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FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF LAW

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INSTITUTO INTERNACIONAL  
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Universidad  
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FACULTY  
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UNIVERSITY  
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## Master's Thesis Defence

# COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND FEMINIST CARE ETHICS: THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN COMMUNITY AGENTS IN MATHIAS VELHO, CANOAS, BRAZIL



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Over the past decade, several projects on community justice have been implemented in Brazil under the execution of the National Program for Public Security and Citizenship (PRONASCI). The Violence Prevention Center, located in the Mathias Velho neighborhood, in the city of Canoas, Rio Grande do Sul, stands as one of them. This study aims to understand, on a local level, how nine women trained as community agents in Mathias Velho have shaped their role under a critical feminist perspective. This study used ethnographic research and qualitative data analysis, with the methodological approach being based on grounded theory.

In short, the main results indicate a twofold process on the formation of the women's role as community agents. First, they largely resort to a discourse of care as a way to assert their positions, which mainly reflects the idea they should care for the community. Second, the presence of care work is highly connected to their perceptions of state institutions as flawed and inefficient, and to the non-use of law in their activities. These phenomena are then analyzed under the debate of feminist care ethics. In relation to this specific case, the overloading with unachievable expectations for their work and the use of conservative discourses have resulted in the women seeing themselves primarily as care, rather than legal, workers. This, in turn, reproduces rather than challenges sexist social structures. In short, this thesis stands as an ethnographic attempt to understand the relations between care work and the absence of law in the role formation of women community agents. It provides a feminist analysis of the use of care as a main strategy for achieving community justice, and uses a field-oriented approach to identify how it can be critically evaluated under the debate of ethics of care.

**September 25 - 16:00 pm.**

**IISJ, Achille Loria/Karl Renner Room**