02

Opportunities and challenges for queer and feminist collaboration in queering WPS

2.1 Opportunities for collaborations between queer and feminist organizations

LGBTQ+ and feminist movements should make alliances for two reasons: a shared commitment to transforming existing gender norms and power structures, and a shared history of organizing for gender justice. Below we examine these two opportunities for feminist and queer collaboration in WPS interventions in more detail.

Shared commitment to challenging existing gender norms and power structures

It benefits women and LGBTQ+ people alike to disrupt and upend essentialist and binary ideas about gender, masculinity and femininity which are detrimental to both movements. Both movements are advocating for greater respect for personal autonomy, and for the renunciation of deterministic ideas about the positions that each person can occupy in society based on their gender. Feminist scholars have done extensive work to point out the harms of patriarchy in conflict, as well as how gender matters to working for a sustainable peace.[31]

In Colombia the feminist movement has focused on discrimination against women: access to abortion, reproductive autonomy, and effects of misogynistic discrimination against women. The LGBTQ+ movement has worked on other effects of this system of discrimination: compulsory heterosexuality and cisnormativity. Both social movements are working for the dismantling of the patriarchal system that divides bodies, behaviors and power in society with women in one category and men in another.

Community-level activities to improve awareness about LGBTQ+ people

• Host reading circles to discuss work by LGBTQ+ authors

• Host a film club to watch films by LGBTQ+ directors about LGBTQ+ lives

• Share children's stories about LGBTQ+ people

Both the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements would benefit from the dismantling of biological essentialism that discriminates against women's access to political roles in economic, political and social spaces. For the feminist movement, addressing patriarchal discrimination means greater political representation of women, greater budgetary allocation for women's health needs and socio-legal work to prevent misogynistic violence. For the LGBTQ+ movement, addressing patriarchy is about: dismantling the causes that generate transphobic or homophobic violence. Upending this discrimination means women, including LBTQ women, begin to gain full access to similar opportunities to men in education and employment, among many other initiatives. WPS interventions would be much more robust if they included an intersectional approach informed by LGBTQ+ experiences.

Shared history of mobilizing for gender justice

There is a strong history of alliance building between the feminist and LGBTQ+ movement in Colombia to advance gender justice. While there is a growing anti-rights movement fixated on tearing these alliances down, queering WPS is about supporting long-standing collaborations, and promoting new ones.

2.2 Challenges for collaboration between feminist and LGBTQ+ organizations

There is a growing interest in developing collaborations between feminist and LGBTQ+ organisations working on transforming the WPS to reframe the agenda through queering.[33] We observe three obstacles to consider when carrying out feminist and LGBTQ+ alliances in an assertive and constructive way: the need to recognize previous efforts for collaboration, the historical difference between the movements, and prioritizing voices other than cisgender women. Below we offer a description of these three obstacles and a brief proposal of how to address them.

Recognition of previous efforts for collaboration

As a first step, LGBTQ+ issues are not new in feminist movement building. Chances are that the movements have worked together and supported each other. This will open the possibility of talking about gender in a complex way enriched by the life experiences of both social movements. In addition, it will recognize the advances and work done previously in favor of this alliance.

These conversations should start from a constructive and supportive perspective and should not shame or erase any participant. This goes hand in hand with sincere and respectful work between the two social movements.

Historical difference between movements

One of the greatest difficulties is the material and formal inequality between feminist and LGBTQ+ movements. The feminist movement has had a much longer trajectory in the public sphere, in legal advocacy and in organizing politically at different levels (local, municipal, national and international).

Due to the disparity between laws, health conditions, and cultural support for LGBTQ+ rights versus women's rights, the two social movements are at different stages of their development. On the one hand, the women's movement has made a lot of progress and

worked to bring international standards to light; on the other, there are small community groups trying to keep LGBTQ+ people alive.

This discrepancy between movements will result in conversations between women peacebuilders and LBTQ women organizers who are not necessarily equals. The feminist movement is made up of more people, more movement leaders with access to professional education, more civil society organizers with some institutional backing, more people who have familial support and a stable home, and more people with experience receiving and administering international cooperation funds than the LGBTQ+ movement. It is important that this difference be used to the advantage of the alliance and not to its disadvantage.

To strengthen our social movements, we need to validate and legitimize the expertise and voice of all individuals who participate in the space. It is also important to develop strategies for mutually supporting each other. This will strengthen the alliance between the movements. It will also allow the feminist movement to reconnect with the grassroots activities relevant to their communities, and the LGBTQ+ movement to acquire institutional and administrative knowledge for improving engagement in WPS.

LGBTQ+ and feminist movement building in Colombia

The history between LGBTQ+ organizations and feminist organizations in Colombia is one of mutual support. Because of this joint effort, sexual violence was judged by the competent transitional justice court, and all measures of truth, justice, reparation and nonrepetition were implemented with a gender perspective.

This joint effort was evident during the negotiations between the National Government and the FARC-EP guerrillas about how to respond to acts of sexual violence. The movements worked together to maintain a broad definition of the "gender approach" weaved into the Final Peace Agreement. The movements were also determined that perpetrators of sexual violence against women and LGBTQ+ people should not be able to seek amnesty for the crime.

This history allows us to see the strategies already used in Colombia for collaboration between feminist and LGBTQ+ movements, and the benefits of this collaboration.

Prioritizing voices other than cisgender women

"Everyone [that I work with] has been a victim of the Colombian armed conflict, so it is useful to have a safe space. During all those years we have worked together with feminist and LGBTQ+ persons. In every social demonstration that we participate, we do it together"

- Bogotá activist

One of the challenges that causes the greatest concern is the unrestricted inclusion of cisgender men and transgender people (men or women) in the spaces that the feminist movement has created for itself. This concern must be received with all the seriousness and rigor possible, because the leadership of some cisgender men has hurt the feminist movement in the past. Trans people have also experienced great harm due to transphobic exclusionary practices.

There may be men who do not participate in this disrespectful way in spaces of alliance, and there may be women who do. The criteria for the participation within the queer feminist movement may be determined, rather, by individual conduct. The role for men and allies should be a continuing conversation. This conversation can come much later when other agreements on strategies, commonalities, and acceptable behaviors have been agreed by LBTQ women engaged in WPS.

However, we must insist that an intersectional feminist future involve men and transgender people. Their involvement in issues of social justice, environmental issues, cultural representation, and other contemporary challenges is vital. They will be part of the solution, and we owe it to the future world to involve them in this social movement of equality and autonomy for all people.

2.3 Actions for NGOs and feminist organisations looking to build coalitions between LBTQ women and feminist organization engaging with the WPS agenda

"My main worry is the security situation for leaders and activists in our hometowns, and the lack of opportunities and public acceptance of our leadership in our community."

- Trans woman activist, Bogotá workshop

We suggest the following actions for NGOs and feminist organisations who wish to support lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer women and LGBTQ+ communities working to queer WPS.

1. *Broaden the definitions of gender and security.*
2. *Be willing to be vulnerable and learn.*
3. *Recognise power relationships.*
4. *Invest in building coalitions.*

1. Broaden the definitions of gender and security.

Almost twenty-three years since the passing of the first Women, Peace and Security UN Resolution 1325, it is time to revisit some of assumptions about women informing the WPS agenda. Many LGBTQ+ communities were criminalised at the time of the passing of the resolution in 2000 and may continue to be criminalized today. A major concern within the WPS agenda is also the continual use of "gender" to only mean "women's issues."[34] Security for women in conflict-affected communities must also consider the security of LBTQ+ women. Conflict actors frequently target LGBTQ+ people for sexual violence, humiliation and even extortion.[35]

To queer WPS we need to move away from approaches to peace and security embedded in militarization. This vision of security is instead about the absence of not just conflict-related violence, but other forms of everyday violence. This also includes conflict that comes from homophobia and transphobia within the home and the community. Instead, approaches to security should be about helping communities address everyday insecurity and, where possible, in a collectivist rather than individual way. NGOs and feminist organisations should allow for grassroots organising, collective demands and lived experience to drive the designing of policies and frameworks that queer WPS.

While women's rights movements have decades of progress in addressing basic rights, LGBTQ+ rights movements have lagged, with states taking decades longer to address homophobia and transphobia. But progress for LGBTQ+ rights is not always one of slow and steady progress. Many countries have never addressed homophobic and transphobic violence, and some are going regressing.

> "Including the LGBT perspective in peace conversations would lead to a more equal society, more acceptance and less isolation."
>
> - Trans woman activist, Bogotá workshop

This violence continues to go unaddressed at home and at work resulting in targeted violence against lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer women as well as nonbinary people.[32] This limitation to the gender lens creates a gap in justice, policy and other legislative measures and ignores the empirical evidence of the experience of LGBTQ+ communities. There is an opportunity for women's rights organizations with more established networks to meaningfully integrate LGBTQ+ organizations, including lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer leaders, into their ongoing WPS work.

To achieve this, NGOs and feminist organisations must commit to engagement in consultancies with queer women on how they define and understand security and what peacebuilding would look like for them.[33] Such definitions and understandings must then be the basis for building a transformative action-oriented analysis to peacebuilding. Use these consultations to revise and/or develop policies, plans, and guidance to ensure diverse LGBTQ+ inclusion in responses, including developing indicators for monitoring progress.[38]

How to do a deep-dive consultancy:

Use ethnographic approaches or workshop style consultations to open the conversation.

Ensure your consultative approaches are open and flexible.
For example, allow participants to provide written submissions if they feel more comfortable, or one-to-one private conversations. Follow the general guide above regarding how to make this space inclusive, safe, and diverse.

Use strategic questioning.
Strategic questioning is a framework that allows for moving a conversation from facts to personal connection and action. Use a conversation technique with the participant/s to set the scene, identify the situation and explore how participant/s feel about it. Avoid closed questions or "why" questions. Use "how" or "what" questions. This line of questioning supports participants to think in terms of possibilities and change and to imagine pathways to action. A strategic question creates motion by asking, "How can we move? "Strategic questions are dynamic and don't allow a situation to stay stuck.

2. Be willing to be vulnerable and learn.

In collaborations between LGBTQ+ groups and feminist organizations one important thing to ensure in building this space is to invite lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer women to lead the consultation. Approach the consultation with empathy and curiosity to learn. It's okay not to know everything! The important thing is to always have the willingness to listen, recognize others and broaden your own perspectives. Recognize different people's expressions, ways of speaking, dressing, or acting. Know that not everyone engaged with gender, peace and security work identifies as a woman, and may be genderqueer or nonbinary. Never assume a person's sexual orientation based on their gender expression.[39] Likewise, respect everyone's pronouns. To avoid assuming people's pronouns, take the initiative to introduce yourself and point out your pronouns. Invite others to do so as well. If you have any questions about how to name someone, simply ask: "what are your pronouns?"[40]

Key Point ⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯>

Respect pronouns! If you are unsure of how someone's pronouns, start by pointing out your own and invite others to introduce their pronouns.

Be aware of unintentionally causing harm. For example, avoid revictimizing LGBTQ+ people who have been victims of conflict: do not use expressions and actions that are morbid, questioning, prejudiced or that can blame the victims and their identities.[41] Due to long-term exclusion, there is a history of mistrust that LGBTQ+ activists and academics may have with feminist organisations or INGOs. As such, it is important to create safer spaces that have strong agreements on how conflicts will be managed. It is important to determine a clear response to acts of discrimination and enable accountability. The goal should be to relieve tensions, while recognizing differences and mistakes as opportunities for learning.

Here is an example: basic steps to respond to microaggressions, in English is the ADRIC method[42]

1. Calmly, acknowledge that there was a microaggression.	"Actually, Dani's pronouns are she/her. "
2. Explain which word/attitude/gesture was disrespectful.	"Actually, Dani's pronouns are she/her. "
3. Refer again to the group's agreement.	"She has kindly reminded him of this several times and finds it hurtful that he doesn't take this information seriously. "
4. Remind the whole group that there is a difference between intent and impact and that even better intentions can have a detrimental impact.	"As you know, our group agreement states that we owe each other respect. This is also demonstrated by the correct use of others' pronouns."
5. Conclude the exchange by focusing on the existence of a safe learning space.	"I have no doubt that you were using the wrong pronouns for Dani on purpose, however we can hurt each other even when it is not our intention."

Translated from: Equalcity. Toolbox Creating safe(r) spaces for LGBTQ people with a migrant background. Training. pp. 97-107.

Throughout the process, adopt an intersectional approach. Don't assume a single image of LGBTQ+ people. In this collaborative work is also important to avoid making assumptions about a person's abilities based on their appearance or speech. Remember that person is not less intelligent because of the colour of their clothes or the length of their nails.

3. Recognise power relationships.

NGOs and feminist activists need to recognise the power that they themselves hold. Sit with your team and look at how you have designed an intervention or programme for LGBTQ+ communities.[43] Determine what actions to take to redistribute power. Continue asking yourselves these power shifting questions: [44] [45]

- Who talks and who acts in the process?
- Whose knowledge dominates in the process?
- Who has been silenced in this process?

Two questions to return to throughout the process are:

1. Is this space actively welcoming of diversity, including gender and sexual diversity?

2. What can we do to ensure that all participants feel informed and welcome? What is required to foster safety and inclusivity?

Thinking co-creatively. *Remember, this kind of approach requires time and capacity!* Thinking co-creatively means engaging all key parties: your staff, the LGBTQ+ partner organisation and the LGBTQ+ community in designing the research.

Value the expertise and perspectives of LBTQ women and make use of any insights from their ongoing advocacy, policy, and programming work. Make connections with LGBTQ+ partners that inform research framing, methods, and interpretation. This will improve the usability and uptake of findings and learning and allow you to co-create knowledge and methodology that are meaningful to LGBTQ+ co-creation partners and their communities.

Power Mapping Exercise

Draw a circle in the middle of a piece of paper or whiteboard. Name it "decision maker." Then draw circles around this circle.

Who are the most powerful actors in your context? Place them in the circle. Draw another set of circles around this second set of circles. Place tertiary actors who are somewhat close to power and decision making but a step removed in this third circles. Keep doing this a fourth and fifth time to locate how far actors are from power and decision making. Draw arrows between actors to indicate any connections they might have, while also indicating any external paths (foreign donors, foreign governments) that add to an actor's power.

This exercise can help you think of strategic ways to build your campaign to queer WPS.

Reflective Questions:

What assumptions about LGBTQ+ people are present in your context?

What do LGBTQ+ persons identify as everyday discriminations?

How can your organization work toward addressing these discriminations collaboratively across feminist and LGBTQ+ programming?

4. Invest in building coalitions.

As states get more authoritarian and the anti-rights movement gets stronger, coalition-building is essential. Amid growing anti-rights attacks, civic space, especially for LGBTQ communities, is drastically reduced. As civil and political rights are suspended and economic and social restrictions are imposed, those that were already marginalized are hit hardest.

Strong coalitions between these groups with support from inter-national can be key to building strong civic spaces and resisting authoritarianism. Investing in critical, transnational alliances based on evidence and building value-based counter narratives can help bridge the CSO/NGO-citizen divide.

It's possible to build and strengthen movements through existing networks and using the complementary roles of NGOs and local/national civil society. In the face of shrinking civic space, we need to reflect more on decolonized practice and localised responses.