

AcPrac Case Study

# Repertoires of Resistance: The Sympoiesis Between Women, The Community, and Critical Research

Anita Peña Saavedra,  
Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity

Alondra Castillo Delgado,  
Universidad de Valparaíso

Atlantic *Fellows*

FOR SOCIAL AND  
ECONOMIC EQUITY

**Design:** Saaga Leppanen  
**Copy-editing:** Yasmine Kherfi

Short sections of text, not to exceed two paragraphs, may be quoted without explicit permission provided that full credit, including © notice, is given to the source.

© Castillo Delgado, Alondra and Peña Saavedra, Anita. All rights reserved.

**Anita Peña Saavedra** is a Senior Atlantic Fellow for Social and Economic Equity at the LSE International Inequalities Institute, a feminist activist, and a research associate in the Social Transformations Lab, UDP.

**Alondra Castillo Delgado** is a professor in the Fonoaudiología School at the Universidad de Valparaíso (Chile). She is a clinical professor in communication therapy and a social researcher in human communication, healthy aging, and feminist critical theory.

---

## About AFSEE

[The Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity \(AFSEE\)](#) at the LSE International Inequalities Institute is an innovative fellowship programme that is funded through a landmark grant from Atlantic Philanthropies.

AFSEE aims to build a community of changemakers whose work addresses social and economic inequalities across the globe, while supporting them in developing imaginative approaches to their work. Adopting an ethos of collective action, the programme encourages collaborations between a range of stakeholders, including academics, activists, artists, development practitioners, and policymakers.

## About the AcPrac Project

This case study is published as part of the '[Exploring the Potential of Academic-Practitioner Collaborations for Social Change \(AcPrac\)](#)' project. The AcPrac project has two key objectives: 1) to contribute to AFSEE's theory of change by exploring the conditions that are conducive to developing generative processes of knowledge exchange between academics and practitioners; and 2) to examine the methodological and epistemological challenges of researching inequalities, and particularly how the latter might be reproduced through the research process itself.

The project also makes theoretical contributions by reflecting on the drivers behind the collaborations that different stakeholders pursue and it explores the potential of collaborative research, as a methodology, in challenging knowledge inequalities and in decolonising research.

# Repertoires of Resistance: The Sympoiesis Between Women, The Community, and Critical Research

## Abstract

This paper outlines the role of different participants involved in the repertoire of resistance practices against violence against women in Valparaíso. Drawing on social practice theory, debates on collective action, as well as the critical theory of Donna Haraway, it analyses empirical evidence from 30 interviews and two focus groups with women from the region, depicting their actions and poietic mechanisms. The paper reflects on our role as researchers, and our contribution to cultivating collaborations between the various participants involved. It concludes that situated knowledge enables the creation of a repertoire of sympoietic resistance practices, and that the state must gather and make use of this knowledge. The paper proposes that we view critical research as a method to recognise repertoires of resistance and support social change.

**Keywords:** collaboration, regions, feminist, memory, and resistance

## Introduction

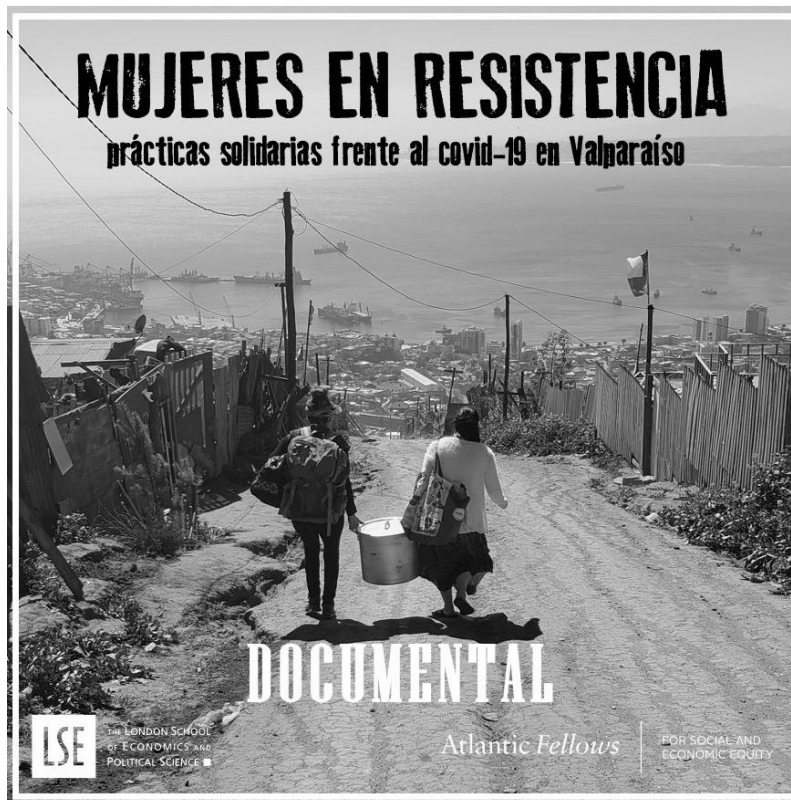
Violence against women (VAW) is recognised as a major form of human rights abuse and a public health problem that has serious repercussions on the physical and mental health of women, children, and families, as well as on their socio-economic conditions (WHO, 2021).

In Chile, the first anti-VAW public policies were developed following the creation of the National Women's Service in 1991 (BCN, 1991). The first legislative milestone was achieved in 1994 with the publication of law No. 19.325, which established the rules on procedures and penalties for acts of domestic violence. There have been several advances since then, many of which have been taken forward by women's social movements. However, many of the international commitments assumed by Chile in this field have not been implemented (CDH, 2018).

Valparaíso is a coastal city in Chile and is also the country's second most economically important port (ECLAC – United Nations, 2018). This city is in Chile's third most populous region, with 10.3% of its total population living there (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas - Chile, 2018). It also has the highest percentage of female residents (53.3%) and of female-headed households (46.8%) (MIDESO, 2017). In Valparaíso, women's labour market participation rate is 46.7%, with 18.7% of those women living in multidimensional poverty (MIDESO, 2017). In terms of violence, the region has been recognised worldwide as the 'red zone' for lesbians, following several local murders of lesbian women in recent years (Mohan, 2019). In addition, the region has statistically experienced a continued

increase in violence. For example, between 2020 and 2021, there was an 11.4% increase in court cases of this type, of which 43% related to injuries, 32% to threats and 7.74% to regular abuse (El Mostrador, 2022; Ministerio Público, 2022).

This paper argues that women in Valparaíso have generated repertoires of resistance for tackling VAW through three notable ways, referred to as *poietic* mechanisms, which are linked to a reflective practice of taking action that mobilises memory, through a collaborative approach. This paper forms part of the research project 'Women's solidarity networks take on COVID-19: the case of Valparaíso, Chile' (Peña et al., 2021) and draws on empirical evidence obtained from individual interviews with 30 women from Valparaíso aged between 20 and 81, and two focus groups with 17 feminist organisations from the Valparaíso region.<sup>1</sup> The data-gathering period took place under informed consent between August 2020 and March 2021, following an ethical-political feminist approach (Bell, 2014) and the methodological guidelines of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014).



Flyer for the 'Mujeres en Resistencia: Prácticas Solidarias frente al Covid-19 en Valparaíso' documentary.

---

<sup>1</sup> In-depth interviews were carried out under individual informed consent. To protect their anonymity, pseudonyms are used, accompanied by the age of the respondents, so that those reading this text have a more accurate idea of the person sharing their experience. Discussion groups do not specify the names of the people participating, and merely refer to feminist organisations as a concept.

The paper has four main sections: the first draws on Charles Tilly's (1993; 2008) theoretical discussion of repertoires of collective action. It explores how VAW is addressed through repertoires of resistance (RR). The second section focuses on the mechanisms that gave rise to these practices and particularly the situated transfer of memory from feminist resistance spaces to the collective self-organisation of a regional resistance. It addresses how institutional practices were recycled and adapted in the region. Third, and inspired by Donna Haraway's critical theory of speculative feminism, specifically the *sympoiesis* metaphor (Haraway, 1995, 2019), the paper presents an analysis of the collaboration between the different local players tackling VAW in the city. It describes the role of feminist researchers in the process, discusses their participation within the RR. Finally, the paper reflects on the collaborative dynamics of the various practices described, and invites us as researchers, to think about the role of academia and feminist research in contributing to social change. Chilean feminist theorist and activist Julieta Kirkwood argued that 'feminism is as much development of theory as practice, and they should be inter-related. Conceiving of a body of knowledge that is strictly non-practical is impossible' (Kirkwood, 1987, p.108).

### **Repertoires of Resistance Against Anti-Women Violence**

There is a field of knowledge that has given rise to what we understand today as a *repertoire of resistance for tackling violence against women*. The concept of a repertoire, applied to the study of collective action, came from Charles Tilly's 1977 theory, and refers to a limited set of routines or actions that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice (Tilly, 1993). In other words, they are alternative ways of acting in processes of struggle and emerge as cultural constructions that are learned from group of people and that vary inexorably across time and space (Tilly, 1993).

For Tilly, repertoires are routines of varied but not infinite claim-making, because those who rise in response to certain contexts act according to the possibilities available to them (Tilly, 2008). This is how, faced with the health crisis caused by the pandemic, for example, women in Valparaíso established various repertoires of action such as *ollas comunes*, which translate to 'communal pots,' and are soup kitchens (Hiner et al., n.d.), supply cooperatives (Carpa de las Mujeres, 2021), basic supplies centres (Vértice Urbano, 2021), among other initiatives that can be seen as belonging to repertoires of collective action (Tilly, 1993, 2008).

From this theoretical standpoint, we see how individual actions form a chain of collective ones (Tilly, 1993) in which all those involved create a repertoire. This set of actions has always carried a meaning; confronting and resisting sexist and patriarchal violence in the city, hence the name *repertoire of resistance*, which as Tilly points out, can be adapted to new contexts and social demands (Tilly, 1993; 2008).

This repertoire of resistance (RR) established by the women of Valparaíso is organised regionally into different axes: the contingency actions (CA) that respond to emergencies, and the preventive actions (PA). Though there are other ones led by public institutions, they have been addressed in other publications (Santana et al., 2021), and will only be touched on here to explain how they relate to RR.



Workshop in Violeta Parra community, Valparaíso. Source: Anita Peña Saavedra and Camila Rodó Carvalho, 30/10/2021.

Given that the hills and neighbourhoods of Valparaíso are viewed as the space in which the RR takes place, we focus on the context they emerge in and inhabit to formulate our analyses and interpretations – as encapsulated in the following quote:

*We have the possibility and opportunity to create regional responses (...) all the problems that we have been addressing, at least since I've been here, as a community, we have come together to take these things on so they are not so difficult because, in the end,*

*when you put up with them [sic] alone it's more complicated but, if you face them as a community, then the cons become pros (Sofía aged 30 and Alicia aged 33).*

The notion of 'regional responses' opens the possibility of viewing neighbourhoods as fields of action where those who inhabit them can establish a community. This form of collective action is not exclusive to confronting VAW but is exhibited in many aspects that make up communal life, as is particularly reflected in the research conducted on women's solidarity networks during the COVID-19 pandemic (Peña et al., 2021).

### **Contingency Actions Axis**

The EAC relates to *activating support networks* and *collectively addressing violence and its consequences*:

#### **Activating Support Networks**

There are various actions that aim to ensure women are not left to experience violence without support, as there are also ones that focus on producing networked responses to address such forms of violence. This helps mobilise support networks among women in the region and beyond:

*What we did was to create a WhatsApp group as a panic button in the background – a WhatsApp group for us only, to alert us if we needed to go out to help, so the idea was that neighbours who were nearby could have a faster way of notifying us (...) alerting us in case anyone needed urgent help face-to-face at that time. (Sofía aged 30 and Alicia aged 33).*

This example is one of many where a simple tool as WhatsApp allows women to communicate and create safe spaces. The accounts also revealed how self-taught, self-defence schools have been implemented, as well as organised discussions about violence, which educate and help provide the resources for people to adequately support each other. Also, informal conversations in neighbourhood businesses and soup kitchens help promote cooperation between neighbours. Beyond the region, there has been dialogue amongst professionals and experts from public institutions. Here, municipal services coordinate to make it easier to access public safety services, including legal support, social workers, and psychologists:



*Though we've always had alerts, notifications, from support officers to channel these complaints in some way, and to be able to help women in reporting them, firstly, and to provide them with channels, networks (...) because our closest channel is the Mari, and about the shelter house, if we're told that the case is already very very serious (...) we then try to move as quickly as possible if someone tells us something, but the Mari is always our point, the Mari that tells us about the cases. (Tatiana aged 27 and Valentina aged 28).*

This quote reflects the link between women and municipal institutions and also highlights the role that some public administration professionals can play to facilitate measures that provide effective responses to VAW-related problems. Through their different teams, institutions should be part of the network for tackling violence. However, over the course of our research, we realised that this is not always the case, as reflected through the ways in which their efficiency can be questionable, particularly when dealing with urgent cases (Santana et al., 2021).

### **Tackling Violence and its Consequences Collectively**

Women recount actions that, from a collective standpoint, directly address acts of violence and their consequences. Women organise campaigns to gather support and resources, manage temporary shelter houses among neighbours, conduct group dialogues with the men responsible for the violence to stop their behaviour, and so on. An example of this is provided in the following quote:

*We got support for women who were in super complex situations (...) some things were bought, women were welcomed who were experiencing violence ... but also it was also quite hard for the women to understand that we are not, for example, an organisation or an NGO, that we are not wealthy old women with cash to spare [sic], but that we are a group of friends who have come together to give support: 'let's face this together – what can we do?'. And so we put together this women's liaison, because we were all from different organisations, or not from one at all – all linked with common goal of supporting other women. (Paulina, aged 52)*

In this account, the process of collectively tackling the consequences of violence was clear. This strategy, which emerged in the context of COVID-19, is ongoing. It takes place with other groups of women and seems to be rooted through the local history.



Workshop in Porvenir, Valparaíso. Source: Anita Peña Saavedra and Camila Rodó Carvallo, 30/10/2021.

### Axis of Preventive Actions

By organising themselves, the women have been able to manage a range of different activities that aim to prevent the perpetuation of violence amongst their neighbours. There are examples that illustrate the practical results of these efforts, as reflected in the following account:

*I think that one of the actions that set the precedent, as far as occupying the public space is concerned here, to state that we are here and make the violence visible, was that intervention we did in the streets recently ... a walk of silence commemorating all the women who have been murdered this year. We walked all across the hill, across the square, the field, and we were making a statement to our neighbours in their homes, speaking on megaphones (...) We did it to somehow mark our presence, to show we are alert, that we'll catch those who are also ... that's what we ultimately wanted, to cause a*

*little bit of annoyance, discomfort to [sic] stop it being normalised.* (Sofía aged 30 and Alicia aged 33).

Here, shared preventive work becomes plausible: the teaching of self-defence is combined with conversations, and involve all community residents. This type of action is absent from institutional practices. The feminist organisations interviewed reported an absence of comprehensive and consistent institutional responses that are attuned to the specifics of the region. For example, many forms of institutional support do not reach women who reside in the hills or are often insufficient when they do.

*We're doing what the state should be doing. Always, always doing what the state should be doing, because 'when is it going to do it'? Never! There's no solution (...) the issue of violence is an issue ... violence is a continuum, right? [sic], it's infuriating because there's no way of solving it except by looking for tools that can simply save women's lives, which is no small thing, but there's nothing more we can do.* (Paulina, aged 52)

Throughout the research process, it was common to hear that the state has been absent on issues essential to the sustainability of life in Valparaíso, and VAW was no exception (Peña et al., 2021). The characterisation of the RR was an important space for building knowledge. However, to better understand this process, we proposed – as feminist researchers – to collaborate in developing a participatory assessment, and in the development of a series of public policy recommendations for the city (Santana et al., 2021). The document summarising this work was systematised, shared and distributed to all research participants, as well as to the respective local authorities. It is important to highlight this process, since it helped initiate dialogue between the various players involved in tackling VAW in the city and produced practical proposals for improvement that are designed for the region, from the women living there.

### **Poietic Mechanisms of the Repertoire of Resistance**

In this section, we discuss the mechanisms that have produced this repertoire – or, with a nod to Donna Haraway's formulation: the *poietic* mechanisms of the RR. *Poiesis* is understood as the concept of making, creating (Haraway, 2019). We asked: how can poietic mechanisms help to understand How did these actions arise?

To begin, it is important to highlight the contribution of the Theory of Social Practices (TSP) in understanding this phenomenon. Social practice is understood as a repetitive type of behaviour, which includes several interconnected elements: bodily activities, mental activities, 'things' and their uses, know-how, states of emotions and motivational knowledge, and so on (Reckwitz, 2002). For Elizabeth Shove, social practices are ways of doing and/or saying that emerge from the time-space relationship that exists between competencies for implementing these practices, the meaning that we attribute to them and the material conditions that allow them to exist (Shove et al., 2012). Through this prism, the actions involved in the RR will not be viewed as unrelated or random actions by different players from the region, but rather as social practices.

The concept of social practices helps us understand their dynamics, that is, how they update themselves. We can therefore make an analytical distinction between practices-as-*performances* and practices-as-*entities* (Shove et al., 2012). *Performances* focus on the implementation of a practice: analysing how it is enacted, where only the contingency of its accomplishment survives. However, *entities* allow us to observe the practice in space and time, involving aspects of its recursivity and temporal trajectories that precede its *performance*, and allow us to ask when the practice originated (Ariztía, 2017; Shove et al., 2012).

Three poietic mechanisms or mechanisms of construction are observed: a) the situated transfer of feminist memory, b) the collective self-organisation of territorial resistance, and c) the recycling and adaptation of institutional practices in the region, as described below.

### **Feminist Memory and its Intergenerational Experience**

Valparaíso is home to a recursive history of practices, expressed as resistance to the precariousness of life and to VAW (Peña, 2020). Examples of this collective action can be seen in visibility work by health groups and collectives against civil-military violence in the 1980s (Toro 1997; Quintanilla 1990; Hiner 2019; Peña 2020), the humanitarian initiatives undertaken by the Mother's Centres (*Centros de Madres*) in the 1960s (Valdés et al. 1989; Bahamondes 2016), among others; all of which were social practices within other repertoires that form part of the historical memory of women in Valparaíso. An older woman, an activist in the region, expressed this in one of the interviews:

*I tell them: 'you have so much energy, energy, knowledge, new technologies'. They do things, god [sic], posters and tones of things so fast. 'That's lovely, I told them, because we're stuck in the past with all that', and that's why we need you and you need us ... our experience, our knowledge of the community and how to reach women who are very hidden. (Lorena, aged 72)*

This account emerged in a street conversation organised after the femicide of an 18-year-old neighbour, in which older women, feminist activists, participated by sharing their knowledge and strategies with younger women, producing a transfer of know-how that is brought up-to-date or – in Tilly's words – a transfer of knowledge that is revitalised according to the space and time (Tilly, 2008).

The evolution of these practices, which are regionalised and passed down from woman to woman, reveal another phenomenon that Donna Haraway had already alluded to, and which, in this transfer exercise, we had the opportunity to see for ourselves: the generation of *situated knowledges*, which are no more than our own *feminist objectivity* (Haraway, 1995). The women of Valparaíso appear to have amassed a body of knowledge that belongs to them, that is specific to them, and which they share with others for everyone's well-being. This is an example of the impact of intergenerational dialogues as a possibility to transmit practices and ways of acting in crisis situations, such as the one experienced as COVID-19.

### **Collective Self-Organisation of Regional Resistance**

Women's own resistance has enabled them to generate new forms of action in response to crisis. Some recent research warns that the absence of social policy in marginal neighbourhoods, or inadequate action by public institutions in vulnerable ones. Due to this situation, communities have had to organise themselves (Peña et al., 2021; Vértice Urbano, 2021) and, in the case of VAW, this becomes replicated. The following account exemplifies one of these actions:

*Last year, early last year, we did a workshop in the prison (...) we created a map highlighting different parts of the region: the home, the neighbourhood, school, the workplace and the prison. These were some of the most, um, inhabited places by the women. And the place where violence came from the most, that they mapped, um, was inside the home and inside prison. In other words, it was clear that violent situations were happening within the home and there were circles of violence being repeated from*

*generation to generation (..) We delved into that research a bit, making those issues visible, um, reflecting on them and exploring them, only then, having never gone that way, nor their neighbours either, took a step further (...) it was very important to be able to begin linking us as a community in the region and getting to know each other. (Carla, aged 28)*

This autonomous action, using their own resources, is a clear example of how feminist organisation in the region is habitual. In this particular case, it was an activity that made VAW more visible, de-normalised the violence and contributed to the construction of an imaginary free from these experiences. We realise that resistance also arises from self-organisation and collective organisation to respond to the needs of the community (Peña et al., 2021). Tilly points out in his writings that, very often, the context – rather than major events – acts as an external limitation on the resistance processes and that this, when complemented by the accumulation of people’s experiences, encourages collective action-taking (Tilly, 2008). Here we observe the agency of women, of feminists and regional organisations when there is an urgent need to take care of themselves and of others.



Workshop in Santa Ana, community center, Valparaíso. Source: Anita Peña Saavedra and Camila Rodó Carvallo, 25/11/2021

### **Recycling and Adaptation of Institutional Practices in the Region**

In the field of VAW, Chile has a series of legal provisions that have been guiding the actions or practices of professionals and/or experts. Although it is clearly not within the remit of this paper to describe this state apparatus, we would like to focus on women's experience with these practices, since it is the women themselves who have recycled and adapted them for their own requirements.

A critical view of local public policy can be gleaned from these women – from policy definition to implementation. They are critical of defining violence as an individual issue, punitivism to address the consequences of violence, the re-victimisation or uprooting of women to live in safer environments, but above all, they criticise a vertically imposed model that does not seek to draw on their collective experience and knowledge (Santana et al., 2021). The following quote illustrates this:

*There is no ideal model for intervention work. I do think that it should be flexible, and it should be co-created all the time. No, no I don't think it should be something immovable and that a programme should be invented and implemented strictly and goals should be met – which is the perversion the system also has – and then to meet those goals you do some [thing], or in reality you do nothing. If [the institution] opens up to getting to know the ways of working of the people who work outside the institution, that dialogue could be a fruitful dialogue that could allow, um, the creation of a new inclusive network, and could be a unifying entity for different forms of work, so that same institution can also know where to go, or even develop or do work together, maybe programmes, projects, depending on the ways these women work. (Carolina, aged 30).*

We observed the expert knowledge shared with us by the feminist organisations and activists in the region, who from inhabiting the neighbourhoods, speaking to each other, and sharing knowledge, have been able to observe and act in the face of *gaps* in the system. As pointed out by one of the respondents:

*There are women who created a shelter house where there was space for two women, right? [sic], which were not funded houses but which were like my house and I have two rooms for two women to go in. It worked like that in some areas (...) last year they were almost the same as the previous year, and before, in terms of femicides, and because there's not much to do more other than create networks and try to get women out who*



*need to be somewhere else for a day, for a night, because where on earth do you go with your child? Where does a woman go if she wants to get out at one clock in the morning? She has nowhere to go, that's the truth.* (Paulina, aged 52).

These collective and self-organised actions, such as 'sorority houses' (*techos sororos*), workshops, street initiatives, among others, are frequently encountered among the women of Valparaíso because, in the state's absence, or in the face of actions that are not rooted in the region, organisation is required (Peña et al., 2021; Santana et al., 2021). From this research process, we reclaim the collective capacity for dialogue and for producing proposals, as ultimately conveyed in the recommendations mentioned above, and ultimately proposed to their local government as a complement to their regional work (Santana et al., 2021).

### **Towards Sympoiesis, For a Life Free from Violence Against Women**

The feminist thinker Donna Haraway invited us to think that another world is possible and, through her metaphors, inspired us to seek to understand the interlinking of actions, feelings and material conditions that seek to sustain a life free from violence for women in Valparaíso. The author also writes that we live immersed in dangerous exterminating forces that put the survival of all species at risk; that the 'earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge' (Haraway, 2019, p. 155), and that it is therefore important for change projects to be situated (Haraway, 2019). In this reflective exercise, VAW is viewed as the backdrop for the extermination forces that put the lives – of women, of us – at risk, and its proposal for situated change, such as the experience constructed from the RR conceived in the region.

One of the metaphors we will allude to in this paper will be the notion of *sympoiesis*, or what Haraway terms the praxis of *making-with*, with other beings (Haraway, 2019). As such, we raise the question of whether it is possible to observe the action of *making-with* in the repertoire of collective actions that are tackling VAW in Valparaíso. Is *sympoiesis* the strategy that sustains this resistance?

We understand *sympoiesis* by realising that the sustainability of life does not derive from the action of independent organisms in their environments – in other words, by combining units that interact in certain contexts – but that it instead derives from *making-with* in 'complex, dynamic, receptive, situated, historical systems' (Haraway, 2019, p. 99), and from *worlding-with*, in company with others (Haraway, 2019). Thus, according to this theory, no species – within sympoietic systems – should act alone, disconnected from the



actions of others. This action-taking is the one we will review in the network of practices through which VAW is tackled in Valparaíso.

The analysis of the RR (poietic mechanisms and practices) shows us that each player in this system *performs* – or acts – and that this practice-as-performance has a meaning, a competence, and a materiality (Shove et al., 2012) that allow us to observe the existence – or non-existence – of the sympoietic fabric. We will review each of the players and their actions to answer this question.

The resistance women in Valparaíso bring the *meaning* to this orchestra, since the vital push for survival – individual and collective – was what drove their urgency to respond, to take care of themselves collectively. It is these women who make life a priority in the face of *machista* violence, and that is the place from which they act. Their practices bring with them competences that have enabled them to take this action, some from knowledges from other women transferred between generations, and others *created-with* others with whom they are learning to deal with everyday life. Whatever their route, the existence of a situated knowledge that – in the words of Haraway – is favourable to this action is exposed (Haraway, 1995). On the other hand, they are the material sustenance of many of these practices, by putting the body itself, in its actions, at the service of this task. The women of Abya Yala have signalled the importance of understanding the body as political territory that must be defended (Cruz et al., 2017) and the women of Valparaíso appear to conceive it as such. They also contribute materiality from their own – scarce – non-physical resources, which they make available for everyone; a practice that we already know is rooted in the region and is manifested in several actions contributing to a better life, or *buen vivir* (Peña et al., 2021).

The practices of feminist activists, mostly independent of institutions, and others organised as collectives, share symbolic dimensions of competence and materiality with the practices of resistance women, since they also form part of that group but inhabit the space of political action. From that place, from activism, they break down the region's physical boundaries and enable connection between others, between older women and younger women, neighbours from different hills in the city, etc. Haraway points to the importance – to inhabit sympoietic systems – of generating kinships and of not defining this as a link tied only to genealogy, to blood ties, but that, by moving beyond family boundaries, we can make expansive kinships, since they could 'change the story' (Haraway, 2019, p. 158). This is what feminists from the region have been doing throughout Valparaíso's history of resistance (Peña, 2020; Peña et al., 2021; Santana et al., 2021). This *becoming-with*, which

is ongoing among these women, delves deeper into situated knowledge, and emerges as expert knowledge that can be used by everyone, for everyone. This expertise is nurtured from the ground up, from the praxis of *making-with*, but also from the work they do with independent organisations, with public institutions, continually challenging the state and its absences, all while they are collectively experiencing an act of injustice against women, against themselves.

The reading of the *sympoiesis* among the resistance women, the women who survive violence and the women who – whether organised or independently – work within their own communities because ‘nothing makes itself’ (Haraway, 2019, p. 99), emerges naturally. Here, we observe an action that is collective, an action that weaves a form of connectivity relationship, the one needed to create the fabric necessary for survival.

In this analysis it is vitally important to describe the participation of institutions, which, despite not being the focus of the paper, exist as another player present in this network. We will analyse this by observing the practices-as-performance of professionals and/or experts from local government. Using state-designed mechanisms, these players implement actions that propose to prevent acts of VAW and to act efficiently (SERNAMEG). However, fieldwork showed us that there are fractures in the coordination of some of these actions, which result in proposals that fail to consider local needs.

By way of example, analysis of the shelter houses that exist in Valparaíso has shown that they are an inefficient model for this issue (Santana et al., 2021). Women and their families can remain on the programme for up to six months, but 37% leave in the first month, and only 34% stay for two months (Marchant, 2014). The intervention model uproots women from their neighbourhoods and care networks, implements a single organisation for everyday life that does not make space for women’s own care practices and does not allow children over 18 to enter. This situation complicates the decision to enter and/or stay, among other complex situations, most of which culminate in premature exit by many women, who end up calling on personal networks for safety and sustainability (Santana et al., 2021).

From the above, we can see those actions emanating from institutions, tinged with meaning, competence and materiality that is nourished by external hegemonic knowledge, are far removed from the situated knowledges that the women and feminists from the region have constructed. Haraway points out that we have the challenge of achieving a version of the world that allows us to understand all knowledge stances, that is, a critical practice for recognising our own knowledge, and which leads us to construct versions closer to reality (Haraway, 1995), an exercise that is proving incomplete or fractured from the strategies for

designing and implementing institutional policy. Consequently, in that place within the wider system, the *sympoiesis* of actions is ruptured, as if these players on the map were walking paths outside of the collective actions created and passed down in the region, without gathering the knowledge that exists there.

Undoubtedly in Valparaíso, this lack of harmony between self-organised and institutional practices is an unresolved issue. Transformative efforts are required to construct an amalgam of the union of different forces that – despite being different in nature – can converse in the same language. As such, it seems important to question our role as feminist researchers. The research experience we engaged in helped us conduct a critical dialogue that interrogates the fractures in this network of actions, as well as the collectivised proposal for ‘recommendations for a feminist and community policy to tackle violence against women’ in Valparaíso (Santana et al., 2021), which was shared with all parties involved. Haraway wrote that iterate-deviate-elaborate were the principles of the exploratory processes by which reefs function (Haraway, 2019), and in this sense research carried out from a feminist perspective enables the recursive action of looking at processes again, of opening new bridges, to become possible.

Similarly, it is interesting to observe – from the viewpoint of social practices – the meaning, competences and materiality of our actions as feminist researchers, that with clarity from our research, and without losing that focus, we feel motivated to engage in actions to reach these fractures, creating dialogues of analysis and synthesis, and to then contribute with inputs grounded in experience – or as Donna Haraway would say – grounded in situated knowledge (Haraway, 1995). To some extent, our role was not only to view things from a specific place and then describe what was observed there, but we also occupied a position of examining and constructing a partial and subjective knowledge embodied in the women, which enabled the connection of others, that is, a knowledge that is applied to the quest for social change (Araiza, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

From these accounts and from lived experience as feminist researchers, we have gained an understanding of a situated knowledge: the practices of resistance to violence experienced by the women of Valparaíso and their poietic mechanisms with deep collaborative and territorial roots. Charles Tilly wrote that repertoires of collective actions will never resemble individual consciousness, but rather actions that connect individuals and groups together (Tilly, 1993). This was the case through the repertoire of resistance.



Demonstration in Valparaíso, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Source: Anita Peña Saavedra and Camila Rodó Carvallo 25/11/2021

This collective dimension, of observing us all as part of the system, is what has been absent in the state's response. In this sense, research becomes a contribution, as it offers reflections that open up some pathways. Firstly, understanding that one possible way of tackling VAW is through the symposium of actions and players, that is, through actions with multiple players, drawing on forms of knowledge situated within the problem. Secondly, understanding that the state needs to return to this work, since the outsourcing of services has fragmented the local contingency network. Finally, understanding that in diverse geographical regions with marked social inequalities – as in Chile – it must be understood that the geopolitical organisation of actions cannot be detached from cultural relevance, regional roots or lived history. The women of Valparaíso have organised themselves beyond the physical limitations of their geography and have constructed a history of resistance that unfolds from their shared history with others.

Julieta Kirkwood wrote that 'In around 1980, you could have counted the number of women's organisations and – would you believe – publications on the fingers of your left hand. Not anymore. Almost without exaggeration we can now talk about a broad and complex women's movement from class to class and from north to south' (Kirkwood, 1987, p. 32). These words, still relevant today, lead us back to those resistance women and their collective, intermingled, symposiumic action, from where they have constructed a way of tackling the violence they experience every day, from where there is no scope for thinking

alone, because – as Chilean feminists shout in the streets – ‘we are stronger together’ (*juntas, somos más*).

The historiography of this repertoire; the poietic mechanisms that gave rise to this resistance, also have their overtones in the collective. This makes it important to highlight the transfer of situated knowledge that other women have been doing throughout history (Hiner et al., n.d.; Peña, 2020; Peña et al., 2021; Santana et al., 2021). Once transferred, this knowledge is no longer the same, it has been transformed and become more complex and will continue growing as contingencies arise. The women of Valparaíso understood many years ago that ‘the personal is political’ (Hanisch, 2016), and that violence occurring in intimate spaces was an important part of their struggle, to look after themselves and others. This feminist understanding of life has been ever-present in time and is experienced regionally, since the *political* opened its boundaries to private life and was coordinated in collective action-taking that preserves memory, that is, which is the result of a process of political maturation of women in the region (Santana et al., 2021).

Donna Haraway challenges us to change our view of the world as sympoietic, to walk towards shared histories and shared futures, where we involve ourselves in one another’s lives (Haraway, 2019), and the resistance women, in relationships of *kinship*, are doing just that. It was revealing to realise how these women, in their collaborative actions, succeed in addressing, from their meaningful practices, a competence and a materiality that contains the women experiencing violence in the region. It was interesting to delve into the fractures that are created between the institutional practices, and life itself, that occur in the city’s hills, where it seems there is a dialogue that is often deaf. Audre Lorde explained that ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’ (Lorde, 1979, p. 32 cit in Lorde, 2003) and, in this case, the lived experience of women in tackling VAW in Valparaíso generated ruptures of the institutional tools – of the master – and they unavoidably sought to build their own.

Situated knowledge will never be a way of theorising and representing the world from an innocent position, but rather a knowledge that is recognised as partial, as it translates experiences of life among quite different and power-differentiated communities (Haraway, 2019). The case of Valparaíso shows us the existence of different and power-differentiated communities that take action, some sympoietically – resistance women, feminist activists – others without managing to entirely compost in this system – professionals and/or experts from public services – and finally, others that, through expert knowledge provided by feminist activism and the discipline of participatory research – we, as women researchers – create

bridges to build the amalgam that connects the fractures in the network. Haraway states in her writings that, in order for there to be environmental justice between species – in this case, a justice that allows us to live in a society free from violence against women – a range of different players must be involved, but she also urges feminists to exercise leadership to imagine, theorise and take action to unravel the knots that keep the genealogies of relations of the same class tied, so that the possibility of the possible exists. In other words, that we are all part of the problem (Haraway, 2019; Haraway & Segarra, 2020).

As activists, to quote Juliet Kirkwood, we had the ‘desire to extract from the archives of hidden female stories their gestures, their urgencies, their hastes and their anger...’ (Kirkwood, 1987, p. 23). Today, having closed off part of a route and with the clarity that we only understand part of that knowledge, we are certain that ‘today we know all that, because we have learned many things through experiences...’ (Kirkwood, 1987, p. 32), in this case the experience of the Valparaíso women in their ineffable drive to defend their lives and those of others, together.



Demonstration in Valparaíso, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Source: Anita Peña Saavedra and Camila Rodó Carvallo 25/11/2021



## Bibliography

Where relevant, the authors have included English translations of the Spanish titles in the references below.

- Araiza, V. (2020) 'El Pensamiento Crítico De Donna Haraway: Complejidad, Ecofeminismo Y Cosmopolítica,' *Peninsula* XV/2, pp.147–64, available at: <https://bitly.ws/X5nV>
- Ariztía, T. (2017) 'La Teoría de las Prácticas Sociales: Particularidades, Posibilidades y Límites,' *Cinta de Moebio* 59, pp.221–34, available at: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=10154572009>
- BCN (1991) *Ley N°19023: Crea el Servicio Nacional de la Mujer* (Law No. 19023 'Creating the National Women's Service'), available at: <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=30390>
- Carpa de las Mujeres (2021), *Catastro Plurinacional de Experiencias de Economía Feminista y Solidaria* (Plurinational Record of Experiences of Feminist and Solidarity Economy). *La Vida En El Centro*, available at: <https://bitly.ws/X5i6>
- CDH. (2018) 'Violencia contra la Mujer en Chile y Derechos Humanos (Violence Against Women in Chile and Human Rights), In *Facultad de Derecho - Universidad del Chile*, available at: <https://bitly.ws/X5of>
- ECLAC – United Nations (2018), 'Ranking de Puertos' (Port Rankings), available at: <https://bitly.ws/X5or>
- Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory; A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications), available at: [http://www.sxf.uevora.pt/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Charmaz\\_2006.pdf](http://www.sxf.uevora.pt/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Charmaz_2006.pdf)
- Charmaz, K. (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London, SAGE Publications), available at: <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/constructing-grounded-theory/book235960>
- Cruz, D. T., Vázquez, E., Ruales, G., Bayón, M., & García-Torres, M. (2017), *Mapeando el Cuerpo-territorio. Guía metodológica Para Mujeres Que Defienden sus Territorios* ('Mapping the Body-territory. Methodological Guide for Women Defending their Territories'), available at: <https://bitly.ws/X5hM>
- El Mostrador. (2022) 'Violencia Intrafamiliar Tiene un Alza de Causas Según Fiscalía Nacional' ('Domestic Violence Cases on the Rise According to the National Prosecutor's Office'), available at: <https://bitly.ws/X5hn>
- Hanisch, C. (2016). *Lo Personal es Político* (The Personal is Political) (A. Franulic & I. Jeka (eds.)), *Feministas Lúcidas*, available at: [http://www.diariofemenino.com.ar/documentos/lo-personal-es-politico\\_final.pdf](http://www.diariofemenino.com.ar/documentos/lo-personal-es-politico_final.pdf)
- Haraway, D. (1995), *Ciencia, Cyborg y Mujeres* ('Science, Cyborgs and Socialist Feminism'), (Ediciones Cátedra; Universidad de Valencia, Instituto de la Mujer), available at:

[https://www.academia.edu/30099457/Donna\\_Haraway\\_Ciencia\\_cyborgs\\_y\\_mujeres](https://www.academia.edu/30099457/Donna_Haraway_Ciencia_cyborgs_y_mujeres)

- Haraway, D. (2019), *Seguir Con el Problema* (Continuing the Problem), Edición Consonni, available at: <https://hipermedula.org/2020/03/donna-haraway-seguir-con-el-problema/>
- Haraway, D., & Segarra, M. (2020), *El Mundo que Necesitamos. Donna Haraway Dialoga con Marta Segarra* ('The World We Need. Donna Haraway Talks to Marta Segarra'), Icaria Editorial, available at: <https://traficantes.net/libros/el-mundo-que-necesitamos>
- Hiner, H., Peña, A., & Castillo, A. (n.d.), 'Gender, Pobladoras and Ollas Comunes in Chile: Re-activating Memory and History in Order to Survive the Coronacrisis,' *Gender & History* 3/4, Special Issue: Food and Sovereignty, pp.708–26, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12671>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas – Chile (2018), 'Síntesis de Resultados: CENSO 2017,' ('Summary of the 2017 Census Results'), available at: <http://www.censo2017.cl/descargas/home/sintesis-de-resultados-censo2017.pdf>
- Kirkwood, J. (1987). *Tejiendo Relebdias. Escritos feministas de Julieta Kirkwood* (Weaving Rebellions. Feminist Writings by Julieta Kirkwood), *Centro de Estudios de la Mujer*, La Morada, available at: <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0049937.pdf>
- Lorde, A. (2003). Las Herramientas del Amo Nunca Desmontarán la Casa del Amo ('The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House') in *La Hermana, la Extranjera. Artículos y conferencias*, pp.115–20, Editorial Horas y horas, available at: <https://traficantes.net/libros/la-hermana-la-extranjera>
- Marchant, J. (2014), 'Vida Cotidiana En Casas De Acogida. Una Aproximación Desde sus Usuarías' ('Daily Life in Shelter Houses, According to their Users'), Tesis para optar al grado de Magíster en Estudios de Género y Cultura (Master's Thesis), *Universidad de Chile*, available at: <https://repositorio.uchile.cl/handle/2250/130102>
- Mideso. (2017). *Pobreza y Distribución de Ingresos. Presentación de resultados de CASEN 2017* (Poverty and Income Distribution. Presentation of 2017 CASEN Results), available at: <https://bitly.ws/X5oB>
- Ministerio Público (2022), 'Boletín Estadístico Anual. Enero - Diciembre 2021' ('Annual Statistical Bulletin. January to December 2021'), available at: <http://www.fiscaliadechile.cl/Fiscalia/estadisticas/index.do>
- Mohan, M. (2019), 'The Red Zone: A place Where Butch Lesbians Live in Fear,' *BBC News*, pp.1–25, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-48719453>
- Peña, A. (2020). *Memoria y Visibilidad. La Casa de la Mujer de Valparaíso y el Devenir de un Nosotras* ('Memory and Visibility. The Women's House in Valparaíso and Our Future as Women'), Ediciones Libros de Cardo, available at: <https://edicioneslibrosdelcardo.cl/product/epub-memoria-y-visibilidad-la-casa-de-la-mujer-de-valparaiso-y-el-devenir-de-un-nosotras-anita-pena-saavedra/>
- Peña, A., Castillo, A., & Torres, M. (2021), 'Redes Solidarias Entre Mujeres Ante El Covid-



- 19, El Caso de Valparaíso, Chile: Aprendizajes y Propuestas Para Las Políticas Sociales Comunitarias' (Women's Solidarity Takes on Covid-19: The Case of Valparaíso, Chile: Teachings and Proposals for Local Social Policies), *LSE Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity*, available at: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/International-Inequalities/Assets/Documents/Recomendaciones-poli%C3%A9ticas-sociales-Spanish.pdf>
- Reckwitz, A. (2002), 'Toward a Theory of Social Practices; A Development in Culturalist Theorizing,' *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5/2, pp.243–63, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310222225432>
- Santana, P., Peña, A., & Castillo-Delgado, A. (2021). *POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS Y VIOLENCIA CONTRA LAS MUJERES: Reflexiones de activistas feministas* (Public policy and violence against women: reflections of feminist activists). <https://www.lse.ac.uk/International-Inequalities/Assets/Documents/VAW-report.pdf>
- SERNAMEG. (n.d.), 'Violencia Contra las Mujeres,' (Violence Against Women), available at: [https://www.sernameg.gob.cl/?page\\_id=31542](https://www.sernameg.gob.cl/?page_id=31542)
- Shove, E., Pantzar, M., & Watson, M. (2012), 'The Dynamics of Social Practice,' in *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How it Changes* (SAGE Publications Ltd), available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446250655>
- Tilly, C. (1993), 'Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834,' *Social Science History* 17/2, pp.253–80, available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1171282>
- Tilly, C. (2008). *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511804366>
- Vértice Urbano (2021), 'Ollas Comunes e Iniciativas de Cooperación Durante la Pandemia de COVID-19 en Chile, Año 2020' ('Ollas Comunes and Cooperation Initiatives During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Chile, 2020'), available at: <https://www.verticechile.org/proyectos/informe-ollas-comunes-e-iniciativas-de-cooperaci%C3%B3n>
- World Health Organisation (2021), 'Violence Against Women, Prevalence Estimates, 2018' in *World Report on Violence and Health*, available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256>