

THE EARTH AND WOMEN DEFEND THEMSELVES

In previous files we discussed the interconnection between our electronic devices, our consumption model and its impact on other parts of the world. These interconnections are based on an economic, social and cultural system that is underpinned by two premises. On the one hand is the idea of unlimited economic growth, that is, that we can produce without limit, without taking into account the planet's limited resources. On the other hand is the idea of dominating and exploiting both nature and women by exploiting/objectifying nature (which provides resources and bears the brunt of the system's waste) and of women (who, through their unpaid work as mothers, produce workers and consumers for the system and take care of family members who are unable to be "productive" for the system due to age, illness, or other issues).

This system, called capitalism (an expression of patriarchy), expands and defends a model of development that prioritises the accumulation of wealth over life. **Economies based on extractivism, for example, promote a view of nature as a simple provider of raw and exploitable materials subject to the needs of cities;** this relationship is extended to the population as a whole, converting people into cheap labour through the violation of the most basic human rights.

This extraction-based model cuts, in turn, the ties that communities have with the region as a place to live, a place for sustaining life, for building and sharing identities and worldviews, a place where relationships are recreated. Damage and deterioration of nature falls more heavily on women, because they are often not involved in decision-making when it comes to land use, and because of their assigned role as caretakers and transmitters of cultural identity. The work of sustaining life becomes even more difficult without land to cultivate or as a source of recognition.

Likewise, conflicts linked to the control of nature's assets cause or increase violence against women (as seen in the use of sexual violence as a weapon in World War¹). The damage caused is two-fold: damage to the individual through the terror of sexual abuse, and collective damage, because sexual violence can be perpetrated to humiliate an entire community. This two-fold damage is made possible because women's bodies are viewed as the property of men and of society at large, and sexual violence therefore becomes a means to convey a message of humiliation and power. The battle is fought from the trenches to women's bodies.

In response to this reality, an approach to feminism was developed in the Aymara communities of Bolivia in the 1990s that soon expanded throughout Latin America. This movement, known as community feminism, argues that defending a land or a region against exploitation without considering the bodies of women who are being raped is a double standard. And they argue that "women and the earth are not territories to be conquered".

These feminist movements against extractivist projects have built a new political mindset and platform for resistance that focuses on women's bodies as the first territory to defend. A reinterpretation in which the concept of sovereignty and self-determination of territories is extended and related to the bodies of women². They put the need to condemn and break with the patriarchal view of women and nature, which sees women as "sacrificial territories", on the public agenda. **This meaning masks an androcentric worldview that minimises and erases the violence against nature and against women themselves. The struggle of community feminism, in the face of these dynamics of domination, involves nature and women regaining their "agency", turning them back into political players.**

From this perspective, the women's bodies also become bodies of resistance. Empowered, rebellious bodies, who stand on the front line against mega-mining projects that destroy their territories, both in terms of land and physical bodies. There are many women like Berta Cáceres and Máxima Acuña de Chaupe, anonymous women from La Puya and the Wayuu women of Colombia, who organise and weave networks of resistance as a way to defend the territory, demanding that we change our approach and focus on life.

¹ See File 4: Conflict-based sexual violence <https://www.tecnologialibredeconflicto.org/materiales-educativos>

² Gator, Miriam: Feminism relaunches the fight against 'extractivism' in Latin America at <http://www.lamarea.com/2014/02/17/ecuador-extractivismo-mujeres>

ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

BECOMING AWARE OF OUR BODIES

This activity involves getting out into nature and taking the time to focus all attention onto our bodies.

Go for a leisurely walk with no other purpose than simply walking. Pay attention to how your body moves, particularly the contact your feet make with the ground, your breathing and all the stimuli in the environment. Don't walk with a destination in mind, enjoy the simple wonder of walking, get in touch with your body and through it with nature.

Try to be fully mindful while you walk. We usually walk without thinking about it, automatically. We walk and run without being aware of our bodies.

Try to be in tune with your body's movements. Do nothing unintentionally. Be an observer of any thought that crosses your mind. Be a witness to any emotion that you feel. Don't engage, don't identify it, don't evaluate whether it is good or bad.

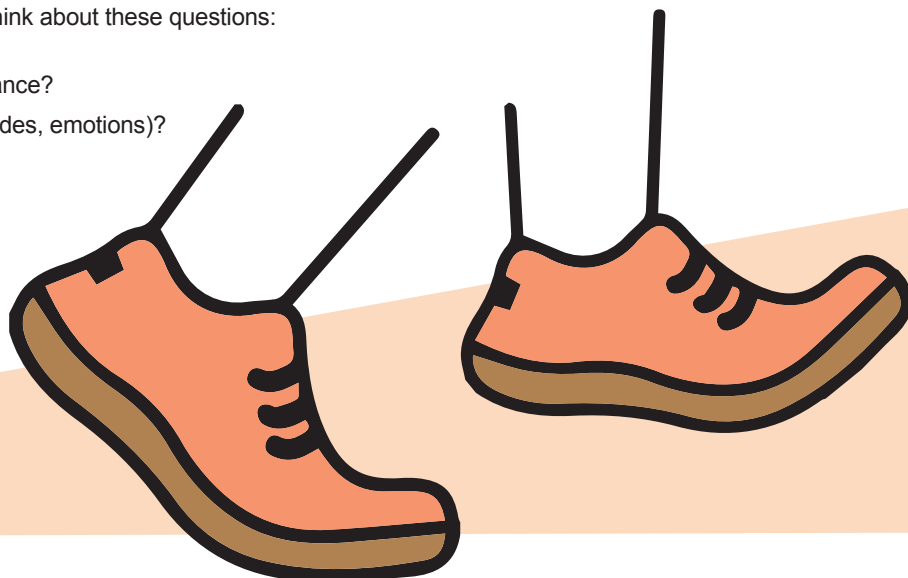
Now start to walk slowly, taking tiny steps. Walking quickly tends to accelerate your mind; slowing things down will help the process.

Focus solely on your feet, feel every part of your foot as it touches the ground.

After walking for 15 or 20 minutes, think about these questions:

- Did you feel any stress or resistance?
- What happened (incidents, attitudes, emotions)?
- Did anything surprise you?
- How do you feel now?

Share with the group.



RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION



On community feminism:

<https://www.fes-connect.org/in-pipeline/feminism-from-memory-community-feminism-in-bolivia/>



On sexual violence as a weapon of war:

<https://www.mukwegefoundation.org/the-problem/rape-as-a-weapon-of-war/>



Websites about women in defence of the territory:

<https://www.protectioninternational.org/en/news/colombia-role-women-defence-territory>

<https://www.wecaninternational.org/post/women-in-defense-of-territories-from-their-bodies-mujeres-en-defense-de-territorios-desde>

<https://www.peacewomen.org/content/guatemala-womens-gathering-defense-water-life-and-territory>



Video about women defending territories:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FieRWo6_y0A

A project from:



ALBOAN
ONG - Jesuita - Fundazioa

www.alboan.org

For a:



www.tecnologia LibreDeConflicto.org

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