International Institute of Social Studies

Connecting with care:
Intra-south feminist engagements
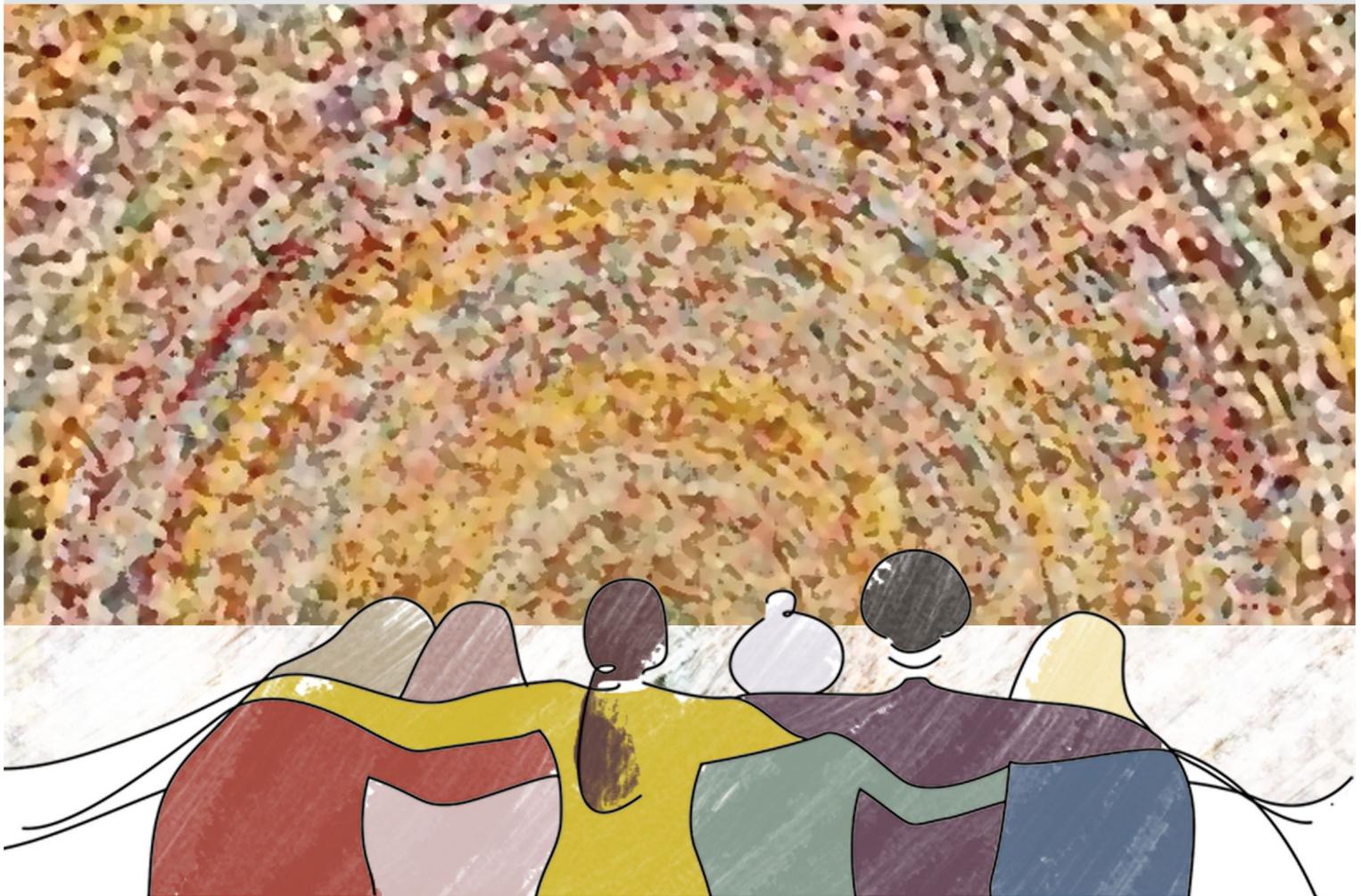
Inaugural lecture Prince Claus Chair
in Equity and Development

24 May 2022
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Connecting with Care: Intra-South Feminist Engagement

Khayaat Fakier, Prince Claus Chair Inaugural Lecture
ISS 24 May 2022

I am honoured to give this inaugural lecture as the Prince Claus Chair. The focus of my two years of research will be Connecting with Care. In this inaugural lecture I will share with you my conceptual approach to care and how it will form a central focus of my research as Prince Claus Chair. I begin by sharing four pivotal moments in my research journey so far, before moving on to briefly sketch my research plans for intra-south feminist engagement in the next two years.

I present these pivotal moments not as quintessentially representing South African, or African, or Global South stories. Rather, they are unique stories which shifted my understanding of care profoundly. They were generously shared with me by women in communities in South Africa. They evoked my commitment to studying care, and how care could be a connecting force in feminist understandings of our world.

These are stories about 'care'. By care I mean, in the words of Fisher and Tronto (1990: xx),

> "everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair 'our world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web".

I invite you to think along with me as I embark on my new research focus as Prince Claus Chair. I follow Donna Haraway (2018) when she suggests:

> Generative, effective multispecies environmental justice must be as much about play, storytelling, and joy as about work, critique, and pain. Storytelling is a thinking practice, not an embellishment to thinking. (Haraway 2018:102)

I tell these stories as an international feminist from the Global South drawing on "situated knowledge" (Haraway 2018). My positionality is defined by my engagement with women, as a black woman from South Africa, a sociologist, with Marxist feminist roots, living in the increasingly interconnected world of the 21st Century.

Care is embedded in my research methodology which entails spending extended periods of time with research participants engaging in conversation guided by them. Gaining trust and mutual respect develop over time, and facilitates the exchange of personal, and intimate knowledge. That is, care-full research is also ethically situated (Haraway 2018) Trust is re-enforced with the use of pseudonyms and informing participants of where and how shared stories will be used. I have used pseudonyms in this lecture, for everyone, except for Maria Dlamini, who asked to be named and acknowledged.

Situated knowledge also entails an understanding of the social context of research participants. It is political in that context. As I discuss later regarding the methodology of Feminist Table workshop, a "care-full" approach informs my research (Hanrahan 2015). A care-full feminist approach includes an ontological awareness of the connections between people and with their social and natural environment. It is through a relational understanding that human experiences are expressed. Care-full research recognises the vulnerability and dependence between researchers and research participants. It is with a sensitivity to these mutual vulnerabilities that solidarity develops (Hanrahan 2015). Such sensitivity includes the understanding of the contingent nature of feminist research and rejects universalising assumptions that there is only one experience of our social world. Instead, the perspectives women shared with me comprised a co-construction of our experience, contingent on our connections to each other and our environment.

In the first part of this lecture, I share four stories from my earlier research which influences my thinking on care. While the concept and praxis of care is multi-dimensional, these moments signify aspects of the connectedness of care, such as the meaning of care for Maria Dlamini, the difficult choices Lindi Sibanyoni confronted in order to care for those in her household, and how women in a community in a rural community decimated by poverty and unemployment develop connections to care for others more vulnerable than them, and the last on how we worked with the methodology of the Feminist Table to engage with community women around major environmental issues.

The first story was shared with me by Maria, who cleaned offices and lecture halls at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (aka Wits University). When cleaning

services were outsourced at Wits University in the early 2000s, many cleaners were employed by a labour broker, who cut their salaries in half and retracted all work-place benefits such as paid leave, medical benefits, and bursaries for the dependents of cleaning staff. In 2004, I conducted research with outsourced workers about the changing conditions of work. Maria cleaned our offices daily and we regularly exchanged greetings and talked about our families. The poster for this lecture, which was designed by multi-talented Dr Agustina Solera, features a mat made with discarded shopping bags by Maria and given to me by her. Maria earned a pittance, had borne no children nor was she married. She had moved from a poor farming area and a rural family to the modern hub of the sprawling city of Johannesburg. Her life was filled with care for people she worked with, family members and her dependents.

The second story was shared by Lindi Sibanyoni. Lindi and I met in 2006 when I did research for my doctoral thesis on the care arrangements in households of women migrants. She lived with her siblings on the outskirts of Emnambithi, a town approximately 300 kms from Johannesburg. For most of her life, Lindi saw her parents every month or two, and in December when migrants returned to their homes. Lindi's mother, who was a domestic worker in Johannesburg, died in 2007, a year after her husband. Lindi's story is about a seemingly uncaring act, which she performed to ensure the survival of her siblings.

The third story is about women from Keiskamahoek, a rural area in the Eastern Cape, commonly acknowledged as the poorest province in South Africa. This community experienced an unemployment rate of nearly 80%. I spent time in here in 2010 as part of a research team exploring the social and economic outcomes of a public employment scheme. While the women of the Rabula Volunteers, were not employed on this scheme, they were connected to it and other local government institutions, relying on the local social infrastructure, and strengthening it to enable their caring activities. The story of these women RVA is about connectedness of care and how care is contingent on women's location within local infrastructure and development efforts.

The fourth story is about the Feminist Table a project I set up together with my colleague Jacklyn Cock working with community women where we created a methodology of *dialogic engagement* framed around care for others and the environment.

Story 1: Maria: Care and Social Reproduction

Maria was the locus of an intricate web of care which defined her social and economic relations with family members and other dependents. She had had a relationship with a migrant worker who worked in the goldmines of Gauteng. Maria adopted their children after he and his wife died. After work hours she cared for an elderly aunt. She cooked and ate with her aunt and her two adopted children, as well as the twin children of one of her cousins. Although the twin children were primarily financially supported by the aunt's sons, Maria provided crucial support by sharing her food with the twins and their mother. She also supported her unemployed sister and brother-in-law, their nine children and her brother-in-law's brother in exchange for them providing a home for Maria's two adopted children. Maria's other sister, who lived and died in Zimbabwe, was survived by two unemployed children, who were supported by Maria and their three brothers. (See Bezuidenhout and Fakier (2006). Maria was not the sole carer and provider of these 21 people, but without, what she called her 'gifts', to these people, they would not have survived. In return, she said, "They love me".

At the time of my research when I was listening and learning from Maria's story, Maria and six other women whom I interviewed were subcontracted to a company called SuperCare, who provided cleaning services at the University of the Witwatersrand. Homing in on the notion of care, I entitled the project "Supercare or Care-less" [1]. The care and connectedness of Maria stood in sharp contrast with SuperCare who paid the women half the salaries they would have earned if they had been fulltime workers for the University, and gave them no paid leave for rest, illness or family obligation and were seen to abuse their workers verbally. Tragically, Maria died a few weeks after I had spent time with her. She had asthma and suffered from high blood pressure. She and other cleaners said that using cleaning materials

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[1] Published as Bezuidenhout and Fakier (2006)

without masks and gloves, affected their health (Bezuidenhout and Fakier 2006). Her death certificate stated 'natural causes', but since Maria could not afford to take time off or pay her doctor, the real cause of her death is not known. Her life and death were not acknowledged by either the university or her employer. With colleagues and friends, I attended an informal memorial gathering for Maria on the university premises, a place she loved where we spoke about our relationships with her. There we met her brother who with her family had arranged her funeral in her hometown.

I had spent time with Maria in her home, accompanied her on her visits in Soweto and on her travel to work in the early hours of the morning. I sat with her at night as she altered or created clothing for staff at the university and prepared her food for the week at her home in Soweto which was decorated with Wits University memorabilia. We shared many stories about ourselves, our work and the people in our lives. The sewing which Maria took on after hours, the cooking of low-cost food products for long hours, visits, and gifts for those who needed her, supported the regeneration and daily maintenance of those whom she loved. She was integral to the social reproduction of many. If we consider how her activities with and for others were imbued with meaning; we can see how much she cared. Maria reflected on her emotional and financial support for others and did not see it as a form of charity. She saw it as a reciprocal relation to others, and the connections she formed with others as enriching her own life, as a woman living on her own removed from her most of her family.

During the time she generously shared with me her story the inter-relational meaning of care became apparent. Care is meaningful for those who give and receive it, but it is also exploitative. Even though she struggled physically with the long hours of work and the additional work imposed on her by SuperCare who also dismissed half of the cleaning staff, Maria could not resign from this position. To do so, would mean not being able to provide crucial support for those she cared for. Maria and many other women in similar positions demonstrate the inter-relatedness of care. Joan Tronto (1993) refers to this when she speaks of the moral boundaries of care and how the recognition of and commitment to care benefit society. The life of Maria demonstrated through her care for others how

indispensable the often-ignored role of women, sustains others faced by even greater deprivation and poverty.

Nancy Fraser (2014) connects care with social reproduction and argues that the kind of work relationship Maria was in, fundamentally relies on unpaid work of women.

> "Wage labor [as one of the only routes out of destitution] could not exist in the absence of housework, child-raising, affective care and a host of other activities which help to produce new generations or workers and replenish existing ones, as well as to maintain social bonds and shared understandings…Social reproduction is an indispensable condition for the possibility of capitalist production." (Fraser 2014:16)

Maria's life and death is an example of the 'work care collision' (Pocock 2003). Modern workplaces and labour markets are masculinist and assume that women and men are 'care-less'. In other words, as Barbara Pocock argues, the workplace wilfully ignores the care responsibilities of all employees and leave care up to the 'private' domain of the household, paid care services or the public arm of the state. Women are particularly impacted upon by this assumption of care-lessness, as it collides directly with social expectations that they <u>should</u> care. Women and care dependents, more specifically, children, the elderly and frail are the crash victims in this collision of care and society. However, what Pocock (2003) fails to include in her analysis is that histories of marginalization impose a burden of care on women, especially black women, in a neo-liberal postcolonial patriarchal society. One obvious way for women to minimise the impact of such a collision is to reduce the number of people who are dependent on them.

Such is the story of Lindi, who found herself in a house with four siblings. The responsibility of care weighed heavily on her since the death of her parents. Both her parents were migrant workers, who spent most of their lives working in Johannesburg. In post-apartheid South Africa, the focus of development policy still remains on large urban cities. Thus, black rural men and women continue to migrate to large urban centres such as Johannesburg and Cape Town to make a living. In the process they leave behind their children and the elderly.

Apartheid capitalism was built on the back of a 'cheap' working class (Wolpe 1972). Black labour was cheap, because black male workers were paid a wage barely enough to sustain

themselves, while their families remained in Bantustans, under-developed areas reserved for black people based on their ethnicity. Later in this lecture, I refer to the legacy of land expropriation which accompanied the proletarianization of first black men and, eventually, black women who became low-paid workers in the mines and factories and private households in so-called 'white' South Africa. Important, though, is to remember the destruction of families and traditional care arrangements. The care needs of black workers, such as care for their children and parents, and their own needs to rest, recuperate and retire, were relegated to Bantustan economies and communities which themselves functioned at barely survivalist levels. Work and social reproduction was not only ideologically, but also geographically and forcibly separated, and gender and generational inequality in relation to care intensified. When migrant workers returned home sick, tired and, often, to die as Lindi's parents did, they had become estranged from the reproduction of their communities (Fakier 2010)

In post-apartheid South Africa, the legacy of disrupted community and family relations and care endures (Budlender and Lund 2012). Towards the end of apartheid, many men working in the factories and mines were retrenched and rural communities increasingly depended on the incomes of women in low-paid cleaning and service sector jobs. In 2006, when the migration of women started to equal and slowly exceed that of men, I started my research on the feminisation of migration in a town called Emnambithi on the social reproduction and care of migrants' households and met Lindi and her siblings.

Story 2: Lindi: Stunted Reproduction

Lindi was 15 years old when I first met her. She shared the following story with me two years later. At the time, Lindi lived with her older half-sister, Manta who was challenged by mental deficits and three younger siblings, in a child-only household. Lindi had an unwanted pregnancy and spoke of how she had attempted to abort the pregnancy outside the formal channels of legal abortions. Although she knew she was entitled by the state to an abortion, she would not go to a clinic for an abortion. She knew from her experience of trying to get hold of the contraceptive pill, and what she had heard from other teenagers that she would be judged and loudly scolded by the nurses at the clinic. Going to her teachers for advice,

was not viable because she could not risk them finding out that her household were living without an adult. Nurses and teachers, Lindi feared would only lead to social development officers becoming aware of them living alone, which would lead to them being split from each other and sent to different foster homes. Of utmost importance to Lindi was that their household would stay together and that she could care for them.

On advice from friends, she had gone to a nyanga (traditional healer) who gave her a substance which only upset her stomach. Others had told her of young girls who gave birth, deserted the babies, and left them do die but she did not want to do this. Going to a big, anonymous city for an abortion was impossible after she had spent money on the traditional healer. She had tried to tie a cloth tightly around her stomach, hoping that would help. Eventually, she went to a person who advertised 'same day services', took the proffered tablets and the pregnancy was successfully terminated.

Lindi's right to abortion is protected under the 1996 Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (COTP Act) (Cooper et al. 2004). However, as the story of Lindi suggests, making use of this right is difficult. The intent of the legislation is hindered by nurses and health care providers who are unwilling to provide this service, asserting their right to conscientious objection against this act, as well as strong social disapproval. A study of perceptions about abortion in South Africa noted that the termination of pregnancy at the request of an adolescent is especially frowned upon and a young woman seeking abortion needs strong support (Varga 2002), something Lindi did not have. From that study terminations are more likely when young mothers are instructed by their parents or urged by their boyfriends to go to a clinic. In the absence of active encouragement, approval and support from others, adolescent mothers are more likely to seek out illegal abortions or as Lindi was told, to abandon newborn babies. In this context, where procreation is socially sanctioned by older people and men, contraception and abortion are subject to their approval and cooperation and women have little say or power to negotiate (Varga 2002). Illegal and unsafe terminations of pregnancy are still rife despite progressive legislation that provides for abortions on the request of pregnant women. So, despite services being available due to social stigma and lack of care, many young South African women have to undergo extra-

legal abortions at great financial, emotional and physical expense (Varga 2002; Cooper et al. 2004).

Another significant factor about Lindi's story is that she was living in a child only household for a number of years. It is estimated that more than 55,000 children in South Africa live in households where members are under 18 years old. Eighty-four per cent of these children have living mothers who reside elsewhere. Low marital rates and the preponderance of single mother families also signal the absence of fathers in children's lives. Barely, more than a third of children (36%) live with their biological fathers in the same households: 34% with both biological parents, and 2% with their biological fathers only (Statistics South Africa: 2019) In many instances parents have left to find work or income opportunities not available in the area. (Hall and Sambu 2019) This does not mean that these children are abandoned or are not cared for. I have found in my research that *care over a distance* is commonly practiced, especially with the use of mobile technology, which I called mobile care.

Mobile care includes the practice of migrant women storing up anecdotes, jokes and stories to share with their children on a daily basis via mobile phone calls. These are treasured times for the women and their care dependents who felt a reciprocal flow of taking care of and being cared for of by loved ones. "Mobile" also refers to the monthly 'visits' to their homes to perform in-person care for their children and parents, while they in turn receive love and attention from their loved ones. The term mobile care recognises the use of available technologies for affective relations by women when separated from those for whom they care. However, mobile care varies in relation to the migrants' resources. For low paid migrants and their families, this form of care is difficult to achieve and maintain.

Domestic cleaning and care are the main forms of employment for black women in South Africa. It pays the lowest sectoral-determined wage, yet compliance with the mandated wage is low, with all the migrant domestic workers I interviewed reporting a wage below this level. At the same time, mobile phones and call and data rates are exorbitant. Given the dearth of safe and affordable public transportation, monthly visits to rural homes are not

affordable for poor migrant workers. Thus, a class difference is evident in the level of these families can experience.

When Lindi's mom was still alive, mobile care – even if constrained by their meagre resources – provided a caring connection between the rural home and the mother's place of employment. Their dependence on this limited means of care, Lindi said, made her even more determined that their sibling unit would not be broken up or further disrupted by the arrival of another child in need of care. Spending long periods of time without adult supervision means that children such as Lindi make difficult decisions at a young age. Lindi said she believed that education may lead to better opportunities for herself and her siblings. She is determined that most of them would complete secondary school, while the intellectually challenged older sibling took care of daily maintenance of their home. In other child only households in my study, similar decisions were made about which child would go to school and eventually provide a stable income for the household, while other children sacrifice their education to earn extra income as gardeners or cleaners, to ensure their survival. However, by going to school the children in the household risks exposure to the authorities. And this household resorts to hidden behaviour at school and in relation to contraception and abortion, not only to survive but also to care for each other.

As Strathern (2019) argues in support of Haraway's maxim that we 'make kin not babies' "kinship must be resilient enough to bear whatever compassion and responsibility and love require, while itself being indifferent to circumscription in such terms". Given Lindi's determination and commitment to ensure care for her siblings, she opts to terminate her pregnancy, rather than to disrupt their fragile care arrangements, even if this decision is judged as uncaring by others in her community. In contrast, to conventional understandings of kinning as the "inevitable outcome" of giving birth and "having babies", Lindi ignores the contradictory circumscriptions against children taking care of other children, and against abortion and practices kinning in a care-full and situated manner.

In the next story, I focus again on a migration sending community. This time in the Eastern Cape province. The high level of poverty in this community is linked to its historical dependence on mine migratory labour, which declined progressively since the 1980s and

the historical underdevelopment of such communities during apartheid (Ngonini 2007). In 2010, I visited Keiskamahoek as a member of team of researchers exploring the social and economic impact of a public employment scheme, the Community Work Programme, which was introduced to a number of communities in South Africa. Our research on the CWP was published in various other publications, but I focus on a group of women, who were not employed by the CWP, but who used the social infrastructure of the programme to support and extend their caring networks. This story indicates a shift in my focus from caring individuals (Maria and Lindi) to more collective forms of caring and the inclusion of care for other-than-humans in my research and writing.

Story 3: Rabula: Caring networks

A group of six unemployed women operates as the Rabula Volunteers. Rabula is one of the villages in Keiskammahoek, where the women are based. The women use the name Rabula to indicate where they are from, but also in recognition of the roots of the word, Rabula, which is derived from a Xhosa term referring to an "irritable child"[2]. Naming their activities in this way specifies their commitment to social issues plaguing not only children but also other members of their community. This community is characterised by an unemployment rate of more than 80 per cent. Many adults leave to find work elsewhere, and many households comprise of the elderly and young children.

The six women operate on an entirely voluntary basis; they receive no compensation, but rather use their own resources to care for others in their village. Members of the Rabula Volunteers go into the homes of the physically frail and child-headed households and bathe, dress and cook for those who need such services. They foster youth offenders upon their release from penitentiaries, hoping that a 'simple, village life' will prevent them from returning to lives of crime and drugs. With their own social assistance money, they give needy children money for transport to schools and hospitals, and even act as interlocutors for many illiterate people with impersonal government departments. Some community members, who could benefit from government social assistance, cannot read and write, or

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[2] See SA History Online: https://www.sahistory.org.za/place/rabula

are not able to visit local municipal offices in-person. The Rabula Volunteers complete forms or visit municipal offices, waiting in long queues on their behalf.

The Rabula community women perform what Tronto (2017) calls a democratic form of care – which makes the reallocation of care responsibilities its central concern – that is beyond the individual and household in need of care. Their members are involved in an HIV/AIDS support group, which consists of nurses, volunteers, and social workers at the local hospital. They are involved in a community vegetable garden and sell some produce from their vegetable gardens to fund their activities and that of local creches. In exchange for vegetables donated to the hospital's kitchen, nurses and social workers run a training programme for the Rabula community women to improve their skill in helping the needy such as working with bed-ridden people and juvenile delinquents. In Keiskammahoek, therefore, there is the beginning of an attempt to enhance women's ability to care and to reward their involvement in the needs of others. In this community, the poor relies on others who are equally poor.

Razavi (2011) suggests that developing countries rely to a large extent on the 'volunteer' or 'community' work of women to care for and reproduce societies, relegating women to unpaid or underpaid positions. This is quite different from, for instance, the Swedish case, where care service expansion was financed and regulated by the state, and where care workers were public employees, with all the rights and entitlements that it implied (Razavi 2011: 12).

In contrast, Rabula Volunteers themselves are unemployed and also in need of specialised care for illnesses. And still they draw on their own resources derived from social assistance to engage in the care of others. One of the resources they consistently use is the knowledge of the local climate and what constitutes good local planting practices. Not only do they teach others in their vegetable gardens when and what to plant, but also how to recycle water and kitchen refuse for re-use in their gardens. Their knowledge about natural insect repellents and inexpensive composting methods ensures the healthy growing of plants, contributing towards the nutritional needs of many in their community.

While learning from these women I noted how care included growing and harvesting of indigenous produce, using ecologically sound methods. It is inspiring to see how a

community ravaged by the extractivist nature of migrant mining, engages with their own natural resources in a non-extractivist manner. Lessons from the Feminist Table similarly informed and expanded my understanding of our interdependence with others and the other-than-human.

Story Four: Relations beyond the human: The Feminist Table

These interests lead me to yet another story I would like to share with you, this time of my research with my friend and ally, Jacklyn Cock with the annual hosting of the Feminist Table from 2012 to 2019. We set up the Feminist Table project conscious that the concept of care, as a situated and politically informed mode of enquiry provides a way of developing an ethic which would sustain our world, developing new methods of drawing in the marginalised and centring 'neglected' concerns for both humans and other-than-humans, (Puig de la Bellacasa: 2017). The interactions of the Feminist Table were framed around care for others and the environment. We applied, what Hanrahan (2015) calls an ontological awareness of care as not only an object of study, but also an awareness of care as a connection between people. We embarked on a workshop methodology, which we called *dialogic*, referring to the relegation of power, authority and expertise by academics to participants and the process of engagement. Implicit in the engagements of the Feminist Table was the notion of critical hope. That is that recognizing and speaking out about eco-feminist concerns with industrial agriculture, mining, the handling of droughts, food sovereignty, and so on, did not exclude an optimism that these concerns could be challenged. Optimism and hope, challenge neo-liberal capitalism. And so do caring people, since *homonis curans* generate a politics anti-thetically opposed to the individualist, market-swayed apathy of neo-liberalism Tronto (2017).

Reflections on the stories:" A livable world is remade with disregarded human persons and other displaced beings, or not at all" (Haraway 2018: 105)

As a sociologist and feminist researcher, I am concerned the experience of women in relation to work, livelihoods and the economy. These stories give important insights into how love, care and work connect in women's everyday lives and relations in places of dire

economic poverty. Maria living at end of the 20th century experienced the demise of fulltime work, and the promise it had for social mobility. Lindiwe in the early 21st century created with her siblings a child-only household faced with impossible choices, as their parents are forced to work in economies hostile to care for the young. The RVA practise care in a rural economy decimated by mining and manufacturing which no longer required their or their men's labour in industries which had increasingly mechanised and/or closed down.

Shahra Razavi refers to a care diamond where care needs rest on the market (privatised care), community, the state and households. For the care diamond to provide care in any context, the relationships between the institutions – the four corners of the diamond – must be of equal strength. But this is seldom the case in the Global South. In South Africa only 33% of women are employed, and fewer women can rely on the market for care. In addition, direct care services by the state are inadequate, even though expenditure on social assistance is high. For many, in South Africa, there is no diamond, and instead an over-reliance on household and community support relying on the care of women not only for their own care dependents but also others in their communities.

From my work with feminist community-based organisations and movements in South Africa, I see how social reproduction and care for the environment are inter-related. In 2016 I worked on with women on the impact of the installation of solar gas heaters their daily care activities in a community in the Western Cape, the province where I currently live. The installation of a (supposedly) green form of energy was imposed on this community after they had collectively stated that what they needed most were jobs and electricity. Instead of benefitting from hot water since the installation of a solar water-heating system, they often find themselves without hot water, having to share bathrooms with strangers, and resorting to unhealthy heating sources such as paraffin stoves. It is common for poor black women to be thought of as a danger to the natural environment and subjected to green policies from above. As Wendy Annecke argues:

"In short, the poor, who are arguably least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, who do not own cars but use public transport, who seldom own refrigerators, and who frequently use just one source of energy for cooking, space heating and light, are being selected to use expensive, rudimentary solar technology, which does not satisfy the most pressing need: heat for cooking. In most SHS households women continue to collect wood. This is why many … women are dissatisfied with [Solar Home Systems (SHS)] (Annecke, 2002).

Evident from research on the impact of 'green' policies, is that our relations with the environment is not the same across race and class. Neo-liberal capitalism not only deepens economic inequality between people but also intensifies the inequality of material living conditions, since it exploits not only workers but also the planet itself, and to levels where neither can replenish nor sustain themselves. As Fraser (2014) argues, capitalism thrives on the separation of humans from the environment, not only with the aim of pushing humans into work, but also to enforce the dominance of capital over nature as a source of raw materials and over the destructive processes which wrest profits from mining and manufacturing operations. Vandana Shiva (2013:18, 90) argues strongly for an ecological shift that entails not seeing ourselves as outside the web of life. She suggests that the dominant institutions shaped by capitalist patriarchy thrive on eco-apartheid", by which she means 'the dualism that pits nature against humans'. Black poor people in the Global South are acutely vulnerable to ecological devastation.

Thinking through the importance of the environment I have had to question my earlier "assumed primacy of humans to the project of development", as I focused on women's "economic activities and human political subjectivity" (Gibson-Graham 2011). Now, as I consider other aspects of care, beyond the human I have to look at how relations with the other-than-human play out the practices of care in women's lives.

Having set the framework for my research interests I now turn to my research focus as PCC.

Connecting with Care

My Prince Claus Chair work responds to today's core environmental concerns. On 5 May 2022, a group of women in the Western Cape Province marched to the provincial Department of Labour offices demanding:

- The banning of highly hazardous pesticides already banned in the European Union
- Greater coherence and coordination among different government departments, including Employment & Labour, Agriculture and Health
- The updating of our outdated 1947 legislation regulating pesticides in South Africa
- The enforcement, by Labour Inspectors, of existing labour laws pertaining to workers' protection from pesticide exposure

- Prosecution of farmers who expose workers to pesticides by, for example, not providing requisite PPE; forcing workers to re-enter vineyards that have just been sprayed with pesticides; not providing washing facilities for workers exposed to pesticides (Women on Farms 2022)

These demands are made by women farm workers and small farmers, who engage in the production of agricultural products for international export. Engagements with others and the more-than-human by woman farmworkers emerge from an understanding of how political economy and history transforms the South African landscape. Rural geographies, populated by one third, predominantly Black South Africans are characterized by poverty (Cousins, Dubb, Hornby and Matero, 2018 and Walker and Dubb 2013) and a history of underdevelopment. Through mechanisms such as the 1913 Land Act, a segregationist law which has had a significant impact on South Africa for the past century, land ownership of Black African people was limited to 7% of South Africa's landmass. By 2013, nearly 70% of South African land was still in the hands of White commercial agriculture, 15% designated Black communal areas (of which the Western Cape held 0.05%), 10% held by the state, and the rest occupied by 60% of all South Africans in urban areas Walker and Dubb 2013). Land restitution in South Africa is slow; hamstrung by a market-based 'willing seller, willing buyer' principle, its social justice intent has been neglected (Razavi 2007). In addition, an encroachment of 'customary' governance into land management systems have further eroded women's rights to land use. Thus, a dual system of land reform - which includes privatization of most of the land alongside the control of traditional authorities in communal areas - operates with severe implications for women's ability to care for the earth.

Sylvia Frederici (2011) points to the gendered contradictions of women's access to communal areas in Africa. Firstly, women are subject to patriarchal control which pervades traditional authority (which had emerged from colonial hijacking of pre-colonial forms chieftainship and rule) over who can own and use land. Thus, men are privileged over women as traditional authorities block women's access to the post-apartheid rights to own, inherit and buy land in their own names. Razavi (2007) suggests that men-focused land reform in Africa mirrors the gender bias of a previous era of land reform in the 1910-1970s when it was assumed that resources owned by men would equally benefit their dependent wives and daughters. She argues against a gender bias not only in land reform, but also in movements struggling for land. Secondly, Frederici (2011) suggests women are also drawn

into conflict with each other over access to land. In South Africa, the changing law on traditional authorities, now requires that these authorities include a minimum representation of women of 30%. However, 30% of women are still easily over-ruled by men, should the women even have gender equality for all women as a goal since many on traditional authorities are from elites in their immediate areas and dependent on the goodwill of men.

Given limited access to land in the Western Cape, many women are employed on farms and engaged in struggles to retain a foothold on farms, access decent wages and enough land to farm produce and livestock for their own and family use. Their engagements with other-than-humans are imbued with obligations of care and sustenance of others, rather than the language of 'ownership' which is the currency of most land reform debates. Similar to the examples cited by Frederici (2011) women farm worker movements appropriate land and the sea for grazing and crops harvesting, rather than for individual ownership.

Women are the "guardians of land, life, seeds, and love"

Many South African women who care for others and other-than-humans gathered at the Feminist Table, on a yearly basis preceding the Covid-19 pandemic (Fakier and Cock 2018). They are members of various cross-cutting movements, such as Mawubuye Land Rights Forum, Masifundise, CSAAWU, anti-mining groupings, movements for the unemployed, and the landless, and community-based organizations for women, who gathered to discuss the political economy of care, access to water and environmental degradation. At these annual events discussions centred on the many activities of care conducted by women in their daily lives and political organization. Some of these organisations have male members, but the Feminist Table is reserved for the participation of women delegates only, to ensure that a feminist lens on the society, state and the economy is maintained. Many of the movements work together on campaigns such as against forced removals, violence against women and for social assistance by the state. They are also affiliates of other bigger movements and specifically of the Rural Women's Assembly (RWA), which is a women-only movement.

"We are the guardians of land, life, seeds, and love" is the organizational motif of the RWA. (Andrews 2019) Its membership displays the deft combination of 'traditional' ways of farming with an aptitude for learning new methods which are less extractive of the

environment. For instance, in 2018, in a small town called Suurbraak, in the Western Cape, six women from Mawubuye started an aquaponics farm to provide healthy vegetables for themselves and nearby communities. This method is 90% less water-intensive than other forms and uses for fertilization the waste produced by fish who live and grow in the same water in which the vegetables are planted. Thus, it cuts out the use of fertilisers and reduces the impact on ground soil and the need to have big tracts of land. Lettuce is the main harvest, and its nutritional value was an important consideration in this project. Importantly, Suurbraak is located in the Karoo, a semi-arid dry area of the Western Cape where the scarcity of water has a severe impact on the lives of its human and the non-human inhabitants.

Scarcity of seeds was a big concern during the first and most severe lockdown period of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. RWA women were concerned with how the restrictions on people's movements curtailed the more common exchange of seeds between women farmers. The saving and exchange of seeds is another tradition amongst farmwomen. In fact, RWA formed part of an anti-GMO lobby with the African Centre for Biodiversity, confronting multinational Monsanto's attempt to 'colonise' South Africa's food systems with the introduction of 'drought resistant' maize seeds in 2017. Instead the ACB argued many drought-sensitive ways of farming already exist amongst small farmers. Amongst black small farmers an informal system of seed saving, and exchange has existed for centuries and has run parallel to a formal seed system which serves white-owned industrial agriculture. (African Centre for Biodiversity 2012) In South Africa it is women who guard against the genetic contamination, high costs and monopolistic behaviour of market-based seed systems. RWA seed savers talk about preservation not only in relation to agricultural stock but also in terms of ways of living. Their seed systems involve an ethic of care which include not wasting resources, reciprocal social relations, and the transmission of respect for others and the environment across generations.

The roles and activities of women engaged in such caring activities, have been recorded and analysed by me and others, however what it is still needed is the recognition of the creativity embodied by so-called volunteers and their struggles for recognition as they

labour in the shadows of the formal activities of the ministerial departments of Health and Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, and Labour. Research on care, not surprisingly if one reflects on the work of feminist scholars such as Nancy Folbre, Judie Nelson, Arlie Hochschild and others, brings to mind the motivations behind care. As those scholars have argued, care – paid or unpaid – has a complicated relationship with the love between carer and recipient and a demand for remuneration of work which cannot be fully compensated. This kind of work also, we must keep in mind can be motivated by a spectrum of interest ranging from self-interest to complete sacrifice to the ideals of public good in an environment where care is not provided in any organised form. A common refrain from participants in my previous research has been that they do this kind of work for "love". As Maria Dlamini, said, "Everyone loves me, they don't give me money, but they love me." Included in this should be the love and deep respect that RWA women refer to, when they talk about the ocean or the natural environment of their communities. The ocean, for instance, is seen not only as a container of resources but also as space around which to organise their indigenous knowledge transmitted over generations, their daily lives, their hopes for the future – in other words, their pasts, present and futures.

I would like to take the analysis of love embedded in the care of nature and people further and following Russell (2020: 329) who argues for a "love that fuels moral outrage" or solidarity love as she calls it. Russell draws on the work of feminist philosopher Ann Ferguson and Rosemary Henessy to understand love as a social power, which adds fuel to the struggle against social inequalities. Russel argues, thus, that the anger at environmental degradation and the social inequality in which it is embedded could be a first step towards the creation of solidaristic bonds between women as they collectivise their resistance to the exploitation of humans and nature. Integral to love as resistance is the notion of hope, which informed by its recognition and objection to the world as is it is, generate critical hope. This kind of resistance is "a creative resistance reconstituting a way of being in relation with others and to nature", as Ana Agostino stated at a WEGO event at 2022 UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Puig de la Bella Casa (2017) argues that in movements such as the RWA, the recognition of interdependency in women's every day activities makes for a collectivist ethic, which is care-full and

speculative. Speculation, she suggests, implies an openness to 'who and what' cares, and allows for the recognition that care by other-than-humans occurs. Thus, for the RWA care for the environment is not only practiced by women in non-extractivist forms of farming (e.g. aquaponics), but also recognized in the sustenance we draw from the soil, seeds, marine life, and agricultural produce. Nature, thus, is not merely a resource, a site of extraction, but rather caring and inter-connected to our well-being. A speculative ethic of care makes real the vision of other-than-humans as caring.

Such an ethics of care, de la Bella Casa suggests, develop from 'regimes of living' (2011:xx), which considers material, emotional, technological and political resources in relation to a specific environmental concern. Referring to de la Bella Casa's reliance on "situated knowledge" (Haraway 2011), Tozzi (2021: page number) argues, "It is precisely its grounding within the specificity of every circumstance that turns care ethics into a politics and an obligation, a necessity emerging from the material and affective constraints of everyday life as we strive to make living with others 'as well as possible'."

Situated ethics of care encourages us to move from a human-centred environmentalism to rather think about connections of care (Gibson-Graham 2011). The stories I shared relates my trajectory of situating care and its connections in my work with women. Maria's story is an illustration of how care as connection operates as a foundation which secures the daily and generational survival of many people in a network of care. Lindi's story is one of kinning, in the face of terrible odds and beyond social and contextual prescriptions of care, as a determination and commitment to stay connected in care for those she loves and for whom she feels responsible. The Feminist Table and, more importantly, the activities of the member organisations of the Feminist Table, sheds light on the caring connections of women as they include care, respect, and appreciation for the other-than-humans in their work and collective organisations. I propose that a situated understanding of 'love' is what fuels connections with care for women in South Africa. A love which is complex and is made of outrage and critique, solidarity and collectivity, and made from tensions with and hope for a feminist future which include an equitable distribution of care for humans and other-than-humans. The content of caring connections in other contexts in the Global South and how, in critical combination, it could develop an international feminist understanding of connecting with care, will occupy my work in the next few years.

Conclusion: Connecting with Care through Intra-South Feminist Engagements

In conclusion, I present you with my plans for the next year and a half as the Prince Claus Chair. I have benefitted immensely in the past from the support and critical engagement of working with others. As PCC 2021-2023 I am working in a team again. I am working with firstly, my host at the ISS, Professor Wendy Harcourt. Wendy is a tour de force, generous and has a keen intellect which have inspired the research direction of our work together. Secondly our post-doctoral fellow is Dr Agustina Solera, who engages with decolonial debates in Latin American thinking, which despite its long history, is only now becoming more known in English-speaking academic contexts. She has worked with grassroots communities in intercultural settings. We have started working together and developed a research plan aiming to collaborate with our respective networks.

Our origins and experience in different Southern regions provide us with the opportunity to explore a plurality of perspectives positioned epistemically from the South. My research will build on the history of the Feminist Table, and I aim to focus on caring connections in the Rural Women's Assembly. The RWA has 80,000 members, with a cascading effect on 300,000 to 500,000 people in 11 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their spread has the potential for developing a regional understanding of women's care for humans and more-than-humans. My focus on Sub-Saharan Africa will be linked to that of Agustina Solera which takes a decolonial focus on care connections articulated to the cultural practices of the Mapuche, indigenous people of Argentina. The ancestral territory and labour of the indigenous communities have been expropriated by the Argentinian and Chilean states and the Mapuches have been subjected to human rights violations. Solera's work contributes to a collective process of reconstitution of their silenced and almost erased languages, worldviews, beliefs, knowledge, a process in which care is at the foundations. The aboriginal people of Australia, also share a history of racialised dispossession and exclusion with South Africans, and the Mapuches. Wendy Harcourt has reflected on her care connections as an "Australian white settler feminist political ecologist looking at the erasures and violence that mark the Australian landscape". (Harcourt 2001, 2009, 2018 and 2021) Such reflection takes seriously the situated knowledge and care of Australian aboriginal people for each other and the other-than-human Our research thus, also entails a care-full connection with the ideas and thinking of feminist movements in South Africa, Australia and Argentina, as well as connections between our works.

Social Encounters: Intra-South Feminist Engagements

We are planning encounters in the three countries as the place and space for our Intra-South feminist engagements. We call these project meetings encounters to clarify that these meetings are not of the same nature as longer-term, organically evolving forms of engagement. Instead, we see the encounters as unique moments of learning with movements which are either from long-standing connections or a signifier of more extended relationships in the future.

The Well-being, Ecology, Gender and Community (WEGO) network, an international feminist political ecology research network, have already started making inroads into exploring the ways in which communities actively sustain and care for the environment and their community members. Since February 2022 I have been drawn into their activities and will continue this relationship in research as well as with their postgraduate training programme. WEGO makes possible an expanding international profile for our work with its membership in the Global North and South.

While we recognise the contingent nature of what we can uncover, and do not expect to universalise from any of these encounters, we do know that there is much to be learnt from connecting with care across regions of the South. I look forward to exploring with other feminists:

- What situated knowledges about caring for humans and other-than-humans emerge, are maintained and reproduced in our respective regions,
- How critical connections between women could encourage care for ourselves, others, and our other than humans in our environment, and translate into new forms of kinning in contexts of marginalisation and exclusion,
- How connections of care could develop into an imaginary of the future, sensitive to our pasts, recovering care from the margins and putting it at the centre of development, and finally,
- How cosmologies of care in different regions of the South could contribute toward an international feminist understanding of care.

Bearing these questions in mind, I will be developing innovative methodologies that will build a research programme based on engaged conversations with women's communities and networks that will help theorize care and produce an informed feminist understanding of care grounded in an intra-south perspective.

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