» emphasises the importance of starting from the body, that place where we feel and live our experience. Therefore, a move away from theoretical abstraction is being proposed, to learn from ancestral knowledge how to feel and work to care for the living – and not only human beings, but territories, waters, animals, air – from an embodied and collective place. From this situated place, recognising that «we live through our bodies, and that our bodies feel» invites us to think of organisations and communities as living spaces that need to be defined and named collectively, to decide what to care for and how, consequently establishing common priorities. This situated approach questions vertical and depersonalised dynamics, proposing instead mutual care that integrates the needs of each body, understanding that not all people or bodies require the same care at the same time.

Farm labour paid in food, a collective practice of mutual aid that combines harvests, construction or life events – births, deaths, breakdowns –, remains a way of working and community care that transcends individualism. It is not always named as such, but there is the seed of a community fabric that sustains and protects. Similarly, informal networks of women who support child-rearing, old age or illness, are living spaces of collective care that challenge the structural invisibility of these tasks.

In order not to fall into an idealised reading, it is worth noting that these community practices coexist with dynamics of patriarchal violence, racism and inequality, and that care is punctured by tensions and struggles. From the Nigerian black feminist **Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí**, to the indigenous Colombian activist **Francia Márquez**, we are reminded that to care is also to resist. It is to protect bodies and territories against multiple forms of oppression and extractivism that especially affect racialised communities, dissidents and women.

From these references, community care is becoming a political practice of anti-racist, anti-ableist, and anti-fatphobic care, which challenges Eurocentric and capitalist norms about who deserves care and how it should be given. In this sense, care is not just a private or feminine action, but a collective strategy to sustain life in adverse conditions and to build possible worlds from the Global South to our territories.

Ubuntu: I am because we are

There is knowledge that does not come from books, but from the warmth of bodies in the community. The *Ubuntu*⁴ philosophy, originating from southern African populations, is transmitted from gesture to gesture, from word to word, in the form of caring, receiving, deciding and healing. It is a deeply relational worldview, where individual existence is only possible within the collective framework. «A person is a person through other people», they say. «I am because we are».

From this perspective, individuality is not opposed to collectivity, but rather the person exists insofar as they recognise others and are recognised by them. In the words of **Sinenhlanhla S. Chisale**, *Ubuntu* is not reduced to an abstract principle, but rather it emerges in the everyday practices of shared care: «*Ubuntu* in a context of caregiving is not exclusively feminine... men and women partnered in extending caregiving to those in need» —that is, care is a shared responsibility, not charity, but a common way of life that sustains co-existence and mutual belonging.

4 For more information on the philosophy **Ubuntu** in Spanish.

From *Ubuntu*, mutual support arises from shared dignity, the view of care as a bond moves away from the welfare-supporting rationale that places some as providers and others as passive recipients. Help is not given from a position of superiority, but from the horizontal recognition that all of us women, at some point, need and contribute. The self-funded communities (known in Spain as Comunidades Autofinanciadas, CAF)⁵, for example, put it into practice through common funds managed without hierarchies, where each one contributes according to what is possible and receives according to their needs. They are economic structures based on trust, commitment, and solidarity. Another well-known story, which circulates by word of mouth, speaks of someone who lent sewing machines to those who did not have the money but who wanted to start their business, allowing the loan repayment to be made when they could generate profits. Returns were not required within a fixed term or with interest, rather when the person managed to obtain benefits. Here, reciprocity is not a transaction or debt: it is care that circulates and enables, it is community that trusts.

A revolutionary love policy: wisdom from Islam

There are words that have been torn from their roots, stripped of their meaning, turned into noise or threat in dominant discourses. Words like *Allahou Akbar* (God is great), which we have heard so many times out of context, manipulated by fear or ignorance. However, those words, in the mouths of those who live them, in their languages, bodies and histories, invite us to imagine other possible worlds.



The Franco-Algerian thinker and activist **Houria Bouteldja**⁶ offers us a deeply political and spiritual reading of this expression: «*Allahu Akbar!* is an affirmation of the human limit, a way of reminding us that we are not gods, that we are not the centre.» From her book *The Whites, the Jews, and Us*, she dismantles colonial arrogance and proposes a revolutionary policy of love, where care involves decentralising the self, recognising our finitude, and embracing the need for the other not as a reflection, but as a difference that transforms. Bouteldja does not speak to those who do not share her faith to convince us of anything, but to question from her place: a French-Algerian decolonial political activist, who reminds us that care is also spirituality, humility, and commitment. That there are ways of naming commonalities that do not go through the rational or the individual, but through a sacred relationship with existence, with the created, with the origin.

From some Islamic trends, concepts are transmitted that resonate with these bond ethics. *Tawhid*, for example, names the fundamental unity of all existence, the connection between everything that is. It is not a matter here of translating or reducing the sacred to lay terms, but of allowing that underlying vision to question us: from where do we connect ourselves? What image of the world do we sustain when we care? What do we renounce when we believe that everything depends on our control? Another concept that helps to understand this proposal of seeing life and self-care is that of *Umma*, which refers to the community of believers united not by blood or nation, but by a common purpose. Although it has a specific meaning within Islam, it allows us to think —from

5 For more information about [CAFs](#) in Spanish.

6 For more information see [references by BOUTELDJA, Houria](#) in Spanish.

the outside, carefully— about types of community based on diversity, respect, and shared direction, without imposed hierarchies or uniformity.

Bouteldja reminds us that to build new worlds, political humility and insurgent love are needed. Not a sweet or docile love, but one that knows how to name the limit, the damage, the need for deep transformation. A love that decentralises, that listens, that knows how to say «I don't know» or «it's not my place to speak». A love that, from care, also challenges and dismantles privileges.

From the Romani borders: care, community and resistance

From Romani thought and practice emerges an understanding of care that is born from the margin, but is not limited to it. The Romani people have historically been persecuted for not fitting into the cultural and social patterns of Western normativity. This disobedience to the logic of the world-system has not been chosen without consequences —anti-Romani discrimination continues to be one of the most widespread and normalised forms of violence in Europe— but it has also given rise to ways of life where community, mutual support and autonomy are sustained without asking for permission.

It is not about romanticizing exclusion, but about looking at how, from it, sustained forms of care have been woven in time: extensive family and neighbourhood networks, conflict resolution without institutional mediation, intergenerational care and economies that circulate outside of the bank capital. As noted by the Romani activist and labour lawyer **Pastora Filigrana**⁷, «life is not possible unless it is shared.» And that implies learning to care outside the moulds that distribute responsibilities according to gender, class or age, building bonds that are not governed by efficiency or by imposed obligation. Or as he says **Tamara Clavería**, «feminism should not pivot solely on outsourcing, but on strengthening community alternatives. To embody the eco-feminist motto of «putting life at the centre», perhaps we can learn something from the worldview of the Romani people»⁸.



Radical interdependencies: contributions from anti-ableist struggles

From anti-ableist activism, a profound criticism of the idea of individual autonomy as a central value of the good life has been generated. The body that sustains itself, the one that does not need help, the one that produces without interruptions: that is the normal model imposed by the ableist system. But in the face of that logic, many activists, thinkers, and diverse communities have raised another, more embodied truth: all lives are vulnerable, all lives need care, we are all interdependent.

⁷ For more information see [references by FILIGRANA, Pastora](#).

⁸ For more information see [references by CLAVERÍA, Tamara](#).



Artist and writer **Johanna Hedva**, in her powerful essay *The Sick Woman Theory*, writes: «The sick woman is the one who cannot work. The one who cannot go out into the street. The one who cannot walk. The one who cannot last a minute longer without rest. But she is also the one that knows that being in bed can be a form of resistance, and that the body that cares and needs care is also political.» As she mentions in many of the interviews or talks she gives, «Everyone in this room will be disabled sooner, maybe you already are, or later».

From that perspective, bodies that don't fit the productive norm —because of illness, differing physical abilities, chronic pain, fatigue or neurodiversity— are not an exception, but a place from which to rethink the entire system of values that supports collective life. Artist and activist **Helena**

Prous insists, «Ableism harms not only disabled people, but it affects us all, because it marks which bodies and times are considered valid, useful, tolerable».

From the community environment, in many popular, rural and transfeminist experiences —such as neighbourhood networks, mutual support groups, self-managed collectives— other forms of care have been created: slower, more emotional forms that are more sensitive to bodies that need to stop or go more slowly. There out of reach of the State or the institutional, often what appears is a situated practice of care that is very similar to what Johanna Hedva defines as «a way of making a world from tiredness, from dependence, from pain that can't be explained».

Anti-ableism is not just a denunciation: it is also an invitation to imagine more caring relationships, to question efficiency as a measure of value and to build support networks that recognise need as a central part of life. In the context of the climate crisis, collective exhaustion, and life uncertainty, recognising interdependence as an organisational principle is no longer an option. It is an urgency.

Dissident Bodies: against fat-phobia and other forms of exclusion

In a world that venerates certain bodies —thin, normative, workable, measurable bodies— fat, racialised, trans, non-binary, disabled people, or simply those who don't fit the formula, are subject to multiple types of symbolic, moral, and aesthetic violence. Fat-phobia is one of these forms of oppression, and it does not act alone: it intertwines with biomedical, classist, racist, and cisheteronormative discourses that legitimise excluding bodies that considered unproductive or inadequate.

Magda Piñeyro has pointed out that fat-phobia is structured around three major axes: the aesthetic, the health, and the moral. Being fat implies not only being seen as someone who «does not fit» —in the seat, in the photo, in the ideal— but also as someone who is failing: a careless, guilty, irresponsible person. «**Fat is not an insult**», insists Piñeyro, rather a political category from which alliances are forged, everyday violence is denounced, and the joy of inhabiting a living body outside the norm is sustained (eldiario.es).

From Argentina, activists such as **Laura Contrera**, **Constanza Álvarez** or **Lucre Masson** have articulated networks such as *Panzas Subversas* («Subversive Bellies») or the fanzine *FEA* («UGLY»), which politicise the fat body and place it within a [transfeminist, de-pathologising, and anti-ableist framework](#). It is not about celebrating an idealised body, but about disobeying the imposition of the standard, and creating other forms of possible life from there. As Contrera

writes, «fat bodies, not responding to health, beauty or productivity ideals, are in a privileged position to challenge the dominant senses of corporeality» (*El gordazine*).

Lucrecia Masson also states that «...there is enormous potential in collectivising our deepest discomforts and taking them out of those places of darkness and silence to which they seem to be condemned».



These types of activism intersect with struggles for the visibility of racialised bodies, trans bodies, with non-normative aesthetics, visibly non-adaptable bodies, bodies that have learned to hide, to deliver from the margins, to use oneself emotionally and materially to survive. Faced with a market that demands highly productive bodies, these bodies generate barter networks, textile workshops, self-managed fairs, shared care, and subsistence strategies that do not go through the validation of the curriculum or the standard. Naming fat-phobia and other bodily violence is not about dwelling on the wound, but about making it a common territory. A space from which to create, sustain ourselves, and inhabit worlds where one does not have to ask permission to be.

All these visions that have been devalued and excluded from being recognized as knowledge provide us with the opportunity to unlearn the disconnected logic of caring for the living, and to take root with who we are and where we are, from the logic of common care and shared responsibility as a skill to develop. This involves leaving aside competition and the struggle for resources, to give way to formulas of co-existence that seek collective benefit.

This invitation to unlearn that we are launching between the lines requires first a prior reflection, starting with how we feel that we take care of ourselves, how we understand that care, and where those ideas within our bodies that we reproduce daily come from. From our experience, being able to share this collective imagination from collective appreciation, not from judgment, but assuming that perhaps there will be incoherence between our theoretical/political discourse and our daily practice, helps us to put into practice collective shared responsibility, as it facilitates the path towards a cultural change on how we want to collectively define and understand care within our organisations. We believe that this process should first go through a personal inquiry and then a collective approach on how we feel the organisation takes care of us, and how we want care to be applied from now on in our organisation, from a greater awareness and diversity.

We know, because we have lived it, that putting into practice this awareness and the possibility that these practices are real is not an easy task. It requires certain skills that we can acquire and unlearn step by step, without penalising or blaming ourselves for not progressing at a faster pace. This concept of rhythms is complex and varied. When we talk about rhythms, we talk about the rhythm that someone assumes is the «right» one for an action or process, but also about the internal rhythms that each person has to process and act on situations and actions. Our learning would consist of naming that rhythms are not neutral and that, according to our organisational culture, we will determine which rhythms have a place, and for whom, and which ones do not.

Unfortunately, we live in a world that demands a fast pace, and that makes many of the things we want to do conditional. Going at a «slow» pace is still a counter-cultural and stigmatising practice for the bodies that experience it. Moreover, it is fundamental to recognise that not being able to follow this fast pace is disabling for many bodies. Undoubtedly, to progress in building more inclusive and sustainable environments, it is necessary to feel and have this awareness, and to try to incorporate it into our reflections as organisations that want to care.

Throughout this journey, although we have chosen not to force similarities, we recognise that especially in contexts far from large cities and metropolises we have seen glimmers that resonate with many of the practices described here. In Andalusia, in southern Europe, on the Mediterranean coasts and mountains, there are gestures and ways of life that last: neighbours who accompany each other in raising children, hands that are extended in the harvests, conversations that sustain collective memory. Returning to the village, or remaining in it, reminds us that community care is not an abstract concept, but a heartbeat that is still present, although we have sometimes forgotten it.

We also want to emphasise that, by valuing economies, jobs, and non-normative practices, we do not fall into a reading that reduces the identity of women, dissidents, migrants, Romani people, and other political subjects to these community spaces. Many of them occupy positions of high responsibility in other spaces, have gone through demanding academic trajectories, lead research and businesses or influence far-reaching political decisions. Recognising and defending community practices does not mean denying these other forms of presence and power. On the contrary, it invites us to think about how both intertwine and nourish each other.

From there, what we have unlearned —and continue to unlearn— is not to build a hierarchy with some forms of care over others. We know that there is no single way to sustain life and that the value of a practice does not depend on whether it is framed in the rural, the urban, the formal or the informal, but on whether it contributes to building networks that dignify and sustain all people in their diversity.

In the end, all these practices and this knowledge intersect in various ways, creating care networks that support and enrich each other. None of them are free from conflict or difficulties, as care is a living and complex process that requires constant work and collective commitment. However, each one serves as a valuable starting point, offering tools and learnings that can accompany us in our individual and collective processes to learn how to take care of ourselves better, through recognising our differences, limits and powers.

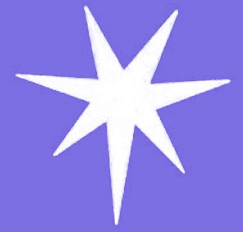
PRACTICAL EXERCISES

During the module, we invite you to carry out practical exercises, understanding that you will choose the outcomes that are most relevant for your situations. We have tried to compile exercises that we have carried out, that we have facilitated with other organisations, and other exercises that we know we believe can be useful to you. For each exercise, we will give indications about their objectives and their requirements prior to explaining how to carry them out.

To put them into practice, we advise you to first read the entire module. Then you can make the best decision about which ones you want to apply or they can even be based on inspiration to create the variations that are most useful to you.

E1

How do I see and feel care?



Type of exercise

Individual

Collective

General objective

Investigate the stereotypes we have in relation to care.

Specific objective

Explore what relationship and personal experience we have with care.

What we need

First of all, find a moment when you can concentrate and give yourself space. If it is difficult try to look for a place that connects you with yourself on a daily basis, trying to avoid interruptions. It is important that you do not judge the outcome, but rather perceive it as an exercise of awareness and internal reflection without filters or prejudices towards yourself.

Duration

15 to 30 minutes per reflection, depending on the need to delve deeper into each question and the person performing the exercise. It would also be advisable to dedicate a minimum of 10 minutes per question.

Material

- Notebook, notepad, A4/A3 paper.
- Markers, pens.
- Space that helps you to be calm and focused.

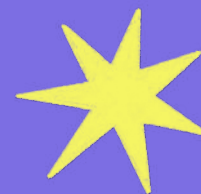
Exercise structure

Questions for reflection:

- If you hear the word care: **What is the first image that comes to mind?** If you can, draw it. Add other associated words that make sense to you.
- **How have you personally experienced care?** Observe whether there are words or phrases that come to mind as a memory and write them down.
- **What does it mean collective care mean for you?** Write down or illustrate the first ideas that come to mind, even if you think of a specific group of people.
- **In your organisation, how do you live and feel care?** Think about the people within the organisation with whom you share space, the things you do collectively, or the things you do with other people, organisations, places and agents with whom you relate.

Results

Once you have the results of these four reflections, we invite you to think about whether these answers correspond to your own ideas or perhaps have a more structural, macrosocial pattern (patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, racism, ableism, and so on). Although it is an initial individual exploration exercise, we recommend that you have a collective space where you can discuss it. It does not have to be within the organisation itself, it can be done with your networks or those you are closest to, and you can see what is similar and what is not.



2 What do we include as care?

From our experience, we understand that the care of our organisation goes through any task that attends to the needs of the living bodies that we have in our environment. On one hand, this includes the people who make up our surroundings, our living environment within the space (nature, animals, seeds, enzymes, and so on) and the structures that make up our surroundings (physical spaces, materials we use, machinery and more). On the other hand, it also includes the non-visible structures of the internal organisation that we have to carry out our tasks (task organisation, responsibilities, protocols), and also the relationships and connections (emotions, legitimacy, reciprocity), which we build and maintain within.

From a classic organisational culture, along Western and capitalist lines, these issues are not a priority and, surely, in many cases they are not even described or made visible: those who are in charge of them are not recognised, nor is their contribution to the sustainability of life. This happens, for example, when those who clean the spaces are invisible, with undervalued tasks that generate well-being in work sessions (preparing food and drinks, organising tables, chairs and materials), or it happens with those who design informal spaces that facilitate links between the people who inhabit them. Even in collective events that are organised to «retain» talent and unite teams, such as *asteam building* sessions, the invisibility of what has been done to make this possible can still be seen as a pattern. For some decades now, there has been talk of the need to «attend» to the workers so that they are «profitable» and perform better in favour of the expected benefits. However, this attention will be maintained whether or not the benefits and the capital sought are obtained, otherwise they will be the first things to be eliminated, as they are understood as costs and not as a long-term investment.

If we look at the culture that promotes the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), whose main message is to put people at the centre. It presents itself as an alternative to wild capitalism. However, for decades, feminist movements have been arguing that there is no clarity about which lives and which bodies are really at the centre of these initiatives that we are building. In practice, we are continuing to reproduce a social market designed for a few people, while others continue to be excluded, either due to an unequal distribution of social capital or because they are lacking their own resources. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in any collective — no matter how small or alternative it may be— it is sometimes difficult to manage care. Added to this is the fact that it is also not usually easy to demand that these needs are covered by those who give us orders, either through subsidies or through hiring.

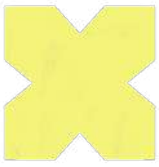
As we saw in the previous section, other cultures' non-hegemonic practices that could serve as inspiration for us and with which it would be valuable to forge alliances are often made invisible. For example, learning from nature itself as a source of wisdom (biomimicry, animals, etc.) can give us ideas that we can then apply in our organisations. We also need more references and

spaces where we can share this applied knowledge. This is the only way we will be able to move away from the sugarcoated theories that say that «we all take care of ourselves from love», and land on how we really experience care in our bodies and in everyday life, with all its complexities.

From our experience, care is often not defined or structured, but rather arises spontaneously within the organisation. The failure to save or plan a space for thinking, feeling, and sharing what happens to us with all this creates dynamics that generate invisible rules, embedded roles, unsustainable burdens, and, in general, discomforts with no specific place to be addressed through dialogue and mutual understanding. All of this ends up causing relationships and even in the organisations themselves to break down, given the impossibility of continuing to bear these experiences daily.

However, we realise that when organisations pay attention to this definition of care, understanding it as something that is alive (and never definitive) that offers us a flexible internal framework and that is nourished by what we are feeling, it makes organisations more resilient, it means they understand each other better, and it helps them look at each other more and recognise each other.

This proposal does not intend to romanticise the practice, but to determine that as we work, it facilitates co-existence and the possibility of inhabiting collective spaces more consciously and more sustainably. Evidently, carrying out this practice requires developing counter-cultural skills that probably not all of us have equally. In this sense, our rucksacks full of past experiences will not be the same, and this will require collective work and effort for each person to have to see how they want to live it. For us it is important to determine that there are no universal measures, there are consciences that we should activate, each organisation in its context and with its journey has to find the ways that can be most useful to them. No one but the living bodies themselves can truly know what they need in order to apply this awareness in their daily lives.



Stories from personal experience

Eli *Sometimes I felt that I'm arriving at an organisation eager to participate, whether it's because I want to be part of it, because I believe I can contribute something different or even because I have been invited, but I see that in this space I can't always fully express what I feel, and this situation is repeated frequently. You realise that you don't feel cared for or welcomed, but you don't know exactly what is not facilitating a change in the climate. Sometimes it's looks, or not looking; other times it is the responses to your arguments or the feeling that you don't know enough and that the other women (others, in general), always know more than you. It has even happened to me at times where you express that you are not feeling comfortable in the space or with the people you are with, and the reactions are of surprise: «Wow, I find what you're saying super interesting.» On other occasions there is a paternalistic and blaming treatment: «Well, it must be you who is more sensitive, because I didn't say it to you with that intention, I only say it because what you propose can't be applied, it's not realistic.» Others have been critical towards my lack of care, for not conceiving or considering other diversities, other rhythms or other ways of life enough, or taking for granted that we were all understanding the same thing, that we saw things the same way, or assuming informally that certain tasks or roles corresponded to me because of my previous experience or my abilities.*

arba *For years I have been participating in collective spaces for work, housing and activism. In many of them I have felt a lack of care, in many others I have also exercised a lack of care. I have been in many spaces where I felt that my presence was too much: too intense, too demanding, too political. Other times I have been invisible. I have arrived with enthusiasm to places where I thought that finally I could live as my whole self, and little by little I shrank inside myself. Sometimes it is not a word or a gesture, it is that feeling that settles in the body that you do not fit in, that there is a code that you do not know. I have felt judged for how I experience conflict, for my body, for my way of naming what hurts. I have felt guilty for pointing out what does not work, as if caring were synonymous with being silent. And I have also made mistakes. I have held more than I could; I have silenced other voices thinking that I was saving the ship, and I did not know how to see that I was repeating patterns of power. I have unintentionally neglected others who were also going through a tough time. I still find it hard to distinguish between when I give because I want to and when I give because I'm afraid of losing my place.*

Specific lessons learned

Eli *In any case, what I have discovered is that there is a lack of care: for the bonds we can generate, for the people who are participating, for the spaces we inhabit and in*

which we find ourselves, and also for the way we relate to one another, beyond the topic or the content we are exchanging. And these experiences interfere in the daily life and are that, often secondary or invisible, part to which we do not give value but which helps us to manage our ways of communicating and generating habitable spaces. More recently, I have started to put into practice not assuming, asking more, unlearning and not victimising myself when someone tells me something they didn't like about my ways, not responding by justifying myself. I have started to try to understand what is happening with that discomfort and how I can respond emotionally responsibly, without avoiding or ceasing to expose my boundaries.

arba *What I have learned the most in these years is that caring is not about pleasing. That not all of us are at the same stage in life, nor do we arrive with the same story, nor can we respond in the same way. I have learned that my pain does not invalidate that of others, and that space must also be left for those who do not shout. I have learned that I can withdraw without betraying anyone. That care is not always given in a group, that sometimes it is also built from a friend who writes to you to remind you that you are not alone. That you can start over without having to pretend it didn't hurt. And that when I recognize myself as privileged, it's not about guilt, but about what I do with it.*

There was something that clicked deep within me: understanding that when we introduce ourselves to others, we tend to make our oppressions visible—that we are lesbians, Andalusian, temporary workers, dissidents— but we leave out our privileged positions. I, for example, have been mentioning for a while that I am a white European cis woman, but I don't usually mention that I am also part Catalan, that I have higher education, that I have high cultural capital and a biological family that supports me. And without saying it, it is more difficult for me to review it. Loving those parts too—not to celebrate them, but to recognise them and take responsibility for them— has allowed me to start looking at myself more honestly, without dividing myself between what hurts and what benefits. Those parts of me also need to be understood, so that I don't act from the shadows.

The process of starting to consciously care(for ourselves)

Eli *Recently, and thanks to a huge amount of work and the privilege of being able to dedicate time to introspection, I have learned to treat myself better as an individual. This overexertion would never have been possible without having the network of people who support me and provide me with the compassion needed to love ourselves as we are, to identify the parts we need to improve out of emotional responsibility towards ourselves and others. I have been aware that it is a treasure and a privilege, academically often called social or relational capital, but it is undoubtedly a resource that is not always given and that can penalise or be unfair to others.*

At the same time, this process has been possible thanks to meeting other people who also wanted to put care in the spotlight, who—from different points of view on what we understand by care— have bet on opening spaces for dialogue and on centring this discussion on not only those tasks that generate remuneration but also all

those that sustain us in our daily life, learning to value them and to work so that they are covered. This part is the most complex, since we live in a world that does not value care and, therefore, our practice is counter-cultural. Often, it feels exhausting to have to defend the quality of life from a shared responsibility point of view, and you want to let go and accept that it is not possible. At this point, having others who also creatively seek ways to apply this outlook and not die trying gives us light. It helps us be able to look at ourselves and tell ourselves that little by little we can make small changes that build more habitable and responsible places.

Even being aware and seeking ways to improve and apply a care culture daily, we have accepted that we cannot cover all our needs. We would love to, but we are not a magic wand that can grant all our desires in a world that does not perceive community care as a priority. It is important to be able to identify, name, value and prioritise care from collective debate, from mutual trust and recognition, from listening and from the memory of what we have done, taking into account what we perhaps have not seen or experienced but what is mentioned as important and as a need by new people.

arba *I started to really take care of myself (ourselves) when I stopped demanding to be the perfect version of myself, when I accepted that I can't do everything, that I don't want everything. I learned that taking care of myself is not isolating myself, but it's also not always exposing myself. That rest is also political. That my body speaks to me and that, if I don't listen, it shuts down. Starting to take care of ourselves has also meant starting to look at others without expecting so much. To join without invading. To name what I need without my voice trembling. I have understood that there is no single model, that what works for me may not work for others, and that's okay. And that when we talk about care, we're not talking about utopias but about small things: a group that changes its schedule so that I can be there, someone who asks me how I really am, a female colleague who offers to cover me without being asked.*

And it has also been about starting to set boundaries, to set a pace that is fairer for me. I reduced my paid work hours to devote more time to my unpaid work, such as raising my son—who is now a teenager—or taking care of the garden at home. I learned to say no to projects, ideas and proposals that perhaps excited me, but took my breath away. To prioritise what sustains me. To stop without having to justify it.

On that path, I stopped looking for escape routes. I left the parties and the noise, but also many collective spaces, projects and activism. For years I felt that I had to be everywhere, in all collectives, in all struggles, as if the more spaces I inhabited the more valid I was, as if my presence in a thousand causes made me worthy of recognition, of affection, of belonging. Today I care less about not being there. I have learned that being someone, the journey, the doing, the sustaining, the transforming, all that is already in me, even if I do not show it publicly. I have learned to validate myself without having to embody a thousand ideas or initialisms. To exist without being everywhere.

And I began to make space for enjoyment from other places: the enjoyment of the body that learns new things, of making with my own hands, of movement without demand, of living slowly. To turn off my brain even if just a little bit. Taking care of myself was also that: to recover the pleasure of existing without having to perform, without having to prove. Without escaping.

Eli *In general, it was very important to share that care is an important priority, but perhaps we don't know how to do it. From compassion and listening, we are exploring which paths help us to take care of ourselves and which ones neglect us. Accepting the inconsistencies from awareness, but not from forgetting. Seeing what things we can put into practice and what others remain to continue looking for options.*

In turn, the privilege of having a network of people who recognise you and who nourish you is not given in all contexts, the privilege of understanding that it is unfair to demand from others that they give from the same place as perhaps the one who does have it. Being able to identify what privileges and what baggage we have that need to be taken into account for our individual and collective practice, and assuming how we can share responsibility for the social redistribution that has not happened, is fundamental. Sometimes we may need to take on internal training, workshops, time or other resources that help restore balance without aiming for the perfect balance.

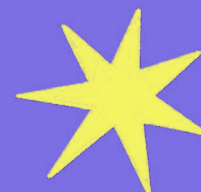
arba *The most transformative thing has been discovering that I am not alone in this search, that many of us feel the same discomfort, the same desire, the same fatigue. When we started saying it out loud, when we stopped pretending that everything was fine and dared to tell each other about the pain, frustration or fear of not fitting in, something moved. A space of possibility opened up. We learned to set boundaries without breaking ties, to recognise privileges without that blocking us, to trust that, although it is slow, contradictory and full of doubts, we can build other ways of being together.*

We also learned that collective care is not improvising, nor is it enough to have good will. We have needed to create specific tools: regular spaces for reviewing agreements and grievances, schedule adjustments and task rotations. Protected moments to talk about what is not working. We created virtual spaces where we can say: «I need someone to cover for me», or simply «I can't handle everything today», we learned to shield moments in the calendar to talk about how we are, not just what we do. We have understood that care is not «an energy that is in the environment» but that it requires time, structure and shared responsibility.

We have seen that sometimes caring is letting someone distance themselves without penalising them, without making them feel like they are abandoning us. And sometimes it is insisting affectionately because we know that the person who is leaving perhaps needs us to hold them, not to let them go. Caring has also been learning not to interpret each other from our own expectations, but from the reality that the other may inhabit. Keeping the rhythm without demanding synchrony. Recognising that not all of us have the same network, the same cushion, the same emotional or material capital, has allowed us not to demand the same from everyone, and to redistribute without feeling guilty. To hold on when it's time, to stop when we need to. Sometimes taking care is saying no, other times, it's arriving on time. And many times, it is to keep searching together, even if we don't know how.

Eli & arba *It is very important that an organisation that wants to sustain care within itself and its outward practice defines «what it understands by care», not as a perfect definition but as one that it truly plans to apply later. In our case, expressing it as specific things went well:*

- *Ironclad periods in timetables and calendars to be able to express what I need and how I am, and to establish dialogue with the entity/organisation.*
- *Working rights that go beyond the agreements to respond to care that is not covered (remote working and flexible working hours, whenever possible and compatible); time for personal meetings (schools, home maintenance visits, medical visits for oneself or dependents); and caring for non-family ties (friends, neighbours, non-human animals, etc.)*
- *Virtual or communication spaces when you need to discuss a topic (be it urgent or at a set time).*
- *Establish shared responsibility for the materials, and the distribution and redistribution of the people in charge of monitoring their condition.*
- *Spaces to review how agreements are being applied and what we are noticing: how we feel we are taking care of ourselves (six-monthly/annually).*
- *Recognition of the invisible times of collective work: emotional care, managing discomfort, resting that maintains the rhythm.*
- *Flexible way of representing ourselves within our networks or in external spaces, recognising that sometimes not being present is also a way of taking care of ourselves.*



3 Other challenges that we encountered along the way

From our own experiences and those we have been observing through joining others, we realise something that we have already been telling you, which is very important for working on conscious care in organisations: organisations and the people who inhabit them are not neutral, socially speaking. The fact that an organisation has a long history or is just starting, or that the people who inhabit it are founders or new incorporations, or that the living situation we are experiencing is more precarious and hostile than that of others, places us on a more complex map than the one we would be identifying on a single plane. That is why our first task is to reflect and identify all the implicit power relations in our environment, to start from this awareness and not only from the common framework of what we understand by community and/or collective care.

Another important component for understanding the power relations that underlie our practices is the concept of work and how we understand it because the belief persists that work is an intrinsic part of my life, whether because what I do is what I am passionate about, it is my activism, or because being «productive» brings me well-being, apparently. This view of work makes us very demanding of ourselves, and makes us neglectful of ourselves and towards others. We have seen how organisations, surely involuntarily or unintentionally, reproduce oversights that later affect the workloads or mental loads of all, which increase the feeling that there is no other way to work, and that we must continue working like this even if it generates stress or difficulties in sustaining the organisation.

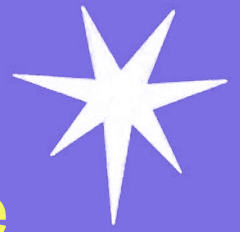
When thinking about work, it is then necessary to visualise and analyse several layers or levels:

- **Individual/personal level:** how I feel, live and experience, from my imagination, work and my living situation.
- **Collective/organisational level:** how we from the organisation feel, live and experience the imaginaries of the organisation about work and about the live situation of the project.
- **Structural/systemic level:** how the system that organises us feels, lives and experiences the structural imaginary that it promotes about work and about the situation of what is vital for the system.

In this sense it would be interesting to investigate from our organisation, and from these three layers, what the imaginaries are that we have about work and about life in order to make decisions, based on this analysis, about how to organise it, putting care and life at the centre.

What do we see and feel about work and life within our organisation?

(Part 1)



Type of exercise

Individual

Collective

General objective

Investigate the collective imaginaries that we perceive and feel about work and life.

Specific objective

- Explore what each of us who forms the organisation feels/thinks about work and life.
- Share our thoughts and perceptions to have elements of reflection on what we need to work on in our own organisational culture, with awareness from our experiences.

What we need

For this exercise, we need to be in a quiet place where we can concentrate, since we will first do an individual investigation about the three levels and then have a moment to share with the rest of the group and see how we can work internally with this awareness. It is very important that we do this exercise without judging or interpreting what others say, since in that case we would be manipulating the results, which would not allow us to work on the collective imaginaries that we have.

It is essential that we are willing to listen to other points of view, understand from compassion and trust in our own results and in those of our female colleagues. Mediate the exercise if one of the participants assumes the role of mediator. This person should be in charge of controlling the dynamics and times, and ensuring that the results of this reflection are the result everyone's participation.

Duration

We propose a **minimum two hours for a group of less than 10 people** (we estimate approximately 30 minutes for individual exploration / four to five minutes for each person to share in large group) and a 30-minute margin for the collective creation of each mini explanation.

Material

- A4/A3 Paper.
- Markers, pens.
- Space to be free to do the individual exercise (tables/floor/wall).
- Space to get together and be able to share our results (it would be ideal to be able to hang them up as if they were a mural).

Exercise structure

From three dimensions (individual, collective and structural), we pose questions that we have to answer with words or drawings that come to our mind, leaving our reflections noted down or drawn at each level.

In the first stage we are going to ask ourselves:

From the individual/personal level

- What do I understand by work?
- How do I feel/perceive my life currently in relation to work?

From the collective/organisational level: the concept of work and the concept of life

- What does my organisation understand as work?
- How do we perceive the life of the project currently?

From the structural/systemic level: the concept of work and the concept of life

- What does our macrosocial organisational system/structure/country understand as work?
- How is our country/structure/system perceived as to what the essential elements for our existence are and how we take care of them and ensure that vital elements are covered?

Once the individual exercise is done, we recommend that you return to the large group and you can briefly present your results. Place or hang the results obtained on a wall as a mural, to see which words and elements are repeated, which differ or even which are antagonistic. This involves a second and third stage, and they can be very enriching processes.

When we have the complete mural, we recommend that you continue working on these results to co-construct your organisational culture more consciously and diversely.

In a fourth stage, we encourage ourselves to collectively ask.

What do we see and feel about work and life within our organisation?

(Part 2)



Type of exercise

Individual

Collective

General objective

Explore what collective map we have in relation to the concept of work and life.

Specific objectives

Agree on what elements we want to incorporate into our organisational culture in a more conscious and diverse way.

Duration

Two minimum working hours for collective exploration. **Four hours is the ideal time.** This exercise could be done on the same day as Exercise 2, or at another time soon after.

Material

- Results of Exercise 2 (individual mural exercises).
- Wallpaper.
- Markers, pens.
- Space to be free to do the collective exercise (tables/floor/wall).

Exercise structure

First, we propose that you carry out a brief individual observation to identify the results and aspects that resonate with us from the different levels, identifying whether our results and perceptions coincide or differ with those identified by the other participants.

From here, we propose a group exercise:

- At the **individual level**, integrate the results of each person, incorporating realities that we may not have taken into account.
- At the **organisational level**, identify the common outcome and discuss the divergent points to decide whether we want to include them or not.
- Finally, at the **systemic level**, add the elements that we collectively consider to be part of the shared framework.

Results

As a result of this exercise, we have a conceptual and experiential map that reflects how we understand work and life in our organisation. This map allows us to structure and plan which aspects we want to incorporate into the imaginaries that make up our organisational culture, being aware of the things from the system that organises us which are interfering with us and the individualities that are part of our organisation. This exercise makes it easier to prioritise the measures we want to implement, helps us understand the identity we are building around work and life, and helps us identify the external elements that can condition us and those that we need to keep in mind.

Then, beyond this exercise, it is important to be able to reflect on whether it is easy or not to talk about care in the organisation, and whether we have defined what we understand as care, by asking ourselves the following questions:

- **Are there caregiver roles and neglected roles?**
- **Has it been possible to talk about this topic in the organisation?**
- **What concrete care practices do we have defined and established?**
- **What do these practices bring us?**
- **Do we conduct regular evaluations of the effectiveness of these practices? Who does it? Based on what criteria?**

It is important to note that, as a living being, our organisation is in constant transformation: any practice or dynamic can vary according to the needs of the bodies that inhabit it and the moment in which they find themselves living (both the project and the people). Therefore, it is advisable to never take these issues for granted, even if we are aware of their existence or that we have built them collectively, even if the people who are part of it remain the same. Our lives change, and with them, so does care, their needs and our priorities.

E4

Mapping unseen care



Type of exercise

Individual

Collective

General objective

Help to look concretely at how, where and who takes care in your organisation.

Specific objectives

Get a map of the dynamics and practices of care (and neglect) that we have.

What we need

The first thing is to create a calm space and a desire to look inward. Evaluate whether you want to have different roles in the set-up of the exercise or whether you will do it self-managed. It will depend on how your group works best.

Duration

Recommended **2 hours**.

Material

- Wallpaper.
- Coloured post-it notes.
- Markers and pens.

Exercise structure

We start with someone from the group drawing three concentric circles: centre, intermediate, periphery.

In the centre, we will write on green post-it notes everything that we do care for and recognise; in the intermediate circle, on yellow post-it notes, we will write down the care that is carried out but is not recognised as such; and in the peripheral or outercircle, on red post-it notes we will put what hurts us, what we avoid or what is never said.

It is not about pointing fingers at anyone. But about mapping the terrain. Naming what is happening. Recognising what is held in the shadows, writing down what is not recognised, not visualised, not valued, what does not generate pain or what is done silently and even in secret.

After that, we will group what has come the results, also answering the following questions: **which types of care are overloading a few people? Which practices could we move from the centre to the periphery? Or the other way around?**

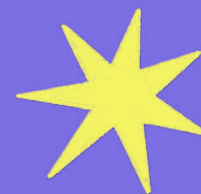
Then, one person from the group asks the participants, «What do I bring? / What do I need?», writing their answers with arrows or circles around the post-it notes.

Results

As you can see, this map is not just an exercise. It is a mirror. It helps us see what we take care of and what we have not yet known how to take care of.

Other practical exercises to explore

We recommend that you go to the [references section](#), where you can find recommended games and guides with more suggestions that may suit you.



4 What internal culture do we have and what do we want?

First of all, we need to know what we mean when we talk about internal organisational culture. For us, it is about the agreements, rules, traditions and dynamics related to our roles and the way we organise ourselves within the organisation. It also includes our experiences, both inside and outside of it, and how these have left a mark on us; as well as the attitudes we accept and the ones we limit. In summary, when we talk about internal culture, we refer to the set of rules and values that we have collectively agreed upon and that we want to permeate across our organisational practice. The internal culture of organisations can manifest itself in different ways: sometimes it is explicitly described and transmitted to new people who join; other times it is not described and non-agreed dynamics are defined and produced invisibly and informally, which consequently become part of the organisational culture. It also happens that, at some point, some people from the project have come to describe it, but that work has been forgotten and left unreviewed, as our journey has continued.

In any case, we consider it essential to stop and reflect on where we are today in relation to our internal culture. Some initial questions that the people who inhabit the organisation could ask themselves are:

- **Do we have our internal culture defined and written/consumable?**
- **How have we built our internal culture? Have we reviewed it? Who has participated?**
- **Are there unwritten things that are actually invisible norms that we are accepting and reproducing from inertia?**

With this section of the module, we are not looking to blame ourselves if we feel that we have not done our homework «well», but rather that these reflections serve as a meeting point to identify where we can continue to work and therefore improve the way we understand and experience our relationships within the organisation.

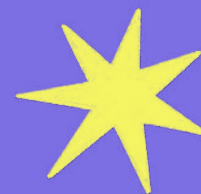
This culture that we have or want to build, must also be considered from the concept of care and how these will be present in our agreements and norms, since there are many organisational cultures that do not consider care as a transversal value to protect, and they are relegated to the background, when they are included. As we have been explaining to you, in order for care to stop being just a nice word, and to have elements that allow us to think about how to implement and apply them in our daily lives, we need rules and materials (spaces, time and money), which help to consolidate their practice.

As we collectively define this organisational culture, which is accessible and revisable, it will be easier to identify what happens in our daily lives. From experience, we know that even if we

have these measures in writing, it is often not enough to feel legitimised to apply them, and even more so when it comes to applying measures that are counter-cultural.

Another key aspect that we must take into account when defining and implementing our organisational culture is transparency about how we define the mechanisms of participation, and what the spaces for decision and governance are, because we often come across teams that say they are horizontal, that everyone can participate and decide, but in practice we see that there are dynamics and informal and formal leadership that constitute real barriers to participation and horizontal decision-making. Moreover, when these spaces are not well defined or identified, roles are presupposed and people are expected to do things that we have not understood equally. Therefore, it is key that we define, delimit, review and build these roles and spaces collectively from shared responsibility, rather than reproducing what has always been done or what someone has decided is best.

And finally, in order to think about a culture of participation from diversity, we must identify and view co-responsibly what we must take into account, so as not to leave anyone out of this culture.



5 What skills do we need to care?

Finally, we want to propose a section that includes the skills that we can incorporate if we wish to take care into account more consciously and diversely. We have gathered these skills from our own experience, both lived and also with others that we have joined.

Flexibility

It means understanding that care is a living process, which means we are always in a dynamic of learning and also of co-construction. The idea is to assume that there is no definitive port to which we will arrive and where everything will always work the same way, rather that we have a map that helps us move, but we will not arrive at a fixed place where we will stay to live forever, and that will always work the same way.

Empathy and shared responsibility

Understanding that care is not individual and that it will not work if we view it as individual demands. We must understand that care requires collective shared responsibility and that, therefore, we must work together to see how we can manage it. Also, it is important to reflect on the power roles that each of us inhabits within our organisations, from an intersectional perspective. It is not just about seeing how many oppressions we each feel, but about understanding that they do not operate the same way in a macrosocial system that is unequal and unfair, since the vulnerability and risk we can feel is very different, depending on our social position in the system in which we live. Therefore, we will need to take responsibility for our share of acquired privileges and shared responsibility made towards non-privilege. Starting from this awareness will allow us to understand that it is necessary to make both individual and collective decisions about the care that we want to consciously apply.

Self-awareness

Applying an outlook towards care also involves taking care of both our personal and collective wounds. This task is not an easy one, as the social culture relating to care that is ingrained in us refers more to self-care, everyone caring for themselves, and that we must always move forward without taking the time to review and reflect on what we live, feel or what we have been able to experience. Also, going to therapy and working internally is promoted, often from privilege, but we know that this is a privilege since it is not included as a right and the cost of going to therapy would not be accessible to everyone. Demanding this as an obligation to those who cannot afford it can lead us to reproduce social injustice. As we have been saying, there are no recipes but points of reflection and awareness to be able to move forward, taking into account the diversity we can find. The proposal is that as we can give space to our own healing and collective healing, coexistence and care will become more conscious and diverse.

Conflict management

Talking about care is also talking about conflicts between the people who inhabit the organisation. In order to grow as an organisation and take into account our diversity, it is useful to learn how to manage our conflicts, accepting that conflicts are not problems but opportunities to work on dynamics that will help in the future with other experiences and people.

E5

What elements do I have?



Type of exercise

Individual

Collective

General objective

Investigate the skills that we recognise as our own.

Specific objective

Be able to recognise our contributions to the community/groups.

What we need

First of all, find a moment where you can concentrate and give yourself space. If it is difficult, try to find a place that connects you with yourself on a daily basis, trying to avoid interruptions. It is important that you do not judge the outcome, but rather perceive it as an exercise in internal reflection and awareness, without filters or prejudices towards yourself.

Duration

We suggest that each reflection takes **15 to 30 minutes**, depending on the need to delve into each question and the person who carries out the exercise. It would also be advisable to dedicate a minimum of 10 minutes per question.

Material

- Notebook, notepad, A4/A3 paper.
- Markers, pens.
- Space that helps you to be calm and focused.

Example list of some skills

We all have developed skills, whether we are more or less aware of them. The skills can be cognitive (thinking, memory, learning), social and interpersonal (communication, empathy, leadership, teamwork), emotional (managing emotions, self-awareness, emotional intelligence) or spiritual (having purpose, connection). We have skills based on the communities we come from and those in which we have socialized, which can be collective and make us resilient.

We mention some possible ones in the list below. But, surely, you can find and name many more!

- Empathy
- Active listening
- Creativity and innovation
- Teamwork
- Responsibility
- Commitment
- Manual skill
- Peripheral vision
- Ability to learn
- Flexibility
- Adaptability
- Effective communication
- Problem-solving
- Generosity
- Rigidity
- Attention to detail
- Compassion and self-compassion
- Patience
- Ability to reflect and argue
- Critical and strategic thinking
- Assertiveness
- Negotiation
- Planning
- Humility
- Co-operation
- Acceptance and the power to let go

Exercise structure

Questions for reflection:

- **If you had to describe your skills and capabilities regarding care, which ones do you recognise?** If you can, write them down, draw them, add other associated words that make sense to you.
- **What skills do you feel you have been recognised by others for?** (These can be personal or professional). Observe whether there are words or phrases that come to mind as a memory and write them down.
- **Do you think these skills can be acquired over time or are we born with them?** Write down or illustrate the first ideas that come to mind. Even if you think of a specific situation/experience.
- **Are individual and group care skills recognised and appreciated in your organization?** Think about the people you share space with in your organisation and the things you do collectively, and other people, entities, places, and agents you interact with.

Results

Once you have the results of these four proposed reflections, we invite you to compare these answers with people from your immediate environment, contrasting their answers with those you have been able to collect in this notebook. Reflect on what you have discovered with this exercise, and if any word, skill or recognition redefines you, we invite you to display it in a visible place (it could be in your workplace, on the wall of your house, or wherever it is most useful for you).

6 More simple exercises



1 The Care Thermometer

Objective: to recognise various perceptions of collective care.

Materials and space: adhesive tape, large space.

Set-up: line on the ground with «cold–warm–hot». Each person stands along the line according to how they feel about care in their group. Have an open conversation with active listening.

2 Gestures of care chains

Objective: to make the body languages of care visible and generate connection.

Materials and space: large room.

Instructions: in a circle, everyone adds a gesture of care towards the person to their left. At the end, repeat the sequence as a small «collective choreography».

3 Caring for objects

Objective: to open up a poetic and material language about care.

Materials and space: personal items.

Instructions: each person chooses an object they carry with them (handkerchief, pen, earring, etc.) and redefines it as a metaphor for care. Then share it with the group.

4 Circle of sounds

Objective: explore care from the non-verbal, connecting with the sensory.

Materials and space: just the body.

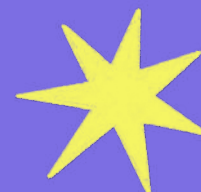
Instructions: in a circle, each person emits a brief, soft sound (sigh, laugh, click) that symbolises care for them. Build a collective soundscape. First emit each sound on its own, then all together, looking for a rhythmic pattern.

5 Collective care poem

Objective: to translate the reflection into creative language.

Materials and space: paper, pens.

Instructions: each person writes a sentence that starts with «Collective care is...». Read them aloud to create a collective poem. You could make a version in the style of the exquisite corpse.



7 Travel Rucksacks

From our intention to share the knowledge that we have been acquiring, we wanted to provide you with rucksacks that can serve you on your journey to conscious and diverse leadership. Our learnings are based on our own experiences, on critical and conscious readings, on the support we have received and that we have also given to others. Our knowledge is not intended to be a universal truth but a source of inspiration for other organisations that wish to put more consciousness into their care and leadership. We know that we are not neutral and also that we have cultural and social biases that we need to review and work on constantly.

Now, we believe that this critical and self-critical exercise is more powerful when done collectively and from the diversity of bodies that experience the discomforts daily. From forging diverse alliances, listening from curiosity and mutual recognition is where we have seen the rewards of being able to interact, feel uncomfortable, collect, learn to take responsibility for the impacts co-responsibly and to understand that, above all, care is a path, a process that never ends, one that is alive. We invite you to be able to find your own path, to research other sources of knowledge beyond your own, to seek external support recommended by others who have a vision similar to yours.

For our part, we hope that this content about the meaning of caring collectively can be useful to you and that you can reflect and review your culture of care and neglect.

8 References



Glossary

1 **Transfeminism**

A feminist current that actively incorporates the experiences, struggles, and knowledge of trans people, non-binary people, and other sex-gender disagreements, questioning the cisheteropatriarchal system from an intersectional and decolonial perspective. It is a commitment within the framework of feminism to put the body at the centre, to think about what things travel the body, and to expand the frameworks of the historical subject of feminism, which is the female subject (LUCRE).

2 **Intersectionality**

A framework that allows us to understand how multiple forms of oppression —such as racism, classism, ableism, or machismo— intertwine and reinforce each other, affecting bodies and trajectories in different ways.

3 **Decolonial Approach**

A critical perspective that questions the hierarchies of knowledge, power, and being imposed by colonialism, and that reclaims silenced or displaced practices, languages, and ways of life.

4 **Collective Care**

A conscious and political practice that focuses on bonds, sustaining life, and the shared responsibility among various people and bodies within a community or organisation.

5 **Internal Culture**

A set of practices, values, dynamics, and codes —which are either explicit or not— that shape how we interact with each other and sustain everyday life within an organisation.

6 **Shared responsibility**

Fair and conscious distribution of tasks, power and care, which recognises structural inequalities and the different abilities, needs and trajectories of those who are part of it.

7 **Precarious administrative trajectory**

Condition imposed on many migrant people by the regimes of foreignness, which limits access to rights, to vital stability and to the recognition of knowledge and work.

8 **Conscious leadership**

A way of leading through listening, honesty, collective reflection and the distribution of power, attending to contradictions without reproducing authoritarian thinking.

9 Shared leadership

An organisational strategy that distributes power and responsibility, promoting horizontality and mutual care as part of decision-making.

10 Relational justice

A form of justice that is not limited to rules or procedures, but is based on caring for relatives and repairing damage from a collective perspective.

11 Anti-ableism

A political stance that rejects the hierarchical ranking of bodies and minds according to their functionality or productivity and that fights for accessible and fair conditions for all people.

12 Sensory justice

Recognition that people inhabit the world in various sensory ways, and that spaces must adapt to accommodate this plurality without normativity.

13 Anti-fat-phobia

Political practice that denounces structural violence towards fat bodies, and that claims the right to exist, move and take care of oneself from other aesthetics, needs and forms.

14 Political self-care

Self-care as a collective act of resistance, recognising that sustaining ourselves is essential to cope with contexts of exploitation, violence and overload.

15 Economy for life

Model that places the sustainability of life —and not profit or productivity— as the centre of social, economic and political organisation.

16 Modern/colonial world-system

Global structure emerged from colonialism that defines which lives have worth, which bodies matter and which knowledge is recognised, and which territories are exploited, perpetuating hierarchies between North–South, white–non white and useful–not useful.

17 Social organisation

Formal or informal collective that works for social change from collaborative, political or cultural practices with a transformative vocation.

18 Organisational ailments

Tensions, contradictions and pains that emerge within organisations, often made invisible, but that deeply affect relationships and collective work.

19 Situated knowledges

Embodied knowledge, born from specific and partial experiences, that oppose the universal and abstract idea of dominant knowledge.

20 Epistemology of care

A form of knowledge that starts from care practices as a legitimate source of knowledge, political analysis and social transformation.

21 Global care chains

Transnational dynamics in which women from the Global South care for the households of the North, while other women in their home countries take on the care that they leave behind.

22 Invisible care practices

Everyday actions that sustain the collective (listening, accompanying and containing), but that are not recognised or valued within many organisations.

23 Non-productive rhythms

Vital times that do not respond to the logic of capitalist efficiency, and that need to be embraced and legitimised in organisational spaces.

24 White saviour syndrome

A, sometimes unconscious, colonial attitude from which white women try to «help» others by reproducing hierarchies and dependencies.

25 Neurodiversity

Way of being and perceiving the world that deviates from what is considered «normal» according to hegemonic neuroscience; it is not a disease, but a legitimate expression of diversity.

26 Dissident body

Body that moves away from the dominant norms about gender, functionality, race, size or age and that embodies other ways of being and resisting in the world.

27 Governance model

Structure through which decisions are made and power is distributed in an organisation; it can reproduce hierarchies or open up to more horizontal, rotating or collective forms.

Resources

AUDIOVISUAL

- Cabnal, Lorena (2021) Jornadas «**Las mujeres, el buen vivir y el feminismo comunitario**». Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQJJ3omn004>.
- Rodríguez, Corina (2023) «**Techo de cristal, pisos pegajosos, escaleras rotas**». Fuente: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdBWrrwhn8>.

PODCASTS

- La casa encendida. **Una sobremesa de cuidado**. Source: Una Sobremesa De Cuidado Podcast En Directo | La Casa Encendida.
- Radio Savia, episode. **El cuidado al centro**. Fuente: <https://www.radiosavia.com/podcast/t1e7/>.

RECOMMENDED PUBLICATIONS

- **Autocuidado profesional**. Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DMu-UdCAGQW/?img_index=10&igsh=MzQ4MTZza2V3dGJy. («Professional self-care»)

GAMES

- **Juegos Intered**. Source: <https://www.intered.org/es/recursos/cuidar-es-otra-historia>. («Intered Games»).

SELF-PUBLISHING, GAMES, FANZINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fanzine **Fanzine de autocuidado colectivo**. https://generoymetodologias.org/media/publicaciones/archivos/Autocuidado_13.5X17_Fanzine.pdf.
- Fanzine **Ruta de acuerpamiento** (Fondo Alquimia). <https://www.fondoalquimia.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/FANZINE%20RUTA%20DE%20ACUERPAMIENTO.pdf>.
- Fanzine **Colocarnos al centro**. <https://luminasdh.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/FanzineOrden-ColocarnosAlCentro-2.pdf>.
- Fanzine **Asian American Feminist Antibodies**. <https://anchorarchive.org/node/11849>.
- Fanzine **Comadre Luna - Autocuidado y sanación colectiva**. https://comadreluna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FANZINE-autocuidado_2.pdf.

RECOMMENDED GUIDES

- **Acuerpamientos resiliencia y resistencia ante la violencia en pandemia. («Resilience and resistance to violence in a pandemic»)**. **Guía básica para replicar Talleres de autocuidado y cuidado colectivo**. Source: https://generoymetodologias.org/media/publicaciones/archivos/GUIAAUTOCUIDADOYCUIDADOCOLECTIVO-cartillaautoecono_441_1.pdf («Basic guide to replicate self-care and collective care workshops»).
- Corporación para la vida mujeres que crean (2022). **Cultivando el cuidado en nuestras organizaciones (Fase 2)**. Source: <https://mujeresquecrean.org/cultivando-el-cuidado-en-nuestras-organizaciones/>. («Cultivating Care in Our Organisations [Phase 2]» by «Corporation for the life women create»).

- Mugarikgabe (2022). **Autocuidado y cuidado colectivo en nuestras organizaciones**. Source: <https://viajandoporloinvisible.mugarikgabe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/guia-de-cuidados.pdf>. («Self-care and collective care in our organisations»).

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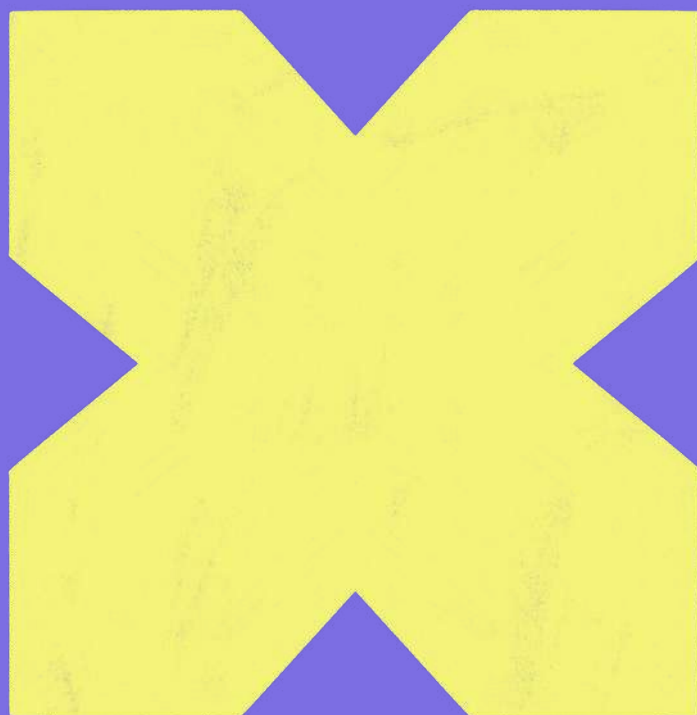
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Theme 1

Conscious and diverse leadership focused on collective care in social organisations

Module 2

How can we build conscious and diverse leadership?



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LINSÒLITA
Xarxa de cooperatives feministes



**How can we build conscious
and diverse leadership?**

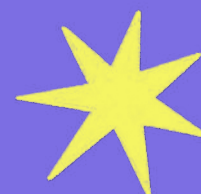


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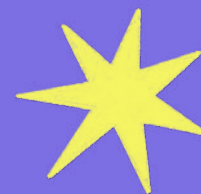
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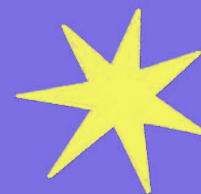
Module 2
How to build
conscious and diverse
leadership?



From criticism to practice: redistributing power, legitimising listening and deciding together how we want to lead

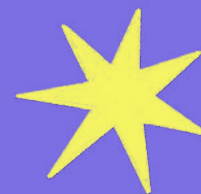
This module addresses the topic of leadership from an anti-hierarchical, intersectional, and honest perspective. We are interested in asking ourselves who are the leaders, how, from where, and with what consequences. Above all, we are interested in asking ourselves what types of leadership we want for our organisations, how we would like that leadership to be, and how we can make decisions collectively, distributing this function fairly and sustainably.

We propose tools so that leadership ceases to be a burden, destiny or privilege and becomes a distributed function, chosen and legitimised collectively based on our diverse values and realities.



What shall we explore?

- Criticism of traditional leadership models: verticality, heroism, hyper-availability, acquired skills.
- Widespread leadership: figures who support without being seen, people who accumulate without knowing how to let go.
- Intersectionality in practice: how gender, origin, class, or age affect our chances of being heard or legitimised.
- Caring and leading: confusion between caring and leadership, and the risk of emotional exploitation by certain figures.
- «Total commitment» culture: as a trap for recognition.
- From diagnosis to collective projection: what kind of leadership do we want to build, and how do we decide and spread it in a way that shares responsibility?
- Decision-making systems: agreements, legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability in collective processes.



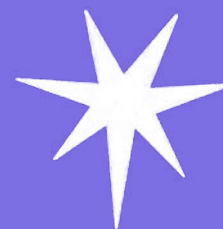
1 Where do we start when talking about leadership?

If we look at it from a Western and Eurocentric perspective, we can see that the origin of the word *leadership* comes from the Old English term *lædere* (leader), a word associated with the idea of guiding, leading or showing the way. This definition refers to the leader as a powerful being who helps others to progress. If we look at this initial approach, we may be reminded of the idea associated with the leader as a person with heroic attributes that leadership can only be assumed or represented individually and not collectively. This concept reflects an individualistic view of leadership, characteristic of the social structure forged in Modernity and Capitalism: the figure of a being with personal power and the ability to act efficiently as a leader.

Even if we go back to stories from prehistoric times, told from a Western perspective, a good leader was someone who possessed good survival skills, such as a hunter or someone who took on the role of protecting the group. We have been told that these roles were assumed by men and that women, in their feminine role, were responsible for organising the group or the gathering. However, other studies, such as those conducted by **Riane Eisler**¹, have discovered, thanks to DNA methodologies and archaeological findings, that the roles of hunting and protecting the group were also assumed by females. Not only that, but there were pre-patriarchal cultures where the goal was not the destruction or domination of some people over others, but rather cultures that sought harmony and community participation. This author describes two social models associated with cultural construction: gylany and androcracy. Androcracy, a term that may be more familiar to us, refers to hierarchical power, generally associated with male roles and a style of exercising power through competition, oppression and exploitation of bodies and territories, devaluing everything that is not associated with this role of power. In contrast, gylany speaks to us of a model based on collaboration, equality and mutual respect, without dividing by gender. Collective well-being is promoted, and there is no hierarchical structure, as power is shared and distributed.

These definitions make us think about the different styles of leadership that exist, and that we need to talk about what we understand by power, to whom it is granted, who exercises it, how they exercise it, and what they use it for.

1 For more information on archaeological evidence of social systems in cultural origins in Spanish, see references for her work "[El cáliz y la espada](#)". («The Chalice and the Sword»)



Type of exercise

Individual

Collective

General objective

Explore the ideas that we have about the concept of leadership and power.

Specific objective

Explore what relationship and personal experience we have with leadership and power.

What we need

First of all, find a moment when you can concentrate and give yourself some space. If this is difficult, try to find a place that connects you with yourself on a daily basis, trying to avoid interruptions. It is important that you do not judge the outcome, but rather perceive it as an exercise in awareness and internal reflection without filters or prejudices towards yourself.

Duration

It depends on each participant and how accustomed they are to personal introspection. In any case, we recommend that you spend **at least 45 minutes to an hour** on it.

Material

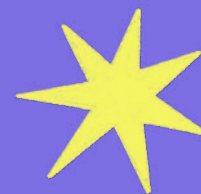
- Notebook, notepad, A4/A3 paper.
- Markers, pens.
- A space that helps you stay calm and focused.

Exercise structure

Ask yourself the following questions and write down your observations without filtering them, without seeking explanations, without judging the result.

1. Close your eyes and think of the word «leadership». **What images, people, or situations come to mind?** Do the same with the word «power».
2. Reflect on how culture, the media, or your environment have influenced your perception of these concepts. **What examples of leaders or powerful figures can you think of?** (They can be people close to you or others in your environment that you do not know.) **How have they shaped your vision? Have they changed throughout your life?**
3. Think of situations in which you have exercised leadership or been in a position of power. **How did you feel? What did you learn from those experiences?** If you feel that you have not had these experiences, try to explore what it means to you not to have had them.
4. From your perspective: **How would you like leadership and power to be? What changes would you make in your organisation or entity to move closer to that vision?**

We invite you, if you want to, to share your thoughts with people close to you, or to invite other colleagues to do the same exercise and then share it. This will help us see which things are socially repeated and which others have more to do with my own experience.



2 Power as a cross-cutting theme

If we continue to explore the term *leadership*, we also find another definition: «leadership as the ability to influence others to achieve common goals». This implies that, even when leadership roles are not explicit or recognised, it is necessary that, as co-responsible individuals, we identify when we are exercising this type of leadership, asking ourselves how we have decided to assume this leadership (if we have done so). We must also ask ourselves whether there are leaders in our organisation who have not been formally appointed but have emerged organically, or whether there are leaders who have been imposed, either by the person exercising leadership or because other people have assumed who should lead, without this leadership having been fully agreed and discussed. Sometimes those who assume leadership roles are perceived as people who possess the power to do so, as if this ability were only available to some people and not to everyone. This imaginary presents leaders as beings endowed with skills that are difficult to obtain, and distances us from the possibility of understanding our diversity and our diverse way of leading.

In fact, the absence of self-empowerment has generated a broad field of work from the perspective of *empowerment* for decades. This approach and practice has been necessary for emancipation, and specifically «female» emancipation, but it has not questioned the real reasons why women have not wanted power. We insist that the idea of the need to empower ourselves has been widely disseminated, but shared responsibility has not been made visible or taken with the essential act of taking away power, since this situation would be caused by the result of putting into practice a theory called «zero-sum». According to this theory, for someone to exercise power, another person must lose it. In other words, power has been exercised in such a way that others have been stripped of their power.

The origin of this term is attributed to the Anglo-Saxon world in the mid-17th century, where it was initially understood as the state or act of granting power. Later, starting in the 1970s, feminist movements in southern Latin America, popular education and Black movements began to use it to refer to oppressive power, highlighting inequality and the system that reproduces it. This definition of empowerment is used as a synonym for collective power and it also seeks to address the root of the problem. However, for several decades now, from a capitalist and Western perspective, a concept of empowerment has been promoted from an individualistic point of view, as the pursuit of individual power, rather than the pursuit of collective emancipation. This view of empowerment has drained the term and its practice of political meaning and has distanced it from its construction to have its own agency over the possibility of changing unjust situations. **Magdalena León**² tells us about the importance of not losing sight of collective struggle as an essential ingredient of empowerment, if we are truly seeking to exercise our own power.

2 For further information in Spanish, see references by [Magdalena León](#).

In fact, for several decades now, from a white Eurocentric perspective, a whole narrative about the need to empower others has been constructed through political institutions and organisations. It is a need to empower those who, because of their marginalised status, do not have power, the power that is expected of them and for which they have to receive training programmes in order to achieve it. In other words, I, a white person from a so-called developed country who is supposedly already empowered, am going to teach others what they need to develop in order to have their own agency, obviously without taking into account the contexts or cultures of other territories, or the desires that other people may have about how to build or identify their own power. Even in feminist contexts, empowerment has been proposed and offered (and still is today) as a mechanism to combat sexist behaviour, as if being aware of our oppression directly gives us a superpower to change the cultural, social and structural dynamics that reproduce it. From feminist perspectives, these approaches are already being criticised, and there is a perceived need to think about collective empowerment, a form of empowerment that reconnects us with the purpose that the movements from southern Latin America, popular education and Black movements bring us in the search for a more conscious and pluralistic transformation.

We need to reconnect with the idea that we are part of a whole, as we saw in **Module 1, «What does collective care mean?»**, from the *Ubuntu* philosophy or **Bouteldja's** politics of revolutionary love, which reminds us that we are not the centre of anything without other living beings, which is about recognising the nature around us as life and not as a resource. This need to reconnect with the fabric of life is essential for building conscious and diverse leadership.

In order to better understand power as a cross-cutting theme in leadership, we would like to explain the different types of power—from a more sociological or psychological perspective—that may be useful in situating ourselves:

- **Inner power:** the ability to have self-esteem, identity, and psychological strength over oneself. This power relates to the will to want to do things; desire is awakened from our inner power.
- **Power of:** having intellectual and material abilities at one's disposal. This power relates to what we know and what we have access to (financial, relational, material resources, and so on).
- **Power with:** the possibility of gaining power alongside others for common goals and visions. This power relates to the need to weave collective support networks in order to transform realities/experiences. A collective desire for identity awakens, along with a desire to cause/promote changes necessary for improving lives.
- **Power over:** is based on building relationships of domination–subordination towards other people. This power is what has historically been associated with a direct connection between power and domination.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between the use and abuse of our power over others, as power is sometimes associated with abuse as if they were synonymous. Exercising transgressive power has often been judged negatively, especially when it has been used from female roles and gender-, class- and/or race-dissident roles to defend and fight against their unjust experiences, as if this form of exercising power were neither valid nor legitimate for us. In contrast, when power is wielded by male figures, the results are interpreted differently: if they are successful, they are celebrated as heroic deeds; and if they fail, they are recognised as a sacrifice made for the common good.

To understand a little more about the distinction between use and abuse, it is important to note:

- Intending to use power does not mean harming lives as an end goal in itself.
- In contrast, abuse does seek to exercise power over (consciously or unconsciously), for domination and for the purpose of self-interest.

Despite this distinction, we sometimes fail to realise whether or not we are abusing our power, or we do not recognise that we are being abused. These situations arise above all when, informally or even formally, there are dynamics that normalise or promote these abuses directly or indirectly. Therefore, they are understood as expected and are not questioned, the classic example of «This is how it has always been done».

To identify abuse—a complex task with many layers—what works for us is being more attentive to whether someone has felt or perceived themselves to be abused in a situation that we have provoked or initiated. We are also inviting you to reflect on what power you recognise you have and how you are exercising it, in order to discover whether we have caused any unexpected abuse through our *power*. Sometimes, simply by paying attention to others' reactions, we can also determine whether any of our actions are perceived as abusive, even if they do not tell us so directly. Recognising oneself from a *position of power*—especially in the context of social organisations—is difficult. We do not have many references on how to do this, and it hurts a lot to feel that we may be doing something contrary to what we want or to our ideals, even when we consider it normal or even necessary for the objectives that the project or entity wants to achieve.

We share these reflections with you not with the intention of causing discomfort, but rather to promote spaces for collective introspection based on compassion, and with the desire to put energy into transforming these situations. In our case, we do not consider ourselves experts in the field. In fact, we are still learning on a daily basis to navigate these new and unfamiliar territories. However, practising collectively and remembering that it is a work in progress, subject to constant reconsideration and change, helps to ease the stage fright of going through life without rehearsing. Even so, a great deal of internal and collective work is required to gather knowledge and implement measures that will help us facilitate the process, understanding it as a constantly changing, living process.

Martha Patricia Castañeda³ warns us what power is NOT, and that power should not be given away or made possible by others, in a misogynistic culture where those who hold the male role are the ones who could do so, or in a white Western culture that provides the opportunity to empower oneself, but from its own ideological frameworks. She adds that power should not be measured quantitatively by the responsibilities we assume. In fact, she points out how women, throughout history, have taken on multiple responsibilities associated with reproductive tasks, but that this has not given them more social power. She also points out that power cannot be achieved overnight, and that it is a process that requires work and time to identify and feel one's own power. She concludes with the idea that power is not a single entity, but rather a set of powers that we need for individual and collective development.

Now that we have shared with you the importance of identifying our power and how we use it, it is also important to incorporate an intersectional perspective to recognise that power is not neutral, especially in a society built since Modernity as an unequal social system. Accepting our

3 For further information in Spanish, see [references by Martha Patricia Castañeda Salgado](#).

privileges within this system is another consideration we should make, so that we can then take joint responsibility for how we use our power over others without abusing it.



This perspective that power is not neutral emerged from feminist and anti-racist movements and was coined by academic **Kimberlé Crenshaw** in 1989. Her intention was to visualise and politicise the different forms of discrimination that intersect (race, gender, class) as particular experiences of oppression. Currently, this perspective has reached different areas and is one of the values to be pursued in social projects. However, like many other struggles and demands, the profound political intention behind its creation has become blurred —from a white Eurocentric perspective —proposing a simple sum of oppressions, without questioning the macrosocial and structural system that causes these oppressions. To think that all forms of oppression carry the same weight in this system is to ignore the uncomfortable question of what our privileges are, those that make our condition or situation expected and normalised; at the same time, it invites us to think about other forms of discrimination that come into play in the course of our lives, such as ableism or fat-phobia. Her reflections invite us to consider that it is not a matter of the sum of discriminations according to how we are «labelled by the system», but rather that there are axes of oppression on which the development of the world-system is based to this day, such as racism, colonialism and patriarchy.

E2

Exploring my privileges



Type of exercise

Individual

Collective

General objective

Reflect on the privileges I recognise in myself as a member of a diverse society.

Specific objective

Become aware of and take responsibility for our privileges and the power they entail.

What we need

First of all, find a moment when you can concentrate and give yourself some space. If this is difficult, try to find a place that connects you with yourself on a daily basis, trying to avoid interruptions. It is important that you do not judge the outcome, but rather perceive it as an exercise in awareness and internal reflection without filters or prejudices towards yourself.

Duration

It depends on each participant and how accustomed they are to personal introspection. In any case, we recommend that you spend **at least 45 minutes to an hour** on it.

Material

- Notebook, notepad, A4/A3 paper.
- Markers, pens.
- A space that helps you stay calm and focused.

Through the **wheel of power** diagram, we invite you to first observe where you are on each axis. Identify which ones you think give you privileges and which ones give you social disadvantages. We recommend that you write it down, as this will make any thoughts that come to mind more visible.

Now we invite you to think, based on your own experience, about what privileges you have seen reinforced by the structural system (laws, institutions, cultural norms, territory, and so on). And **what systems of oppression can you identify that are limiting your opportunities?**

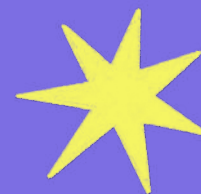
At this point, we suggest a compassionate dialogue with yourself:

- **Have you ever had to hide part of your identity in order to feel safe?**
- **When did you realise that you had a privilege that other people might not have?**
- **Do you think your privileges can affect your relationships with other people? Have you ever felt it and recognised it?**
- **What emotions do you feel when you recognise your privileges?**
- **How do you think you can use your privileges?**

This exercise is not intended to punish us for our privileges and practices, but rather to hold up a mirror that helps us identify them more consciously and begin to take co-responsibly take possible actions to address them.

We know that it is uncomfortable to identify ourselves through complaining about others; it is a dynamic that we have socialised on a daily basis in the Western world. On the other hand, looking at ourselves head-on, recognising our areas for improvement (making vulnerability visible), and taking shared responsibility from a place of awareness can leave us paralysed. However, if we have identified our privileges, we do not lose sight of them in our daily lives. We check in with others about how each of us perceives them, and above all, we discuss what we need, which facilitates grounded and conscious practice. We also accept that this practice may be useful in some contexts and not in others, since diversity means recognising that, even when sharing the same identifications or going through similar situations, other people may need different things.

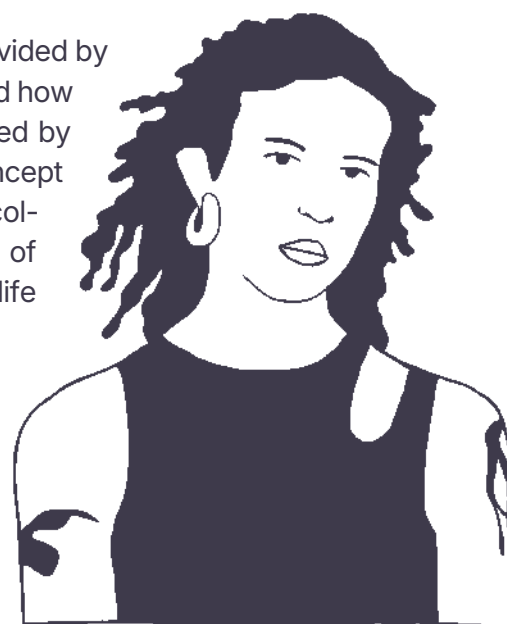
Finally, we would like to point out that this implementation is not about thinking for others or overthinking. We recommend discussions, active listening, and a willingness to take measures and make efforts so that you can all feel safer.



3 Other narratives about leadership

With the anti-racist and decolonial political will and commitment to acknowledge our privileges as two white cis women, we aspire to include content that goes beyond our realities. We are striving to ensure that the stories, although they are written by us, bring to the table other ways of seeing, understanding and organising the world, bringing us closer to other role models from whom we can continue to draw inspiration. We continue on this path of deconstruction, honest in acknowledging that we do not have all the answers, but committed to not reproducing our stories as unique and universal.

At La Insòlita, we had the great opportunity to have spaces provided by **Selva González**⁴, to discuss how we understand leadership and how we want to build it. She shared with us a perspective, proposed by anthropologist **Anna Tsing**, from the world of fungi⁵, on the concept of lichen as an element to be taken into account for building collective living. Lichen is born and lives thanks to the symbiosis of fungi with single-celled algae and is, therefore, composed of life forms that collaborate for their existence.



This way of observing life around us, thought out from nature, helps us understand that we are and we form part of a network of connections and management methods that can inspire us in our conscious practice. From this perspective, Tsing distinguishes between being a boss or a lover as the root of our relationships. In her reflections, she points out that the world-system was built with the intention of promoting bosses, the owners of material wealth; and that, in contrast, this mushroom worldview proposes that we be lovers of what surrounds us, lovers who admire, recognise and prioritise care. That which we can admire, recognise from the care taken to keep it alive.

This view contrasts with the classic social image of leadership, which represents it as a pyramid, a more hierarchical view of leadership. Instead, Selva proposes visualising leadership as interlocking circles in constant motion. Returning to the simile of nature, she suggests we think about insect colonies, such as ants or termites, and their capacity for self-organisation,

4 For further information in Spanish, see [References by Selva González](#).

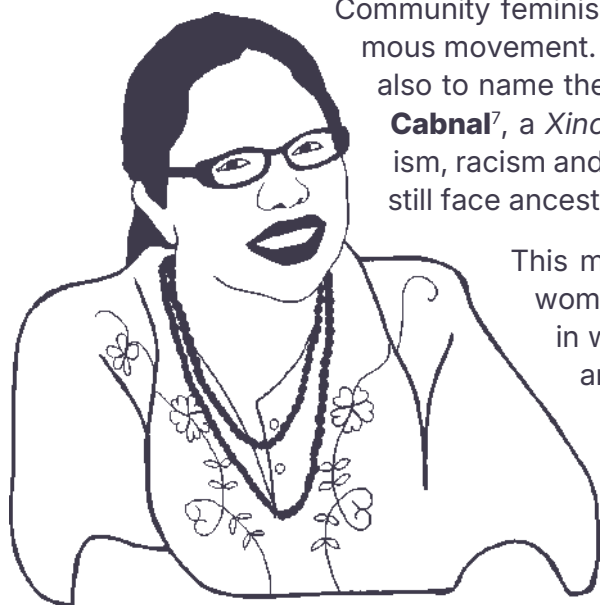
5 For more information on the world of fungi, see [references by Anna Tsing](#).

understanding that our organisations are alive and not static, and that therefore their capacity for self-organisation is constantly being reviewed and practised.

Selva points out that this practice tells us that it is not innovative, but rather ancestral, where clans would gather around the fire to think about how to organise themselves and make decisions about their lives. This vision helps us define a more diverse culture of participation, based on mutual recognition and respect for differences. It invites us to think of ourselves in terms of collaborative leadership, to exercise power without concentrating it in a single person, seeking formulas that can work better at any given time. This perspective helps us to move away from the logic of «I know more, or I can do more, or I am the most qualified»; and to understand that organisations are alive, and that what has worked for us in one living context may be different in another, even in the same contexts with the same people involved, as we are not always the same, we are also constantly changing, like living beings.

From *Abya Yala*⁶, we have read about community feminists, such as **Francesca Gargallo** (2014), who describes how they identify themselves from a political position of responsibility for defending what they have defined as the «body territory» and «land territory» of their peoples, with the intention of decolonising them. This reflection identifies them as bodies that have been historically expropriated, just as the «land territory» of their indigenous peoples has been expropriated. Therefore, on 12 October, which in Spain is celebrated as Spain's National Day, Hispanic Heritage Day and Columbus Day, commemorating Christopher Columbus's landing in America in 1492, in *Abya Yala* it is celebrated as the Day of Commemoration, Resistance and Dignity of Indigenous Peoples, alluding to the struggles and resistance of the indigenous peoples of *Abya Yala* against colonisation.

For community feminists, identifying and understanding *the patriarchal nexus* —a term coined by the movement to describe the misogyny they experience intertwined with colonialism, racism, and capitalism— has helped them politicise their everyday grievances in their contexts.



Community feminism is conceived as a revolutionary, critical and autonomous movement. They have dared to question their ancestral legacy and also to name the oppression suffered by their own community. **Lorena Cabnal**⁷, a *Xinca* community feminist, points out that even if colonialism, racism and even Western patriarchy were defeated, women would still face ancestral and indigenous patriarchy.

This movement has been built and put together by different women who have facilitated the creation of a political space in which they can identify with one another, recognise one another and assert their political proposals for profound change. Guided by ancestral knowledge, which is more intuitive and more connected to nature itself and the meaning we can have as living beings, those women are suggesting that it is necessary to start by listening to others, gradually attending to the needs that

6 *Abya Yala* is a term reclaimed by indigenous peoples and activists as a way of asserting their identity as pre-colonial ancestral territories. See further information in Spanish in [references by GARGALLO, Francesca](#).

7 For further information in Spanish, see [Lorena Cabnal's audiovisual reference](#).

arise. This way of conceiving community helps them to position themselves and reorganise collectively from a more conscious leadership.

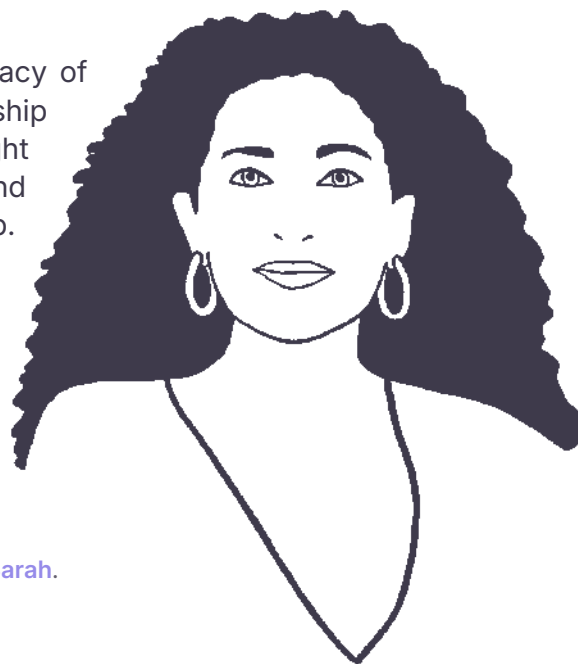
From what we have been able to ascertain, there are other community feminist groups in other territories that operate on an assembly basis and whose political aim is to build networks and establish meeting spaces where people can share their concerns and politicise them collectively. This communal and ancestral view inspires us to build networks and spaces of communal identity that allow us to assert and share our daily needs, and to share our visions or desires to build other more conscious and healthy spaces for our lives.

From the struggle of Romani women, we also have several Romani words, such as *phenjalipen-pa*, which means sisterhood. The word existed before it was used by feminist movements in the West. Another word is *opre romnia*, which means «stand up Romani women». These words have been used to assert their status as women and Romani people. As **Susana and Montoya** explain⁸, the need to have one's own space where one can identify oneself, share one's experiences and listen to intergenerational wisdom has been key to the struggle for the liberation and recognition of the Romani people.

One example of these initiatives is the **DiscriKamira** project⁹, promoted by Romani women together with Romani organisations in Spain, Rome and Helsinki, with the aim of combating discrimination and hate crimes against the Romani people, and especially against women. Among their actions, they have developed an application that allows people to immediately report experiences of discrimination wherever they occur, leading to a faster and more visible response. As **Carmen Santiago** explained¹⁰, it was the Romani women themselves who launched the initiative, aware that they are the ones who suffer most from this type of violence.

These experiences show how the struggle of Romani women is articulated from their own spaces and tools, without necessarily being included in the mainstream feminist movements, whether white or even anti-racist. Their resistance stems from an intersectional perspective in which being women, Romani and, historically, also poor, has placed them on the margins. There, they have been subjected to attempts at indoctrination to eradicate their Romani identity or to question the values of their culture, without understanding their contexts or their history as a people.

This view of the people's identity has generated a legacy of resistance from the margins, including models of leadership in favour of a people and a culture that others have sought to bury. Romani culture has a sense of belonging and community that, according to **Pastori Filigrana** (2020, p. 54)¹¹, has been key to their resilience and survival. This is reflected in practices such as collectively sharing and managing resources, organising common work, and distributing profits according to the needs of the people whose lives have sustained that work.

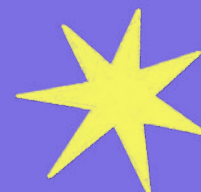


8 For further information in Spanish, see [references by BABIKER, Sarah](#).

9 For further information, please visit their [website](#).

10 For further information, see [references by Carmona, M.ªJosé](#).

11 For further information in Spanish, see the [reference to Filigrana, Pastora](#).



4 The art of leadership from consciousness

As we have seen in this module, leadership can be understood in many different ways and with different purposes. When we talk about leading from consciousness, we are referring to leading first and foremost for a collective purpose, which helps us to improve situations of social injustice, whether our own or those of others. This way of understanding leadership leads us to ask ourselves many questions and to question our practices and our powers. Having the will and political intent to identify our individual and collective powers and decide how we want to use them helps us to be aware of where we are and where we are going.

From other social movements that are identified as horizontal, we have also seen that sometimes the necessary questions are not asked and decisions are not made consciously. Instead, decisions are made by giving in to the inertia of those who have the power of public speaking, knowledge of what we want to defend, or key relationships to achieve our goals, among other factors. This dynamic usually leads to a concentration of power and representation that is often difficult to relinquish, because we believe that no one else will be able to do it as well or better, or because some people feel very represented in that role and do not want to give it up, even if they do not consider whether that representation is actually being chosen or imposed.

Conscious and diverse leadership puts us in a situation of constant tension and readjustment, forcing us to constantly learn ways to manage ourselves in order to progress towards our goals. It means sharing leadership, feeling that we share responsibility, and that each of us is part of the whole on this journey. It requires us to feel that we can influence and be influenced, so that from there we can feel our powers and organise ourselves to share them.

Taking on leadership, consciously and/or unconsciously, puts us in a more vulnerable position, making us feel like we have to do what is expected of us, like we have a shared responsibility and commitment. Practising this can have its pitfalls, because when we see someone who feels powerful and uses that power, we may perceive it as selfish or individualistic. Taking on this role may also cause us to neglect others. That feeling we describe as a trap, coupled with the notion that women and dissidents may not be so accustomed to inhabiting these places, can lead us to believe that it is not and will never be our place. We will never be sufficiently prepared, while perhaps informally we are capable of managing our daily needs in the lives we share. It would appear that by not formally accepting the «title» of leader, we are not assuming the «position», but at the same time, taking it on can impose a straitjacket that oppresses us and prevents us from acting freely.

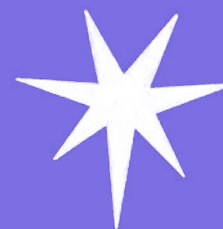
This feeling comes from a view that neoliberalism has engraved in our minds: the idea that each person must solve and take responsibility only for their own needs, which depend solely on themselves; at the same time, we are reminded that failure is not allowed, that everything must be perfect and that we cannot show vulnerability. Thinking this way, even though we are aware

of it and do not want to, can often play tricks on us: voices appear in our heads telling us that we cannot allow ourselves to fail, that we have to do well because of our commitment to others and to the goals we are pursuing. This burden can start to feel very heavy, and it can complicate the role of leadership. In contrast, conscious leadership aims to accept that mistakes are part of the process and that they can be accepted collectively, without questioning our leadership abilities. Opening up to these new forms of leadership relaxes and makes the possibility of inhabiting this role more appealing.

Other times, we believe that there is no one who formally assumes leadership roles, although in practice, every living system has some type of leadership for its organic movement. If we do not decide, it will happen unconsciously, surely causing discomfort. We will let everyone do as they please, and this will have individual and collective impacts that could harm our organisation and its relationships. We see this, for example, when there are people who are supporting and carrying the weight of the project or organisations without holding an official or formal leadership position. These individuals are left in limbo without recognition, but with an emotional, mental and physical burden that can lead to unhealthy dynamics for the group as a whole. This also happens when it is decided that the same person should always take the lead, because no one else is seen as having the ability or opportunity to do so, or because no one consciously wants to be in that vulnerable position. In all these cases, we will be indirectly causing dynamics that generate discomfort for people in leadership roles (whether formal or informal); furthermore, we will be creating a narrative about the impossibility of inhabiting this role calmly, and even with enjoyment and pride.

To gain practice in conscious leadership, we will have to acknowledge our inconsistencies, to accept and criticise ourselves calmly with a view to improvement, and we will have to be aware that the fact that we have experienced discomfort or pain does not mean we cannot cause it for others, as we are not immune to causing it, however aware we may be of our power. Conscious leadership invites us to move forward from a lack of certainty, but feeling confident that we are building spaces where it is possible to engage in healthy conflict. It also invites us to understand that having the ability to influence others does not mean forcing processes. We must ensure that our leadership is clear and legitimate, because imposing leadership does not work, even if some of us see clarity while others do not see it and do not legitimise it. This situation will lead us to engage in constant dialogue to understand each other's wishes, to establish boundaries and to reach a mutually agreed common ground. Common ground does not mean that it has to be seen in the same way, but rather that it is something we can identify with and recognise. We recommend understanding that conscious leadership allows us to constantly review ourselves and the self within; and it allows us to identify our powers, our commitments, our roles, our spaces for dialogue, and our places of disagreements about care.

In order to lead collectively, we must first ask ourselves about our shared values and interests. Not taking them for granted and engaging in collective reflection can help us understand the points of view we share and those we do not; knowing them can help us determine where we want to stand as a collective in the face of this reality. This understanding may open up paths we have not yet explored or help us see that what worked before may now have changed.



Exercise proposed by Selva González and adapted for this module.

Type of exercise	
Collective	Individual
General objective	
Explore what vision we have, individually and collectively, for our organisation and the direction we want it to take. The set-up helps to identify shared values, priorities and dreams, as well as those differences that are also part of the group.	
What we need	
A reserved space for the group to concentrate on doing this exercise without rushing or other activities; and a willingness to express what is important to each person.	
Duration	
It depends on the size of the group. For a group of 10–12 people, we estimate that 30–45 minutes as the minimum time required.	
Material	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notebook, notepad, A4/A3 paper.• Markers, pens.• A space that helps you stay calm and focused.	

Exercise structure

Individually, take some time to think about what you consider most important in your life and in your way of being in a group.

Ask yourself: **what are the values and qualities that you do not want to lose under any circumstances? What aspects would you like to always be present in the way you relate to others and in your organisation?** Write down or remember your answers.

Then, apply this reflection to your organisation: **Does it currently have these values and qualities? Would you like them to be more present? How are they recognised in the environment in which you participate?** You can also write it down or simply commit it to memory.

Next, take some time to share your individual vision and how you connect it to the organisation with another person. This dialogue should last at least 5–10 minutes and will allow you to observe which elements appear in common and which do not.

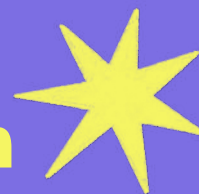
Then, return to the big group. Each pair will share the common elements they have identified, as well as the most significant desires that have emerged from the collective vision. It is advisable to write down everything that is mentioned, both what is repeated and what comes up only once, so that you end up with a broad map of perspectives.

Finally, have an initial group discussion about what the essential elements would be, those that you do not want to do without as an organisation. This reflection should not be based solely on what is most often repeated, but also on what, although not shared by everyone, is vital to some of the people in the group.

This exercise should serve to recognise the diversity of perspectives that coexist within the group, not to immediately agree on what the definitive vision that defines you will be. If you want to take that step later on, it is advisable to let some time pass, to review what has emerged and assess together how important each element is to you and what actions you want to take based on that outcome.

When finishing the activity, it is important to mention how you feel after sharing these points of view: if there are any concerns, fears or needs for clarification, you can mention them and decide together when and how you want to address them.

5 What culture of participation do we have and which one do we want?



According to our understanding and experience, in order to review, identify and build a culture of organisational participation, we must take three key elements into account:

- **Being a part:** Feeling that we are committed, identified and recognised within the organisation.
- **Playing a part:** Assuming a role that is legitimate and meaningful in our space.
- **Taking part:** Have a place to participate in decision-making, with clear and accessible mechanisms and methodologies.

We have seen that in certain places, a culture of participation is required, in which involvement and commitment must be very high. However, legitimate and accessible spaces for participating in decision-making are not being created. Following this idea, it seems that we must first prove that we are «worthy» in order to be «granted» a place. This type of culture of participation, based on sacrifice and total commitment, forces us to be present and committed without really knowing whether this will lead us to the place we desire within the group or organisation.

Talking about participation also opens up another imaginary about what is expected. Sometimes we take its meaning and implications for granted, without defining what we understand or what is understood by participate, as if it would mean the same thing to everyone. In fact, sometimes actions or attitudes are misinterpreted as a lack of participation, when in reality a common idea of what it means to participate has not been generated and agreed upon with the people who want to participate or whom we want to participate.

To help clarify all this, reflect on the following:

- **What do we mean by participation in our organisation?** (Collectively define what it means to us, beyond the abstract meaning of the word).
- **What are we expecting from participation?** (Explore what changes, benefits or outcomes we want it to lead to).
- **Who do we imagine as protagonists when we talk about participation?** (Ask ourselves who we automatically include and who we leave out of that idea).
- **Are we all included? Do all members of the organisation participate in decision-making?** (Review the limits and exclusions, whether conscious or not).
- **What spaces and mechanisms are we providing ourselves with to put participation into practice?** (Identify specific tools, both formal and informal, that we already use or that are lacking).

It may also be the case that we believe the methods or spaces for ensuring participation are clear, but we do not consult with everyone to see if these mechanisms or strategies are working. Sometimes it could also be understood that the manner of participation and the location are clear, but this is not verified with the participants. This can lead to a lack of communication and clarity, and can result in people being left out or made to feel that their participation is not necessary.

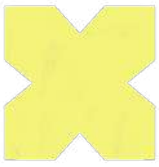
When we talk about clear and accessible spaces with defined participation mechanisms, we may also encounter difficult situations. For example, it may happen that decisions are made in these spaces with the people who are present at the session, meeting or assembly at that moment, but it turns out that not all the people or groups who should be represented are participating. Therefore, that space, which we had agreed upon as the place for making decisions, is no longer a legitimate space for that purpose, since decisions are made without everyone else's consent. This situation may also lead to the search for other non-legitimate spaces, with the result that the decision made becomes more of an imposition.

We have seen this situation many times with leaders who are unaware of their power or the culture of participation they apply. They are part of the imaginary of the person who is leading, who will make the best decision at any given moment according to their own criteria. All of this can have negative impacts on the culture of participation, causing people to stop going to the spaces where decisions were made because they notice that they have lost meaning in practice, and causing the decision-maker to not understand why participation has declined, as they believe they have acted according to the best criteria. In any case, what these experiences can teach us is the need to be clear and consistent with the culture and structures of participation that we have or that we are deciding upon.

On other occasions, we have observed that even though we are in the agreed-upon places where decisions are made, not all voices are heard equally. This occurs in spaces where certain groups are over-represented or when no effort is made to discuss differences. Sometimes, urgent decisions are made that require more time to truly take into account the diversity of our organisation with regard to the issue at hand.

We do not refer to these experiences as undesirable or impossible, but rather as those that have not been chosen or constructed by the people who are part of them. Or even if that were not possible, because they arrived later or because they were not part of that circle of creation, sometimes there is also a lack of clarity regarding the procedure or rules for participating in that place.

Therefore, in order to implement a more conscious culture of participation, we need to identify where, when, how, and who will make the decisions. A clear culture of participation helps us understand how we are going to organise ourselves and how it will work in our governance model. This model can take various forms and can have different levels of participation. The important thing is how, based on consistency, we develop it and put it into practice.



Stories from personal experience

Eli *I have had different experiences with participation, some of which are related to my professional or activist practice—in spaces where I have been part of the collective—and others in which I have facilitated spaces to review an organisation's culture of participation. All of them have provided me with different accounts of how we understand participation, from viewing participation as a practice highly focused on oral communication and «good speech»—be it political, as a subject expert, or in a leadership role—to understanding that there are only a few standardised ways of participating.*

This entire perspective is nothing more than a social construct that limits our ability to recognise ourselves. Without knowing or understanding the rules of the game, a person may not feel invited to participate spontaneously if they are not invited, or they may think that if a certain topic is not discussed in a space, then everything is fine, or they may feel that it is always the same people who participate, but they do not dare or feel validated to express this discomfort. And so time passes and people leave or don't arrive or don't stay or question each other without knowing the rules of the game we have established.

arba *Since I can remember, I have participated in leadership roles in many places, even as a child, without being aware of it. I was class representative year after year, a leading figure on the school council, in school campaigns and protests, and then a driving force behind collective projects through activism or paid work. I'm the kind of person who has ideas and looks for friends to help me implement them, often doing the bulk of the work myself. I feel comfortable in that place, even though I often hate it, and even though at other times I don't know how to inhabit it without burning myself, without burning others, without extinguishing them either, without feeling like it is a constant burden from which I cannot escape.*

Specific lessons learned

Eli *I have come to understand the need to consciously build the culture of participation that we desire. When I say be aware, I mean that we cannot expect a culture of participation based on a single perspective; the more diversity we have, the more open we must be to questioning our participation model. However, this practice requires shared responsibility with this culture of participation and, therefore, it needs spaces of trust to be able to be built to share what would be a diverse culture of participation, from different points of view, with specific measures, with practices put in place, with people involved in what is important and what is desirable. The more permeable this idea is within our group as a whole, the easier it will be to have safe spaces for dialogue and to complete our culture of participation.*

arba *One of the biggest lessons I have learned over the years is that I am not indispensable, although for a long time I found it difficult to let go of that idea. In projects such as Babàlia, a space for co-parenting and shared childcare, or La Raposa del Poble-sec, a vegan bar and feminist bookshop, I was there from the beginning, pulling my weight, putting in my energy, time and brainpower almost without rest. For months —sometimes years— I lived with the contradiction of wanting to leave and, at the same time, fearing that if I did, everything would fall apart. And yet, when I left, none of that happened. The projects continued, transformed, and found new hands and new ways to sustain themselves. That moment was a liberation and a lesson: leadership should not be built to depend on a single person, but rather so that, when the time comes, it can move forward with other steps and other rhythms.*

In other spaces such as Embrutafils (feminist silk-screen printing), or Sorotech (an electronic music festival), and even in La Creatura (my current project), I have shared leadership with other people, learning that there are times when one puts in more energy and others when one steps back a little, and that this fluctuation is also part of collective life. Understanding this has allowed me to take on leadership roles with less guilt and more confidence, knowing that a living project is not one that depends on you, but one that can continue to grow without you. I have also learned that every project must be a malleable, amorphous, permeable and living entity, like the lichens Selva told us about, capable of adapting to the people who make it up at any given time and to the social context that surrounds it. Like lichens, a project can change shape, expand or contract, join others or break away from parts, while still remaining itself. That flexibility is not a sign of weakness but of resilience: it means that you are prepared to sustain life and connection, even when circumstances change or the people who drive it are no longer there.

Collective learning

Through its collective reflection process, La Insòlita was able to learn that the structure of participation that was initially established did not work for the people and organisations that comprised it. It was upsetting that the people who were driving the project forward, who were dedicating their own or collective time and resources, felt alone. They felt that there was no sense of community or possibility of commitment from everyone. In addition, we realised that the structure we had decided on in the initial sessions was designed for many of us to do different things, and what happened was that it was always the same people attending multiple meetings or being in many spaces, without knowing clearly whether we had the capacity to make decisions or not. We had an assembly space and different workspaces, a calendar decided in assembly, and minimal mechanisms for commitment and participation, which included a willingness to embrace diversity in the ways of being in the group.

During that time, some roles changed for individuals and organisations who, for different reasons, were able to devote more or less time to the various tasks necessary for the group's survival.

There were changes within the assembly: some entities requested temporary unpaid leave, some withdrew, and some new ones joined.

The people who were looking after the sustainability of the network felt a double burden: on the one hand, their commitment to the collective project and its structure; and on the other hand, their commitment to the people involved in it. This balance became burdensome and uncomfortable because it did not lead to clear, recognised and legitimate spaces for participation. At the same time, those who could not or did not have the opportunity to devote time to the joint project felt uncomfortable about not being able to participate. They wanted to be part of it and did not want to distance themselves, but they could not commit to the established time and space. We tried different approaches to address this situation, changing schedules, meeting places, seeking funding so that everyone's participation would be remunerated and not depend solely on the primary entities and their possibilities. It was as if we were lost in our own structure, even though theoretically it was described as having desirable and malleable mechanisms for participation.

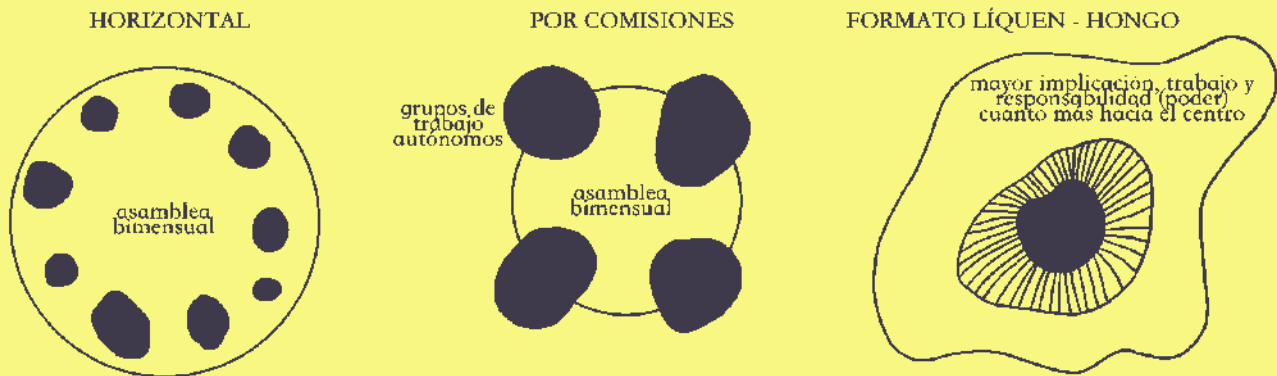
One of the lessons learned was that the culture of participation we had imposed on ourselves was not suited to our lives. Thanks to this discovery, we are collectively rethinking the participation culture and structure. We did this work after a year of reflection, sharing the discomforts we experienced in our primary organisations and sometimes naming some things that were part of the network. These were single-topic sessions led by external facilitators, which we were able to run thanks to a regional grant. We also held a couple of monographic sessions facilitated by us, with the aim of sharing ideas on how to rebuild the network from a more diverse and participatory perspective. And among the many things we proposed as an action and organisational plan, we managed to establish a new culture of governance that was more in line with our capabilities and that took diversity into account. We have only been implementing this for a year, and we all feel lighter, calmer and have been able to function much better. Our leadership is becoming more conscious and more diverse.

Situated contributions and tools

With the aim of offering tools that may be useful to you for inspiration or practical application, we would like to share with you the internal revitalisation work we carried out at La Insòlita.

As mentioned above, La Insòlita is a collective made up of various organisations, whose governance model has evolved over time, adapting to the needs of the group. For a period of time, a horizontal format was adopted, whereby all organisations participated equally in the bi-monthly assembly. On paper, it seemed fair, but in practice it demanded the same from everyone without taking into account the diversity of paces, abilities and contexts. This created expectations that could not always be met and, with them, feelings of guilt or frustration at those who did not achieve what was expected. Later, a commission-based format was trialled, in which tasks were distributed among autonomous working groups. Although the aim was to streamline management, the fact that there were so few people

meant that the same individuals ended up taking on several committees, doubling their workload, while others gradually became disengaged. In both models, the difficulty of embracing differences and keeping them evenly balanced was one of the main collective lessons learned.



Different governance models practised at **La Insólita**. arba Arellano Arnedo.

In this endeavour to review our culture of participation and governance, we first engaged in several reflections and then set about creating workspaces where, based on the results obtained, we could devise other ways of identifying ourselves and functioning better, given our contexts and previous lived experiences.

The first activity was to ask the organisations questions, which they could answer anonymously, through a form entitled: **Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?**

- **What are the greatest benefits you have gained from participating in La Insólita?**
- **What do you think could be improved at La Insólita?**
- **How would you like to see participation in the organisation develop in the future, and how could you envisage this happening?**
- **If you would like to add any comments, you can do so here. Otherwise, that's all for now. Thank you for your time :).**

The next activity was done in person and consisted of placing ourselves on a barometer where we felt most comfortable. This exercise can be done physically by drawing an imaginary or visible line on the floor where each end is clearly defined. Each organisation/person can position themselves wherever they wish and then decide whether they want to comment on why they have positioned themselves in that place, or simply gather the collective mapping of where we are in order to continue adding elements to the reflection.

- **How do I feel about the balance between what my organisation contributes to La Insólita and what La Insólita contributes to my organisation?** (The extremes were: my organisation contributes LITTLE / my organisation contributes A LOT compared to what La Insólita contributes to me).

- **How do I feel about the balance between what my organisation contributes to La Insòlita and what others contribute?** (The extremes were: my organisation contributes LITTLE / my organisation contributes A LOT compared to others).
- **How do I feel about the balance between the number of jobs my organisation devotes to other networks in which it participates and the number of jobs it devotes to La Insòlita?** (The extremes were: my organisation contributes LITTLE/A LOT to La Insòlita compared to what it contributes to other networks).
- **How do I feel about representing the connection between my organisation and La Insòlita?** (The extremes were: on the one hand, a feeling of great fluidity, where the entity and La Insòlita are closely connected and influence each other—with me as the link between the two—; on the other hand, a feeling of disconnection, in which only I, personally, feel part of the process).

Based on these two dynamics, and with the desire to rethink a governance model with which we identify more closely, each primary group took on the task of answering these questions, and then sharing them in a single-topic space within the La Insòlita network.

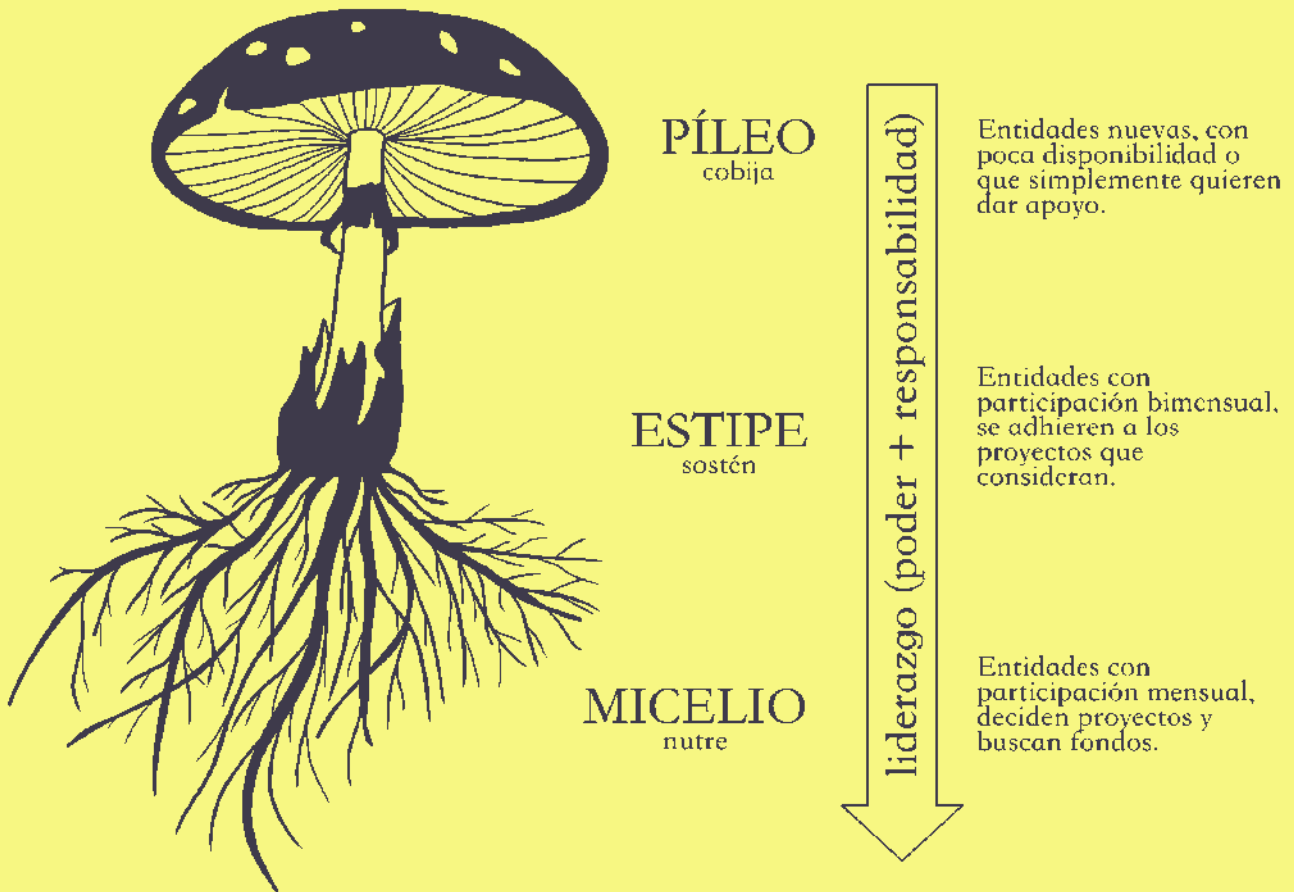
1. **What governance model do you think La Insòlita should have?**
2. **In this governance model: , what are the minimum responsibilities for each organisation? What happens if an organisation fails to meet the agreed minimum responsibilities?**
3. **How is La Insòlita expected to grow? Should a probationary period be considered for new admissions?**
4. **How do we manage "incidents" or temporary issues at each organisation in order to comply with agreements? Any suggestions?**

This single-topic session enabled us to work collectively on the different views and proposals that we had developed within our primary organisations. It was a crucial moment for understanding who was involved in this reconfiguration and who wanted to participate, even if they had not previously been attending the other designated spaces.

From all the proposals and discussions about the needs that each person brings, we managed to build a new structure. Inspired by the sessions led by Selva and the contribution of fungi to life, we identified ourselves with a fungus and its parts. (This idea can be understood on different levels and can be associated with another image or metaphor that may resonate with you more):

- **PILEUS: this is** the part that provides shade and shelter for the fungus, and includes organisations that want to support the network by accepting the decisions made by others. Two annual assemblies are held, which serve to connect us all, provide feedback, and gather new needs from the network. They may participate in various activities throughout the year, but they are not part of the core group that makes direct decisions.
- **ESTIPE: these are** the ones who form the network, sustain it, make decisions and can execute projects. They are invited and they take on the commitment to attending all of the network's bi-monthly assemblies, where we make strategic decisions and share updates on the agreed action plan.

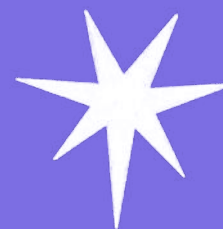
- **MYCELIUM: these are the roots that nourish the network, make operational decisions autonomously, and execute projects. Monthly meetings are held to create workspaces, to make decisions for executing projects or to implement the cross-cutting action plan agreed upon in assembly.**



La Insòlita's current governance model.

Based on this structure, we were also able to define some minimum agreements and commitments with the network:

- Establish annual membership fees based on the type of fungus we are, the economic volume of the organisation, and its living situation.
- Acquire the minimum commitment to read all emails sent by the network to all organisations that form part of the fungus.
- Willingness to review every six months where we are within the structure and how we are doing, gathering needs and/or changes.



Exercise proposed by Selva González and adapted for this module.

Type of exercise	
Collective	Individual
General objective	
Explore our intentions regarding the culture of participation.	
Specific objective	
Explore the practices we carry out in our culture of participation.	
What we need	
A space reserved for the group to concentrate on doing this exercise without rushing or other activities. The desire to express what is important to each individual.	
Duration	
It depends on the size of the group. For a group of 10–12 people, we estimate that 30–45 minutes as the minimum time required.	
Material	
<p>Notebook, notepad, A4/A3 paper.</p> <p>Markers, pens.</p> <p>A space that helps you stay calm and focused.</p>	

Exercise structure

First, start with a moment of silence, focusing individually and thinking about the question: **How do we cultivate belonging?** (*maximum 10 minutes*)

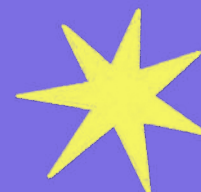
Then, in one sentence, write down your answer. Try to make it a single sentence.

Now find a partner. Take a few moments to read your intentions to each other. Now you must combine your intentions and arrive at a common intention. (*Maximum 10 minutes*).

Now, join other pairs to expand your group (six people in three pairs). You must read the common intentions to each other, and from the three resulting sentences you must construct a single intention (*maximum 10 minutes*). Adapt to the number of people in the group, understanding the methodology of co-constructing a larger group from each small group. We will meet and listen to the intentions of each group.

We join up with the rest of the group. It is time to weave together one last sentence that resonates with all of us, discussing what you found significant about the results obtained, and how you feel about your final outcome.

This exercise will help you to unite your intentions regarding the culture of participation that you wish to implement in your organisation. This resulting phrase can branch out into different actions that must be carried out in order to achieve it as an objective.



6 What do we need to put leadership into practice?

Finally, we would like to share a section that outlines, based on our experience and the support we have received, the components we consider necessary for practising conscious leadership.

- **Practising sincere apology**

Taking on leadership, even if it is done consciously, is not without causing discomfort or impacting others. Understanding mistakes and apologies as part of the process, acknowledging them, accepting a sincere apology and taking this experience into account in the future will help us continue to build trust within the group and with the project or organisation.

- **Promoting inspiration**

When we feel comfortable or recognised in a leadership role, we can inspire others to take on leadership roles themselves. Facilitating the connection between what we see from our legitimised power in other people helps them feel recognised, valued and able to use their own powers. It is a way of using our power to project powers that are not as visible.

- **Belonging**

To exercise our conscious leadership, we need to feel, have and take part. We must ensure that this feeling is not solely individual, but rather collective, that we all feel that this leadership resonates with us, identifies with us and represents us.

- **Learning to delegate**

We need to learn to let go, to trust that others can also give and offer similar or different ways of doing what we are doing. We must learn not to spy on what others are doing, to let them «make mistakes», and to guide them in this learning process if necessary. The art of trusting and delegating helps us be more resilient and diverse.

- **Trust**

To practise diverse leadership where everyone can have an assigned role, it is important to build mutual trust and recognition. Be very careful that this trust is not broken, and that if there is discomfort, we have spaces where we can discuss it. We also need to have confidence in ourselves, to be able to move beyond «I have no power» and «I am not good enough» and to connect with our inner power.

- **Culture of appreciation**

Generate internal dynamics that promote a culture of mutual appreciation, where we can recognise and identify with each other.

- **Compassion**

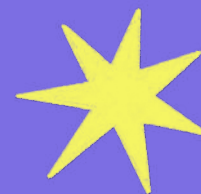
Practising compassion towards ourselves, letting go of the pressure to be perfect leaders, allowing ourselves to fail, allowing ourselves to try, trusting our intuition.

- **Review of beliefs**

If we want conscious and diverse leadership, we will need to constantly review our own beliefs, our imaginaries, and our dynamics. Be flexible and practise active listening. Commit to seeking out information on diverse worldviews that provide us with a broader frame of reference.

- **Self-care**

It is important to bear in mind that we will need to take care of ourselves when performing this role: our bodies, our emotions, our thoughts, how we act, where we come from and where we are at this moment, and how we relate to others.



7 More simple exercises

1 The highs and lows of leadership

Objective: to recognise internal tensions in leadership.

Materials and space: cards , wall space.

Activity: share the highs and lows of leadership; place these in two columns on a wall.

2 Bodily map of energies

Objective: to become aware of how leadership is embodied.

Materials and space: paper, colours.

Activity: draw a body (all bodies are valid!) and mark where you feel the energy when you lead.

3 Leadership sculpture

Objective: act out and physically experience different forms of leadership.

Materials and space: a large room.

Activity: in groups, create living sculptures with bodies representing oppressive leadership and then conscious leadership.

4 Leadership masks

Objective: reveal roles, fiction and protections surrounding leadership.

Materials and space: cardboard, rubber bands, felt-tip pens.

Activity: with paper or masks, draw the «mask» we usually wear when leading. Then share and reflect upon them to see what they reveal.

5 Collage of role models

Objective: to broaden perceptions of conscious leadership.

Materials and space: magazines, scissors, glue, cardboard.

Activity: with magazines or photos, make a collage of role models for diverse leadership. Then explain why.

8 Travel rucksacks



With the aim of sharing the knowledge we have acquired, we wanted to provide tools that can help you on your journey towards conscious and diverse leadership. Our learnings are based on our own experiences, on critical and conscious readings, on the support we have received and that we have also given to others. Our knowledge is not intended to be a universal truth, but rather a source of inspiration for other organisations that wish to bring greater awareness to their care and leadership. We know that we are not neutral and also that we have cultural and social biases that we need to review and work on constantly. However, we believe that this critical and self-critical exercise is more powerful when done collectively and from the diversity of bodies that experience discomfort daily. From this place of forging diverse alliances, listening with curiosity and mutual recognition, we have seen the fruits of being able to intersect, make ourselves uncomfortable, gathering, learning to take shared responsibility for the impacts, and understanding above all that it is a journey, a process that never ends, one that is alive.

We invite you to be able to find your own path, to research other sources of knowledge beyond your own, to seek external support recommended by others who have a vision similar to yours.

For our part, we hope that this content on how to build conscious and diverse leadership will be useful to you and that you will be able to reflect on and review your own leadership model based on consciously using power.

9 References



Glossary

Note: This glossary contains conceptual terms that appear in the module content and that we consider important for situating the reader within our frame of reference. Words that may have multiple interpretations or are not in common usage have been included, specifying here the meaning with which we are using them.

For other key concepts present throughout the training process —such as decolonial, transfeminist, or economies of resistance— please refer to the **Module 1 Glossary**.

1 **Conscious leadership**

Practising leadership exercised with political intent, critical reflection, and attention to the impacts generated, seeking the collective good.

2 **Culture of participation**

Set of values, rules and practices that define how people are involved in decision-making and in the life of an organisation or group.

3 **Governance**

The way in which power, responsibilities and decisions are organised, distributed and managed within a community or group.

4 **Self-organisation**

The ability of a group to organise itself without the need for a centralised or directed (whether internally or externally) authority, adapting autonomously to needs.

5 **Shared responsibility**

Responsibility shared out amongst all members of a group or organisation, both in terms of tasks and decision-making.

6 **Legitimate spaces**

Places or structures collectively recognised as valid for decision-making and dialogue.

7 **Collaborative leadership**

A leadership model in which decisions, responsibilities and visions are shared, prioritising cooperation over competition.

8 **Ancestral patriarchy**

A form of patriarchal social organisation that predates European colonisation, recognised and challenged by movements such as community feminists.

9 **Body territory**

Concept of community feminism that understands the body as one's own territory that must be defended against violence, exploitation, and expropriation.

10 Land territory

Understood as the collective and natural territory of peoples, linked to identity and community life.

11 Patriarchal connection

A term from community feminism to describe the intersection between patriarchy, colonialism, racism, and capitalism.

12 Symbiosis

A mutually beneficial relationship between different beings, used here as a metaphor to describe collaborative relationships and leadership.

13 Mycelium

The subterranean part of fungi that connects and nourishes, used as an image of invisible but essential networks in collective organisation.

14 Sisterhood

Relationship of support, care, and solidarity between women and people read as women, especially in the face of systems of oppression.

Resources

AUDIOVISUAL

- Cabnal, Lorena (2017) **Especial: Territorio, cuerpo, tierra**. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uUI-xWdSAk>. («Special: Territory, body, earth»).

PODCASTS

- World YWCA —RiseUp! **Young Women Leadership**. <https://worldywcapodcast.buzzsprout.com/1878799/episodes/14152834-episode-6-young-women-leadership>.
- Masala Podcast —**Being Queer and identifying as South Asian**. <https://www.globalplayer.com/podcasts/episodes/7Drmc6t/>.
- Samavāya —**Conversations with Asia 21 Young leaders**. <https://castbox.fm/channel/id5242792?country=es>.

SELF-PUBLISHING, GAMES, FANZINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fanzine **Crisálidas —Tricontinental**. <https://thetricontinental.org/es/estudios-feministas-4-crisalidas-memorias-feministas>.
- Graphic novel **Banzai Femimutancia**, ed. Feminismo ilustrado. («Illustrated Feminism»).
- Fanzine **Torcer las palabras**. <https://movimientoafrolatino.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FANZINE-torcer-palabras-espanol.pdf>.
- Game **El Cuidado: vínculos feministas abriendo el juego**. <https://www.feminacida.com.ar/un-juego-feminista-para-cuidar-los-vinculos/>. («Care: feminist bonds opening the game»).
- **Rueda del poder**. <https://institutoeducacion.org/el-concepto-poder-y-la-interseccionalidad/>. («Wheel of power»).

KEY PEOPLE

- **Selva González** <https://www.instagram.com/selva.gv/>.

RECOMMENDED GUIDES

- **Acuerpamientos, resiliencia y resistencia ante la violencia en pandemia. Guía básica para replicar. Talleres de autocuidado y cuidado colectivo**. Source: https://generoymetodologias.org/media/publicaciones/archivos/GUIAAUTOCUIDADOYCUIDADOCOLECTIVO-cartillaautoecono_441_1.pdf. («Support, resilience and resistance against violence in a pandemic. Basic guide to respond. Collective care and self-care workshops»).
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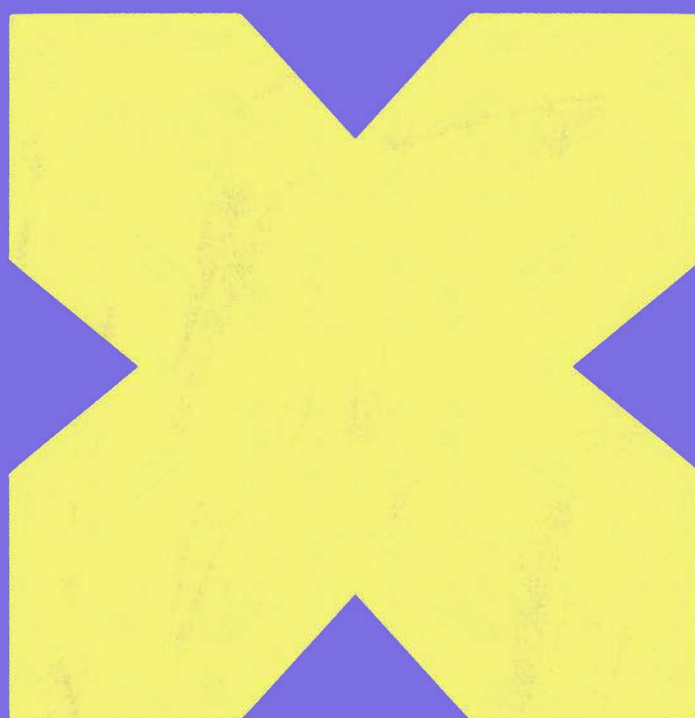
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Theme 1

Conscious and diverse oriented leadership focused on collective care in social organisations

Module 3

Who cares for those who care?



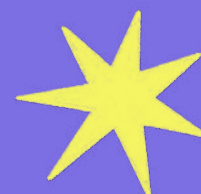
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LINSÒLITA
Xarxa de cooperatives feministes



Who cares for those who care?

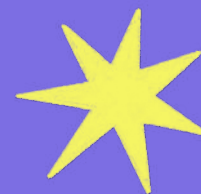
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Module 3
Who takes care
of those who care?



Internal sustainability policies and rest culture

In this module, we are facing one of the most invisible, yet profoundly present realities in community, social and activist work: structural exhaustion. This exhaustion, which is especially present for those who maintain spaces for care, coordination or companionship, has become a constant in our organisational practices. The premise is to break away from the rationale that adapts the responsibility for self-care, accepting that people who are dedicated to caring for others also need to be cared for and that this need should not be seen as some accessory or as a secondary priority, but as a fundamental aspect of long-term sustainability.

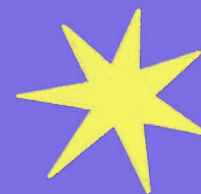
We are proposing reflecting on the importance of structuring internal policies that not only recognise but also promote collective rest, establishing healthy boundaries and creating spaces where the well-being of those who lead and care is not an option, but an organisational pillar. The culture of emotional permission is key to this process: that each person in the group may be allowed to feel vulnerable, to be absent when they need it, and to say «no» without fear of judgment or overload.

Throughout this module, we will invite you to rethink times, rhythms and breaks as fundamental elements of our organisational structure, while proposing ways to generate schedules and working rhythms that allow for mutual care, without falling into the trap of bureaucratisation or rigidity.



What will we explore?

- The centrality of fatigue in community, social and activist work.
- Care as an unrecognised job: emotional, invisible, continuous.
- Self-care is not enough: internal policies, breaks, collective rest, explicit boundaries.
- Culture of emotional permission: being able to be unwell, being able to be absent, being able to say «no».
- Times, rhythms and breaks as a structure: how to generate a calendar that cares without bureaucratising.



1 Where do we start when talking about care policies?

In module 1 «What does collective care mean?» we shared what we understand and where we start when talking about care. In this module, we are focusing more on how we are equipped with tools that help us to authenticate for everyone the possibility of applying sustainable care. We understand that we are starting from the idea that care is central for any living being and that, therefore, what we are looking for here is how we apply it in our daily lives, how we sustain ourselves, how we are reorganised, how we give ourselves explicit permission to not let ourselves be carried away by the ruling imaginary of a macrosocial system that does not prioritise care but that decides to neglect it.

Looking at this, this desire to give space and meaning to our way of thinking and doing in our organisations requires addressing our discomfort and listening to our needs.

Before starting to look at where we can start this journey, we would like to share an initial reflection: building habitable, well-kept and diverse spaces involves taking on a major challenge. We must understand this situation as part of the process, as part of the lack of references, of narratives that help us to flatten the path we want to build. We must also understand that, as much as we want to, we cannot solve everything that the macrosocial context does not provide us, but it helps us to see where we can fix cracks in the system, how to join others to get stronger in those aspects that we need to shout that we can no longer stand it and demand that we need public policies that guarantee care for living beings.

For several decades, we have been observing that care policies may be (almost) invisible in laws, specifically those that aim at equality between women and men. This can be seen, for example, in the recently approved Spanish Royal Decree 901/2020, from 13 October, which regulates gender equality plans¹, which requires companies with 50 or more workers to register gender equality plans. Through an initial prior analysis, this regulation seeks to propose equality measures to address the gender inequalities that companies may be generating. But it there is no clear definition of what measures or what emergencies would be appropriate or desirable. Nor does it require a participatory methodology. It is only recommended that everyone be informed of the measures taken, and that it would be advisable to be able to establish measures that guarantee the effective participation of all parties during the process. These regulations, from our point of view, have de-politicised the sense of having an obligation to adopt measures that can address our inequalities, since it will depend on the bias of those who carry out this process and on how they culturally understand it, so that substantial changes will be affected by this process.

1 For more information in Spanish, see [here](#).

If this reality about legal obligations is not accompanied by planning and reflection on the meaning of building policies that promote care, then we run the risk of remaining in a theoretical framework that is excessively dependent on who holds formal power within companies. From our perspective, this situation can even be counter-productive, since it tends to reproduce dynamics that do not favour care and that transfer the burden to those who support it through invisibility and devaluation. Without a gender equality plan that provides protection, there is little room left to review or improve the situation, if it is not already identified. In practice, we have observed that in many large companies, these obligations become a mere procedure and are done without carrying out a process of internal reflection that helps identify what type of measures can solve collective and individual needs.

However, although it is progress that the regulations in force in Spain oblige companies with more than 50 female workers to have gender equality plans, it must be recognised that these policies focus almost exclusively on one of the main points of oppression: gender. This leaves out multiple dimensions that also cross our lives and our bodies, since the inequalities that are sustained by racism, anti-Romani discrimination, ableism, fat-phobia, classism, homophobia, and the administrative situation of migrants, among others, remain invisible. In addition, gender equality plans start from making conditions and/or opportunities equal, but they do not require a reflection that focuses on the concept of equity, where the recipe would not be «all the same», but rather recognising the structural differences we experience and the measures we can implement to improve our living conditions.

If we talk about care, we cannot keep a biased outlook. Ensuring truly liveable and sustainable workspaces requires intersectional policies that tackle oppressions together, recognising how they intersect and reinforce each other. Care policies that address structural racism, class inequality or discrimination against non-regulatory bodies are needed; otherwise, there is a risk of perpetuating exclusions while proclaiming equality.

Riane Eisler (2014) reaffirms that, within the built world-system, care has been relegated as an activity without prioritisation or value in the monetised economy. She also points out that this concept is even counter-productive in purely economic terms, since several reports show that the implementation of supportive care policies contributes to reducing production and labour costs. From this perspective, interdependence is considered as a vital need that involves recognising care as an action inherent to the human condition, and prioritising short-term profitability over the protection of life, therefore making invisible the negative costs derived from the lack of care, such as increased staff turnover, increased sick leave or delays in production processes.

Even within the Social and Solidarity Economy, this concept of care as a transversal axis of any socio-economic initiative that is built remains a challenge with a theoretical framework. Its essence is to put people and the environment at the centre, but those responsible for making that possible remain a board with few clear rules and roles. In conversation we say it, we name it, we fight because we are kinder than that dominant system called capitalism, but at the same time it is difficult for us to question our roles of power, to assume in time, money, energy and self-criticism what and how what we say about putting people at the centre and being able to carry out a social initiative affects us. Even when you want to voluntarily and politically include, that action that will depend on the rest the initiative going well always remains, and therefore it would not be a central focus but a complement to be taken into account if everything works out as we hope or have planned.

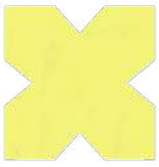
At the same time, we know that there are few of us who believe in each other and who want to practice care at the source, as the axis from which the rest of the things we do pivot. It is a very difficult task, since it involves being constantly creative, constantly supported by others to see where to open cracks; even being willing to endure a greater demand due to the fact that we

declare that this intention of care is a priority, but the belief that this is what we want to build helps to gradually lay the foundations that each one needs to continue generating options helps to verify that we are not currently able to take care of ourselves as we would like, to identify what would help us achieve it and to continue exploring towards where to move forward. We have found that, when this path is collectively changed and shared sincerely and honestly with other people, in spaces where we can feel safe, information flows to share strategies, views, ideas, practices and dynamics that expand our ways of working, and we breathe fresh air so that we can continue walking.

For this reason, it is essential for us that the first action is to consider what we mean by care, what care culture we have and which one we want; that is why the first suggested training module has been to work on this part, so we can come to identify in a more diverse and comprehensive way what policies, measures, regulations, agreements we want to help us put our care culture into practice.

From our point of view, and as we have already shared with you in the first module, care contains:

- Who needs to receive and provide care.
- Where we establish that care is legitimate and reviewed.
- What organisational structure we build to deal with care.



Situated tools and contributions

As a result of our internal process at La Insòlita, we did several exercises that also helped us to review our mental frameworks, to be able to collect how we understood it in each entity and to share it together. The objective was to systematise learning and collective debates that would expand and transform our primary organisations and, in turn, the other organisations that are part of this network from the structure of La Insòlita.

As we have mentioned in other modules, La Insòlita is a diverse network, made up of organisations with very different trajectories, sizes and realities, united by the desire to rethink together how we take care of ourselves and how we want to sustain our projects. This diversity, far from being an obstacle, is one of our greatest riches: it confronts us with different experiences and needs, it invites us to break out of our usual frameworks and reminds us that there is no single way to understand or practice care.

At La Insòlita, we feel the need to do internal work, not as a simple organisational procedure, but as a deep and shared reflection. A reflection that helps us to put words to discomforts and desires, to legitimise care as a central axis of our practices and to collectively build tools that allow us to transform both our entities and the network itself. We share with you our exercise on how we understood WELL-BEING. Selva² proposed that we ask some questions to all the people who make up our teams, through an anonymous form/feedback box.

These were the questions we asked:

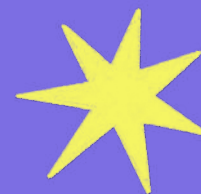
- 1. What is for my well-being** (what do I understand, what does it include)?
- 2. What do we need from our entity to have well-being?**
(individual and collective)?
- 3. What can I do for the organisation's well-being?**

Once each organisation had collected the anonymous responses, we put them together to see whether beliefs, demands and practices were repeated.

This exercise helped us a lot to share the delicate part of carrying out an initiative with intersectional feminist perspectives. It allowed us to realise how the people who inhabit our organisations felt, needed and provided well-being. In addition, it helped us understand the difficult balance between what we want and what we are building to get closer to what we want.

2 For more information in Spanish, see references by [Selva González](#).

We believe that it was particularly useful to realise that some things were not specific to organisations but were difficult challenges as a whole. Sharing these challenges, taking on our responsibility and working collectively on how to keep moving forward are strategic tools for building care policies that can be grounded and legitimised.



2 The challenge that regulations do not mean practice

We think this point is very important, as a warning from navigators, because of the experiences we have had and when we realise that these are not particular circumstances but that they are part of a larger process of cultural change.

We have been explaining the complexity of looking for cracks, of establishing agreements that take into account the care culture we want; we identify what priority aspects we should include in that care culture. At the same time, we have been telling you that formal legal regulations do not protect or guarantee that practice and culture produce changes from the root. We can observe it when new laws are modified or approved, the changes that are actually sought take longer to happen because they involve unlearning and deactivating automatism, mantras and cultures that we may have installed in the depths of our thoughts and practices, which are normalised and validated. That is why it must be understood that there are times when we need to put in more energy than simply approving agreements, rules or protocols, and that we must combine cultural change from different perspectives and practices, since the regulation itself will not achieve the change we seek.

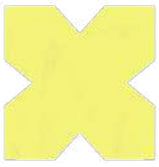
Throughout the modules you will see that our embodied experience promotes changes being made collectively and in turn with individual work. We understand that every change requires a change from the inside out and vice versa, like a cyclical system that feeds back, since it will be of little use if we only live and assume the change individually, because then we will be strengthening self-care, neglecting the collective and shared responsibility, or under worse circumstances, demanding that it be through self-care that we legitimise taking care of ourselves. This could produce, from our point of view, an effect that is the complete opposite to what we are looking for if we want a culture of conscious and diverse care. In this way, we would be forgetting the premise that we are not alone, that we need each other without losing our essences, without forgetting that we form part of a group, and we would also be holding ourselves responsible and promoting individualism as a methodology for change.

Nor does it work for us if we collectively promote a change that the group does not share or feel, no matter how well we write/provide resources to put them into practice. If we do not promote and share this care culture, it will be very difficult for the changes we want to occur in healthy and sustainable spaces. The proposed changes will feel like pure impositions, and it will be difficult for them to be perceived as a collective need. For all this, it is important that any process of cultural change is participatory, diverse and that it takes into account all voices. Ignoring what we do not consider interesting would lead us to the same problem. If we believe that by neglecting minority voices or voices contrary to our way of thinking, we will be able to

make progress in changes. It is most likely that they will not occur, or that they will not be able to include all the people who are part of the process.

It is essential to reconnect with the vision that we are part of a whole and that we cannot exist apart from the rest of the living world.

The perspectives worked on in the different training modules —*Sumak Kawsay, Ubuntu*, being lovers and not masters— invite us to understand, in everyday life, the need to see, feel and live care comprehensively. If we think of ourselves as intertwined living beings and not as isolated and autonomous people, the transformation we long for can emerge from those multiple connections and relationships that comprise us. Cultural changes require time, shared identity, collective feeling and deep listening; only then can shared responsibility be promoted with greater guarantees.



Eli *I have experienced different situations where the care/neglect culture had direct impacts on projects and on people. I even remember some that I perceived in a perverse way, where a simple practice that sought to take care of the group, a guaranteed and legitimate space ended up having the opposite effect. In this place, team meetings began with a round of «how we are at/how we arrived to» the space, something that may seem harmless, because in this place from my point of view it never made sense, it was a performative practice, devoid of content and intentional care and shared responsibility. Nobody actively listened to what the others were saying; it was a round that served to vent complaint and demand. It was often used to justify why you were not arriving on time to do your established tasks, to demand more support without feeling what was happening and how in the group. It became a hostile place where you knew that something was going to «fall/impact» you on behalf of other people, where you had stomach pain and nerves because we didn't know what was going to happen, thinking that you had to go on the defensive, protecting yourself. Although apparently there were spaces for «care» and from dialogue in theory, in practice, it became a dynamic that generated collective discomfort. Some time later, many people rotated from this space and abandoned the project. And the general complaint came from a perception of carelessness. If we had only looked at what the paper said, we would have said that it did have practices that sought care; this was one example and there were more, but in practice, in the feelings of the group it produced the opposite effect and it was not seen to be possible to express this discomfort.*

Recently, in my organisation we have been reviewing several things: on the one hand, we have already understood that the rules do not apply alone, that it needs to join us collectively, establish spaces for continuous dialogue and create a climate where it is healthy to tell us things, are key to moving forward in this practice.

On the other hand, out of the willingness to welcome everything that happens to us in the organisation with these feminist visions, we forget that we are not a utopia and that sometimes everything is not possible, that applying measures sometimes also speaks of sacrifices. We must accept the sacrifices consciously and know that perhaps we have to consider the possibility of stopping doing other things. We must also think that the suggested measures proposed that take care of some do not generate impacts on those who are left supporting them as well. Now, in fact, we are reviewing this part, learning that when we make agreements that involve maintaining care, there must be a counterweight for those that are also left supporting it, and that we must think about this when we apply the measures, not leave it until we can no longer sustain it.

arba *For me, one of the biggest difficulties has always been how to find the balance between having common norms and recognising the real diversity of the people who are part of the organisation. In my organisation, we live with people with very different origins, family situations, mental health status or migratory processes. This takes us, almost naturally, from a foundation of extreme trust: freedom of time, autonomy to organise, flexibility to redistribute tasks, knowing that when we really need it, we will all be there.*

The problem is that, in practice, that trust does not always translate into collective shared responsibility. Often, faced with the precariousness of our lives, we stop carrying out tasks to which we have committed ourselves because there are other urgencies that seem more immediate, whether they are personal, collective or in other spaces. And of course, here comes the dilemma: how to set limits without betraying the care policy we want to maintain? How can we remember that we also need a minimum common framework for the structure to work and so that we do not always end up overloading ourselves?

I feel that we tend more towards individual self-care – «I do what I need to support myself» – than toward collective care that sustains us all. And, although I understand and empathise, that sometimes generates frustration, because although we trust that each partner is doing what they can, what happens when what we can is not enough to sustain common commitments?

I think that in our daily practice, excessive empathy plays a double role for us: it protects us from falling into punitive or bureaucratic thinking, but it also makes it very difficult for us to confront when minimum standards are not met. And then we are left on that ambiguous terrain where there are written agreements, but breaches are tolerated in silence, because we all know about the difficulties of everyone else, but at the same time we feel the wear and tear that this generates.

Specific lessons learned

Eli *On a personal level, I feel that every day we learn a lot about how to put the focus on care. On a practical level, we have learned that measures cannot be universal, that each case – each experience – will bring us new learning. The fact that we already have measures and an eye on care, from a participatory position, helps us to react much faster, but it does not save us the time we are going to need to think creatively about how to sustain ourselves, to see what we are going to neglect with this movement, and how far we want to go. It helps us to have and share a common framework, which can be accessible to all, but it cannot become a straitjacket that oppresses us. Our lives are changing and we need to accept that perhaps what works for us today will not work for us tomorrow, that what seemed like a super measure to us, that we felt like the goddesses of care, now in another context and perhaps with other people no longer has the same meaning. At the same time, recognising that we have integrated care dynamics that are perceived as alive, like we are, like our environment is and like our initiatives that are also alive.*

On the other hand, I have learned that rules do not work alone nor can they be reproduced, nor by reading or finding a practice directly can we put it into practice, given that it must be understood collectively, to feel that it can work for us, to legitimise that we want to test it so that it makes collective sense and we can review it, so that we don't stay with the methodology we have seen when discovering it. To make it our own, we need to take it through our experiences and adapt it to us.

arba *In my experience, I have learned that no rule works by itself, even if it is very well written or agreed upon. Time and again I have found that paper can withstand everything, but if there is no collective accompaniment and real commitment, the rule is left empty or becomes a decoration. The most difficult thing has been accepting that agreements are not automatically maintained, but that they require constant review, dialogue and the courage to name what isn't working.*

And as Eli says, another of the great lessons learned has been that measures cannot be universal. What at one time seemed great progress, in another context, with other people or simply with the passage of time, may cease to make sense or even generate inequality. That's why I now know that every agreement needs to be thought of as something living, that it must go through our experiences in order for it to be legitimate.

One of the clearest (and most complex things to work with) that I carry is that trust and boundaries need to be continuously reviewed.

Working from extreme trust gives us freedom and recognises our diverse realities, but if we don't establish common limits, that trust can become fragile, generate discomfort and inequalities. However, setting limits that are too rigid can empty the meaning of the trust that sustains us as a collective.

The challenge is not to settle at either extreme, but to constantly adjust that balance: caring means trusting, but also marking how far we can go so as not to harm ourselves.

In the same way, I have learned that the rules and practice cannot be maintained without each other either. Written rules offer us a shared framework and help us not to start from scratch every time, but on their own they don't transform anything. As for everyday practice, it shows us real care and forces us to improvise, but if it doesn't fit with the regulation it can overwhelm us or generate impulsiveness. Tension is inevitable: we need written and clear agreements, but also the flexibility to review them in light of our experiences.

In both cases —trust and limits, regulation and practice— it is not a question of choosing an extreme, but of assuming that the balance is dynamic and requires constant review. Nothing is given forever: what takes care of us today may stop doing so tomorrow. Therefore, rather than fixed prescriptions, what we need are recurring spaces to review how we are doing, to name what bothers us and to re-adjust our measures. This continuous review exercise is, in and of itself, a practice of collective care.

The process of starting to consciously care (for ourselves)

Eli

Since the beginning, in our organisation, we have been looking for care mechanisms that we have been putting into practice, establishing times, spaces and measures additional to those established by labour laws. Despite this attentive look, we have understood that this practice is a process that is being built, reviewed and maintained with shared responsibility. We realised that taking measures often was not enough, just as we also realised that we could not design all the measures as if they were the ones that would cover current and future needs, for us and for those that would come. We realised that it was a process under continuous review and that for this we needed to establish the rules, the procedure for how we implement them, but at the same time have spaces for reviewing how we were doing, not only with indicators of whether or not we had put them into practice, but that they would give us the possibility to talk about and share what was happening to us with the agreements that we had agreed on.

I remember when we decided to establish that it was valid to not work if we felt unwell, but we didn't go to the doctor, such as when we felt menstrual pain (before there were formal rules). This measure was useful for any time when it was not possible to work, and the worker herself decided when to use it, letting the others know if she had to delegate any task or whatever it was. We were attentive for a while, since the «rule» existed, but we didn't use it, and we knew that some of them had been unwell or unable to work and this option had not been used. When we realised that, we had a debate to see what was happening to us, why it was and we weren't using it. We learned that there was such a strong sense of responsibility that it stopped us feeling like we were allowed to use it, that it was there and without an agreement, it became a measure of only «I'll only use it when I'm almost dying».

As a result of this dialogue, something did change in the practice and use of the subsequent rule, and we began to use it more calmly. This is not why we stopped reviewing how we are using these options, so as not to overlook the things that can happen to us subjectively.

The same thing happened to us when we identified that we had to set up an option that contemplated mental health, for those times when our mental capacities are not available. A little like in the previous example, what happened was in theory we were all in agreement, but in practice other things happened to us through our bodies. It happened to us that we were people who did not identify with a mental health situation on a daily basis, the fact that temporarily one of us would not be able to work and did not know why, was a very new situation. For the person living it, it was an incomprehensible situation, she didn't understand what was happening to her and she didn't know how to improve the situation; everyone else wanted to provide support but didn't know how. The rule was there, the person was entitled to not work, looking for ways to unload that person from work, to make follow-up spaces to see how they were doing, had been thought about, but we were in a new situation that we wanted to welcome them to but that we were learning. Some out of a willingness to care proposed that a forced leave of absence should be taken, and steps were almost being taken to make it possible, regardless of how the person who was in this situation perceived this measure. In

fact, this person did not feel that a forced leave of absence helped her, but rather that it left her in a much more uncertain place that caused her more discomfort.

In this chapter, we learned that processes are being built, that we have to think and follow up collectively, that any measure needs us to accompany it with an attentive outlook and with the intention that we are open to listening and trusting the processes. In our case, we carry out a biannual and annual review of the use of our measures, we have quantified the hours that we have used them for and we apply a collective perception and qualitative review of the individual and collective use of the rules, if necessary, it is debated again and the standard is revised.

In our organisation there are different types of female worker roles, and it also happened to us that, although there were rules for the care of non-member workers, it was difficult for them to feel like they were legitimately allowed to use their consensual rights without feeling guilty. In this specific case, we worked from the role of the members, generating a culture of allowed REST, of shared responsibility when a colleague cannot continue, and of biannually and annually reviewing how we are doing with this. In addition, we have an extra measure that is useful for the times we need to raise discomfort before the biannual or annual review, it is like a red button, which we can activate and that calls for us to gather, the members with the workers who ask for it, to listen to and address the situation.

All these measures that we explain to you are quantified in time and in formal physical spaces (biannual/annual), and digital and communication spaces. Based on how the previous one went and the needs we foresee for the following year, we are providing resources to be able to cover them.

arba *In my case, the path to collective care has been a slow learning process full of contradictions. For a long time I thought that having agreed measures was enough, that putting them in writing guaranteed that they would be applied and that they would sustain us; but I soon understood that rules, on their own, do not work if they are not accompanied by trust, continuous review and, above all, by the effective possibility of naming what is happening to us.*

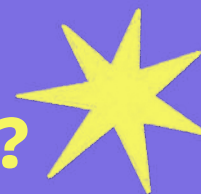
One of the clearest lessons I learned was realising that collective care involves accepting sacrifices. We cannot handle everything, even if we want to. And that, in practice, means asking oneself what they are giving up in pursuit of the collective, and deciding together what we stop doing, what we postpone or what we delegate. And to tell oneself what they are sacrificing in pursuit of the collective, not as a contest to see who is sacrificing more things, but as an exercise of transparency and knowledge, in which we do not assume that we are always the one who gives up the most. Naming these sacrifices without feeling guilty has been an important step for care to not always fall on them, and to recognise that supporting us also involves knowing how to stop.

I have also seen that often the difficulty is not in drafting the measures, but in legitimising them in everyday life. For example, when we agreed that no one had to justify whether they needed to rest or couldn't take on a task, on paper it sounded liberating, but in practice it was very difficult to use that right: there was a feeling of failing everyone else, of not being responsible enough. I have experienced that tension between knowing that we have an agreement and still not quite daring to use it many times. It was necessary to talk about it collectively to begin to truly legitimise it.

I share with Eli the need to incorporate mental health as another axis of care, not as something out of the ordinary or strange. I had to learn, alongside my colleagues, that mental illness does not always have a name or diagnosis, and that taking care of ourselves in these situations involves remaining uncertain. We don't always know how to accompany, and that's where our ability to listen and trust is put to the test the most.

Over time, I have understood that taking care of ourselves collectively is not applying fixed recipes, but rather sustaining living processes. Every semester we review what we have implemented, what has worked and what has not, what has given us relief and what has exhausted us. And collective evaluation exercise, even if it is sometimes tiring, is what allows us to make care real and not a mere conversation.

For me, starting to take care of ourselves consciously has been accepting that the rule is never enough, that practice is never perfect, and that care is always a collective trial, made up of adjustments, contradictions and a lot of dialogue.



3 What care policy do we have? And which one do we want?

In module 1, we saw what care culture we had and which one we wanted. Perhaps it may seem to us that we are talking about the same thing, but we do not understand it that way, in this module we are talking about generating consensual measures of care. In the first module we have been looking at what imaginaries we have, what dynamics we have built and which ones we would like the most.

In this module, it is time to set up a structure that helps us to set up a protocol including our care culture. Do not be frightened when we say protocol. Essentially, we are not looking to bureaucratise the process, but rather to establish, beyond practice, our agreements, the set-up that they may accept or the words you want to put to this process, whatever works best for you. We want to do this while understanding that on one side there are our real practices and visions, and on the other side there is the formal part, which is indeed consensual and is part of our established «rules» of coexistence. Whether we have to comply with the royal decree of having an equality plan or not, we advise you to have written regulations, which have been built collectively, which are clear and accessible, and with which you decide what spaces you are going to dedicate to their review and implementation. It is important to understand that their review is a living process, and that therefore it is not a one-off review as if it were a pilot test, but it will form part of putting our care policy into practice.

If you already have a care policy in your organisation, we recommend that you review it collectively, that you do a diagnostic exercise at the starting point, in which you can anonymously collect and collectively share how you are doing, what your measures are covering and what is not being cared for. From there, start thinking about what included measures are essential for you and why. We suggest, whenever possible, be it from debate and not from judgment, that you try to outline from categorisations how you think about your care culture, what measures you want to implement and how you are going to make it possible for them to be applied. It should be kept in mind that to be able to carry them out, we will need to have the time allotted to do so, perhaps save part of the economic budget to cover costs, to delegate specific tasks to roles so that they can be fulfilled or reviewed. As we are able to think of it as if it were just another project, which we are certainly more used to, it will be easier not to lose sight of all the parts we need to take into account.

In this training module, we did not want to focus on the measures that would be included in an equality plan, since we consider that it is important to understand the concept of collective care as a transversal culture not focused on sex/gender polarisation. In turn, this view does not avoid the intersectional perspective or the anti-racist intentionality that we want to protect through-

out the entire training content. Therefore, it is important that whether we already have formal measures or not, we can reflect on where we started from, think carefully about who we are including and who we may not be taking into account. It is important for us to be able to express our thoughts in safe spaces, while also assuming our formal and informal roles of power. As we have already seen in module 2, we are not neutral living beings in a socially unequal built world; we cannot lose sight of the idea that the world-system since Modernity classifies us according to «identities», and that this classification has impacts on our daily lives, where there are lives that have associated privileges and others are more likely to remain on the sidelines.

To be an organisation that wants to care, it is necessary to understand that our organisation is not neutral either, and to accept that in our current social and territorial context, it will have a power in itself that can impact the lives of those who are part of it. On the other hand, let us not forget that we need constant dialogue, let us avoid the role of the «white saviour» who seeks the protection of the person we consider vulnerable, let us promote healthy spaces with a balance of power so that we can listen to our identified needs and not overthink ourselves.

To help you ground yourself a little more, we are offering you a more detailed outline of the first point of what we talk about in each section:

Who needs to receive and provide care

Thinking about who receives and offers care helps us not to universalise needs or the possibilities of offering care, but it reminds us that we need to review who we are, how we are with the care that we set out in the initiative, to ask ourselves if we are all within this approach or if we are missing something/a perspective, to also observe what care is not covered and what care we need or can offer that perhaps we did not take into account. It also helps us to think beyond people, and to think about that who in a broader way: the living environment that surrounds us (land, nature and plants), the spaces where we are, and the support networks with which we relate.

To give a few examples, in the human sphere, we can recognise the colleague who supports internal communication or the one who welcomes new additions; when it comes to material and space, we recognise the one who cleans and tidies up a room after an activity or who is responsible for making the technology work in a meeting, who calls for maintenance or changes a light bulb directly when it blows; in the relational and community sphere, we recognise the neighbours who provide space when we need it or the mutual support networks that are there to help us; and more broadly, we can recognise our own territory and nature – the water, the air, the fertile soil – that takes care of us and that, in turn, need us to take care of it to sustain life together.

Where we establish that care is legitimate and reviewed

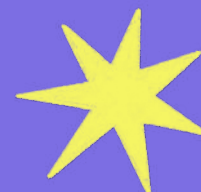
Thinking about measures helps to give us a legitimate framework for conscious action on care, but we also need to clarify in what places and times these measures are considered valid, when they should be reviewed or debated again and when, perhaps, they should be discarded.

This *where* is not something abstract: we are talking about a concrete space that is accessible to all people within the organisation, where agreements are available on a daily basis. It can be a physical closet where we store printed documents, a shared folder in the cloud, a mural in

the office or a whiteboard in view of everyone. The important thing is that each person knows where to go when they have questions or need to remember how to apply an agreement. From experience, even when we have participated in the creation of a rule, when putting it into practice, we often need to revise it, re-read the exact text or check whether there are any nuances that we have missed. For this reason, having a shared consultation space is becoming essential.

At the same time, it is necessary to be as specific as possible about when and where the agreements apply, and to plan how to ensure they are complied with. For example: if we decide that the organisation will always cover the total cost of social security, we need to reserve a budgetary line for this, so that it does not depend on the good or bad financial performance of the year.

From our experience, we consider it essential to also establish spaces (physical and/or digital) where we can share what is happening with the application of these agreements. There may be deeper review spaces (annual, quarterly) and other lighter ones at regular meetings, to respond to doubts or resolve specific issues without having to wait for the next major review process.



4 What organisational structure are we building to care for carers?

Defining our organisational structure with a thought-out care policy helps us to attend to the measures we want to implement in a more conscious way and with shared responsibility.

This means that we must review the assigned tasks and roles, seeing how the measures we decide should be incorporated into our daily organisation. We have already told you that shared responsibility must always be incorporated. We believe that designing measures and making them available, without integrating them into our daily tasks, can turn them into «another task», which ends up falling on those for whom it is most present in their daily lives, either because of their role or because of their way of working. Therefore, we should consider for each type of measure that if we want to take responsibility we need to define and agree on who applies it, how they apply it, and how we share responsibility so that the measure can be complied with.

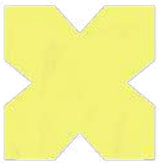
This methodology does not mean that we all have to be in all the measures in the same way, but rather it puts us in a situation where the measure itself will not do its job, which needs a larger mechanism in order for it to work. From our practice, we have observed that if we see measures with at least these three vertices of a triangle, we will be more aware and able to implement them, helping us to project them from different angles, seeing how they overlap each other in our daily practice.

In order to understand the proposal of three visions for each practice, we are giving you an example measure and how we think about it from these three points:

- **MEASURE:** Option to work remotely for up to two days a week.
- **WHO:** All female workers regardless of their role.
- **WHERE:** The rule is written in our consultable internal policy. It can be implemented as long as there is no task that requires the worker to travel, in which case the priority will always be the schedule of planned actions and remote working must be done on another day of the week. It will be reviewed at the annual conference to see how it has been during the year and whether there have been any incidents (remote working has been used; who has done it; if it has not been used, why not; what perception workers have about the measure and the possibility of applying it; are there demands/acknowledgements?). If any request/comment needs to be made before the review, it will be done by contacting the person who manages the operational meetings to include an item on the agenda and it will be discussed there.

- **INTERNAL ORGANISATION:** The worker who wants to work remotely may apply the rule autonomously as long as they meet the condition that it is not within the already committed task schedule, nor does it affect the organisation of another colleague. You will always have to let the rest of your colleagues know that you will be working remotely in case they need to share any topic/information.

If any technological support is necessary, the person who wants to work remotely will have to communicate it in time so that the organisation can see how to meet the demand with the resources it has or whether it needs to expand them.



Personal experience stories

arba *One of the greatest stresses I have had in my organisational experience has to do with the balance between extreme trust and the need to set limits to sustain ourselves. In my entity (and in many collectives I have been in, or in other labour organisations), we are people with very diverse trajectories: there are migrant colleagues in the process of regularisation, single mothers, people suffering from mental health situations, precarious or complex family situations that force us to reinvent ourselves on a daily basis. From the beginning, we wanted this diversity to be not an obstacle but rather the starting point for building an organisation where radical trust and freedom of time (and even of assignment of tasks) were the framework. The idea was clear: we know that, when it is really necessary, we will all be there, but the rest of the time everyone organises themselves as they can and as they need.*

In practice, this flexibility has allowed us to sustain ourselves in very difficult times, because we recognise that life is bigger than work. However, we have also realised how this same freedom sometimes becomes a double-edged sword. Often we stop doing tasks to which we had committed ourselves because the vital or community urgency pushes us to the other side. Or because, quite simply, precarious conditions force us to prioritise what is immediate. And here comes the difficulty: how do we maintain a minimum shared framework where we can all feel cared for, without this becoming a rigid imposition?

In the projects we have promoted, for example, we have always tried to open workspaces for colleagues who needed them, without requiring a formal curriculum or demonstrable legal work experience. I firmly believe that knowledge does not fit in a degree or a certificate, and that reducing it to that reproduces the exclusion that we want to combat. But in the long run, this has also put us in front of difficulties: when there is no common work methodology, nor clarity about responsibility for tasks, the structure falls apart. Trust alone is not enough to sustain collective processes if it is not accompanied by clear agreements and a minimum of organisation.

This is where the tension between what we want and what the context requires of us becomes most evident. We want to build on equal opportunities, on the basis of mutual respect and trust, but at the same time we operate in a system that requires measurable results, productivity and efficiency if we want to survive as an organisation. This shock is constant: how can we honour our care policy without falling into dynamics that wear us down or make us unfeasible? How can we take care of ourselves and our colleagues without losing sight of the fact that we need to sustain a structure, pay bills and respond to external commitments?

For me, this is not a close-ended question. It is rather a place of permanent searching, a collective trial where we learn to set limits that are not experienced as punishment, but as a form of mutual protection. Where we trust diversity, but we also give ourselves permission to name when something isn't working, and to review together how to do it better.

Situated tools and contributions

In the spirit of visualising possibilities, we want to share with you measures that we can take into account for our care policy:

Measures for work-life balance

It is important that these measures do not reproduce existing social inequalities. That is why it is important that we do not think that these measures are only for some people depending on their gender and their live project status, we should promote social shared responsibility. In our opinion, the concept of work-life balance must be broader, we all deserve the right to enjoy our lives outside the professional/militant environment. It is essential for the organisation to take into account whether we have ascending or descending burdens, but it is also essential if we need to balance life with our neighbours/friends, or with people outside the established or legal family nucleus, because sometimes, through wanting to care for balance, we neglect the impact it causes for people who do not have formal burdens, prioritising which lives should be reconciled and which should not.

Questions you can ask people who are part of the organisation:

- **Do you think that the balance measures you apply cover your work-life balance needs?**
- **If they don't cover them, what do you need? Would you have a suggestion for it to be applied within your organisation?** Explain your situation and your suggestion.

Collecting these answers can help us to see how people are feeling within about reconciliation measures, and what options we should explore to be able to take care of what now feels neglected. These questions can help us to position where we are indeed going and where we still need to continue to see how to move forward in our internal care.

Health measures beyond those established by law

It is important to be clear about what current measures exist for health situations, what is thought-out and covered and what is not. It is important that you take into account your type of activity, and based on what is covered, think about whether you need other concrete measures that you should take into account. For example, it may be that an organisation has a seasonal calendar that causes a very uneven workload throughout the year, so we need to see what health measures we must include to ensure well-being. Knowing our context helps us to be realistic, without losing sight of the fact that we want to take care of ourselves and, therefore, we also want to pay attention to how to improve it, instead of settling for a «it is what it is». It is about thinking about how to more consciously organise days, people, tasks, breaks, projects, and other aspects.

Questions you can ask people who are part of the organisation:

- **Do you think that the organisation is willing to cover more working rights than are covered by law? What do you think these additional measures are?**

- **Do you think that these additional measures help your well-being? How do you rate them?** If your assessment is negative or neutral, **could you tell us what other additional measures could be taken into account from your point of view?**

Collecting these answers can help us understand how we are communicating the measures and the over-exertion involved in applying them, in contrast to how they are perceived by the people who are part of the organisation. In other words, it allows us to see if they really contribute to taking care of us or if, on the contrary, they should not be maintained. Additionally, this process opens up the possibility of identifying measures that perhaps we had not considered and that may be valuable to better meet the needs and proposals of those who make up the collective.

Connection and disconnection measures

We need to establish what internal and external communication channels we have, and what limits we set ourselves on schedules, roles, tasks. We also need to establish when we can make exceptions to these rules and why, and who should be responsible for keeping an eye on duty and how we rotate those roles. Especially in self-management spaces, we sometimes forget to schedule «of-fice» hours and we use communication channels that are always available (e.g. WhatsApp), and that means that people cannot disconnect from the project in our own time.

Questions you can ask people who are part of the organisation:

- **Do you think that the organisation respects and guarantees your rest time and disconnected time?** You can tell us when you feel that you do respect them and when you think you do not.
- **Do you think that other care measures could be taken to make rest and disconnection more effective?** Tell us what they are and how we would apply them.

Collecting these answers can help us to see what is happening in the bodies of the people who are in our organisation. Sometimes we have the perception that the fact of having guaranteed spaces for remote working, for social entities that care or for promoting self-care are sufficient to guarantee rest and disconnection. But from our experiences we know that this vision can deceive us, since the feeling of responsibility and of «not leaving behind» the entity can carry a burden that prevents rest and disconnection from tranquility. We must consider how we can guarantee «being able to let go» without feeling like we are failing.

Measures on who takes care of the material and the space where we are.

It is important to define how we share responsibility for the material and the physical space we have. Sometimes it is the case that, by type of role, these tasks are assigned to only a few people and there are no rotations. Care tasks can be a great mental and physical burden because they are not tasks that are externally recognised or valued. If we do not understand their importance and the need for their shared responsibility internally, we could be reproducing dynamics that can generate discomfort. Sometimes we can make a counterweight by making all roles part of care tasks in each area or type of role, so that somehow all of us are in charge of part of that type of task.

Questions you can ask people who are part of the organisation:

- **Do you think that the organisation includes, values and takes into account the care of physical spaces and material as just another job? If you think it does not include them, could you tell us when you notice it is happening? Do you have suggestions or measures that could favour the change that you do not currently feel?**
- **Do you think that from your professional/militant role you could contribute and/or share responsibility for care work for materials and physical spaces? Indicate which ones you would suggest if so. If not, tell us why you think it would not be necessary to share responsibility.**

Collecting these answers can help us understand the collective imaginary we have regarding care that is usually more invisible. Understanding how we perceive it, how the people who are responsible for caring for it feel, and identifying what we are doing from the organisation prepares us to see what jobs and measures we should improve to take them into account and even to understand what dynamics we are promoting that could facilitate or limit this recognition and redistribution of work.

Measures on how we set project limits

It is important to provide ourselves with objective measures to limit the projects we can develop. These measures help us to make decisions with more peace of mind when we have to say NO to an external or internal commission. Clearly defining how many hours and projects we can accommodate without neglecting ourselves gives us a more realistic framework of our capacities, allows us to delegate or ask for collaboration, and helps us understand what revenues and projects are feasible.

We know that projects are directly linked to the organisation's economic sustainability, but we still need to maintain the right not to overload ourselves. Therefore, establishing clear criteria – what we can take on, what people we have, what options we have if something overflows – is a measure of care in and of itself. We also need to legitimise a culture where it is possible to say «I can't» or «I can't anymore», even in scenarios where, on paper, it seemed that it was possible.

Questions you can ask people who are part of the organisation:

- **What criteria do you think the organisation takes into account to accept or reject a commission/project? Do you know formally or can you imagine them?**
- **Do you feel that the needs of the people who carry out the activities/projects are taken into account, based on their dedication and assigned schedules? If not, what measures would make it easier for this information to be taken into account?**
- **Do you think it is easy to set limits on the amount of or the time allotted to activities and/or projects? If not, what other measures could make it easier?**
- **Do you feel that it is easy to say that you cannot take on more responsibility in your entity? If not, what elements would be necessary to facilitate this dialogue?**

Collecting these answers can help us identify what work culture we are building and what care policy we are applying in project management. It gives us clues to balance economic sustainability and the sustainability of life, remembering that the limits we agree on are not an obstacle, but a fundamental measure of collective care.

Measures for taking care of external networks

Care does not end internally. We are often part of networks, platforms and groups that also support our projects, but the time and energy we dedicate to these external relationships remains invisible or unrecognised. Including this aspect in our care policy is key: otherwise, we run the risk of always burdening the same people with this work and exhausting ties that are essential for the sustainability of the whole.

Questions you can ask people who are part of the organisation:

- **Do you consider that the organisation cares for the networks of other platforms/organisations that it is a part of?**
- *If so, who is in charge of this work?*
- **Is this care counted within the working or militant hours of our organisation or is it left out?**
- **What other steps could we take to care more consciously for this work?**

These questions help us to broaden the perspective of care, recognising that we are also responsible for caring for the relationships that sustain us beyond our own organisation. Valuing this work, including it in times and planning, and redistributing it fairly allows us to better care for those who care for those relationships and to strengthen our networks in a conscious and sustainable way.

The process of starting to consciously care (for ourselves)

Eli

In our organisation we are entangled in different areas, because we think that it forms part of our way of developing our work. Networks provide us with a safe space from which we can share discomfort, seek collective strategies and build actions that can satisfy us together.

In one of those that we are part of, we felt that we should build a model of good practices with public administrations, given that we felt that we were constantly being treated in a way that did not take care of us and that our work was being underestimated, questioning why prices, times and a number of people were applied to develop it.

Within the framework of our jobs, from non-profit organisations that promote social welfare and carry out socio-educational actions that should be guaranteed by the administration, we seek ways to guarantee conditions for our work, both for professionals and for the people with whom we relate to carry out the commissions/projects.

It took us a while to agree on where the discomforts were and which points the limits we were looking for should affect, but we managed to draft a protocol of good practices between feminist organisations and entities³, which describes and proposes an optimal way to relate to the public administration when they hire our services. We had to take legal advice to validate that what we were demanding did not violate any regulation, nor were we asking for an impossible one.

Once we had it approved and validated, including legal issues, we set out to implement it. All the organisations that are part of the network apply the agreement to implement it, informing all the institutional clients with whom we relate how we expected to relate to them. We also communicated within the network how it was being implemented and what response we had, identifying whether there were clients who did not want to consider it.

We confess to you that, at the beginning of the debates, it felt like whoever pays or hires you could be stronger, like they gave us a little respect. At the same time, we saw that it was necessary to set certain limits to demand that we develop our profession with dignity. The result was very positive, we were generally very well received and they thanked us and valued these documents.

In turn, it has helped us so that if at any time we have experienced situations that have caused discomfort in the contractual relationship, we are able to state that we did not consider this way of managing the problem/incident to be appropriate. We can state that we invite them to look for other ways to reach an agreement that could take into account all needs, but from a place that is more respectful of our work. We not only apply this way of relating to institutions, we apply it to all types of clients.

We have another example that we also experience within our organisation and that, as a result of the pandemic, gained much more strength and courage. These are the agreements we demanded when someone hired us and accepted a quote. In the pandemic, like many organisations, we stopped our activities, and all the budgets we had approved were invalidated. An enormous amount of work began to chase all the clients to demand their commitment to the rescheduled budget when it was possible to continue working. Our budgets contemplated many conditions, built on the basis of previous experiences, but at that time we learned that the world as we knew it was going to change and that, the moment of restarting productive activity left us in a greatly uncertain situation. We needed to think about how to redistribute the risk of assuming this uncertainty, so it was time to review the hiring notes, to reinforce them and to seek the clients' explicit commitment so that they understood that we needed each other, but that we needed to be clear about how to respond to case studies that were going to appear to us, especially the suspicion that there were cases of the virus, to incorporate these dynamics and see how to protect the agreements.

We have debated this stance a lot, along with the work dedicated to ensuring that it was well communicated and understood by the clients.

³ For more information in Spanish, see the [L'eixam website](#).

We knew that it was difficult to position ourselves in this way, that it was also difficult to get it to be understood by the clients. We debated it a lot, we always felt that we had little strength, we were afraid that by setting limits we could lose projects/jobs, and ultimately lose the possibility of surviving. But the truth is that we can also share with you that we generally had a good response and we managed to make it understood. Obviously we did it out of empathy, it was not a demand because we considered it and that is it, rather it was a matter of doing a teaching job, of exploring paths that could mutually favour us, but understanding that those limits were clear and therefore we were not going to exceed them.

We know that in this case we had a good reaction, which would not be the same situation if we had been desperate or if we had to rethink our stance. This fear existed, at some point we have experienced it more strongly since then, and at other times we have trusted that we are not demanding anything that is incoherent, or anything that is not informed from the beginning. It has also been an emotional job, with identifying ourselves well with what we can contribute, with believing that it is really necessary to defend the conditions and that it will benefit us together. At the same time, we have also felt stronger to be able to say that we can NOT execute orders, but to decide it based on clear criteria: our available schedules, and contribution to the organisation in balance with what it brings to the people who develop it.

Fear is always present in our heads and in our decisions, but we try to hold on to the limits we need to try to take care of ourselves. And we are reviewing it collectively, every year we learn about the things that are happening to us. Sometimes, we apply measures that then, when we reflect and debate them, we realise that they have neglected us and we take them into account. Learning from the process, we try to systematise them to add them up and take them into account in the future. It is a transversal, invisible work, the way we do it to sustain ourselves is difficult to make visible and yet it is the most important thing for forming organisations that have a strong identity and are resilient to internal and external changes.



Type of exercise

Collective

Individual

General objective

Bring to light, in a collaborative way, how people are cared for (or not) within the organisation: existing practices, tensions, inequalities and desires.

Specific Objectives

Build a common base for reflection, transformation and future collective care agreements.

What we need

The first thing is to create a quiet space and a desire to look inward. Assessing whether you want to play different roles in streamlining the exercise or whether you do it self-managed will depend on how your group works best.

Duration

Two hours (between 90 and 120 minutes).

Material

- Whiteboard or a roll of paper / flip chart (minimum size A1).
- Post-it notes in three colours (green, yellow and red).
- Felt tip and fine-liner pens.
- Stickers or symbols if you want to differentiate by category (optional).
- Map template (this can be a photo or drawn by hand).

Exercise structure

1. Emotional landing: What does it mean to be cared for here? (20 min).

Initial group set-up (circle or plenary).

Each person should briefly answer the first question or both:

- **What does it mean to feel cared for in this group?**
- **When did I feel like I wasn't being taken care of here?**

Someone then writes down key phrases on the blackboard or large sheet of paper. It helps to open up the emotional and personal side of things right from the start. IT IS NOT A SPACE FOR DEBATE OR RESPONSE, just for expressing feelings.

2. Individual practice identification (15—20 min).

Each participant writes their thoughts and feelings on three coloured post-it notes, according to the following:

- **Greens:** Positive and visible care practices that live or sustain.
(Example: *someone asks how you are, rest times are respected, they watch their back, they respond collectively to external attacks, they take responsibility for their own collective errors towards the outside*).
- **Yellows:** Invisible, automatic or ambiguous practices.
(Example: *someone always makes coffee, answers urgent emails, takes on tasks without asking for them, someone is always expected to be there for a certain task, things are taken for granted*).
- **Reds:** Practices that block or derail care.
(For example: *expressing discomfort is not allowed, fatigue is judged, a few are overloaded, some turn up late, agreements made at meetings are not respected, people are ghosted*).

3. Construction of the collective map (30–40 min).

Three concentric circles are drawn on the roll of paper:

Centre → «What we care for and value» **Middle Circle** → «What happens but is not mentioned» **Outer Circle** → «What is harmful or avoided»

People then place their post-its in the circles as they see fit.

They can do it in silence or in pairs, commenting on why they are placing it there. (It will depend on the number of people in the group. If you are a large group it is better to work in small groups and if not then you can comment on it in the plenary session).

It is possible to regroup or move post-it notes if comments or disagreements arise.

4. Reading the map + thematic grouping (15–20 min).

In plenary, chosen or remarkable post-it notes are then read out. Then group them into emerging categories such as:

- Affective and emotional care.
- Organisation of time and rest breaks.
- Burden of invisible roles and tasks.
- Internal communication.
- Conflict management.
- Material and logistical care.

They can be marked with symbols or colours depending on the category.

Structure of the exercise (continued)

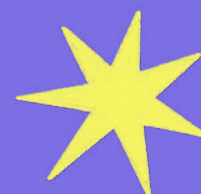
5. Reflection and closing questions (15–20 min).

- Individually or in subgroups, answer these questions: **What care practices are always maintained by the same people? What habits or dynamics would we like to transform? What do I take with me from this map? What do I contribute? What do I need?**

If there is time and you want to, space can be left for micro-suggestions for change (such as «initial care agreements» or a shower of wishes for the future).

RESULTS

- A political, emotional and visual collective map of current care.
- A basic diagnosis to begin discussing your results and exchange proposals.
- A tool that can be picked up, photographed or transformed into agreements.



5 Commitments to our care policy

Once we have been able to reflect on where we are, diagnosis/mapping, and what we need to feel like we are taking care of ourselves within and outside our organisation, we begin the path of agreeing on the commitments we make collectively and on time, and building the regulation/protocol/guide that will give us a new framework for how we are going to take care of ourselves in a conscious and diverse way from now on.

This section is very important to avoid frustration and to ensure that the work of reflection and participation in information gathering does not lead to a feeling of «it has been of no use». When we set out on the path of reviewing ourselves, the will to change must be implicit. At the same time, we must certainly assume that we cannot accept everything that has come out and that we will have to prioritise what actions we can incorporate and what measures have to be taken later or under what conditions.

At this point of reflection on what our plan of action will be and the concrete measures that we will apply, it is important that we try not to let ourselves be carried away by the organic prioritisation dynamics that we already have internally; since in that case, we would be informally deciding in favour of what we have already established before. In other words, if we have always made this type of decision solely based on whether we have positive monetary results during the year and we know that this is very difficult, we are indirectly saying that this measure is conditioned and will only be applied in cases where the organisation is doing well economically. We talk about monetary budgeting because we know that it is a key factor because, as we have been telling you, implementing care policies requires an understanding that they are investments that we must make and not see them as an expense. From our perspective, care policy measures should also have a similar internal logic, seeing them as an investment, although a limited one because we will certainly not be able to financially sustain everything we would like. But changing the logic, changing the perspective that we must ensure that there is income so that this can be covered gives us another way of understanding and planning it, to be able to guarantee these resources more consciously.

From experience, we also know that communicating this type of information is sensitive, that we need to open a space of trust and transparency that allows us to illustrate what decisions we are making, why these and not others, what we are betting on and above all how we collectively take responsibility to make it covered.

Applying this type of collective vision favours understanding the needs of one's own entity for the care of all. It is understanding that the entity also needs us to take care of it so that it can take care of us.

In module 2, we saw how to build diverse and conscious leadership. This type of leadership seeks to ensure that care policies are part of both internal and external culture, that we feel we can identify with them and that we can contribute so that the organisation takes on the policies as its own. It also means that shared responsibility, just like the measures implemented, may be constantly reviewed: evaluate whether they are working, and if not, identify why. Is it due to limitations within the organisation that prevent it from being guaranteed? Is it a cultural aspect that we still need to continue working on? Does it have to do with the way in which we are applying the measure? Or do we really require a different type of action?

From our experience, applying this type of conscious and diverse perspective always requires ensuring spaces for review and discussion. Planning, quantifying, communicating and using them in a participatory and consensual manner will make the challenge of taking them on more possible.

RECOMMENDED EXERCISES

In the **References** section you will always find the information on the notes that we have been incorporating throughout the training content, as well as other types of unwritten resources, with the intention of favouring other non-hegemonic resources (audiovisual, illustrations, games and so on).

In this module, in the **Recommended Guides** section, we have left you several guides from which we will extract some exercises to invite you to put them into practice, and there is always the possibility of adapting them to your context.

We make a list of the suggestions, not with the intention of devaluing the rest of the exercises in the proposed guides, but with a desire to highlight certain aspects that we consider interesting depending on the training content that we have generated for you.

Reflect on the lifetime we want

- **Soste[VIDA]bilidad («Susta[LIFE]ability»):** Eisenhower Matrix
- **Sembrant cures per cultivar canvis («Sowing care to cultivate change»):** Conciliació, coresponsabilitat i organització del temps. («Conciliation, shared responsibility and time organisation»)

These exercises help us to visualise differences and joint needs, to reflect on how to work on the sovereignty of our time, and on how to think about the redistribution of time in the organisation, knowing what this implies for everyone else. In order to interpret the results, we recommend that this task be done based on collective empathy and shared responsibility, not based on personal judgment. This is a cultural practice for which we don't have many references or alternatives, which sometimes prevents us from seeking careful solutions because we come up with productivist imaginaries («the organisation cannot take care of this»), ableist imaginaries («I cannot understand how it takes so long»), or even individualistic ones («it is not my problem that the other one...»).

We know that inviting people to make these proposals in cultures that do not incorporate the collective perspective is a perilous leap into the void. In these cases, we recommend working for more time and in depth on the care culture beforehand. In general, we need a dose of trust in others, in the organisation and in ourselves, and to apply creative measures based on solving the pieces of a puzzle that seems impossible to complete, but that we all want to see exposed.

Sharing how we take care of ourselves

- **Basic guide for replicating Self-Care and Collective Care Workshops:** Axis: Recognising the Body – Territory Theme/Objective: I connect with others, without losing my identity Session 3.
- **Soste[VIDA]bilidad («Susta[LIFE]ability»):** HABITOMATRIX.
- **Work models and activism that put care at the centre. Ideas and lessons learned to share:** suggested reflection exercises.

These exercises help us to review our individual and collective care practices, they show us and they reflect our imaginaries and daily dynamics so that we can give them a review with other perspectives, from other angles. This enables us to negotiate between what we theoretically want and what we reproduce that neglects us or places us in internally unequal situations.

We think that above all we must save quality time to generate healthy collective spaces, in which we can express ourselves and share what is happening to us, what we are noticing that we need, and not let ourselves be carried away by the inertia of the external system that devours us.

It is an exercise that requires effort, but in reality it is a very necessary exercise to practice, in order to progress in our care practice, in our daily feelings, in being able to stop and check ourselves, in continuing to see what things help us and what others limit us.

6 More simple exercises



1 The clock of rest

Objective: to visualise rhythms and loads.

Materials and space: paper, pens.

Activity: draw a clock and mark rest/overload times. Share with the group.

2 Invisible permissions

Objective: to legitimise new agreements.

Materials and space: post-it note, wallpaper.

Activity: naming permissions that we take for granted and transforming them into explicit permissions.

3 Tiredness Sculpture

Objective: to physically experience the effects of overload and release.

Materials and space: a large room.

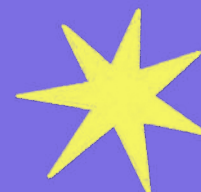
Activity: in groups, create a «sculpture of tiredness» with their bodies and then transform it into a «sculpture of rest».

4 Diary of rest

Objective: to open personal and collective narratives about rest.

Materials and space: paper, pens.

Activity: write three sentences: «I rest when.../I have a hard time resting because.../Rest for me means...». Then share in pairs.



7 Travel rucksacks

As our intention is to share the knowledge we have been acquiring, we wanted to provide you with rucksacks that can serve you on your journey to conscious and diverse leadership. Our learning is based on our own experiences, on critical and conscious readings, on the support we have received and that we have also given to others. Our knowledge is not intended to be a universal truth but a source of inspiration for other organisations that wish to put more consciousness into their care and leadership. We know that we are not neutral and also that we have cultural and social biases that we need to review and work on constantly.

However, we believe that this critical and self-critical exercise is more powerful when done collectively and from the diversity of bodies that experience discomfort daily. From that place of forging various alliances, of listening out of curiosity and mutual recognition, is where we have seen the fruit of being able to intersect, become uncomfortable, gather, learn to assume the impacts accordingly and to understand, above all, that it is a journey, it is a process that never ends, it is alive. We invite you to find your own path, to investigate other sources of knowledge besides your own, to seek external support recommended by others who have a vision similar to yours, that you can share fears and needs, and in this way strategies and other visions that perhaps we cannot achieve on our own may appear.

For our part, we hope that this content on how we take care of ourselves and make it legitimate for everyone can be useful to you and you can reflect and review your own model of measures around collective care. We hope that it can help you to gather the energy and the intentions to set out to do your own collective exploration.

8 References



Glossary

Note: This glossary includes conceptual terms that appear in the module content that we consider important to place the reader in our frame of reference. Words have been included that can have multiple interpretations or that are not in common use, so we are specifying here the meaning with which we use them.

For other key concepts present throughout the training process —such as decolonial, transfeminist or resistance economies— we refer to the **Module 1 Glossary**.

1 Structural exhaustion

Sustained tiredness derived from organisational and social dynamics, especially in the people who are maintaining spaces for care and coordination.

2 Internal sustainability policies

Measures and agreements within an organisation to ensure well-being, rest and continuity in the long term.

3 Rest culture

Recognising rest as a collective and structural practice, not as an individual concession.

4 Care culture

A shared vision and shared practices on how care is understood, organised and legitimate in the organisation.

5 Emotional permission

The opportunity to be vulnerable, to be absent or to say «no» without feeling guilty, in a collectively legitimate way.

6 Prevailing imaginary

A set of dominant ideas and beliefs in the macrosocial system that prioritise productivity and profitability over care. Throughout the module, it is used to point out how these imaginaries influence our organisations, hindering the legitimacy of rest, vulnerability and collective care.

7 Gender equality plan

A legal tool that Spanish companies with more than 50 workers must develop to pinpoint gender inequalities and to propose measures to eradicate them.

8 Starting point verdict

Initial process of collecting and collectively analysing information about how care is experienced in an organisation. It can include anonymous responses and spaces for sharing,

with the objective of identifying what measures are working, what needs are still being discovered and what the priorities are for moving towards a shared conscious care policy.

9 De-politicisation

Loss of the transformative meaning of equality policies when they become formal procedures with no real impact.

10 Inter-dependence

Recognising that all people and environments depend on each other to sustain life.

11 Well-being

It is not just an individual state of physical or emotional balance but a collective construction that crosses projects and organisations. Well-being involves feeling recognised, valued and sustained in an environment that validates both the vulnerability and the power of each person. It involves being able to unfold life in its complexity, without being reduced to a work or militant role, and it includes the possibility of resting, setting boundaries and sharing responsibilities. From this perspective, well-being is not a privilege or an extra but a central organisational and political objective that is essential for sustainability and justice within collectives.

12 Shared responsibility

This module emphasises how shared responsibility involves implementing care measures: having rules is not enough; it is necessary that everyone shares the responsibility to apply, review and sustain them over time. It means avoiding the burdens always falling on a few, promoting a truly collective care practice.

13 Invisible care

Care work that is carried out automatically, silently or without recognition, both material and emotional. It includes everything from preparing spaces, taking on tasks that «someone always does», to emotional gestures that sustain the group. When they become invisible, they are not usually redistributed or valued, which creates inequality and overload.

14 Redistribution (of jobs or power)

The process by which an organisation equally distributes both daily tasks and responsibilities (burdens) and positions of decision and influence (power). The redistribution seeks to prevent a few people from holding most of the work or concentrating the ability to decide, promoting a balance that makes care sustainable and reinforces internal justice.

15 Cultural change

Deep transformation within an organisation's practices, values and beliefs regarding care.

16 Rules and practice

A concept that indicates the gap between what is written in rules, agreements or protocols and what actually happens in the daily life of an organisation. Having rules does not in itself guarantee a cultural change: it is necessary to combine them with collective commitment, review and dialogue processes so that they are translated into living and sustainable practices.

17 Red button

Extraordinary internal mechanism to urgently address discomfort or critical situations.

18 Care Policy

A formal set of agreements that establish how care is applied within an organisation.

19 Life balance

Measures that seek to balance work, personal and community responsibilities without prioritising one over the other.

20 Disconnection

Beyond the right to not respond to communications or to not take on tasks outside of working time, disconnection implies the real possibility of freeing the mind and body from collective or work demands. It involves placing oneself emotionally, physically and psychically in other spaces of personal and community life that are also important and nourishing. It is a caring practice that protects against structural exhaustion and helps maintain the long-term sustainability of projects.

21 Healthy Boundaries

Collective agreements that balance personal involvement and well-being, avoiding overload and exhaustion. They are not understood as individual restrictions, but rather as a shared boundary policy that protects both individuals and the project.

Resources

AUDIOVISUAL

- Gargallo, Francesca (2012). **Feminismos desde Abya Yala. Entrevista a Francesca Gargallo**. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSCZm5brTh8>. («Feminism from Abya Yala». «Interview with Francesca Gargallo»).
- Mugarik Gabe (2021). **Los cuidados en el centro**. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgq3vf2yMLU&t=259s>. («Care at the centre»).
- Mujeres que crean (2022). **Cuidándome Cuidándonos**. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fux7dEld0m4>. («Women who create» «Caring for me Caring for you»).

PODCASTS

- El Descanso – **Episodio piloto**. Source: <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/el-descanso-episodio-piloto/id1681138347?i=1000607744119>. («Rest» «Pilot Episode»).
- Radio Savia – **Prácticas de autocuidado**. Source: <https://www.radiosavia.com/podcast/t0e0/>. («Self-care practices»).

SELF-PUBLISHED EDITIONS, GAMES, FANZINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fanzine **Cuidar de quienes cuidan**. Source: <https://revistapoietica.com.ar/fanzine-cuidar-de-quienes-cuidan-reflexiones-en-torno-a-las-practicas-de-cuidado-de-quienes-trabajan-con-el-sufrimiento-de-otrxs/>. («Caring for those who care»).
- Juego de cartas **ColectivaMENTE** (UNICEF/América Solidaria). Source: <https://www.unicef.org/lac/salud-mental-colectivamente>. (CollectiveMINDS card game).
- Juego **Los cuidados colectivos**. Source: <https://cepad.org.mx/micrositios/nuestra-voz-interna-como-brujula-en-el-camino/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/4.1-Juego-de-los-cuidados-colectivos.pdf>. («Collective Care game»).
- Fanzine **A Zine of Collective Care**. Source: <https://denisekwan.co.uk/A-Zine-of-Collective-Care>.

KEY PEOPLE

Selva Gonzalez <https://www.instagram.com/selva.gv/>.

RECOMMENDED GUIDES

- **Acuerpamientos, resiliencia y resistencia ante la violencia en pandemia. Guía básica para replicar. Talleres de auto cuidado y cuidado colectivo**. Source: https://generoymetodologias.org/media/publicaciones/archivos/GUIAAUTOCUIDADOYCUIDADOCOLECTIVO-cartillaautoecono_441_1.pdf. («Support networks, resilience and resistance to violence in a pandemic». «Basic guide for replicating care». «Self-care and collective care workshops»).
- Colaborabora (2018). Soste[VIDA]bilidad. **Guía de trucos y remedios para un emprendimiento que ponga la vida en el centro**. Source: <https://sostevidabilidad.colaborabora.org/>. («Susta[LIFE]ability». «A guide to tricks and remedies for a business that puts life at the centre»).

- Corporación para la vida mujeres que crean (2022). **Cultivando el cuidado en nuestras organizaciones (Fase 2)**. Source: <https://mujeresquecrean.org/cultivando-el-cuidado-en-nuestras-organizaciones/>. («Corporation for Life Women Who Create» «Cultivating Care in Our Organisations (Phase 2)»).
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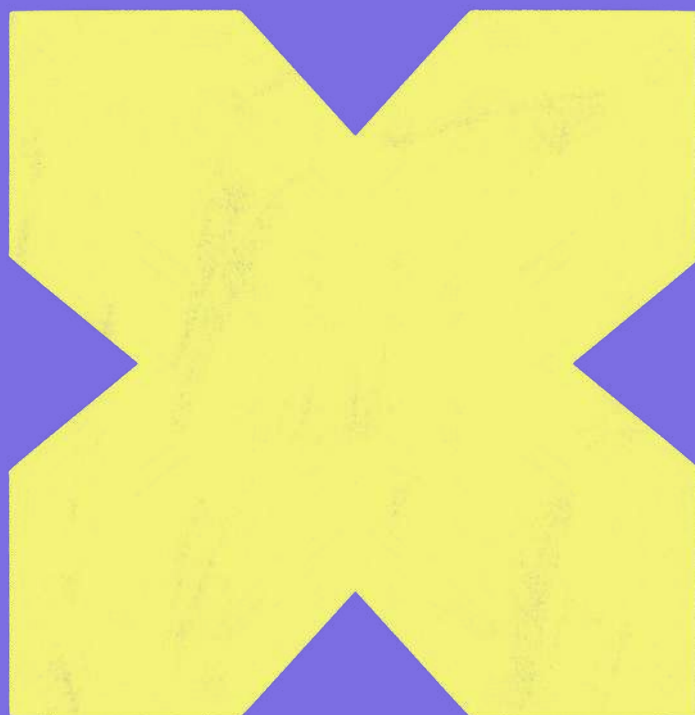
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Theme 1

Conscious and diverse leadership focused on collective care in social organisations

Module 4

How to navigate conflict from a care and responsibility perspective?



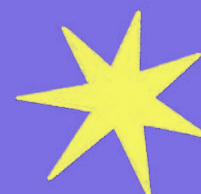
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LINSÒLITA
Xarxa de cooperatives feministes



How to navigate conflict from a care and responsibility perspective?

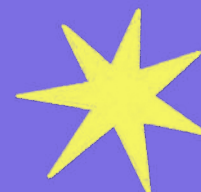
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Module 4
How to deal with
conflict based on care
and responsibility?



Power, boundaries, and reparation as transformative dimensions

Conflict, although usually perceived as something negative, is an inherent part of any human group, especially in situations of collective work where different perspectives, experiences and emotions converge. However, we are rarely taught effective tools to manage these conflicts so that we not only resolve them but also use them as opportunities for collective growth.

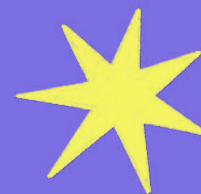
This module suggests approaching conflict from a transformative perspective, where responsibility and care are the bases for finding solutions. Instead of fleeing conflict or trying to avoid it at all costs, we see it as an opportunity for internal review, deep reflection and a chance to question the power dynamics that underlie our groups. We are interested in working on conflict as an opportunity to learn to recognise our own limits, to validate the emotions and experiences of those who go through it, and to develop repair tools that allow us to rebuild our bonds without resorting to punitive logic.

We seek to establish forms of communication that not only resolve conflicts efficiently, but also contribute to the redistribution of power within our organisations, promoting restorative justice as an integral process that strengthens our relationships and allows us to move forward with more strength and cohesion.



What will we explore?

- Conflict as a natural part of collective processes.
- How conflict is lived, named and avoided in our organisations.
- Conflict management tools: non-violent communication, restorative practices, accountability, and establishing legitimate and reviewable spaces.
- The fear of conflict and its relationship with power: who can make others uncomfortable, who should be silent.
- How to generate agreements to sustain care also in confrontation.



1 Where do we start when talking about conflict?

Often, when we hear the word conflict, it causes us discomfort; it causes us to feel defensive and alarmed. We feel that a fight may start, that perhaps we notice that we are an active part, that perhaps we have to take positions, that the apparent situation of peace or tranquility is no longer present. The fact that we can feel and interpret what conflict is and what it means, from each person or vision, means that the same situation can be experienced in very different ways.

Here we will not focus on armed conflicts or situations of explicit violence against land or bodies. We want to make the embodied learning that we have had available and, given our cis-white, Western and European privilege, we have not had to deal with these types of situations that are happening in many parts of the world and that are another completely different scenario from the one we will talk about here.

The conflict that we experience in social organisations —being part of them—, activates warning zones for our individual and collective vision. The way in which we identify it, interpret it and decide how to manage it is key to having tools that promote a diverse and conscious co-existence. We understand conflict as moments of disagreement, of discomfort that can occur between specific people, and/or more in the sense of a group or organisation. Seeing it as a natural, inevitable and necessary process to sustain ourselves healthily has helped us learn to cause conflict without feeling like we are in a pitched battle.

This view in relation to conflict needs a review of what we have culturally socialised, especially from the West. Therefore, it needs us to first look within ourselves, to listen to each other about how we feel when there is a conflict, when we also feel discomfort with others, to understand what is happening to us and why, and then to be able to dialogue with the group, to see how the rest feels and perceives it, and how another structural role that would be the organisation itself feels and perceives it.

What do we do when there is conflict in the organisation? We flee, we hide the rest, we reduce or diminish meaning or we even face it collectively, we provide it with an open space for active listening.

These dynamics about how we culturally understand conflict in our organisation will also mark a way of managing and experiencing the situation of difference. In fact, sometimes, there is a belief that everything is fine if we have no conflict, if no one complains or if no one says anything «negative». This way of understanding that we are in a good situation can confuse us, since we certainly do not realise that what is happening is that we are neglecting the conflict, we are not giving it space, we are not legitimising that it is welcome in our organisation. By not giving it space, people hold it individually, in small groups or communally, but a space is needed to share it and to remove it.

We could almost guarantee that always, in all places, no matter how healthy they are, there is conflict. As we have told you, it is part of life, of understanding that we are constantly changing, that what we need today is not what we needed yesterday. That today we are not the same people as yesterday, that our organisation is not the same, and that neither is the world where we live. This energy generates changes and dynamics in an organic way, and therefore, tension or discomfort must arise. Understanding that they exist as part of the process of life, and not because we are capricious or because we want to always be annoying or attracting attention is very important.

From a psychological perspective of work processes¹, with a more systemic view, a distinction is provided that can be very useful to us: seeing people as representations of roles.

People can express a discomfort, which may seem very personal, but if we observe the discomfort as if it were a role, the difference is that we de-personalise and look at the disagreement as a topic that today this person can say it and tomorrow someone else, but that it belongs to the group, that there is a part of what they are expressing that is within others who have not expressed it at the same time. Being able to work on it from here helps us to not harm ourselves interpersonally. When we see it as a collective topic and hear the diversity of points of view based on empathy and validation, where all the parties are real, we begin to listen to each other from recognition and not from judgment.

To reiterate the *Ubuntu* philosophy —which we have already mentioned in other modules— it is important to take into account the «I am, because we are» principle. Based on this vision, if someone experiences discomfort, I am to a certain extent also in that situation because we are part of a whole. This is as well as the responsibility towards needing to transform situations that generate community imbalance, also following the Andean philosophy of *Sumak Kawsay*, where everything is perfectly balanced and we are responsible for keeping it that way. From a Romani philosophy, we also have the motto of «life is not possible if it is not communal». All these proposals provide us with a group perspective that reaffirm that we are part of a whole, and that for this reason we must be present and active in order to take care of this network of interconnection with the living, beyond humans.

There are several fables and stories that talk about conflict and how to see or manage them. We are sharing one with you that is a popular story of Hindu origin:

The Elephant and the Blind

This story talks about blind people describing what an elephant looked like; they touched the animal and each one said how they felt it could be. They identified the animal as something they already knew (a wall, a snake, a spear) and they argued about who was right, until another, very wise person arrived, who explained that they were all right and that each of them had only one part of the truth.

The moral of this story is that conflict can be viewed from limited perspectives, and listening to and understanding other points of view is essential to managing it.

In conflict, we usually see this part that the story tells us when it comes to trying to resolve them, even with good will. We are looking for who has the truth and then on the other side there would be the opposite party, who does not. Sometimes we do not tell them the truth, sometimes we tell the person who is fairer, who is more coherent, who makes the most sense. In short, a polarised

¹ For more information see [references to Mindell, Arnold](#).

vision of understanding conflict, since we are looking for someone to «win» and then another to «lose». This competitive dynamic is not alien to the world-system that organises our lives. We socialise culturally understanding that we are on a planet of scarce resources and that therefore we are in a constant struggle for survival, operating the survival of the fittest. This sense of who has or perceives more strength, more power, is also important to comment on.

We often see that not all people feel the same power to express the discomfort they are aware of, even when they say so, sometimes we do not see that conflicts can be managed from a situation of balancing power. Who feels empowered to make others uncomfortable? Who does not dare to name the conflict out of fear of the consequences or of the relationship changes that may follow? This perception of fear is an element that plays an important role in the relationships we are going to build for managing diverse and conscious conflict.

As we told you in **Module 2 (How to build conscious and diverse leadership?)**, reviewing the power that we feel we have and the power that can come to us through the social context is important in any situation, and more so in times of conflict. From the formal roles we may have in the organisation and from ourselves, as people, we are not neutral in terms of power. It is very necessary to assume shared responsibility for power to establish diverse and conscious links.

Aside from the sense of power, we should also keep in mind that conflict management involves learning to manage our emotions (individually and collectively). The most disruptive emotions have been associated with the male role from a misogynistic and patriarchal perspective and, in contrast, the most peaceful emotions have been associated with the female role. This way of validating or invalidating emotions operates invisibly in our sociocultural dynamics, with expressions such as «don't cry anymore/stop crying», «it's no big deal», «don't give it more importance», «how heavy you are, you're always the same», «don't be a baby girl», «you don't have to be like that» and so on. None of them legitimise the fact that there is a space to hold them, listen to them and see what is happening to us deep down.

We return to that imaginary where it seems that showing our vulnerability can make us weak, and we must hide it, make it appear like we are «strong» and not let us feel what our body tells us. Because if we want to demonstrate, to talk about our emotions, we can feel that we are not welcome, that we are out of place, that we do not know how to solve our things, that we are «weak» because we cry or because we need or demand to talk about them. This way of visualising emotions comes from a world-system that wants us to be productive, unconnected to injustice, to community, in assigned and concrete roles where if we go beyond those lines they are considered inappropriate behaviours. From intersectional feminist perspectives, we have been able to learn that this form of social control most likely stems from the fear of losing power, of not being able to manage societies that want to rebel against that greater power. That world-system has to «beat» the other one who cannot take power and «dominate». That *status quo* must be protected and for this reason it is important to fuel the stories and visions that situate us or rather disorient us from where and how we can be and relate to one another.

The system in which we live does not seem to provide us with references that help us understand conflict as necessary moments that occur in the living world. In fact, it shows us endlessly how geopolitical conflicts are resolved. While in theory we see that a conversation that promotes peace and collective well-being is applied, in practice competition, armed battles, pressure on those who have power and on those who decide how we organise ourselves prevail in this world. We need to reconnect with other viewpoints that provide a community perspective, a way of understanding that we are interdependent, that we need each other, that we want the bond. However, this need should be covered in conditions of dignity, and it should be able to guarantee safe spaces for collective learning.

As we have already mentioned in each module, it is important for us to recover other narratives that we have intentionally tried to erase and exclude. From our choice to want to put the need (and responsibility) to listen to intersectional criticism (which requires us to act from our white privilege, to connect with other viewpoints, to actively seek and wake up to be critical of what we read, say or how and from where we relate to other stories that have been diminished) on our Euro-centric white tables, to not be left alone with what we know. Our intention is to be able to demonstrate where we have been expanding our visions, being aware that we are not the people who have lived or who are part of these contexts. We do not intend to appropriate their knowledge, but rather to be able to leave threads to stretch for others who may not have started this active anti-racist and intersectional process. Accepting that our path is not the only one, there are many other narratives that we are certainly not including in these modules, which speak of our biases to continue working. From our point of view, it is highly recommended that we be open to connecting with people other than ourselves, that we recognise and share responsibility through the rebalancing of powers and that we are opening the seams that oppress this world's diversity that could fully exist.

From reading about other cultures, such as indigenous cultures², we can learn that conflicts are a continuous process; they are seen as an opportunity for change, for transformation, for improving co-existence. In their practice, they understand that conflict management requires third parties who can help balance the situation. **Pressia**, explains to us that the Mayans have a model they call «tripartite», where the resolution not only seeks the end result of the «problem», but also contemplates the situation from different perspectives: spiritual, reparation of justice and community healing. In its management, conflict must be exposed to the community in order to cause changes in the relationships and attitudes of the group.

This reparative justice, which we are trying to describe to you —according to our reading interpretation— has different rights to take into account. We are highlighting two: one is indigenous law as its own system (social, cultural, political, economic, ecological and philosophical regulations), which is applied communally and has been transferred orally, with the objective of maintaining societies that can live together in harmony. Two is traditional law, such as regulations that are based on the customs (rules, uses and habits accepted by the group) and traditions of indigenous populations. The justice they seek is neither vindictive nor punitive, it is applied with a conciliatory, preventive intention to restore harmony to the whole. It is not intended to find «guilty» parties, it is meant to recognise those «responsible» who take charge of the reparations, and to restore community balance. The desired solution is one that has a collective vision, beyond the specific fact itself.

Applying Mayan justice is based on 18 steps for conflict resolution. Here is a short summarised extract from GIZ (2011). *Prácticas Tradicionales Maya de Resolución de Conflictos en los Territorios* («Traditional Mayan Practices for Conflict Resolution in Territories») (pp. 14–16):

- 1 The Warning/Ujachick cho mexá:** the people in charge are informed that there is something that needs a solution.
- 2 The Analysis/Unik'oxik rij:** there is a space to evaluate the problem and to decide whether or not to intervene in its solution. The conflicting parties are sought and evaluated whether or not an arrangement is finally requested by the community.
- 3 The Call/Sik'nik:** the conflicting parties are called, first separately and then together to talk about the issue.

2 For more information in Spanish, see the [references by GIZ](#).

- 4 **The Talk/*Utaik utatb'ixik ri tzij***: it is the space to talk about the problem, actively listening to the parties and those who know the problems of the community as well.
- 5 **The Duality of Truth or Lie/*Uchomaxik la tzij on tzijtaj***: if the problem is more serious, this step is reached where we seek to verify or confirm whether there is truth or lies, where other people close to the problem are heard to broaden the context of the problem.
- 6 **The Knowledge/*Uk'otik chi'a'j***: the space where all the information on the problem that has been collected is organised and understood in depth.
- 7 **The Approach between parties/*Majb'al re ri tz'ijnem***: the conditions are proposed so that they can make an exchange between the people involved with the problem.
- 8 **The Exchange/*Tz'ijonem***: it is time to give time to words and to the truth to build things.
- 9 **Counselling, drawing attention, call for reflection/*Pixab'***: the space where the wisdom and teachings of grandparents and parents are remembered and the acts that have been done are reflected upon and it is recommended to get out of the problematic situation.
- 10 **Creating and practicing ideas/*Nuk'uj no'jb'al***: the space for those who caused the problem to participate in order to reach an arrangement and to achieve the commitment to want to repair the impacts generated.
- 11 **Recognising the infraction and asking for forgiveness/*Kuyb'al mak***: this space is important so that the problems can be reconciled. It seeks recognition of what has happened, shared responsibility of the impacts and the search for forgiveness. It is also intended for the person who has received the impact to see whether they accept or not, or if something else is necessary.
- 12 **Combining Ideas, Opinions and Comments/*Nuk'uja no'lb'al***: it is the space where the Mayan person who represents authority exposes the problem and the possible conclusions and agreements for the solution.
- 13 **The Definition/*Uchomxik Rij***: the space where agreements are defined.
- 14 **The Act of Forgetting/*Usachik mak***: it is the space where the parties agree on how to forget the impacts that have been generated from the situation, defining the reparation and the damage it may have caused.
- 15 **Getting Together Again/*Uk'amik ib' pa uzilal***: harmony and justice are restored through acceptance and reconciliation.
- 16 **Paying for Guilt/*Utoji'k mak***: it is a space to think about the sanctions that must be applied for committed crimes or misdemeanours. The affected person is asked to decide what sanctions they should be.
- 17 **Gratitude/*Maltioxnik***: this is the time to celebrate reconciliation. It usually involves a shared meal or a donation of gifts of food or groceries.
- 18 **The Follow-up/*Uternexik ri Tzij***: it is a step that was added later with the will to ensure compliance with the agreements and the successfully transforming the conflict.

We share these steps, not with the desire to either appropriate Andean culture or to propose that they are the steps to follow for conflict resolution, but with the desire to provide other perspectives, other ways of understanding and resolving that can help us to reflect on how we believe that we can work better from our organisational structures.

This way of conceiving conflicts and the objective of their resolution can help us to understand that conflict is necessary as part of the collective learning process, to understand it as a path

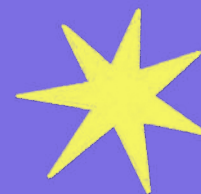
that we must follow, which may not produce a direct change simply because of a conversation, even when there are situations of warmly listening to those who express discomfort. Conflict helps us identify situations and attitudes that are not good for us. It forces us to think about limits, about how to face the grief that something is going to have to be different, about what we need to think about in order to improve our collective co-existence.

From the restorative perspective³, derived from ancient knowledge, which began to be better known after 1970, within the framework of restorative justice, we are rescuing a community practice that can be very useful in addressing the diversity and discomfort of a group. It is a practice that has some basic elements (a word object, rules of the circle, facilitation role, question/topic to be addressed) for the ritual called «talking circle». **Fil a l'agulla**⁴ suggests that we can use this dynamic for different purposes: to create community, to know each other, to express and appreciate diversity, to prevent and intervene in situations of conflict, to develop social, relational and personal skills, but it warns that it is necessary for the group to know and recognise it in order for it to be effective.

These age-old perspectives have their restorative role as an objective in conflict management in common. The harm they may have caused is accepted and recognised and a way to restore them is sought, each person assuming their shared responsibility for the impacts generated. From these perspectives, solutions are sought that generate group well-being and not the polarity of the strongest. Having spaces to accommodate and manage conflict is also essential in these proposals.

3 For more information, see [«Cercles of Paraula and a restorative view»](#) in the references section.

4 For more information in Spanish, see [Key People](#) and the [bibliography](#).



2 How we identify types of conflict?

When we focus on being attentive to conflicts, we can learn to see the signals we are emitting. We can see them in our body positioning and in that of the rest of us: we feel uncomfortable, we have an expression of anger, of denial or a feeling of alarm. We can also see these signs in the change in atmosphere that is noticed in a space or at a time: such as, for example, when there are uncomfortable silences or exaggerated laughter. Even when we are more aware of our own signals and those of others, we can realise that the body activates survival automatisms, which attempt to deny the emotion that passes through the body. At that moment, if we are active and observant, we will even be able to notice that there are what are called «double signals»: verbally we say one thing, but the body says something else.

This way of perceiving our body and feeling the others requires practice and listening without judgment. From lived experience, it needs a willingness to want to listen to you, to stop thinking so much from reason and to let yourself be carried away more by intuition. We know that, if we are not used to it, what we are saying may sound very strange to us, as if it were almost a very spiritual practice. From our perspective, when we take these intrusive thoughts out of our heads or put aside these intrusive thoughts that do not allow us to try other ways of perceiving the world, all this will not be so strange to us; rather, it can become closer, more organic and liberating. When we are more present and more aware of others, we see and can even feel what others can be like. It is important not to overthink or deduce without checking with others because we can get confused in interpretations and have false readings of situations. In fact, many conflicts occur due to misunderstandings, and they are proof that we lack spaces to share what is happening to us, why we behave in a certain way, if we have any discomfort with others, situations that are affecting us in our relationship with others, and so on.

We are accustomed to wanting to understand everything that happens to us, or on the contrary, to not giving any space to what we feel is happening to us. In any case, we need to learn that the causes of conflict can be very diverse, and that we will not have all the answers. A biased reading, from our single perspective, will not provide us with the necessary elements to understand the conflict from all its angles. For this reason, the need to identify conflicts, to listen to discomfort deeply and without judgment, assuming our share of responsibility, rebalancing our powers, seeking the end goal of transforming co-existence and not of finding the cause or the guilty person. This attitude will help us to finally change a situation that is damaging the group, from a perspective of collective restoration.

E1

Learning to feel the body

Type of exercise

Individual

Collective

General objective

Learn to be attentive to the signals of our body and the group atmosphere.

Specific objective:

Collectively explore a practice of individual and collective observation.

What we need

First of all, find a quiet time where you have no distractions. It is important that you do not judge the outcome, but rather that you perceive it as an exercise in awareness and internal reflection, without filters or prejudices towards yourself and others. Try to think like you do not know the people you are with.

To create an environment and atmosphere of mutual trust.

Duration

It depends on whether the group has done any previous bodily practice or not. We recommend **a minimum of 45 minutes to 60 minutes.**

Material

- Space that helps you to be calm and focused, that is clear and spacious so that you can all move without any problems.
- Playlist of instrumental music.
- We would highly recommend that someone assume the role of activity facilitator.

Exercise structure

We stand in space, we begin to listen to the music in the background, the person who plays the role of activity facilitator will say what the slogans are.

We move through space slowly, without bumping into each other, without talking, observing each other.

We listen to our breathing and we connect with listening to our body. We are looking for a place where we feel more comfortable, we position ourselves depending on what each of us considers our bodies to need (standing, on the floor, sitting).

When we are comfortable, we close our eyes, we connect with our breathing, if thoughts that are unrelated to our body come to us, I hear them, but now we decide to not address them consciously. We begin to focus on how our body is doing, from head to toe. I go zone by zone, little by little, trying to feel carefully how we are with our body. The facilitator names the parts of the body, promoting that if we hear discomfort or well-being we memorise them.

At the end of our own scan, we give ourselves a space of calm where we try to remain with the part of the body that has attracted our attention the most, where we have perceived/felt the most signals.

We are opening our eyes and when the facilitator says «3, 2, 1», we try to represent with our body the emotion we have after visiting it.

We maintain the representation for a few seconds, as if we were statues, we try to observe everyone else's from where we are and in any way we can and we undo them.

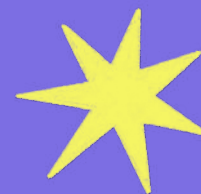
We end up in a circle. We remember our own representation and the experience of visiting our body, and we freely share whatever we want.

It may be that it is my own experience of feeling the body or taking a few minutes to listen to it, or it may be that it is what I have observed from my body.

We try to take care of ourselves if we have experienced discomfort, if it has to do with the group, we try to make sure that the practice we are suggesting to you does not focus on solving the ailments but on identifying them. Working on discomfort should be in another space and here we can say that we need a space for dialogue/sharing.

It is interesting that you can share how you felt the observation, what helped you to feel the parts of your body. Try also to observe what the atmosphere of the group and the space was like before starting the exercise and how you are now.

All these observations help us put into practice the awareness of letting ourselves feel and being able to identify what is going through us. At the same time, if we feel intrusive thoughts, learning to limit what cannot now be addressed is also a highly recommended practice for managing them. So how to identify what we may need after the practice, without wanting it to be the complete solution, but perhaps I need to organise another space to talk about things that I have felt have to do with the group, or rather I need my own space where I can continue to explore this approach to the body that we have done.



3 How do we learn to manage conflict?

Focusing on social organisations, according to the **Fil a l'agulla** cooperative, the most recurrent conflicts are those related to:

- Different ways of understanding our organisation's vision.
- Perceived imbalances in our culture of governance and participation.
- Perceived imbalances in how we manage power and leadership.
- Lack of established and legitimate spaces to manage conflict.

Taking these aspects into account to work on conflict prevention can make it easier for us to live with conflict in a conscious and diverse way. The tools we can equip ourselves with will always help us to feel more secure and comfortable to be able to cause conflict.

However, as we have already been sharing with you, it is a process, it is collective learning. It requires understanding that not everything will be resolved as we would like, nor will we succeed at the first attempt. Not all of us will be at the same point in life to understand this logic of causing conflict as part of life. This will depend on our personal baggage, on our relationship with conflict, and on personal and contextual power in the organisation. Nor can we demand that, even if we provide resources, conflict will be accepted or managed from the outset. We will be seeing and learning together from the process, looking for the best ways to serve and manage conflict.

To do this, we need to include skills such as flexibility, empathy, calm, active listening, non-violent communication and the desire to restore our practices and dynamics that may cause discomfort. We should also focus on the process and not on the results. We will learn to cause conflict and we will find our way, and in the meantime, we will be trialling from a consciousness and diversity perspective, accepting shared responsibility for the impacts that may be generated.

Tools that can help us manage conflict:

- Accept conflict as necessary and as an opportunity to review things beyond the people who bring or expose it.
- Provide us with formal and informal spaces so that conflict can be worked on. We may have an active recurring space, and another one, for the moments outside the recurring space that we may need.

- To think that what some people may be saying about conflict is not something personal, and that instead it helps us to manifest something that is within us, even if we are not the ones who expose it (we are systemic roles that can bring very beneficial information to the group, if we leave the personal setting).
- Think about whether we need specialised external help to facilitate conflict. This is always recommended, if it can be assumed in monetary terms, since, even if we are not an active part of the exposed conflict, we are part of the group, and we are not neutral in the conflict. An external professional can help us to not generate flawed loops and dynamics, to see other ways of understanding the situation, or even provide other information that we are not taking into account beyond the specific situation.

According to **MINDELL** (2022, p. 42) conflict has four phases:

- 1 FIRST PHASE:** this is where we are all apparently well, where there is no discomfort, everyone takes care of their own things and there is nothing to share.
- 2 SECOND PHASE:** this is where the conflict is already felt and perceived, tension is noticed, and there is something that is not right.
- 3 THIRD PHASE:** this is where we can put ourselves on the other side of the situation, where we can see what the person in the other role feels. We can even come to understand and notice what is happening from the other place.
- 4 FOURTH PHASE:** this is when we are connected, we no longer experience the polarity, we feel that now everything is moving towards where we feel best.

From this perspective, knowing how to identify what phase we are in as a group can help us to see what we may need to intervene in conflict. We cannot speed up or avoid these phases. For some it may be an easier path and for others it may take longer. It will depend on the types of conflict, on the moment we are in when the conflict occurs, and on the individual and collective tools we have.

It is also important that people who express discomfort can indicate what they need to recover the situation. It is important that we do not take what they need for granted, because sometimes, those people will not know. We should not decide for everyone else just because some of us see the situation clearly, we need to live in the conflict collectively. We repeat: it is essential for everyone to be able to express what they need to manage the conflict, understanding that it is a process and that it has phases; the way in which we are able to see how we are and what we need can help us to cope with it more calmly.

We have no intention of romanticising conflict. We know that causing conflict is uncomfortable, it awakens a deeper sense of alert, it moves us. A lot of times we become unwell, trust can be broken, we go through moments when we do not recognise ourselves, we lose ourselves, and this mixture of feelings is not pleasant. Causing conflict is exhausting: we need a lot of energy to resolve conflicts, even when we have learned a lot about the dynamics that work for us.

From our embodied experience, we see that it is essential to be curious to know how the other person feels, what they need. It is also important to get out of my own beliefs, to open my mental boundaries and to leave space to feel that other alternatives may be possible. All of this requires trust, creativity, mutual recognition and a desire for repair.

This restoration exercise would also be appropriate for us to systematise the methodology we are applying, also including how we feel that we are managing the conflict, and how the people in the organisation are. We know that at first it may seem like a huge job that we do not even

know where to start, that we want to, but we have not had the practice. But having this desire is already a very good start.

With the aim of showing you how we have been doing since our specific practices and experiences, we explain them to you in case they can inspire you or serve you to start this journey.

RECOMMENDED EXERCISES

In the **References** section you will always find the information on the notes that we have been incorporating throughout the training content, as well as other types of resources that are not only written, with the intention of favouring other non-hegemonic resources (audiovisual, illustrations and games).

In the **Recommended Guides** section of this module, we have left you several guides from which we will extract some exercises to invite you to put them into practice, and there is always the possibility of adapting them to your situation.

We are making a list of the proposals, not with the intention of devaluing the rest of the guides' exercises, but with the desire to highlight certain aspects that we consider interesting depending on the training content that we have generated for you.

Exercises to gain emotional awareness and conflict management tools

- **Self-care and collective care in our organisations:**
Exercise 2. Empathic communication.
- **The art of learning to treat yourself well:**
Exercise 5. Exploring the relationship with emotions.

These exercises help us to become aware of how we talk to ourselves, how we express our emotions, to notice how others express themselves. They also help us realise what emotional management we can have within our diverse group. With this we are not saying that it would be the only possible path, but rather that this is the path that we have learned from our perspective, which has been able to work for us to pick up tools that help us to unlearn automatisms, which we have socialised during our lives. These tools help us to be aware of whether or not we have a type of emotional management that affects our relationships with everyone else. It also gives us a view of where each one of us is in our own emotional management, and to realise how, this too, can put us in a position of more power, of emotional power because we have the ability to manage emotions, to have that path already made, everything and whatever is an enormous inner work. Remembering **Module 2 (How to Build Conscious and Diverse Leadership?)**, to the extent that we know how to identify our power, that we identify whether we use or abuse it at the community level, we will be able to learn to manage our conflict and seek collective and not individual solutions. Suggest proposals, review them together and let the group itself decide what and how it can provide support.

Exercises to work on conflict

- **Guide to conflict management in cooperatives:**
Annex 2: Exercises to work on personal view and common view.

In this guide, we can ask about types of conflict that have to do with diversity, in relation to the point of view we may have in our organisation.

Sometimes, especially when they are long-established organisations, we take it for granted that the point of view is shared and untouchable, but the diversity of people that make up the organisation needs to review that point of view with new perspectives and with new contributions. It is true that we cannot allow organisations to constantly review more strategic or core structures, but it is highly recommended that they be reviewed within established periods of time (every five/ten years, for example). We must understand that organisations are cyclical as well and that, therefore, what we believe to be core can also change. Maybe this will not be a total mutation, but we must reflect that, if we are not able to leave spaces that can permeate our diversity, in the long run it can oppress us, it can prevent us from identifying ourselves and feeling recognised to everyone. This feeling can generate discomfort and, therefore, conflicts that if we do not give them space and do not allow them to open up for dialogue, then it is very likely that the discomfort can cause rotations, exhaustion and disconnection with the sense of being part of something.

E2

Easy, everyday, organisational practice

Objective

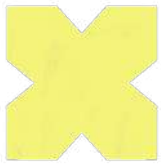
To facilitate internal communication regarding discomfort, and to bring invisible care practices to the table.

Duration

20 minutes maximum (depending on the people participating, two minutes per person are required).

Exercise structure

Always add an item to the agenda in which each person expresses the care received from another person or collective during the previous week. Each person will also express an oversight on the part of another person or group, if there are any. It is not a space for repair or dispute. It is only collected. When an oversight is repeated, it is brought to an assembly as an explicit agenda.



Personal Experience Stories

Eli *Throughout my life I have had different situations where I have experienced conflict in a very different way. As I have been taking an inner journey, and relying on others I have learned from, from reading, doing internal exercises and experiencing situations in spaces of trust, I now feel much more able to sustain, live and manage conflict.*

This path has not been easy at all, as a child, in my environment we did not know how to manage everyday conflicts; they were not directly managed, they were hidden, they were left to pass. This socialisation of conflict accompanied me throughout my life. I learned that I was not allowed to express my needs out of fear of conflict. Even so, almost organically, when I felt very uncomfortable in places or with people, I learned to survive and get out of there quickly. Later, I learned that leaving had worked for me but that it was also necessary to be able to express limit. It helped me to protect my well-being and was important, it made it easier to lay the foundations for living together from another place, or even to be clear about my limits of non-acceptance. I was putting it into practice, with better or worse luck. Sometimes personally conflicting with people who were not following the same inner journey as me, this point for me has been an important learning experience. Not all of us are in the same place. Demanding of ourselves that we respond to or deal with conflict in the same way also has a part of not putting ourselves in the other person's shoes. I have recently been learning to find the balance between being empathic and not abandoning the boundaries I need to set, accepting with emotional responsibility that this attitude can have an impact on the other side, that I will take care of them to the extent that I can, as long as I do not neglect myself either. I share it with the intention of telling experiences that may resonate with you, but assuming that this form is the one that has been working for me. It is not universal nor is it the best for everyone, it is the one that has helped me to be more aware of myself and my environment.



arba *Talking about conflict is not easy for me, because I experience it as a subject covering many personal layers. For one, I have the enormous difficulty of managing emotions. It is part of a generational story: those of us in our fifties grew up with an emotional education that was practically non-existent. Nobody taught us to say what we were feeling, or to give it a place in everyday*



life. We were asked to hold on, to keep going, to not complain too much. What little I know about emotions, what I have been able to cultivate, has come later, as an adult, on a path that I decided to undertake when I discovered —almost like a secret— that taking care of what I feel was also important. But the start was late, and that void continues to be a burden. Sometimes I find myself in the midst of a conflict without having the words, gestures, and tools to express myself clearly and carefully.

The other axis that runs through me is hyper-responsibility. From a very young age, the idea that only perfection was valid was instilled in me. A silent command that was being tattooed on me: to do more, to do better, to never fail. I grew up believing that the only way to deserve a place was to constantly prove that I could handle anything. And that, although on the outside it gave me an appearance of security, on the inside it translated into fierce insecurity. I learned to hide it behind hard-painted nails and an edged face, as if showing fragility was a luxury I could not afford.

I also realise that this hyper-responsibility often led me to stubbornness: to think that my way was the only valid one. And there all the possible «isms» creep in: ableism; arrogance; the privileges of the cis, white body, with high intellectual capacities. Recognising this is not comfortable, but it is part of the truth. When conflict appears, it puts me in front of that mirror: it shows me how hard it is for me to let go of the need for control, and how much I have to unlearn from that demand that inhabits me.

Unlearning is a long and constant process, which I put energy into because I know that I cannot —nor do I want to —stay in the place of unquestioned privilege. On this path, all the people who have been by my side have been fundamental: friends, companions, accomplices who have acted as a mirror, as a point of reference, of loving criticism. Thanks to them, I have been able to recognise my rigidity, name my boundaries and try other ways of being in conflict without that destroying me or leading me to destroy others.

I am still learning. Sometimes I stumble into the same places as always, but now I know that there are also other ways to experience the conflict: with care, with listening, with shared responsibility; not as an enemy, but as part of life together.

Specific lessons learned

Eli

In my organisation we had a very delicate moment where we were feeling discomfort among the members and we needed to have established spaces to take care of ourselves, to name the discomfort, and to share what we needed. The perception that this was happening went through each of us in a different way, to the point that we identified it and wanted to give it a specific space, external support with the desire to find the possibility of repair. We had two years of managing and learning from this conflict, while the organisation continued on its way. Sustaining the internal process, and at the same time supporting the organisation, us and the team was not an easy task, knowing as well that we were not finding a way to leave that process happy.

At that time, thanks to external support, we were able to cope with the situation, to learn from every step of this process, until a moment came when a facilitator told us that what was happening was that we did not want to accept that we could no longer be working together. Feeling that generated even more discomfort, there was a lot of love and respect between us, and accepting that we could not work together, that that seemed like the restorative path, it was difficult for us, it put us in a situation that, a priori, was not wanted. None of us saw it completely clearly, but we trusted those who accompanied us. In this final part, when we were already clear that we were faced with a separation agreement, we decided to invest more time and money to have two types of joint support: on the one hand, invisible and emotional facilitation, and on the other hand, a tangible facilitation for drafting the agreement, with the intention of balancing our powers. Right after signing that contract, which cost us sweat and tears and time not being together, the pandemic arrived. It was another emotionally very hard moment where we had almost no energy left to sustain what was coming our way. It was a huge emotional and physical strain, but we supported each other. This moment also helped us to see that other very important things were happening that impacted us and the world. It was a very strong emotional learning experience, as well as an experience of building collective resilience that helped us to see light where there was none.

Now, five years later, we can share with you that we feel that it was the best decision we could make, and that we are very proud of how we managed it. Today we are all still in touch. The separation helped us, the process of conflict was necessary and we learned a lot as individuals and as an organisation. At that time, the people we shared how we were managing it with were surprised; we noticed that they were proposing other less power-conscious ways of search for restoration. There were not many references, but inside us we knew that we needed to take care of ourselves and take care of the process.

This also happens, people speak from what they know, they want to help you, but often we do not realise that our opinion is biased and that it speaks to our fears as well. Many people told us that we were wrong to do so and to communicate it openly, but at that time it was very important for us to be able to share the process and naturalise the conflict. We felt that, despite the disagreement, we could hold it together. We were very much in agreement on the how, and that pushed us to continue from the place we saw clearly, until we reached the restoration of relations between us today.

arba *One of the most important lessons learned about conflict came to me when I left the first work cooperative that I founded, together with two female friends as partners. It was my first self-managed workspace, and right from the start I could tell the difference compared to any activism project I had participated in before. Here we were not just organising political activities or processes: there was rent to pay, and lives that depended on that project working. That pressure crept in everywhere, and outside productivism found a place within. The urgent always devoured what was important, and the lack of time to talk about our differences gradually eroded the bond.*

I, trapped in that logic of hyper-responsibility that I have been carrying since I was a child, believed that without me that ship would sink, that everything should

be done as I saw it, that if I did not take the helm nothing would work out. And that outlook isolated me, making me feel more and more distant from my colleagues, until one day there was no turning back. I left. That departure opened a grief that was individual and also collective. It took weeks before we were able to talk to each other again from another place, until the pain gave way to affection.

The project, of course, did not sink. It was transformed. She knew how to adapt to the wants and needs of those who stayed. We knew how to close that phase beautifully and open another one in which I was already on the periphery: inside the heart, but outside the head. Today I still feel that cooperative is my home, I love those who stayed and those who also left. That process taught me that no one is indispensable, that projects are sustained because there are many hands that make them possible, and that people leaving, however painful, can also be gestures of care if they know how to combine them.

Another strong lesson came a couple of years ago, in another organisation that I started. Although I started the process alone, very soon the project became a two-headed thing, shared with another colleague. I, out of fatigue or from listening, began to occupy a second-row place. The organisation grew a lot in a short time and, as is normal, it was transformed. But in that transformation, I felt more and more out of place. I found myself doing administrative tasks for projects that I did not believe in, or that I did believe in, but that did not make me feel comfortable or identified.

The tensions between the «two heads» —which were sometimes three —became more intense. Each one looked in a different direction, and the personal friendship that united us was not enough to calm those waters. There came a time when everything was too much. We had external support, many hours of conversations and also crying. And finally, one of those heads decided to leave.

That blow moved me a lot. It made me think about everything we could have done differently. About what I myself could have done differently: talking about structure from the beginning, setting clear boundaries before it was too late, thinking collectively about the path to follow instead of assuming that it was already marked. To have looked for spaces outside of work, to stop —especially stop —to be able to introspect and look at others in more depth. To listen more, empathise more, review myself more.

I do not fall into the trap of thinking that «everything would have been perfect» if we had done it differently. But I do think we could have gone through it with less pain. That there was another possible way if we had the courage to stop earlier, to ask ourselves questions, to sustain conflicts instead of letting them grow to overwhelm us. That learning now accompanies me in every project: to remember that conflict does not go away on its own, that it takes time, perspective and shared care to go through it.

The process of starting to cause conflict from a care and responsibility perspective

Eli *In my organisation, since the beginning of the project, we have been learning to take more conscious care of ourselves. It has always been at the root of our*

essence, how to do things. And from here and with all the will and spaces of care, we also learned that it was not enough to have them and put them into practice. This process requires flexibility, continuous learning, a compassionate but joint-responsible approach to the impacts it may generate. And in particular, it requires being attentive to the group, seeing what is not named, being aware of how difficult it is to express things that are not hegemonic, the desired, the expected, the things that you are able to sustain.

We had created an apparently careful, open and self-critical culture, but we were unable to express what generated profound discomfort. We were not able to tell each other those little things that we did not like or that hurt us. There was such a feeling that everything was done from one place for the common benefit, that it was difficult to criticise, express the discomfort, the impact. However, when perhaps someone dared to do it, they never did it from the place we wanted. Some time later we understood that what was happening was that we were learning at the same time that we were putting what we learned into practice, and that sometimes prevented us from being aware that it was part of the process itself, that we should learn to listen and sustain criticism, just as we should learn to criticise from a sustainable place, without stopping saying what we need. We can share that this constant balance is emerging more and more organically, now we are a little calmer about how we are managing, and we are still learning from the process.

arba Learning to cause conflict through care and responsibility has not been, and is not, a straight path. For me, rather, it has been a slow process, full of twists and turns, of stumbling blocks, silences, and also of revelations that have forced me to look at myself head-on.

I come from a story where conflict was something that was hidden under the carpet. Nobody taught us how to go through it: it either exploded with screams and blame, or it was kept quiet until it became entrenched. Caring, in those environments, meant not disturbing, not making uncomfortable, letting go. So getting to a place where conflict could be named was already a revolution. Realising that arguing, dissenting or even getting angry could also be a way to care for ourselves was something that I was slow to understand.

There is one thing, however, that I have always been good at: making others uncomfortable. Since I was young, I liked being the one with the bomb ideas, the one that raised my voice in the streets, the one who organised collective projects to confront fascists, tough-looking men and capitalists. I come from a progressive left-wing family, who, although from the village, were able to study, and there I learned to get my claws out when something was unfair. This urge to make people uncomfortable seems to me to have enormous potential, because it connects me to anger as an engine of change.

But the difficulty appears when the conflict is not towards others, but within. When it is with equals, with colleagues, or with people less privileged than me. I have a hard time listening there. There my anger and stubbornness become an obstacle. It is hard for me to recognise my privileged place, to lower the volume to my certainties, to leave room for other voices.

The process of causing conflict from care, for me, has meant several things:

- *Learning to stop before answering. Letting the emotion settle in, even a little, so as not to spit out words that I later regret.*
- *Really listening, even when what I hear makes me uncomfortable. Give me time to understand what is behind the other person's anger or reproach.*
- *Recognising my boundaries and saying them out loud. Understanding that taking care of myself is also saying «I can't do it anymore», or «I've come this far», without waiting for the body to explode.*
- *Accepting my share of responsibility. Stopping pointing towards everyone else all the time and accepting that I too fall into dynamics that harm, that I too can hurt, even if I do not want to.*

I have not done all this alone. I needed mirrors, people who showed me, lovingly and also firm, where I was making mistakes, where I was letting myself be carried away by my privileges, where I was repeating learned forms of violence. That company, even if it sometimes hurt, has been a gift.

Today I cannot say that I already know how to do it, but I can say that I dare more to enter into the conflict without fleeing or attacking. That I can look at it with less fear, knowing that, although it hurts, it also opens up possibilities. And that care and responsibility are not an ornament, but rather the basis for a conflict not to with end us, which can rather allow us to continue together, with more honesty and with more strength.

Collective lessons learned

Eli *When we experience a group conflict, we want to welcome it and think about it from healthier and more restorative places for the group. It is vital to listen to all of us, to let disruptive voices also emerge, understanding that that party that is angry with the other party, that does not understand their behaviour, their demands have their roles. It is essential to leave space to listen to it, to feel it, to give it a place. When this voice enters into conversation with the other voice, it may be that we come to a mutual understanding, although sometimes restoration requires a separation, understanding that we can no longer be together, that in order to feel restored we need to be separated. Living these processes in a group way makes it possible to live more calmly, more securely; and at the same time, the very fact of going through these processes makes us stronger, generates more identity, more trust in the group and in its capacity for survival.*

arba *If I have learned anything during this time, it is that conflict is not managed alone, that we need to build common tools, not only to «make the organisation work», but to take care of ourselves as people. When we have done it together, the learning has been more profound: putting words to what hurts, daring to listen to each other with patience, understanding that there will not always be agreement, but that we can sustain the difference without breaking down.*

And there is something very common in our transfeminist lesbian communities: we set up projects with lovers, girlfriends or friends. Because we like to work with our peers, because we feel more secure and because desire is also mixed with poli-

tics. But when conflicts arise, things become much more complex. Since they are people close to us, we take it for granted that they think the same way we do, and we hardly ever talk about boundaries, about expectations, about what will happen when something goes wrong. And of course: there is always something that goes wrong at some point. And then the conflict becomes more personal, more painful.

Collective learning has shown me that conflict is not a threat, but a training ground for trust. That when we dare to talk about what does not work, without hiding it under the carpet, the possibility of creating more honest bonds grows. And it has also taught me that good will is not enough: shared structures, spaces, times and care are needed for difficult conversations to have a real place.

Situated tools and contributions

Eli

In our organisation we have learned not to think of conflict as something to fear. In order not to let it escalate, we have several legitimate spaces to express discomfort and appreciation during the school year (biannual/annual). In addition, we invented a digital space where we leave written the headline that we need to talk about before the definite moments arrive «because I have to get rid of the hairball» that I have been going through. After using it for a long time, we realised that it works for us, that we have it in place, and that even the rest of the team feels more and more legitimate to express their needs.

Apart from these spaces, we decided that in order to learn to express ourselves or share the discomfort between us and the organisation more organically, we needed another space that we called «feedback». This feedback is part of a continuous learning process. First, we had feedback from the members who have been around the longest, we had a hard time telling each other the things that did not make us feel good, or that we could even identify as small impacts that we received from others. In this feedback between members, we tried to make it a little lightness, taking advantage of the fact that there were few of us members. First, we tried to give this feedback without much planning, in informal spaces, taking something together and letting ourselves flow, so we felt safer and more confident to lose the fear of hurting the other. Deep down, we knew that, even if we did not like what we were going to hear, we would still be in spaces of care because of who we were. Now we have seen that in the biannual and annual planning, the conversation has flowed much more, we have been able to express with all our emotions, everything that gives us weight or a sense of imbalance, and we have sustained space and listening from a place where we all feel identified, listened to and willing to make commitments for the needs we have.

Accepting that spaces, even if they are legitimate, need to be accompanied, to let them feel their own, that we can relax and let ourselves listen to our bodies, share what goes through us, and see how we restore what we need to change.

With the team that are not members, in the search to generate feedback spaces, we were testing dynamics and proposals that have not always been good and that, in some cases, have generated negative impacts. At the same time, we have opened spaces for collective dialogue in which to express this discomfort, these views; spaces in which the organisation has been able to accept its share

of the impact and its desire to restore it, while asking for the shared responsibility that we are seeking. We understand that this is a process, and that it helps to share practices that do work, to find the one that this group can sustain.

We have had to assume that, although with good will and by consciously opening spaces, we can generate unwanted impacts that we must repair, we must discuss how and why to find a new meeting point. It is essential that this dialogue makes sense for all of us, if we are the only ones who always think and make suggestions, we will be leaving out different views that we may have. We know that we cannot always go through the processes with the times and deep participation that we would like, but finding a balance and keeping it in mind can help us on the search.

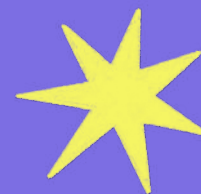
arba *When I think about what I can contribute to this module, I get two voices that coexist: my own, with my scars and lessons learned, and that of the collectives in which I participate, who also cross me and teach me. Personally, I know that I insist on stopping, stopping before what is urgent eats away at what is important. Stopping so that conflict is not covered up by silence or haste. Stopping because I know, from experience, that if we do not, it explodes just the same, but with more pain.*

I also bring discomfort. Sometimes I am the one who throws out uncomfortable questions, the one who says out loud what no one wants to mention. I do not always do it in the softest way, but I am confident that that discomfort can open up necessary conversations and remind us that the conflict is there, even if we do not want to look at it.

And I bring something I learned from Eli: caring without even knowing you. In the midst of a pandemic, in the midst of a feminist chat full of tensions, I was exhausted, unable to hold on any longer. Eli, who did not know me at all, wrote to me to ask how I was doing. That small gesture full of tenderness showed me that care can be immediate, without the need for years of bonding, and it marked me profoundly. It is an honour and a pleasure to have come to plan this project together.

From a collective point of view, I like I bring memory. I remember what we have experienced in other processes, both in my current organisation and in previous projects, and I bring those experiences so as not to repeat patterns that already hurt us. I also provide the perspective of the transfeminist lesbian communities which I am a part of, where we teach ourselves that affection and projects tend to go together, and that when conflicts arise, this becomes as challenging as it is revealing.

I think that my contribution is that mix: the person who does not want to stop reviewing themselves, who recognises themselves in their privileges and limitations, and the member who carries with them memory and collective learning. This tension between the personal and the common is where I try to contribute, with honesty, care and responsibility.



4 What culture of conflict do we have and which one do we want?

Now it is time to explore within our organisation, to ask ourselves how we have built our culture of conflict. Even if you think you have no culture, since you have not spoken about it explicitly, experience tells us that you do and that it is probably not the formal management of conflicts. It is certain that we have generated an organisational culture, and it is key to think about it consciously, not to judge ourselves or the organisation. We have certainly applied the best we have known with our tools at all times. If we are here with the will to learn other ways, this is a very good start. We are open to seeing what we can do to improve our co-existence.

We ask you some questions that may help you to start your individual and collective reflection:

- **Do you think that you have consciously managed the conflicts that have arisen in this organisation?** YES/NO
- When you have had conflict: **Do you feel that it has had a legitimate space to be managed?** YES/NO
- **Do you think that the power roles and the awareness about them are being reviewed in this organisation?** YES/NO
- **Do you think that your organisation has tools for conflict management?** YES/NO
- **Do you believe it would be necessary to establish a culture of conscious conflict management in the organisation?** YES/NO
- **Would you be willing to learn how to manage the conflicts that occur in our organisation?** YES/NO

We invite you to think about how to ask these questions depending on your dynamics, whether or not it is comfortable to speak transparently, even if we do not like what is going to be expressed. If you feel that you are not yet ready to address this topic directly, perhaps it is good to start with anonymous forms or mailboxes, and of course, be willing to see results that we do not expect.

One of the emotions that arises in these processes is frustration, of not achieving the goal we want, that the processes are not as we had thought, and that we have to make changes that make me uncomfortable. But as we gain tools to manage our own emotions, we will be more able to sustain the collectives.

We also need to ask ourselves individual questions about how we are in relation to conflict. It is interesting to be able to make an individual reflection and to be able to share it with the large group. Before making this suggestion, it is interesting to know how the group sees it, maybe

we are not ready to be in a large group sharing this exploration, maybe we need space. If you want to do a first collective inquiry, it can help not to force anyone to say or share or even do the practice deeply. Somehow, we must be aware that we are making a sensitive suggestion, which can take us to places where we do not want to be or do not want to re-open right now. It is important to keep in mind that this can happen to us to understand that not all of us can be at the same point of will to begin this exploration into our relationship with the conflict.

- **If you hear the word conflict: what is the first thing you identify or associate with the word?** You can draw a picture, write down words or phrases, or perform it with your own body.
- **How do you feel that you have managed the conflict you have experienced during your life?** Give yourself a space to remember experiences, write down what helps you to keep it in mind. Do not judge yourself, do not blame yourself for how you reacted or what could happen. We are in a space of internal listening, of reviewing what we have stored that can interfere with us in identifying and managing conflict. This question, we highly recommend that you can put it in common, helps in spaces where trust and mutual respect exist to let go of things that are not only our individual ones, but perhaps we can observe that they are more social, that they have to do with our way of understanding the world from how we have learned.
- **Do you feel that you have emotional management tools to address conflict from a collective restorative perspective?** Listen carefully, sometimes we do not give importance to the tools we have been normalising for pure survival. Sometimes we even feel that we never have enough to face certain situations. It is about you looking at what internal tools you have.
- **Do you think you need to reinforce your emotional management or your tools to tackle conflict?** Now we ask you to identify where you see that you may feel most lost, the point where you always get stuck, or whether you think you need to practice more in accompanied spaces that make you feel more secure.

You can adapt all these questions that we are proposing to you so they work best for you. The essence is being able to ask yourself internal questions, to observe what things are not just individual. As we shared in the first module, from different narratives, we are part of a unit, and much of what happens to us has to do with things that come from the collective, with socialisation, with the fact that we are an interdependent living being, dependent on things that connect us and that we should unlearn, as aspects that can make us vulnerable or weak. Obviously, we do not want to insinuate that these practices can be done in any context, it is vital that they can be done in spaces and with people who provide us with security and trust. Here, awareness of our power and the power of others is key, to feel more balance when opening this type of space.

In order to build a conscious and diverse culture of conflict, we must accept that the state of peace will not be constant. As **Mindell** tells us, «the state of permanent peace is not a sustainable objective». We have been repeating it through the different modules: conflict has to do with the relationship with what is living, we mutate, we change, and therefore, states of peace will change, they will mobilise us towards other places.

In this part, we recognise that, for people to whom familiar areas provide security, knowing where we are and how we do it can generate an additional stress impact. Another important aspect of how to manage emotions collectively is to know and recognise each other. It is clear that not all emotions are perceived the same for all people, or even at different times. It will be easier to implement spaces for honest and conscious dialogue to the extent that we feel that we are part of a group that recognises and cares for us, at the same time we share responsibility with taking care of ourselves and the rest of our lives, including the organisation as another living being to provide our care for.

Once here, the proposal is to assess:

- 1 What culture of conflict we have generated.**
- 2 Which one is the one we want to build.**
- 3 What steps we must take into account in order to implement it within our care culture.**

Making these processes as participatory as possible will help us not to leave things in the way, to feel part of the process and to understand what we are doing.

To begin building a foundation for our conflict management and prevention protocol, we offer you the following steps to work collectively:

- 1 Describe how we have experienced conflict management throughout our organisation.**
Perhaps it will help us to think about it with a timeline, letting each person set a milestone in that line that is important for learning about conflict management. They may be experiences where we have consciously managed, or perhaps experiences that we have had where we have not given enough space to conflict (when X happened, when X went away, when X changed us, etc.).
- 2 Collect what we feel and what we need as tools for conflict management and prevention.**
Here there can be an, unfiltered, collective brainstorming session, listing everything that each individual thinks is important to consider.
- 3 Gather the limits that we need to set as a group to learn to manage and prevent the conflict we have.** Here, the individual or collective experiences we have had can help us to think about what limits we would set now after the embodied experience.

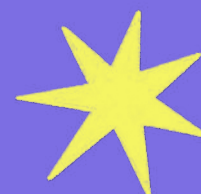
With the information obtained with the answers to these three points, we have the cross-cutting elements that we are going to take into account to define how we want to deal with conflicts from now on.

It is important that in the definition of the protocol/culture we are clear about:

- **What can we do if we feel uncomfortable?**
- **What formal spaces do we dedicate to talking about discomfort?**
- **Who can organise a space for sharing discomfort?**
- **What commitments do we make as a group when we have discomfort on the table?**
- **What tools do we equip ourselves with to learn to communicate in a non-violent way and to better manage our emotions?**
- **What ritual do we represent to understand that we are consciously causing conflict?**
- **Where will we have these written agreements?**
- **Who is responsible for keeping track of these spaces?**

We hope that these questions can help you to ask what you need, but that they are not a barrier nor are you afraid to start incorporating a protocol within your own culture of conflict because it seems very difficult to you. The intention is to bring reflections that we consider important, and then have a space to think, test and accept that the process will come and go. The important thing is not to make it «perfect», there are no «universal» rules; the ideal is not to lose sight of shared responsibility with the process and the impacts.

Surely there will be situations that will impact us during the learning process. This would probably also happen to us even if we had done an exhaustive study of how to do it without forgetting anything, but this is also part of the learning process. The more shared this process is, the more you feel that it represents you from your diversity, certainly the more aware you are that you are learning to «walk», that you are going to make mistakes, that perhaps it will not turn out the way you would like the first time. Collectively holding these feelings will help you to overcome them and will make you feel like your culture is making more and more sense, as long as you take care of yourself with respect, shared responsibility and recognition throughout the process.



5 More simple exercises

1 Calm seeds

Activity: write down a practice that helps you calm down and put it on a seed mural. The mural stays fixed and can be visited over time.

Objective: to gather personal resources when facing conflict.

Materials and space: paper, wall space.

2 Letters to the future

Activity: write a letter to your future self about how you want to manage a specific conflict.

Objective: to project horizons for care.

Materials and space: paper, envelopes.

3 Sentence charades

Activity: typical conflict statements («you always do the same thing») are distributed and acted out. They are then rephrased into careful sentences and acted out once again.

Objective: to experience the power of language and its transformation.

Materials and space: cards with phrases, large room.

4 Circle of silence

Activity: In a circle, each person has one minute of silence where they look at the group and think about how they feel in a conflict. At the end, they share voluntarily.

Objective: to give way to silence as part of conflict and care.

Materials and space: quiet space, stopwatch.

5 Collage of conflict

Activity: with images and words, everyone creates a collage that represents how they experience the conflict and how they would like to transform it.

Objective: to work on the conflict from an artistic and symbolic point of view.

Materials and space: magazines, scissors, glue, cardboard.

6 Travel rucksacks



As our intention is to share the knowledge we have been acquiring, we wanted to provide rucksacks that can serve you on your journey to conscious and diverse leadership. Our learning is based on our own experiences, on critical and conscious readings, on support they have given us and that we have also given to others. Our knowledge is not intended to be a universal truth but a source of inspiration for other organisations that want to bring more awareness to their care and leadership. We know that we are not neutral and also that we have cultural and social biases that we need to constantly review and work on. However, we believe that this critical and self-critical exercise is more powerful when done collectively and from the diversity of bodies that experience discomfort daily. From that place of forging diverse alliances, listening out of curiosity and mutual recognition is where we have seen the fruit of being able to intersect, of being uncomfortable, of collecting and learning to assume shared responsibility for the impacts, and understanding that, above all, it is a path, a process that never ends, one that is alive.

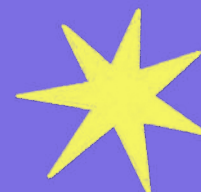
We invite you to find your own path, to investigate other sources of knowledge besides your own, to seek external support recommended by others who have a similar perspective to yours.

Although this is the last module in «Conscious and Diverse Leadership», you will have seen that all the modules are interrelated and are needed for conscious change. We have been following this path based on our vision, based on what has worked for us from our concrete experience, so we invite you to see what your journey would be like.

Regardless of what we just said, it is essential for every organisational culture to be clear about what care and leadership we need, and what we want to do with conflict. All this reflection must be exposed and accessible to all of us who are part of it; it must be in a language that is easy to understand and to apply for everyone.

These guides, protocols/cultures that we are going to generate will need monitoring: spaces, times, people who take care of processes and people. They will surely generate new agreements, new lessons learned and it will change during the journey that accompanies you. In this way, we will surely be closer to understanding that they are living processes that are constantly changing and evolving.

For our part, we hope that this content on how to manage and experience conflicts in organisations may be useful to them, and that you can reflect and review your way of feeling and dealing with conscious conflicts.



7 References

Glossary

Note: This glossary includes conceptual terms that appear in the module content that we consider important to place the reader in our frame of reference. Words have been included that can have multiple interpretations or that are not in common use, so we are specifying here the meaning with which we use them.

For other key concepts present throughout the training process —such as decolonial, transfeminist or resistance economies— refer to the **Module 1 Glossary**.

1 Conflict

Not as a battle to be avoided, but as a moment of inevitable, necessary and sometimes productive disagreement and discomfort for collective life.

2 Discomfort

A feeling of discomfort or pain that emerges in organisational life. Instead of denying or hiding it, it is recognised as a sign of asking for care.

3 Diverse co-existence

A way of living together, recognising differences, tensions and learning, without seeking uniformity.

4 Care in conflict

Understanding care not only as softness, but also as the ability to sustain differences, set limits and build trust in the midst of tension.

5 Boundaries

Necessary decisions and boundaries for taking care of oneself and the group. They are not barriers against others, but conditions of mutual respect.

6 Emotional responsibility

Recognising that our words and actions have an impact on those around us and taking responsibility for those effects without denying them or blaming the other person.

7 Trust

An essential condition for starting conversations and daring to show discomfort; it is built over time and it is cared for consistently.

8 Active listening

The practice of opening space for conflict to be expressed and shared, rather than making it invisible.

9 Talking circle

A restorative practice with ritual elements (object of speech, rules, role of facilitation) that seeks to create community, express diversity and prevent or repair damage.

10 Restorative justice

An approach that does not seek punishment or revenge, but rather to repair bonds and restore collective harmony.

11 Reparative justice

A perspective anchored in ancient and indigenous knowledge that understands conflict as an opportunity for community healing.

12 Indigenous law

Systems of social, cultural and political regulations transmitted orally within native populations, focused on collective harmony.

13 Traditional law

Regulations based on customs and traditions accepted by the community; they legitimise co-existence practices that are not codified in state laws.

14 Community healing

The spiritual, relational and collective dimension of conflict resolution processes in ancient knowledge.

15 Facilitation

The role in collective dynamics (such as the talking circle) that is not imposed, but rather helps to make the process fair, balanced and participatory. This role takes into account all voices, those that are heard and those that stay quiet.

16 Prevention

Not waiting for conflict to break out, but creating practices and spaces that reduce its intensity and allow us to anticipate tensions.

17 (Collective) repair

The process of restoring bonds and trust in a group after damage, recognising shared responsibilities.

18 Grief

Recognising the pain and loss involved in accepting that something must change in co-existence in order to move forward.

19 Collective learning

The pedagogical dimension of conflict: it is not just about «solving», but about learning together to transform ourselves.

20 Empathy

The ability to put yourself in the other person's shoes without abandoning your own boundaries, in a way that combines mutual care and self-care.

Resources

AUDIOVISUAL

- Rodhes, Ana (2016) **Intervención en conflictos y facilitación grupal —Escuela de Atención**. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2mmzgZRgyE>. («Conflict intervention and group facilitation —School of Attention»).

PODCASTS

- **Quando el miedo al conflicto te paraliza | @SomosEstupendas**. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rZ_jLiGTxM&t=1129s. («When the fear of conflict paralyses you»).
- **Prácticas Restaurativas y Sabidurías Colectivas**. Source: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/pr%C3%A1cticas-restaurativas-y-sabidur%C3%ADas-colectivas/id1276323457>. («Restorative practices and collective wisdom»).

SELF-PUBLISHED EDITIONS, GAMES, FANZINES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- **Card game ¡Va Jugando!** Source: <https://cila.comminit.com/content/%C2%A1va-jugando>. («Get playing!»).
- **Fanzine «Conversas para la juntanza»**. Source: <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/sites/default/files/2022-08/Conversas%20para%20la%20juntanza%20-%20Fanzine%20pedag%C3%B3gico1.pdf>. («'Conversations for juntanza' Fanzine»).
- **Children's activities and puzzle books «El Tesoro de Pazita»**. Source: <https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/media/746/file/el%20tesoro%20de%20pazita.pdf>. («The Treasure of Pazita»).

KEY PEOPLE

- **Fil a l'agulla Cooperative. Original Spanish Source: <https://filalagulla.org/es/qui-som>. Translated English version: <https://filalagulla.org/en/qui-som>.**

RECOMMENDED GUIDES

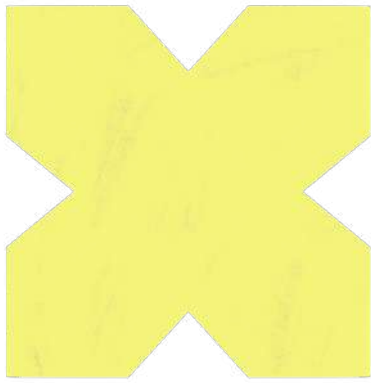
- Carro, Sara (2019). **El arte de aprender a tratarse bien. Fil a l'agulla** resources. Original Spanish Source: <https://filalagulla.org/es/recursos-lectures-recomanades>. Translated English version: <https://filalagulla.org/en/recursos-lectures-recomanades>. («The art of learning to treat yourself well»).
- Fil a l'agulla (2025). **Cercles de paraula i mirada restaurativa. Manual d'ús**. Original Spanish Source: <https://filalagulla.org/es/recursos-lectures-recomanades>. Translated English version: <https://filalagulla.org/en/recursos-lectures-recomanades>. («Talking circles and restorative perspective. User manual»).
- Fil a l'agulla (2017). **Guia per a la gestió de conflictes en les cooperatives**. Original Spanish Source: <https://filalagulla.org/es/recursos-lectures-recomanades>. Translated English version: <https://filalagulla.org/en/recursos-lectures-recomanades>. («Guide to managing conflict in cooperatives»).
- Mugarik Gabe (2022). **Autocuidado y cuidado colectivo en nuestras organizaciones**. Source: <https://viajandoporloinvisible.mugarikgabe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/guia-de-cuidados.pdf>. («Self-care and collective care in our organisations»).

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Article «**La mirada restaurativa en las violencias machistas**». Source: <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2025/05/la-mirada-restaurativa-en-las-violencias-machistas-sinonimo-de-antipunitivismo/>. («The restorative view of sexist violence»).

GIZ (2011). **Prácticas Tradicionales Maya de Resolución de Conflictos en los Territorios K'iche, Tz'utujil y Kaqchikel. Guatemala**. Source: https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/sites/default/files/media/file/2022/zfd-practicas-tradicionales-maya-de-resolucion-de-conflictos-1531_8.pdf. («Traditional Mayan Conflict Resolution Practices in the K'iche, Tz'utujil and Kaqchikel Territories»).

MINDELL, Arnold (2022). **El conflicte: Fases, Fòrums i solucions. Per als nostres somnis i cossos, organitzacions, governs i planeta**. Neret Edicions. (Conflict: Phases, Forums and Solutions: For our Dreams and Body, Organizations, Governments, and Planet.)



Radix

is a project dedicated to strengthening organisations that protect the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ communities through the Escuela Radix school and fund.

Radix is a co-funded project by **Calala** and **Otro Tiempo** and the **EU**.

Escuela Radix is a capacity-building school for feminist, women's and LGBTQIA+ civil society organisations.

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Theme 1. Conscious and diverse leadership focused on collective care in social organisations

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We are trainers and feminists for a more just, equitable, diverse and sustainable world, free from violence. Through training, support and other services, we are sharing our knowledge to aid transformative processes aimed at women, LGBTQIA+ people and/or professionals from the third sector and social intervention.



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