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FEMINISM IN TRANSLATION

Ecofeminist Degrowth for Sustaining *Buen Convivir*

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Translator's Introduction

This essay is a translation of "Decrecimiento Ecofeminista para Sostener el Buen Convivir," by Amaia Pérez Orozco. This is a slightly revised version of the fifth chapter of Orozco's book, *Subversión Feminista de la Economía* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2014), originally titled "Ecofeminism or Barbarism." Pérez Orozco is a Spanish feminist economist and activist, who has participated in diverse feminist and ecological movements in the Spanish state, with an eye toward connecting those with struggles in Latin America. She is currently a member of the feminist research-action collective Colectiva XXK: Feminisms, Thinking & Action, which collaborates with social movements and organizations to produce research analyses and educational workshops and materials, putting feminist thought into practice.

Subversión Feminista de la Economía, now in its fourth reprinting in Spanish, was a landmark publication with major impacts in the fields of both economics and feminist philosophy, but also for social movements across the country. It was groundbreaking both in introducing concepts from Latin American struggles into the European conversation, and for drawing connections between feminist analyses of reproductive and care labor and proposals from the environmental movement for degrowth. These concepts have directly fed into conversation with the wave of social movements that grew out of the 2011 Indignados movement and the renewed wave of feminist activism that the country has seen in recent years, especially in the massive feminist strikes, through Pérez Orozco's participation in these movements and popular education processes.

Pérez Orozco's work has also had important impacts on the international stage, especially through her collaborations with the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and other interventions with the UN about care labor and global care chains. *Subversión Feminista de la Economía* has been widely read and engaged with throughout Latin America, especially through Pérez Orozco's ongoing collaborations with feminist researchers and activists in Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador, among others. However, to date, little of her work has been translated and circulated in the English language.

Drawing from the wealth of knowledge produced by feminist and ecological movements across Latin America and the Spanish territory, Pérez Orozco's work challenges both conventional economic theories and feminist theories based on Western

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conceptions of the individual. Weaving together ecological and degrowth theories, feminist economics, and Latin American Indigenous ecofeminist positions, this text proposes the perspective of sustaining life as a way to decenter capitalist markets both in economic analyses and in proposals for alternatives. As an alternative to centering markets and accumulation, the text proposes the notion of *buen convivir* (collectively living well), adapted from Latin American social movements and Indigenous communities, as a common horizon of struggle. To do so, it examines different understandings of degrowth, focusing on the contributions from feminist theories and movements to degrowth theories, considering the invisibilized and feminized labor of care and reproduction and the household as both an essential economic unit and a space of power relations and conflict. Defining sustaining life as the creation and maintenance of the conditions of possibility for a life worth living, the text also calls into question who the subject of that life is, understanding that life worth living in terms of webs of interdependence between human and nonhuman life and, indeed, whole ecosystems. This perspective emphasizes the vulnerability and interconnectedness of all life and questions the white, male, bourgeois subject as the norm for both economic theory and political and social movements. Yet it simultaneously challenges a reactionary ethics of care, based on notions of feminized self-sacrifice, and calls for entirely new understandings of subjectivities that privilege relationality over independence. The text concludes by discussing the construction of a common subject who is not a preexisting subject but one built from all those spheres of life that are marginalized and attacked by processes of capital accumulation.

Different critical perspectives have long insisted on the need for systemic change.[1] Today we must recognize that change is already underway. Now the urgent question is to find ways to govern that change with justice and equity. This text contributes to the horizontal dialogue between these critical perspectives from a particular site of enunciation. This site is notably situated in the zones of accumulation throughout the globe—*in this fortress called Europe*, even if in its internal peripheries (the Spanish state, one of the "PIGS": Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain)—from which it articulates a collaborative work with Abya Yala.[2] Through "emancipatory feminist economics,"[3] we hope to contribute *partial truths* to our common understanding, as part of a search for collective cartographies with which to guide the ecosocial transition in which we are immersed.[4]

Building the Common for the Ecosocial Transition

We are in the midst of a multidimensional crisis that affects socioeconomic, political, and ethical structures; it preceded the pandemic, but is also accelerated by it. It is so deep that we could speak of a civilizational crisis: the project of capitalist, heteropatriarchal, and racist modernity is broken. That rupture enters into an accelerating feedback loop with profound and complex ecological collapse, thus requiring the metabolic degrowth of our socioeconomic systems. The combined civilizational crisis and ecological collapse confirms that we are inhabiting an ecosocial transition, in which the world as we knew it ceases to exist.[5]

This systemic crisis involves a process of peripheralizing the center: the planet's zones of accumulation are becoming zones of dispossession.[6] The crisis of social reproduction expands globally, and precarious life is imposed as a new regime of existence for the global social majorities. The promises of individual success that *neoliberalism* (today's hegemonic version of capitalism) offered to each person, each nuclear couple, each company, each country, are systematically unfulfilled. The dream of development

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has been shattered. This system does not accommodate all our "American dreams," and "a gap, a crisis, a malaise, a formless sensation without a specific name that indicates 'this is not working' emerges" (Gil 2011, 309). Faced with the failure of the seduction of the American Dream and increasing loneliness, "America First" is proposed as the expeditious solution. We are offered a community to which we can belong through the violent expulsion of the other and the reinforcement of the internal hierarchy: you can always be one of us (in terms of whiteness, nationality) so long as you fulfill the role assigned through gender and social class.

The discourse of seduction and of explicit violence are not so distinct. The latter more clearly demonstrates what the former hides. Both tend toward increasingly aggressive modes to guarantee the structural dynamics of accumulation and dispossession. Against this opposition between belonging and expulsion, how can we build a world otherwise in which we all belong and in which all lives, in their multiplicity, are valued? We urgently need to take responsibility for the ecosocial transition because change, whether we like it or not, is already taking place. To do so, we must share an understanding of a common problem and trust that a better future is possible for everyone.

Taking the Perspective of Sustaining Life

Silvia L. Gil urges us to *build the common* in two dimensions (Gil 2011; 2017). The common must first be built as a point of departure, identifying the causes of our discontent and their structural roots tied to the perversions inherent in this heteropatriarchal, racist, (neo)colonial, ecocidal, ablist capitalism—what we occasionally call, paraphrasing Donna Haraway, that *scandalous Thing* (Haraway 1991). Second, we have to build the common as an end goal, because we need to decide how to direct unavoidable change. We do not speak of a closed or static future, but rather a shared horizon of transition or utopia. Different critical perspectives that center sustaining life as an analytical and political axis and that decenter the capitalist market prove essential in this construction of the common.[7]

Feminisms focus this proposal in a particular way, emphasizing the broad range of processes and labor necessary to maintain life, which exceed the market, and tracing the heteropatriarchal dimensions both of the ways of sustaining (or attacking life) and the hegemonic notion of a life worth sustaining. This feminist perspective understands "sustaining life" as recreating the conditions of possibility for lives that are worth living, understanding life as inherently vulnerable, as a potency but not a certainty. Its conditions of possibility can be created only collectively; we are not self-sufficient; rather, we depend on one another. Interdependence is a basic condition of existence, as is ecodependence: life is possible only within a living planet. Thus, the socioeconomic system is a web of interdependence, contained in an ecosystem that exceeds it, where one grapples with the vulnerability of life. From this perspective, at least two basic questions arise. First, the *what*: what is that life whose sustaining we want to understand, whose lives are we talking about, and what are the hegemonic ethical-political conceptions of life that are up for dispute? The second question is the *how*: how can socioeconomic structures sustain that life, both those that already exist and those we must we construct?

Buen Convivir *against the Capital–Life Conflict*

By asking these questions, we confirm "the irresolvable and radical (referring to the roots) tension between capitalism and sustaining human and ecological life" (Herrero

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2010, 28). Identifying this tension expands the notion of the capital–(waged) labor conflict to include not only all types of labor, but also to affirm that the conflict is with life itself, the planet as a whole, and is not reducible to labor power alone. In capitalism, this structural capital–life conflict is, by definition, resolved by guaranteeing the preeminence of capital's valorization process. As Cristina Carrasco affirms, "between the sustainability of human life and economic profit, our capitalist patriarchal societies have chosen the latter" (Carrasco 2001, 28), placing life itself in systematic danger. Capitalism is a "death economy" (Picchio 2012) an economic mode driven by a "biocidal logic" (Herrero 2010, 27).

Thus, in this scandalous Thing in crisis, there is a conflict with *life*—in its comprehensive sense—encompassing the whole of the life–death cycle (but concentrated in those moments in which we are most vulnerable) and the myriad dimensions that constitute "the complexity of life" (Picchio 2012, 31). It is a conflict with life in its collective sense, as a shared reality, although certain lives not only benefit from this system, but also establish a conception of life worth living that can be reached only at the expense of dispossessing all other lives. It is a conflict with *the living*—without separating human from nonhuman life—recognizing that an ecocidal civilizational model is, in the first or last instance, suicide.

Given that the toxicity of this scandalous Thing refers both to our idea of *life* and the mechanisms with which we make it (im)possible, we must build the horizon of utopia both on the level of the *how*—with what socioeconomic and political structures do we want to sustain life—and the *what*—what *life* do we collectively aspire to?

To date, there is no one term in the Global North that contains a shared political horizon. In Abya Yala, the recuperation of ancestral concepts linked to social movements' resistance to the *long neoliberal night* of the 1980s has enabled the construction of a shared horizon of struggle. We see this in notions of *sumak kawsay* in Kichwa (used primarily in Ecuador and usually translated as *buen vivir* or the good life), *suma q'amaña* in Aymara (used primarily in Bolivia and usually translated as *vivir bien* or *buen convivir* in Spanish, and as good living or collective good living in English).[8]

We tentatively propose using the notion of *buen convivir*, which we could translate as the collective good life. This is not an idealization of proposals made by Indigenous movements, nor of how they have been adopted by institutions and much less, we hope, an act of (neo)colonial dispossession. We use the term contextually, motivated by the conviction that, after centuries of believing ourselves to be the civilizational reference, it is necessary for us to learn from discussions taking place in the *planet's zones of dispossession* as a way of decentering ourselves. This move must overturn everything: just as *sumak kawsay* approaches institutional questions based on a distinct cosmology, our use of *buen convivir* would have to emanate from an epistemology and ontology in rebellion against the hegemonic ones. We choose to speak of *buen convivir* rather than *buen vivir* to reinforce the collective dimension, distancing ourselves from individualist proposals of happiness that we run the risk of falling into in the Global North.

We understand *buen convivir* as a (future) ethically and politically codified notion of the *life* that is worth living, which would ultimately be the result of a radically democratic discussion. We still cannot fully describe it because that discussion has not yet taken place, but we can outline a few proposals. This notion of life must incorporate a multidimensional conception of well-being, understood as always being embodied and experienced collectively. It must recognize vulnerability as a basic condition of existence and take into account eco-interdependence and the limits it implies; it must be

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universal, while also having room for singularity and autonomy, acknowledging life's complexity and finitude.

Ecofeminist Degrowth

In this text, we suggest that *ecofeminist degrowth* could be, for the Global North, the path for channeling the ecosocial transition along the path of *buen convivir*. The term *ecofeminist* brings together those perspectives that center sustaining life, as discussed above. The notion of degrowth can be understood in different ways.

A first, common, approach to degrowth critiques conceptions of well-being as the constant and unlimited increase in market-based consumption. This notion of well-being, besides being unsustainable in environmental terms, generates dissatisfaction. Degrowth advocates argue that you can live better consuming less in the market, working fewer hours for a wage, and freeing up time for other activities. According to José Manuel Naredo, "better with less" refers to "an ethics of voluntary restraint, not only measured in physical terms, but also in terms of finance and power, while affirming the enjoyment of life" (Naredo 2009, 217). This opens up the question: if we no longer aspire to unlimited consumption, what would make life meaningful?

Feminisms make relevant contributions to this debate. They affirm that our horizon of transition must take up the question of joy and pleasure, since it is precisely desire that capitalism traps.[9] Furthermore, the debate cannot be established in dichotomous terms pitting needs (which must be guaranteed) against desire (which must be questioned).[10] They warn against emphasizing access to tangible resources, leaving aside issues such as bodies, sex, or emotions and disregarding that decessities are both material and affective-relational and that the two dimensions are inextricably linked. Finally, feminisms raise the issue of "restructuring" the infinite amount of invisibilized labor that exists beyond *creative leisure time* and waged work and that generally falls on women (Grupo de Feminismos Desazkundea 2015, 19).

A second way of understanding degrowth underscores the metabolic dimension by recognizing the socioeconomy as an open subsystem within a finite ecosystem. This forces us to recognize that we have already surpassed the biosphere's limits, even though responsibility is distributed in a profoundly unequal way. As discussed above, ecological collapse brings about a necessary metabolic degrowth. The political task consists of adjusting our use of material and energy, as well as our generation of waste, in accordance with a principle of sobriety. This requires taking into account the actually available material and energy flows when making calculations, without dreaming of technological improvements that would allow for escaping the planet's limits.[11] On the other hand, we must approach this reduction of the biophysical foundation with criteria of global redistributive justice, prioritizing redistribution over growth when it comes to repairing the current lack of resources to enable a livable life for enormous sectors of the population.[12]

A third sense in which we could use the notion of degrowth is that of affirming that life must be understood in terms of its vulnerability and interdependence, dismantling the false, harmful, masculinized, and white chimera of self-sufficiency as the existential objective and its hidden counterpart of self-sacrificing, feminized, and racialized dependence. Self-sufficiency is the hegemonic way of understanding life—what we could call the "frame of intelligibility of life" to use Judith Butler's terms[13]—that underlies the logic of *growth*, that is, of capital accumulation, whose preeminence gives rise to the capital–life conflict. As Butler puts it, "The problem is not merely how to include

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more people within existing norms, but to consider how the existing norms allocate recognition differentially" (Butler 2009, 20). We need to change the way in which we understand life, constructing other notions that would enable all lives, in their diversity, to be valued.

Fourth, we speak of degrowth as a commitment to drastically reducing the spaces motivated by the *growth* logic and, going further, to affirm that a socioeconomic system capable of sustaining *buen convivir* cannot revolve around accumulation. This requires building a diverse economy, interweaving different radically democratic economic institutions motivated by a common search for *buen convivir*. It also means bringing the responsibilities of the invisibilized dimensions of the socioeconomic system out into the open, dissociating the task of sustaining life from femininity, and putting an end to the sexual and racialized division of labor. Ultimately, it requires constructing a socioeconomic network that operates in terms of collective responsibility.

In what follows, this text develops the last two of these meanings, as they are those to which emancipatory feminist economics can make the most contributions. It is also important to note that we have no desire to use the notion of "degrowth" to tie ourselves to a label that we know is polemical.[14] What matters is the political content with which we seek to fuel the debate nourished by the questions raised by degrowth, ecological, and feminist movements.

Against Self-Sufficiency: Vulnerability and Interdependence

Building on Butler's proposition of grievable lives, we could say that, in order for a life to be considered worth sustaining by *this* socioeconomic system, it first must be "apprehended as a life" (Butler 2009, 13). From a feminist position, we argue that that recognition is tied to an anthropocentric, androcentric, and Eurocentric ideal of not needing anything or anyone. This hegemonic notion of life, that negates the basic conditions of existence of vulnerability, ecodependence, and interdependence lies in the very heart of the accumulation process. It is embodied in the privileged subject of capitalist modernity, that subject in which all the axes of inequality intersect in their privileged form, and that which we ironically call the BBVAh: white, bourgeois, adult, urban, heterosexual man with normative functionality.[15]

That is the subject that holds corporate power, dominating the process of capital accumulation and putting life as a whole at the service of his particular life. As we have stated elsewhere, "The capital–life conflict emerges because the way through which they meet their vital aspirations is through accumulation, dispossessing the lives of others and the life of the planet, turning modes of collective reproduction of life into private modes of the 'production' of capital" (XXK and SOF 2021, 22–23). This dispossession is legitimized because it turns its own—supposedly self-sufficient, isolated from all others—life into the paradigm of the human. Affirming self-sufficiency means negating the limits generated by bonds between living beings and is thus used to justify inequality, by hiding the surpassing of limits. Self-sufficiency is the fantasy of those in privileged positions who appear to obtain it through the invasion of extractive frontiers and the appropriation of others' lives (bodies, time, work, resources, and so on).

Our political wager involves recognizing the vulnerability present throughout the life–death cycle, since it could become "the internal lever for rethinking the assumptions on which contemporary human existence is constructed" (Gil 2011, 306). It is not a matter of constructing interdependence; it already exists: "Depending on one another is not, therefore, something one chooses, but something that just is" (Foro

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de Vida Independiente and Agencia de Asuntos Precarios Azien 2011, 201). Furthermore, as Gil states, interdependence "is not something that is good in itself because it does not express a specific content" (Gil 2011, 306). In fact, it is currently managed in terms of exploitation and inequality. Recognizing our own vulnerability means accepting the fact that we all have dependencies, and that such dependency does not negate our capacities as agents nor our constitutive political subjectivity. We are, we exist, and we inhabit the world as part of a broad living whole that we affect and are affected by. Our task lies in taking advantage of that possibility to understand or, better yet, to feel the common, and then to acquire the political power to generate a collective fabric able to create the conditions of possibility for that vulnerable life, as addressed in the following section. The absence of said fabric makes ontological vulnerability become a politically constructed precarity of life.[16]

Recognizing interdependence forces us to pose the question about *buen convivir* in a collective register. For those of us who have constructed our identity in a Eurocentric epistemology, it is extremely difficult to profoundly understand ecodependence and interdependence. We permanently inhabit a tension between well-being as an individual embodied experience and a lived experience that can be achieved only collectively. We understand that we need to break with the language of happiness, which understands private property and the existence of markets as the institutional guarantee for the individual expression of happiness. The commodified *right* to enact particular notions of happiness becomes the privilege that we are given or denied based on our position within this scandalous Thing. Furthermore, in this discussion about collective *buen vivir* (not individual happiness), we propose two inalienable ethical criteria: "universality (it is either accessible to everyone or it is not *buen vivir*) and singularity (it either respects the diversity of lives, opening space for difference, without homogenizing it or penalizing as inequality, or it is not *buen vivir*" (Pérez Orozco 2015, 28).

However, it is difficult for us to go further, as Latin American comrades have done: they explain that, in other cosmovisions, well-being is a collective experience embodied not only in one's body, but in the "body-land territory" (Cabnal 2010). They warn us of the possible Eurocentric individualist bias of many of our demands.[17] Could we, those of us who inhabit the planet's zones of accumulation, or would we want to, attempt to understand ourselves more collectively, less in isolation? Could those of us who inhabit the planet's zones of accumulation attempt to understand ourselves more collectively and less in isolation? If we were to take that path, we would probably reach territories that seem unimaginable to us today. Perhaps we could start by attempting to redefine our political commitments from that basis, for example, by talking about the "collective right to care" (Colectiva XXK 2020) instead of care as an individual right. We could also attempt to reconstruct our desires together with others. For example, instead of trying to achieve our reproductive desires through accessing assisted-reproduction markets, we could construct a desire for shared child-rearing based on an understanding of reproduction as a "relational act" to "respond to reproductive desire outside of a productivist, individualist, and heteronormative framework" (Lafuente-Funes 2021, 249).

The final element in terms of dismantling the notion of self-sufficiency places us on the other side of the coin: the mirage of self-sufficiency can subsist only if other subjects deny their own existence and dilute their being into an alienated being. Only rarely does the left's critique of individualism recognize that if we all acted according to that precept, society itself would be impossible, because nobody would take responsibility for sustaining life. As Almudena Hernando affirms, the imposition of an "individual identity" in capitalist modernity does not replace what she calls "relational identity," but

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rather coexists with it (Hernando 2012). Different subjects and/or subjects in different spheres enact each identity, but only one can be successful: the former.

Subjected to the pressure of the logic of accumulation, relational identities become sacrificial identities, placed in the service of the one occupying the fully human position of self-sufficiency. With different incarnations and intensities, these logics of immolation are imposed on those who occupy the *servant classes* in the heteropatriarchal, racist, and class-based socioeconomic structure. Therefore, recognizing interdependence requires defending sufficient levels of autonomy, guaranteeing spaces of freedom, recognizing diversity, and the availability of resources to develop one's own and collective life projects, to ensure rights and not commodified privileges. Feminisms have particularly signaled that the socioeconomic construction of both hegemonic masculinity and femininity gives rise to "damaged subjects," to use María Jesús Izquierdo's words (Izquierdo 2003). The critique of the damaging chimera of self-sufficiency tied to the hegemonic construction of masculinity cannot lead us to an idealization of a supposed (feminine) ethics of care. That ethics, subjected to the pressure of the logic of accumulation, becomes a reactionary ethics of care.[18] To build what Precarias a la deriva would call an "ecological logic of care" (Precarias a la deriva 2005), it is crucial to rebel against the everyday performative reconstruction of the heterosexual matrix and its economic articulation.

Toward Economies Otherwise for Sustaining *Buen Convivir*

Affirming that life is vulnerable means saying that we cannot take it for granted, but rather that it is necessary to articulate a collective responsibility for creating its conditions of possibility. Thus, the question becomes: what institutions do we need, in which spaces, and how are we going to make *buen convivir* possible? Despite all our doubts and unknowns, we can affirm that it is imperative to subvert the existing structure. That structure is what imposes a logic of accumulation that acts as the gravitational pull organizing the whole system; it drowns economies *otherwise* and hides the responsibility for sustaining life in invisibilized spheres.

Subverting the Existing Structure

It is not only a question of ceasing to prioritize capitalist markets as the dominant socioeconomic structure, but also making them disappear: "We have to convert capital's means of production into means of the reproduction of collective life" (Aboitz 2018, 99).[19] The logic of capital accumulation must be replaced by a new *ecological logic of sustaining life* as the backbone of the socioeconomic structure. To degrow the spheres driven by the logic of capital accumulation, we have a multitude of mechanisms that imply a more or less extensive, intensive, and direct withdrawal of resources that are currently in the hands of private capital. These mechanisms can be implemented at the level of nation-states, a more local level, and the supranational level.

We can distinguish between means of resistance and of transition.[20] Resistance can be understood as measures that defend those still-existing *outsides* to the logic of accumulation, dimensions of life that cannot be covered by capitalist markets, social groups that only partially inhabit those markets, and territories in which life issues are still fundamentally resolved in the margins of capitalist circuits. These measures of resistance include opposing five interrelated processes: the new wave of trade and investment agreements, (neo)extractivism's advance, the privatization of common goods and public

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services, the commodification of intimate and biological life, and digitalization at the hands of corporate power.

The means of transition are those that are already emerging from *within* the socioeconomic institutions that are a constitutive part of the system in crisis or, at least, do not require a frontal break with them. Yet they simultaneously achieve a twofold objective: they respond to urgent needs while establishing the foundations for systemic change. These measures employ the mechanisms of welfare states and public policies in a tripartite direction: regulating markets, intervening in the unequal primary distribution that occurs in markets, and taking on direct responsibilities for regenerating well-being. Among other examples, these would include the defense of labor rights (including the reduction in the working day without pay cuts, but with a revision of pay scales); the critical defense of strengthening public-communitarian services based on progressive and profound tax reform and not on public indebtedness; the constitution of citizen debt-auditing processes; land reform and the promotion of agroecological models; priority intervention in especially speculative markets such as housing or key ones such as energy, and so on. Many of these measures have emerged from a perspective of short-sighted productivism[21] and are, therefore, constructed based on and by the hegemonic subject. Thus it is necessary to revise them, drawing on broad and diverse critical perspectives. For example, we propose that, when defending labor rights, we have to prioritize the right to *balance*, through the struggle to *recapture little bits of life* from capital, without allowing the rhetoric of balance to obscure the capital–life conflict, which is extremely visible in the distribution of work time.

Distinguishing transition measures from mere patchwork responses requires criteria that would enable us to test the potential for systemic change contained in a given measure. Elsewhere, we propose four principles: *amalurrización* (return to mother earth), decommodification, decorporatization, and territorialization of the collective organization of life:

> We understand them as beacons to help us navigate the complexity of the current political contest and to prefigure paths along which to move from the current framework of the possible, defined by capitalist growth, to an alternative one that positions a *profound reorganization of the foundations of capitalism on the basis of a radical and multidimensional redistribution in favor of a diverse majority*. In the face of biocidal accumulation in the hands of corporate power, we seek to establish a political and socioeconomic fabric where all lives matter. (Pérez Orozco and Fernández 2021, 11)

These four principles specifically impact the spheres dominated by corporate power. Taking power and resources away from corporate power is a critical move because that power attacks life. But to remain here is insufficient: on the one hand, because the logic of accumulation is imposed as the dominant economic model, drowning the diverse economies that we need to recuperate and consolidate; on the other hand, because the hegemonic socioeconomic structure has a hidden other, on which it is equally important to intervene.

The systemic preeminence of the logic of accumulation inhibits collective responsibility for sustaining life. Feminisms argue that it is necessary to shift responsibility for sustaining life away from invisibilized economic spheres, that *hidden other*, which we have diverse names for: domestic work, reproduction, care, and so on. That

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responsibility is submerged in that sphere where it remains privatized (it is not common, but rather belongs to the private-domestic sphere and is increasingly resolved in the private-market sphere) and feminized and racialized (linked to a reactionary ethics of care as a mainstay of white hegemonic femininity, as well as classist and racist neo-servitude). The endangered vital processes have to be sustained by that hidden sphere, by work that *does not exist* in spheres that are *not economic* and by subjects that *are not political subjects*, because if they were to exist and be named, and if those who did that work were to have a political identity, the conflict would come to light in all its severity. Thus, we can say that the socioeconomic system is shaped like an iceberg: in the visible part, the epicenter, we find capitalist markets, governed by a logic of accumulation and associated with the white masculinity of the BBVAh. In the hidden part, under water, we find the processes that sustain life being attacked. That sphere has to remain *invisible* in the sense of lacking politicity, in Rita Segato's terminology (Segato 2016). This iceberg revolves around a heteropatriarchal and colonial axis that defines the levels of visibility and mechanisms of invisibilization.

Therefore, at the same time as we take resources away from capital, it is also necessary to deprivatize the responsibility for sustaining life, taking it out of the domestic sphere and placing it in the public-common. It must be defeminized and deracialized, putting an end to the international sexual and racial division of labor. It must be rendered visible, by constructing politics in and from the processes that sustain the life under attack.

For all of these reasons, degrowth of the logic of accumulation must be accompanied by another simultaneous movement, which we could call the *democratization* of households.[22] This refers to making what happens within households a topic of political debate. From there, we seek to move toward horizontal relations within households, with a truly equitable and just distribution of labor and resources, recognizing the plurality of forms of cohabitation when it comes to guaranteeing rights, and encouraging the diversity of what Martu Långstrumpf calls "chosen families" (Långstrumpf 2013). It is a matter of establishing "networks of coexistence that are truly chosen, which requires profound changes in the households that we have [and] reinforcing and consolidating the most horizontal forms of coexistence that already exist, but that face many difficulties because they do not fit into normative categories" (Colectiva XXK 2020, 22). Finally, households cannot be understood as isolated units, but rather as interwoven in "communitarian networks, rooted in the territory" (Colectiva XXK 2020, 22).

To make guaranteeing access to conditions that would enable a life worth living into a common responsibility would require putting already existing mechanisms into practice and also looking for new mechanisms, given the relative lack of proposals in that area. This lack is due, in part, to the need to keep households invisible as a socioeconomic unit founded on inequality in order to maintain the false social peace of a growth society, and, on the other hand, to the fact that modifying this structure directly touches elements related to the profound and everyday reconstruction of identities, going beyond the tendency to only intervene *outwards*, so dear to short-sighted productivism. Thus, just as we demand, for example, public-communitarian care systems to socialize tasks that should not correspond to households, such as attending to situations of greater dependency requiring intensive and specialized care, we also argue that it is equally fundamental to bring tasks that are currently outsourced by contracting domestic labor back into our own hands: "the delegation of one's own care cannot be established as common sense" (Colectiva XXK 2020, 24).

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Building a Socioeconomic Fabric Otherwise

If we withdraw resources from capital, where will they circulate? If we take tasks out of the household, where will they be dealt with? We want to make those resources circulate in socioeconomic spheres in which there is a collective responsibility for sustaining a life worth living and in which resources and power are redistributed. What could those spheres be? In the Global North, there are generally three answers to this question: the state, self-management, and the commons.

Short-sighted productivism is encased in the state–market binary, but we can make use of several elements from this perspective: the critique of private property and the claim that the state can curb markets and establish mechanisms to break down the heteropatriarchal and racist pact. This involves defending what is still public today and reversing privatization. We also rescue the principal of universality and the capacity to guarantee it. However, when the debate stays on this level, there are at least four problems. First, there is no discussion of the *what* and, therefore, a certain notion of *development*, based on environmental depredation, continues operating.[23] The second problem is that these debates rarely address the issue that greater state involvement does not necessarily imply authentic collective responsibility for sustaining life, which can still be relegated to hidden spheres. Third, universality tends to be limited to the borders of citizenship, and often at the cost of homogenizing diversity and violating the principle of singularity. Fourth, the defense of the state often understands the state based on a centralizing and top-down perspective of power, without critiquing the current institutional framework.

In opposition to the state, self-management wagers on the creation of spaces in which we can "lead our lives autonomously," with different rules of the game than those imposed on us by the system (Taibo 2019, 7). What is powerful about this perspective is the attempt to construct alternative socioeconomic relations and the will to disobey existing institutionality, including private property. As weaknesses, we can point to the lack of a guaranteed questioning of the sexual division of labor and that, by remaining small-scale, it requires developing other forms for processes that need greater coordination and a larger radius of action.

Following a certain line of continuity, there is the proposal for the commons as a communitarian property- and resource-management regime, that, at least partially, makes social reproduction independent from waged labor and responds to parameters of direct democracy.[24] This perspective allows for thinking about ways of organizing the common other than the predefined administrative apparatus, taking into account the complex nexus between economics and politics and questioning political subjectivities and institutions constructed in relation to waged labor (unions, the traditional left). The limits, in our opinion, come from perpetuating the invisibilization of the socioeconomic spheres in which life is resolved, which only rarely become the topic of serious debate, and much less the core element for reconstructing the sphere of the social today.

In the Global North, the debate is often limited to the state, self-management, or commons triad. In the Global South, movements do not wager on a single path, but rather speak of *economies otherwise*.[25] They propose promoting already existing forms of economy in resistance: the peasant economy, social/solidarity economy, popular economy, Indigenous economy, economy of care. Thus they break with (capitalist) *market economy* to construct a plural economy *with markets* that would enable access to *buen convivir* in contrast to Western expectations of life. This implies the coexistence of

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forms of market exchange (not driven by the profit motive, in which use values are prioritized over exchange values) with other forms of production and exchange, for example, subsistence economies and barter. These proposals include autonomy (for example, over one's own labor) and prioritize short cycles and proximity. To a large degree, they are linked to the recuperation of ancestral knowledges, often in women's hands. They are connected to the critique of private property in itself and as the only form of property. We underscore this approach's commitment to revaluing the economic protagonism of nonhegemonic subjects, such as Indigenous and Afrodescendant women and working-class sectors. Thus we can return to the idea that we have to start from what Magdalena León calls the "actually existing diverse economy" to move toward another possible diverse economy (León 2009).

This diverse economy also exists (or resists) in the Global North: the transformative social and solidarity economy, popular economies that are gaining momentum in the context of the peripheralization of the center, peasant economies, and so on.[26] Although we have to create new institutions, we are not starting from scratch. The power of these formulas, which do not compose any type of *manual* for transition, lies in experimenting with other modes and explicitly addressing disputes over how to organize and value work and jobs, how to establish mechanisms for recognizing decessities, and so forth, since in formulas of the state and capitalist market those discussions are already closed. At the same time, the defense of the public and of mechanisms to contain markets can be useful for constructing other socioeconomic modes beyond the state-market-household triad. This can take place at the same time as we look for other ways to effectively practice direct democracy, in and through the functioning of the public. Ultimately, it can serve to construct the public-communitarian: the common.

We can imagine a future diverse *economy otherwise* as networks of nodes that are connected within each level (some communities with others, some chosen families with others) and between different levels (from the household to the community and/or the public and vice versa). These structures would be connected through a decentralized distribution of the responsibility to sustain the conditions of possibility of life, organized according to the scales of interdependence. We could imagine that in each level (and in diverse institutions at each level) different systems for recognizing decessities and valuing and distributing work (market exchange, gift logic, sustenance, citizens' rights, and so on) would operate. That is, we are not talking about a single mode, but rather a heterogeneous socioeconomic structure. It would be a matter of weaving that web that makes life function and whose absence makes life precarious, and of exploding the public/private-domestic dichotomy, starting from the fact that today it is in the latter where life is resolved, whereas the logic of accumulation dominates in the former. This web will necessarily be "rooted in the territory" (Colectiva XXK 2020, 11), which requires a process of relocalization, decomplexification, and self-centering of socioeconomic processes.

In summary, we propose collective responsibility for sustaining *buen convivir* in the sense that it is not relegated to the subaltern, feminized, and racialized part of a world divided in two; rather, it should be part of the common and the terrain of the political. It must be the priority and backbone of the socioeconomic system. This is a radical subversion of the socioeconomic model imposed by this scandalous Thing and requires the construction of a diverse socioeconomic fabric otherwise, empowering what already exists in rebellion and inventing new modes.

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A Common Subject

What political subject could articulate and enact this proposal for ecofeminist degrowth desiring a horizon of sustaining *buen convivir*? Although we pose the capital–life conflict as a common problem around which to articulate political struggle, we do not start from the premise of a strong preexisting subject, marked by a common experience of subordination.

In this scandalous Thing, an intense and complex hierarchy is created among lives. The further we get from the privileged subject, the less our lives are considered worth sustaining by the social whole. Capitalist markets, as inherently hierarchical structures, provide a materiality to this system of differential valorization of life. In opposition to those few lives that are highly *valued*, we find the bulk of lives that are valuable only to the extent that they are *at the service* of the accumulation process itself and that, while they all inhabit territories of precarity in life, they also establish relationships of servitude among themselves. The greater its proximity to the circuits of accumulation, the more that life matters, the fewer responsibilities it has to carry out invisibilized work to sustain life, the lower its rates of exploitation and precarity, and the greater its margin to exercise relative privilege. Finally, following Segato's distinction, there is another set of lives whose value is precisely death, with their disappearance being valuable both in an instrumental register as well as in expressive terms (Segato 2016). These are the territories of necropolitics or "gore capitalism," as Sayak Valencia refers to it (Valencia 2010). Going further, there are lives that form what we could call, drawing on Zygmunt Bauman, "human waste": lives that don't have any value, not even through death (Bauman 2004). As we affirmed elsewhere:

> Under this perspective, the capital–life conflict becomes a problem that is simultaneously common and unequal. . . . In political terms, our strategy does not lie in removing the veil so that everyone recognizes that it is capitalism that exploits us. We could appeal to the "working class," "women," "the people of the South," "the people," or any other collective subject that seems closest for us to summon, but we have to recognize that we must create that political subject and that, to do so, we have to address this conflict in the specific situations in which the unequal way in which the conflict affects us is materialized. (XXK and SOF 2021, 27)

With Gil, we ask: "How can we go back to saying 'we,' but differently?" (Gil 2017, 93). We propose a we that is situated and constructed through the exercise of a politics of the common. If there are to be collective subjects, they will be the result of a difficult task: demonstrating the convergence points of different movements and subjects against the backdrop of a social confrontation. Attempting to dismantle the recreation of privilege/oppression implies addressing not only precarity, but also the privileges that another's precarity generates for us, those that we receive due to inhabiting a colonizing geopolitical space, those that impregnate us when we adjust, even partially, to a normative mold. The dream of innocence, of being about to elaborate the debate about what *buen convivir* consists of from a purely oppressed and violated position, of being able to locate the guilty parties entirely outside of ourselves, in corporate power, falls apart.

We have to build conflict starting from the invisibilized socioeconomic spheres and the diverse subjects who do not fit into the BBVAh norm. It is precisely those spaces of non-politics in which the capital–life conflict is hidden, and depoliticizing them is the essential maneuver used to guarantee that that tension does not explode. It is the

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nonhegemonic subjects who do not fit into this perverse understanding of life that we want to transform. Therefore, we propose rebelling against life precarity and not only labor precarity. We defend the reduction of the working day not because we could *produce* the same amount working fewer hours, but because we do not have time to work in the market because of nonmarket tasks that are essential for life (and life itself). Our call is for the end of the revolutionary fetish to be a factory worker defending his family's bread in favor of becoming the domestic worker who desires an autonomous life.

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Notes

1 We understand these critical perspectives in terms of Zygmunt Bauman's definition of the left: that way of perceiving "the human condition and its prospects and untapped possibilities" characterized by two basic assumptions: "The first assumption is that it is the duty of the community to insure its individual members against individual misfortune. And the second is that, just as the carrying capacity of a bridge is measured by the strength of its weakest support, so the quality of a society should be measured by the quality of life of its weakest members. These two constant and non-negotiable assumptions set the left on a perpetual collision course with the realities of the human condition under the rule of capitalism" (Bauman 2007, 8).

2 Abya Yala is the name used by different decolonial and anticolonial perspectives to refer to Latin America. It comes from the Kuna language, of the Indigenous Kuna people who inhabit the territories today corresponding to Panama and Colombia.

3 A feminism that could be defined as anticapitalist, transfeminist, ecofeminist, and antiracist, emphasizing the economic dimension. The nomenclature of emancipatory feminist economics can be found in Aguinaga Barragán et al. 2017; and Dobrée and Quiroga Díaz 2019, and that of a feminist economics of rupture in Pérez Orozco 2014. This understanding of the economy is characterized by its determination to act as a subversive practice and by being profoundly territorialized: by prioritizing the diverse spaces that we inhabit, we learn to see other territories, we look for what is unique and what intersects with us (Re-Vuelta 2021). Thus, this text directs its calls for systemic change to the planet's zones of accumulation, recognizing their global historical responsibility with other territories of the world.

4 This text is a synthetic and updated re-elaboration of chapter 5, "Ecofeminist Degrowth or Barbarism" of *Feminist Subversion of the Economy* (Pérez Orozco 2014, with subsequent editions in 2015, 2017, and 2019). It is set to be published in English by Common Notions in 2022.

5 In speaking of an ecosocial transition, we do so very differently from notions of an *energy transition* articulated around a Green New Deal project that, in the best of cases, seeks to amend the current socioeconomic system and, in the worst of cases, to recover processes of capitalist dispossession and accumulation. This is in line with other proposals, such as those from, the Transdiciplinary Research Group on Socioecological Transitions (https://transecos.wordpress.com/), whose most recent publication is Álvarez and Garí 2020.

6 We alternate among the nomenclature of "zones of accumulation" and "zones of dispossession," Global North and Global South, and center and periphery, understanding that each set of terms emphasizes different and complementary issues.

7 The notion of sustainability comes from the ecologist perspective (and should not be confused with its perversion in terms of *sustainable development*), whereas the emphasis on life is more connected to the feminist question about how societies are reproduced. This pioneering text for introducing the notion of the sustainability of human life is Carrasco 2001. Among the more recent work following this thread, see SOF and XXK 2021 and Carrasco and Quiroga 2021. A confluence of views can be found in REAS 2014.

8 Similar notions are used in other parts of Abya Yala: *Lekil cuxlejal* in Tseltal; *ñande reko* in Guarani, and so on. For more on these proposals, see Medina 2001. Ivonne Farah and Luciano Vasapollo return to these debates at the height of the progressive governments in the region (Farah and Vasapollo 2011). For feminist perspectives see Cabnal 2008 and 2012; Vega 2014; and Varea and Zaragocin 2017. Both concepts have institutional support, taken up in the constitutions of Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009), although how much of a rupture the corresponding legislation represents is a matter of profound debate.

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9 On the potency and limits of a politics of desire, see Gil 2011; Vega 2011.

10 We use the word *decessity* to resignify the idea of "needs" without separating it from "desires." It is a proposal that emerges from popular education initiatives among women in Central America: "the word 'needs' had become an enemy for them: their 'needs' always had to do with what their husbands—if they existed—or their children, others said, in such a way that they spent their lives struggling for the desires of others. They 'desired' and they fought for changes, and it did not seem to them that the process could be a simple acceptance of needs" (Miguel Ángel Martínez del Arco, personal communication, December 9, 2011).

11 This broad principle could be broken down into other more precise ones, such as Jorge Riechmann's proposal that defends four basic principles corresponding to respective problematic features of the current situation (Riechmann 2005): first, a principle of self-support, sufficiency, or generalized management of demand to take on the problem of scale (the ecological saturation of the world); second, a biomimicry principle (coherence between natural and human systems) to confront the design problem; third, a principle of ecoefficiency to confront the problem of inefficiency in the use of raw materials and energy; fourth, a principle of precaution in the face of the Faustian problem (uncontrollable technoscience).

12 We do not address this dimension in depth here since other comrades have already tackled the metabolic issues better: Riechmann 2005; Naredo 2009; Herrero and González 2011; Riechmann et al. 2012; Herrero 2017; Naredo et al. 2021.

13 Butler makes a more complex distinction between the norms of "recognizability" as those that establish "the more general conditions that prepare or shape a subject for recognition" (Butler 2009, 19) and "schemas of intelligibility that condition and produce norms of recognizability" (21). For the purposes of this text, it does not seem necessary to be quite so precise.

14 We want to echo Naredo's critiques when he affirms that "degrowth's objective is an offshoot of the reductionism of the ordinary economic focus, because the term in itself does not give rise to any idea of changing the model or the system, but rather emerges as the negative of the discourse of economic growth" (Naredo et al. 2021) and that, additionally it is "an unattractive generic objective." Therefore, we do not want to propose it as an objective in and of itself, but rather, following Naredo again, "as a groundbreaking magazine or book headline to counter the dogmatism of economic growth" (Naredo et al. 2021).

15 BBVAh is a play on words in Spanish, BBVA (the acronym for "white, bourgeois, urban male" in Spanish) is an immensely powerful bank in the Spanish state and in several Latin American countries.

16 We understand precarity in life as insecurity in sustained access to the resources that we decessitate to live meaningful lives. In the current systemic crisis, this precarity is becoming the new regime of existence for global social majorities, although with radically unequal intensities and concentrations. The distinction between vulnerability and precarity is similar to what Butler proposes between "precariousness" and "precarity" (Butler 2009).

17 In this respect, communitarian feminism is key (see Cabnal 2010; Paredes 2010; Guzmán Arroyo 2019). In XXK and SOF 2021, we propose the concept of "time-body-territory." For a debate about the possibilities of even being able to understand this notion in the planet's zones of accumulation, see Colectiva XXK 2020.

18 We call this ethics reactionary for three reasons: because it is a logic of immolation (that is why we sometimes ironically refer to it as an ethics of *doing everything for love*), because the concern for care is limited to the heteropatriarchal family, and because it serves to hide the capital–life conflict.

19 Uzuri Aboitz proposes this movement as a one of the keys for advancing toward feminist sovereignty, understood as sovereignty that "is not decided upon in offices, nor is constructed from the top down. . . . It is materialized in households, in the distribution of time, models of cohabitation, the recognition of the diverse, the right to decide about our bodies, the organization of labor, as well as in the defense of the common, the public model, or forms of financing [that] would allow us to be owners of our own lives" (Aboitz 2018, 98–99).

20 This distinction is further expanded upon in Pérez Orozco 2016, and the idea of subversion is expanded upon in Pérez Orozco 2017. For a feminist critique of global corporate power and a call to resist its advance, see Moreno 2020.

21 This term, taken from Picchio, refers to a vision that reduces all dimensions of life, all social relations, and all economic processes to the wage relation, based on the perception of the existence of a profound conflict between capital and (waged) labor, and consequently prioritizes the struggle over the wage relation.

22 These reflections emerge in close connection with the work on debt in the Feminisms Commission of the 15M Acampada Sol in Madrid. In the workshops, participants questioned the use of the idea of

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democracy due to the difficulty of delinking it from its hegemonic understanding (extremely emptied in the liberal state). Here we use it in the sense of *radical feminist democracy*.

23 The disputes in several countries of Abya Yala about the role played by different progressive governments, giving the state the leading role in the attempt to advance toward good living and betting on neoextractivst strategies are perhaps the best recent example of these tensions. For an ecofeminist reading of the (neo)extractivist strategy, see Svampa 2019 and, specifically on the dispute in Ecuador around petroleum extraction in the Yasuní Reserve, see Colectivo Miradas Críticas al Territorio desde el Feminismo 2014.

24 On the political proposal of the commons and how it is articulated today in the Global North, see Madrilonia.org 2011. From Abya Yala, the construction around the common is much richer and is directly linked to the proposals for economies otherwise. It is worth highlighting the work of the Horizontes Comunitarios space (https://horizontescomunitarios.wordpress.com/); for syntheses of the lessons and elaborations of this group, see Navarro and Gutiérrez 2018; Gutiérrez 2020. On care and the common, see Vega, Martínez-Buján, and Paredes 2018; Sanchís 2020.

25 For more on this concept, see Marañón-Pimentel 2012; Calle and Álvarez 2019.

26 We are referring both to what remains of an older primary sector as well as the current experiences of food sovereignty and agroecology. For feminist readings of these approaches, see SOF 2015; Etxaldeko Emakumeak 2020 with their proposal for agroecofeminism.

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