

Contribution to the 7th Global Report on Local
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Economies of Equality and Care

Care-based public policies and services for peacebuilding

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1. Introduction

Humanity faces multiple challenges at local and global levels that pose a threat to rights and peace. Challenges such as increasing inequalities; the escalation of conflicts, violence and wars; the increase in migration and forced displacement; the climate emergency and the eco-social crisis; the rise of violent extremism and totalitarianism; the deterioration of democracy; the uncertainties associated with the use of artificial intelligence, etc. In short, a multidimensional crisis that undermines the prospects for peace, stability, coexistence, fundamental rights, human dignity and sustainable development.

This context means that for many people today's society is insecure, plagued by threats that entail multiple forms of human insecurity, generating structural imbalances, inequalities, imbalances – ever-widening gaps between the poor and the rich –, exclusion, marginalization, injustices, regression or loss of rights that can lead to violent conflicts and threaten the progress of societies. In this sense, cities, which are increasingly interconnected, must deal with forms of violence associated with the local and the global and which affect municipal management. The permeability of borders, the growing population flows, migrant communities, the cross-border repercussions of economic or environmental factors or of those fleeing wars or being persecuted by their governments in their own states, reveal both the interdependence of societies and the gap in inequality that exists between them.

Given this situation, municipalities, as actors with the capacity to lead proposals and initiatives on global problems, need major transformations so that life in them can develop in a sustainable, equitable and inclusive manner, with justice, dignity, peaceful coexistence and free of any type of violence.

Since our daily lives are linked to the city, it must be a place capable of welcoming us with our differences and needs. Municipalities must create conditions for human security, peaceful coexistence, collective development and the exercise of solidarity. In short, the city is our home and as such we want it free of violence, oriented towards educating people to live peacefully through inevitable conflicts and governed by care.

Caring for people must become an essential and central axis of local public policies. These public care policies must be oriented towards promoting public services for care and care communities, so that the responses are collective, including communities in the approaches and proposals on care needs

throughout the life cycle. It is about going beyond care as a task inscribed in the private-family sphere and designing models based on proximity, co-responsibility and quality. It is about seeking particular solutions that articulate public and community resources and putting into practice a coherent care policy.

Addressing care policies involves considering the injustice of the prevailing care model that places this responsibility on women and within the scope of private life, generating poverty and isolation or the hiring of female immigrant labor in precarious and vulnerable conditions. Caring for people has become an essential and central axis of public policies for several socioeconomic reasons, including the disproportionate workload of women compared to men. The lack of adequate material conditions for caring turns care work into a vector that generates inequality, which impacts on the economy, poverty of time, physical and mental health of caregivers.

Therefore, implementing local public care policies is to address the basic needs that people have, contributing to the construction of peace in municipalities. Peace is a process of social transformation where violence decreases, there is an absence of undesirable conditions (poverty, marginalization, inequalities...) and the degree of justice increases, the presence of desirable conditions (decent work and housing, health, education...). Therefore, peacebuilding is understood as a substantial element of care to promote fair, peaceful, inclusive and emancipatory life scenarios.

2. Conceptual Framework

The concept of care has been linked to jobs that have historically been in the hands of women. In the literature there are various conceptions of the term care. For example, in the text of the Women's Health Observatory (OSM)¹, of the Spanish Ministry of Health, some are rescued that transcend the traditional ones:

"Care is a multidimensional need of all people at all times of the life cycle, although in different degrees, dimensions and forms. It constitutes the most basic and daily need that allows the sustainability of life."

¹ The Women's Health Observatory of the Directorate General of Public Health of the Government of Spain is working on developing common lines of action to reduce gender inequalities in health, from a perspective of participation and collaboration between all the agents involved in this area, generating and disseminating knowledge that allows for gender analysis and promotes the inclusion of the gender approach and equity in public health policies. <https://www.observatoriosaludmujeres.es/>

"By care we can understand the daily management and maintenance of life and health. It has a double dimension: 'material-corporal', and 'immaterial-affective'.

"Care is the set of activities and the use of resources to ensure that each person's life is based on the validity of human rights. Primarily, the right to life in the first person."

From the three previous definitions, care refers to all those activities that contribute to maintaining the life of individuals throughout their life cycle, which includes health actions, their management and maintenance in everyday life, ensuring the right to life with a strong emotional charge. In other words, it is in care that life is sustained and the physical, material, economic, moral and emotional well-being of people is guaranteed.

Nowadays, care in the city has been commercialized because it is no longer assumed personally or as a group, which opens a market for specialized services and citizens must cover their needs by resorting to this market. But what happens to those who cannot pay for this type of service?

2.1. Concepts around care

Some concepts related to care are presented below:

- **Care programs:** specific services directed to certain populations, such as early childhood in poverty, with the goal of child development and, in some cases, the redistribution of care.
- **Care policies:** consist of the articulation of various programs that seek to satisfy care needs and guarantee the exercise of rights of a specific population group.
- **Care systems:** governance models that coordinate policies and programs at national and territorial levels, to meet the care needs of diverse populations and redistribute unpaid care work.
- **Comprehensive care systems** are a set of policies aimed at creating a new social organization aimed at caring for, assisting and supporting people who require it. Its emphasis is on recognizing, reducing and redistributing care work to achieve models of co-responsible care not only between men and women, but also between the State, the market, the community and households. All of this from a human right, gender, intersectional and intercultural perspective (UN WOMEN, s.d.).

- **Community:** one of the central debates is how responsibilities are distributed between the State, the family, the market and what has been identified as community. Zúñiga (2020) systematizes a definition of community based on five elements: space or territory, as a need for physical anchoring of communities, although there is no clear correspondence between places and human groups; community interaction, as a set of relationships of reciprocity and mutual support where people make a commitment to each other; the psychological component, as a subjective construction of individual and group identity; participation, which makes the community something in permanent construction through intentional collective action; and the grouping of people, small enough to enable personal ties and recognize diversity. In summary, the author defines community as “a process (or several) of participation that takes place in a given physical space in which the people and groups that interact in it develop a psychological component of belonging/reciprocity”.

Although there are different meanings of the word community that refer to spatial frameworks (rural community, local, regional, national, European, international community, etc.) or to traits shared by human groups or communities (values, interests, customs, languages, cultures, etc.), for the context of this work the community will always be local (a neighborhood, an area, a town or a city) and will be made up of four structural elements: territory, population, resources and demands of the population.

Organized community

- **Organized Community:** Community organization is the process by which the local community provides itself with spaces for participation by its three protagonists, the spaces for relationships, and adapts them to develop community programming as effectively as possible.
- **Actors in community participation processes:** in the context of this work, there are three actors in community processes that are part of the social, political and institutional context of local communities: a) democratically elected representatives of administrations (politicians); professionals belonging to technical resources, whether from public administrations or private entities that intervene in the territory; and citizens who reside in that territory.

3. Who needs care and who should provide care

All people need care throughout their lives, since they are dependent from birth, unable to survive on their own and subject to the constant risk of contracting diseases or falling prey to unexpected aggressive circumstances. This need for care is due to the “radical vulnerability” that all human beings have by the very fact of existing. In other words, radical vulnerability is a common trait of all human beings. Therefore, all people are vulnerable and need care throughout their lives, regardless of whether the need and the impact are different for some people or groups or others, and whether the circumstances in which this need is manifested are different throughout the life cycle.

However, there is a vulnerability that is constructed. That is, a vulnerability caused by structural violence, such as poverty, discrimination, lack of access to health, work, housing, education, etc. This is what is called “constructed vulnerability” or being in a situation of vulnerability. In other words, the vulnerability they suffer is not due to their condition as human beings, but due to structural imbalances that are the cause of the lack of coverage of their basic needs.

Peace research addresses care from a broad and comprehensive perspective, understanding the assistance, attention and care of all people, both for their radical vulnerability and for their constructed vulnerability. That is, care for sick people, dependent people, elderly people, children, etc., as well as for all people who do not have their basic needs met to lead a dignified life or who are in a situation of lack of protection.

Caring for one another by one human being is an indispensable premise for human existence. But care must go beyond the private-family sphere to encompass both the local and the global. This debate can be related to the debate on the public-private dichotomy; there are no specific values for each sphere, but rather all values must permeate all spheres. In the private sphere, more justice is needed to prevent domestic violence or child abuse; at the same time, in the public sphere, new values are needed, such as care, to revitalize democratic participation and address serious problems such as poverty (Comins, 2008), or other types of violence such as inequalities, exclusions, discrimination, etc.

In this sense, municipalities are the most suitable places to carry out care actions and, therefore, city councils must prioritize the implementation of policies and public services focused on care. Since they are the institutions closest to citizens,

those that satisfy the most immediate needs of people and guarantee their well-being. Therefore, cities, towns... must create conditions for human security, peaceful coexistence, collective development, democratic participation and the exercise of solidarity. Implementing transformative public policies and services that promotes social cohesion, coexistence, the enjoyment of rights and citizenship, and a life free of violence.

The underlying thesis in the work that pursues the promotion of peace in municipalities is that it is necessary to establish conditions from the bottom up (taking care of daily living conditions, responding to human needs, taking care of what is small and close), and from the top down (designing structural frameworks, international, regional and local policies for conflict management and diplomacy, taking care of what is big) (AIPAZ, 2017)²

In short, the governance of care for the common good must be promoted from the local level, a governance for peace.

3.1. Social needs that require care policies

Below are some of the social needs that require care policies:

- **Ageing of society**

It is a demographic fact that the percentage of people over 65 years of age is increasing. On the one hand, there is a decrease in births and on the other, life expectancy is increasing. The ageing of the population is an indicator of well-being, but at the same time it entails a greater demand for long-term care services. The key factor is the quality of health and life.

Addressing this challenge means ensuring that people can live in decent conditions, enjoying access to essential social and health services, that they have an income that allows them to live independently, that they avoid impoverishment and that they contribute to healthy ageing.

The community or civil society usually organizes itself to deal with certain situations such as: visiting the elderly in their homes or local shops acting as a radar and notifying municipal Social Services when they observe that a neighbor stops going shopping.

- **Caring for the people who care**

² "Ciudades de Paz y Convivencia", AIPAZ, consultado el 26 de enero de 2025 <https://aipaz.org/ciudades-de-paz-y-convivencia/>

Today's society has a higher rate of dependent people (children, elderly people, people with physical or mental disabilities or people with dependent illnesses). Carers dedicate a large part of their time and effort to helping the person being cared for to cope with their daily life, helping them to adapt to the limitations that their situation imposes on them. Most of the time, caring tasks fall on women, whether these tasks are paid or take place within the family setting. Women continue to have an overload of care, they continue to spend many more hours a day than men.

Caring can be a rich and satisfying experience, but it can also be a lonely and ungrateful experience. Caring tasks require a lot of time and dedication; when these tasks fall on the woman in the family, for many of these female carers, the conflict is to reconcile work and care. They often live with dilemmas such as having to leave family members because they must go to work or give up work and their personal fulfillment to care for a family member. Care tasks affect the usual activities of any person, the distribution of time, especially the time spent on oneself; it affects the time spent on social relationships and, often, these times are dedicated to care. All of this can cause changes in the health and mood of the caregiver.

Beyond its feminization, care itself is a vector that generates inequality. This situation is transversal to the different positions in relation to care: workers in the economic sector of care and caregivers of dependent people or people with functional diversity who care for themselves or care for other people.

- **Access to housing**

Housing accounts for more than 70% of land use in most cities and determines urban form and density, providing employment and contributing to growth. However, housing has now become a factor of social and economic inequality, as a large part of the urban population cannot afford decent housing. It is no coincidence that a third of the world's population lives in informal settlements and that this group is increasing. More and more people in the world are unable to afford a decent home. Not to mention the crisis posed by the thousands of homeless people who sleep on the streets or in shelters.

Housing is the world's greatest challenge, difficulties in accessing housing have become a global problem, it is a problem in most cities. High housing or rent prices, lack of public housing or insufficient wages are the three most important problems, with young people being the most affected.

Housing problems are aggravated by population displacement due to climate change, forced displacement or war.

- **Unwanted loneliness**

First, it is important to differentiate between social isolation, lack of social contacts, and unwanted loneliness, the subjective feeling of not having quantity or quality in social relationships. Chosen loneliness is not a problem, unwanted loneliness does have negative consequences for the person who suffers from it, affecting physical and mental health.

Unwanted loneliness is a silent social problem, but one of great magnitude, as it affects more and more people. It is a growing phenomenon, and our social and relational system seems to be worsening it. Some studies indicate that the perception of unwanted loneliness is greater among young people, adolescents and the elderly. Other specific social groups with a greater probability of suffering from unwanted loneliness would be people with disabilities, migrants or caregivers.

There is a direct relationship between unwanted loneliness and vulnerability, affecting to a greater extent older people who suffer from some type of poverty, exclusion or social marginalization. Those who live in rural areas have lower rates of loneliness than those who live in cities or large towns, due to the greater proximity and social ties between inhabitants.

Given this situation, there is a shared feeling that it is necessary to act and launch coordinated action by different social agents that prioritize the fight against unwanted loneliness.

- **Beware of the climate and eco-social crisis**

Due to the climate crisis, natural phenomena or incidents such as heat waves, heavy rains or unexpected snowfalls are increasing in number and intensity. These extreme scenarios put the health of people, animals and plants at risk, so it is essential that municipalities develop adaptation strategies that take these extreme phenomena into account.

Around a third of the world's urban population is at risk of suffering the consequences of cyclones, floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters. In the face of these phenomena, the resilience of cities must be addressed. A resilient city is one that assesses, plans and acts to prepare and respond to all types of obstacles, whether sudden or slow, expected or unexpected. In this way, cities are better prepared to protect and improve the lives of their inhabitants.

Given the breadth of the concept of resilience applied to the urban context and focused on urban planning, it is necessary to address it in its different dimensions: social, physical and environmental. From this perspective, a fundamental part of social resilience is the knowledge and education of citizens regarding the risks which they are exposed to in their urban environment, and the construction of a type of community resilience that allows them to "anticipate, plan, confront, recover and adapt to threats".

- **Rethinking urban planning and architecture**

Prioritizing the sustainability of life means providing the material and immaterial conditions that support care. In the field of urban planning, this means breaking with the public/private dichotomy, since care is not only located in a specific space or time; the material needs of care transcend spatial and temporal boundaries.

Our urban spaces are not designed to provide support for (radical) vulnerability, which is innate to life. One only must look at the space occupied by cars on the streets in relation to the space delimited for people. After years of industrialization, cities have become places geared towards productivity. A particularity that favors, for example, the possibility of consuming on terraces, driving to work or delivering goods in a simple way, but at the same time turns cities into a hostile environment for carrying out activities far from productive ones such as resting, drinking water without paying or having fun without consuming

Public space has been allocated to private or economic activity to the detriment of its social and relational function. Putting life at the center cannot become a slogan empty of content. Prioritizing the sustainability of life implies providing the material and immaterial conditions that support care also in the field of urban planning.

The caring city is one that cares for us, cares for our environment, allows us to care for ourselves and allows us to care for other people.

The social and solidarity economy has launched different initiatives to attend to care in a community way, such as cohousing experiences for families and the elderly, cooperatives and unions of women working in the home or various childcare initiatives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this community-based approach to care has shown its strengths and it is necessary to reflect on how to protect it from a public perspective.

- **Caring for women**

Women in the role of caregiver: The fact that women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work is widely known and well documented; just as it is well documented that too much care makes women poorer and sick. The question is, who cares for women?

Women as women suffer violence: gender violence is one of the forms of violence with the greatest social impact, both due to the high percentage of the population affected and the degree of social acceptance and normalization it enjoys. Violence against women is mostly exercised in the private sphere, which makes it difficult to detect and prosecute.

Machismo, although in decline as a public discourse, is still very present in private space, where gender-based violence mostly occurs. Thus, the most unsafe space for women is the private space, where abuse and violence are perpetrated by people they know in a “supposedly safe” space, which makes it a very invisible form of violence.

4. Care as a means of peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a process of social transformation in which violence is reduced, undesirable conditions are eliminated (poverty, marginalization, inequalities, etc.) and the level of justice is increased, as are desirable conditions (decent work and housing, health, education, etc.). Therefore, peacebuilding is understood as a substantial element of care to promote just, peaceful, inclusive and emancipatory life scenarios.

4.1. The ethics of care in the public sphere

The gender perspective, with the introduction of ethics of care, is what pushed us to go beyond the demand for security policies. In contrast to an individualistic concept of security that holds individuals responsible for their own fate and obscures the moral responsibility of those who create structural conditions to prevent its transformation, alternatives call for new policies of care in interaction with justice and in explicit recognition of the relational nature of human beings.

The ethics of care emphasizes the responsibilities that arise from interpersonal relationships and bonds that occur between human beings and the importance of addressing specific needs. Empathy and the activity of caring are fundamental to this process.

The ethics of justice remind us of the moral obligation not to act unfairly towards others. The ethics of care remind us of the moral obligation not to abandon, not to turn our backs on the needs of others.

To think ethically is to think about others. If we want this thinking to become practice, it must be translated into measures of justice and attitudes of care. Both things are essential. The only thing that the ethics of care does is to draw attention to the neglect of care as a basic ethical prescription, putting emphasis on the need to build a collective responsibility for sustaining life.

From the perspective of peace research, caregiving tasks are addressed not only to children, sick people, the elderly, etc., but also to all those individuals whose basic needs are not met. From this point of view, caregiving tasks are not limited to the private sphere but also encompass the global sphere. The transformative power of the ethics of care extends beyond the personal sphere to the political sphere, and from there to the global context of social life. Fiona Robinson (1999) argues that care is relevant not only in the private sphere but also beyond it. In this sense, she proposes a critical ethics of care that can provide clues regarding the nature of morality, moral motivation, and moral relationships in such a way that it takes the debate on international relations beyond its narrow borders.

The apparent particularism and localism of care has made it easy for care to be incorporated into local politics, but it has made it difficult even for advocates of care to imagine how it might be applied in a world where many of the most serious problems are global problems. Care, at first glance, does not seem to respond well to distance. This contrasts with the ethic of justice, for which distance ensures impartiality and is therefore fundamental to moral judgment. Since it is a

morality of closeness, rather than distance, the question that arises is how and how much an ethic of care might be useful applied to the global context and as a political project.

According to Fiona Robinson (1999), the main contribution of care ethics to international relations is the emphasis on the creation of new social and even personal relationships between groups and individuals from different socio-economic levels and places. These new relationships may motivate moral care, which is "incompatible with the characteristically interactive and relational relationships that define care." Caring for distant others may amount to a form of colonization, since the distance that separates people from each other erases the interpersonal element of care. It can be argued that when others are too distant or numerous for personal caring relationships, their neighbors should be pressured or motivated or incited to care for them, or they should be empowered to help themselves.

Tronto (1993) points out that the care of one human being for another is an indispensable premise for human existence. He sets out the four phases that make up care: worrying about or detecting the need for care; assuming responsibility for that care; materializing the care; and allowing oneself to be cared for. Thus, care, with the structure mentioned above, can serve both as a moral value or as the basis for the political achievement of a better society.

Therefore, care must extend beyond the private sphere to encompass the global. This debate can be related to the debate on the public-private dichotomy; there are no specific values for each sphere, but it is necessary that all values permeate all spheres. Hence, the feminist motto of the personal is political. In the private sphere, more justice is needed to prevent domestic violence or child abuse; at the same time, in the public sphere, new values are needed, such as care, to revitalize democratic participation and address such serious problems as poverty. For this reason, more and more proposals are appearing for applying the ethics of care to social justice policies.

Education in the ethics of care, solidarity and responsibility towards others will favor the creation of a more committed and participatory civil society. Participation of civil society is necessary for the construction of peace.

4.2. Co-responsibility for care with the community

Care as a driving force for social participation. Education for peace is also an education in citizenship. The democratic and active practice of citizenship is a key pillar in building a culture of peace. The value of care can strengthen and broaden citizenship in general.

One of the great achievements of modernity was the discovery of the dignity of the person, his or her autonomy. But this achievement has degenerated in contemporary societies into an excessive individualism based on living independently of others. This current individualism has three serious consequences: the inflation of individual rights without any reference to duties; the predominance of pleasurable interests; and the loss of the sense of belonging to a community. Feminism in general and the ethics of care in particular have criticized abstract individualism. We could say that abstract individualism underestimates the role of social relations in the constitution of the authentic identity and nature of human beings.

At the very micro level, there are initiatives that arise from the community itself and that can be used as practices of democratization of care, which decisively contribute to correcting the very serious gender injustices that sustain the care system.

In recent years, community networks have emerged in many cities to provide care. These are citizen initiatives, groups of citizens who are committed to various areas such as dealing with unwanted loneliness, promoting shared parenting spaces, encouraging healthy and local eating, promoting health routes or school routes, etc. In the context of COVID-19, many neighbourhood associations were involved in developing proposals for mutual support, monitoring neighbours who might require help to acquire food or medicine and developing food banks for poorer neighbours. In general terms, neighbourhood organizations are participating and contributing to the creation of community care projects. These experiences arise from a great diversity of associations that change depending on the topic.

There is talk of a new care policy referring to two complementary realities: 1) On the one hand, the increasing importance that care policies are taking in the field of formal politics. Examples of this importance could be the Dependency Law in

Spain³ or the government's efforts to reconcile work and family life. Care issues are now part of the political agenda; 2) On the other hand, the demand to incorporate the values of the ethics of care into citizen participation, in the field of civil society. This could be called "caring citizenship".

Thus, care leaves the space of the private sphere to approach the public sphere, both at the level of formal policies and informal policies or civil society. The second dimension, that of "care citizenship", is the one that interests us most here in terms of its contribution to the construction of a culture of making peace. It is essential to create spaces for new practices of care and responsible citizenship: practices in which people can manifest themselves as caregivers and/or recipients of care, in dialogue with each other, concerned about their own well-being, that of others and that of nature. In this way, new forms of democratic action emerge that integrate care as a vector axis, thus converting care into a practice of participatory democratic politics.

The conditions for peace require two processes of democratisation: one at the micro level, from the municipalities, and another at the macro, supranational level. And in both, the ethics of care can be applied.

4.3. Rights-based approach

There is still a long way to go before care is truly considered a social right for all citizens. However, only to the extent that it is included as a personal and universal right of people to care for and be cared for will significant progress be made, both in terms of recognition of what has been invisible until now, and in terms of quality of life for citizens.

The development of care theories enabled an interpretative and normative shift, by confirming the scope of care as a right. That is, not only cares no longer a problem, it is paid and unpaid work, but it is a human right, which, whether called as such or not, is mandatory for States. Guaranteeing people the effectiveness of the right to care in its three dimensions, that is, the right that all people must care, receive care and self-care.

Transition to a development style that prioritizes the sustainability of life and the planet, that recognizes that care is part of human rights and that it is fundamental to the well-being of the population as a whole. Care policies mean

³ The Dependence Law was created to guarantee the care of all people who need care. This law offers a set of services and economic benefits aimed at the care and protection of dependent people <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2006-21990>

guaranteeing the rights of people who need care, as well as the rights of people who provide care. It makes visible the effects of the care economy in terms of well-being.

From this approach to care, cities, given their proximity to citizens and their capacity to act with local communities, can contribute to changing social relations at a local level and can influence changing international relations. At a local level, the municipality is the most appropriate place to carry out participatory actions of responsibility and care. Furthermore, the participatory experience at a local level develops in the individual the feeling of responsibility for the global public good.

4.4. Gender equality

Gender injustice. It is necessary to overcome the sexual division of labour, to move towards a development style that prioritises the sustainability of life and the planet, that recognises that care is part of human rights and that it is fundamental for the well-being of the population. Care policies mean guaranteeing the rights of people who need care, as well as the rights of people who provide care. It makes visible the effects of the care economy in terms of well-being.

Promoting measures to overcome the sexual division of labour and move towards a fair social organisation of care, within the framework of a new style of development that promotes gender equality in the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The way in which a society addresses problems relating to care has important consequences for gender equality: whether it increases the capacities of women and men or whether it perpetuates the reduction of women to traditional roles that link them to certain models of femininity and motherhood. It has also been highlighted that the way in which care is provided is inextricably linked to other structures of inequality such as race, social class and place of origin, among others.

It has been proven that the value and praxis of care are fundamental in promoting a participatory, responsible and interconnected civil society. Therefore, it is a priority that care tasks are shared between men and women to ensure this is the case. It is necessary to rescue the value of care as a human and citizenship value, and not merely as a gender value.

5. Public services for care and peacebuilding

Care must be a priority for society as a whole and, therefore, for local administrations, which must promote public policies and services for care and peacebuilding.

Care policies must be formulated with a focus on rights, gender and the principles of solidarity, equality and universality. And they must have adequate economic resources for their implementation.

On the other hand, it is important to develop a comprehensive model of public services focused on people and that allows for responding to and paying attention to the different needs and situations that guarantee the enjoyment of a dignified life. To do this, it is necessary to create and/or strengthen public services with adequate resources, ranging from social, educational, health, dependency, training, education, support, capacity development, transmission of knowledge and social values, etc. Public services that are close, equitable and accessible to all citizens; that improve people's quality of life; encourage participation and the exercise of citizenship; reduce inequalities; and contribute to the prevention and eradication of any type of violence, and to peaceful coexistence.

Public services that care are essential to regenerate the social fabric; promote autonomy and the development of capabilities; reduce violence and inequalities; and foster coexistence. Therefore, to build peace linked to social justice and the satisfaction of basic needs. Building peace must become a central axis of municipal public policies to promote fair, peaceful, inclusive and emancipatory living scenarios. And, in this way, address the causes of conflicts with the aim of preventing them, since the most common features underlying conflict are:

- Excessively concentrated power structures.
- Uncompetitive economic dynamics.
- Institutional legitimacy questioned by citizens.
- Management problems to control the problems that most concern citizens (unemployment, poverty, inequalities...)
- Limited citizen participation and political disaffection.

For this reason, it is important that public policies for peace and coexistence take on the social challenges that generally have a significant impact on the processes: social relations, shared values in communities, work from attitudes, communication formulas, etc. That is, all public policies on coexistence and peace must be committed to relational work, thus contributing to generating

social and democratic mechanisms that enable democratic and inclusive responses to the problems and conflicts that naturally arise in all human and community spaces.

Policies that address the different dimensions of human security, involving aspects such as economic security, food security, access to health, personal security, a healthy environment, community security, political security, decent housing, employment that allows for a dignified life, etc. This means that actions from institutions include the perspective of the theory of care.

It is necessary to implement coherent policies that promote the necessary transformations, through comprehensive care responses, to the challenges that citizens face. A coherent care policy for the construction of peace and coexistence that serves to launch the actions and changes necessary towards a governance model that pursues the common good. Adopting this approach implies making care and peace a central and transversal objective for all municipal political action, which considers and includes all other readings, identifies intersections and guarantees holistic attention to various aspects that affect social well-being.

Peace municipalism is more necessary than ever today, in order to provide adequate responses to the multiple challenges faced by people in cities and in different territories, and to be able to advance comprehensive solutions towards reducing inequalities, promoting human rights and peaceful coexistence.

Municipal reality, much closer to the person, to the citizen, can generate mechanisms of satisfaction and response that are much more significant for the population. In addition, the adaptation and adjustment of public policies to the specific logic of each municipality guarantees that citizens participate in a more evident way, because the proposals will be more significant for them. Likewise, municipal policies tend to incorporate all minority communities and groups more easily, thus fighting against discrimination and generating more inclusive responses for all people.

5.1. Care-focused communities and public services that contribute to peacebuilding

Below are two public services focused on care that contribute to peacebuilding:

- **The PILARES project⁴** for the well-being of Mexico City. It is a municipal project that seeks to intervene and reduce violence and inequalities in specific neighbourhoods of the city, spaces controlled by armed groups, with the lowest indices of Social Development and higher population density, with a greater presence of young people from 15 to 29 years old. In these spaces, the municipality builds a building in which anyone can begin or continue their studies, from literacy to university, as well as sports, cultural activities, training in trades for production and marketing that allow economic autonomy. These spaces contribute to regenerating the social fabric, they are spaces free from control by armed groups, they are safe spaces for the community. The community proposes the activities that are carried out and with the participation of technical personnel, the activities that the community needs are developed. (In 2021, it received the Building Equality Award given by the International Center for the Promotion of Human Rights of UNESCO),
- **Happy Learning Centers⁵** in Andong (Republic of Korea). South Korea's low birth rate and aging population make lifelong learning particularly important. Aware that lifelong learning is a key factor in citizen happiness and national development, the central government adopted a National Plan for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning, a comprehensive strategy with medium- and long-term policy objectives. In line with this national plan, Andong City Hall offers lifelong learning opportunities to ensure the quality of life and well-being of all citizens.

The aim of the Happy Learning Centres is to develop and offer programmes that meet the needs of the local population, collecting their opinions and conducting surveys on their demands and needs. All the training activities carried out in these centres are aimed at improving the quality of life and collective well-being and at empowering residents to manage local problems in a self-organised way. The training offer of the centres is very varied and includes training courses for trainers, capacity development, visual arts, community action projects, specialised or tailor-made programmes, with the possibility, in addition, of obtaining an official certificate of achievement.

⁴ "PILARES para el bienestar", Gobierno de la Ciudad de México, consulted on January 22, 2025 <https://pilares.cdmx.gob.mx/>

⁵ "Happy Learning Centers", International Association of Educating Cities, consulted on January 22, 2025 <https://bidce.org/en/experience/72>

According to a survey carried out by the City Council, people who participate in the training programmes feel happier and more fulfilled, improving their health and well-being in general.

- PAZOS Project. Peace and Opportunities for Palmira⁶.** The Municipality and the community of Palmira successfully implemented a comprehensive approach to violence prevention through the PAZOS project. The homicide rate was significantly reduced and mediation in community conflicts in the municipality was facilitated through a preventive intervention model as opposed to the classic repressive police models. Through intervention, prevention, the creation of safe environments and improvements in access to justice, it was possible to have a considerable impact on the high rates of urban violence. This is an experience funded by the Open Society Foundation and implemented by the organization “Riqueza Completa” and the Applied Research Center of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Cali. This experience received the Peace Prize from the UCLG/UCLG and the Association of Municipalities of the Netherlands (VNG). It has great potential to promote new technical assistance experiences in this area of urban violence, through decentralized cooperation.
- “Refugees Welcome”⁷ Hospitable Communities.** In recent years, following the mass flight of people from the war in Syria and more recently from the wars in Ukraine and Palestine, there has been a solidarity response from citizens and local authorities to welcome them. Communities of citizens who, together with the local government, launched the Refugees Welcome initiative and project, which aims to promote a cultural change and a new model of welcome and reception. It is a horizontal hospitality project to facilitate the inclusion of refugees in the city and in the country. A project that helps more than any other measure to overcome the vulnerabilities of newcomers. In addition, it creates safe spaces that encourage the expression of personal potential, participation in the community and common well-being.

Opening our doors, living with other cultures, integrating in person, weaving citizen networks, demonstrating that “we can overcome fear”, relating horizontally, and raising awareness about International Protection through personal experience. For displaced people (asylum seekers or refugees),

⁶ PAZOS Project, consulted on January 28, 2025

<https://palmira.gov.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Infografia-PAZOS-L.pdf>

⁷ Refugees Welcome, consulted on January 28, 2025 <https://refugees-welcome.es/>

being part of a shared household can be a decisive moment on the path to full autonomy. Living with local people is the best way to become part of a community and quickly learn the social and cultural context of the host country. We promote a model of horizontal inclusion based on mutual knowledge between displaced people and local citizens, which helps to combat prejudice and discrimination. *The Culture of Welcome* is good for all people, not just displaced people.

Networks that welcome refugees include the *International Network of Cities of Refuge (ICORN)*⁸, which offers refuge to artists, writers and journalists at risk due to their profession, financed by different public and private institutions in Norway, and *Shelter City*⁹ (or Cities of Refuge), which offers temporary shelter, supporting human rights defenders who are at risk. Networks such as the Catalan *Ciutats Defensores dels Drets Humans*¹⁰; and other regional and municipal programmes of the Spanish State for the protection of human rights defenders.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

1. The work that pursues the promotion of peace in the municipalities is that it is necessary to establish conditions from the bottom up (taking care of daily living conditions, responding to human needs, taking care of what is small and close), and from the top down (designing structural frameworks, international, regional and local policies for conflict management and diplomacy, taking care of what is big)
2. The task of building peace is a medium- and long-term process, and to achieve this, public peace policies must be established that are aimed at generating decent living conditions for all people. In this sense, one of the major problems in carrying out these profound transformations is short-term policies and the lack of resources for their implementation.
3. Municipalities must promote a permanent or continuous evaluation of their work: on the one hand, responding to their commitments in terms of accountability as a public institution and, on the other, to be able to react when the results are not as expected. Evaluation proposals must also form part of the design of the policy itself and must also be participatory proposals: citizens, agents and institutions must be able to contribute to all

⁸ International Cities of Refuge Network, consulted on January 30, 2025 <https://www.icorn.org/>

⁹ Shelter City, consulte on January, 30, 2025 <https://sheltercity.org/>

¹⁰ Ciutats Defensores dels Drets Humans, consultate on January 30, 2025 <https://ciutatsdretshumans.cat/>

the evaluation phases that are foreseen in the development and implementation of the policy.

4. Care must be a priority for society as a whole and, therefore, for local administrations, which must promote public policies and services for care and peacebuilding. Understanding peace in all its facets, as the absence of all types of violence (direct, structural and cultural) and the presence of social justice.
5. Public care policies must be geared towards promoting public care services and care communities, ensuring that responses are collective and that communities are included in approaches and proposals regarding care needs throughout the life cycle.
6. Municipalities must contribute to strengthening the connection between the territorial and the community, given that community action, participation and care require relationships of proximity, neighbourhood and local belonging.
7. Placing care on the political and urban agenda means putting the emphasis on the precise conditions for its development and on the need for a radical transformation, in which care responsibilities move from being resolved in the private sphere and, mainly, by women to becoming part of a social, collective and community commitment. As care becomes a civic value, it is going beyond the private sphere and entering the public sphere. It is necessary and urgent to extend the value of care beyond the private sphere, breaking the glass wall that exists between both spheres.
8. It is necessary to broaden the approach from care as a right to care as a responsibility, in order to avoid providing public or private services that are welfare-based or paternalistic, in which the person offering the care service decides what should be done and places the recipient of the care action in a passive position. If care is approached from a perspective of responsibility, it implies that both citizens and administrations are subjects of law and have obligations at the same time; they are responsible for acting and caring for those who need it. In other words, everyone has the obligation to collaborate and participate in the generation and enjoyment of care.

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