GOLD VII

Multimedia Journal

Economies of Equality and Care

Final Report of the GOLD VII Research Process

UCLG
United Cities and Local Governments

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United Cities and Local Governments
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis
Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos
Carrer d´Avinyó, 15
08002 Barcelona
www.uclg.org

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Matylda Zawadzka

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Foreword

Care policies are no longer on the sidelines: they are becoming central to how we shape our societies and organize life in our neighbourhoods. What was once treated as a marginal concern is now increasingly recognized as a defining dimension of public policy and collective wellbeing.

Within the framework of the UCLG World Summit and Congress in Tangier, and following four years of collective work, the GOLD VII process on Economies of Equality and Care has reached maturity at a turning point for our global community of local and regional governments.

GOLD VII represents a shared learning process grounded in territories, built through continuous dialogue among cities, regions, networks, movements and partners across the world.

The interconnected crises that mark our time are highly visible in our cities and territories. These crises stem from development models that have obscured relations of dependency and care, and treated both people and the planet as inexhaustible resources. In this context, local and regional governments are not only on the frontline of response—they are leading the way in reimagining and testing alternatives grounded in community priorities, strengthening people's agency while protecting the commons.

GOLD VII has allowed us to deepen the notion of care beyond its political and ethical connotations. We identify it as a practical key for transformation. This approach places interdependence at the center of public action, confronts structural inequalities and demands a redefinition of collective priorities.

At its core, the idea is simple: Everyone needs care. To care is to sustain life. Sustaining life is a shared and deeply political responsibility.

As part of this process, we have played a part in ensuring that care is no longer seen as just a private or domestic concern, but as a core dimension of public policy. This shift reflects a growing commitment among local and regional governments to position care as a transformative lens for shaping societies. This is where the collective agenda of the municipal movement can make a difference.

While public debates are finally starting to focus on the relevance of unpaid work and the disproportionate burden on women, they fall short of the broader ambition we advance: understanding care as a systemic and transformative agenda that reshapes economies, institutions and social relations.

This Multimedia Journal contributes to expanding the understanding of care infrastructure and new essentials beyond the traditional understanding of care work. It highlights a more comprehensive approach that engages with the use of public spaces, social and institutional systems, and emerging priorities such as policies around time.

Advancing care systems calls on us to address how we finance them: rethinking how resources are allocated and what is considered a priority investment. It calls for financial frameworks that directly support public service provision and recognize the central role of local and regional governments in sustaining care systems, while challenging dominant notions of what is considered viable or investable.

GOLD VII is, above all, a collective endeavor. More than one hundred representatives from local and regional governments, associations, international organizations, research centers and community actors have contributed experiences, reflections and proposals. This process affirms local and regional governments not only as implementers, but as producers of knowledge: as actors capable of generating grounded evidence, innovating through practice and co-creating alternatives that should inspire international policies of the future and shape a more inclusive multilateralism grounded in the needs of communities everywhere.

This Multimedia Journal is not an endpoint. It is part of an ongoing effort to reshape global public policy and multilateral processes through local tangible solutions. Our shared future will be determined by the place we give in public policies to caring for each other: for people, planet and government. These choices must be matched by action and delivery for all.

Emilia Saiz,
UCLG Secretary General

1

Setting the Stage: Care and the GOLD VII Research Process

Local and regional governments (LRGs) across all world regions have long established themselves as key actors that foster caring cities and territories, equitable progress and sustainable development. Now more than ever, the strength of the global municipalist movement represents an anchor of stability and cooperation *vis-à-vis* the ever more uncertain state of global affairs, the grave climate and environmental crises and rising inequalities.

The care crisis is inseparable from these complex emergencies. Although care is essential for sustaining individual and collective life—and for protecting our planet—, gaps in its recognition, provision and accessibility are widening. Care work has historically been rendered invisible, unpaid or underpaid: women and girls perform roughly 75% of unpaid care work daily,[1] while domestic workers—often migrants—earn only about 56% of the wages of other employees and are largely excluded from social and labor protections.[2] With rapidly growing cities and urban populations, complex systems of inequality increasingly limit people's ability to access housing, employment, free time and cultural life in ways that are dignified and respectful of their autonomy. At the same time, unsustainable models of production and consumption intensify pressures on both care systems and the planet, linking the reproduction of life directly to environmental and social sustainability.

Faced with these challenges, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), as the largest global network of cities and local governments, together with its members and partners have renewed their efforts related to care, good governance, local democracy and the provision of quality public services. Building on this commitment, **the GOLD VII research process on the Economies of Equality and Care and, in particular, its online platform called "Multimedia Journal", were launched. The goal was to deepen understanding of how care is conceptualized and embedded as a lens for local governance and operationalized in local action around the world.** This report presents the culmination of three years of collective reflection, research and co-creation, synthesizing the knowledge, practices and recommendations co-produced by LRGs and their partners, and charting a path forward for more caring, equitable and sustainable cities and territories.

[1] International Labour Organization, "Decent Work and the Care Economy," International Labour Organization, April 4, 2024, https://www.ilo.org/resource/conference-paper/decent-work-and-care-economy.

[2] International Labour Organization, "Making Decent Work a Reality for Domestic Workers: Progress and Prospects Ten Years After the Adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)," June 15, 2021, https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/making-decent-work-reality-domestic-workers-progress-and-prospects-ten.

1.1 Why Now? The Urgency of Prioritizing Care

The care economy, essential to the reproduction of life in all its forms, constitutes the collective and social glue that enables societies to live with dignity and achieve wellbeing for all. For this reason, an increasing number of LRGs have placed care at the heart of public governance and local democracy, recognizing it as a fundamentally public concern that cannot be relegated solely to the private sphere. Care materializes through concrete public services and infrastructures, which are key responsibilities of LRGs. Acknowledging the individual, social and collective necessity of care strengthens the case for its recognition as a universal human right: to care and to be cared for.

While care is practiced in both formal and informal jobs and spaces, it also embodies a broader value of solidarity and collective responsibility that is intrinsic to sustaining human societies and territorial life. With LRGs being the closest level of government to people and directly affecting their daily lives, they must adopt a stance of caring governance.

Despite its centrality, **the care economy remains systematically undervalued and underinvested.** According to United Nations estimates, women perform 67% of paid care work and as much as 76% of unpaid care work worldwide.[3] If it were to be monetized, unpaid care work would amount to around 9% of global GDP—an equivalent of roughly USD 11 trillion—[4], underscoring the scale of economic value that remains invisible in conventional accounting frameworks. For reference, USD 11 trillion was also the value of the travel and tourism industry in 2024.[5] Globally, 748 million people—which includes 708 million women—are outside the labor force due to care responsibilities, representing a third of all working-age persons not participating in paid employment.[6] These patterns are shaped by deeply entrenched gender roles, unequal access to quality public services and insufficient social infrastructure, constraining people's autonomy, economic opportunities and capacity to engage fully in cultural and community life.

The care economy sector has therefore constituted a cornerstone of the GOLD VII research process. Within this framework, **care has often been articulated around the 5Rs—Recognize, Redistribute, Reduce, Reward and Represent—**,[7] which offer practical and policy-oriented responses to the systematic invisibilization of care work and to its far-reaching impacts on caregivers' lives. Recognizing the hidden burdens borne by both formal and informal caregivers, reducing these burdens through adequate public services, and redistributing responsibilities across households, communities, public institutions and markets are essential conditions for advancing the rights of women and girls and ensuring the right to care, to be cared for and to self-care in dignified and just ways. Equally, rewarding care work through fair regulation, decent pay and social protection, alongside strengthening the political representation and social recognition of care workers, points towards renewed models of equality-based and feminist local governance rooted in quality public service provision.

[3] World Health Organization, ed., *Fair Share for Health and Care: Gender and the Undervaluation of Health and Care Work*, March 12, 2024, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240082854.

[4] International Labour Organization, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, June 28, 2018, https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/care-work-and-care-jobs-future-decent-work.

[5] Reuters, "Travel industry to contribute record $11 trillion to global GDP in 2024", September 3, 2024 https://www.reuters.com/business/travel-industry-contribute-record-11-trillion-global-gdp-2024-2024-09-03/.

[6] International Labour Organization, "The Impact of Care Responsibilities on Women's Labour Force Participation," October 29, 2024, https://www.ilo.org/publications/impact-care-responsibilities-women%25s-labour-force-participation.

[7] International Labour Organization, "Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work." UN Women, *A Toolkit on Paid and Unpaid Care Work: From 3Rs to 5Rs, UN Women*, June 2022, https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/07/a-toolkit-on-paid-and-unpaid-care-work.

Evidence suggests that **such investments can also generate broad-based socio-ecnomic returns:** model simulations show that an annual increase in public spending by 1% of GDP in the care economy over five years can yield an increase of more than 11%, as well as a 6.3% increase in total employment levels,[8] reinforcing the role of care as both a social and economic multiplier.

Building on these advances, the GOLD VII research process engages with a broader body of critical scholarship—drawing on the work of thinkers such as Joan Tronto, Eleonor Faur, Valeria Esquivel, Berenice Fisher, Nancy Fraser, María Puig de la Bellacasa, Daniela Rea Gómez and Parvati Raghuram.[9] Their publications have highlighted how societies have long taken for granted the capacities, tasks, time, individuals and groups that sustain social reproduction, much like natural resources, falsely treating them as self-renewing. In this way, GOLD VII recognizes the intersectional nature of care, by appreciating the numerous interconnected aspects that characterize this concept. Such awareness calls for the discussion between the fields of study and policy that are conventionally related to care—for instance focusing on disability, gender, age, education, etc.—and the ones that have inherent care dimensions like migration, accessibility, social sciences, urban planning, economic policy, etc. Likewise, acknowledging that indigenous peoples worldwide have practiced exemplary forms of care and stewardship for millennia, and that their knowledge has been translated into philosophies like ubuntu, GOLD VII takes the notions of harmony and coexistence with others and nature as a cornerstone of its knowledge gathering.

This expanded understanding situates care not only in households and services, but also as a fundamental feature to design the spatial, temporal, socio-economic and environmental organization of territories. In many cities of the Global South, for instance, low-income workers, many of whom are women, often spend more than three hours per day commuting and at least 15% of their income on their daily commute.[10] This significantly intensifies the time burdens associated with care responsibilities and limits access to employment, education and civic life, underscoring the critical importance of accessible, affordable and well-integrated public services—particularly transport systems—as core care infrastructures that can alleviate time poverty and expand access to opportunities. At the same time, satisfaction with reliable access to essential public services is strongly associated with higher levels of trust in public institutions, including local governments and the civil service.[11] This highlights the centrality of care infrastructures to democratic legitimacy and social cohesion.

From this perspective, care becomes a powerful entry point to reveal, question and transform entrenched socio-economic systems marked by exploitation, inequality and imbalanced power relations. These dynamics are particularly visible at the local level, where the organization, accessibility and quality of public services shape everyday experiences of care, inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, with 1 billion people

[8] International Trade Union Confederation, *The employment effects of public spending in infrastructure, the care economy and the green economy: the case of emerging economies*, February 6, 2023, https://www.ituc-csi.org/The-employment-effects-of-public-spending?__cf_chl_tk=qwsMInSSrmaGUobnek-9XGQjwvyzXlkGcC2WNARpTluc-1770901658-1.0.1.1-r5sO6zGbSLWMcROJkyQjKf1uWxDw05mBMAHq0WVWw0g.

[9] See, for example: Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. Psychology Press, 1993; Joan C. Tronto and Berenice Fisher, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Caring", in *Circles of Care*, ed. Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson (SUNY Press, 1990), 36–54; Valeria Esquivel, Eleonor Faur and Elizabeth Jelin, eds. *Las lógicas de cuidado infantil: entre las familias, el Estado y el mercado*. Ides, 2012; Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism: How our System is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet and What We Can Do About It*. Verso Books, 2022; María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. PostHumanities (Paperback), 2017; Daniela Rea Gómez, Fruto. Antílope, 2022; Parvati Raghuram, Locating Care Ethics Beyond the Global North, *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 15 no. 3 (2016).

[10] World Bank Group, *Promoting Livable Cities by Investing in Urban Mobility*, World Bank, March 14, 2024, https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2024/03/13/promoting-livable-cities-by-investing-in-urban-mobility.

[11] OECD, *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean 2025 Results*, November 10, 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-2025-results_ea3385cf-en.html.

living in areas prone to severe riverine flooding in 2025, half of them in cities,[12] less than 10% of climate finance is currently directed to urban areas,[13] limiting local governments' capacity to align climate action with care-centered approaches. Similarly, only around 45% of the global urban population enjoys convenient access to open public spaces,[14] despite strong evidence linking proximity to nature with physical and mental wellbeing, social interaction and collective care. The overall fiscal and economic costs of disregarding planetary boundaries far exceed the costs of taking proactive mitigation measures.[15] These care-related gaps are further exacerbated by the fact that over one billion urban residents live in informal settlements or underserved neighborhoods,[16] where access to basic services such as water, sanitation, healthcare and childcare remains precarious or absent.

If care is understood as the driving force behind personal, economic, social and collective life, it cannot be approached exclusively as an economic sector or solely through the lens of gender equality, however central these dimensions may be. Rather, **care permeates the ways in which territories are planned, services are delivered, time and space are organized, and relationships between people, institutions and the environment are governed.** Strengthening care-related public services brings into focus the material conditions, labor relations and institutional arrangements that sustain life, while broader care-oriented perspectives allow local public action to confront structural inequalities, reorient policy priorities and transform the social, economic and environmental systems in which care is embedded. Together, these dimensions contribute to more coherent, transformative and sustainable forms of local governance.

Against this backdrop, the core objective of the GOLD VII research process has been to explore how care is understood and mobilized across diverse local and regional contexts, how it is translated into concrete public services, policies and practices, and which shifts are required to support cities and regions in fostering more caring, equitable and resilient territories.

1.2 Why Us? Our Municipalist Journey towards GOLD VII

The growing prominence of care within the UCLG-led municipalist movement reflects a gradual political shift driven by LRGs themselves, many of which have increasingly prioritized care in their territories. LRGs, individually and collectively, have likewise found innovative ways to overcome political polarization, conflict and distrust and opened new paths towards the creation of a better and more caring future for all people and for the planet.

This evolution was collectively affirmed through UCLG's Political Declaration, The Pact for the Future, adopted at the 2022 UCLG World Congress in Daejeon, which placed "Caring for People, the Planet and Government" at the center of the organization's political agenda. The Pact built on the evidence and analysis provided by the GOLD VI research process on Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality, where *Caring* emerged as a key pathway to address structural inequalities and unsustainable development trends.[17] It is from this shared commitment that the Local Social Covenant emerged in 2025, articulating a renewed

[12] United Nations Statistics Division, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*, 2025, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/.

[13] Soanes, M., Rai, N., Steele, P., Shakya, C. and Macgregor, J., *Delivering real change Getting international climate finance to the local level*, International Institute for Environment and Development Working Paper, 2017. https://www.iied.org/10178iied.

[14] UN-Habitat, *Progress towards SDG 11*, 2023. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/11/sdg11_booklet_2023.pdf.

[15] Edward B. Barbier, "An Economic Perspective on Planetary Boundaries," *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 17, no. 1 (April 22, 2025): 189–207, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-resource-013024-033016.

[16] United Nations Statistics Division, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition*, July 10, 2023, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/.

[17] United Cities and Local Governments, *Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality: Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies*, 2022, https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/field-document/211222_uclg-gold-vi_en_report_for_web.pdf.

political vision to guide local and regional action in the years ahead.

In this context, UCLG launched the GOLD VII research process on the Economies of Equality and Care in 2023. **GOLD VII was designed to deepen the understanding of localized care systems, document transformative practices emerging from cities and regions worldwide and generate actionable and policy-relevant knowledge.** Throughout its three-year trajectory, GOLD VII has become a cornerstone of the municipalist journey on care, providing the evidence base, collective analysis and shared narratives that have underpinned and strengthened the development of the Local Social Covenant, helping to anchor its political ambition in concrete experiences, data and knowledge produced by LRGs and their partners.

GOLD VII seeks to build synergies between these two approaches to care—care as an economic sector and care as a broader lens for social and environmental transformation—bringing them into dialogue in a mutually reinforcing way. By framing care as both a material practice and a guiding principle of governance, the research helps reorient local public action towards the sustainability of life, addressing structural inequalities while reshaping institutional priorities, policy frameworks and territorial development pathways. In addition, by working in, with and for cities and regions committed to building a more equitable and sustainable world, GOLD VII translates political commitment into rigorous research that informs policy, reinforces social cohesion and drives transformative local action.

Acknowledging the co-production of knowledge as a core principle of UCLG, the GOLD VII research process has continued and enlarged the participatory footprint of GOLD VI. This evolution reflects the true democratic, global and bottom-up spirit of the municipalist movement and at the same time allows for the inclusion of different perspectives, multiple entry points and richer analyses into the research. In addition, in true UCLG spirit, the research aims to be fully action-oriented to shape policy decision-making, foster transformative action on the ground, and ultimately improve the wellbeing of all people and the planet.

The GOLD VII research process does not exist in isolation. It complements the efforts made by the UN Human Rights Council, which formally recognized the right to care in 2023 and urged states to adopt measures to recognize, redistribute and invest in care work and care systems;[18] by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose 2025 report analyzes standards, promising practices and recommendations to promote and protect the human rights of caregivers and care recipients;[19] and by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in recognizing a right to care.[20] It builds upon and converses with a number of complementary initiatives led by other organizations and networks, including UN Women's and the Global Alliance for Care's global efforts to recognize and uphold the care economies, among others. While these initiatives provide valuable evidence and perspectives on care, equality and social infrastructure, GOLD VII uniquely positions UCLG members and partners as active conveners and translators of this knowledge. By linking these processes to local realities, **GOLD VII situates municipal experiences at the forefront of global debates, showing how cities and regions are not only recipients of international frameworks but also active contributors to shaping the discourse, strategies and recommendations that inform broader policy agendas.**

[18] UN Human Rights Council, *Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 11 October 2023. Centrality of care and support from a human rights perspective*, 2023, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4025103?ln=es&v=pdf#files.

[19] United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Human rights dimension of care and support," January 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5843-human-rights-dimension-care-and-support-report-united-nations.

[20] Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, "El Contenido y el Alcance del Derecho al Cuidado y su Interrelación con Otros Derechos," OC-31/25, June 12, 2025, https://jurisprudencia.corteidh.or.cr/es/vid/1088056961.

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1.3 Structure and Purpose of our Report

This report marks the culmination of three years of collective reflection, analysis and co-creation carried out within the framework of the GOLD VII research process. More than a compilation of findings, it brings together the purpose, the journey and the outcomes of a shared endeavor that has sought to understand how economies grounded in equality and care are already being built, and can be further strengthened, by LRGs and communities across the world. It captures the consolidation of care as a political priority within the municipalist movement, while systematizing the new knowledge, practices and policy insights co-produced through a deeply participatory research process.

To achieve this, the report is structured in four sections. This first section presents the rise of the concept of care within the municipalist movement and outlines the rationale and objectives of GOLD VII. The second zooms in on the research design itself, to reflect on the innovative co-production methodology that allowed an extensive group of different organizations and experts to be recognized as knowledge creators. The third section synthesizes the key findings emerging from the three thematic stages of the research process, highlighting how different dimensions of care were explored in an incremental and interconnected manner. Finally, the fourth section proposes a set of concrete conclusions and policy-oriented recommendations to advance the municipalist care agenda in the years to come, aiming to transform research into action and support cities and regions in building more caring, equitable and sustainable communities worldwide.

This report aims to inspire and support LRGs as primary agents of change, while also engaging their local partners and contributing to broader international dialogues involving national governments, the UN system and the wider multilateral community, in advancing care-centered, equitable and sustainable development. Above all, it seeks to convey a sense of hope, showing that through collective action and care-driven governance, a more just and sustainable future for all is within reach.

2

An Innovative Way to Do Research: Co-Production at its Core

The GOLD VII research process was conceived not only as a research exercise, but also as a collective and care-centered process of knowledge co-production. It was composed of three interconnected and incremental stages:

Stage 1

"Care as aspiration and inspiration"

(May 2024 – March 2025)

Stage 2

"The necessary infrastructures for caring cities and regions"

(April – October 2025)

Stage 3

"Care resources and reforms"

(November 2025 – May 2026)

At every stage of the research, the GOLD VII process relied on a wide, inclusive and thorough participation of a diverse range of actors. This innovative methodology meant that LRGs, civil society networks, cooperatives, academia, think tanks and UN agencies collaborated as primary creators of knowledge around the topic of care, engaging on an equal footing, using accessible language, and moving beyond purely academic logics of knowledge production. **In total, the GOLD VII research process has been co-produced by around 50 institutions.** Together, these contributors have developed around 100 contributions that form the evidence-based backbone of this process. Meanwhile, the role of the UCLG World Secretariat has been that of a coordinator and editor, valuing partners' contributions while ensuring the overall integrity and cohesion of the research process. Reflecting UCLG's commitment to the democratization and decolonization of knowledge production, this participatory design affirms collaborative, horizontal and inclusive forms of governance not only as research principles, but as viable and desirable practices at the local level.

This collective effort is illustrated in the figure below, which maps the diversity of institutions that have co-produced the GOLD VII research process, reflecting the plurality of voices, geographies and forms of knowledge that underpin its findings.

Figure 1. Map of institutions contributing to the GOLD VII research process

To enable this participatory approach, the GOLD VII Multimedia Journal online platform was created. The Multimedia Journal represents a novel way of understanding research and presenting its outcomes. Through this online platform, the research process is made universally accessible. In contrast to a report published only at the end of a multi-year process, the Multimedia Journal allows for the progressive publication of intermediate outcomes from each of the three stages. In this way, while reinforcing the incremental nature of the process, readers and interested stakeholders are able to engage with and use the different findings as they are produced.

Another strength of the GOLD VII Multimedia Journal lies in its ability to include different kinds and formats of contributions. This serves three main objectives. Firstly, to ensure that each partner was able to contribute in ways that best matched their objectives and capacities, fostering a process that respects and cares for collaborators. Secondly, to demonstrate that knowledge can be expressed in multiple forms—through short written pieces, longer reports, videos or video interviews—highlighting the richness and diversity of perspectives and experiences. Thirdly, to enhance the user experience by enabling smooth navigation across content and facilitating quick access to specific sub-topics of interest.

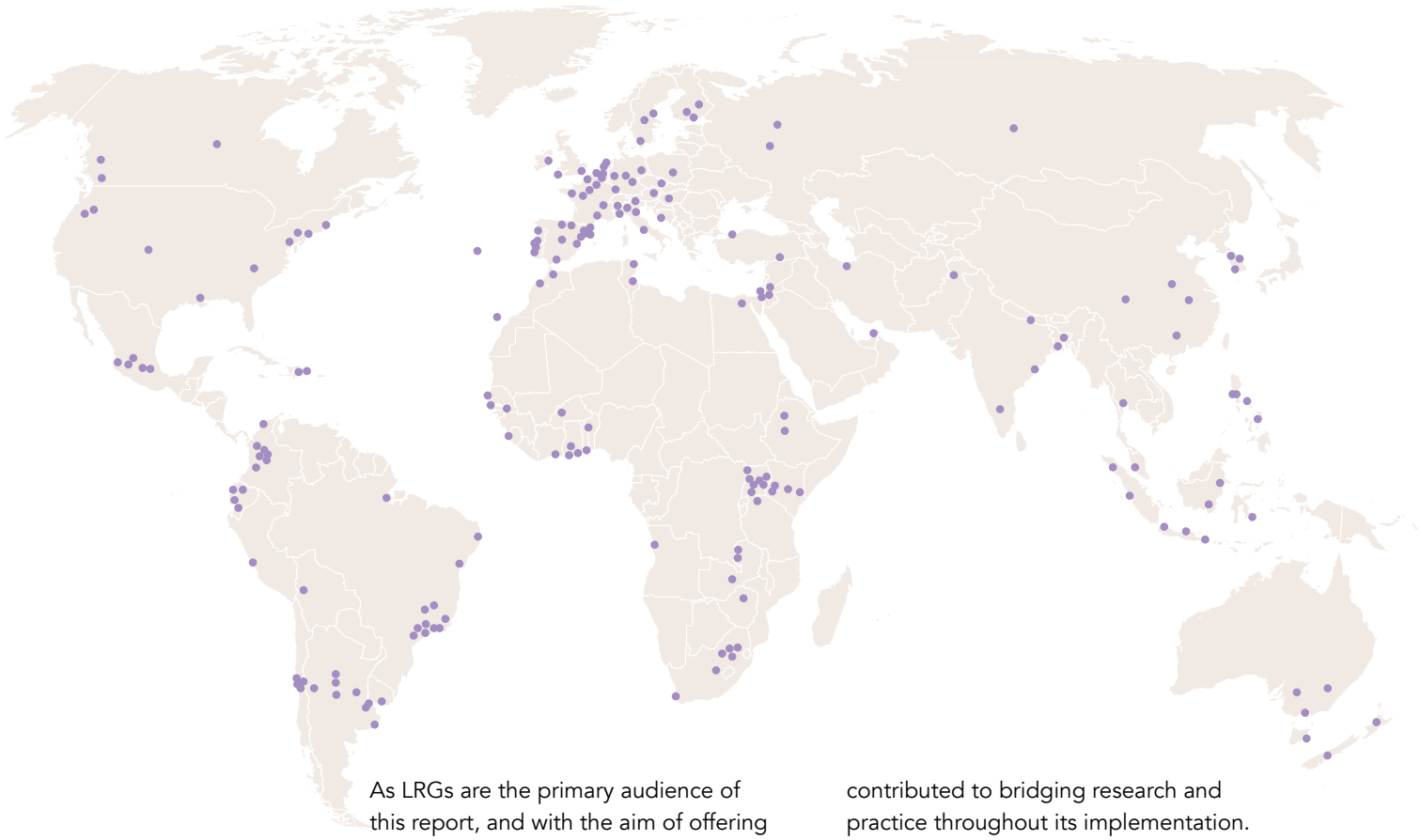
In addition to the contributions published in the Multimedia Journal, a series of online workshops were held for GOLD VII contributors. **These moments of co-production created spaces for participants to share their care-related approaches and initiatives, fostering productive synergies and contributing directly to the co-creation of shared research outcomes and recommendations.** Beyond their immediate outputs, these collective reflections helped surface a shared realization: that LRGs play a central role in co-constructing caring cities and regions, and that there is a wide diversity of ways in which care can be embedded in local public action. Participants consistently highlighted that care is not confined to specific policies or sectors, but can act as a guiding lens across all areas of local governance. At the same time, these exchanges revealed that many of the necessary knowledge, tools and solutions already exist across territories, and that the challenge often lies in connecting, valuing and upscaling them.

This process has been beneficial to UCLG as well as to its partner contributors. In this sense, according to a survey circulated amongst the partners in April 2026, the majority of the participants confirmed that the process has been either beneficial or very beneficial to them and their organizations, since it has contributed to exploring relevant care-related priorities in-depth, connecting key ideas with practical examples, and enhancing their engagement with local and regional priorities and actors.

The participation of a mix of stakeholders (academia, civil society organizations, LRGs, UN agencies, think tanks, etc.) and the creation of a new, dynamic Multimedia Journal instead of one single lengthy report were among the most successful features identified, proving the effectiveness of the participatory nature of our research. Additionally, contributors highlighted that having the chance to exchange experiences and points of view with such a varied group of colleagues was a crucial added value, and something that can be further expanded in future UCLG-led research processes through in-person meetings and collective discussions.

Together, these methodological innovations have provided the GOLD VII research process with a rich understanding of care that is both grounded in lived, practical experience and informed by robust theoretical frameworks.

Figure 2. Map of local and regional governments featured in the GOLD VII research process



As LRGs are the primary audience of this report, and with the aim of offering readers as many concrete ideas and actionable pathways as possible, **the GOLD VII research process has deliberately drawn on real-life examples of transformative practice.** It brings together experiences from a wide range of LRGs, alongside initiatives led by civil society, cooperatives, communities and other local actors, all of whom are actively translating care into public action within their territories.

These experiences are reflected in the map above, which highlights the 200 cities and regions referenced throughout the contributions, illustrating the geographical diversity and contextual richness of care-centered local action worldwide.

Importantly, this research is not conducted for its own sake but to provide a solid evidence base that will inform and guide future actions. Thanks to its incremental design, the GOLD VII process has already contributed to bridging research and practice throughout its implementation. Its findings have informed internal policy debates among UCLG members, notably through the Policy Councils, and have been shared and discussed with partners through Town Halls and other collective spaces. This influence has been achieved by inspiring these spaces with the values and principles underpinning GOLD VII, by directly providing them with evidence and insights emerging from the contributions, and by actively involving GOLD VII partners in these parallel policy, advocacy and learning processes. In parallel, the research has helped ground UCLG's advocacy efforts in concrete local realities and has started to be translated into learning tools that support capacity-building and peer exchange. Moving forward, this work will continue to evolve, serving as a living reference to support LRGs and their partners in advancing care-centered approaches to local governance.

3

What the Research Delivered: Core Findings

Section 1 discussed the rise of the care agenda in response to the current care crisis and the related climate, ecological and socio-economic pressures, and demonstrated UCLG's commitment to the topic. In the same way, it identified the research gap that GOLD VII tries to address: understanding what the multidimensional concept of care entails in local contexts, how care can be advanced in our cities and regions, and what conditions and resources LRGs need to make these caring transformations happen.

The focus on the local context is clear, since LRGs are the closest to the population and are always directly responsible for the governance of care in all its dimensions. In fact, LRGs are already leading the way in the care agenda. They do so through their competencies and actions in:

- healthcare and education
- public service provision
- targeted social programs
- economic support systems
- planning of the very spaces that allow care to be provided and received
- reorganization of decision-making processes, relations and programs to include care
- and other related actions.

Each stage of the GOLD VII research process has focused on a specific aspect of the role that care plays in communities and territories around the world. In the pages that follow, the outcomes of this research will be presented following the three f undamental and incremental questions that guided it, which are summarized in an infographic:

What?

What do we mean by "care" at the local level?

How?

How can we advance this new caring approach in practice?

Under which conditions?

Under which conditions can LRGs realize their care vision?

Read the complete findings of Stage 1! Scan the QR codes or click the links below.

Stage 1

Care as Aspiration and Inspiration

Stage 1 Summary Document

All Stage 1 contributions

The first stage, "Care as Aspiration and Inspiration", analyzed the existing approaches to care. Care, as a multidimensional concept, is understood in different ways, depending on social and cultural backgrounds and it is consequently operationalized in an array of modalities when it comes to actions, policies and strategies. Studying how cities, regions but also partner organizations and civil society understand and use care in their daily work is essential to identify synergies and common values and principles, to get inspired by and mainstream successful approaches and ultimately to build a common care agenda. Learning from different schools of thought such as the feminist movement, climate activism and the solidarity economy movement also completes a holistic care vision. Care is thus both an aspiration—a goal to strive for—and an inspiration to do things in a different, more caring way.

What is care for the municipalist movement?

Care is not only a sectoral agenda, it is a lens that places at the core the reparative duty of the public sector towards groups and people that lie at the intersection of inequalities and exclusion.

Cities and territories that care recognize and value the social and environmental components that are needed for the reproduction of life.

They enable transformative and reparatory processes, and move beyond purely market logics to prioritize collective wellbeing and shared prosperity.

Prioritizing this new care vision works towards the realization of:

Just and equal cities	Democratic communities	Sustainable societies and systems

In practice, LRGs are already showing what "care" means to them by:

Reaching people who have historically been discriminated against	Bringing decision-making close to those who have been systematically excluded	Redefining the relationship between people and nature
Reaching territories that are underserviced	Expanding the knowledge base from which decisions are made, recognizing diverse perspectives	Enabling a better adaptation to shocks by reducing the uneven distribution of risks
Adapting systems to the diverse needs of their populations	Fostering mutual trust and solidarity	Mitigating the impact of shocks, securing a healthy planet for future generations

Care permeates all domains of governance. Examples are:

Universal healthcare	Social cohesion and peace	Public services
Participatory budgeting	Time	Crisis management and security
Culture	Public administration	Urban and territorial planning

To achieve this care vision, Stage 1 put forward four main recommendations:

1.
Restore the role of the public and mainstream care as a cross-cutting lens

2.
Identify, support and empower caregivers and vulnerable populations

3.
Use data and partner with other stakeholders for evidence-based decision-making

4.
Understand local democracy and direct participation of citizens as key

Read the complete findings of Stage 2! Scan the QR codes or click the links below.

Stage 2

The Necessary Infrastructures for Caring Cities and Regions

Stage 2 Summary Document

All Stage 2 contributions

The second stage, "The necessary infrastructures for caring cities and regions", researched what concrete structures, relations and programs, amongst others, are needed, in combination with each other, to realize more caring cities and territories. Such infrastructures have proved to be physical infrastructures (buildings, service infrastructures like water pipes, buses, urban planning measures, etc.), social infrastructures (social support programs, economic support systems, etc.) and institutional infrastructures (policies and programs, participatory and co-production mechanisms, financial frameworks, etc.). This stage placed the focus on the way in which LRGs and their partners can transform a care aspiration into tangible improvements that better people's and the planet's wellbeing. Through care infrastructures, public services are innovated following a care logic to repair long-standing inequalities and serve marginalized communities.

How can care be fostered on the ground, locally?

Care infrastructures are used by LRGs and their partners to realize the care vision delineated in Stage 1. Infrastructures of care are the physical, social and institutional spaces that provide the scaffolding for the reproduction of life.

LRGs are supporting existing care systems and implementing infrastructures of care that involve:

The provision of material spaces and equipment that support the reproduction of life in all its forms	The creation of social and economic programs that reach people and especially vulnerable groups	The inclusion of care as the core gear that reshapes institutional action and governs the relations with the population

Prioritizing all these care infrastructures means developing holistic and context-dependent solutions that reflect the concrete care needs and aspirations of the population through:

Physical Infrastructures of Care	Social and Welfare Infrastructures of Care	Institutional Infrastructures of Care
Direct provision and building, co-design	Delivery of social support by combining universal and targeted approaches	Institutionalization of the collective and public responsibility of care
Recognition and facilitation of existing physical infrastructures	Recognition and nurturing of existing social and natural support systems	Provision and co-creation spaces for framing and delivering care
Coordination of multilevel and inter-level provision	Recognition and reward for caregivers and care receivers	The use of inclusive knowledge and co-production in the effective monitoring of care frameworks

Care infrastructures translate care into projects, programs and ways of doing locally. Examples are:

Youth and community centers	Municipal currencies	Public-community partnerships and public-common partnerships
Gender-sensitive urban projects	Cooperative and people-first housing measures	One-stop shops for carers, migrants and vulnerable populations
Inclusive urban planning interventions	Community-led natural restoration projects	Climate-resilient programs for informal workers
Time policies	Public restaurants	Resilience-building through cultural practices

To truly build a resilient system of care infrastructures, these recommendations were put forward in Stage 2:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Create links among broader (sectorial) agendas and mainstream care as a transversal principle	Leverage your own resources and competencies to begin implementation	Recognize, strengthen and support existing infrastructures	Start with pilots, find allies and partners, and then scale up	Use local knowledge to identify infrastructural gaps, put in place monitoring systems

Read the complete findings of Stage 3! Scan the QR codes or click the links below.

Stage 3

Care Resources and Reforms

Stage 3 Summary Document

All Stage 3 contributions

The third stage, "Care resources and reforms", analyzed the reforms and changes needed to fully embrace the care lens as a guiding principle of local public policy, and to comprehensively implement care infrastructures: in global and national financial frameworks, decentralization and devolution processes, the political capital and competencies required to implement care, the role of the multilateral system and the contribution of new technologies and monitoring frameworks to support the care agenda. Together, these reflections provide a complete picture of the reforms needed to put the proposals from Stage 1 and Stage 2 into practice.

What are the conditions and the reforms needed to advance care locally?

LRGs need enabling environments and adequate resources to support, create and maintain care-based systems. This calls for collaboration across all stakeholders—from international organizations and national governments to civil society organizations and the private sector—to drive the radical reforms that truly enable local care governance and reach territories and groups that are often invisibilized.

Key enablers that support LRGs in governing with care include:

Adequate resources and capacities that enable the redistribution of care	Robust and transparent monitoring, participation and learning mechanisms to co-create evidence-informed policy	Governance and policy frameworks that nurture multilevel and multi-sectoral collaborations for care delivery

The realization of these enablers requires radical and shared reforms addressing both the tangible and intangible conditions that shape the ability of LRGs to advance care-based governance. Key transformations entail:

Adequate resources and capacities	Monitoring, participation and learning mechanisms for policy creation	Multilevel and multi-sectoral frameworks
Decentralizing resources, power and capacities	Establishing collaborative mechanisms for monitoring and learning from care	Aligning national, regional and local strategies around care delivery
Diversifying funding sources and resource mobilization	Supporting locally-led knowledge production and data collection	Diversifying and democratizing care delivery across scales
Strengthening capacities and promoting cultural shifts towards care redistribution	Innovating in citizen engagement and feedback loops to inform decision-making	Consolidating solidarity economies and social bonds as key components of care policies

Fostering truly enabling environments for local care-based action is a holistic endeavor that embraces all sectors. Examples include:

Legal and regulatory frameworks	Multilevel governance	Financial infrastructures
Data, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	Media and journalism	The multilateral system
Administrative, political and fiscal decentralization and devolution processes	Digitalization and artificial intelligence	Labor policies

These recommendations were put forward in Stage 3 to collectively create more enabling environments for the implementation of the municipalist care agenda:

1. Build equitable and predictable financing systems for local care	**2.** Establish clear legal mandates and multilevel governance frameworks	**3.** Provide lines of support for caregivers, their communities and public workers
4. Strengthen LRG capacities through continuous support, peer-to-peer learning and learning-by-doing	**5.** Develop integrated, disaggregated, transparent and collaborative data and knowledge systems	**6.** Foster inclusive public-community partnerships, innovation and community engagement

4

Shaping Policy and Practice: Recommendations and Impact

The global recommendations of GOLD VII have been produced by UCLG in close collaboration with its members and GOLD VII partners. They build on the findings, priorities and proposed next steps identified across the three stages of the research process, as synthesized in the corresponding Summary Documents. The recommendations reflect both substantive policy directions and methodological insights emerging from this incremental and collective journey.

While grounded in the lived realities, practices and innovations of LRGs, **these recommendations are addressed not only to LRGs themselves, but also to national governments, international institutions, development partners and civil society actors**. Their purpose is to reinforce the understanding that advancing care-centered approaches to governance requires a shared global effort—one that aligns responsibilities, resources and decision-making across levels of government and mobilizes diverse stakeholders to collectively sustain the wellbeing of people, communities and territories.

The recommendations are structured around the three principles of GOLD VII that together provide a conceptual framework for care-centered governance:

Principle 1

Care is a need, work, a value and a right

Principle 2

Care is everywhere, from the self to the systems

Principle 3

Care is the engine of all life—Now, then and in the future

Each recommendation is organized following a four-tier approach:

- **Pause and Consider**, prompting reflection on local realities and care needs
- **Rethink**, encouraging re-evaluation of existing norms, practices and social relations
- **Act**, outlining concrete interventions and strategies for local governments
- **Enablers**, emphasizing the institutional, regulatory and systemic conditions that not only make care-centered policies possible but also actively bring all relevant stakeholders on board, national governments and international organizations in particular, fostering collaboration beyond LRGs

This structure allows readers to navigate the recommendations by connecting evidence, principles and actionable guidance, making them adaptable for different local, national and global contexts while fostering collaborative, care-focused governance.

Care as a lens

LRGs are at the forefront of defending care as a universal human need, value and right. As public service providers, redistributors of resources and opportunities, and regulators assigning responsibilities among public institutions, markets, communities and households, LRGs should make sure to consider every policy, every service and every local planning decision holistically and through the lens of care. This framework translates GOLD VII findings into a clear structure for action.

Let's imagine the world in a different, more caring way.

Principle 1

Care is a need, work, a value and a right

Care is essential for the wellbeing of all people and the planet, and for sustainable development. It is at once a fundamental need, a form of labor, a set of services and a value system that shapes how societies organize and sustain life. Recognizing care as a right shifts norms and priorities in favor of equality and justice, thus influencing policy, law and resource allocation.

Pause and consider

Who and what needs care in your local context? What forms of care are needed?

If care is what sustains life on our planet, often in a way that is invisible, unrecognized or taken for granted, which tasks and people enact care in your territory?

How do your local policies and narratives prioritize production (economic growth) and reproduction (sustaining life)? Do they do so in different ways, do they do so in equal measures?

Rethink

Needs and universality

Acknowledge that all individuals, social groups, communities and spaces need care, in particular those facing structural discrimination, recognizing how gender, age, race, class, disability, migration status and other intersecting factors shape both care needs and access.

Understand our shared interdependence and relational nature, and that everyone will require care, either transiently or permanently, during the course of our lives.

Recognition

Make care, care tasks and caregivers (especially girls and women) visible, recognized and embedded in public discourse and everyday practices.

Ensure they are socially valued, not stigmatized, and that the public sector, individuals, communities, the third sector and private stakeholders recognize their responsibility to care.

Redistribution

Question social norms that take care for granted in and beyond the conventional care sector, and that subsume wellbeing and the sustainability of life into productivity, speed and economic output.

Reframe the narratives around valuing self-care as well as care for societies and for the planet, while actively encouraging a more equal redistribution of care responsibilities across society away from girls and women.

Rights

Consider care as an obligation for public authorities and a right for everyone; noting that care looks different for different people, guaranteeing the right to care regardless of context fosters agency, dignity and autonomy for both care recipients and caregivers.

Equality

Reduce the long-standing, care-related inequalities in access to and provision of care through an intersectional and diversity-sensitive approach (including those suffered by people living at the margins, indigenous peoples, undocumented migrants etc.).

Act

Ensure decent work

Improve labor conditions, ensuring decent work, fair wages, social protection and labor rights for all workers, including migrant and informal workers, while acknowledging and addressing global care chains.

Go beyond GDP

Ensure that social and environmental outcomes are recognized and valued beyond economic logics, and that successes are communicated and made visible to inform and inspire action.

Re-imagine time

Foster the shift towards a care-grounded governance through concrete policies that address time poverty, as well as paid, unpaid and informal care provision.

Offer holistic support for the wellbeing of caregivers on topics typically considered as "private matters", including nutrition, health, mental health, care responsibilities and in-work poverty.

Improve public employment

Lead by example as employers and service providers, embedding care principles in public employment practices and working conditions.

Promote policies such as work-life balance measures to redistribute care responsibilities more equitably across society.

Develop care infrastructures

Recognize and invest in the creation, maintenance and repair of the material, social and institutional infrastructures that ensure the production and reproduction of wellbeing for all people and the planet, prioritizing democratic control and affordable, quality and equity-based in-house provision.

Break away from paternalistic approaches and ensure universal access to services that are provided and sustained no matter what, as well as to targeted programs for the empowerment of vulnerable groups, removing barriers to entry.

Support community solutions

Support, through funding, visibility and access to spaces, the existing structures that promote care, such as indigenous and cultural practices, community-based and civil society-led programs and networks, and collaborate with the private sector under an equality-based principle.

ENABLERS

HUMAN RIGHT

Care enshrined as a human right in national legislation and international conventions, creating binding commitments for governments, multilateral agencies and private actors.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Structured agreements between national governments, LRGs, trade unions, social movements, civil society and others that ensure equitable care conditions, address historic neglect and strengthen shared responsibility.

CARE ECONOMIES

Economic models that prioritize wellbeing, sustainability and social reproduction over extractive growth, including valuing and rewarding care work across formal, informal and plural economies.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Care policies aligned with broader sustainable development strategies and policies, reinforcing the centrality of care in achieving social, environmental and economic justice and peace.

Principle 2

Care is everywhere, from the self to the systems

Care is not limited to health or social services; it intersects with housing and security of tenure, transport, public space, climate resilience and urban governance, amongst others. LRGs must integrate care across sectors and policy decisions, and care for all public workers, in the care sector and beyond.

Pause and consider

What does it mean to govern with care?

Do your policies consider the impact on caregivers and care receivers individually, collectively and globally?

Are care implications assessed horizontally across sectors in your policies?

Rethink

Daily activities

Broaden your understanding of what care work looks like in your territory. Take account of the daily acts including cleaning, gardening, maintenance, administrative tasks, as well as larger infrastructures like housing management and water supply.

Take account of the workers, including and beyond the care sector, who make these possible.

Systems approach

Reimagine local government as an active care ecosystem with interconnected actors, rather than a fixed structure composed of separate sectors.

Promote policy coherence and break silos by assuming that issues are multidimensional and interrelated and working transversally with different departments.

Policy integration

Integrate care into consolidated public services including water, waste and energy management, mobility, housing and social protection systems; new essentials like public food infrastructures; urban planning; environmental policies; and in your organizational, delivery and relational spheres of action.

Global justice

Reflect on how local decisions affect local-to-global care justice, including climate, economic and social impacts on people, social fabric, ecosystems and infrastructures in and outside of your territory.

Act

Be a leader

Lead the care agenda as a political and collective commitment, embedded in feminist municipalism.

Develop solid political narratives and actions that overcome polarization through shared core principles of equality, justice and wellbeing while broadening the debate on care to society at large.

Center proximity

Design urban planning and policies that address historical and spatial injustices (e.g. inaccessible public space infrastructures, neighborhoods underserved in services, high care burden zones) and respond to context specificities through service decentralization, territorial equality, proximity and open, inclusive and multifunctional public spaces that foster social interaction, care practices and social mix.

Budget for care

Introduce care considerations in your annual budgeting and investment exercises (e.g. allocating a percentage of your general budget to care projects, targeted participatory budgeting, etc.).

Expand knowledge and data

Develop care-centered data and knowledge systems that combine disaggregated quantitative indicators (including the monetization of previously invisible care work) with qualitative and lived experience (including time use, service coverage, accessibility, workforce conditions).

Use them to conduct regular care impact assessments and monitoring, mapping needs and inequalities, to inform evidence-based decision-making across all policy areas.

Ensure data practices are respectful and non-extractive and that the social and environmental impacts are monitored beyond purely economic and GDP-related indicators.

Coordinate

Establish coordination mechanisms across local government departments, levels of governance and community actors to ensure coherent, integrated care approaches.

Foster shared responsibility, joint planning and co-implementation of policies that reflect the cross-cutting nature of care.

ENABLERS

DECENTRALIZATION

Decentralized political, administrative and fiscal frameworks that enable place-based, participatory care systems, supported by adequate, predictable and sustainable financing that combines space for experimentation with a long-term strategic vision, ensuring innovation is scaled and embedded.

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

Multilevel governance mechanisms that coordinate across local, national and global scales, enabling democratic, accountable, coherent and integrated care systems where listening, learning and support flow in all directions, ensuring that national governments learn from local innovations and actively back and scale them, while empowering LRGs to shape policies and resources.

SOCIAL CONTRACT

Renewed social contract in which public authorities take on a stronger role in reclaiming, regulating and providing care and the related hard and soft infrastructures, reducing the disproportionate burden on girls, women and communities, and ensuring universal access to quality public care services.

MARKET REGULATION

Private sector aligned with human rights standards and care-centered principles, and channels that allow civil society, cooperatives and small-scale providers to participate in co-production and service delivery, fostering proximity and contextual relevance.

DIGITALIZATION

Digital tools and infrastructures that support care provision and governance, bridging digital divides and ensuring equitable access for all, so technology strengthens rather than replaces relational care. Technologies are not neutral and must be localized to territorial realities.

Principle 3

Care is the engine of all life—Now, then and in the future

Care is dynamic and intergenerational. LRGs must plan for evolving needs and opportunities, reshape power dynamics and foster resilient communities. To care is to expand the governance imagination beyond what is already witnessed—across time, across actors and towards future generations and planetary boundaries. Enriching democracy is necessary for this.

Pause and consider

Are your policies and governance arrangements dynamic, adaptable, responsive and sustainable enough to be prepared for demographic shifts, climate risks, conflict and uncertainty, while taking into account the enduring and essential nature of care?

What fundamental changes to local democracy are needed so that everyone can participate, considering their care duties, needs and barriers? What can it unveil, who can it mobilize?

What is the role of your institution in reimagining the economic system so that caring for people and the planet becomes a central driver of society?

Rethink

Life-centered rhythms

Move towards calmer and more life-centered urban models, where economic activity and urban organization respect the rhythms of care, rest, cultural life and social reproduction.

Stewardship

Embed environmental stewardship as a core dimension of care, recognizing the interdependence between our communities, ecosystems and future generations and safeguarding traditional knowledge and heritage practices of care.

Democracy

Reframe democracy and peace through participatory, deliberative and co-productive approaches that recognize care responsibilities, redistribute power and enable meaningful inclusion, and broaden public ownership of the care debate through accessible and diverse communication channels.

Commons

Recognize the importance of knowledge as a common and foster its co-production, integrating community and indigenous knowledge, and addressing historical injustices through reparative approaches.

Continuity

Promote a political culture that transcends short-term mandates, fostering continuity, shared values and cross-party commitment to care-centered agendas.

Act

Regenerate

Promote regenerative care economies, moving from extractive to sustainable models, and defend the plural economy, supporting existing non-market solutions and promoting new ones, including public-common partnerships, collective tenure, cooperatives and local currencies.

Design across time horizons

Plan short-, medium- and long-term to anticipate future care needs and ensure intergenerational equality, combining systemic vision with sustained, small-scale interventions that, when consolidated, can be institutionalized and expanded to drive lasting transformation.

Experiment

Foster context-specific experimentation as a way to reimagine present and future care systems, supporting small-scale initiatives as starting points for addressing broader structural challenges.

Embrace open, adaptive approaches that respond to each context, fostering collective learning through practice, capacity-building and education rather than relying on fixed models or predefined solutions.

Embrace co-governance

Advance participatory and co-governance mechanisms to rebalance power relations and reinforce trust among local actors, including participatory urban planning and budgeting, co-management of services, and strengthening the role of community actors and independent institutions (such as journalism) as accountability mechanisms.

Devise specific strategies to promote children and youth leadership.

Foster co-production

Learn from, support and scale up community-based knowledges, voices and care solutions, partnering through public-community partnerships so that data and knowledge exchange are bidirectional as well as mutually beneficial and reinforcing.

ENABLERS

REPRESENTATION

Mechanisms for community engagement, co-design and co-management, including caregivers, care receivers and youth involvement to ensure that care becomes a recognized value across generations and that local policies cultivate trust, continuity and social cohesion.

DECENTRALIZED COOPERATION

Legal and political frameworks that support the design and implementation of care systems in all territories through decentralized cooperation, moving away from unconnected pilots to structured knowledge exchanges and long-term policy.

RESILIENCE

Care systems embedded in crisis preparedness and resilience, ensuring that care considerations and existing cultural practices of community preparedness are integrated into disaster planning, climate adaptation, conflict response and recovery efforts so they can contribute to peace building and social cohesion.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Legal institutionalization and protection of care across political cycles, ensuring long-term commitment beyond individual mandates and parties.

LOCAL MULTILATERALISM

Care-centered transformations from the local to the global, positioning LRGs as key actors in advancing care and feminist agendas through local action, multilevel governance and international cooperation.

The conclusions and recommendations of this research do not mark the end of the journey. GOLD VII provides a solid evidence base that will continue to guide the implementation and materialization of the Local Social Covenant at and beyond the UCLG World Congress, ensuring that the commitments made by members and partners are grounded in care-centered approaches. Its findings inform policy development, collective advocacy and the design of local initiatives, enabling LRGs to translate care into concrete practices across public services, urban planning, social programs and institutional governance. By connecting local experiences to global frameworks including the SDGs, human rights, gender equality and climate action commitments, **GOLD VII ensures that care is embedded not only in municipal priorities, but also in multilevel, multi-stakeholder decision-making processes.**

GOLD VII also strengthens advocacy and capacity-building efforts by providing evidence-based arguments and concrete examples that demonstrate how care-centered approaches generate tangible outcomes for communities. This knowledge supports the participation of LRGs in international dialogues and agreements—from the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the High-Level Political Forums and the World Urban Forums to International Labour Organization's convenings and the Conferences of the Parties—positioning them as co-creators of policy rather than mere implementers. Beyond advocacy, GOLD VII's findings will be translated into practical learning tools and capacity-building programs for local government staff, fostering skills, competences and institutional practices that embed care across all areas of governance and ensure it permeates both local action and global conversations.

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Emilia Saiz (UCLG Secretary General)

UCLG World Secretariat

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GOLD VII

Multimedia Journal

Care is essential to sustaining life, shaping the way societies organize time, relationships, work, services, resources and territories. As inequalities deepen and climate, social and democratic pressures intensify, care offers a transformative lens to rethink public action, strengthen collective responsibility and place the wellbeing of people, communities and the planet at the centre of governance.

This report presents the final outcomes of the GOLD VII research process on the Economies of Equality and Care. Built through three years of collective reflection and co-production with local and regional governments, international organizations, researchers and civil society, it gathers evidence, practices and recommendations to support more caring, equitable and sustainable cities and regions, and to inform the municipalist contribution to a renewed multilateralism.

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