Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: [00:00:00] Good[00:01:00] [00:02:00]

afternoon. Hey, let's get started and kick off this webinar this afternoon. My name is Mariolga Juliá Pacheco. It's a pleasure to welcome you and connect with you through this webinar. So I'll quickly hand it over to Bruje so she can provide some instructions, and so that all participants who need to can access the interpretation services.

Good afternoon, everyone. This event will be bilingual. We will be speaking in Spanish, and we will have interpretation into English. I will be providing instructions [00:03:00] on how to connect your device to the English interpretation. Hi, everyone. This event will be held in Spanish with interpretation into English.

So I will be—I'll be giving instructions on how to activate English interpretation. If you're using a computer, please look at the bottom of your screen, where you'll find the globe icon labeled "interpretation." Click on that, and it will give you the options for English and Spanish.

For English interpretation, please select the English channel. If you're using a cell phone, click on the three dots and find the icon labeled "interpretation." Click on that, and you'll also see the options for English and Spanish. Select English and make sure to click "Done" or "Finalize" on your cell phone.

Otherwise, the interpretation will not activate. [00:04:00] Thank you. Gracias. We hope

that...

Now. Great. We hope you were able to receive, right? Um, the instructions from Bruje. Before we start, we want to thank them for their pro bono interpretation services. Um, Bruje is part of, um, right? The collectives that we're gathering in Puerto Rico, um, and, and then we can talk a little more about that later.

So without further ado, let's get started, right? In this webinar, "Designing Collective Land Tenure Solutions Based on the Context of Puerto Rico and Community Aspirations," we'll discuss [00:05:00] our experience as a Puerto Rican community. My name is Marie Olga Juliá. I'm a community social worker and I lead, uh, the citizen engagement and social development aspects at Caño Martín Peña. This webinar is part of the global summit and conference being held to recognize the efforts of land trusts internationally, uh, primarily

sponsored and organized by the International Community Land Trust, uh, but with the support, right?

From the Rondo, the Rondo Community Land Trust, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. There are several events left, so we invite you to continue, uh, following the CLT Center's social media and to register for other events that catch your interest. Uh, so we are different networks around the world, all of us trying, right?

To put out there and share the work being done so that we can strengthen [00:06:00] efforts, uh, from every context and every region on a global level. Uh, a little context. Since 2021 in Puerto Rico, a number of groups and collectives have been coming together. We are different initiatives working on the issue of collective land management and tenure.

There's been a resurgence of a cooperative movement in Puerto Rico, and you'll be learning about some of those experiences through the webinar. And thankfully, we can now share that there are five land trusts in Puerto Rico. The application of land trusts has diversified a lot, right?

The pioneering work that we initiated—and that others initiated before me—right? By people who have been here, especially community leaders, starting in 2004 with the Caño Martín Peña Land Trust, which was recognized in 2016 by winning the World Habitat Award.

So that has [00:07:00] had, right? That multiplier effect, uh, of creating that echo that collective land management was possible and is possible in the Puerto Rican context. So we want to share that experience; we want you to listen to us, to learn how we're applying it here, how we're seeking alternatives even in the face of a scenario, uh, of gentrification and direct, ongoing threats, uh, that we face on Puerto Rican soil and throughout the archipelago.

So, that's a bit of how we're contextualizing collective management—what's being done in Puerto Rico—and so you can learn about the four projects that will be presented. First, our comrade Françoise Mar Otero Garay, who works with the Community Land Trust for Sustainable Agriculture, will be presenting.

She'll be in charge of providing some context. Then we'll move on to our colleague Katia Avilés, who [00:08:00] will then give you a little, right? That introduction and that overview of what the Agroecology Trust in Puerto Rico is all about. Then we'll move on to another diverse experience of applying—of

land trusts—with our colleague Mariana Reyes Angleró, from Calle Loíza and the Loíza Trust.

We'll then move on to Marina Pineda, Choco, who will discuss that emerging movement of housing cooperatives here in Puerto Rico, sharing the experience of the La Torre de Sofía Housing Cooperative. And we'll close with the experience of the Valientes de Vieques Land Trust with our colleague Andrea del Mar Malavé.

Well, due to time constraints, we may not be able to address all questions during the webinar. However, we're committed, right? Together with the CLT Center, to collecting those questions and concerns so we can continue the conversation. So please feel free to leave them, to [00:09:00] write them down, to share them—and as much as possible, we'll either answer them here or we promise to get back to you eventually.

Eh, at the end we'll have some conclusions and a closing, right? For the activity, eh, with our colleague Lidia Rodríguez del Valle, from Enjambre Colectivo, who was also, right? The first executive director of the Caño Martín Peña Land Trust. So, without further ado, we want to begin sharing this resurgence and this possibility, uh, of collective management and collective land tenure in our Puerto Rican context.

And so, we'll leave you with Françoise.

Francyá Mar Otero Margary: It's a pleasure. Hello. Next slide. Well, let's start to understand a little bit about this resurgence of interest in forms of collective land tenure [00:10:00]. We have to talk about the political context, right? About Puerto Rico and its relationship with the United States. For the benefit of the people joining us from various parts of the world, Puerto Rico is an island country in the Caribbean that, right?

It has a long history, about five hundred years of colonial experience, right? First invaded and conquered by the Spanish in the 15th century and handed over to the United States as spoils at the end of the Spanish-American War. So its history has always been marked by a crisis—a colonial-institutional crisis—due to the lack of our right to self-determination.

But more recently, in 2000, since 2016, the United States has, uh, tightened its control over Puerto Rico by imposing a fiscal control board to oversee local debt. This board transfers significant powers from the local government to a group selected by the U.S. Congress [00:11:00] and has since implemented cuts

to essential services to justify paying off this debt, which has then led our already vulnerable infrastructure, health, and education systems to greater dysfunction.

Next slide. So, added to this scenario is, uh, a bit of what they call disaster capitalism, right? A—the passage of hurricanes in 2017 that are unprecedented in our history, which justified, uh, implementing even more austerity measures and—and privatization that, uh, right? In the name of the so-called reconstruction of Puerto Rico, which has resulted in significant increases in the cost of living.

For example, some of these measures were the privatization of the electricity supply system and a policy, uh, well, of school closures. Also, a tax haven regime that, [00:12:00] uh, offers tax benefits under a law granting tax exemptions to foreigners who acquire residency in Puerto Rico and to foreign corporations that establish an office in Puerto Rico.

And since then, particularly because of that last one, we've seen a spike in housing prices, the rise, right? Foreign interest in acquiring properties and land—mainly for tourism purposes—has accelerated and increased speculation on the value of land and housing.

And all of this is reflected in the rise in short-term rental prices, as well as in the threat to our cultural and natural heritage, the negotiation of the right to access public goods—such as coastlines—and the lack of access to agricultural land. Next slide. So, as [00:13:00] neighborhoods and communities with shared interests have been organizing to confront everything that threatens—our right to remain on the islands of Puerto Rico, among the mechanisms beginning to take shape are community land trusts.

These are nonprofit entities that acquire and manage land with and for the benefit of a community, as defined by those who establish the trust. Thus, land is transformed from a private asset—a commodity, excuse me—into a communal asset. It is managed collectively for the present and future well-being of those people, thereby guaranteeing affordable access to, and the use and care of, the land.

They are a relatively recent legal development in Puerto Rico, and their earliest manifestations date back to the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, during the civil rights struggles there. Next slide. It is important to note that although the legal structure may vary across regulatory frameworks and different trusts—given that there is no universal or consensus-based definition within the social

movements themselves—in general terms, community land trusts are distinguished and governed by the philosophy of the common good, uh, collective well-being, and placing the community and collective participation at the center of decision-making.

For example, in Puerto Rico, not all trusts, as we can see, have been established under the same legislation, right? Like, some have been created directly under the Trust Act, while others have emerged through legislation related to territorial planning or community planning to [00:15:00] address the specific needs of those communities.

Next slide. Um, this search for mechanisms of collective land tenure also has important roots in the housing cooperative movement of the mid-last century, when joint housing cooperatives emerged in response to the problem of affordable housing.

Uh, one of the earliest examples is the El Palenquerio housing complex, uh, established in 1948. It's one of the first experiences of organized housing, uh, under cooperative principles, which emerged, right, in a context of urgent need similar to the present and represents a, a first attempt—one of the first attempts—to organize access to housing through collective models.

Next slide. The League of Cooperatives defines them as an [00:16:00] association, a cooperative organized by families who wish to join together to improve their housing conditions at moderate prices. Their purpose is to provide adequate housing for low- and middle-income families.

And in Puerto Rico there are two categories of housing cooperatives: joint ownership and owner-occupied. Joint ownership cooperatives are covered by a global mortgage, so members do not obtain individual ownership of units, but rather are co-owners of the project. Next slide. So, these recent experiences, right?

introduce or reintroduce into the collective imagination, uh, these models and make cooperatives and trusts, uh, distinct legal entities, but ones that are part of the current—of the current conversation, uh, about models for, uh, right? Alternative forms of tenure [00:17:00] and, and what we'll be discussing—we'll have the privilege of hearing a little more about today.

Thank you.

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: We thank François for, right? This great challenge, uh, of truly being able to briefly explain a bit of that context, uh, of where, right? The history of land trusts arises. We know it's much deeper. This was just a few brushstrokes, just like the cooperative movement of, of housing cooperatives here in Puerto Rico.

So with that introduction, we want to formally begin so that you can fully get to know the organizations that will be sharing their story, their reality, and how they are gradually joining the collectives that we are trying to transform, rescue, and maintain our archipelago for the Puerto Rican people.

So [00:18:00] we'll now hand it over to our colleague Katia Avilés Vázquez, who is a geographer, researcher, and activist; she was also part of the team working here at the Martín Peña Canyon, and she is the executive director and co-founder of the Agroecology Trust. So, Katia.

Katia Avilés Vázquez: Greetings to everyone. Thank you very much for being here, and in particular, François, thank you for that context. Let's take a look at how what François mentioned about rising housing costs is impacting us in the agricultural sector specifically. Let's move on to the next slide and the one after that.

Next. Thank you very much. So, a little bit about the population we work with. The reason for the institute is that we work primarily with small-scale farmers, and one of the first things we identified with small-scale farmers—if you can see here in the graph on the [00:19:00] right— we have sales figures, which in this case show that seventy percent of the people who self-identified as small-scale farmers or farmers in the 2022 census have less than twenty thousand dollars in sales.

For context, the 2026 poverty line for a family of three is twenty-six thousand U.S. dollars. So right off the bat, we have the vast majority of our farmers below the poverty line. We've also been looking at how 21% of the farmers who self-identified as such in the census are, well, 21% are renting.

So, if we look at a census from a couple of years ago of farmers, particularly agroecological ones, more than 30% of them are on leased land. However, and this is the interesting part of how difficult it is to navigate the [00:20:00] legal and political landscape in Puerto Rico, we've worked on over eighty cases in the fisheries and agrarian law program, and of those eighty cases, only four had secure tenure.

And often it's because we think things are clear when they really aren't, putting farmers' land—or land for agriculture—in a precarious position. Another important point to note is that in Puerto Rico, you can be considered a farmer simply because you lease land for an activity that is recognized as agricultural.

And unlike the last twenty years, when rent had remained at three to five percent, in recent years we've seen farm rents skyrocket. And I'm going to talk to you about this because it's extremely important. Next slide. First, of all the remaining agricultural land in Puerto Rico—five percent of the farms, and these are [00:21:00] individual farms—only five percent have more than 260 cuerdas.

Just a quick note for context: one cuerda is 0.97 acres or 0.39 hectares. For us on an island, 260 cuerdas is a lot. And when you look at that five percent of farms or people and consider the amount of land they accumulate, nearly 50% of the land is in the hands of that five percent.

Next slide. And that is partly due to—as François clearly showed in the image he had—all those short-term rentals on the coast are displacing us to other areas and driving up land prices. I made a mistake here. It says a factor of seven. In the latest research we conducted, it's a factor of nine, which has increased the price per acre for farmers.

One indicator of displacement is if the price [00:22:00] and cost of living rise but incomes do not. And we have seen that although land prices increased by a factor of nine per acre, income in rural municipalities has remained stable or has barely increased by just over one percent. On top of that, as François already mentioned, the entire system has been deregulated.

Industrial solar panels are considered agricultural activities; many environmental protections have been liberalized, and people who could protect the land have been driven off it. Here in the image on the right, that is Jobos Bay, created because they removed the fishing associations since it was going to be a federal reserve.

Next slide. What are we losing with this? Well, look, small-scale farmers are the ones best able to adapt; they have the greatest diversity of both food sources and redundancy systems; they are the ones who typically sustain their communities; they can respond to local needs; and they work in networks.

And in Puerto Rico in particular, [00:23:00] networking or mutual support is something that has been documented on the island in general—and in

agriculture in particular—for decades now. Next slide. So at the institute, we started thinking: Okay, what alternatives do we have?

One of the things we said was, well, let's support or partner with family farms. Let's think about organizing as a collective. Conservation easements that provide a tax credit to those who keep their land in conservation and don't develop it, or place an encumbrance—which is a restriction—on the property title.

And we realized that none of these options was solid or permanent enough for what we wanted. And we started looking and beginning—to think about other things, like ancestral migration patterns; in the Caribbean, it was a single homeland, or how we belong to the land, the case of Barbuda in particular.

If I am born here, I belong to this land. So, how do we start thinking differently about the territory as a collective? Next slide. So, the Agroecology Trust was established in 2023, which is a sister organization of the institute. The board of trustees is composed of the very agricultural projects that operate on the land, and two types of deeds are granted: surface rights deeds for housing and agricultural rights deeds.

The deeds—excuse me—are inheritable, and that also alleviates many of the anxieties of farmers, or farming people, when it comes to being able to maintain the land so it can remain in the family and, obviously, culturally perpetuate that profession.

Next slide. This is more or less how it looks. We currently have more than eighteen families settled here, and one of the most wonderful things we've been able to offer through the agroecology trust is that we've managed to formalize not only access to land, but also to [00:25:00] housing. For example, we had a farmer who was on half a cord of land living in a tent because he was going to be evicted.

And he couldn't invest in a home—a small concrete house—because he couldn't get anything done without being the legal owner. So through the trust and the process we've implemented, he's no longer in his tent; he's been able to start investing in a house. And the same goes for other similar situations—generations of farmers who now find themselves competing with industrial projects, and whom we've been able to help put down roots through the formalization of their surface rights on agricultural land and by providing them with decent, safe, and sanitary housing.

Next slide. And most importantly, Kristallen says that to achieve food security, you have to improve innovation. And the way to improve innovation with our farmers in particular is by ensuring there is a [00:26:00] foundation of strength, that there is security, that I can invest and experiment on my own land.

And from that perspective, we're already seeing the fruits of the agroecology trust, where we're seeing a school being established on the trust's lands, workshops held on the trust's lands, and research to share knowledge about new strategies to combat climate change.

So I'll leave it at that. Thank you very much.

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: Katia, we thank you, not only for the presentation, but for the many, many efforts we know you've been making here in the Puerto Rican archipelago for years. We can see on that map, right? How those little seeds are spreading and how, right, it keeps getting stronger. And as you rightly mentioned, we keep rooting our people in our land and reclaiming what is ours.

So we continue; we're moving away from that agricultural and rural context, and suddenly shifting to an urban one [00:27:00], so we're welcoming her, right? And we'd like to thank Mariana Reyes Anglero in advance—she's a journalist, cultural manager, and activist, a resident of Calle Loíza, executive director of the Comunidad La Goico workshop, and co-founder of the newest trust we have here in Puerto Rico, the Calle Loíza Trust.

So without further ado, Mariana, tell us about it.

Mariana Reyes Angleró: Thank you, greetings. Thank you for the invitation. Well, it has been an honor for us today as well to witness the process of the Caño community, where we were there as neighbors from Santurce, seeing how that initiative is progressing after twenty years. So congratulations to everyone.

This, the Loíza Street Trust, as you mentioned, is the most recent one. We launched it last November by presenting the deed. You can move on to the first slide.

Next. Okay, uh, [00:28:00] why did we decide, uh, to use this mechanism—the creation of a trust? Well, in Puerto Rico there's a very real housing crisis. Housing has become more expensive everywhere. In our neighborhood in particular, which is a coastal neighborhood, right? You can go there—the beach is right there.

Out of the roughly three thousand housing units in the Loíza Street area, nearly a thousand, uh, are short-term rentals. A little less than a thousand, but it's a very significant number. Uh, and homes for sale have doubled in price, or, or, or are being listed at prices that double the appraised value.

That is, if the bank appraises it at two hundred thousand dollars, the, the, the owner is asking for three hundred fifty or four hundred thousand in cash. And those properties are being snapped up by investors. So, the units left for long-term rent, to actually live in, well, their prices have tripled [00:29:00] in recent years as well.

So there's nowhere to live, and people have to leave the community little by little, right? Destroying that essential fabric of the neighborhood. Next slide. So, what are we trying to defend with this newly established trust? The right to live in the city, in community, the very existence of the community itself, right?

Which is at risk of disappearing, uh, which is threatened by the lack of places to live that have realistic prices for the wages of Puerto Ricans, the people who live in Puerto Rico. I mean, no, I mean, the rent prices we're seeing now in our community are sometimes what a person earns in a month.

So, well, it's impossible, uh, to pay for it, right? The dismantling of the community, including what used to be our traditional commercial sector, because [00:30:00] this is a neighborhood, uh, a mix of residences and businesses, but those traditional businesses have also had a hard time. The lack of conditions for us to build a decent quality of life.

That's a threat that's pretty much beyond our control, like the water issue, for example. Right now I don't know if there's water or not—this happens every day. So that's another threat, right? To quality of life. And what are the possible consequences of this situation? Well, the almost total displacement of the community and the demographic shift, right?

Population-wise. Well, it remains to be seen what, uh, the results will be of the efforts we're going to make with this new initiative we've just started, but what it's aiming for is precisely to prevent that appalling displacement we're seeing. Next.

Why, uh, [00:31:00] did we decide on, uh, collective tenure? Well, it's a legal tool that exists, right? One that can work in any scenario. In our case, uh, which we'll talk about later, we did it through a deed—we created a deed. This—this trust wasn't created by law, but by us, and it's then presented to the court.

Eh, whether we manage to reclaim a lot or a little space, whatever the case, the effort aligns with our intention to stay. And of course, as I mentioned at the beginning, one of the things that motivates us toward this tenure model is that we've seen models like El Caño—they're our neighbors, because we're in the same San Juan neighborhood, which is the Santurce neighborhood, San Mateo de Cangrejos—so we're neighbors.

Uh, so, that was also something we saw as possible, right? Because we've already seen other neighbors, uh, change their lives with these mechanisms. It's possible, it's possible. Uh, what are the considerations? Well, uh, we've taken [00:32:00] other actions that aren't ruled out alongside the trust, because as I mentioned before, the roots of the problem that we've identified in our community in particular and in Puerto Rico in general are quite specific, including, uh, the lack of regulation for short-term rentals, which significantly reduces the number of available units.

And we're also—working simultaneously with the trust and with different groups on creating public policy for those purposes, although right now there isn't, uh, a, uh, very favorable political climate, but we are working in that direction as well, uh, with, with other communities in San Juan and other parts of the island, including Vieques, Rincón, and other areas.

And we also understand that, well, in the case of Puerto Rico, the incentives under Act 60 need to be eliminated. That's a law that allows investors from outside Puerto Rico—from the United States and elsewhere—to come [00:33:00] to buy... and it incentivizes them to purchase properties in exchange for, uh, not having to pay taxes.

Uh, and that puts us in a completely unfair competitive situation where people who, who, well, who are from here haven't been able to compete with that. I think there's one slide missing. You see. Exactly. What does collective tenure offer us that other forms of tenure don't? Well, also, I mean, we've been coming—I think for over a year now, a little longer—to participate in the collective tenure meetings that have been taking place in Puerto Rico, led by El Enjambre, where we've seen other similar projects, other similar problems.

So there, too, we began to define our ability to work toward a collective goal of joining forces to confront economic powers we can't compete with, as I mentioned before, right? It's impossible for us to compete with that; we don't have those millions. And to protect in perpetuity the territory we [00:34:00] manage to reclaim, whatever it may be, right?

Umm, we're trying to do that in different ways, seeking funds for it. And we're also in talks with the municipality of San Juan, because there are abandoned properties that are public nuisances, right? In our community, which could very well be homes for people. We're in, in meetings to, to see if that can happen.

And other ways we can acquire properties, whatever the conditions, and then move on to fixing them up. The design of our trust in particular was established through a public deed that sets up the trust for Loíza Street and its operating procedures. We spent a year working on that deed with a board of directors, a trust board made up of community members that includes me, since I'm a neighbor in the area.

I also lead a project called La Goico, which is a project based in a school that we in the community rescued ourselves, and from which many initiatives [00:35:00] emerge that seek to defend the right to the city. So, from La Goico, we're pushing this trust project forward and trying to shape it, right?

It already exists; it's already legally established. The next step is to acquire those properties so we can get to work. That's a summary of the work we're doing here in Loíza.

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: Thank you, Mariana. As Mariana rightly mentioned, right? Each of the initiatives we're, uh, presenting—and which are sharing their experiences today—we're giving brief summaries. Each one has a much longer, much more complex story, and you can find more information, right?

On the various social media platforms for each of the initiatives. On the City Center's own website, there's different information. And I know that each of these initiatives is more than willing to continue sharing their experiences, deepening those relationships with other groups and collectives that are exploring and seeking alternatives to transform their reality.

So, from Santurce, we're moving to the university town, we're moving, right? To the heart of what the University of Puerto Rico is here in Puerto Rico, which is the town of Río Piedras. So, and I say "town" because it used to be a municipality and retains—right? Many unique characteristics. So, I'll now hand it over to Marina Pineda Chókuhu, a graduate of the Sustainable Community Development program at the University of Massachusetts, and vice president of the La Torre de Sofía Housing Cooperative.

Marina Pineda Shokooh: Hello, good afternoon. Um, as Mari Olga mentioned, we're in the heart of the university town of Río Piedras, uh, located in San Juan.

Um, and that photo [00:37:00] shows our building. Um, you can go to the next slide. Our building was acquired by some investors under Law 60, as has been mentioned, and we're facing the same problems.

So it was acquired in 2023 by investors under Law 60, who raised the rent by eighty percent, and almost all the residents at that time, uh, had to leave; they were displaced from their homes. Uh, and there the residents originally organized as a neighborhood association to try to figure out the next step in how they were going to prevent a second displacement.

And collectively, it was decided that the best option for this building was to convert it into a housing cooperative. So [00:38:00] efforts began in collaboration with the Law School and the Legal Aid Clinic to incorporate as a housing cooperative, which we achieved in the summer of 2025.

Currently, the building is on the market, and our goal is to acquire the building again and be able to formally operate as a housing cooperative in Río Piedras. Also, what's important about our cooperative is that our priority is to provide affordable housing for students, because as we've discussed, our country is facing severe displacement, and one of the populations most affected is students.

And since we're located in the university district, it's very important for us to provide, uh, affordable housing [00:39:00] for students, so they can live in and enjoy Río Piedras and the city. So our cooperative will be a cooperative for students. Also, it's very important for us to join all the efforts currently underway in Río Piedras in terms of community development and the fight to stay in the city.

This is because we've seen that Río Piedras is being impacted by gentrification and extremely high rent prices for students and other people living there. So we're joining all the efforts happening in Río Piedras right now. Next slide.

This, yes, as I mentioned, is to provide. This is a photo of our day when we incorporated, the day we [00:40:00] formally incorporated as a cooperative. This, yes, you can continue.

Thank you, Marina. Not just for the presentation, but for joining the rest of the group—the Torre de Sofía group—in committing to reviving or re-exploring cooperative housing models here in Puerto Rico. It had been over thirty years since a housing cooperative was founded.

And as we've seen and learned over the years, there's a saying here, Bruje—excuse me—the habit doesn't make the monk. So it seems to me that here, the debate over what's better—a land trust or a housing cooperative—is ultimately irrelevant. What's important here is how [00:41:00] there are people willing to keep developing initiatives, as Mariana and Marina rightly mentioned, to uphold that right to the city, to reclaim our spaces, and, as Katia mentioned, to put down roots in our lands—from sovereignty and food sovereignty to decent places to live.

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: So, the last presentation we'll be having on one of the projects is by Andrea Del Mar Malabé Bonilla, program manager at the Vieques Women's Alliance, a graduate in Environmental Sciences, and co-manager of the Valientes de Vieques Land Trust. For those of you who are, uh, connected here today in the webinar and who aren't from Puerto Rico—well, Puerto Rico is an archipelago, so now, right?

we'll take the ferry and head straight to Vieques with Andrea. So, Andrea, tell us a little bit about the history of the Vieques Brave Lands Trust.

Andrea **del Mar Malavé Bonilla:** Well, hello, hello to everyone. It's a pleasure for me to be here and to speak on behalf of this great community effort.

As our colleague mentioned, Vieques is, uh, an island municipality, and unlike other municipalities in our wonderful archipelago of Puerto Rico, we had the misfortune of experiencing another wave of displacement. Uh, during the 1940s, the... we faced expropriation and military displacement so that our land could be used for military exercises.

Thirty-three thousand cuerdas, right? Which, which—they have to convert that to acres. Vieques, uh, had thirty-three thousand, has thirty-t—thirty-three thousand cuerdas, and the Navy occupied twenty-six thousand. So the people of Vieques were simply living in the middle of it all. So it's important to have this background because it wasn't until 2003 that [00:43:00] the bombing stopped, uh, thanks to the struggle of the people and the whole world.

Well, this step was taken toward another development project in Vieques. However, no sustainable plan was taken into account for housing or for the people who were already living there—who were, essentially, survivors of a war, since live-fire exercises were conducted there. Instead, the land was transferred to various agencies, such as Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Housing, and the Land Administration.

And that's where the obstacles begin. So, we can move on to the next slide. From 2003 to the present, we've been surviving and fighting against constant displacement, not only due to military maneuvers, [00:44:00] but also due to tourism. Vieques has the brightest bioluminescent bay in the world and spectacular beaches, and they're turning it into—right?

A hub for the tourism industry. Which means, with Act 20 and Act 60, that it's become a niche or an attraction for these wealthy foreigners who move to Vieques just to develop, uh, various or multiple, uh, short-term rentals, leaving us without housing or simply cramming us into spaces like public housing, of which there aren't many anyway.

The federal system has abandoned three of the existing public housing complexes, so we're in a situation... ...of a crisis due to the high cost of housing and the lack of [00:45:00] government action, whether from the central government or the municipal government, because they don't give us the option to stay in our homes, but instead force us to displace ourselves, to have to move out little by little.

There is no, there is no, uh, post-secondary education, jobs are very scarce, so on top of that we have food insecurity and a shortage of, right? Decent housing. Uh, for this very reason we have, uh, can you move the slide, we have committed to creating these spaces, securing and safeguarding these spaces for the people of Vieques.

Um, in 2020, short-term rentals accounted for seventy-four percent of rental units. That's a lot. Today it's much more. However, in 2023, fifty-three [00:46:00] point two percent of the population lived below the poverty line—that is the vast majority—and the median income hovers around fourteen thousand dollars.

What's going on? Well, currently in 2026, our homes—right?—whether built or as land, range from three hundred thousand to half a million dollars, which isn't sustainable for a working person, a family, or people who give it their all and still barely make ends meet. Ah, there's been a population decline of 7.29 percent from 2020 to the present, and, uh, here you can see that, unfortunately, the current unviable housing options, uh, fall into these categories.

The central government is the red ones—that is, this is administered by the central government without taking into account [00:47:00] the particularities we have as, as an island municipality. Uh, the private corporations are CODEVI and Verde Vieques, right? Within the scope of what they could be, they're run

by a board, but we see that it's not affordable for the population and that they don't have fair models for land allocation; rather, they're driven largely by money, because you're not from Puerto Rico, right?

They don't guarantee fair housing. Um, on the other hand, we have the municipality of Vieques, which has land that we've seen being auctioned off illegally; they, they, they hand it over to people we don't know through, um, non-bureaucratic processes, um, while people are asking for a home. So, we have private sales where, within the possibility that might arise, uh, of, of being able to acquire [00:48:00] a house from a neighbor or from a person who, who, who passed away, we have this—some major issues regarding the plots and how they're inherited and weren't divided up.

So, well, these are people who, because of this situation—there are five siblings—can't reach an agreement, and the house remains in that state with no one living in it and no one selling it. Additionally, we have many titles without property because Vieques reclaimed a lot of the land that was used by the Navy, and there's a limbo, right?

Among those plots, they sell them, but they sell them without a title and without a house. So, right? There's a, um, there's a very high cost of, of, of building in Vieques, and additionally, acquiring your property title—it doesn't matter if you've been living there for over eleven years. And finally, the realtors [00:49:00] who have a monopoly and won't let, right?

Sales or the cost of housing to be affordable; instead, they jack it up to, to, to numbers that, that we see are ridiculous, because, uh, we see how often there aren't even, aren't even houses—the houses have to be completely rebuilt—but since there's someone who can buy it, they, they're simply guided by that, that person coming from outside.

Here is a map of Vieques. It's important, right? To note that only the light blue area is where the people of Vieques live. The green area of Fish and Wildlife—the light green and the dark green—was used for military exercises, while the dark, brown, green area was used for bomb storage, and right now there's no plan or development.

So for us—you can go to the next slide—it's [00:50:00] super important, uh. This, other areas that we know are being targeted by people with a lot of capital, politicians who are desperate to pass laws to take our lands away from us, take our beaches away from us, take our natural resources away from us.

So we decided that from Vieques for Vieques, we're going to work to ensure our permanence using the, the collective tenure instrument of the trust. The Tierra de Valiente Trust seeks to collectively safeguard and manage, right? We are a group of community organizations that have been working for Vieques for years, including the Alianza de Mujeres Viequenses, Vieques en Rescate, the Archivo Histórico de Vieques, La Colmena Cimarrona, and Yuca Yeque Vieque.

And... right? We already have a history and, and, and, and a, a, a deep connection [00:51:00] to our spaces that we know are the things we need. Eh, this is coming together, right? After the need, after the pandemic, after the earthquakes, after COVID, realizing that no one was going to do it for us, so we had to do it ourselves.

Uh, it'll be—uh, approximately in, during 2022. Um, this collective tenure instrument is going to allow us, uh, —we're still in the drafting process—it will allow the community to have greater access to land and property, and ensure opportunities for social growth through the management and protection of affordable housing, stable and sustainable commerce, agricultural production that harmonizes with its natural resources, the preservation of culture and history, and, well, a truly sustainable management of the valuable natural resources that Vieques possesses.

You can follow us on our social media, right? [00:52:00] Um, to learn a little more. We're just getting started—we're still in the drafting phase—but we're really eager, right? To keep working and to build on what our colleagues have already shown is possible and worthwhile.

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: Thank you, Andrea. We also want to thank the people who have taken the time to post their doubts, questions, and concerns in the Q&A section. Now, what we'd like to do is delve a little deeper into different aspects that might be resonating with our listeners.

So, let's start with Andrea and that last experience she shared with us from Vieques, and with a story so marked by state violence, by the violence of—you know—our colonial relationship with the United States. Well, we'd like to know, [00:53:00] you explained a bit that COVID had a lot to do with it, the various crises we've gone through here in Puerto Rico—we know COVID was a global phenomenon.

Andrea del Mar Malavé Bonilla: In Puerto Rico, there was a series of earthquakes, and some terrible hurricanes. So, what was that process like,

Andrea? Well, there are several collectives that make up this trust. What was that process of deciding, of coming to an agreement, of designing, of saying, "Well, the trust is the right tool for us"?

Well, and in those early days—which you mentioned so well, right?—when you were just starting out, but you've already come a long way, what kind of support did you need? Because there might be people listening who are thinking, "But where do we even start?" right? So, could you elaborate a bit on that? Well, um, to be precise, in July 2022, the municipality held an auction that was completely illegal and totally against the interests of the Viequenses.

And it was very abrupt, it was extremely violent, and it was like a wake-up call [00:54:00] to realize and acknowledge that the government and our municipality weren't going to do anything for us. So it was time for the community—which had already been working on this for some time—to develop different other, uh, other fronts of struggle. But we said: look, we'd been talking for a while about the possibility of a cooperative, of a trust where we could be the ones managing everything—from the economic aspect, the economy, to social development.

And the trust fund—among the options, as we've mentioned regarding the water pipeline, we've mentioned, uh, uh, uh, the, the agroecology lands—we saw that it was indeed possible, that despite the time and effort, it was possible. So we approached, uh, the University of Puerto Rico's Pro Bono Law Clinic, right?

Long live, long live the public university and [00:55:00] how, uh, we have access to these great resources. And, well, we worked hand in hand with these people who've been doing this for years too, uh, through, uh, Mariana, who's also worked with the canal, uh, she inspired us and gave us, uh, a sense of direction—that this is possible, we can achieve it, we have to do these certain things, uh, organize ourselves as separate collectives, right?

Because within the different struggles, which are very different, we had to figure out what connects us, what makes us want to stay in Vieques, but how can we actually stay in Vieques. So we had very intense, yet very interesting conversations, but it's from these conversations—often uncomfortable ones—that these trusts are nourished and created.

Many trusts have been tried to be established from Vieques. [00:56:00] However, there's kind of a bureaucratic hurdle, right? That bureaucratic hurdle where, oh, I have to—uh, uh, register, I have to hold a meeting, I have to go through all this extra red tape to be validated by this system, which to us is

disrespectful, because Vieques has been the colony of the colony for a long time.

But nevertheless, if we didn't take those steps, well, we couldn't be the—the organizers of this great initiative. So making peace with this bureaucratic process, which is super, uh, well, difficult, because the reality is that it is difficult if, if we are entities that—we don't come with that background in planning and law and knowledge of collective action.

However, right now we're talking and organizing activities for the community, so that the community can get involved, right? And we [00:57:00] achieve that. We haven't yet laid the complete groundwork for the document, but by bringing in the people who, like us, have that—that distrust of the government—and managing to say, "Look, we're people from Vieques, for Vieques; trust us," right?

Because there is that sense of distrust—which is completely valid—but when the initiative comes from Vieques for Vieques, there's another possibility. And that's exactly what we're betting on: that we have the capacity to create our own narrative, to create our own projects, and we're really motivated to keep at it and grateful to El Enjambre and this collective and these dynamics that fuel us so we can keep at it.

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: Thank you, Andrea. Um, I think, right?, it's important to highlight some of the points you brought up. You mentioned, uh, difficult conversations, you mentioned bureaucratic processes, you mentioned that it's a [00:58:00] long process, that it can be slow, that in some instances, right?, you can feel—you can feel some degree of discouragement, right?

Or, or, gosh, how do we move this project forward, right? It comes from the heart and from a need, but it's not necessarily that simple to get moving, is it? And you also mentioned something important regarding collaborations and how to knock on those necessary doors, right? And where to find those other people and that other knowledge that can nourish and contribute to the processes each group is carrying out.

You touched on that a bit, right? Well, lots and lots of insights on learning topics, and I'd like to check in with both Katia and Marina on what lessons they'd like to highlight from the process—whether they're successes or missteps—so that those listening to us, well, after hearing Andrea, can understand, right?

that these are long processes, that this takes time, that this takes patience, that it takes [00:59:00] uncomfortable conversations, uh, that it takes reconciling positions, that it takes negotiating. We're not always going to agree, so I'll just hand it over to Marina and Katia so they can share with us a bit more about that other aspect of the lessons learned and the insights from the process.

Marina Pineda Shokooh: Yeah, right. For us, the challenges have been similar—these bureaucratic processes—and we're still learning as we go. As for the regulations, rules, and clauses to establish the foundation of the cooperative, that took us a year, a year and a half of various meetings where we'd draft a set of rules, but then at the next meeting we'd want to go back to another idea we'd had.

So it was a constant evaluation and took a long time, [01:00:00] especially the internal process among us as well—how we wanted to shape it, what structure we wanted to give the cooperative, how we want to relate internally, because there are many opinions, and, and resolving conflicts among us too, and how that will look in the long term, because we're establishing a set of regulations.

The good thing is that we have a very, very flexible team, and it's been really nice that maybe at one point we like this idea and at another we want to change it, and we give space to that too—to the fact that things change—and also give space to that flexibility.

But the biggest challenge we're facing right now is regarding financing, which is a fairly common challenge [01:01:00] in this line of work. And that's the biggest challenge we're facing. For the, for the purchase of our building, well, it requires financing, it requires a mortgage, it requires that, that, that the institutions, uh, trust us enough to lend us that money.

So that also has other implications that we're working on and that have been challenges both internally and externally with these financing institutions.

Katia Avilés Vázquez: Along those lines, one of the things that has been very, very important in terms of how we do the budget has been to incorporate into the budget what the needs will be, not only of the trust, but of the people in the trust.

So, for example, in the first year, particularly for those working the land, there is supplementary income, which is part of our argument that farmers need and deserve a [01:02:00] base salary. So that first year, part of the process is

ensuring they have that base salary so they can adjust and begin to get to know the land to better defend it.

So, and that has been, this, revealing in terms of how people can then genuinely settle into the space without having to rush out in desperation to produce, to sell, to find a way to keep surviving, even though they already have a little more security with the house. Another thing that has been a really beautiful process is the fact that, and, and sometimes it's misleading, isn't it?

Because, and I remember, Mariola, we always said this at El Caño: repetition, repetition, repetition. And it was consistent—it's a process of political education, and we can't forget that it's a tool for political education. So all the time, at every meeting, remembering this—the trust isn't an end point; it isn't the ultimate achievement.

On the contrary, the trust is still a rather deficient tool. And now we see, for example, [01:03:00] this new Bill 12-13 even proposes to subordinate all the protections of a trust to the supremacy of that new law, which removes all environmental protections and compliance with environmental protections.

So, and there too, El Caño was a beautiful example, because—even the Bar Association—when they passed the law to eliminate the Bar Association and when they passed the law that took the land away from the El Caño Martín Peña land trust, what kept that trust going, what kept the Bar Association going, was the people. It's not necessarily capital, hard cash, but rather the people.

So, this process of building with the people

is fundamental. The other thing I think has been really beautiful—and this ties in a bit with Carnero's question—is that since this isn't a final point, we can't ask the trust to meet the requirements of what the next step should be. And so we can't [01:04:00] lose sight of the fact that the next step is, for example, to start thinking about non-ownership—which is the collective management of assets—and that the collective isn't just human families, but all those other beings living in the space.

So, we're gradually adjusting to this space that the trust provides us, so that we can relearn how to manage collectively, because the other thing is that we're used to an individual process, and that's what we revert to. When we're afraid, when things are uncertain, as human beings we're going to revert to: "Ah, wait a minute, I have to protect myself, I have to defend what's mine."

"Wait a minute, what will I have for my kids, and what will I have for my family?" So as you gradually address those concerns—without forgetting that this isn't the end goal either—it's like one of those interesting contradictions you have to navigate all the time, and they're a daily challenge.

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: Thank you both.[01:05:00]

Here, excuse me, it's just that, uh, for those who don't know, we're having a little trouble with the internet connection here, so I'm—the camera is on one device and the audio is on another. Uh, but thanks to both of you. Uh, I think that, that some, some points we can highlight, uh: you learn as you go, right?

A lot of times we want solutions to problems, but we haven't actually faced them yet. So we know the problem is there, and we have to navigate it, face it, make some right and wrong moves along the way, and learn a bit by doing. I think in all our experiences, right?, we have that in common. Um, there's a lot of learning in action, and we can't lose sight of that.

And I think we should also highlight the aspect of innovation from Jala's perspective. How, how do you identify the problem of that economic stability that creates a real limitation on the material needs of these people who are trying to work the land? And if there's a pressing need, I won't necessarily be able to focus on the goal, but I will [01:06:00] be able to work toward that goal.

So, how, right?, the trust and the structures related to the trust are used in a very creative and innovative way to pave the way so that people, right? can focus on what, at the individual level, as farmers, they want to develop in their project, but also what that reflects and what it means for the collective in terms of what we want to achieve and what we want to protect.

Also, recognizing the shortcomings, right? Along the way, there will be shortcomings; along the way, there will be very difficult and complex situations. It's a bit about how you work through them, right? And you navigate them in the creative search for solutions. So, along those lines, we'd like to wrap up this part of the conversation with Mariana and ask what recommendations you might have for groups that are just starting the process—groups that are considering ideas from the GOIC and the Calle Loíza Trust. What might you recommend?

Mariana Reyes Angleró: Well, based on our [01:07:00] experience, right? Because every community has its own particularities, its own needs, its own ways of organizing. We've been organizing ourselves in unorthodox ways for

many years. I mean, we don't have traditional community meetings or anything like that in Loíza; instead, we've developed more by creating things, right?

Whether they're projects or different initiatives. And that's how we've been organizing ourselves over the past fifteen, twenty years. That part is really important. I mean, there has to be a foundation and an organization, you know, of the people who are interested in moving that project forward. And there has to be trust within that group, because a lot of decisions are made, right?

Which are, well, gambles—we're taking a chance to see what we can do, right? So, I think that's really important—that foundation—having that solid foundation to build on, and also being flexible with the options, the solutions we might have, [01:08:00] for the problems we're facing.

Um, and in our particular case, it's been really important to celebrate whatever achievements we have. Um, because this is a long-distance race, uh, it's not something that's going to be achieved quickly, it's not easy, it's something where you have to, you have to seek the solidarity of other groups and other actors.

So, uh, the part about, like, collectively celebrating whatever is achieved, in our case has been really important so we don't, uh, fall into the temptation of not wanting to keep going, right?

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: So from Mariana, we took away that... That lesson and, and that recommendation to celebrate small achievements. Uh, the path, the path is full of difficulties, and every now and then we have to look in the mirror and say, "Hey, we're doing well, we're on the right track." [01:09:00] Uh, and celebrate it, right?

as a community and collectively. So, I'm grateful, and we're grateful, right? To all the comrades who shared their experiences and who've also shared their various recommendations with those of us here. We'd now like to wrap up with some concluding remarks from comrade Livia Rodríguez del Valle, co-founder of Enjambre Colectivo.

Enjambre, together with the trust, right?, is organizing and working on different initiatives, uh, to keep bringing people together, uh, and keep learning, uh, from the lessons and keep, right?, delving deeper into, into the search for alternatives, uh, and, uh, supporting groups. So I'll leave you with Livia, uh, and I'm grateful to be part of this group.

Lyvia Rodríguez del Valle: Well, thank you to my colleagues for those very important reflections and for their presentations and their work. If you can, please take a look at some slides that I prepared [01:10:00]—some beforehand and others while they were sharing their experiences with us. And what I'm trying to do is perhaps, uh, summarize some of the lessons, right?

from—from processes that can support the selection and design of collective tenure instruments like the ones we've been discussing today. Um, go ahead, please. Next one. Thank you. And it seems to us that one of those key lessons is that the instrument cannot be an end in itself. That is, this cannot be about creating a cooperative, a trust, a community land bank, and so on, but rather, on the contrary, the instrument is at the service of what we want to achieve, right?

And for the communities that benefit from these, from these tools. So, these instruments must be adapted to the context, not the other way around. And, well, there are many examples of ways in which—objectives, right?—for which we want to organize around collective tenure.

Today, for example, we've discussed preventing the displacement of a community, [01:11:00] and addressing the consequences of short-term rentals, as in the case of La Eloísa, or the rising cost of agricultural land, as in the case of the Agroecology Trust. This can be to make housing construction viable, to make access to affordable housing viable, as in the case of Rio Piedras, which is specifically for students, and so on.

And in the case of Caño Martín Peña, to regularize tenure. But we also have to think about who it is for and who those people are who should be the protagonists of these processes. So, well, we can talk about geographic communities, as in the case of Caño, La Eloísa, or groups of people with particular characteristics, as in the case of, of the Trust, uh, for Agroecology.

Another thing we've learned is that we need to identify the characteristics of the context, right? Here we've talked a lot about history, the legal framework, real estate pressure, the political situation, and the legal framework. And all these things are [01:12:00] fundamental, right? When it comes to determining what we want to do and how.

And the other thing our colleagues have been explaining to us is that they've evaluated various alternatives based on the needs and aspirations they've identified. They've looked at possibilities and then, based on that evaluation—which in these cases has been a participatory evaluation, with the active

participation of the beneficiaries of these initiatives—they've been able to decide on the paths to follow.

Uh, whether to form a new cooperative, and what kind of cooperative, right? In the case of Puerto Rico, whether it's a housing cooperative or whether we organize through another type of cooperative to achieve the goals we want, and so on. Next. We have also seen that once the instrument is selected, we must then identify tools that allow that instrument to be tailored to the needs and aspirations of the community [01:13:00] and what we want to achieve.

And there are many questions we can ask ourselves regarding property management, right? Once we have that property, what do we want to do with it? Is it for self-building housing? What is it for, and what mechanisms or tools do we need? Legal tools, for example, are needed to achieve those goals.

And with these trusts, for example—to give an example from this case—there's been talk of transferring surface rights, but there are countless other legal tools, right? That can be used and tailored to what we want to achieve. The same goes for the governance structure, right?

Here, we were talking about who makes decisions, how decisions are made, to whom we are accountable, and what kind of organizational structure makes sense, right? So that we can make that structure viable—so that this governance structure remains relevant in the long term. Next. And so, some of the lessons that have emerged from this whole conversation are that participation doesn't end, organizational processes [01:14:00] don't end, and spaces for critical reflection don't end either.

So they have to have continuity. It's not just the initial stages; continuity is the key to long-term success. Especially because we're talking about mechanisms that seek to perpetuate collective tenure, right? And to be able to face all these challenges. And in these lessons, they spoke to us about flexibility and adaptability to changing contexts, to intergenerational changes, and so on.

These are—elements we have to consider from the very beginning. Celebrating achievements, incorporating conflict resolution mechanisms, keeping in mind that political education is ongoing, right? And that, and that the best defense of these tools is precisely community organization.

Learning to work collectively in an individualistic context, and that organization requires action. We've also seen that these initial processes [01:15:00] can be long and complex. And so, to keep people from getting discouraged, it's very

important to have concrete short-term results we can celebrate—even if they're very small things—that keep us active, alert, attentive, and eager to keep participating while we work through those hurdles.

You have to learn by doing, and you must always create spaces for reflection on the action. Folks, there is no organization without action. And another thing we learned from these experiences is the importance of seeking role models and external support. Next. Well, some factors in our experience that favor collective land tenure: essential, community organization; committed support; and the existence of incentives that make it attractive compared to other options for individual and speculative land tenure.

Here we've [01:16:00] talked about the threat of displacement as a major incentive for deciding to opt for collective land tenure, the lack of affordable housing, and so on. For existing communities, it's essential that there be a sense of belonging—as is the case on Loíza Street—and a desire to stay.

And also the possibility of acquiring a property, right? Whether because we're already living there or because we want to acquire it. Favorable public policy helps, of course it helps, right? But it's not necessarily indispensable. Here we see several examples in the context of Puerto Rico, where community land trusts have been created without legislation on community land trusts, but by making use of existing legal instruments, right?

So that, with a lot of creativity, we can precisely achieve what we want to achieve. Next. But that doesn't mean that when we're swimming [01:17:00] against the current and working, struggling with legal instruments or others that are created from different logics, right? We don't, therefore, face challenges.

This context in which we live and these legal instruments often promote speculative individual property. So, therefore, there are processes like the ones explained today that aren't designed from a collective perspective and that, consequently, present obstacles, right? It is very important to be aware of these processes, to understand what the requirements are so we can find a way around them, and to weave together the mechanism of collective tenure by utilizing the gaps that contextual opportunities present—whether legal, political, or otherwise—and that allow us to move forward, as has been the case with our colleagues here.

Sometimes the legal framework is there, but instead of helping us, it ties us down, right? It imposes bureaucratic obstacles on us. In the case of cooperatives, for [01:18:00] example, in Puerto Rico, if you want to formalize a

cooperative, there are a lot of very onerous requirements for its governance, and so on. So how do we handle that, right?

We recognize this context; we look for ways to navigate it—that's important. And well, in many cases, the political will simply isn't there. And this sounds or seems, right? Like we're always fighting, uh, you know, going against the tide, as we were saying earlier. Therefore, and that reinforces the importance, right?

Of, of maintaining that hope through concrete action and results, like the ones Katia mentioned to us, for example, in the case of Ejes Agricultores. Next, please. And anyway, to wrap up this presentation, I wanted to share that in Puerto Rico we're pleased to have countless recently created initiatives for collective land management today.

The oldest of the ones you see there is the Caño Martín Peña Land Trust, which was [01:19:00] created in 2004. And from then until now, look, all—most of these initiatives you see here have been from the last five years. Next. And this has allowed us to create a gathering, a meeting of these spaces for collective land management, which are fundamental because there we have the opportunity to share challenges, mistakes, but also lessons and tools that arise precisely from learning by doing and that allow our comrades to have or expand, right?

The mechanisms they have to address the challenges we know they'll face along the way. It's a space to manage joint projects, to think collectively, and to see how we can continue to advocate so that other communities have a smoother process in defending their lands in a country that's being so threatened and stripped of that right, right?

To their territory due to its colonial status, [01:20:00] in particular. Next. With this, uh, well, the good news is that among these groups you saw in the previous slide, there are already approximately three hundred hectares of land that, uh, are collectively owned by the families who benefit from them or who collectively steward these lands for the benefit of approximately sixteen thousand people, uh, in Puerto Rico.

Next slide. And well, we also want to let you know that this group from Puerto Rico has continued to connect with initiatives in other countries, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, where there is also a lot of interest in continuing to promote collective land management, particularly in urban contexts, right?

Like the ones we've been discussing today, but where there's also a whole history, right? Of collective land tenure from which [01:21:00] we have a lot to learn here in Puerto Rico as well. So that exchange of knowledge doesn't just stay local; the intention is to keep working on it and share our experiences with those of others across the region.

So with that, we'll leave it there. We hope this webinar has been helpful for everyone. To those who submitted questions, know that we'll be answering them—as much as possible—in the coming days. And we thank the participants and everyone who joined us this afternoon for the interest you've shown in this topic.

María, I'll hand it over to you for some closing remarks.

Mariolga Juliá Pacheco: Well, I'm grateful, really, just as Lidia said, for the time you all took to connect here. I'm grateful to the colleagues who presented, but not just to them, but to the groups they represent. [01:22:00] And please know that here in Puerto Rico, those of you who aren't from Puerto Rico have allied collectives to help you continue promoting collective land management and the defense of our territories.

And for those of you here in Puerto Rico, well, you know where to find most of us, so we're at your service and at your disposal. Um, and once again, well, thanks to everyone.