



X REUNIÓN WATERLAT-GOBACIT

Struggles over Water: Intersections of Class, Gender and Ethnicity

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Introduction

The tenth international meeting of the Waterlat-Gobacit [Network](#) was organised jointly with the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Universidad de [Concepción](#), Chile. According to the [Declaration of the Plenary X Meeting of the Waterlat-Gobacit Network](#)

“The organization of this X International Meeting in Chile has special importance given that the country is experiencing a hydrological and climatic crisis largely provoked by the neoliberal model of water Politics and management, that privatized the access to water and to essential water and sanitation services and promoted the dispossession of water and territory by means of multiple extractive projects.”¹

The following summary details the participation and contribution of three of our Water Security Hub members from the Colombian collaboratory, based at the Cinara Institute, Universidad del Valle: Prof Miguel R. Peña Varón, Ms Carolina Blanco Moreno, and Prof Mariela García Vargas.²

Activities developed by Prof Miguel R. Peña Varón

Prof Miguel R. Peña Varón coordinated Workshop No. 11 entitled, **“The social production of inequality and injustice in the interrelations between water and the processes of health and disease: determinants from social class, gender, ethnicity and age amongst some other mechanisms of social differentiation”**.

This workshop provided a forum to discuss water-related health struggles, highlighting situations that reproduce health inequality and vulnerability on different social groups. A total of five oral presentations were delivered in the workshop, on the theme of water and health in both urban and rural areas of Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina.



Following this workshop, a small group of experts will produce a working notebook for digital publication.

Miguel (f. right) with Dr José Esteban Castro, Waterlat-Gobacit coordinator (f. left)

¹ <http://waterlat.org/GeneralPDFs/DeclarationofthePlenary.pdf>

² The Water Security and Sustainable Development Hub is funded by the United Kingdom Research and Innovation’s (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) [grant number: ES/S008179/1].

Activities developed by Ms Carolina Blanco Moreno

Ms Carolina Blanco together with Citlalli Aidee Becerra ([CONACyT](#), Querétaro, Mexico) coordinated Workshop No. 4 entitled, **“Water management, unequal relationships, vulnerability and poverty: resistances and social struggles”**.

The workshop was a discussion forum on water struggles, highlighting situations that reproduce inequality, vulnerability, and poverty on different social actors. It also considered the resistance to tackling situations that affect human settlements such as: unequal access and distribution of water for human consumption, water scarcity, water stress, and natural events (i.e. floods and droughts). The workshop revolved around nine oral presentations that discussed research and intervention processes in Brazil, Uruguay, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru.

The main topics of those presentations were: integral management of catchment areas, human right to water, networks and citizenship participation, and community management of water and sanitation. Carolina’s presentation, **“Struggles for the recognition of community water management for human consumption in Valle del Cauca, Colombia”**, discussed the experiences of two second-level community organizations – [AQUACOL](#) and [FECOSER](#). The pathways of these two organizations were analysed along with their strategies, outcomes, and challenges. The findings presented are part of Carolina’s doctoral research results.



Carolina (middle) with fellow delegates



Mariela presenting in the first plenary

Activities developed by Prof Mariela García Vargas

As part of the first plenary, Prof Mariela García Vargas presented, **“Water struggles and social differentiation”**, introducing the main topic of the meeting: the inclusion of social issues in the water sector. This incorporates gender and intersectionality perspectives and Mariela provided several examples of the contribution of women to the development and implementation of environmental thinking.

Together with Prof Hebe Barber ([Tucumán University](#), Argentina), Mariela coordinated Workshop No. 20 entitled, **“Gender and Water as a tense relationship: progress, setbacks and unfinished tasks”**. Experiences from Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil were presented to discuss four main issues:

1. Public management of water is still predominantly in men’s hands.
2. The transformation of gender relationships necessitates the empowerment of women at personal, social, and political levels.
3. Female indigenous suffer a double discrimination and it is essential that we promote links among indigenous movements across Latin America. Some indigenous women are against feminist theory because, according to them, it expresses a white, hegemonic, and colonial vision. We must promote indigenous territorial feminists’ networks, like the [TZK'AT Network](#) of Ancestral Healers of Community Feminism in Guatemala, formed in 2015.
4. As a matter of urgency, we must incorporate the intersectionality of gender, class, race/ethnicity, and age within the curricula of Engineering Faculties.



Female environmental activists in public conversation

Mapuche community representatives in public conversation



Photos courtesy of [Waterlat-Gobacit](#)