Chapter 4
Transformative Synergies and Tensions: Intersecting Paradigms of *Buen Vivir*, Decolonial Feminism, Feminist Economics, and Social and Solidarity Economy in Latin America

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Abstract This chapter critically examines *Buen Vivir*, Decolonial Feminism, Feminist Economics, and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), highlighting their distinct yet interconnected contributions toward rethinking economies in Latin America (LA). Collectively, these frameworks challenge neoliberal capitalism by proposing economies centred on life, care, reciprocity, and ecological balance. *Buen Vivir* emphasizes indigenous cosmologies and humans—ecology interconnectedness; Decolonial Feminism integrates critiques of colonialism, race, and gender; Feminist Economics foregrounds sexual division of labour and care organization; and SSE offers concrete organizational alternatives emphasizing collective governance and solidarity. The chapter explores theoretical convergences, tensions, and empirical examples from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador, illustrating both successes and persistent challenges in achieving truly transformative economies. Ultimately, the analysis calls for a plural, intersectional approach that bridges epistemological divides, advancing an agenda that deeply engages with the complexities of gender equity, ecological sustainability, and socioeconomic justice within and beyond LA.

Keywords Social and Solidarity Economy · Buen Vivir · Decolonial Feminism · Feminist Economics · Indigenous Worldviews · Reproduction of Life

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Acronyms

ILO	International Labour Organisation
LA	Latin America
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MNCR	National Movement of Urban Waste Pickers (*Movimento Nacional de Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis)*
MST	Landless Workers' Movement (*Movimiento de Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra*)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECAs	Peasant Economic Organizations *(Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas*)
OECOMs	Communal Economic Organizations (*Organizaciones Económicas Comunitarias*)
RIPESS	Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy

4.1 Introduction

In the context of cascading global crises—ecological devastation, widening social inequalities, the dismantling of care systems, and the rise of authoritarian political projects—mainstream economic paradigms have proven not only inadequate but deeply complicit in sustaining the very conditions they claim to address. Rooted in extractivist logics, patriarchal divisions of labour, and the colonial legacies of capitalist modernity, dominant models of development and growth continue to prioritize capital accumulation over ecological integrity, commodification over solidarity, and individual utility over collective well-being. In this critical historical juncture, Latin America (LA) emerges not simply as a region of economic experimentation, but as a political and epistemic site from which alternatives to the current order are being imagined and enacted.

This chapter engages with four interrelated paradigms— *Buen Vivir*, Decolonial Feminism, Feminist Economics, and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)—which have taken root in various LA contexts and offer powerful critiques of, and alternatives to, neoliberal capitalist rationalities. Rather than proposing mere reforms within existing frameworks, these perspectives call for a profound ontological and epistemological reconfiguration of what is understood as "the economy". They challenge the bifurcation between production and reproduction, the universalization of Eurocentric economic models, and the naturalization of exploitative labour and gender relations. Instead, they foreground *life-sustaining values*—such as interdependence, reciprocity, care, and ecological embeddedness—as foundational to any economic system truly oriented toward social justice and ecological sustainability.

In the last two decades, Indigenous worldviews have been acknowledged globally as an alternative to the unbridled race of accumulation, waste and environmental degradation, and the deeply human dissatisfaction that comes with it (Suppiah et al., 2022; Martínez & Porcelli, 2018). *Buen Vivir* principles propose a harmonious life between human cultures and their ecosystems; moreover, they offer a purpose to life—living well with oneself, with others, and with nature, of which humanity is but one component. Feminist economists have long critiqued the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy, highlighting the devaluation of women's reproductive labour and the feminization and exploitation of both women and nature. Decolonial feminism, emerging in LA in the 1980s, builds on these critiques by situating gender, race, and economic inequality within the legacy of colonialism. Drawing on the modernity/coloniality framework, it argues that global structures of inequality persist through the continuous inferiorization of women and other marginal groups in the modern capitalist system. The SSE, in turn, brings organizational alternatives, deeply embedded in ongoing initiatives rooted in the popular economy, mutual aid, and collective self-management, operating under democratic governance of enterprises, collective ownership of means of production, and reinvestment of surpluses into community development (RIPESS, 2015, 2).

These four paradigms converge in their critique of the dominant capitalist system, sharing a common commitment to reorient economies towards reciprocity, redistribution, and the collective good. Nonetheless, given that each emerges from distinct epistemological positions and ontological foundations, notable tensions arise regarding their conceptual frameworks, institutional strategies, and political imaginaries. Addressing these tensions critically is essential to achieving genuine articulation and transformative synergy. This chapter critically explores these intersections, synergies, and frictions, aiming to advance a multidimensional understanding of economic transformation deeply rooted in Latin American feminist and communitarian struggles.

The discussion is structured into five sections. Following this introduction, Sect. 4.2 develops the philosophical and political foundations of *Buen Vivir* and Decolonial Feminism, emphasizing their critiques of modernity and their proposed ontological alternatives. Section 4.3 examines Feminist Economics and SSE, detailing their respective analyses of care, value, and economic democracy. Section 4.4 illustrates how these paradigms materialize in concrete Latin American feminist and solidarity economy experiences. Finally, Section 4.5 synthesizes the dialogues and tensions among these frameworks, identifying key epistemological, theoretical, and pragmatic challenges that must be addressed to envision and construct future economies centred on the reproduction of life.

4.2 Buen Vivir and Decolonial Feminism: Dialogues of Resistance and Critical Fractures

Since emerging in the public discourse in the late 1980s, the principles of *Buen Vivir* have gained increasing global recognition as a critical alternative to Eurocentric modernity—characterized by its anthropocentrism, capitalism, economism, and

universalism (Hernández & Laats, 2020; Vanhulst, 2015). In contrast, *Buen Vivir* offers a pluralistic, nonhierarchical, and inclusive framework that challenges the dualism between society and nature, while honouring Indigenous knowledge and practices (Vanhulst, 2015; Cubillo-Guevara et al., 2014). Its global appeal stems not only from its extensive academic and policy elaboration but also from the lived experiences of various Andean and Amazonian communities, where its foundational principles originated.

Several studies highlight contemporary communal economic practices that remain deeply rooted in ancestral systems of social organization, production, and the exchange of goods among indigenous communities. For example, Arias et al. (2022) and Ramírez-Cendrero et al. (2017) highlight how communitarian economies tied to *Buen Vivir* centre on subsistence and maintaining the physical and environmental conditions vital for survival, emphasizing a ritual respect for nature. Communities focus on building sustainable living environments, supporting their economies through cooperation, exchange, and solidarity, contrasting with capitalist goals of constant economic growth. In this model, individual and collective needs take precedence over monetary value, and community is prioritized over markets, depending on and adapting to nature as a survival strategy. These characteristics make the living experience of *Buen Vivir* unique and contextual to specific environments but also to specific organizational forms.

In contrast, efforts to translate the simple principles of *Buen Vivir* or *Vivir Bien* into public policies and projects have led to their interpretations becoming increasingly complex (Cubillo-Guevara, 2016; Vanhulst, 2015; Cubillo-Guevara et al., 2014). Rooted in ancient animistic beliefs and rituals, *Buen Vivir* is a belief system that encompasses complex mythology and supra-entities, offering a perspective that transcends conventional understandings of concepts such as the cycles of life and the relationship between the material world and the spiritual realm (Avilés & Youkhana, 2024; Lalander & Cuestas-Caza, 2018). Over time, *Buen Vivir* has been articulated as a socialist proposal and has been incorporated into the political and societal frameworks of countries like Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador, where it has influenced legislation, development, and economic policies. While it has inspired a discourse advocating for a deep, respectful relationship with nature (often referred to as Mother Earth), its practical implementation has remained entangled with mainstream developmental language and its associated procedures (Avilés & Youkhana, 2024). Efforts to operationalize *Buen Vivir* within political systems that position the State as the guarantor of basic needs and the inclusion of historically marginalized groups have yielded mixed and often disappointing results, particularly in terms of safeguarding nature from threats such as deforestation, fires, agricultural expansion, and extractivism (Villalba-Eguiluz & Etxano, 2017; Vanhulst, 2015).

Despite its several interpretations or co-optation by political interests, the concept of *Buen Vivir* still strengthens the theory and practice of various critical proposals from the margins of power centres, such as social/solidarity economy and critical discourses aiming to transform hegemonic forms of social and economic organization in LA (Vanhulst, 2015). It also converges with other discourses for radical

transformation of ethnocentric and anthropocentric societal organization along the deconstruction of historical hierarchies among cultures, knowledge and practices, such as the decolonial feminism.

Feminists from the South have long advocated for *life sustainability*, highlighting the intrinsic link between the capitalist paradigm of accumulation and growth and the patriarchal system. Historically, patriarchy has manifested—and continuously reinvented itself—through various forms of violence against women and certain marginalized groups of men. What remains consistent, however, is its intertwining with the capitalist system to devalue or render invisible women's reproductive and productive labour. Women are assigned the fundamental task of caring for the family and for others, with this sexual division of labour framed as "natural" and thus unworthy of recognition (Svampa, 2021; Shiva, 1988). Since capitalist economic systems are built on the exploitation of both natural resources and human labour, the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature are inherently connected. Women are often considered closer to nature than men—and, therefore, in need of control—and nature itself has been feminized to justify its endless sacrifice and silencing (Svampa, 2021; Shiva, 2005).

Although branches of ecofeminism and economic feminists address issues of intersecting discriminations and colonial struggles (Daibes, 2023; Salleh, 2017), decolonial feminists have read patriarchy, multiple discriminations and the coloniality of modern life, from the LA historical perspective. Decolonial feminists draw on the central argument of intellectuals of the "grupo modernidad/colonialidad" from LA that, since colonial times, there has not been a significant transformation in the international division of labour between the centres of capitalist power and the peripheries, nor in the ethnic-racial hierarchies of populations after the formation of nation-states in previous colonized territories. "Instead, what has occurred is a transition from modern colonialism to global coloniality" (Curiel Pichardo, 2014, 49). Silvia Lugones expanded on this by arguing that colonialism imposed a modern/colonial system of gender that is marked by heterosexuality of social relations, patriarchal organization, and biological dimorphism (Lugones, 2010). While decolonial feminists may differ in their views on whether patriarchy also existed in pre-colonial societies or was introduced by European colonizers, they are united in their condemnation of the ongoing exploitative relationships between former colonizing powers and formerly colonized countries. These enduring relations—manifested through the extraction of natural resources, cheap labour, and commodification—are deeply embedded in racialized and gendered structures of economic inequality within the global economy.

Many expressions of feminism in LA fall under the umbrella of decolonial feminism due to their mobilization against extractivist policies and projects, their denunciation of the historical construction of intersecting inequalities based on gender and race/ethnicity, their (re)valuation of local knowledge and practices, and their call for an economy that values care work, social reproduction, and ecological balance. In practice, decolonial feminist actions are often indistinguishable from current ecofeminist movements in the region. Svampa (2021), for instance, notes that women's movements advocating for human rights, the marginalized, and the

environment exist under various names, including territorial feminisms, communitarian feminisms, popular feminisms, and even anti-extractivist feminisms or ecofeminism from the South. Svampa adopts the term "ecoterritorial feminism" (feminismo ecoterritorial) to name these expressions of the southern ecoterritorial feminisms fighting for environmental justice. As this author affirms, not all these movements reclaim themselves as feminists, but "in its most disruptive version, it is a wager whose starting point is the denunciation of the triple violence on territories/bodies, namely, patriarchal, colonial, and extractivist, as well as an emphasis on healing." (Svampa, 2021, 19. Own translation).

Decolonial feminism in LA distinguishes itself from other feminist currents in the region by emphasizing the intrinsic relationship between patriarchy and coloniality. Their critique extends beyond the denunciation of gendered and racialized forms of subordination experienced by women, Indigenous peoples, and other historically marginalized communities. Decolonial feminists advocate for a radical decolonization of both thought and practice, challenging the pervasive dominance of Eurocentric and U.S.-centric epistemologies across social, political, and cultural spheres. They further interrogate the persistence of internal colonization, wherein colonial power dynamics are reproduced within nation-states through institutional frameworks, hegemonic discourses, and everyday practices that continue to marginalize Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and other subalternized populations. Unlike advocates of *Buen Vivir*, decolonial feminists maintain a fundamentally critical distance from the modern nation-state (Barroso, 2016), arguing that the colonial project persists through the patriarchal, racist, and colonial structures embedded within state institutions.

Decolonial feminists have also frequently critiqued the appropriation of *Buen Vivir* within political discourse as a means to sustain, or even reinforce, the subordination of women (Avilés & Youkhana, 2024; Varea & Zaragozin, 2017; Burman, 2011). The notion promoted by some *Buen Vivir* advocates of an inherent complementarity between masculine and feminine principles within Indigenous communities (chacha-warmi in Quechua language) has, in some cases, served to obscure existing gender hierarchies and to mask patriarchal practices, including violence against women. Such essentialist interpretations risk naturalizing inequality and silencing feminist critiques. Nevertheless, this misinterpretation has not diminished the transformative potential of *Buen Vivir* as a framework reclaimed by women's movements across the region. These movements have embraced their principles as both a visionary horizon and a source of political agency in their struggles (Álvarez Ávila, 2019; Varea & Zaragozin, 2017).

While acknowledging the profound critique advanced by decolonial feminists regarding the patriarchal, extractivist, and colonial logics embedded within nation-state models—often legitimized through the discourse of *Buen Vivir* —this analysis also emphasizes the points of convergence between feminist and *Buen Vivir* paradigms. Both challenge dominant models of conventional development, universalist epistemologies, and systems of power rooted in historical colonialism. In contrast, they propose alternative ways of life grounded in solidarity, harmony with nature, respect for diversity, and the valorization of local knowledge and traditions. Within

this shared framework, both feminist thought—including decolonial and community-based feminisms—and Indigenous worldviews propose care expressed in communal responsibility, tenderness and collective affection as counter-hegemonic responses to the rationalist and exclusionary logic of current forms of social organization (Feminismo Comunitario, 2014; Soto Rodríguez, 2022; Guerrero Arias, 2010).

4.3 Rethinking Economies: The Transformative Dialogue Between Social and Solidarity Economy and Feminist Economics

Following the exploration of *Buen Vivir* and decolonial feminism as critical paradigms that challenge the foundational assumptions of modern capitalist development, this section turns to two additional frameworks that have gained growing relevance in LA: Feminist Economics and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). Although grounded in different intellectual and political traditions, these approaches also converge in rethinking the economy. Feminist Economics emerges from within the critique of the discipline of economics itself and it reveals the centrality of the sexual division of labour, the interdependence between productive and reproductive labour and proposes coresponsibility of care as an axis of economic justice; and SSE by advancing collective, democratic, and territorially rooted forms of organizing production and distribution. Rather than offering a unified vision, they contribute complementary insights and practices that enrich current debates on economic transformation, while also posing important questions about their articulation with the decolonial and nature-centred perspectives discussed in the previous section.

Feminist economics constitutes a longstanding and plural tradition of critique that spans both the Global North and South. Since the 1970s, feminist scholars and activists have interrogated the blind spots of neoclassical, Keynesian and Marxist economics, particularly the exclusion of unpaid domestic labour and the gendered assumptions embedded in models of utility, labour, and rationality (Benería & Roldán, 1987; Kabeer, 1994). In LA, this tradition intersects with broader struggles for social justice and against structural adjustment, austerity, and the feminization of poverty. Feminist economists across the region have not only critiqued the androcentrism of economic theory but have also advanced comprehensive proposals for building economies centred on the reproduction of life, rather than the accumulation of capital (Wanderley, 2018; Segato, 2016).

In doing so, they have brought to the forefront the political economy of care—not merely as an interpersonal activity, but as a structural axis of economic systems that sustains life. Moreover, they reconceptualized care as a public good, a collective responsibility, and a foundational economic category (Pautassi, 2007). Far from being confined to private households, care is understood as a form of socially necessary labour that underpins human and social reproduction. The unequal distribution

of care—along lines of gender, class, and race—reinforces broader systems of inequality, often rendering women's labour invisible or undervalued. In response, feminist economists have developed policy frameworks that call for the redistribution of care responsibilities through public investment, community-based initiatives, and intrahousehold coresponsibility (Montaño & Calderón Magaña, 2010; Pautassi & Zibecchi, 2010). In LA contexts marked by labour informality and weak welfare states; these proposals have been particularly urgent. They advocate for a plural care architecture that integrates state action with collective and communitarian strategies, aiming not only to alleviate care burdens but to transform the very structures that devalue life-sustaining work.

Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), for its part, builds on historical traditions of mutual aid, popular economy, and collective self-management in LA. Drawing inspiration from Polanyi (1957, 1992), SSE scholars emphasize that economies are always plural, governed not solely by markets, but also by redistribution, reciprocity, and subsistence-oriented production. SSE proposes to subordinate the economy to social and ecological aims, by promoting democratic governance of enterprises, collective ownership of means of production, and reinvestment of surpluses into community development (Coraggio, 2015; Laville, 2009). It encompasses a wide variety of organizational forms—including cooperatives, mutuals, associations, communal enterprises, and networks of popular economy—that operate outside or on the margins of capitalist logics (Gaiger et al., 2019).

Furthermore, SSE advances the discussion on the political nature of economic order by emphasizing that market boundaries result from collective decisions, rather than from autonomous economic laws perceived as naturally arising dynamics. From this perspective, markets can adopt diverse structures and scopes depending on their connections with other mechanisms—such as redistribution, reciprocity, and subsistence. Thus, economic orders (including markets) are necessarily embedded within institutional frameworks (ethical principles, justifications, formal and informal rules and regulations, and networks of relationships) that define which goods and services are appropriate for market exchange (commodification), and which should be exchanged through alternative coordination mechanisms (redistribution, reciprocity, or self-sufficiency). These frameworks also determine conditions under which goods and services can be traded in markets within the parameters of social justice and environmental sustainability, as well as specifying legitimate behaviours and penalties for noncompliance with agreed-upon values and rules.

What distinguishes SSE from both capitalism and state-centric socialism is its commitment to economic democracy and plural institutional arrangements. Rather than accepting the commodification of all goods and services, SSE proposes a more selective, socially deliberated process of valuation, in which communities decide collectively which domains of life should be governed by market logic, and which should remain in the sphere of commons, reciprocity, or public provision. Markets are not eliminated but "nested" within ethical, social, and ecological considerations (Polanyi, 1992; Laville, 2010).

The dialogue between Feminist Economics and SSE thus holds immense transformative potential. Both frameworks reject the ontological separation between

economy and society, and advocate for economic arrangements centred on the reproduction of life, rather than capital. They challenge the dualism between productive and reproductive labour, emphasize the importance of democratic deliberation over economic decisions, and foreground values such as care, solidarity, and sustainability. Together, they propose a paradigmatic shift from economies of accumulation to economies of life (Hinkelammert & Jiménez, 2013).

However, tensions persist in their articulation. SSE has historically focused on class-based inequalities and the democratization of production, often neglecting the gendered organization of labour and the structural importance of care. Many SSE organizations—such as cooperatives and community enterprises—replicate patriarchal norms internally, failing to recognize or redistribute reproductive labour, or to promote women's leadership (Chatterjee, 2015; Anderson, 2015; Osorio-Cabrera, 2017). Conversely, Feminist Economics has developed strong critiques of reproductive and care inequalities but has paid less attention to the practices of economic self-management, alternative market forms, and collective enterprise that characterize SSE.

4.4 Transformative Practices: Intersections Between Social and Solidarity Economy and Feminist Economic Initiatives and Struggles in Latin America

Across LA, a rich and diverse array of Feminist and Social and Solidarity Economy experiences (SSE) has emerged in response to the persistent crises of labour precarity, extractivism, care, and inequality. Far from being isolated or marginal, these initiatives constitute concrete and dynamic efforts to construct alternative ways of organizing production, distribution, and reproduction that challenge, on different levels, capitalist logics and patriarchal structures. From worker-recuperated factories and feminist care cooperatives in Argentina, to Afro-Indigenous territorial care networks in Colombia, agroecological enterprises in Ecuador and Brazil, and indigenous community economies in Bolivia, the region provides fertile ground for examining the transformative potential of SSE when it intersects with feminist and territorial initiatives and struggles.

In Argentina, the SSE landscape has been shaped by successive economic crises and strong popular mobilizations. A paradigmatic example is the wave of empresas recuperadas, such as the Chilavert printing cooperative, where workers took over bankrupt private enterprises and converted them into democratically run cooperatives. These experiences demonstrate that production can be maintained without capitalist ownership, with collective governance and the reinvestment of surpluses into the collective good (Vázquez, 2020). Alongside these, the proliferation of feminist care cooperatives—especially since the mid-2010s—has revealed another dimension of transformation. These organizations, often composed of women from marginalized urban neighbourhoods, provide paid care services for children, the

elderly, and people with disabilities, while simultaneously improving working conditions for caregivers. Their existence revalues care as essential labour and opens space for political organizing among women workers, contesting the commodification and devaluation of reproductive work (Bottini et al., 2021). Despite these gains, the feminist agenda within Argentine SSE faces ongoing tensions, particularly in accessing public contracts and challenging gender hierarchies within traditional cooperatives and state policy frameworks.

Bolivia presents a different but equally complex landscape. Here, SSE is shaped by indigenous cosmologies and community-based systems embedded in the plural economy framework enshrined in the 2009 Constitution. *Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas* (OECAs) and *Organizaciones Económicas Comunitarias* (OECOMs) offer distinct yet overlapping approaches to collective economic practice. OECOMs in particular, rooted in indigenous governance, operate based on principles of reciprocity, asamblea-based decision-making, and collective reinvestment. These forms challenge both capitalist ownership and extractivist state models. However, tensions emerge in the relationships these organizations maintain with state agencies and markets. While community economies assert control over territory and production, they are often co-opted or subordinated to bureaucratic logics or extractive agendas. A key dimension of Bolivian SSE is the role of women in urban and rural associations. In urban contexts such as El Alto, Aymara women organize artisan cooperatives and market associations that generate income, mutual support, and cultural affirmation. In rural areas, women participate in the production and commercialization of quinoa, cacao, and crafts, though they often face barriers to leadership and decision-making within mixed-gender organizations (Wanderley, 2019; Soares Guimarães & Wanderley, 2022). These experiences demonstrate both the empowering potential of SSE and the persistence of gender inequalities within community structures.

Brazil presents a vibrant SSE ecosystem anchored in popular struggles and social movements. Solidarity enterprises linked to the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the national movement of urban waste pickers (MNCR) have played a key role in shaping the sector. Agroecological cooperatives established by MST communities combine food sovereignty, ecological sustainability, and economic autonomy. They reconfigure land and labour relations by promoting nonexploitative production, environmental restoration, and community governance (Ferrarini et al., 2020). At the same time, feminist agroecology movements have deepened the connection between reproductive and productive work. Rural women's collectives engage in sustainable food production, community kitchens, and care networks, contesting the invisibility of women's labour while creating new spaces for economic and political empowerment. Nevertheless, gender hierarchies persist within many cooperatives and movements, highlighting the need to explicitly incorporate feminist principles in governance, training, and strategic planning.

In Chile, recent mobilizations have revitalized interest in SSE, particularly among youth and feminist groups. Following the 2011 student movement and the 2019 social uprising, new cooperatives have emerged in urban areas, including solidarity food networks, educational collectives, and service cooperatives grounded in

self-management and horizontal governance. These organizations contest the legacies of neoliberal privatization by experimenting with alternative modes of organizing labour and consumption. While traditional cooperatives, such as rural water cooperatives, remain relevant, the newer initiatives often explicitly incorporate feminist and anti-patriarchal frameworks, particularly those developed by queer and feminist activist collectives (Giovannini & Nachar-Calderón, 2020). However, the limited institutional support for SSE in Chile, combined with the economic pressures of informality and market competition, constrains their capacity to scale and sustain their operations.

Colombia offers perhaps the clearest example of territorial care economies with a strong feminist and anti-racist orientation. In conflict-affected and neglected regions, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous women's organizations have developed networks of collective care that integrate reproductive labour with territorial defence and cultural resistance. Initiatives such as the Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas, Asoparupa (a network of traditional midwives), and Delicias de Mujer (a food collective in Cali), represent care not only as a survival strategy but as a political practice (International Labour Organization, 2024). These networks sustain community life under conditions of extreme violence, often without state support. They challenge both capitalist exclusion and patriarchal domination by reconfiguring care as a shared, dignified, and culturally embedded labour. Nonetheless, these initiatives remain vulnerable due to structural underfunding and lack of institutional recognition.

Ecuador provides a more institutionalized approach to SSE, enshrined in its 2008 Constitution and the Organic Law on Popular and Solidarity Economy. Organizations such as Grupo Salinas de Guaranda represent long-standing SSE models that integrate dairy production, agroecology, community finance, and education. These experiences articulate a vision of local development anchored in cooperation, sustainability, and endogenous growth. However, as Ruiz-Rivera and Lemaître (2020) observe, the formalization of SSE through state policy has produced tensions between grassroots autonomy and bureaucratic regulation.

All these examples show that while women play significant roles in food production, crafts, and community governance, gender equity is not always systematically addressed in SSE policy frameworks. Nevertheless, feminist agroecological networks and Indigenous women's organizations continue to mobilize around food sovereignty, ecological care, and reproductive justice, linking economic alternatives with broader emancipatory agendas.

Across these national experiences, certain commonalities emerge. SSE initiatives in LA share a commitment to democratic governance, collective ownership, and the reinvestment of surpluses for social purposes. They are territorially rooted, culturally diverse, and often driven by women and marginalized communities. Their transformative potential lies not only on their opposition to capitalist enterprise forms but also in their redefinition of economic value, social reproduction, and collective life. Yet, they also share structural challenges: the risk of institutional cooptation, limited access to financing, gender inequalities within mixed organizations, and the persistence of unpaid reproductive labour. The tension between scaling up

and maintaining autonomy remains unresolved, as does the need for coherent and gender-sensitive public policy frameworks.

In other words, the diversity of these experiences in LA reflects a growing commitment to social justice and community well-being that often resonate—implicitly or explicitly—with the principles of *Buen Vivir* and decolonial feminism, even as they navigate different sociopolitical terrains. These cases collectively demonstrate that while gender equity is often marginal in formal SSE policy, grassroots feminist and Indigenous movements are actively resignifying economic life. They advance a vision aligned with decolonial feminism and *Buen Vivir*, grounded in care, reciprocity, ecological sustainability, and communal sovereignty.

4.5 At the Crossroads of Transformative Proposals and Experiences in Latin America

At the crossroads of various transformative proposals and experiences in the LA region, which aim to create an *economy centered on life*, with care as its driving force, there is potential to develop a shared language and common understanding. This chapter does not seek to unify discourse but rather to build bridges, share meanings, and explore possibilities for strengthening ongoing transformative initiatives through the theoretical frameworks and experiences of *Buen Vivir*, decolonial feminism, feminist economics and SSE in LA.

Buen Vivir contributes primarily by introducing an ontological critique that challenges Western epistemic dominance, offering an integrative vision where economic activities are embedded in broader ecological and spiritual relationships. Its strength lies in decentring the anthropocentric view of nature and advocating for a harmonious coexistence with the Earth (Pachamama, originally in Quechua). *Buen Vivir* further emphasizes reciprocity, equilibrium, and territorial interdependence as foundational to sustainable living. Its global influence arises not only from academic and policy recognition but from lived experiences of Indigenous communities practicing communal economies rooted in ancestral knowledge and rituals.

Decolonial Feminism advances present and future transformative economies by deepening the critical analysis of capitalism by embedding it within broader colonial histories, explicitly highlighting the intersections of gender, race, and colonial power structures. Its theoretical contribution lies in unveiling how capitalist modernity perpetuates racialized and sexualized labour divisions inherited from colonial structures. This framework uniquely challenges universalizing feminist discourses that overlook historical and colonial contexts.

On its side, the Social and Solidarity Economy provides concrete organizational and strategic pathways towards economic democratization and collective self-management. Its emphasis on democratic governance, collective ownership, and community reinvestment offers practical alternatives to market and state-centric models. SSE is deeply rooted in historical traditions of mutual aid and collective

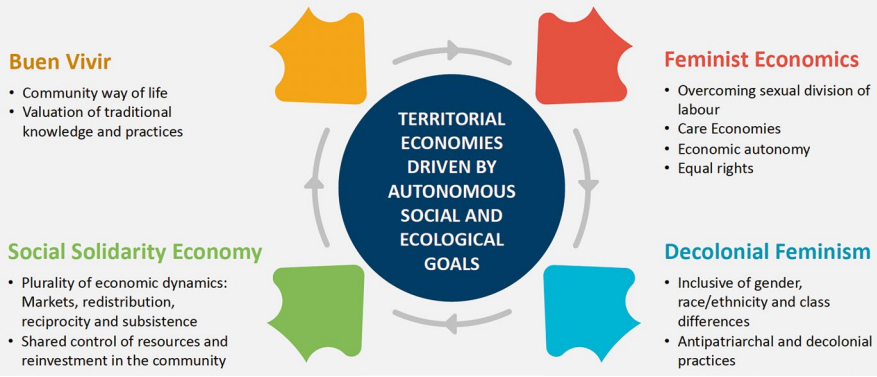


Fig. 4.1 Main foci, central convergences: a view across the four approaches (copyright by the authors)

self-management in LA, offering tangible alternatives to neoliberal capitalist models through cooperatives, community enterprises, and barter networks (Fig. 4.1).

Feminist economics primarily addresses systemic inequalities related to the sexual division of labour. Feminist economists advocate recognizing care as central to economic systems and have proposed comprehensive policy frameworks that integrate state action with collective and communitarian strategies, emphasizing the structural importance of care as a foundational economic category.

Despite their significant contributions, it is essential to acknowledge that each of the four paradigms— *Buen Vivir*, feminist economics, social and solidarity economy (SSE), and decolonial feminism—faces notable limitations in their practical implementation. *Buen Vivir* has been criticized for insufficiently addressing internal gender inequalities and patriarchal norms, which are sometimes reinforced under the justification of cultural preservation. Decolonial feminists, while offering a radical critique of existing frameworks, encounter challenges in engaging with policy-driven economic initiatives, which often operate within institutional or rights-based paradigms. SSE initiatives, despite incorporating social inclusion and ecological principles in the discourse, frequently perpetuate patriarchal norms and undervalue reproductive labour, with the institutionalization of SSE sometimes leading to depoliticization and bureaucratic constraints. Lastly, feminist economic institutional approaches often fail to fully integrate the ontological and epistemic critiques advanced by *Buen Vivir* and decolonial feminism, particularly concerning the abstraction of care from its specific cultural and territorial contexts, thereby limiting their transformative potential in diverse settings.

The interaction between these four frameworks highlights several points of convergence and divergence. All paradigms reject the artificial separation between economic, social and political spheres, advocating instead for integrating ecological, communal, and reproductive dimensions into economic systems. However, significant debates remain, particularly around conceptions of autonomy, rights, and gender-based discrimination. Feminist Economics and SSE may align with *Buen*

Vivir and Decolonial Feminism in critiquing extractivism and advocating territorial rights but diverge in their strategies for addressing gender inequalities and collective rights. Feminist perspectives stress individual autonomy and equal rights, while *Buen Vivir* and Indigenous frameworks prioritize collective rights and cultural continuity, giving less attention to patriarchal norms and gender hierarchies.

Decolonial feminists further complicate these intersections by arguing against nation-state structures, viewing them as extensions of colonial and patriarchal legacies. This critique significantly contrasts with feminist economic proposals that frequently depend on state-led policy frameworks and institutional recognition.

Decolonial feminists emphasize the need to dismantle colonial and patriarchal practices embedded in everyday life, advocating for autonomous, community-based strategies. This emphasis introduces a deeper tension, particularly through their focus on clearly distinguishing community members by gender, race/ethnicity, and class, and addressing the inequalities often concealed within universal economic and development theories. This raises the question of whether it is possible to bridge epistemological divides and develop approaches that can reconcile collective rights, gender, race, and class inequalities, ecological integrity, and institutional engagement within a cohesive and transformative framework.

In synthesis, the dialogue among *Buen Vivir*, Decolonial Feminism, Feminist Economics, and SSE opens essential avenues for understanding and constructing post-capitalist economies in LA. Each approach offers vital insights into rethinking economic practices around life-sustaining principles, yet their integration demands nuanced articulation and continuous critical engagement. Acknowledging these tensions and convergences provides fertile ground for collaborative theorization and experimentation, enabling the emergence of genuinely transformative economic models grounded in solidarity, care, and decolonial justice. LA thus continues to serve as a critical space for envisioning and practicing alternative economies where solidarity, ecological sustainability, and gender equity form the basis of genuinely transformative economic and social models.

4.6 Conclusions

This chapter set out to explore critically the convergences, dialogues, and tensions among *Buen Vivir*, Decolonial Feminism, Feminist Economics, and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), emphasizing their collective contributions toward rethinking economic practices from LA. By placing care, life, ecological sustainability, and communal reciprocity at the centre of economic analyses, these frameworks offer powerful epistemic, ontological, and methodological alternatives to dominant capitalist paradigms, challenging the foundations of neoliberal market logic and extractivist development.

Central to this critical engagement has been recognizing each framework's distinct theoretical and practical contributions without minimizing the significant internal debates and tensions among them. *Buen Vivir* fundamentally shifts the

economic discourse through indigenous cosmologies, repositioning human activities within ecological and spiritual interdependencies. Decolonial feminism deepens the critical analysis of modern capitalism by uncovering its gendered and racialized colonial foundations, advocating for an economic restructuring that confronts intersectional oppressions rooted in colonial histories. Feminist Economics highlights the centrality of care and social reproduction, advocating for policies that structurally transform the sexual division of labour and redistribute reproductive labour. SSE provides tangible organizational pathways to operationalize these ideals, promoting democratic governance, community ownership, and economic pluralism.

An essential theoretical contribution of the analysis developed in this chapter is the emphasis on the complementarities and critical dialogues necessary for achieving genuinely transformative economies. This requires addressing explicitly unresolved theoretical and practical tensions such as the integration of feminist perspectives within indigenous and community-based frameworks, and the negotiation of autonomy and institutional engagement. Such dialogues are not mere theoretical exercises; rather, they have profound implications for guiding effective strategies and practices capable of addressing systemic inequalities at multiple scales.

A particularly salient debate concerns the integration of feminist critiques into *Buen Vivir* and SSE practices. Despite broad agreement on the necessity of prioritizing care, significant differences persist regarding how care should be defined, valued, and redistributed without reproducing existing gender hierarchies. Decolonial feminism and feminist economics stress the need for explicitly addressing gender-based discrimination within community-based economies, something not always adequately confronted by proponents of *Buen Vivir* and SSE. This raises important questions regarding internal dynamics and governance practices within transformative organizations and movements.

Furthermore, decolonial feminism highlights the importance of explicitly addressing racialized and gendered inequalities within economic structures as central to ongoing processes of subalternization affecting Indigenous women and women of colour. A critical area for future debate and practice thus involves confronting the specific exploitation faced by women experiencing scarcity and limited resource access, which are conditions deeply shaped by intersections of race, ethnicity, and historical legacies of colonial exploitation. Consequently, an essential task for future agendas inspired by decolonial feminism is to explicitly make these entrenched gender, race, and class hierarchies visible, actively moving beyond ahistorical and depoliticized analyses.

At the same time, another critical area involves more rigorous exploration of how feminist and indigenous epistemologies can inform each other in meaningful, mutually enriching ways. Doing so may offer a compelling pathway to transcend existing binaries—such as individual rights versus collective identities and economic democratization versus cultural integrity—thus creating genuinely intersectional and inclusive economic practices. Simultaneously, a central discussion revolves around the role of the state and public policy frameworks. Decolonial feminists

remain sceptical of the state, viewing institutional mechanisms as perpetuating colonial, patriarchal, and capitalist logics. Conversely, feminist economists typically advocate for leveraging state structures to implement transformative care and social reproduction policies. Navigating these tensions represents one of the most significant theoretical and practical challenges moving forward.

The empirical experiences analysed—from feminist cooperatives in Argentina, indigenous economies in Bolivia, agroecological movements in Brazil, feminist solidarities in Chile, territorial care initiatives in Colombia, to institutionalized SSE models in Ecuador—highlight the vibrant diversity of practices already underway in the region. They demonstrate how grassroots initiatives, driven largely by women and historically marginalized communities, concretely articulate alternatives to capitalist and patriarchal norms. Yet, they also underscore persistent structural challenges, including gender hierarchies within organizations, risks of institutional cooptation, and difficulties balancing cultural preservation with necessary social transformations.

From these experiences, a rich and forward-looking research agenda emerges. Future scholarship and policy practice must delve deeper into understanding how these transformative economies negotiate internal governance tensions, particularly concerning gender-based discrimination and the redistribution of care responsibilities. Additionally, further exploration is required on effective strategies to engage constructively with state structures without losing transformative potential or community autonomy. This implies developing nuanced and contextualized theories of governance capable of simultaneously addressing institutional pragmatism and radical socio-economic transformation. Beyond the region, Latin American experiences and theoretical debates provide critical insights and concrete tools for movements, scholars, and policymakers worldwide engaged in similar struggles for economic justice, ecological sustainability, and social equity.

Finally, this chapter advocates for embracing a plural, intersectional, and reflexive approach to economic transformation, grounded in lived experiences and local knowledge. The four paradigms explored here, individually and collectively, underscore the necessity of moving beyond mere reformist agendas towards truly transformative economies centred on life and care. The LA region, with its colonial history and contemporary practices, offers invaluable theoretical contributions and practical lessons, shaping a compelling agenda for future economic debates and practices in pursuit of just, sustainable, and equitable societies.

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