


FEMINIST FUTURES

A large, solid pink silhouette of a woman's head in profile, facing left. It is positioned on the right side of the cover, partially overlapping the title text.

Feminist Perspectives

Feminist Futures Series

How may we imagine a feminist decolonial future? How are feminists around the world already working to bring about transformative change within their own communities and beyond? How can an intersectional feminist approach help us tackle broader global issues such as – but not limited to – inequality and environmental disaster?

With those questions, we launched our Feminist Futures call in January 2022 and we are delighted to present here the 15 pieces *Feminist Perspectives* published in response to it over the course of 2022. Our authors reflected on the methodological, ethical, and logistical challenges and opportunities of doing research informed by feminist, embodied, participatory and/or decolonial methodologies. Together, these pieces offer critical perspectives on contemporary feminist policy, activism, and theory. The contributing authors considered what it means to dismantle patriarchal structures and work towards imagining and creating a feminist future for women and girls, LGBTQIA+ people, Black, Indigenous, and Brown communities.

To bring these pieces to life, we organised a three-day risograph printing workshop in collaboration with Rabbits Road Press. Participants were invited to collectively create a booklet and design collages inspired by the *Feminist Future* series.

This workshop was organised by Lea Happ, Natali Francine Cinelli Moreira, and Hana Riazuddin. We are grateful to the LISS DTP for making this workshop and booklet possible through their Student Led Activities Fund, as well as to Sofia Niazi at Rabbits Road Press for helping us realise this project.

This booklet was collectively created by the following workshop participants:

Megan Gallagher
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All original contributions, including hyperlinks to all sources, are available at:
<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/feminist-perspectives>

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The Feminist Perspectives Editorial Collective

Contributing Authors

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Towards feminist peace: imagining a future without war

Imagining a decolonial, feminist future requires critically questioning, re-examining and redefining familiar concepts such as peace. Feminist scholars and peace activists have made invaluable contributions to re-conceptualizations of peace in the past decade. This piece analyses the complex and contested meaning of "feminist peace", and reflects on what a more peaceful feminist future might look like.

In the past decades, in reaction to what has been dubbed "liberal peacebuilding" – Western-driven and characterized by a focus on "problem-solving" rather than understanding the structural drivers of violence and war, more holistic, critical approaches to peace have emerged and gained prominence. Theories around quality peace, everyday peace, and the local turn in peacebuilding continue to gain traction and attention.

At the policy level, following the 2015 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly adopted identical resolutions emphasizing the importance of a broad approach to peacebuilding, encompassing all stages of peace and not only immediate post-conflict reconstruction. This approach, which has been dubbed "Sustaining Peace" within the UN system, defines peace "as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society".

Feminist scholars and peace activists have made invaluable contributions to these re-conceptualizations of peace. A careful reflection on how feminist thinkers and activists envision peace – and how they work towards this vision – is crucial in imagining a more feminist future.

Defining "feminist peace". There is no single definition of feminist peace. On the contrary, feminist peace research has been characterized by "untidiness, complexity and co-existing contradictions". Perhaps paradoxically, this openness to contestation, multiplicity and a plurality of perspectives can be seen as one of the key tenets of a feminist definition of peace – and a feminist recipe for a more peaceful future.



The tensions and contradictions often come to light in the context of an ongoing armed conflict, such as the war in Ukraine. The Russian invasion has triggered global media coverage dominated by strongly militarized narratives. While some feminists have warned of the danger of such rhetoric and called for de-escalation and broader reflection on the shortcomings of the global system that has allowed the war to happen, others have called for more military support for Ukraine to defend itself. Lifelong feminist peace activists I spoke to since the outbreak of the war have shared with me that while they still believe a feminist future is one with fewer weapons and no wars, the military aggression they face and the failure of the international system to prevent it, has left them without hope, resigned to calling for weapons to defend themselves. At the same time, they are acutely aware of the dangers of further militarization, and the threats that the weapons will create for women when they remain in circulation after the war. Thus, faced with the war and a failure of the international system, they find themselves in a contradictory and contested space. That feminist peace leaves room for such space: for taking diverse voices and often contradictory

perspectives seriously, and understanding how they emerge from, and are shaped by, global power dynamics, is – to me – its key feature.

Another belief shared by many feminist peace researchers and peacebuilders is that feminist peace is about more than merely "adding women" or "adding gender" into peacebuilding action and deliberation. The mere presence of women in the room or at the table does not guarantee that feminist ideas will be incorporated into peacemaking and post-conflict reconstruction. Similarly, "mainstreaming" gender-equality into peacebuilding and reconstruction programming "rarely transform[s] the structural power asymmetries" in post-conflict contexts. A more transformative approach, that pays careful attention to gender and power dynamics and how they both shape and are shaped by, conflict and post-conflict processes, is thus another key tenet of feminist peace. Feminist peacebuilding should aim to identify, unpack and transform the complex power dynamics that shape the lives of those designing and participating in peacebuilding programs, in order to contribute to a peace that works for everyone – not "women" as a homogenous category, but women in all their diversity, as well as other marginalized groups and persons.

Critically, feminist researchers and activists recognize that – like gender norms and power dynamics – peace is produced and reproduced in everyday spaces and actions. Many have pointed to the fact that, especially for women and sexual and gender minorities, violence experienced during conflict is intimately connected to violence and oppression experienced in the private sphere, and forms a "continuum" that extends from war to peacetime. Moreover, just as violence persists and is reproduced in private and everyday spaces, so too seemingly "mundane practices of caring" contribute to building more peaceful and trusting communities. Paying attention to the everyday practices of peacebuilding requires training one's eye to peace processes and practices as they happen at the local level – "people's diverse experiences of conflict and peacebuilding in the context of their communities, beyond the strategizing of governments and insurgents". In line with these reflections, women that participated in a 2018 study about the meaning of "sustaining peace" I led saw their work within their communities – including creating cooperatives to support each other both psychologically and economically, and caring for those affected by war – as their key contribution to peace.

While there is no single, uncontested definition of "feminist peace", feminist scholars and practitioners share some important perspectives when it comes to peace. Most feminist understandings of peace are simultaneously broader and more holistic than the liberal peacebuilding approaches, and more intimate and attentive to the everyday. Importantly, feminist visions of peace are built on a commitment to take seriously diverse voices and perspectives and to unpack the power structures that shape war and peacebuilding.

What does a feminist future look like? So, what does a feminist future look like from the perspective of feminist peacebuilders? Is a feminist future a future without wars? I believe so. Despite the contestation and contradictions emerging within feminist movements, in particular in countries torn by war, feminists share a belief on the need to examine, unpack and transform structures that perpetuate violence along the "continuum" – from the violence in the private realm, through political violence and human trafficking, to war.

At the global level, it means paying more attention to narratives and practices of militarization – not merely in the context of any particular war, where they become particularly pronounced, but more broadly and in societies considered at peace. It also means taking seriously calls to reduce global military spending and instead invest in locally-led movements for peace. Finally, it means closer attention to how current international institutions – such as the UN Security Council –

influence and perpetuate power imbalances, and becoming more serious about reforming them.

At the national and local level, it means being serious about listening to women and other marginalized groups. It means including them in peace processes and decision-making about reconstruction and peacebuilding programs from the early stages, providing them with resources to continue and amplify their work, and recognizing and challenging underlying power dynamics that often permeate the partnerships between local, national and global actors.

A feminist future, thus, requires commitment to transformation and structural change. Only then can we truly challenge the continuum of violence and imagine a world without wars.

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What about immigrants? A plea for feminist engagement with immigration injustice in the Americas

The following piece reflects on the lack of consistent engagement of feminist scholars with immigration injustice in the Americas. Once this is presented, the author pleads for a more robust feminist response to the injustices Latinx migrants face.

I have studied immigration (in)justice throughout the Americas for many years and, from the outset of my research, I noticed the conspicuous lack of feminist engagement with the topic. This is not to say that feminist scholars and activists don't care – far from it – but it is to say that feminist activists and scholars rarely speak about the issue and, when they do, they tend to piggyback on the work that immigrant rights organizations are already doing (rather than expanding such work to more explicitly address issues specifically related to immigration and gender oppression). And this, I think, should cause us serious concern both because it leaves many migrant women without adequate support and because it inhibits feminists from realizing their stated goals of resisting oppression for all women.

Allow me to briefly explain. With few exceptions, such as Amy Reed-Sandoval, too often feminists ignore manifestations of oppression against both cis and trans migrant women (such as those in the detention system, documentation and asylum process, and informal economic contexts). Furthermore, if they do take these issues up, they do so without centring how immigration status, country of origin and receiving country intersects with, alters, and amplifies experiences of sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination. For example, while some feminist organizations in the United States, like Planned Parenthood, Radical Women, and *Ms. Magazine*, did condemn forced sterilization of Central American detained migrant women at the Irwin County Detention Center (ICDC), it was Project South along with other immigrant rights groups like Georgia Detention Watch, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, and South Georgia Immigrant Support Network that actually filed an official complaint and brought the issue to light. The statements made by the feminist organizations or immigrants' rights groups connected these horrific acts to the history of reproductive injustice against black and brown people more broadly in the U.S., rather than highlighting the ways the women's immigration status was central.

Similarly, despite understanding that feminicide of immigrants is rampant, feminist organizations and activists too often downplay, ignore, undertheorize, or underemphasize the connection between feminicide and immigration. To take just one example, renowned scholar and activist Julia E. Monárrez Fragoso notes in her article, "Feminicidio sexual serial en Ciudad Juárez 1993-2001," that: "there is a descriptive generalization of memory taking place when it is said that some 400 young women, ranging in age from 16 to 24, mainly immigrants, often black, primarily students at commercial schools or computing centres or workers in free trade zones, have been mutilated, tortured, and raped, their bodies left abandoned in the desert surrounding [Cuidad Juárez]." Nevertheless, she argues, we should not focus on the connection between feminicide and migrant women because doing so, "hinders making visible other representations of feminicide and elaborating a feminist policy that focuses on opposition strategies vis-à-vis the murder of women in all its forms." I disagree; we need to centre the connection between feminicide and immigration and see it as a form of immigration injustice (in other words, as an immigration

policy, practice or norm that reflects, creates or furthers oppression).

Let me be clear, though, the problem is not simply that the issue is ignored or not explicitly mentioned. On the contrary, to realize their own mission – identifying and resisting oppression – feminists must recognize and confront the fact that migrant women are targeted for these and other abuses because they are immigrants. These injustices are intentionally (or at least not randomly or accidentally) being perpetrated on immigrant bodies. Beyond this, they are aimed at particular immigrant bodies – the bodies of poor women from Latin American nations, as opposed to the bodies of wealthy immigrants from Europe, for example. It is not a coincidence that in 2017 the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) instituted a policy of blocking young, Latinx, pregnant people from accessing abortion, only providing access to such services after a Supreme Court ruling demanded it. It is not coincidental that The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has uncovered numerous abuses of detained Latinx pregnant migrants that include: border agents repeatedly slamming them against a chain link fence, migrants miscarrying in Border Patrol facilities without receiving hygienic products or medical care, migrants being denied medical attention, and migrants being forced to deliver a child in a Border Patrol *hielera* (or the freezing cold rooms where detained immigrants are sometimes held) while standing and still wearing pants. These things are happening to (primarily Latin American and Caribbean) immigrant women specifically.

Similarly, we cannot lose sight of the fact that migrant women are often targeted for feminicide precisely because they are immigrants. They are targeted because migrant women are seen as easy prey and their deaths are intended to send messages to other migrants about their status in society. These – and many others that permeate the everyday lives of migrants in the Americas – are feminist concerns and it is time to centre them as such.

I admit that I have a more personal stake in this issue; as a feminist scholar of immigration and an immigrant to Colombia myself, it is all too clear that black and brown migrant women (and migrants in general) face obstacles that I never have or will simply because of their/my social group memberships and nationalities. For example, as Carlos Sandoval, among others, has noted, like other immigrants from the Global North, I am often not even seen as an "immigrant," with people instead referring to me as an "expat," "a professor," or simply as a "gringa." While it took me two weeks to get my documents, it took a Venezuelan nurse I met two years. While I had an apartment waiting for me, countless Venezuelan women have been forced to turn to sex work to earn enough money to share a room with numerous other families for one night. While practically everyone I meet in Colombia welcomes my family and I and celebrates our presence in the country, Latinx migrants consistently endure racist and nativist insults. These and so many other manifestations of oppression immigrants face reflect the core of what feminist activism and scholarship was meant to confront. And I am hoping that these words inspire us to do precisely that.

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Peruvian women thriving around the world

Every country has their own migration waves, and according to some reports Peru has already experienced five waves. Migration from South America is also a gendered phenomenon: over 50% of migrants from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela up to 2019, were women. This piece explores the experiences of female migrants from Peru's sixth wave of migration.

When I moved to Israel to pursue my MA in 2017 for economic purposes, I did not understand what being a migrant meant. I always saw migrants as people who had to move locations, as in they were forced to do it. Migrants for me were also people who planned to move for years, and finally made it. I always saw myself as just a traveller, passing by. Three years later, I moved back to Israel for family reunification, and I started my migrant journey. During the struggle to settle down in my new country, my husband gave me the idea to reach out to other Latinas that have migrated before and ask for advice. I decided to narrow the search to Peruvian women abroad, hoping that they would share with me, and by default, with anyone who would listen to the podcast, the key to surviving outside of Peru. I held many informal conversations with Peruvian women over WhatsApp and Zoom; every discussion would end up with us agreeing that we were knocking down stereotypes, prejudgments, cultural differences and more, but we also agreed that it was not an easy task and we wished for someone to have helped us.

In the process of understanding my migrant process and theirs, I created Granadilla Podcast: Peruvian women thriving around the world. The Granadilla part is easy to explain: it is my favourite Peruvian fruit, and is very hard to find abroad. The podcast's slogan "peruanas rompiéndola en el extranjero" translated into English would be "Peruvians thriving around the world". "Rompiéndola" has a double meaning in Spanish. First, it is a very Peruvian expression which means to do amazingly or succeed in whatever you are working on. Second, it means to break or tear down the obstacles, barriers and more that we as Peruvian women face outside our country.

Throughout the first year of the podcast, I have had the privilege of meeting amazing Peruvian women that are working to bring transformative change within their own communities and beyond. In Europe, we have Diana Morales, who created and directs the Pierre Janet Institute in Italy – a mental health centre offering specialised psychotherapy, wellness programmes and distance-learning courses. If we go to North America, we have Yane Valdez, in Canada, who is devoted to breaking down barriers that prevent women from succeeding in STEM fields, as well as creating awareness about Covid and immunology through her Twitter account ImmunoLatinXs. In South America, more specifically in Brazil, we have Rocio Espinoza, who through her Instagram account Piridina.pe, shares important information about drug discoveries and her PhD journey as a female scientist. These are just a few examples of what Peruvian women are doing abroad, and you can learn more about them by visiting our social media or listening to their stories through the podcast.

It is no secret that being a migrant is a challenge. If you add to this that you are Latina and a woman, things become even more complex. Racism is one of the biggest struggles of Peruvian migrants, who face prejudice based on both their skin colour and nationality. This fact has only been an extra motivation for these Peruvian women to achieve higher milestones. They are climbing up the ladder in their different fields, and they are showing the world what it means to have a Peruvian in their team.

Aware that language represents another obstacle when migrating, we therefore took it upon ourselves to learn the language of our new country. Based on the interviews conducted for the podcast, 3% of interviewees speak at least 4 languages including Spanish, 43%

learned 2 more languages besides our native language, and 49% chose a second language after Spanish.

Another big challenge is the cultural differences. The Peruvian women featured on the podcast had to put themselves out there and learn about new cultures and new ways of doing things, from understanding how bureaucracy works in each country, to learning dress codes for different occasions. As the saying goes: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do": they adapted themselves, and became one with their new nation, without leaving their Peruvian roots behind.

The future of Peruvian migration needs a feminist approach. For example, there is no research on how maternity is experienced when abroad and away from family. As Latinas, we are used to having all of our family involved in the process, but how does this work when away from home? On the other hand, security and safety are key considerations when a Peruvian woman decides to migrate. How do their lives improve when they are less worried about being assaulted returning home late at night? Throughout Granadilla Podcast's episodes we are trying to understand what the female Peruvian migrant looks like. We know for a fact that Peruvian migrant women are shaping the future of Peru from abroad and it is time to give them the recognition and support they deserve.

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Digital femininities and the ethics of sextech

Technology is increasingly pervasive in our everyday lives. Given this, it is not surprising that technological developments modulate experiences of sex, intimacy, and pleasure through new devices.

Sextech serves as an umbrella term for digital technologies that facilitate sexual experience. Further clarifying this term, sextech can encapsulate sexual experience “through”, “via” and “with” technology. An example of each of these experiences would be meeting a sexual partner ‘through’ an application, having sex ‘via’ webcam, and/or sex ‘with’ a digital character. The heterogeneity of this field complicates encompassing research, especially in these early stages. Their genealogy, however, is tied to their analogue counterparts, sex toys. Some interesting reflections can be gleaned from turning to early feminist discussions.

Historically, sex toys have been divisive in feminist spaces. As Hallie Liebermann documents in her book *Buzz: The Stimulating History of the Sex Toy*, sex toys and pornography were not exempt from the US feminist ‘sex wars’ and dildos in particular were a polemic topic. For radical feminists the dildo symbolised women’s oppression subjected to the phallic order, replicating penetration and phallocentricism through capitalist consumption, while pornography epitomised the degradation and objectification of women. At the same time, ‘pro-sex’ feminists argued the sex toys were transformative tools to reclaim and destigmatise women’s sexual pleasure, and acknowledged that women’s arousal was at times reliant on erotic media. These polarising attitudes reflect the controversial nature sexual devices and media initially created in feminist discourse, while also showing how feminist engagement changed the markets and attitudes in sexual devices for women.

Academic research, feminist perspectives and attitudes show a general shift into considering sex toys, and their sextech counterparts, as having emancipatory potential for women. Recent research illustrates growing acceptance and less taboo around sex toy usage. This is so pronounced that sex toys are now seen (and marketed) as tools for women’s sexual liberation and empowerment, a significant factor in maintaining one’s sexual ‘wellbeing’ and a disruptive force in challenging heteronormative views on women’s pleasure linked to penetrative sex. Current, and valid, criticism of sex toys overwhelmingly interrogates the capitalist forces of this field that emphasises sexual empowerment through consumption or challenges the dearth of research beyond European and North American women’s experiences.

In a parallel fashion, little research or thought attends to men’s use of sex toys and sextech – particularly heterosexual men’s usage. Overwhelmingly, this field comprises of sex-doll research, and their potential evolution into sex robots, which is characterised by sensationalising and overgeneralising personal experiences. In sextech production, Ronen notes that: “girl-power sex positivity discourses valorise women’s orgasms, but men’s sex toy use is disavowed and even openly reviled by producers”. This is equally prevalent in academic research, as limited literature interrogates men’s sex toy/tech usage, let alone consumption motives, advertising tactics and design choices.

My current doctoral thesis probes these aforementioned dimensions. Initial research suggests that heterosexual men’s sextech advertising and design choices overwhelmingly emphasise emotional interaction with digital femininities *over* but along with erotic interaction. These development choices offer sextech products with affordances for emotional interaction with technological constructions of femininity.

This is best illustrated with one case study, RealdollX Application. This AI avatar chatbot is marketed as a “perfect companion”. Promissory discourse states “she is made to fall in love”, users can “take her wherever you go” so therefore – “Goodbye Loneliness!”. The users construct the avatar’s personality and physical appearance. They can select the hair, skin, eye colour, along with clothes and accessories. From the twelve personality traits that include ‘Moody’, ‘Sensual’, ‘Talkative’, ‘Jealous’, and ‘Spiritual’, users select features to create the most compatible character with which to interact. Since its release in 2017, only female constructions are available. Through conversing with the character, users can fill up her ‘pleasure’, ‘happiness’ and ‘lust’ barometer in order to ‘have sex’. This culminates in the user stroking the screen until the avatar ‘orgasms’ as you advance in the game to unlock more activities and “get to know her more”. Ultimately this application, while an illustrative sextech example, centres on conversing and building a bond with the character – albeit for erotic outcomes.

RealdollX highlights where sextech deviates from the sex toy genealogy. The digital affordances, displacement of sex as bodily experience and reliance on digital femininity as emotional assistant illustrates where the tensions are. Although much more can be unpicked from this one example alone, the case study nevertheless probes some of the ‘sex wars’ feminist debates. What constitutes sex? How far can symbolism, of the dildo or digital character, influence the politic of erotic content? How do representations of women in erotic media, be it through a digitally-constructed avatar or pornography actress, affect our social perceptions – especially when they are represented as servile, controllable, and desirable?

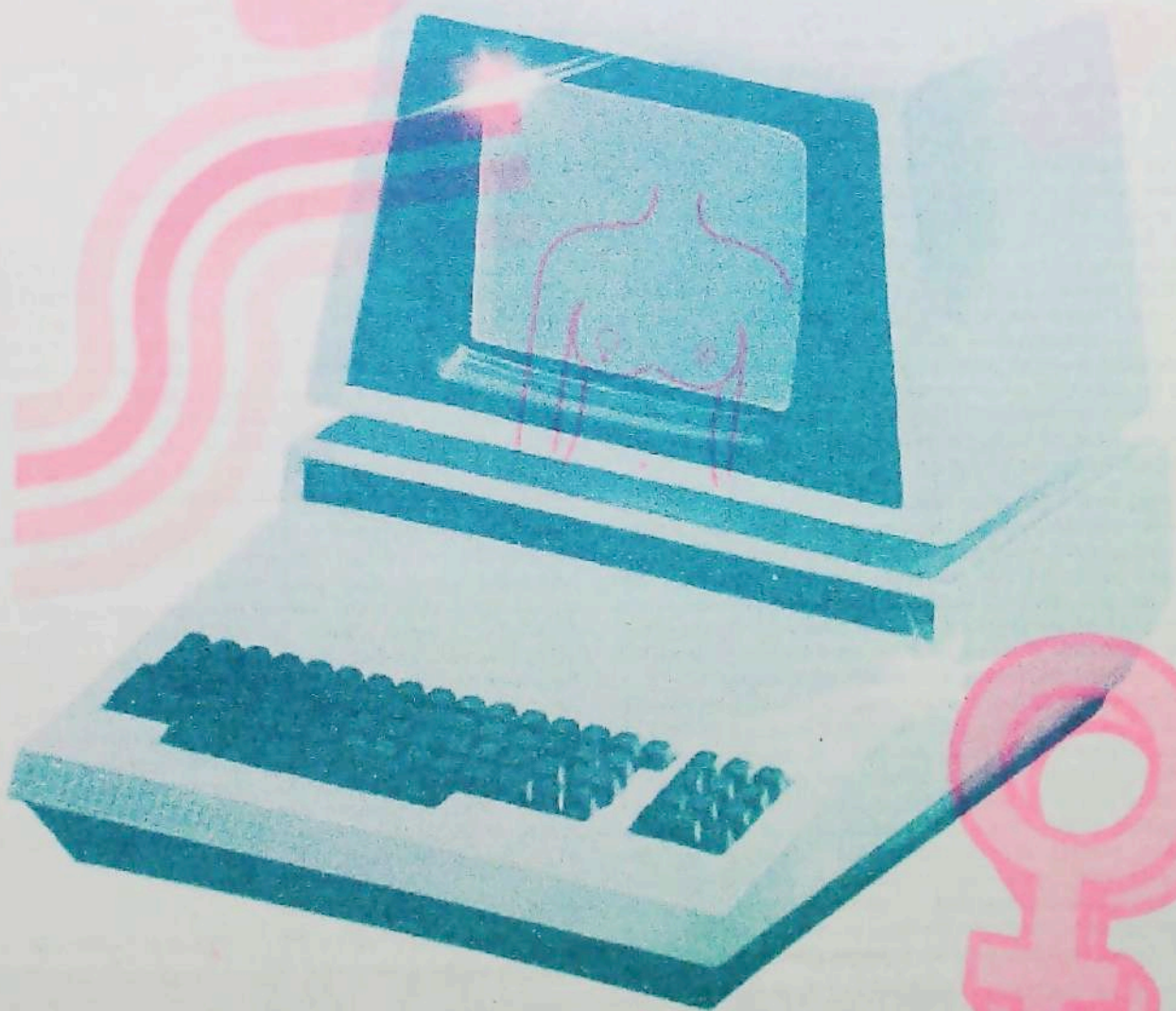
It also exemplifies the complex intricacies of feminist digital/technology research. Why are technologies increasingly gendered? Why are those gendered-female technologies overwhelmingly assistive? Can a feminised digital character be ‘dehumanising’ to women? And can this have repercussions in our social consciousness of how women are expected to behave?

A growing corpus problematises these questions regarding ‘gendered-female’ technologies and their significance. Early work shows sufficient gender bias to prefer ‘female’ voices in assistive roles. Concerns about how feminised digital technologies will permeate our perception are already being explored. As a UNESCO report highlighted, assistive technologies that laugh when berated and insulted present ethical dilemmas and poorly thought-out choices on the designer’s part. Strengers and Kennedy note there is a “Smart Wife” phenomenon, where feminised digital technologies increasingly offer emotional and domestic support – be that through embodied sex robots or home assistants such as Alexa. Recent media coverage highlights how some users create AI girlfriends to abuse, prompting moral dilemmas about how to curb this.

While emergent sextech reliant on digital femininities is fraught with problems and controversial topics, research on sextech necessitates urgent and further attention. The emphasis in advertising and design for emotional interaction shows a marked shift in sex toy genealogy – but current research would do well to consider the historical controversy that has consistently mired covering sex, erotic media, and sexual devices.

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Learning from Latin America: Feminist abortions at the margins of the law

Following the US Supreme Court overturning of Roe v Wade, much can be learnt from Latin American strategies to increase access to safe abortions at and against the margins of the law. Although as a region Latin America has made important legal gains with regards to abortion, for the vast majority of people across the continent it remains illegal and highly stigmatized. Instead of waiting for the law to change in the future, activists and people seeking abortions have had to create a feminist present.

In 2019 and 2020, protests took place in India against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the National Population Register, and the National Register of Indian Citizens (henceforth referred to as the CAA-NRC-NPR, to denote their interconnected nature) that disenfranchised Muslims, women, exploited castes including Dalit and Adivasi communities, transgender people, and immigrants. Protest communities challenged the violent conceptions of marginalised religious identities with a new idea of reform, a peace narrated by the 'defeated', of unheard stories, fragments, and ruptures.

When looking at abortion in Latin America from outside the region, it is usually treated as a legal issue. News outlets report on progress towards legalisation and the impact of the *marea verde* on the law. However, this legal perspective misses two points. First, it tends to signal a linear form of progress whereby states move from more restrictive reproductive rights to more liberal rights. This ignores the pendular nature of abortion politics as laws move back and forth following left and right political swings, which has been particularly noticeable in Latin America. Second, a legal perspective sidelines the feminist futures that are being fought for irrespective of the law. Here, we draw on our research in Mexico and Peru to show how even where abortion is not legally accessible, activists are making abortion access a reality through providing surgical and medical abortions. The feminist presents being made in Latin America can act as an example to the rest of the world where abortion remains illegal or is moving towards illegality to show how reproductive justice can be fought for in spite of the harmful actions of the state.

The legal landscape of abortion varies widely across Latin America, with the procedure legal on request in some countries and absolutely banned in others. Mexico and Peru are at different points on this spectrum but both exemplify the challenges of accessing a legal abortion in practice. Abortions are available on request in Mexico City and a handful of other states but access remains severely restricted in most other areas. In Peru abortion is technically legal where there is a threat to the life or health of the pregnant person but stigma and the lack of training and infrastructure severely restrict access. Moreover, flouting the law can result in severe sanctions for both abortion seekers and providers. Despite legislation and active criminalization, abortions are extremely widespread which drives the practice underground, putting abortion seekers in risky situations. Mobilized by this desperate need, healthcare practitioners and activists have been building individual and collective strategies to provide safe and effective abortions. We focus on two of these strategies that have been put into practice to create abortion presents.

Networks of healthcare practitioners have created safe abortion presents since the 1990s. Early in this decade, the US-based International Projects Assistance Service (IPAS) developed a model of post-abortion care to address abortion-related mortality that championed manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) as a safer, more effective, and cheaper method for

surgical abortions than dilation and curettage. MVA is considered safe and easy-to-use by mid-level healthcare professionals and in more rudimentary clinical settings which made it attractive to international agencies and national NGOs seeking to reduce abortion-related mortality in clandestine settings. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, these institutions trained a growing network of health providers -from physicians to traditional midwives- to deliver MVA abortions across Latin America. The number of safe abortions administered thus exploded and our research shows that in 2020 the main Peruvian network performed 80,000 MVA abortions, accounting for 25% of all abortions in the country. Far from simply performing a medical procedure, providers also provide emotional support and counseling on whether termination is the right choice.

A more recent development in the creation of an abortion present is the growth of *acompañantes* (accompaniers) who support people to end their pregnancies with abortion medication. While the 'gold standard' is to use both mifepristone and misoprostol the former can be difficult to find across Latin America because it is only used for obstetric purposes. Misoprostol, however, was designed to treat stomach ulcers and this means it is easier to buy online, from pharmacies, or on the black market. *Acompañantes* work to share information about how to use pills safely and effectively and often provide emotional support throughout the process in person or virtually. These activists are therefore important in creating access to abortions in contexts where they are not legally accessible but they are also fundamentally changing the nature of the process by shifting it from something medicalized and individualized to a process that is collective and centred on empathy and care.

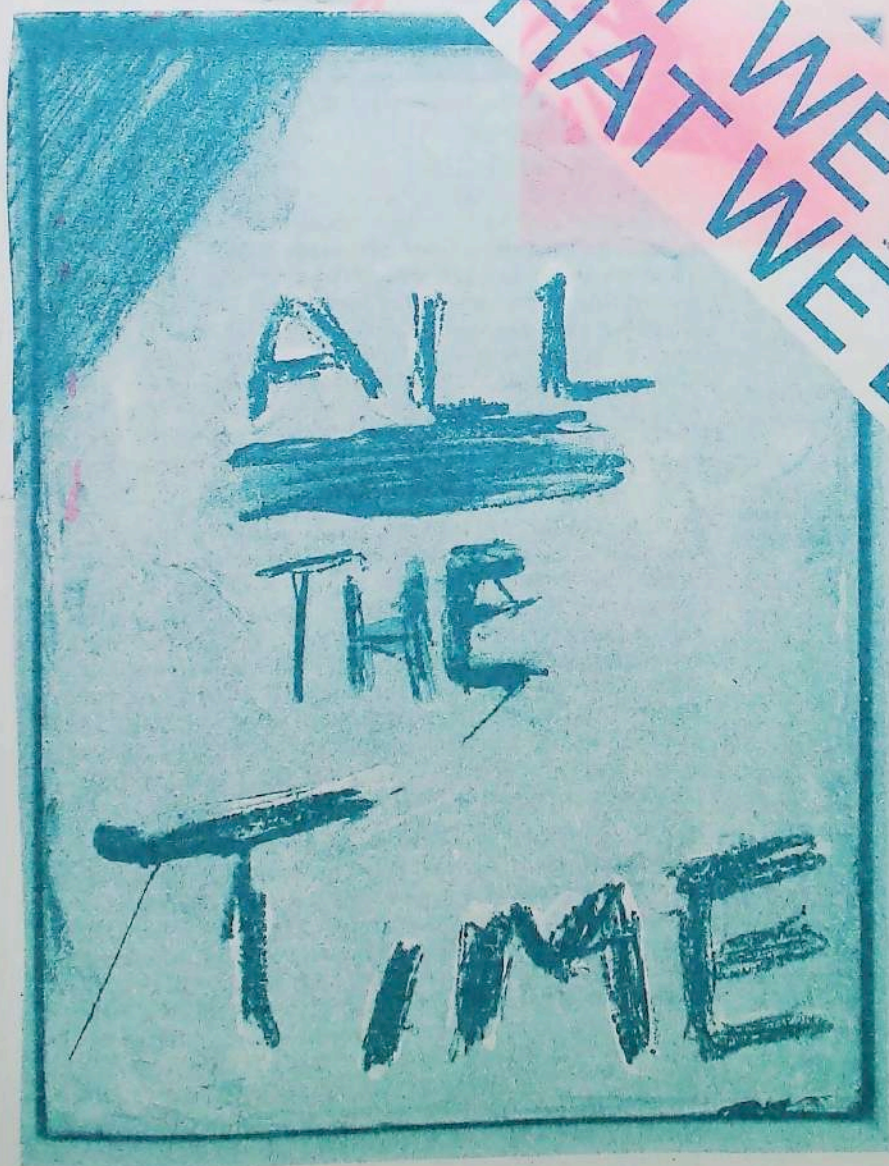
The resistance to and flouting of the law by activists in pursuit of a feminist abortion present in Latin America has in turn created feminist presents in other parts of the world. For example, misoprostol was not used as an abortion medication until women in Brazil in the 1980s noticed that it warned pregnant users of possible miscarriages and so they experimented with it until they developed a dose effective enough to work as a "passport" to obtain a safe abortion in a public facility. Scientists took note and tested it and now misoprostol (with mifepristone) is used for the majority of abortions in the US and the UK and listed as an 'essential medicine' by the WHO. The actions of Latin American women created safe and legal abortion access for pregnant people in the global North but this privilege has been denied to themselves. Ironically, Brazil now has some of the most restrictive regulations around misoprostol in the world.

Recent changes towards the legalization and decriminalization of abortion in several countries in Latin America are undeniably a good thing. However, as the US case proves, the trend is not unilinear and it warns us of the rippling effect this may have at a global scale. As shown above, underground networks and activism have created feminist abortion presents through surgical and medical abortion access across Latin America. Abortion needs are urgent, time-sensitive, and do not go away if the law declares them illegal. People seeking to end their pregnancy cannot wait for laws to change and for those laws to gradually create pathways to access. Therefore, it is more pressing than ever to take notice of these strategies in the face of the global anti-abortion movement and the rolling back of rights in contexts such as the US.

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AND WHAT WE SEE
AND WHAT WE DON'T



We need to talk about ageing in cities: the importance of gender for inclusive city building practices

Gender and age have emerged in recent decades as two important aspects to consider for better city planning. Through examples of policy approaches and case examples from the Global South and Global North, we highlight the intersections of age and gender in current planning practices, and discuss how a proactive consideration of these intersections could promote inclusivity in city building practices.

Ageing is not devoid of gender. Men and women age differently but rarely, if ever, are these differences factored into the way cities and places are planned. Although gender mainstreaming has figured prominently in urban planning and city building, it is seldom addressed in an intersectional manner. By accumulating insights from policy approaches and case examples from the Global North and Global South, we highlight the intersections of age and gender in current planning practices and how an explicit consideration of these intersections could provide equity in city building at multiple scales and enable age-friendly cities. We argue that this consideration enables a proactive recognition of age-related specificities across gender and ability in urban environments.

Efforts at incorporating gender mainstreaming into urban practices have intensified over the past decade at a global scale. This includes developing indicators that build consensus among generations, and other aged-based evaluation tools. Examples of such efforts are Her City Toolbox - UN Habitat (2021), Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design - World Bank (2020), I'm a City Changer Gender Toolkit - UN Habitat (2016) and OECD's 2015 report Ageing in Cities. We acknowledge that 'such gender mainstreaming toolkits, guidelines and resources are effective to facilitate transformation in the urban environment. However, their scope appears to be limited due to their focus mainly on the needs of women and girls. In addition, as these are global frameworks and tools, there are no formal requirements to implement them at lower levels of government.

It is crucial to look beyond gender mainstreaming and broad top-down attempts at 'inclusive' urban planning employed at macro policy levels. As we will demonstrate it is more effective to also probe actionable possibilities at city and local levels in parallel with macro approaches. Current interpretations of gender mainstreaming commonly do not extend to people with nonbinary identities. As such, there is a need for expansion of engendering in urban planning involving different ways of incorporating gender across planning and development. Although gender is not always explicitly referred to in the following examples, there is nonetheless evidence of gender and age intersections that could be foregrounded to enable contextualised and scalable planning and design strategies.

The capital city of the Netherlands, Amsterdam, became a part of the World Health Organization (WHO) global network of age-friendly cities in 2015. The city government instituted a multi-disciplinary team to investigate various aspects that take the needs of older people into consideration. In addition, a five-year action plan was formulated to target issues of dementia, loneliness, accommodation for older people, as well as 'spatial methods to enhance an age-friendly environment'. This demonstrates an important targeted policy approach that also connects to spatial considerations. Ideally the action plan could be monitored and improved to extend beyond five years.

The Hague, another prominent city in The Netherlands, is also part of the WHO global network. In 2020, in a bid to understand the needs of the older people in the city, the

municipality prepared a questionnaire that posed various questions to a sample population that included older Western and non-Western immigrants to emphasize inclusion and diversity of the city. This resulted in an age-friendly action plan that, similarly to Amsterdam, emphasizes improved vitality, reduction of loneliness, and facilitating ageing in place.

In Japan, more than 25 cities are officially part of an age-friendly city initiative. As part of this initiative, the city of Toyama, for example, supports its older population through compact city strategies guided by policy to improve public services accessibility and promote the independence of the elderly. Importantly, 1 in 3 women in Japan is 65 or above, 92 % of Japanese are urban citizens, and older women represent a culturally important segment of the population in Japanese cities. In parallel, increasing poverty among the elderly, in particular among older women, is challenging to address.

In India, the traditional systems of care and familial support are largely informal in nature and cater to the ageing population through kinship networks and mutual aid societies. However, these organic arrangements are stretched beyond capacity under current socio-economic and demographic changes such as an increase in migration from rural to urban areas by women, and an increase in female-headed households in urban areas. Challenges are also reinforced by existing inequalities due to caste, class and ethnic differences. The National Institute of Urban Affairs is in the process of addressing shortcomings in Indian cities through BASIIC (Build Accessible, Safe and Inclusive Indian Cities) which aims to incorporate universal design principles for spatializing age-, gender- and disabled-friendly cities. The general intent and framing of BASIIC demonstrates awareness of the need for gender mainstreaming.

Inclusive city building practices that consider both ageing and gender remain challenging if planning processes are limited to formulating high-level policy frameworks. The examples selected demonstrate a need for context-specific participatory processes and targeted policy solutions. Although each country and city identified have unique approaches, they also initially identified a broader ageing focus identified through buy-in by level(s) of government, used cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary engagement and partnerships, and established a need for social considerations of ageing such as loneliness. However, these approaches are limited due to a lack of understanding of their current and potential impact due to inadequate monitoring and implementation.

HerCity Toolkit, for instance, has recently launched their second edition at the UN Habitat World Urban Forum 11. While the summary report is not published yet, they commented "if we make a city safer for women, we make them safer for all". While this is true, without specifically indicating how differences across gender, age, ability and others impact safety, there are limits to the potential of similar gender-focused frameworks and toolkits. Assuming that making a city safer for women and girls means "all", without specifically acknowledging who it is currently not safe for, is limiting the robustness of potential changes and necessary solutions.

The Hague is now a partner in a project entitled How age-friendly are our cities? that is led by the Hague University of Applied Sciences. With research partners in Poland and Romania, they are further developing a tool from their aforementioned public questionnaire work that will be more replicable across the 1,100 cities that are part of the WHO global network. The main researcher, Joost Van Hoof, shared that the collaborative research project will result in a reliable measuring tool for age-friendliness that will fully involve older people. Furthermore, the work will provide an "internationally useful basis for collecting relevant data on age-friendliness, which will allow municipalities to govern more adequately and based on evidence". Although gender is not mentioned in the research project description, there is potential to collect sex disaggregated data that could derive more accurate insights.

Their qualitative approach for "joint decision-making and co-creation of policies with municipalities and actions at a neighbourhood level" also connects to participatory approaches highlighted in the other case examples.

To explicitly embrace gender along with ageing, planning could use progressive zoning and policy tools to encourage functional diversity and include a broader variety of built forms that are adapted to the needs of older people as well as catering to their physical, mental and emotional health. For Ageing in place, or growing older at home, considerations are also crucially needed for marginalized populations that have historically been limited from living in certain areas through restrictive and exclusionary planning. Finally, there also appears to be a vast disconnect between initiatives and policy approaches on gender mainstreaming and those focused on ageing. To conclude, we therefore argue that inclusive city building practices must include the experiences and identities of women and all genders for holistically integrating age-based needs.

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Between practical presents and transformative futures: What we learn from organizations that use professional clothing as a tool for feminist empowerment

While helping low-income women gain mobility, stable income, and autonomy, professional dressing nonprofits leave uncontested (and in some ways leverage) the very structures that harm their clients. As critical feminists oriented toward the future, how do we negotiate between strategies that intervene in our world to make it more live-able in the here and now (however imperfectly) and our visions for an anti-racist, anti-austerity feminist future?

Professional dressing nonprofits provide workplace clothing to low-income women who do not have access to it in order to increase their chances of success in job interviews. After collecting new and lightly used clothing donations, volunteers work with clients to help them select quality clothing that matches their workplace environment and helps them feel comfortable and confident. Professional dressing nonprofits recognize that women face specific challenges in the labor market and seek to reduce gendered and racialized inequity by providing the clothing needed to make a strong first impression. These organizations do not necessarily seek to address the structural conditions of persistent low-paid work which shape the challenges faced by their clients; instead, they are designed to help low-income women improve their lives by giving them a tool that creates the possibility to mitigate the effects of structural inequity.

Doing fieldwork at a professional dressing nonprofit left me grappling with new questions about the complexities of feminist praxis. For the clients that I spoke with, **the services offered by these nonprofits were helpful and meaningful; being able to appear in professional clothing helped them feel confident in their abilities, navigate racism and harassment in their workplaces, and assert belonging and value among their peers.**

At the same time, the foundational assumption of this strategy for feminist empowerment – that getting low-income women into work reduces poverty and minimizes their need for social support – is both misguided and harmful, as it justifies austerity policies of disinvestment (which hurt low-income women of color the most). Because only women who are striving toward paid work are eligible for support, professional clothing nonprofits exclude those who cannot or do not wish to enter paid work, often due to disability or familial responsibilities. In this sense, insofar as the organization re-articulates the hyper-valuation of economic self-sufficiency (prevalent in both mainstream politics and strains of neoliberal feminism) to frame and justify its services, it also re-articulates a framework where moral deservingness is contingent upon aspiring towards gainful employment.

The strategy is also limited in its practical effects. **Although professional clothing may help Black women (and other racialized women) distance themselves from negative stereotypes, clothing does not insulate them from experiencing racist harassment or eliminate the effects of structural racism** (as one Black client explained, dressing in “nice” clothing made her feel good in her body, yet she could always feel the eyes of others seeing and reacting to the darkness of her skin, regardless of how she was dressed). Additionally, by embracing the terms of respectable femininity, this strategy sidelines queer people who don’t want to present themselves in a feminine way, as well as trans people who don’t have the same assumed access to femininity that cis women do. Finally, the selection of clothing in larger sizes is

often quite limited, meaning that larger bodied women are much more likely to leave an appointment without their needs met.

These challenges undoubtedly emerge because professional dressing organizations have limited resources, little control over donations, and no control over the forces that shape the opportunities available to their clients. Simply put, **these organizations do meaningful work in an environment**



of multi-layered challenges. Nonetheless, this model of feminist empowerment may not be accessible, effective, or affirmative for all people who need workplace clothing, let alone all people in conditions of poverty and immobility. As such, even as this practical strategy is meaningful for many low-income women, it is also inherently limited, provisional, and implicated in the reproduction of structural inequity.

I am not interested in exposing or critiquing the models or practices of professional dressing nonprofits as a research goal in itself, however imperfect they are. Instead, I find that thinking carefully through the tensions and limitations presented within this example can be a useful way to explore the inherent complications of feminist praxis. What can the specific context of professional dressing services tell us about **the relationship between social disinvestment and the practical strategies that vulnerable people are offered to access mobility?**

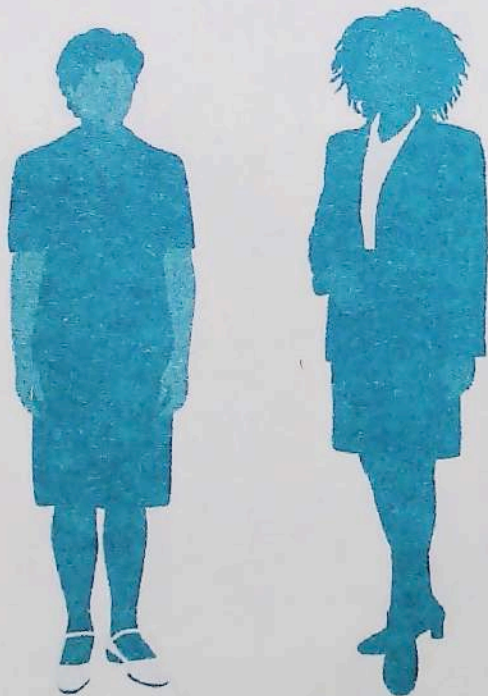
The setting of professional dressing nonprofits shows that **the potentialities and limitations of practical strategies that vulnerable women can use to survive and thrive are necessarily inter-related and co-constitutive**, not contradictory. Access to respectability is unstable and contingent (especially for Black and Brown women) precisely because respectable, professional femininity gains coherence by stigmatizing those deemed “disrespectable.” To assert value by claiming professional respectability is necessarily to distance oneself from the devalued labor and appearances of poor women (often migrant women or women of color) who perform undervalued, “unskilled” work. In this way, the emotional, social, and material benefits of claiming professional femininity are rooted in the devaluation of poor, racialized women. This is not paradoxical, but instead an inherent feature of intersectional systems of oppression: when gender, race, and class devaluation are interconnected, the tools that vulnerable people have to contest their devaluation and claim inclusion always implicitly rely upon the stigmatization and devaluation of other vulnerable people.

Nonetheless, it would be misguided to abandon claims to social value altogether. **For clients at professional dressing nonprofits, having access to professional respectability not only made hostile social worlds more survivable; it was also pleasurable and affirming in environments of constant devaluation.** If we are committed to making our current world more livable, we cannot easily abandon strategies that mobilize social value in order to contest oppression. As critical feminists oriented toward the future, how do we negotiate the constitutive tension between strategies that intervene in our world to make it more live-able

in the here and now (however imperfectly) and our visions for an anti-racist, anti-austerity feminist future?

In *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*, Black feminist theorist Lola Olufemi challenges feminists to imagine a radical, transformative future within the present moment. Olufemi argues that the terms of “practicality” often work to curtail imagination and limit feminists’ demands for a better future. Rather than consigning radical visions of the future to the horizon and intervening according to what is practical in the present, Olufemi imagines the present and the future as cotemporaneous. She writes, “the future is not in front of us, it is everywhere simultaneously: multidirectional, radiant, spontaneous. We only have to *turn around*” (35). For Olufemi, **the practicalities of the present and the imaginations of the future cannot be pulled apart.**

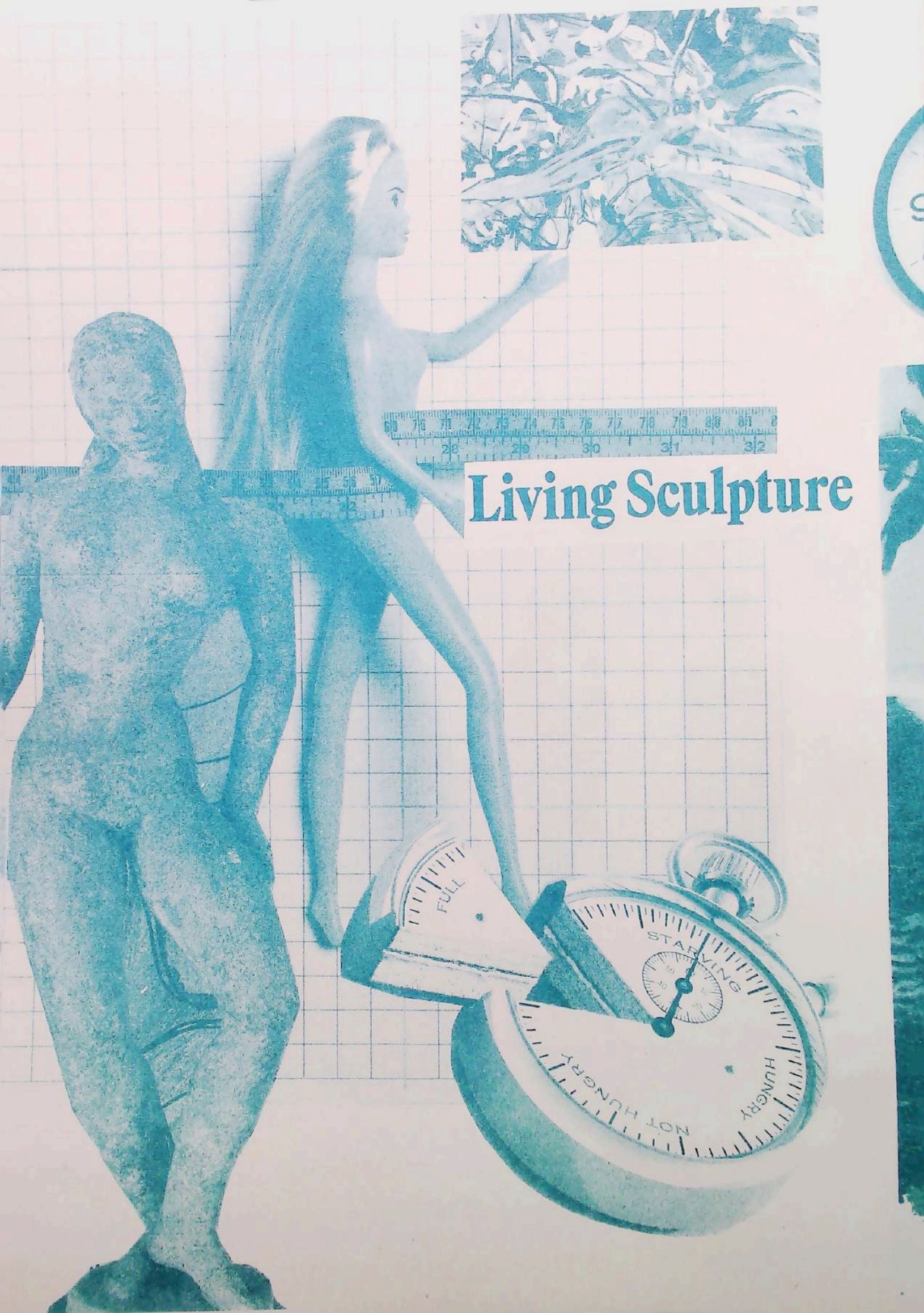
One example or author cannot provide the answer to how feminists can or should negotiate the interrelation of what’s practical in the present and what’s possible in the future. I do not have a satisfying answer even within the particular case that I studied, and of course any answer could not be universal, as each specific context raises unique considerations. Instead, the example of professional dressing nonprofits shows how incredibly necessary it is for feminists to think carefully about how feminisms **“inevitably collapse into depoliticizing and hegemonic frameworks”** because oppressive structures are interrelated and co-constitutive. It is urgently necessary – both for bringing about equitable practices in the present and for creating a more just future – that we constantly



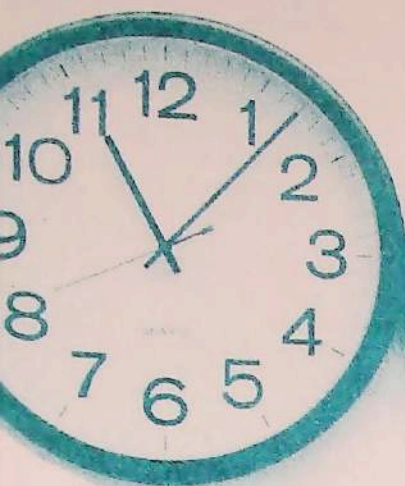
examine, question, and resist the ways that feminist strategies may leverage or even legitimize austerity, racism, and classism while seeking to make the present more live-able for vulnerable people.

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Image credit: WONDER WARDROBE, The Nation.



Living Sculpture



ART



GROWS



FROM

JOY AND

SORROW

Feminist foreign policy: Coloniality in new clothes?

Feminist foreign policies are a tool that maintain global hierarchies, due to their colonial underpinnings and universalisms. A transformative project should consider the needs and proposals of a wider variety of actors, creating a world based on pluriversality instead of cosmopolitan (Western) ideals.

Foreign policy has been one of the most masculine dominated areas of study and practice of international politics. However, when Sweden launched a feminist foreign policy (FFP) in 2014, it opened new possibilities. In 2020, another important event took place: Mexico became the first country of the “Global South” to adopt a FFP, unsettling the previous notion that such policies were an exclusive tool of wealthy or western nations.

Feminist foreign policies have a transformative ambition, as they propose to eliminate structural differences and promote gender equality through new practices and frameworks at both national and international levels. Nonetheless, along with concepts such as homonationalism* and femonationalism**, these policies could also be a tool of national identity and exceptionalism that maintain global hierarchies and reorient certain problems outside national borders, such as the securitization of migration, the exclusion of indigenous populations and arms exports.

My goal in this piece is to briefly discuss if feminist foreign policies are addressing and disrupting the structures that exclude non-hegemonic subjects, or simply (re)producing normalised regimes of power and concealing them through a feminist discourse. Moreover, I want to examine how a decolonial approach could change the current narrative and envisage other forms of being and existing in the world, that goes beyond the policies designed by and for the State.

Foreign policy, colonialism and gender. I understand foreign policy as a social construction. This implies that it is produced by discourses, which are embedded in a system of meaning. By adding the adjective “feminist” to such policies, the aim is to change the dominant narrative that positions the sovereign subjects as male, white, heterosexual and bourgeois while claiming gender neutrality. The objective is to dismantle traditional notions of how issues are framed, prioritised, and managed. Moreover, it seeks to put the everyday lives of historically marginalised communities at the forefront of foreign policy.

Despite initial scepticism, feminist foreign policies have gained attention and a growing number of countries are in the process of adopting them.*** Furthermore, some organizations are advocating for such policies globally. However, if we analyse the current FFPs by looking at handbooks, action plans, op-eds, declarations, and other official documents, we find that colonial logics remain, even in the Mexican proposal, designed by a former colony.

As Lugones argues, modernity organizes the world ontologically in terms of anatomic, homogenous, separable categories. These were created during colonialism through the construction of race as a system of social domination; the hegemony of capital as a system of social and economic exploitation; and gender, which privileges the existence of specific bodies and identities that have benefited from the prerogatives granted by modernity. This modern/colonial system is in place today and is violently backed by the power of the State.

One of the main goals of FFPs is to reach gender equality. However, gender is a tool of domination introduced by the West that designates two social categories - male and female - that oppose each other in a binary and hierarchical manner. Although some proposals, such as the Mexican, include an

intersectional approach, they focus on “women” and do not go against the logic of categorisation. In fact, intersectionality — in its current usage by policy makers and institutions — has become an instrument of neoliberal ideology, governing difference by reifying these categories (women, black, homosexual, poor) and adding groups to the structure instead of eliminating the conditions that maintain racism, sexism, classism, etc. These policies, then, exclude the subjects that do not fit neatly into these groupings, such as the *muxe* population — an indigenous non-binary group in the Zapotec cultures of southern Mexico — and LGBTQ+ “irregular” migrants, to name some examples. These exclusions are a legacy of colonialism, as the Western-colonial gender system produces nonhumans — such as Black and indigenous women — and queer bodies, constituted according to colonial difference.

Moreover, global issues such as migration and climate change are still framed in a capitalist, racist and patriarchal logic. Violent and exclusionary practices towards migrants, usually impoverished, racialized and gendered — not exclusively but particularly in Mexico — have not been modified since the adoption of a FFPs. For instance, there are no specific policies for LGBTQ+ migrants that come from Central America, fleeing from gender-based violence. Moreover, the number of “irregular” migrants that have been deported by Mexican authorities to their countries of origin is increasing; women and unaccompanied minors are particularly vulnerable to these deportations.

In the case of climate change, states keep supporting multilateral efforts, such as the Paris Agreement, that maintain the capitalist framework of production and consumption, do not reduce inequalities, and place human beings at the centre of efforts to reduce carbon emissions. In other words, the binary and hierarchical logics of the categories citizen/migrant, legal/illegal, human/non-human, and the understanding of migration as border-control and nature as a commodity, reinforce coloniality and (re)produce the structures that privilege certain lives over others.

Decolonial horizons. There is a risk that feminist foreign policies could become a new standard of civilization, claiming that the inclusion of women in diplomacy and foreign policy represents a common behaviour of advanced countries. This would only reinforce the discourse that there are universal values and ideas that everyone should adopt everywhere. Furthermore, since these policies were built from a top-down approach at Ministries of Foreign Affairs, it would also support the notion that states are the ones that grant rights and promote representation, instead of recognizing how they maintain and reproduce the global hierarchies that exclude non-normative and non-hegemonic bodies, ideas, and knowledges.

Hence, it is fundamental to decolonise FFPs. To do so, we must consider other proposals from the margins. This does not mean to assimilate various demands into state policy and advocate for representation within oppressive structures, but to reconceptualise and co-produce knowledge with the “other”, transcending the state itself. Since modernity has sought to render invisible different forms of thinking, being, and existing in the world, a transformative feminist foreign policy should be the result of a critical dialogue between diverse epistemic/ethical/political projects. A good example is the call to leave the dominant anthropocentric paradigm and to construct a new relationship with the earth, a project that has been promoted by indigenous communities in Abya Yala — the name given by pre-Columbian communities to Latin America and used by indigenous communities today.

The implications of such a move would be to consider other forms of coexisting with nature, rethinking the idea of borders, creating a different sense of solidarity that goes beyond ideas of individualism, and delinking current policies from neoliberal globalization and “universal” frameworks, such as human rights, global governance, development, among others. This would entail creating a world based on pluriversality where many worlds can exist. It would require replacing universalisms with a decolonial cosmopolitan project, taking

into account the needs and proposals of a wider variety of actors.

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* This term, coined by Jasbir Puar (2007), refers to the emergence of national homosexuality as a tool to justify certain interventions in the name of American exceptionalism.

** This term, coined by Sara Farris (2017), refers “both to the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam campaigns and to the participation of certain feminists and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality”.

*** The countries that have officially adopted a Feminist Foreign Policy are Sweden, Canada, France, Luxemburg, Mexico, Spain and Libya. Additionally, the United States, the European Union, Norway, Ecuador, among others, have declared their interest in adopting one.

Imagining a care curriculum

Can we teach the grief, hope, and care of a protest? The piece considers two of the largest protest movements in modern history, and draws from them a splinter of a care curriculum that witnesses, archives, and remembers resistance, in the wake of violence.

In 2019 and 2020, protests took place in India against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the National Population Register, and the National Register of Indian Citizens (henceforth referred to as the CAA-NRC-NPR, to denote their interconnected nature) that disenfranchised Muslims, women, exploited castes including Dalit and Adivasi communities, transgender people, and immigrants. Protest communities challenged the violent conceptions of marginalised religious identities with a new idea of reform, a peace narrated by the ‘defeated’, of unheard stories, fragments, and ruptures.

Women-led protest sites such as in Shaheen Bagh in New Delhi emerged as symbols for caregiving as resistance; a radical, queer, and (dis)embodied resistance to the violent masculinities of a capitalist, neoliberal, and Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) state. The sit-in led by Muslim women presented a space to not only practice caregiving – childcare, eldercare, eating together, tending to each other’s illnesses, praying, mourning – but to present it as a resistance to unfair media and social categorizations of protests and Muslims as aggressive, violent, and worthy only of suspicion. Protest locations hold place-based memories, their maps charged with histories of home-making and community building. In subsequent years, activists in the Farmers’ Protest – the largest protest gathering in modern history – demonstrated similar forms of care. From langar (communal kitchens) to songs, stories, community libraries, and slogans, activists from historically exploited and marginalised communities reimaged collective grief, grieving, and care as not only work or labour, but as modes of political action, ingenious citizenships and creative transgressions that resisted the insecurity of an uncaring state.

As a cautious and privileged supporter, I breathed a fragmented air of insecurity in Delhi between 2019 and 2021. We rallied between lawyers, activists, journalists, medical professionals, NGO workers, and protest coordination committees. Nights were spent with constantly ringing phones, calling for support; silence from one forum indicated an internet shutdown, noise from another meant a police clampdown or the presence of disruptive elements, news of detentions or releases from detention. In the wintry haze, the fog did not muffle the stream of ambulance sirens, the khaki of police blocking entrances to Delhi Metro Rail stations, rows of police vehicles in neighbourhoods where even a vehicle parked or slowed down was sufficient to be detained.

The rich felt it too, as an almost exciting addition to conversation, storytelling. The protests were the object of idle judgement – the property owner, the businessman, the socialite proud of their provocative questions, all made loud declarations of, “First, we should investigate who funds these protests.” The demand is for protest purity, Gandhian, of immaculate conception and composition, a peace that is peaceful in that it is voiceless, not too disruptive; it is the hunger strike that kills the protestor, the protracted sit-in that blocks no roads, takes up no public space, and for which the Government provides no food, healthcare, or livelihood support.

Amidst this apathy, in the orange-ochre hue of streetlights, people held hands, looked at each other, listened, and mourned the loss of friends and families. The voices of poets, writers, and singers such as Ali Sethi, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Gulzar, Farida

Khanum, and Swanand Kirkire's voices, among others, wafted in the breeze. We recited the Preamble of the Indian Constitution, sang songs of love. By doing so, these resilient communities denied the belief that identity, culture, and citizenship are inhospitable, bordered, monolithic entities; they are homes. We try not to romanticise resistance, but to not notice and centre love and beauty in these movements is to erase its overwhelming, undeniable existence.

Those nights, the protest space was not simply a geography of political contestation. It was a forum where participants, even the least invested, engaged in history and fiction. We reimagined identity as both an honest narration and archival of the past and a dream of a feminist future in a free state – of belonging, and hospitality – of storytelling which, by providing space for metaphors, references, and narratives, resisted the violences of distance, theorization, and abstraction.

By engaging with feminist storytelling, now, can we better understand these metaphors and practices of collective caregiving, and learn from grief in the wake of violence? Learning from our protest strategies, conversing with the toolkits of jailed activists, and their letters from prison, we (I, speaking with protest communities and solidarities, near and far), ask if there is perhaps a curriculum of care – strategic and tactical, community driven, compassionate, and kind – that can be taught and learned in these spaces. Such a curriculum would ultimately aim to teach the love, beauty, narration, organising, and caring necessary to sustain a protest, in other contexts – a pedagogy of (and by) the oppressed. It would teach care in conversation with the violences it hopes to resist: in universities, in schools, to children, to businesses, to governments.

The care curriculum would be created with the protest communities, and maintained and updated by them. As such, it would reflect the hierarchies of the community. For instance, with the CAA-NRC-NPR movement, this would have been in collaborative consultation with organisers and participants of protest movements. The curriculum, in this sense, will inevitably fall prey to replications of social power hierarchies, likeability, legitimacy, and masculine figurations of effectiveness and delivery. However, building the care curriculum can begin from a point of noticing this skewed original position, asserting its impartial origin as a feature of its legitimacy. In doing so, we locate the curriculum's enactment in an oppressive regime, of Hindutva politics, of capitalist oppression, of economies of exclusion. By growing from (and beyond) this impartiality, it would not simply seek to enable awareness and understanding, but responsive (and hopeful) action – solidarity, "toolkits", networking with academics, corporations, funders, political organisations, media houses, grassroots forums – all whilst cognisant of the truth that protests don't run on hope alone.

To address these risks, curriculum creation could incorporate contestation as a key feature in its radical pedagogy. We acknowledge the power hierarchy, and assert that the curriculum is plural – it does not hold one claim to knowledge. It is taught, retaught, and through the act of teaching, grown. The teaching would be oral, not evaluative but through a prioritisation of vigilance and attentiveness, capturing the anxiety of protests, of active listening and memory-keeping taking from the archival needs of a protest's caring practices. A curriculum of care, necessarily, thus, would exist outside of the institution of the state executive, judiciary, and legislative, in constant negation of the institution of the university, attempting to not replicate institutional structures in doing so.

Such a curriculum would by definition, include teaching the histories of places, movement and settlement, language and loss of ecologies, stories and metaphors in the margins, and ways to craft new stories that persist. It teaches care – not only eldercare, childcare, healthcare – but well-being cognizant of caste, class, and gendered influences towards joy, rest, and a full life. A care curriculum is not only a curriculum of care, therefore, but a curriculum that cares for its learners – that

speculates new futures, new modes of resistance. As a scholar, now, afar, studying grief and protests away from the communities I worked with, the curriculum to me would also need to know affect. It would understand, study, repair, and stitch the loneliness of isolation, the anxiety of unbelonging, and the grief of loss into its methods – to read and write with grief, to write anxiously, to sing your loneliness into community. The act of imagining such a curriculum is perhaps in itself reparative, if to no-one else, at least to me, to those of us for whom allyship and solidarity is a responsibility.

As spring blooms, the summer at home is the hottest in over a hundred years. By dreaming of care and love, by noticing the immense and intimate grief of thousands, millions, or by attempting to, we hope to grow new friendships, craft care into the quiet lights that find their way into uncertain homes – there is nothing more gentle, political, or real.

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Fiction and feminist curiosities: Stories from when the writing writes back

This piece reflects on the process of writing as crucial element of a feminist research process. The author draws on her experiences of working alongside magical realist fiction to glean feminist insights for a centering emotional experiences of humans who inhabit the international.

In her latest non-fiction marvel, Elena Ferrante shares her experiences of being a writer. The opportunity to peek into the inner workings of her gorgeous writing was reason enough to warrant an enthusiastic purchase, but it was really a WhatsApp blurb from a dear friend who was relishing the book so much, that it made her want to plan a “proper holiday” just so that she could spend it with Ferrante’s well-loved fiction, that made me reach for it sooner than planned. Amidst many breath-taking jewels about the complex nature of writing that she generously shares, Ferrante also invites us to think about *how we think about writing*. What might have seemed indulgent to some, was like reading my most intimate thoughts, struggles and even triumphs about writing being articulated for the whole world to read. Professions, genres and even languages away, I felt a certain kinship with Ferrante’s journeying with words. Simply put, as an accomplished fiction writer and as an early career PhD scholar, her and I were the same when it came to writing; and our collective belief in it being the way of experiencing and extending ourselves into the world.

For my doctoral research, I read magical realist fiction to make a case for emotional worlds which often go missing in unemotional analyses of international politics. It has taken me exactly eighteen months to condense my project into this one sentence and yet, it feels tentative. It feels as though I am trying to squeeze a tide in a tube to reduce how overwhelming it seems (and probably even is). The feminine urge to doubt my positionality; and by extension of the work I produce, is made more acute in the face of academic pursuit of favoring parsimonious theories over complicated feelings. The pressing demand for objective research in the neoliberal academy often dilutes and depoliticizes research intentioned towards prioritizing subjective experiences which get buried underneath the weight of such attachments to innocence. The discipline-ing of creativity to the point where writing becoming merely a vehicle for expressing ideas, rather than a practice that is integral to the formation of ideas itself reflects the violence of research processes which murder authors by burying their complex emotional situatedness in their research. Feminism offered me a way out of this quandary by recognizing the importance of coming-up-against established forms of thinking and writing, as a crucial part of the project of retrieving emotional lifeworlds which rub against, resist and spill outside the margins of academic prose. When asked about why I chose to centre fiction as a way of studying international politics, I found myself reaching into my feminist curiosity for writing and saying- “It’s because I love sentences, well-crafted ripe sentences”. By identifying my positionality as a writer making sense of the world and myself through the written word, I was able to make room for alternative forms of writing which are not usually permissible in the academy but can often become roadmaps for grappling with a world where one was placed without warning. While this does not stem the flow of further questioning, it allows me the joy of riding the tides rather than evading them.

In my research, I am interested in the culmination of the emotional with the methodological, which animates feminist, postcolonial as well as aesthetic explorations of emotions, particularly expressed through their use of literary sources besides academic prose and alternative, creative forms of writing, which prominently feature and engage the emotional. I focus on the literary genre of fiction as a specific form of storytelling attuned to both- an accounting for emotional worlds as well as reimaginings of the relationships between emotional humans and their worlds. Specifically, I look at magical realist fiction; the work of Salman Rushdie, Isabel

Allende and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, as a literary genre that weaves together the emotional and political experiences of humans and how they relate to each other. Stipulating that the bias against emotions is complicit in the stultifying lack of human stories in the discipline, reading magical realism become a methodology which undertakes the emotional work of recovering emotionally entangled human lives to reimagine the international. Exploring alternative ways of writing that resist forms of academic knowledge production which conform to hegemonic standards of writing, citation and history, allows fiction to uncover hidden (dis)connections, interdependencies and disjunctures, leading us to more holistic and representative forms of knowledge. Far from being mere falsities, fiction goes beyond established norms of knowledge, to construct a creative space that challenges existing ideas and information, while beckoning thinkers to write about an imaginative international- one which is made magical simply by acknowledging the emotional-relational and indeed human encounters that make and unmake our world(s).

How do fiction and feminism intertwine in the critical project of reimagining an emotional international? Feminists in the discipline have long called for an intentional investment in the relational and emotional parts of IR. For feminists, international politics at the very heart of it, is not an intellectual enterprise but rather is a matter of how human beings, and the collectivities they have created, find themselves in emotional worlds. In opening up these alternative worlds, fiction challenges the fixity of meanings and discourses on the world. Asserting the multidimensionality of textual knowledge, feminists have shown how fiction helps us move from identifying texts as containing singular absolute and original truth, to recognizing them as performative spaces which are a part of something living, active, breathing and include a variety of selves and truths which blend and clash. Feminist, postcolonial and aesthetic thinkers are drawn to alternative worlds, and are therefore attuned to different ways of ‘seeing’ and ‘being’ in these worlds. Far from the singularity of the world ‘out there’, these approaches are interested in the relational and emotional lifeworlds; drawn from the phenomenological concept of *lebenswelt* (lifeworlds) which pertains to the human ways of being-in-the-world, with which they have inseparable connections. In search for lifeworlds, such approaches have travelled outside the strict boundaries of disciplinary objectivity and its consequent detached knowledge about the world. I argue that it is in their exploration of lifeworlds as sites of political analysis, that feminist, aesthetic and postcolonial thinkers make use of methodologies which are reflective of the emotional worlds they hope to encounter. The use of literary sources which illuminate these lifeworlds and their distinctly emotional characteristics, becomes an important methodological choice for such scholarship, in ways which fuses the method with the purpose of research.

Towards the end of her book, Ferrante talks about how the journey of writer-to-writing is akin to that of heart-to-page. I relate deeply; to that desperate desire of writing down not only what’s in the heart, but the heart itself. Fiction harkens to a specific kind of impulse for knowledge which cannot be found in neat or self-assured disciplines. In mapping my research alongside the generous, diverse and emotional geography of fiction, I am able to imbue my love for writing with an equal love for a politics of humanity that I found missing in the canonical texts which stipulate the boundaries of the discipline. While the road to a more emotional International Relations warrants an engagement with a plurality of methods; a sustained interest in how and when in fiction; does the personal become political, and indeed; international, is in safe hands between feminists who will till all surfaces to plant seeds of curiosity; including and beyond WhatsApp gardens and well-deserved holidays.

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The "unhappy" coupling of sports and politics — how athletes and their rights are caught in the crossfire

Coupled with fans, broadcasters and coaches, athletes are at the core of the international sporting system. For a feminist, post-colonial future where sport is seen as being free from the gender binary (the separation of gender into male and female), their voices, that usually advocate for inclusion of minorities and underrepresented groups in sport need to be allowed expression.

This freedom of expression is usually contingent on the political, moral, and ethical viewpoint of their representative country and/or the international sport organisation under which they play. This hinders athletes who advocate for this inclusion from sharing their views without fear of repercussion. And yet, these same member nations and international sport organisations continue using sport as their own political tool in international political relations. This goes against a central argument presented by these stakeholders that sport and politics should be kept separate. In this piece, I argue that this suppression of political opinion is detrimental to achieving equal rights in sport.

Historically, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and its sister organisations used boycotts and similar sanctions to politically influence its members, with varying results. For example, days after Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) announced that they would ban Russian teams, clubs, and athletes from competing in their respective events. This type of political decision is reminiscent of the actions of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the 1960s when apartheid South Africa was removed as an IOC member committee. Alternatively, member nations, as Olympic hosts, have used sport as platforms to display specific political ideologies, ignoring opposition, for example: the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the 2008 Summer and 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, China along with Russia's own tryst with hosting the Winter Olympics in 2014 and the FIFA Men's World Cup in 2018.

Despite how sports and politics appear constantly interrelated as shown through the examples above. Leaders of international organisations such as the IOC President, Thomas Bach, consistently espouse the impartiality of the Olympic movement along with several coaches and fans calling for this separation. This fervent desire to keep sport and politics separate is neither successful nor necessary. But are sport and politics truly separate? Why do stakeholders of sport — international sport organisations, national federations, corporate sponsors, continue to advocate for this separation? Consequently, what does this mean for equal rights in sport, especially for LGBTQ+ athletes?

In an article for the *Guardian*, Bach stresses that the Olympic Games are about diversity and unity and not about passing political judgement on its member nations. However, what Bach, his predecessors and the overall Olympic movement should consider is that ensuring the protection of human rights is necessary, despite its political nature that is an unfortunate association.

Since the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics in Russia, the discussion of the inclusion of LGBTQ+ rights within sport have been both a flaming touchpoint for many stakeholders and something that has been pushed to the forefront. The spotlight shining on LGBTQ+ rights occurred through the anti-gay discriminatory law introduced months prior to Sochi 2014, which highlighted how sport was used as a political tool in international relations to advance different rights agendas.

Sport, especially, has become a particular hotbed to debate these issues due to its structure and functioning that is heavily dependent on the enforcement of the gender binary. With the emphasis that sport places upon the body and the form of worship created by these feats of athleticism, it is impossible to ignore the pressures placed upon athletes and those enforcing the maintenance of these sport mega-events to adhere to the gender code upon which sport is based. What then can be considered as the turning point for LGBTQ+ rights in sport?

There have been several stories of athletes coming out, mostly sportspersons towards the end of their careers or already retired. Ian Thorpe, Billie Jean King, Justin Fashanu — to name a few — shared testimonies that were both empowering and heart-breaking. The LGBTQ+ experience in sport differs from athletes gaining support for their coming out stories while their counterparts may face severe discrimination and threats to their existence for the same. The former results in acceptance and backing for the larger movement towards advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights in sport. The latter, however, can cause physical, mental, and emotional trauma from being ostracized from society to the athlete themselves having to seek refuge in more accepting countries. The practice of gender testing, however counterproductive it was towards the inclusion of LGBTQ+ rights, can be considered as acknowledgement of differing genders and sexualities.

In an ideal world, a post-queer world, there would be no existence of the rigid gender binary that divides society into the male and female gender. This would mean that sport would be practiced on lines of other industries where talent and skill determine success. Sport would become not only an athletic activity for the sake of entertainment but representing the very society in which it exists.

However, neither is the world a comic cinematic universe, nor is it utopia. Definitive steps therefore need to be taken towards what can only be described as a post-queer international sport system where, according to David Ruffolo in his book titled *'Post-Queer Politics'*, there is a "commitment to disrupt ideologies, practices, concepts, values, and assumptions that are essentially normal in order to expose what is normatively essentialized."

A definite reduction of the reliance upon the IOC and similar organisations to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and the formation of a new network of actors to take movement forward are necessary steps toward this world. What could also result out of this system is a redefinition of what it means to have a gender identity and a sexual identity — more than what is currently defined and less than what an ideal definition would be. Ultimately, what needs to be constructed is a space where all types of identities are included and respected, while also allowing for sporting competition.

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Practices of relationality: Conversations to imagine feminist social research otherwise

Decolonial feminisms are central to thinking and doing feminist research otherwise. This article comprises our insights into possible decolonial feminist approaches to research and social change developed through a series of dialogues where we discussed and sought to enact practices of relationality as feminist researchers and activists, reaching the conclusion that "the treasure is in the relationships".

Although research can be a powerful tool to uncover, challenge and transform social injustice, it can also (re)produce injustice. As feminist academics working from Northern academies and institutions, we have been implicated in academic and social structures with a history of epistemic extractivism and marginalisation of Southern knowledges and ways of knowing. Rather than physical entities, we understand the North and South as constituted through the power relations implied in the colonial-capitalist-neoliberal project of the West. This makes it essential to deeply reflect on how we do research and its implications on those we converse and work with. It is also why we sought to collaborate with the Red de Organizaciones Femeninas del Pacífico Caucaño, a network of Indigenous and Afro-descendant women in Cauca, Colombia, whose work is presented through two videos included in this blog.*

Their videos show how the decolonial feminist praxis embedded in the organising processes of Black, Indigenous and *Campesina* women, oral traditions and popular communication goes beyond traditional research outputs. The first video created for this blog documents their recent projects rooted in the ancestral knowledge of women committed to healing, resistance, subsistence and *pervivencia*, as well as enacting political impact from the territories.

In the second video, the Network members set an agenda by them and for them, highlighting the importance of reasserting their own priorities and needs over external actors and institutions. As researchers, we can support this work.

Epistemic Extractivism. The violence of epistemic extractivism has been a main concern in our discussions. Epistemic extractivism refers to the extraction of ideas following the logic in which natural resources are stolen from colonised territories for the enrichment of the North. Epistemic extractivism utilises and destroys the transformative potential of knowledge, absorbing it into Western cognitive patterns (Grosfoguel, 2016) while delegitimising the spaces it originates from as mere places "of experience," not theory. We have witnessed how communities organise and struggle against extractivism and the continuum of violence that their body-territories are facing.

As the Northern gaze was firmly set on Colombia following the historic 2016 Peace Accord, epistemic extractivism was an important theme in our conversations with members of different organisations. In conversation with Laura in early 2020, Charo Mina-Rojas (Human Rights Defender and Afro-Colombian leader from the Process of Black Communities) underscored the instrumentalisation of women's memories and struggles by "peace research and institutions" following Western parameters of fast-paced and quantifiable outputs.

"They [institutions] grab things and adapt them and accommodate them, but ultimately, memory needs to contribute to transform. But the way it has been happening is not really transforming anything, because it is a memory that is left on the bookshelves and not [engaged] in dynamic

processes of construction and transformation of realities and of people." – Charo Mina-Rojas

We thus questioned how we could do transnational research as feminists committed to social transformation. How do we ground this commitment in alliances which defy utilitarian relationships? What circumstances involve the risk of exploitative practices? These questions led us to rethink our research methodologies and relationships.

Methodologies challenging extractive research. The selection of research methods in relation to ethical relationships implies contradictions. Views are still split amongst the group on the potential of traditional interview-based methods as spaces for dialogue, recognition and shared knowledge creation. Participatory methods, far from "the" magic cure due to the additional effort, time and emotional investment they expect from the participants, have brought more tangible results to participants and have made the research process more reciprocal as the experience below shows. Questions remain about whether participants engage more due to an emotional attachment with the researcher than because of a committed engagement with the project itself.

Contesting extractive research starts with investing time and building relationships based on mutual trust and transparency. Whether participants really need us there or the material needs of communities to realise social transformation are two questions that took front seat in our discussions. In research, these questions impose limitations on transformative work. As researchers we might also want to challenge the hierarchical idea of "you need"/"I have" to become more aware and accountable in relation to our privileges of inhabiting the extractivist Global North. Vulnerable listening, respect and care are pillars in the relationships that we develop in the desire to co-create transformative knowledge.

Imagining otherwise. Although we are all aware of the risks of extractive research, avoiding it is not always easy. Sometimes we learn and self-correct by making mistakes. Sanne shares one such experience.

"In a recent project, I found myself in a focus group with women, organised by one of their leaders. Most of these women were quite 'over-researched' and reluctant to participate because they felt emotionally distressed after interviews. Feeling utterly exploitative, I told them we did not have to do the focus group. Some women indeed left, while others insisted on telling their story. I decided to give this project a participatory turn and produce something more meaningful for the participants. I obtained financial support, and the participants decided they wanted to create a book with their stories. In further workshops we co-created the book, which can be found online. Eventually, my extreme discomfort led to something positive." – Sanne Weber

This example shows that preventing exploitative research is not necessarily just about the methods we use, but also about the conversations, the recognition of those we are working with, and the process that lead us to arrive at shared goals and expectations.

How do we imagine other ways to carry out social research then? We need to constantly reflect on the expectations we and our participants have of research. Career goals, timeframes and outputs specified in grant applications share a utilitarian logic that rubs uncomfortably up against the fact research is rarely linear. Participants might know or intuit that many of the social transformations we would like to see are subject to broader political and societal structures, but we need to be transparent about our capacity to effect change. This does not mean research is meaningless. It is all about entanglements, relationships, and unexpected outcomes.

Another way to imagine research differently is to think about our research questions. Instead of asking potentially revictimizing questions about conflict-related experiences of violence, we can create space for participants to “speak back to power” (patriarchal, local, regional, institutional, state, academic, etc.). The experience of working with historical memory processes and institutions shared by Laura above is one such avenue as is what Eve Tuck (2009) calls “desire-centred research” to refer to the hopes and dreams of participants about their future. The Network’s videos show that their agendas and projects for social transformation are already ongoing. Thus, researcher participation could take the form of assisting them with the material possibilities and of knowledge sharing to achieve impact in the way they desire. Social transformation expands through the creation of relationships that are based on care, solidarity, respect, mutual support and generous knowledge exchange.

**Red de Organizaciones Femeninas del Pacífico
Caucano Matamba y Guasa**

Laura Rodríguez Castro, Sanne Weber, Adriana Rudling &
Andrea García González

*to access the videos: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/practices-of-relationality-conversations-to-imagine-feminist-social-research-otherwise>

Post-revolution Sudan: The solidarity of young feminists and LGBTQ+ activists

The December 2018 revolution in Sudan witnessed the strongest feminist movement in the country's history. However, it also sheds light on the different interpretations youth and LGBTQ individuals have of the revolution's slogans of freedom, peace, and justice.

The challenges of being a young feminist or LGBTQ+ member in Sudan, according to civil society organizations means you cannot voice your own identity while working on community issues. As a result, young feminist groups and LGBTQ+ members feel that their issues are not represented, worked on, or funded. Moreover, in conditions of peace or conflict, the actual struggles of vulnerable groups like women survivors of sexual violence, sex workers, and LGBTQ+ individuals are not investigated, measured, or researched in order to design effective interventions.

While the revolution promised a better future for human rights and sexual freedom in Sudan, in the aftermath of the 25th of October 2021 coup, which was led by the Sudanese military and the Janjaweed militia, the notorious militia responsible for the genocide in Darfur. This coup nullified the democratic government and put the country in a state of emergency.

Feminists and LGBTQ+ groups are left to deal with the backlash. Civil society organizations are predicting the harshest outcomes, especially for these groups. Restriction of mobility by family, bullying, and violence, imprisonment, honor killings, homelessness, rape, and unsafe abortions. Organizations state their role is very limited since they are forced to operate discretely and on a small scale to provide support and protection, and this must change in the face of another totalitarian regime.

The current situation in Sudan puts more pressure and considering the long history of dictatorships and military rule in Sudan women and LGBTQ+ groups fear degradation in human rights in general and women and sexual minority's rights, and this fear comes from the turbulent political history in Sudan. A brief look at Sudan's history takes us back to the post-independence Sudan.

In 1956 Sudan won its independence from the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, which was marked by the start of the documented feminist movements following western demands, such as voting and education. The "Educated Girls Association" was formed in Khartoum among elite women, where education had been accessible to upper-class women since the 1920s. In 1965, the Sudanese parliamentary elections saw the election of the first woman, Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim. She was a parliamentary speaker, a leader within the communist party and a funder of the Sudanese women's union. She is seen to be among the first Sudanese feminists and politicians.

Politically, women's rights have seen great gains with democratic governments and great defeats when conservative governments are in power. During the thirty years of Omar Al-Bashir's regime, which started after the 1989 coup it toppled the democratic rule in Sudan and led to Sharia law enforcement. Women were removed from civic spheres, along with restrictions on mobility, and ownership, and made to adhere to a strict Islamic dress code enforced by the public order police. They carry out articles of public order and criminal laws, and a considerable part of this enforcement is based on the decision of the police officer. Women were harassed in the streets, where many women and under-aged Sudanese girls would be picked up by the police for wearing pants or behaving in a way that is deemed inappropriate. One striking example is when a girl got picked up because the policeman didn't like the way she was walking.

Women could face trial, and they could be punished with 40 lashes and of almost 200 Dollars.

During the overthrow of Albashir's regime, women played an influential role. Women constituted up to 70 percent of protestors in peaceful marches. After the overthrow of the regime, women organized themselves into the largest women's rights coalition in history "MANSAM". This coalition enabled them to achieve remarkable results, such as attaining a 40% quota for women in all governmental bodies within the Juba peace agreement. This coalition also played a major part in the transitional government ratification of CEDAW and the criminalization of FGM. This coalition which has more than 60 political and civil society organizations, armed groups, and women experts managed to push the government to increase women's representation in the transitional government.

That being said, women feminist groups in Sudan are currently divided into two main categories: one being conservative feminist groups which are mainly older women elites from Khartoum who have political participation as their main demand, and the other is a demographic of younger feminist groups which include women and men with priorities of achieving more freedoms, democracy, and justice beyond the capital.

LGBTQ+ groups are to be found within the margins of activism at the moment, due to the threats imposed on sexual rights in Sudan. Homophobia is prevalent even among culturalists, educated people, women's groups, civil society organizations, and workers. This is evident after the government removed the death penalty for sodomy in a very discreet manner because of fear of a public backlash.

In conservative Sudan, sexual freedom and rights are taboo. Young women and men are prohibited from experiencing and expressing their sexuality in any way. Sexual relations outside of marriage and between people of the same sex are prohibited by law. As a consequence of these regulations and communities being overwhelmingly against sexual freedom, advocating for sexual freedom is a highly sensitive and risky endeavor. This is due to the sensitivity of the topic. Laws are not protecting civil society organizations working in the issues. And the risk of facing prosecution and harassment from National Intelligence and other government bodies is probable.

Civil society organizations stated that working on women's rights has become easier after the revolution. They stated that after 30 years of oppression they can work directly in women's rights, gender, and feminist awareness campaigns but this is not the same for LGBTQ+ activism and sexual rights, which include sexuality, sexual orientation, right to abortion, and access to contraceptives. However, LGBTQ rights activism still has to operate covertly, and support groups have to work under different titles to raise awareness, and support groups are to be conducted in a secretive way and with limited numbers.

December revolution and the promise of a better future in Sudan. During the December 2018 revolution in Sudan, freedom, peace, and justice were the slogans used on the streets of Khartoum and other Sudanese cities for a period of 4 months before the overthrow of the Islamist dictatorship of Omar Albashir. After three months, the democratic transitional government was announced; many considered this the beginning of a new era for human rights in Sudan.

Feminist groups in Sudan are witnessing a renaissance now more than ever. The current debates among these groups are challenging. One of Sudan's biggest women's alliances "MANSAM" in history has been criticized for being elitist and failing to represent women from the peripheries, young women, and people of LGBTQ+ identities.

According to civil society organizations, the debate over sexual rights, which gained momentum after the revolution, is now subdued – the argument is that now is not the time to advocate for sexual freedoms and that doing so now would cause harm. Another organization reported that left-wing political parties

had changed their stance regarding sexual rights and sexual identities and that they had abandoned the cause.

In response to the many violations committed by government forces and armed groups (the Khartoum sit-in break, Tabit mass rape...) the general public is trying to deal with sexual identities, sexual rights, and sexual violence victims in the same way it has always interacted with them – by silencing and denying the existence and struggles of this vast category of Sudanese people. They are left to deal with their struggles alone, stigmatized and rejected from the community.

Young generation Sudanese feminist groups a new safe space. Despite all the struggles the solidarity between younger feminist groups and LGBTQ+ groups run deep and intersects in spaces. Having a safe space within a caring community and supportive friends is a very difficult thing to find in Sudan. This is perhaps partly due to the different perspectives lack of understanding younger and older generations carry, as well as the labeling of sexual freedoms and sexual identities as foreign and contrary to religious beliefs. This challenges the long history of the community in Sudan.

Sudan's future of inclusive feminism that focuses on advocating for representative political and social spaces with respect to sexual identities and does not discriminate based on age, is tied with the presence of a democratic civilian government. Civil society organizations are predicting a huge dip in human rights in Sudan if this current coup continues, especially for young feminist groups and LGBTQ+ activists. However, if a democratic civilian government is established, we might see a future where outdated beliefs about age and sexual identities are no longer a restriction, nor a limit. We will also see an increased number of spaces where expression and identities are accepted and supported.

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Towards an intersectional foreign policy for the United States

"A country's foreign policy is a statement of its values and priorities. The implementation of foreign policy, across all of its various levers, is one demonstration of how a nation lives its values. Now, more than ever, the United States needs a feminist approach - one that fundamentally alters the way the nation conducts itself..." - The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

Since the end of World War Two, the U.S. has led the liberal world order through diplomacy, multilateralism, and foreign assistance. After 9/11, it accelerated its development efforts to promote security and stability. In 2020, the U.S. invested in foreign assistance obligations across 11,000 activities and 212 countries, averaging around 1.2% of the federal budget, focusing 42% on long-term development aid. However, since the Taliban returned to power following the withdrawal of U.S. troops, U.S. assistance programs have faced growing criticism for their failure to evaluate local context and their lack of lasting, positive impacts. As the U.S. continues to lose credibility as a promoter of development, bipartisan support for foreign policy collapses and its ability to stop the post-liberal misogynistic backlash against human and women's rights has become compromised.

Still, since the positive effects of a more peaceful, developed world are well-documented and because the U.S. continues to be the world's largest donor, democracy promotion and international leadership remain relevant topics for the current administration.

Foreign assistance has effectively reduced extreme poverty, expanded access to clean water and sanitation, and improved health. But if we hope to tackle global, multi-dimensional challenges - like the climate crisis, growing social divides, and barriers to migrations - shying away from the world is not an option: foreign policy must center on tackling structural inequalities, which prevent lasting development, through a defined overarching strategy that focuses on building local capacities through inclusion. However, there is not yet a consensus about what this guiding policy should be. This article suggests some ways forward.

Feminist foreign policy officials have proposed pursuing gender equality as both a goal in itself and a strategy, arguing that by promoting women's empowerment we reduce poverty, promote development and move towards peace. Particularly, an Intersectional Foreign Policy (IFP), that builds on Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP), provides opportunities for the U.S. to advance equality and re-establish its leadership in the development arena.

First proposed by former Swedish Deputy Prime Minister Margot Wallström in 2014, FFP has aimed to challenge male-dominated areas like foreign aid, trade, defense, and diplomacy by providing women and girls with rights, representation, and resources. FFP, and similar variations, have since been applied by Canada (2017), France (2019), and Mexico (2020). In 2021, Luxemburg, Spain, Malaysia, Libya, and Germany also made pledges to advance a FFP. In Sweden, FFP has impacted trade, assistance in reproductive health, diplomacy, and transparency. For instance, FFP was key to Sweden's 2015 decision to halt bilateral arms agreements with Saudi Arabia, following Wallström's allegations of Saudi's human rights violations, and its 2017 pledge to stop providing aid to organizations complying with Trump's global gag rule.

Since 2019, the ICRW's Coalition for Feminist Foreign Policy has aimed to advance an FFP for the U.S. However, FFP has been criticised by feminist scholars and activists, particularly BIWOC (Black, Indigenous and Womxn of Color). These

criticisms highlight various issues: 1) contradictions with other aspects of policy like international arms trade, 2) exporting a top-down approach that fails to include local knowledge and work with grassroots organizations, and 3) a failure to tackle racist and colonial patterns by imposing one, White vision of feminism, with little acknowledgement, support, and promotion of BIWOC voices.

An intersectional perspective, building on the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, sheds light on the unique, simultaneous impacts and challenges of social injustice and discrimination experienced by individuals facing multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. Such a perspective understands that a gender lens can only promote transformative social change if it explicitly considers intersectional identities such as race, nationality, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, and age. Following a similar approach, Chandra Mohanty insists on the importance of anti-racist, feminist politics in putting an end to imperial U.S. wars, which have long been promoted in the name of democracy.

Whilst feminist objectives have become compromised domestically by conservatives and the U.S. Supreme Court, the executive increasingly accumulates power in the foreign policy arena. Thus, IFP provides opportunities to re-think foreign policy, advancing feminist objectives where it remains possible. Defined as a lens designed to strategically guide States in their policymaking and interactions with other State and non-State actors, IFP centres decisions, activities, and attitudes on understanding, de-constructing, and including individuals and groups experiencing multiple layers of exclusion and discrimination. It is a framework anchored on disrupting existing patterns of power. Particularly, IFP understands that, if the objective is to foster a more developed world, thus promoting stability and peace, the imposition of liberal democracies is too uncritical.

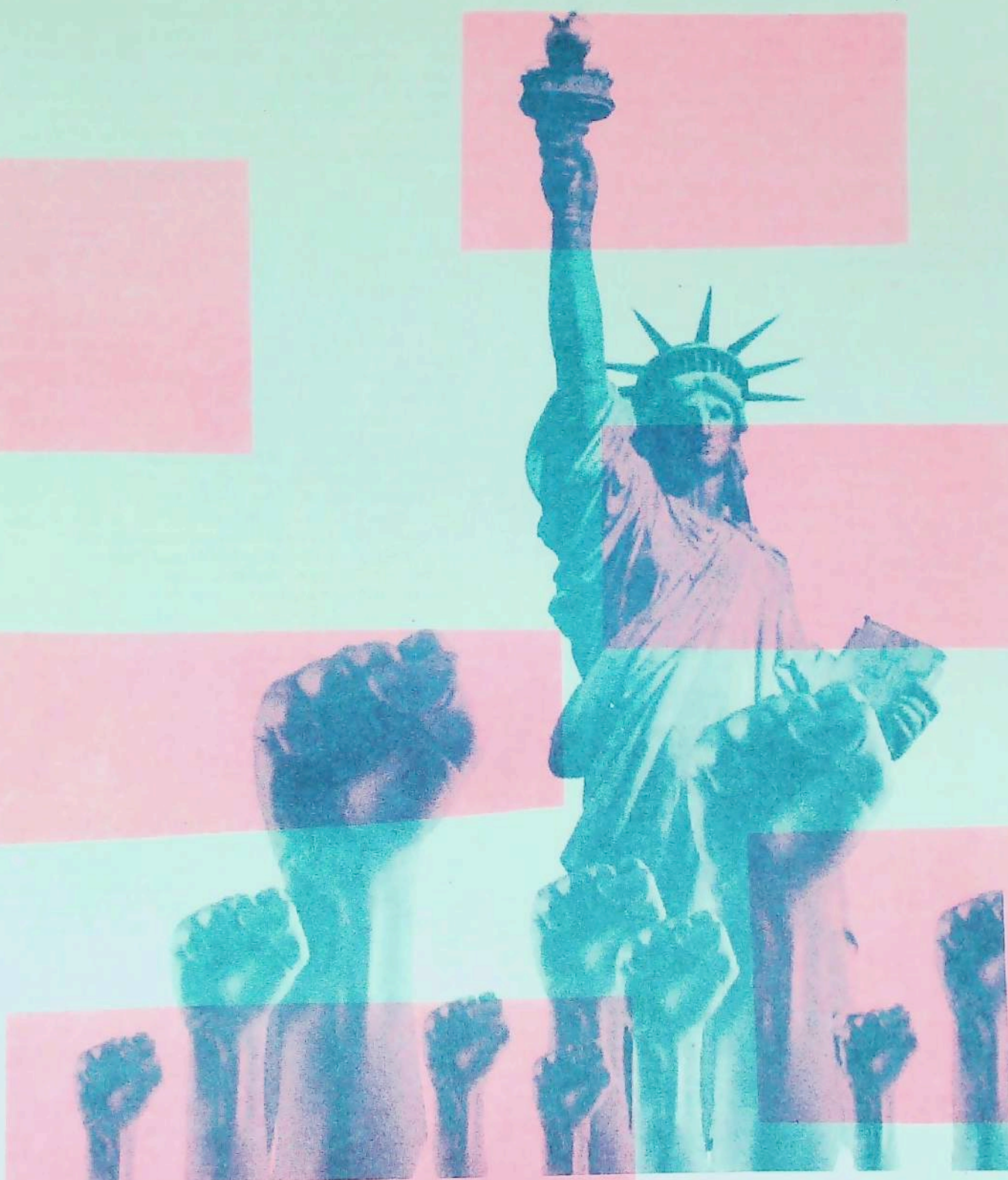
In contrast, IFP evaluates the impacts of global challenges on groups with overlapping, disadvantaged, and excluded identities, who disproportionately experience poverty, the threat of war and climate change, the need to migrate, and disease, amongst others. To drive more impactful and transformative interventions, IFP argues that instead of focusing on liberal democracy promotion the key lies in re-centring inclusion; both through advocating for more complex interventions that tackle the nexus of power structures, and to a lesser extent through representative politics, since gender, as well as other inherited traits, impact policy decisions.

The question is then, what gives the U.S. the legitimacy to advance IFP? Despite advances made during the Biden administration, the U.S. is not "an example" when it comes to equality. However, no country has managed to do something like this: even Norway, a country that scores #1 in Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index, focuses on middle- and upper-class women's freedoms, failing to comprehend - or change - how its "gender-positive" policies negatively affect migrants like au-pairs and nurses, increasing dangers of exploitation and trafficking. In line with Toni Hastrup's assertions, to be successful, IFP must avoid invoking its own experiences as good practice and recognize that gender-based discrimination, in its intersection with the racialized legacies of colonialism, exists everywhere. Therefore, the only prerequisite for the U.S. is to leverage IFP as a strategy for accountability, showing how individual actions add-up thoughtfully to a larger purpose.

This article has argued that the U.S. needs to rethink how it relates to the world by implementing an Intersectional Foreign Policy Strategy, in order to increase the quality and effectiveness of its aid and impact. To maximise success, such a strategy must be mainstreamed across sectors. All aid provided should go to projects that consider coherent, intersectional approaches to specific challenges. Support for projects must be flexible and long-term to ensure effective implementation, including funding and leveraging innovative funding methodologies. The U.S. must promote representation

of women and disadvantaged groups in diplomacy, think tanks, and academia, and incorporate voices from the "Global South" through scholarships, fellowships, and job opportunities to facilitate improvement and application of IFP. The U.S. must also ratify CEDAW, the Domestic Workers Convention, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child to reposition itself on the fore-front of innovation and development. Gender-budgeting and education policy must be prioritized, to focus on women and girls and shift gendered norms. Lastly, frameworks to measure intersectionality should be developed to gather robust evidence and continuously inform policy-making and promote accountability.

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A softer way for feminist engagement: How public opinions on social media encourage gender equality for Chinese women

Inspiring Chinese netizens to engage with gender issues is impossible without social media. Its user-generated content allows previously anonymous women to become visible in the social world, serving as a public engagement tool for asking for and achieving accountability with authorities. Focusing on a recent news story about the "Eight-Child Mother", this post explores how social media has accomplished accountability.

Although political feminist movements are not encouraged in China, it does not mean that feminism's progress is constrained as some Western scholars believe. Online forums like TikTok and Zhihu have revealed a greater concern with gender-based problems in China – like trafficking of women. In the future, social media is projected to play a larger and more important part in China's feminist growth, as it has the potential to encourage feminists voice in a softer way, by challenging structural and institutionalized gender inequality in China without being censored.

Factors affecting the development of contemporary gender norms in China. Taking an intersectional perspective, we can see how women are affected by political changes like the Open Reform in 1978 and the Nine-Year Compulsory Education Policy implemented in 1986. A market-constructed gender order has emerged since these social revolutions. Following the start of marketization reform, China's rapid industrialized process has resulted in a demand for skilled workers. Simultaneously, postsecondary education equity has progressively increased since women are provided with unprecedented opportunities to receive education at all levels.

Through education, some women have overcome conventional patriarchal dependency on husbands and families by finding professions in metropolitan cities. This trend breaks the traditional model of marriage, like being reliant on a financially successful spouse and accepting reproductive obligations as a trade-off. Reproductive and productive work reframed domestic gender relations as women's economic contributions rose and their autonomy grew, resulting in a new gender order. Reports, online programs, and discussions concerning the ideals of feminism in the digital sphere primarily demonstrate how social media has aided the reshaping of gender perspectives in Chinese feminist conversations.

Nevertheless, while educated women have gained more autonomy in marriage with improved economic status, marginalised men have fewer alternatives for marriage, which remains an important aspect of Chinese society. Most of them live in ultraconservative rural regions with limited mobility, resulting in rampant female abduction in modern China. It is reported the total number of young women and children trafficked in China from 2000–2013 was 92,851, while it is thought to be substantially higher than the officially stated figure. These unlawfully sold women are perceived by rural males to meet their sexual and reproductive needs, and they are more likely to face domestic abuse. However, in most situations, the cries of trafficked women are invisible due to their limited power to fight against this deplorable treatment. What is worse, due to patriarchal society, gender-based crimes in rural regions are commonly treated as "family affairs" rather than issues requiring public oversight, deteriorating the accountability ecology of social underclasses in rural China. Because of the lack of attention, trafficking women remains hidden from public view.

Chinese social media and its accountability. Being educated and financially independent has made some women

more sensitive to gender issues and feel more empathetic to helpless female groups. As feminist voices grow louder, an increasing number of women participate in public discussions about gender issues, demonstrating their ability to create alternative public forums for marginalised voices through social media. Such sensitive discussions on social media caused by gender disparities have become more noticeable in recent years. According to the most current data China's netizen population has already surpassed 1.032 billion. The decentralised information sharing feature allows anybody to share and receive knowledge, laying a foundation for previously invisible women to speak up online. In this context, a growing number of women are concerned and sensitive to disparities when seen through the lens of gender. As a result, when gender inequality is clearly recorded and disseminated, feminist discussions proliferate.

In a TikTok video posted on January 18th, 2022, a Chinese lady with eight children in Xuzhou was captured being bound by chains. While she was subjected to cruel treatment, her husband was lauded by local authorities as a good example to raise eight dependent children. The video sparked widespread interest on a national and worldwide scale. Suspicions that the women had been unlawfully transported to the county quickly spread on Weibo (China's equivalent of Twitter), and netizens were reminded of the facts of rural China's human trafficking. The hashtag #Investigative progress of eight ladies who gave birth to eight infants in Fengxian County revealed by Xuzhou# has been accessed 90 million times on Weibo as of April 11st. The story was also carried in Western media outlets such as the New York Times, BBC, and Radio Free Asia, reflecting the international impact.

Authorities were then involved in examining the truth after intense public debate on Weibo and Zhihu (Chinese Quora). In response to public concern, the provincial administration organised an inquiry team on February 17th. According to the most recent official declaration her spouse has been found guilty of unlawful incarceration and has been brought to justice in suspicion of human trafficking. Furthermore, it has been claimed that a member of the CPPCC National Committee has advocated invalidating marital relationships with trafficked women, demonstrating the news' legislative impact. What's more, on 19th of April, the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress released amendment to the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests. The draft amendment requires the establishment of a mandatory reporting and investigation system for abduction and other infringements of women, showing legislative influences of huge public attention in social issues. However, compared with long-lasting online and social activists which directly argue for political rights (like #Ni Una Menos in Latin America), discussion on social events indirectly claim for political changes. As a result, it is more complex to track their legislative results – the effectiveness of online discussion for accountability is difficult to measure.

To conclude, in China, the growing awareness of feminism confronts patriarchal culture through online discussions about women's rights in daily news. Such approach avoids direct social conflicts that CCP strictly regulates (like political movements and riots), but achieve accountability by showing backlash to topical social issues and urge for change, offering an approach for feminist development in the long term. In the case of trafficked women, discussions on social media help these invisible women occupy a space in the public sphere, arouse political attention and, in this instance, achieve amendment of the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests. Although such a method raises doubts about its effectiveness, it functions as significant moment to consider how to demand accountability in China's feminist future.

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热门



热门话题

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