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of York

**LATIN AMERICAN TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST SOLIDARITY:
Alliance for Safe Abortion Access**

Exam number: Y3927282

Dr Rachel Alsop – Main Supervisor at the University of York

Dr Kathrin Thiele – Support Supervisor at Utrecht University

Submitted to the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of York

Word Count: 28,686 words

August, 2024

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Approval signed by Dr. Rachel Alsop

Main Supervisor



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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the crafting of feminist alliances in the Latin American context that navigate and resist oppressive structures and propose new human rights paradigms that prioritise women's autonomy and dignity. By examining the affiliation between two organisations in the region, the Brazilian Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and the Colombian Oriéntame, the study highlights innovative models of feminist solidarity. The two groups collaborate to guarantee safe and affordable abortions for Brazilians whose terminations do not fall under the legal permissions in their country. With the support of these groups, individuals travel to Colombia, where abortion regulation permits the procedure up to 24 weeks. The central research question investigates how these cooperative models foster a Latin American feminism that challenges and reconfigures colonial boundaries, forming alliances across national and linguistic lines, and reshaping human rights discourse. Methodologically, the research employs a semi-structured interview with Juliana Reis, founder of Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres, along with a comprehensive review of relevant feminist decolonial literature. This approach provides a decolonial perspective on feminist solidarity, emphasising the importance of intersectionality and dismantling colonial epistemological hierarchies. This dissertation contributes to the academic field by elucidating the significance of feminist affiliations in the Latin American context. It advocates for a more inclusive and intersectional feminist movement and aims to inspire further research into decolonial feminist praxis and the reimagining of human rights.

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to all the women in my life.

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It is so beautiful that I have so many people in my life to say thanks to.

Thank you to my mom. When I told her that I was moving away, she started crying because she would miss her daughter but was extremely proud of how I was conquering the world. Thanks to my dad, grandmother, madrinha and grandfather for the immense love that accompanies me anywhere. Thank you to my brother for always telling me how proud he is of his little sister. Thank you to my niece and nephew, if your tia lives away and sees you growing up by video calls is because I hope to teach you both that a better world is possible and that you can do everything you want. Thanks to my younger self, I love you deeply and I know I am making you proud. If I am who I am today is because you had the courage.

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Y gracias a Dios nací en Latinoamérica!
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PNA	Brazilian National Abortion Survey
SUS	Brazilian Unified Health System
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WGDAWG	Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

INTRODUCTION

This work is based on the initial premise that abortion is a human right. Indeed, a body of jurisprudence has indicated that the denial of safe termination of pregnancy amounts to violations of numerous human rights, including privacy and freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Calling for its decriminalisation, some texts have acknowledged that laws prohibiting abortion not only target women and girls seeking to have an abortion, but also penalise service providers and facilitators (OHCHR, 2020).

At the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, the majority of states acknowledged that unsafe abortion poses a significant public health issue, and committed to “take all appropriate measures to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, universal access to health care services, which includes family planning and sexual health” (United Nations, 1994, p.10).

This commitment came to be known as the “Cairo Consensus” and represented a major paradigm shift, moving away from policies steered by demographic targets aimed at population control, to approaches recognising women’s reproductive autonomy as an essential component of human rights (Garita, 2014). In addition, the course of action that ensued after the ICPD affirmed that reproductive health care programmes should provide a wide range of services free from coercion (United Nations, 1994).

This stance was reiterated in the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted during the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Here, the final declaration acknowledged that forced abortion was among grave violations of human rights. It also urged all governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations to recognise and deal with the impacts of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern, and as a threat to the health and life of women and girls (United Nations, 1995).

The Platform also stated that where abortion is not against the law, measures should be taken to ensure that the procedure is safe. This involves individuals having the necessary knowledge to make decisions and governments recognising the population groups at the highest risk. It also outlined that, in all cases, citizens should have access to quality services to handle

complications arising from abortion. In addition, laws containing punitive measures against those who have undergone illegal abortions were to be reviewed (United Nations, 1995).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), implementing measures to prevent unsafe abortions is a nation's fundamental duty in its protection of the right to sexual and reproductive health. The WHO has also acknowledged that international human rights law mandates that states must take action to lower maternal mortality rates and protect women from the physical and mental health risks linked to unsafe termination of pregnancy (World Health Organization, 2022).

Meanwhile, United Nations human rights bodies have also recognised restrictive abortion laws as a form of discrimination. Highlighting physical and psychological integrity as essential to the full enjoyment of other rights, they have pushed for the elimination of laws that criminalise sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion procedures. Various such committees have asserted that prohibitions on the safe termination of pregnancy breach the obligation of states to uphold the right to sexual and reproductive health, along with other human rights (OHCHR, 2020).

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has outlined that it is discriminatory for a state to refuse the legal provision of reproductive health services. It has also argued that violations of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as the criminalisation of abortion and the denial or delay of safe abortion services, constitute forms of gender-based violence:

Criminal regulation of abortion serves no known deterrent value. When faced with restricted access women often engage in clandestine abortions including self-administering abortifacients, at risk to their life and health. Additionally, criminalisation has a stigmatising impact on women, and deprives women of their privacy, self-determination and autonomy of decision, offending women's equal status, constituting discrimination (OHCHR, 2020, p.2)

The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WGDAWG) has highlighted that the right to make autonomous decisions about body and reproductive functions is central to fundamental rights such as equality and privacy. In addition, the Special Rapporteur on the right to health has argued that laws criminalising abortion infringe on women's dignity

and autonomy by severely restricting their ability to make decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health (OHCHR, 2020).

In two cases presented before the Human Rights Committee where women were forced to travel to a neighbouring nation to terminate a pregnancy, it determined that the two women endured severe physical and mental suffering, which amounted to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Furthermore, the Committee observed that the criminalisation of abortion induced shame and stigmatised the women's actions (OHCHR, 2020).

Focusing on Latin America specifically, there is evidently a growing recognition of abortion as a fundamental human right. A group of activists in Colombia advocated that health and mental risks resulting from an unsafe termination of pregnancy undermined the fulfilment of all other rights, which proved crucial in 2006 when lawyer and activist Monica Roa fronted an effort to persuade the Colombian Supreme Court to decriminalise abortion (Palomino, 2022).

Roa's approach included delivering a broad definition of health, which encompassed physical and mental wellbeing, ultimately advocating for abortion when the pregnant person's life is at risk. Roa then successfully turned to the Colombian Constitutional Court, where the magistrates were persuaded to base their decision on human rights principles, resulting in the decriminalisation of abortion in three specific cases (Palomino, 2022). At that time, human dignity was beginning to carry greater weight in Colombian jurisprudence, and indeed prevailed in the decision, recalled former judge Manuel José Cepeda: "The starting point, and what is essential, is human dignity" (Cepeda, 2022).

In the case of the neighbouring country Brazil, Decree-Law no. 2.848 of 07 December 1940 decriminalised abortion under the following two circumstances: if the pregnancy is a result of sexual violence; and if the pregnancy represents a risk to the pregnant person's life (Decreto-Lei N° 2.848). In 2012, a decision of the Brazilian Supreme Court ruled that people are free to decide whether or not to terminate their pregnancy if a medical report shows that the foetus is anencephalic. Based on this understanding, the same court declared unconstitutional any interpretations that include the termination of pregnancy, in case of anencephaly, in the articles of the Penal Code that criminalise abortion (ADPF 54, [2012]).

According to the National Abortion Survey (PNA) in Brazil, released in 2021, approximately one in seven Brazilian women above 40 had had an abortion. Of the sample of 2,000 women who took part in the survey, 43% had been hospitalised due to abortion

complications and 39% had used abortion medication. The 2021 PNA also found that 52% of respondents were 19 years old or younger when they had their first abortion. Higher rates were detected among respondents to have had less schooling, as well as among black and indigenous women and those living in poorer regions (Diniz, Medeiros and Alberto Pereira Madeiro, 2023). More recent data were provided by a survey made by the association *Gênero e Número* (Gender and Number). In 2022, there were 180,500 registered hospitalisations for abortion in public and private hospitals in Brazil. The national Unified Health System (SUS) received 156,400 of these patients (around nine out of every 10 cases of hospitalisation for termination of pregnancy or pregnancy loss). The SUS treated 91% of spontaneous abortions and was responsible for carrying out 97% of the abortions falling under the umbrella of legality (Alves and Nunes da Rocha, 2023).

Coming back to Colombia, abortion has been judicially decriminalised since 2006 under three circumstances, similar to those stipulated in Brazilian law. The Colombian Constitutional Court determined that abortion could not be considered a crime: if it represents a risk to the woman's health or life; in cases of foetus malformations that would eventually result in endangering or terminating the mother's life; or whenever the pregnancy resulted from sexual violence (C- 355/06).

However, in practice it has been shown that in Colombia, unlike Brazil, the term "mother's health" covers a broad scope, including both the physical and emotional well-being of the pregnant individual. Research conducted between 2013 and 2014 involving 87 women who underwent voluntary termination of pregnancy in Medellín revealed that concerns for maternal health were the predominant reason behind seeking termination, accounting for 61% of such cases (Restrepo-Bernal et al., 2019).

Overall, 55.3% of respondents stated that they had sought termination of their pregnancy due to mental health risk, while 5.7% of respondents had done so because the pregnancy posed a threat to their physical health. Among the women citing mental health risks, 18.6% of them had a psychiatric history, with two patients previously being diagnosed with clinical depression (Restrepo-Bernal et al., 2019). This conceptualisation of health as encompassing emotional well-being has led some Brazilian women to regard Colombia as a safer territory in which to have an abortion.

Such a journey has been made by many, and is exemplified by the case of Rebeca Mendes. A Brazilian woman from São Paulo who consented to her image and real name being used to narrate her story. Mendes had her request for a legal abortion in Brazil rejected by the Supreme Court in 2017. Having had her human right to an abortion denied, Mendes, with the financial and logistical support of two Colombian sexual and reproductive health organisations, went to Colombia and underwent the procedure safely (Passarinho, 2017).

The Brazilian juridically managed to have the procedure carried out in Colombia on the grounds of safeguarding her mental health. She arrived in Bogotá with a psychiatric report stating that she was suffering from anxiety and stress, which could evolve into severe clinical depression. This case occurred in 2017, when abortion was permitted in Colombia only in the three circumstances mentioned above (Passarinho, 2017).

If the case had happened in 2022, Mendes would not have had to present a psychiatric report. In February of that year, the Colombian Constitutional Court passed the decriminalisation of abortion in every case up to the first 24 weeks of a pregnancy (C-055/22). International human rights organisations working in Colombia perceived this as a historical event. In particular, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in a statement affirmed that this decision allowed Colombia to move forward in complying with international agreements and recommendations on access to safe abortion (UNFPA Colombia, 2022).

Reaffirming the argument in favour of safe abortion as an essential human right, UNFPA added that under international law, the right to abortion is intimately linked to the protection of women's other rights and is a fundamental element of sexual and reproductive health (UNFPA Colombia, 2022). The Americas Director at Amnesty International Erika Rosas, also in a release, celebrated this ruling as a historic victory for the Colombian women's movement, acknowledging that it represented the recognition of their rights (Amnesty International, 2022).

Context of the Research

Against the background of the juridical context laid out above, in 2019 the Brazilian organisation Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres (“Miles for Women's Lives” in Portuguese) was founded. Its origin story started in 2017 when Juliana Reis, founder of the organisation, when following the aforementioned case of Rebeca Mendes and her journey to Colombia in the media, published a

post on her social media asking who would be willing to donate air miles so other Brazilian women could access legal and safe abortion in the neighbouring country. As Reis shared in the interview I conducted with her for the current work, the post had limited reach until 2019 when the political scenario in Brazil changed:

In May 2019, a year and a half later, Damares is the Minister for Women under Bolsonaro, the President of the Republic. Damares is saying that women should wear pink, men should wear blue, and an article comes out about trips seeking legal abortions in Colombia. I take that same article and make a new post on my social media, asking the same question: 'Who would be willing to donate miles so that other women who don't have money can go?' Within 30 minutes, there were over 5,000 women and men jostling online. I received 1,200 offers of miles. And that is crucial. (Reis, 2024)

Encouraged by such a positive response, in September 2019, a project was launched. In November of the same year, for the first time, a pregnant woman went to Colombia with air miles donated under the initiative. In December 2020, Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres was formally established. After initial contact from a woman wishing to terminate her pregnancy, the organisation facilitates access to this fundamental right, guiding them through the preliminary examination processes, helping them to prepare necessary documentation for travel, and selecting routes and arranging means of transport. Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres can also partially or fully cover the costs of travel, accommodation, and meals (Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres, 2019).

When the abortion would be permissible under Brazilian law, the woman is referred to legal abortion services within the SUS network. When not permitted under Brazilian law, the woman, providing she is willing, is guided to undertake the procedure in another Latin American country, namely Colombia, Mexico, or Argentina. Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres mediates with partner institutions in these countries to reduce the bureaucracy, communication difficulties, and insecurity the woman would otherwise face (Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres, 2019). One of these partner institutions is the Colombian organisation Oriéntame (“Orient Me” in Spanish).

Oriéntame is a private social organisation established in 1977, which has formulated an integrated model and a safe protocol aimed at guaranteeing comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare for girls and women. Equipped with an interdisciplinary healthcare team, the organisation has developed a broad portfolio of accessible services for unwanted pregnancies or incomplete abortions. Furthermore, Oriéntame has created alternative programmes to prevent unwanted pregnancies, as well as training and education programmes contributing to the improvement of public health, women's rights, and social justice (Oriéntame, 2024).

Since the C-355 ruling that authorised abortion in three specific cases in 2006, the organisation has developed its protocols applying high-quality standards of care for women who require such procedure, establishing itself as a reference point for other institutions engaged in the implementation of legal abortion services (Oriéntame, 2024). And, one of this other groups is Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres. Oriéntame became the focal point in Colombia for the Brazilian organisation.

As will be explored throughout this work, Brazilians who search for Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and, with the support of the organisation, go to Colombia are medically assisted in Oriéntame's clinic. Juliana Reis, in our interview, shared that Oriéntame welcomes these individuals and, depending on the circumstances, provides the necessary procedures either free of charge or at a reduced cost. Additionally, there is effective communication between the two organisations to facilitate case referrals. This collaboration, as I will explore in this work, emerged from a shared commitment to ensuring the human right to safe abortion for everyone, regardless of financial background or nationality.

Research Question and Relevance

Considering the context described above, the research question underpinning this work investigates how this model of cooperation between a Brazilian organisation and a partner from Colombia fosters a Latin American feminism that transcends colonial barriers in search of ensuring a human right. The work examines the formation of alliances that cross borders, overcome language barriers, and go beyond the limitations imposed by colonial demarcations that separate nation-states from each other. This study seeks to understand how collaborations of

this kind not only resist but also reconfigure traditional boundaries, thereby creating a more inclusive and intersectional feminist movement in the region.

The significance of this research lies in its exploration of a form of feminism that diverges from Eurocentric paradigms, offering a decolonial perspective on feminist solidarity. This work acknowledges the critical need to challenge and dismantle colonial epistemological hierarchies, and, within the context of European academia, amplify voices from the third¹ world. By focusing on narratives that are often marginalised or silenced, this study aims both to illuminate and validate diverse experiences and perspectives.

Furthermore, this research is relevant with respect to highlighting a form of feminist affiliation that emerges from the Latin American context, thereby encouraging further scholarly inquiry into decolonial, feminist, and intersectional approaches to feminist creative action. By doing so, it not only enriches the academic discourse but also seeks to inspire and catalyse new research initiatives that embrace a more inclusive and holistic understanding of feminist praxis.

Aims

While setting out to answer the research question, the path undertaken goes from the “I” to the “we”. Here, I acknowledge Mohanty’s (2003) criticism of the construction of a “we” by the white, western, middle class feminists of the first world. This construction is related to an abstract “they” that would represent a “Third World (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimised, etc.)” (Mohanty, 2002, p.22).

Mohanty argues that it is essential to rethink the problematic modern ideas of linear development and essentialist notions of “we” and “they” (Mohanty, 2002). Therefore, in order not to support the power structures that the “we” claim to fight against, the theoretical and practical construction of this subject must reflect positionalities from an intersectional and global perspective (Lykke, 2012).

With that in mind, the aims of this work are threefold. The first aim is to investigate and historically and politically locate the “I,” understanding that it is the individual that will form the

¹ In this work, I use the term “third world” while recognizing its inadequacy to represent the social, economic, and political incompatibilities existing among the nations that fall under the third world umbrella. Nevertheless, following Mohanty (2003), I agree that this term offers heuristic utility and detailed explanatory power regarding the legacy of colonialism and the current neocolonial economic and geopolitical dynamics, which are not adequately addressed by other models such as “north” and “south.”

“we.” Accordingly, the research subject is analysed in relation to identity formation and the role of the state in this process. Furthermore, with the objective of investigating the individual that affiliates, I move on to the notions of active citizenship and, lastly, characterise the margins where this Latin American female “I” analysed in this work operates.

According to Ahmed: “when we think [about] the question of feminist futures, we also need to attend to the legacies of feminist pasts; what we have inherited from past feminisms” (Ahmed, 2014, p.183). Bearing that in mind, I will also explore the multiple historical cosmologies that shape this contemporary Latin American subject(s). A historical overview is, as argued by Spivak (1993), of extreme importance if one’s intention is to comprehend the possibilities of feminist alliances across diverse material conditions, and this will be adopted accordingly to achieve this first aim. .

Having explored the historical formation of identities and citizenship, the second aim of this work is to analyse the coming together of multiple individualities to form a “feminism without borders” (Mohanty, 2003, p.2). For that purpose, I build on Lugones’s (1987) symbology of world travelling to explore the ways one can beneficially navigate, and bond in, other realities. Doing so is important to understand the benefits of going to other “worlds” (Lugones, 1987, p.3) without the aim to conquer, but rather with a “loving attitude” (Lugones, 1987, p.15).

In addition, I explain why the concept of affiliation (Said, 1983) is useful to explore the relationship between *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and *Oriéntame*. Thereafter, still with the aim of exploring the connections between different “I” on the margins, I examine the crafted place(s) where they can speak, affiliate, share, and construct counter-discourses (i.e. the subaltern counterpublics as conceptualised by Fraser (1990)).

After having gained an understanding of the formation of identities and the creation of a collective that establishes beneficial affiliations, the third and last aim of the work is to analyse what the “we” can do specifically when it comes to proposing a new rewriting of human rights. As argued in the first section, abortion is widely recognised as a human right, so when the Colombian and Brazilian groups come together to propose new forms of addressing and experiencing abortion, they are essentially rethinking a human right.

With that in mind, I build on Fregoso’s (2014) concept of alternative imaginaries of human rights. This theoretical framework is particularly useful for its acknowledgment of the role of counter memories that were silenced in the formation of the marginalised individual

identity, in the course of the rethinking of human rights. The goal of reassessing this set of norms is to concoct a utopia; a world where everyone is guaranteed their human right of safe abortion. I then finish by exploring how Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and Oriéntame are bringing about their desired reality and the forming of a heterotopia.

Methodology

To achieve the aims detailed above, I conducted a semi-structured interview with Juliana Reis, founder of Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres. Meanwhile, this research project was analysed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Centre of Women's Studies of the University of York. After obtaining ethical approval, I first contacted Reis via her publicly available email address posted on the website of her organisation. At this initial stage of contact, I introduced myself, as well as my research and its objectives. In the course of early exchanges with Reis, I also explained the process of ethical approval that the research had successfully gone through and shared with her the consent form (located in this work's appendix).

While explaining the research project's ethical concerns, Reis was offered anonymity; it was made clear to her that, if she agreed to talk to me, she could ask to stop the interview and/or the recording at any time. All of this information is also presented in the completed consent form. Having been fully informed and given the chance to ask questions about the research project and ethical issues, the participant accepted the interview. She also agreed to an audio recording of the interview, and waived her right to anonymity.

The interview was conducted via Zoom in Brazilian Portuguese, and the audio was recorded via the same platform. Five days after the interview was held, the transcript of the audio was sent to the participant who was given two weeks to ask for any deletions and/or changes to be made. While the transcript was being prepared, the audio recording of the interview was securely stored in the University of York's cloud drive and deleted after the participant gave the approval of the transcript. It is important to note that all necessary documents (namely, the information sheet, the consent form, and the transcript of the interview) were shared with the participant in her native language (Portuguese), meaning that knowledge of English was not a prerequisite for taking part.

Extracts of the interview transcript are presented in this work in English, for which I acknowledge the inherent complexities of translation in qualitative research in social sciences.

Generally, semi-structured interviews allow participants to share their experiences and stories in their own words, but their responses sometimes include colloquialisms and expressions filled with jargon or slang that are difficult to translate (Temple et al., 2006).

If these unique elements and subtleties are overlooked, it can result in language inconsistencies during the translation process (Temple et al., 2006). Here, I acknowledge that even though my interviewee and I share the same native language and come from similar cultural backgrounds, the translation of some passages of the interview represented a methodological challenge. In order to mitigate that, I carefully reviewed the translated extracts, paying special attention to semantics and content. In addition, when certain aspects of the speech needed to be highlighted, this has been done in the interview analysis.

Another remark to be made in this methodology section is that, initially, the aim initially was to conduct an interview with a representative of Oriéntame as well. I contacted the organisation via a publicly accessible email address and an instant messaging application. I received an answer via the latter, saying that they would pass my request on to the responsible department who would get back to me via message or email. Weeks later, after not having received any answer, I contacted Reis from the Brazilian organisation to enquire whether she could ask her contact in Oriéntame if they would be willing to share their institutional email address with me. Reis contacted them and they accepted. Thereafter, I reached out to the Colombian organisation again and once more was told that my request would be forwarded to the responsible department. However, again I did not receive an answer. Ultimately, due to time constraints, I then decided to proceed with work using only an interview with the Brazilian organisation's representative.

Here, I recognise the role of the interview in feminist research in maximising both discovery and description. The method is perceived as a primary means, in feminist knowledge production, of guaranteeing the active involvement of respondents in the construction of data. Moreover, this method is deemed particularly important in this context because it represents an attempt to reverse the historical silencing of women and their stories, especially women of colour, queer women, and women of the third world. In addition, interviewing opens up a gate to people's own words, experiences, and narratives, thereby gleaning primary rather secondary data (Reinharz, 1992).

Accordingly, the primary data obtained via semi-structured interview is presented throughout this work. Threading through the analysis, relevant excerpts of the interview with Reis will be combined with an intersectional, feminist, and decolonial theoretical framework in order to generate meanings and reflections. It is important here to add that secondary data were also included in a conscious effort to amplify feminist voices from the third world, especially Latin America.

Lastly, I also recognise my own positionality with this work. As a Brazilian who can gestate, the theme under study involves me personally. The feminist affiliations that are forged within the region where I was born and raised are particularly important to me because they also inspire my own feminism. In the choice of theme, the body of literature, and the interviewee, this project is influenced by my own life.

CHAPTER 1. WOMEN AT THE CENTRE: NATIONAL, POLITICAL AND PERSONAL CONCERNS AND THE DYNAMICS OF POWER.

Within the larger context surrounding this work as a whole, this chapter presents the analysis of the “I,” the individual who, with other affiliates, forms a “we” focus for subsequent chapters. The aim of this chapter is to understand the “I” in this case, which here is a Latin American woman. In particular it sets out to understand the identity formation of the “I” and their relation to the state, in order to then move on to the “we.” I begin by exploring the existence of multiple historical cosmologies that shape contemporary Latin American subjects.

This analysis starts from recognizing the enduring legacy of colonialism. This is essential when attempting to comprehend the current social and political landscapes as well as the power dynamics in postcolonial states such as Brazil and Colombia. It is important here to clarify that this does not imply that history in America only began with colonisation; rather, the objective is simply to examine the lasting imprints left behind by colonial practices and ideologies.

In addition, the importance of addressing the role of the state in the dynamics analysed within the scope of this work is recognised. Indeed, the need to do so is emphasised in three points.

First, given that women have always been central to national concerns, as argued throughout this chapter, it is crucial to examine how women and their affiliations both shape and are shaped by national power. Here, I assert that identities are constructed through a reciprocal process involving nations and individuals.

Second, the nation-state is a type of entity entrenched in power inequalities since its inception, often obstructing the protection of human rights, and consequently compelling marginalised groups to form partnerships like the one established between *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and *Oriéntame*.

Third, those on the margins may, as a form of creative defiance, bypass national boundaries and utilise norms provided by the nation-state itself to help women cross both literal and symbolic borders. This describes in part the operations of the two organisations focused on in this work. How they innovatively use state tools, namely legal frameworks, are concentrated on in chapter 2. Before arriving there however, analysing the state is a necessary first step.

Maintaining a focus on the articulations of the “I” in relation to the state, I now examine the concept of citizenship. Sexual differences are simultaneously denied and reinforced by the nation-state as it delineates the boundaries of citizenship and belonging for women, thereby

perpetuating the stratification of society (Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem, 1999). However, the classical understanding of citizenship is often seen as overly exclusive, largely as it neglects central dimensions relevant to today's world, including a recognition that citizenship flourishes under different material and psychological conditions.

After constructing such an understanding of this crucial notion, this chapter moves on to explore the places from which citizenship is conceptualised. It considers how individuals relegated to the margins can imagine and propose alternative realities parting from this space. To do so, I adopt the perspective of the margins as a fruitful space put forward by hooks (1989). The margins are a symbolic location where concepts like security, legality, and legitimacy are constantly disputed. Moreover, it is from the margins, characterised as a space of struggle and action, that the organisations analysed in this research project have developed strategies to promote and facilitate safe abortion.

To achieve the goals listed above, I draw on secondary data, building on the work of decolonial feminist theorists while also referring to primary sources. Throughout the chapter, I present excerpts of the interview I conducted with Juliana Reis, founder of *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres*. The intention of doing so is to draw parallels between her recounting of her experiences and work on one hand, and the body of theoretical work that forms the reference list for this work on the other.

1.1 Historical Cosmologies: Shaping Latin American Identities

A place on the map is, after all, also a locatable place in history (Mohanty, 2003, p.111)

Without interpreting Hannah Arendt's work as a timeless and universal construction or dismissing its historical background altogether, it is relevant here to discuss her thoughts, and specifically those on politics. According to Arendt, political life is viable because to be human is to inhabit the world alongside others. In particular, she asserts that our existence in the world is inherently collective; we coexist with others who vary from us to different extents (Arendt, 1990).

She claims that what distinguishes us is not our inherently divergent natures, but rather that we perceive the same world but from unique perspectives. This plurality is, Arendt states, the defining condition of all political life. Politics, therefore, concerns the mutual interaction of diverse individuals within a community and is founded on the reality of human plurality (Arendt, 1990).

This perception of plurality as being key to political life, and thus in all forms of participation in politics, is central to this work.

Furthermore, in this study, politics is viewed as more than specific activities, such as voting and campaigning, which occur in clearly delimited and often unwelcoming places for minorities. Instead, following Alvarez et al. (2003), politics is also seen as encompassing power struggles enacted in spaces socially defined as private, social, and cultural.

Taking into account both of these understandings (Alvarez et al., 2003; Arendt, 1990) is essential to deliver a complex analysis of the work of Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and Oriéntame. First, embracing the diverse perspectives brought by Colombians and Brazilians, as well as by women from differing socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, has been crucial in generating the possibilities shaping the forms of political engagement investigated here.

Without this diversity, the discourse would be homogeneous, reflecting only the experiences of those in similar circumstances. For example, upper-class people in Brazil, when deciding whether or not to have an abortion, would have the financial resources to travel to another country to undergo the procedure, but this would not be the case for women from other layers of society. Indeed, by incorporating different perspectives, new courses of action have emerged, such as soliciting donations of air miles, as well as reducing (or even removing) the cost of the procedure.

One pertinent example here is the Justice Fund established by Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres along with Oriéntame to enable Brazilians from all economic backgrounds to access safe abortion procedures at the Colombian organisation's clinic. Therefore, by acknowledging different realities, namely of those unable to afford international travel or pay for a medical procedure, politics in action materialised. Reis described this development in her interview as follows:

The Justice Fund made it so that for every woman who paid the normal price, so to speak, for a legal abortion, another woman could pay nothing, or for two to pay half, or for three to pay a third was given. And so we were able to take to Colombia not only the woman who could afford to pay for her journey and her procedure, but also the woman who was there gathering money to pay for her ticket and negotiating with Oriéntame so that she wouldn't pay anything for the procedure because someone else had paid for it at the full price (Reis, 2024).

Another initial understanding here is that what these groups are doing *is* politics. This is a means of political action that offers new readings of the guidelines dictated by male-centric laws and is practised outside places hostile to certain groups, but is nevertheless also valid. When Reis mentioned in our exchange that Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres visibly intends to “turn abortion into a commonplace act in women's lives” (Reis, 2024), this ambition can be translated as a political act. It represents a conscious action based on creativity, promoting discussions and ultimately change.

Meanwhile, comprehending politics in both senses presented above (Alvarez et al., 2003; Arendt, 1990) enables us to view the state differently. Seeing politics not merely as domination makes one more inclined to perceive the state as both an alternative *and* a resource. Following Matos and Paradis (2013), I propose that we recognise the state not only as a higher unit of political decision-making but also as a power resource in itself. As expanded upon in subsequent chapters, the organisations being analysed here use resources, instruments, and institutions established and supported by governments, including hospitals, protocols, legal documents, and the international human rights framework.

Nevertheless, it is not forgotten here that the state mediates interests, perspectives, and values, determining what is illegitimate and thus facilitating or blocking certain programmes and supporting (or not) development and effective access to resources for a specific group (Matos and Paradis, 2013). The argument being advanced here, therefore, is to recognise the state in its capacity to legitimise certain internal issues and enable specific actors to mobilise, access resources, and grasp opportunities.

Adopting this comprehension does not mean disregarding the nuances involved in the mobilisation of various resources, whether they be symbolic, material, or cultural. Rather, it is understood here that the state institutionalises power derived from broader macroeconomic and social structures, resulting from a complex interplay between national and international factors. Consequently, if a space bearing these characteristics is the locus for determining whether something is legitimate or not, there are likely to be biases at play (Matos and Paradis, 2013).

In other words, the various sources and forms of legitimacy and authority invoke dimensions of superordination and subordination affected by intersecting differences such as gender and ethnicity (Matos and Paradis, 2013). However, this does not imply that it is impossible for marginalised groups to take political action. Specifically considering gender, the exercise of state power exhibits biases often invisible when presented under the guise of gender neutrality

(MacKinnon, 1989). Nevertheless, as illustrated in this work, the state can become a significant power resource for marginalised groups, such as women, through creative means.

Therefore, based on this premise, I propose the initial theory that the Latin American feminist approach to creatively engage with the state and foster transnational relationships among feminist collectives for the advocacy for human rights is unique. This is partly attributable to the distinct cosmologies and historical experiences involved. Therefore, to comprehend the plurality currently visible in Latin America, a historical overview is necessary.

A politics of location that constructs similarity through superficial equalisations, thereby disregarding material history, is questionable. To be effective, it must destabilise unexamined stereotypical images that are remnants of colonial legacies or other manifestations of modern inequalities. Thus, effectively invoking such a politics of location reiterates the need of a critical analysis that deconstructs conventional historical periodisations and demystifies abstract spatial metaphors (Kaplan, 1994).

Critical historical methodologies are thus needed to navigate apparent dichotomies and successfully scrutinise the concepts that idealise women's differences and commonalities. Achieving this allows one to recognise and work through the nuanced relations between women in different parts of the world and better examine the formation of transnational alliances. Any resorting to space, place, or position thus becomes abstract and universalising, if not accompanied by historical specificity (Kaplan, 1994).

In her theoretical exploration of experience, Mohanty proposes that historicising and situating political agency is a vital alternative to the notion of the universality of gendered oppressions. This perceived uniformity is problematic because it presumes that the categories, for example of race, nationality, and class, must be rendered invisible for gender to be properly acknowledged. Any analytical attempt to treat groups like women as universal across cultures ultimately ignores differences (Mohanty, 2003; 1995).

Therefore, it is imperative to recognise the category of women as historically bounded, non-universal, and dynamic (Ramos Escandon, 1997). In addition, any such analysis must be intersectional and situate women as historical subjects and assess their presence and significance within a society in a specific period. With that in mind, the aim of this section is to unpack the ways in which categories of femininity and identity have been socially constructed in relation to the colonial state. It also proposes examining how women shape and are shaped by the nation.

1.1.1 The Colonial Legacy: Power Relations and Women

If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (Spivak 2010, p.83)

Grant (1991) explores theories regarding the origins of the state to explore how it relates to women. She asserts that the mainstream foundational theories of Rousseau and Hobbes depict the transition of a state of nature to an orderly society exclusively in terms of what they assume to be male characteristics. For Hobbes, this means acknowledging the aggressive nature of men, while Rousseau's focus is on the capacity for reason. Accordingly, women, as a group presumed to lack these attributes, remained excluded from the social domain and were instead associated with nature. Subsequent theories, Grant continues, adhere to this very assumption.

In this sense, what is known as the passage from nature to culture is actually the institutionalisation of the reign of men.² The laws and regimes that came to give societies order exclusively valorised male needs. Moreover, with the birth of capitalism, the value of material and corporeal reproduction gained prominence and women's bodies came to be seen only for their potential in relations among men (Irigaray, 1985). Thus, from the perspective of the state and the early capitalist societies within this new historical matrix, women become mothers, daughters, caretakers, prostitutes, and whatever other roles they can fulfil in relation to men.

It is valuable now to gain a comprehension of how this European narrative was translated to the Latin American colonies. This is achieved by firstly accepting that the colonial rules of Portugal and Spain across Ibero-America were not uniform. Their legacies left behind distinct material, political, discursive, cultural, and social impacts on the region that persist to this day. For this work in particular, it is important to note the varying effects of these legacies on women.

The central and first dichotomy in colonial modernity concerns the distinction between the human and the non-human. This fundamental separation was followed by other binaries, such as man and woman, which became markers of humanity and civilisation. The colonisation process entailed constructing the identity of the colonised, disregarding their existing selves and reducing

² Here I refer to Irigaray (1985) and her conception of the 'hom(m)osexual.' Irigaray calls this law that orders society 'hom(m)osexual' or 'phallogocentric' in that it values, and exclusively serves, men's needs and desires, and exchanges among men. It is the preservation of the "reproduction of culture in the image of a masculine morphology – a morphology sculpted and sustained through techniques of identification and attachment which institute a self predicated upon the denigration of otherness; or, specifically, an otherness which has been attributed a feminine gender" (Pottage, 1998, p.19).

them to something less than human (Lugones, 2010). "Turning the colonised into humans was not a colonial goal" (Lugones, 2010, p.744).

Furthermore, if the objective was to erase community practices, ecological knowledge, and cosmologies, while also controlling reproductive and sexual practices, the colonisation process inevitably targeted both the bodies and identities of women and girls. Here, a connection is highlighted between the imposition of modern concepts of nature and gender, both integral to capitalism, and the dehumanising impact of the colonial gender system in particular is revealed (Lugones, 2010).

Colonial powers used women's bodies as symbolic reference points to legitimise their rule. The official discourse employed emotive images of social evils to portray American societies as barbaric and in need of the civilising influence of "enlightened" Europe. Women's bodies were central to this narrative, symbolising the "retrograde" condition of these colonised societies. They were depicted in two contradictory ways: on one hand, as victims needing the protection of colonial rule from a barbarous male population; and, on the other hand, as naturally libidinous and out of control, in contrast to the relatively disciplined woman of Europe (Rai, 1996).

In the latter regard, Christian confession, sin, and the Manichean division between good and evil were used to mark female sexuality as evil, with colonised women and their bodies associated with the devil. In a context in which the "civilising" mission justified the colonisation of self-perception, intersubjective relations, spiritual beliefs, identity and social organisation, Christianity became a powerful tool (Lugones, 2010).

"Civilising" was also used as a euphemism for accessing people's bodies via brutal forms of violence (Lugones, 2010). Sexual violence and other forms of brutality are the real foundational myth of these nations. Countries such as Brazil and Colombia were born from the wombs of enslaved indigenous and black women and this still echoes today among the respective populations of these countries.

Accessing women's bodies was among the objectives of the colonial missions because bodies in general and reproductive capabilities in particular were essential to the survival of the emerging capitalist system. Although Nazzari's (1997) argument that sexual asymmetries result primarily from the articulations of modes of material and human (re)production is not fully endorsed in this work, it nevertheless does agree with her idea that sex and gender arrangements are integral to the reproduction of class society and are intrinsically linked with capitalism.

Serving as a basis for the link between material and human reproduction and sexual asymmetries, Nazzari (1997) uses the example of slaves in colonial Cuba. In this context, the author argues that “neither slave owners nor slaves themselves wanted enslaved women to be mothers, so that there was no specific female role” (Nazzari, 1997, p135). In other words, because women were not expected to reproduce, they did not experience sexual division of labour, worked just as hard and for the same hours as their male peers, and were not submitted to female-only roles that would lead to sexual inequalities (Nazzari, 1997).

I do not agree with this logic however because it seems that Nazzari (1997) overlooks other roles placed upon women that also generate inequalities. For example, the presentation of enslaved women as sexual objects made them more vulnerable to sexual violence. Another pertinent such illustration is that of women who were forced to do housework for the slave owner’s family, thereby assuming the role of care. All of these roles generated sexual and racial asymmetries and reflect the way in which women of colour are still portrayed in contemporary Latin American societies.

Returning now to Nazzari’s second affirmation, namely about the connection between gender arrangements, class, and capitalism, I also refer to the colonial example. Essentially, women produced the working class, slaves, and the elite, through their gendered role as mothers. For instance, women of colour were considered as sources of more slaves. Even when, according to the cruel logic of slavery, it was suggested that it would be cheaper to transport people across oceans rather than bear the cost of raising a child to working age, as early as that would be, the gender system still played a role in class dynamics, be it when slaves already in the Americas were forced to abort or when African women were regarded merely as the mothers of future slaves (Gonzalez, 1988).

However, despite highlighting the imprints of colonisation and capitalism on the colonised here, it should not be taken as implied that the Europeans, upon disembarking, encountered passive populations ready to be moulded as the colonisers saw fit. Lugones (2010) reminds us that the colonial system of power did not meet a void world with empty spaces and minds to be shaped. Instead, it came across complex cultural, political, economic, religious, and social systems. When looking at Latin America and its people today, it is essential to acknowledge these realities. Indeed, identities and interactions in the region today are also shaped by black and indigenous cosmologies and legacies.

Epistemological hierarchies are in place so that “we know the slave only through the master” (Lugones, 1987, p.18), and thus we must break from this logic and know the subjects in separation from their oppressors. The proposed aim here is to discover what can be found via different narratives if one loses their “arrogant” perception, to use a term applied by Lugones (1987). Ultimately, the goal is to understand what these multiple histories, many of which are often forgotten, tell us about what we, as Latin Americans, are today, how we affiliate, and how we interact with the nation-state.

1.1.2 Cosmological Intersections: The Collision of Narratives

Five hundred years of colonial rule by peninsular officers and, since the early 1900s, by creole and mestizo elites did not erase the energy, force, and memories of the Indian past [...] just as the histories and memories of Afro-descendant communities in Brazil and Colombia have not been erased (Mignolo, 2017, p.3)

Lélia Gonzalez (1988) asserts that what we know as Latin America is fundamentally "*Amerindian*" and "*Amefrican*," despite efforts to emphasise and forge European roots. While proposing a new and creative analysis of Brazil's historical and cultural formation, the scholar advocated for the development of a category that transcended the case of Brazil without losing sight of the need for interdisciplinary perspectives.

She then coined the terms "*Ladinoamefricanos*" (ladinoamefricans) and "*Amefricanos*" (amefricans). In her rhetoric, Gonzalez argues that these terms break through territorial, linguistic, and ideological boundaries, offering fresh insights to inform a comprehensive understanding of the Americas. She further asserts that these categories encompass an extensive historical process marked by radical cultural dynamics involving adaptation, resistance, and creation (Gonzalez, 1988).

The methodological significance of these terms lies in their capacity to reclaim a specific unity historically forged within diverse societies in this region. Thus, "*América*," as an ethnogeographic reference, represents a creation inspired by African models, originating from ancestralism. Consequently, it fosters the construction of ethnic identities by enabling a profound awareness of Latin Americans as descendants of Africans and indigenous peoples (Gonzalez, 1988).

Prompt Lugones and Gonzalez in conversation allows to argue that contemporary Latin America and its societies, women, and states are products of complex histories that did not begin

with Europeans. What Latin Americans are today, and the relationships constructed amongst themselves, result from indigenous and African cosmologies in all their various forms. Indeed, the solidarity observed and the networks analysed in this work are assembled in the context of intense rebellion against the “coloniality of gender” (Lugones, 2010, p. 746).

This illustrates that the colonial system should not be viewed as successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledges, and relationships, but rather as a process that is still being resisted to this day. Acknowledging this sort of defiance allows us to conceptualise the colonised not as beings imagined and constructed by the capitalist colonial venture, but rather as complex individuals who inhabit a fractured locus and therefore perceive and relate doubly. The conflict between sides here informs the subjectivity of the colonised (Lugones, 2010). Moreover, this process of oppression and resistance is part of what shapes Latin Americans.

The goal here is to argue that the identities, states, and societies that form Latin America today are, in various ways, the result of processes involving violence, assimilation, and resistance. Latin Americans are products of indigenous ontologies, nascent European capitalist societies, African matrices, and other ingredients. Concurrently with their undeniable indigenous and black roots, the societies that came to constitute Latin America are historical heirs to the ideologies of social classification, especially racial and sexual ones, as well as the legal and administrative techniques of the Iberian metropolises (Gonzalez, 1988).

The intention here is not to fall into a simplistic binary view where everything European is bad and everything indigenous or African is good in a childish manner. Rather, the aim is to reaffirm that at the core of Latin Americans’ fractured colonial locus lies these practices of subjugation and defiance. Latin Americans are shaped by creative ways of resisting and assimilating, and are thus permeable yet also resistant. These historically formed contradictions, forged in borderlands, are foundational to Latin American identities and interactions today.

Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper class touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 5)

By transferring Anzaldúa’s (1987) theoretical framework, originally created to scrutinise the border separating the United States and Mexico, this work highlights the emotional state of perplexity inherent in us *mestizas/mestiças*. We are the product of the coming together of cultural

and spiritual values of different groups and the collision(s) of frames of reference. In response to this intense clash, we have developed a tolerance for contradictions and ambiguities. We pray for Mary, the Christian virgin, and also throw flowers into the sea for the Yoruba entity, *Iemanjá*.

Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem (1999) draw on Derrida's concept of *différance* to situate women within this dual existence and further elaborate on this doubleness in relation to modern nation-states. Latin American women are historically syncretic and our worlds are a synthesis of crossroads, of expansionist economic interests and various forms of domination and resistance (Lagarde, 2013), for which the nation-state does not account. Even though the processes that shaped the modernisation of post-colonial societies are uneven, the practices that formed these new nations are deeply entangled with the notion of the rights of men and citizens (Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem 1999).

1.2 Sexual Politics and the State: Citizenship and Social Stratification

The nation-state sharpens the defining lines of citizenship for women, racialized ethnicities, and sexualities in the construction of a socially stratified society (Kaplan, Alarcón and Moallem, 1999, p.1)

This problematic relationship between certain groups and the modern nation-state in Latin America has been evident since the conception of this entity. States were not designed for or by women; the processes of independence here were predominantly male-driven. Historical figures such as Simón Bolívar, who led the revolt against colonial rule in Gran Colombia, and Tiradentes, the Brazilian martyr for independence, exemplify this male dominance.

The state, as the central site for hegemonic masculinity or 'hom(m)o-sexuality' in Irigaray's (1985) terms, perpetuates the misconception that conditions applicable to men apply equally to women and other marginalised groups. This erroneous belief positions elite males as the societal mould, while women and racialised individuals are treated as eccentric subjects. Simultaneously, through processes of genderisation, sexualisation, and racialisation, individuals are rendered non-conforming, allowing the nation to construct a timeless and homogeneous identity (Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem, 1999).

Contrarily, the use of gendered and racial stereotypes is evident in cultural artefacts used to shape national identity (Munanga, 1999). Images such as the “*mulata*” and the figure of the “Girl from Ipanema” in the bossa nova song, which fail to signal exactly who the specific girl is who

could freely walk in one of Rio de Janeiro's elite neighbourhoods, use non-conforming individuals to create an international identity for the nation-state. Women, in these arrangements, are reduced to a monolithic category exploited by nationalist discourses.

In these structures, marginalised populations are viewed as the cornerstone of specific national identities yet, paradoxically, are excluded from these identities by a form of disciplinary knowledge that categorises them as civilisational others (Das and Poole, 2008). These two different dynamics presented in the construction of states reveal a contradiction between the denial of difference and the universalisation of difference (Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem, 1999).

In other words, genderisation is used to construct national images and promote a discourse of kinship, which was pivotal to the binding of subjects to the state and its laws. Simultaneously, women, along with other sexual minorities and racialised groups, are othered, while white men are upheld as the societal norm. This approach denies the existence of sexual, racial, and class differences, falsely presenting societies as homogeneous.

The space between women and the nation-state can be observed as a critical site for deconstructing these homogeneous ideas that lump diverse groups like women into single entities (Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem, 1999). Thus, the effort undertaken here to inspect these spaces carries the aim of dismantling the notion of Latin American women, or even Brazilian or Colombian women, as a single entities. The identities of such women are not the same and neither are their relations with national entities. Depending on various factors and intersections, women and feminist organisations may have diverse connections and experiences with the state.

Reis (2024) provided an illustrative example of this phenomenon when commenting on how the actions of *Milhas pela Vida das Mulheres* in Brazil under the Bolsonaro presidency (2019-2022) differed compared to the current Lula administration. The latter was broadly presented as a more progressive option in response to Bolsonaro's openly antagonistic stance towards women's rights, reflected by his policies and the approach of his Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights, Damares Alves. Nevertheless, Reis said in her interview for this work that the organisation she founded:

Had more contact with the networks of doctors and politicians at the time of Damares than I do now with Cida Gonçalves, the (Lula's) Minister for Women's Affairs. [...] I

certainly have no doubt that what happened during Bolsonaro's four years in terms of creating awareness and action cannot be compared to now (Reis, 2024).

This passage of the conversation helps to disarticulate Rai's (1996) assertion that women in third world nations “are more removed from the state in all its manifestations than Western women” (p. 16). To suggest that the state does not interfere in women’s lives in peripheral countries, and to assume that the Western liberal welfare state provides a robust safety net for all its citizens, would undermine the gendered complexities and realities faced all around the globe. Such an approach also risks oversimplifying the challenges and inadvertently perpetuating the notion of a homogeneous third world as the underdogs in the face of the “developed” first world.

States have intruded in people’s lives since their inception and this persists today. Our existence is profoundly impacted by it; the lives, bodies, and futures of so-called “third world women” are notably shaped by governmental policies and actions. For instance, in the case discussed in this work, many Brazilians are compelled to leave their country to exercise their human right to safe abortion, demonstrating how the state affects our lives.

This particular phenomenon is evident in the legal framework as, paradoxically, while laws are designed under the guise of equality for every member of society, they effectively control and regulate certain subjects more than others. Indeed, the laws are structured in a way that creates an atmosphere where women must resist systemic oppression while being the primary targets of these controlling measures. Looking at the case of abortion laws, norms are often shaped and implemented in ways that deny women authority over their own bodies.

Reis (2024) emphasised that, despite the legal provisions in Brazil permitting abortion under certain conditions, the state infrastructure often fails to fully implement these laws. At this point of our conversation, she was referring to decree law No. 2848 of 1940, previously mentioned in the introduction section of this work, which stipulates that abortion is legal when the pregnancy results from sexual abuse or poses a risk to the woman's health. However, Reis asserted many times during the interview that “we can't enforce a law that's over 80 years old.”

The argument here is that women, largely forgotten in the conception and management of the nation, constitution, and laws, are also among the groups most controlled and affected by them. For example, indigenous women are completely ignored in the Brazilian constitution³ yet are among the

³ For decolonial feminist thinkers (Cusicanqui, 2010; Marcos, 2005), modern colonial law not only disrupted indigenous cultural traditions that valued women's roles in society and politics, but it also further reinforced the inscription of gender inequality,

most afflicted by laws that permit mining on indigenous land. Lower class women were most affected by the armed conflict in Colombia. Black women, while representing the majority of the Colombian population, are absent in spaces of power⁴, legislation, and decision-making.

However, political representation in the classical sense is not the only gauge of the state's impact on women's lives. Taking a historical leap into the present, I echo the thoughts of Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989), who argue that central dimensions of women's positions are constructed around various aspects of state policy and legislation. For example, taxation, social welfare, maternity leave, and menstrual dignity shape women and girls as mothers, wives, housekeepers, migrants, workers, and more.

In Brazil, it is common practice for social benefits to be paid to the mother of the family (Decreto N° 6.135, de 26 de Junho de 2007). While this policy could potentially expand women's social networks and material resources, and consequently instigate changes in gender relations, concerns remain that it may also reinforce the notion of caregiving as primarily being a female responsibility (Bartholo, Passos, and Fontoura, 2019).

The examples outlined above are to contend that the state is responsible for the disposition of life, not merely the enactment of violence (Arendt, 2002, cited in Matos Paradis, 2013, p.93). However, this does not imply that women, as a group and political entity, are a null force. Women are active participants in public life who demand to be heard and shape the state. To use a physics analogy, women represent a dual force of oppression and resistance, the balance of which is not necessarily zero. We, Latin American women, inhabit this dual space of influence and control, much like our black and indigenous ancestors.

Essentially, we *latinas* are struck by national forces but at the same time exist in opposition to the nation. We are, at once, inside and outside the nation as a group that participates in social forces that advocate for and influence governmental and political projects (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989; Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem, 1999). For instance, the #EleNã movement⁵ or the

undermining matrilineal societies and indigenous women's participation in governance, communal life, and trade. In addition, indigenous women's claims to land, based on an understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings, are ignored by most constitutions. Indigeneity refuses to separate "nature" from "culture" or view the former as an external entity to be controlled, instead affirming the integral nature of all things and recognising the living earth's agential capabilities and universal kinship with land and other nonhuman species.

⁴ In Colombia, women represent 28% of the Representative Chamber and 30% of the Senate in the 2022-2026 mandate even though 51.2% of Colombians are women (Universidad de Los Andes, 2022; Colombia, 2018).

⁵ The #EleNã ("Not Him" in Portuguese) movement began as a group on a social network, created to unite women who opposed Jair Bolsonaro, then a presidential candidate in Brazil. The group quickly amassed millions of participants, and in September 2018, what initially was primarily cyberactivism, mobilised many women to take to the streets. After Bolsonaro won the

advocacy for legislation setting out national regulation of the domestic⁶ work sector in Brazil display how women are not simply shaped by the state, but rather how women's demands actively shape the national entity as well.

The case under study in this work represents a convergence of both dynamics. These groups propose new, creative readings of laws, thereby acting as demanding players. However, they do this because of having to operate in a setting that does not permit full control over their bodily decisions, meaning that they are marked by the state. Effectively, they are shaped by the state courtesy of the necessity to travel to Colombia to have their human rights guaranteed, but at the same time they also mould the state through exerting political pressure such as “performing abortions out of the closet,” to quote Reis (2024).

Another example of women's dual relationship with the modern nation is the paradox that the entity that can ensure human rights is the same one that violates and denies them. It is the state that, be it via binding international agreements or jurisprudence, offers the tools through which legal recognition and acknowledgment can be demanded. Even if it has a colonial past and present, the state is the framework through which Latin Americans exist as citizens.

A case recounted by Reis (2024) elucidates this point further. *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* once intervened to help a person to obtain an abortion in Brazil that would have been legal due to them suffering from hypertension, one of the main causes of obstetric fatality in the country. Understanding that this condition can lead to eclampsia during labour and ultimately result in death, and knowing that risk to maternal life has been a legally permissible reason for abortion in the country since 1940, they juridically demanded protection of the person's right to safe abortion..

Reis (2024) outlined that: “Women can access a legal abortion when they are at risk of death. Hypertensive disease is life-threatening; it's the number one cause of maternal death. That's it.” In the example Reis shared for this work, the legal framework allowed for actions to be taken to secure rightful access to a legal abortion. However, it was initially the governmental body that violated these rights, after which the individual, with the help of *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres*, had to unveil this negligence to enforce the law.

presidential election, the movement remained active, serving as a counter-hegemonic force throughout his four-year term (Tereza, Bandeira, and Olivia, 2023).

⁶ The legal bill known as “PEC das Domésticas” established, for the first time, the principle of an employment relationship for paid domestic work, eliminating ambiguities in these contracts. This issue had previously placed domestic workers—who are predominantly women and black in Brazil—in a liminal position concerning labour legislation. The approval of the bill to regularise domestic work in Brazil was the result of a prolonged process of union demands from the sector, during which significant political alliances were formed, which was crucial for its implementation.

This example showcases how to creatively find ways of individually and collectively engaging with the nation-state and the constraints it imposes on women's rights. Essential to this exercise of fighting for rights is the concept of citizenship. However, this term should be rethought in a way that addresses exclusions and power inequalities inherent to the classical neoliberal model of citizenship. In particular, rethinking what the limitations and opportunities are with the existent framework of citizen engagement is necessary before proposing alternative solutions to issues like abortion.

1.2.1 Expanding Citizenship: Beyond Classical Understandings

Alongside political citizenship, let us construct social citizenship for women in such a way that development and democracy are intertwined in processes of well-being (Lagarde, 2009, p.133).

Pnina Werbner and Nira Yuval-Davis (2005) asserted nearly two decades ago that in an increasingly globalised world, where the economic, political, and military influence of nation-states appeared to be diminishing, there was a necessity to reconsider citizenship from a gendered perspective in progressive terms. However, in 2024, it is apparent that as significant displays of state military power are still witnessed in conflicts such as in Palestine, the power of nation-states is not waning; rather, it is intensifying (Tickner, 1992).

Nevertheless, it remains undeniable that citizenship in fact must be reimagined to transcend its predominantly male origins. This is particularly pressing because, as argued in the previous sections, women often bear the brunt of national power dynamics, whether in times of conflict or peace. This includes enduring the loss of rights in times of crisis, a disproportionate burden of caregiving roles in post-war periods, and gendered poverty. Therefore, there is a compelling need to conceptualise citizenship on a global scale, addressing these critical issues in the process.

Citizenship is a fundamental aspect of political rights and consists of the set of public and private rights, obligations and guarantees enjoyed by a group of the population that has the category of citizen, which grants it opportunities and prerogatives in relation to the exercise of political power and the control of public functions. One of the expressions of citizenship is the exercise of suffrage, the right to elect and be elected to the organs of popular representation (Bonilla-Velez, 2007, p.50).

The definition above represents the classical view of citizenship. However, Bonilla-Velez (2007), in a feminist reinterpretation, posits that citizenship primarily entails a political dimension and can be delineated into two forms: first, as a relationship between the state and individuals, where states recognise their members and confer rights denied to non-citizens; and, second, more aligned with the scope of this work, as an association between individuals and the state, emphasising people's engagement in public affairs.

Theorising citizenship where the arrow is pointing from the citizen to the state, rather than the reverse, encourages popular participation in governance and matters of public interest. Meanwhile, reimagining citizenship through feminist intersectional lenses introduces new possibilities catalysing transformative change. As Yuval-Davis and Werbner (2005) assert: "The language of citizenship provides women with a powerful tool in the struggle for human, democratic, civil, and social rights" (p. 28).

Changing the course of the hypothetical arrow however symbolises the capacity of individuals to exert influence over the state's political projects, thereby challenging the conventional notion of the state as the sole entity responsible for shaping societal dynamics, as previously discussed. This perspective on citizenship not only highlights the agency of individuals in civic matters but also reconceptualises the extent to which certain groups can enjoy active participation in public discourse.

A further reason for rethinking the concept is that the classical understanding of citizenship encompasses an objective dimension, which reflects the actual existence of rights, but fails in addressing more subjective aspects. The latter may involve the extent of knowledge, perception, trust, and affirmation of one's own rights, and of fully belonging to a political community. These consciousnesses are undeniably linked to the real and imagined barriers that individuals perceive and encounter (Vargas, 2015).

Such subjective barriers stem from non-legal discriminations that persist in everyday social life, creating traumas and complexes of superiority and inferiority. These obstacles hinder individuals from perceiving equality under the jurisdiction, and generate a limited sense of entitlement, leading people to view rights not as inherent but as privileges granted to a chosen few (Vargas, 2015). This is not different in the Brazilian context as perceived by Reis when she founded *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres*, as she recalls:

In 2019, at the beginning of our work, nobody knew that there was a law in Brazil that authorised, enabled, and obliged legal abortion in cases of sexual violence. We had to discover this almost by forceps⁷. If there was already this movement campaigning for abortion, why wasn't it publicised? Because everything was half-hearted. You had to know someone who knew someone. In other words, you had to have a foot in the university, you had to have a foot in the civil service, you had to have friends. In other words, that's not a right. That's a privilege. (Reis, 2024)

For women, the historical reality is that their rights have only ever been partially understood. Such inadequate awareness of their entitlements significantly impacts the political culture. It weakens the connection between democracy and citizenship, distorts the true meaning of rights, and legitimises exclusion (Vargas, 2015). The conclusion to be drawn here is that rights are anchored in both social and political realms. Without conducive social conditions, political rights are meaningless (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Bearing in mind these conditions and acknowledging the unfairness of marginalised people having to allocate energy and resources to seek creative alternatives of political participation, this work endorses the importance of reconsidering possibilities for civic-driven change. New ideas about citizenship, representation, and political participation that enhance equality and accountability are seen as the response to the limitations of the liberal democratic model of citizenship.

One notable example of this reimagining is the creation of conditions for the feminisation of citizenship, which involves recognising and re-signifying qualities traditionally associated with women's roles as nurturers, or carers of the family. Political motherhood exemplifies this process by leveraging characteristics historically used to exclude people from public life—such as reproductive capacities—to assert their voices and agency as citizens (Werbner, 2005).

So, if from a trans-exclusionary and patriarchal perspective “maternity is the only social power open to women” (Lorde, 1983, p.95), reimagining citizenship might then involve advocating for public policies that support the provision of free spaces for breastfeeding or the presence of mothers in political arenas. In her analysis of political motherhood, Werbner (2005) contends that

⁷ Here Reis uses a word play with “force” and “forceps”. The latter is a metal instrument resembling a large spoon or tongs. In deliveries, when necessary, they're curved to fit around the baby's head (NHS, 2023).

assaults on these defined cultural domains tend to propel women into the public sphere, thereby challenging existing power structures.

In this example, by re-signifying cis normative gendered qualities it is proposed that these characteristics, used to exclude people who can gestate from decision-making processes, are recognised as critical to justice and equality. This shift reflects the efforts being made to integrate attributes extraneous to the white elite male mould for the state and citizenship into the fabric of public discourse and policy-making (Werbner, 2005).

Another significant example here is the concept of bodily rights. In contemporary Latin America, sexual and reproductive rights are not merely individual rights but also a strategic necessity if full citizenship is to be achieved collectively. This is exemplified by groups such as the Argentinian Socorristas en Red (Cristine de Souza, 2021), as well as the Colombian Oriéntame and the Brazilian Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres. Creativity plays a crucial role in this regard because, according to Reis "there's an intolerance of no longer being able to walk the paths that have already been walked and that have never come to anything" (Reis, 2024).

The affiliation between Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and Oriéntame thus represents a reimagining of citizenship. It involves inventing new routes when "confronted ten times a week with things we've never heard of" (Reis, 2024). It acknowledges that one of the ways to resist and remind the law and the state of one's existence is through a willingness to be creative and "to come up with novel answers because the questions are all also a bit new" (Reis, 2024).

This approach stems from a creativity that is both individual and collective. Moreover, this rethinking encompasses both the citizenship of the organisation's participants and that of the Brazilians who contact them to seek protection of their human rights in neighbouring countries. In this regard, Reis noted: "The idea is to be able to be a citizen and work on the citizenship of another woman. It's a way of working on my own citizenship" (2024).

This collective construction of citizenship does not mean being paternalistic. It is not about doing something for the other, but rather doing it together and jointly being creative and enhancing each other's citizenship and abilities. This applies for the organisations' work among themselves and with the people who search for them. In both cases, it is essential to consider the materialities each individual brings to an affiliation due to their membership in a specific group.

Yuval-Davis (1997) advances in the rethinking of citizenship, reconceptualising it as a multi-layered construct that encompasses both individual and collective dimensions. This

framework applies the concept of citizenship to the membership of individuals in various collectives—local, ethnic, national, and transnational. By doing so, the author broadens the scope beyond citizenship's traditional connection with maleness or the state. Instead, the emphasis is on the interplay between individual and collective belonging, and the complex positioning of these layered citizenships.

This comprehension, therefore, highlights the constraints of the liberal definition of citizenship. The classical framework operates with disregard for the diverse lived experiences and structural inequalities that shape individuals' access to, and exercise of, their citizenship. Attention paid to particular affiliations and realities is null, contributing to the reinforcement of existing privileges. The perspectives and interests of the economic, cultural, and political elites are likely to dominate this unified public discourse (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

In contrast, adopting a definition that addresses the diverse positionings of groups within states invites an intersectional lens to the analysis. This approach recognises that the material realities in which individuals find themselves significantly influence the degree and quality of citizenship they can attain. It is inferred here that the tools and resources afforded by one's citizenship, as well as the demands placed thereupon, are intrinsically linked to the collective to which one belongs (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

In proposing a rethink on citizenship and ultimately achieving structural change, it is essential to identify the perspective from which one speaks. Historically, women have been relegated to marginalised positions. From here, battles have been fought, affiliations forged, and identities constructed. Therefore, it is crucial to consider what is meant by creatively envisioning alternatives originating from the margins.

1.2.2 Envisioning Alternatives: Marginal Voices and New Realities

Marginality as a site of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there (hooks, 1989, p.23)

One of the aspects of thinking of the state in terms of its ordering functionality is that the spatial and social margins are seen as spaces of disorder; sites where the state has not been able to establish control. Margins are therefore places where the state is constantly redefining its modes of governing and legislating. Nevertheless, they are also the locus of practice to consider, where law and other state processes are appropriated through tools that emanate from the pressing needs of populations in order to ensure political and economic survival (Das and Poole, 2008).

Alarcón, Kaplan, and Moallem (1999) in their reinterpretation of Derrida's dual concept of the border to contextualise women and nation, advocate for the disassembly of the binary relationship between centre and margins. They argue that deconstructing this dichotomy would enable the articulation of unities, subjects, and practices that might otherwise seem unattainable (Alarcón, Kaplan, and Moallem, 1999).

Such deconstruction reveals the unities that transcend divides, such as the emergence of gendered subjectivities that support nationalisms worldwide. In addition, problematising the logic of centre and margins discloses the role of binary actors in maintaining power relations. The margins make the centre visible and measurable, just as various deployments of women render the nation determinable, even as women themselves are subject to erasure (Alarcón, Kaplan, and Moallem, 1999).

The authors contend that articulating a perspective from the margins inherently involves complicity with the official discourse of the nation-state. Viewing the world exclusively through the dual lens of centre and margins, they continue, confines humanity to colonial power dynamics and consequently hinders the recognition of the complex and nuanced manifestations of transnational movements of people, goods, and information in contemporary times (Alarcón, Kaplan, and Moallem, 1999).

Nevertheless, in this work, margins are treated as fertile ground. In particular, engaging from these peripheral spaces is both a potent and empowering act, providing valuable resistance and critique tools. This conception is built on hooks's (1989) construction of margins and her view that the appropriation and use of spaces are political acts. The scholar argues for those participating in the formation of a counter-hegemonic cultural practice to identify places to begin the process of revision, stating that: "Our living depends on our ability to conceptualise alternatives, often improvised" (hooks, 1989, p.19).

Creating this radical creative space transforms individually and collectively. This process also reaffirms and sustains subjectivity by providing a new place in which to articulate a sense of the world. This, according to hooks, is possible because "to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body" (hooks, 1989, p.20). It means being aware of the separation between and centre and margins but also possessing a private understanding of being a vital part of this totality (hooks, 1989). To exemplify this, hooks (1989) uses the example of her childhood neighbourhood, separated from the rich part of the city (i.e. the centre) by train tracks.

Marginalised people could only cross the tracks in a service capacity, for example as cleaners or prostitutes. The transit from margin to centre was thus merely spatial, not political or physiological, and completely regulated. Nevertheless, this controlled movement permitted being reminded of the existence of a whole body and consequently a unique view of both worlds. This particular perspective, unknown to oppressors, provides an oppositional view that sustains and aids. It represents a fertile viewpoint to imagining of alternatives (hooks, 1989).

Margins are therefore a prime location that, by offering a perspective to conceptualise alternatives, becomes uniquely valuable in the production of counter-hegemonic discourses. It is a space for saying “no” to the oppressor, and a locus for “radical openness” (hooks, 1989, p.19). Moreover, it is a space where a refusal, that comes from being aware of the vitality of opposition, is born. It is a site of deprivation but also one of possibilities and of resistance. Therefore, margins do not constitute a place one wishes to lose, or to escape from, and at the same time going to the centre is not a goal because the margins nourish the capacity to resist (hooks, 1989).

Therefore, hooks is describing a process of moving beyond boundaries and embracing multiple locations as an opportunity. She articulates the nuanced tangling of identities staged by politics of location. In seeing margins as a site of repression but also resistance, location then becomes historicised, a place of future possibilities and a result of the nuanced articulation and processes of the past (Kaplan, 1994).

This is not to say that the margins is a safe place; it is an edge. It is difficult to be located there but necessary. To be there means being at risk, and therefore needing a community of resistance. Hooks did not intend to romantically reimagine margins, or see the place where oppression and separation occur as comfortable. She wanted to distinguish the marginality that is imposed by oppressive structures from the one a person clings to because it is a site of resistance and possibility. Ultimately, the margins is a space where cultures of opposition, central to critical response to domination, are formed (hooks, 1989).

Seeing the margins as a position for resistance is vital for the oppressed. If one only sees margins as a site of oppression and deprivation, despair and hopelessness would take over and one’s creativity and imagination would be at risk. Moreover, to avoid romanticising the site of resistance, it is important to add that hooks (1989) acknowledged that one reaches this space through struggle. One goes there not easily but because it is a locus of creativity, power, and

strengthened solidarities where marginalised people move together to erase the numerous categories that oppress (hooks, 1989).

Therefore, by discussing the concept of the margins as a resourceful space, as articulated by hooks (1989), I intended to represent those located in this social place not as passive actors, but as agents of creative defiance.

In this chapter, I investigated how diverse historical cosmologies shape the modern Latin American individual, leading to various forms of resistance against pervasive inequalities. In the broader scope of this work, this chapter covered the “I,” analysed via different lenses (e.g., formation of identities, citizenship, and social location) in order to transition to the “we” for subsequent chapters. From now on, the aim of the work is to analyse how the affiliation of different variations of “I” forms a “we.”

CHAPTER 2. NAVIGATING BORDERS: FEMINIST NETWORKS AND COLLECTIVE AGENCY.

Having explored the formation of identities and citizenship among women in the first chapter, the aim of the present chapter is to analyse the coming together of multiple individualities aiming to propose new realities. What happens when organisations are formed and what power can be derived from this? I begin by examining the benefits of affiliation, drawing on Lugones's (1987) concept of "world travelling," after which I explore how one can leverage these benefits and to what ends.

To address these issues, Mohanty's (2003) notion of "feminism without borders" is employed and referred to as a framework and guideline for effective organisation. Finally, in preparation for the subsequent third chapter of this work, I explore how marginalised groups, through affiliations, articulate their positions and put forward new spaces for debates at a time when the public sphere is hostile. Throughout this chapter, I draw on secondary sources and one primary source. As was the case in the previous chapter, the primary source is the transcript of the interview conducted with the founder of Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres, Juliana Reis.

Where relevant, extracts of, or general ideas gleaned from, the data collected via that interview are brought up to link theory with practice. The aim of doing so is to demonstrate how the ideas of Lugones (1987), Mohanty (2003), Said (1983), and others are applied within the research context. Conducting an analysis of the data compiled from the interview in light of decolonial, feminist, and intersectional theories is expected to provide a suitable understanding of feminist networks in Latin America.

Building upon the exploration of collective action and its transformative potential and emphasising the theoretical frameworks and practical implications of feminist networks, the focus here is on the pivotal role played by NGOs. These types of organisations are most known for undertaking one of the following two forms of activity: the delivery of basic services in a specific location; and organising policy advocacy and public campaigns for change. Nevertheless, NGOs have also become active in a wide range of other more specialised roles such as emergency response, democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights work,

environmental activism, policy analysis, research, and information provision (Lewis and Nazneen Kanji, 2009).

Definitions of NGOs vary given their widely diverse nature, roles, and structures across the globe. Typically, they are seen as independent organisations, separate from government control and without a profit motive. However, some NGOs receive substantial government funding and exhibit bureaucratic traits, while others operate in a manner similar to private sector businesses. NGOs, therefore, can be challenging to pin down analytically (Lewis and Nazneen Kanji, 2009).

Looking specifically at the Latin American context, Alvarez (1998) underscores the role of feminist NGOs in the articulation of diverse formal and informal processes. In that way, they are political webs of communication that intertwine feminists and their allies occupying diverse public positions. Another specificity of the region is the presence of division between government-assisted NGOs and more autonomous parts of the feminist movement that refuse any kind of link with the governmental apparatus (Alvarez, 1998). This split was verified by Reis (2024) who commented on the hostility her organisation had faced from feminists:

I remember that when we started operating in 2019, we were treated by the card-carrying feminists in Brazil as a bunch of crazy people who were acting in a risky way that was going to endanger all the women in the country (Reis, 2024).

Yet, drawing a sharp distinction between these two different parts of the same movement would be oversimplifying the issue, and would ignore the complex political realities in which feminisms have developed, the consequent heterogeneity, and the variety of operational modes deployed across the region. Doing so would also disregard the multifaceted nature of most NGOs, as well as the varying levels of “NGOization” in different countries (Alvarez, 1998). In addition, by drawing on the hybrid characteristics and positionalities among these different players, Alvarez (1998) argues that their impacts can be leveraged.

Multiple identities, Alvarez (1998) continues, have been central to the effectiveness of NGOs both in “*la política*” (politics, and in particular public policies) and “*lo político*” (the political, relating to the influence on the cultural, symbolic, and hierarchical gender dynamics that are continually constituted and reconfigured socially) (Alvarez, 1998).

Forging links with a diversity of actors in civil society including the rest of the feminist field and grassroots organisations allows NGOs to make important contributions in the field of public policy and to establish a political support base in society (Alvarez, 1998). However, in many cases, this support is also derived from the political settings. Reis, during the interview, reaffirmed this point when comparing the different levels of social and financial support for *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* during the administrations of Bolsonaro and then Lula. She said:

Intolerance, right? It reaches a level that generates...that generates life. I find it very curious to think that anger is our friend; intolerance is our friend. When we can't take it anymore, we change the world. And maybe that's what happened. And what happened? When we go back to a progressive, humanist government, it's over. The word "abortion" is no longer mentioned. [...] I prefer to call Bolsonaro for a fight, to beat up. I prefer it because society came together, because it created an intolerance that was friendly, that was transformative (Reis, 2024).

From this passage of the conversation, we can conclude that even under a government that is more progressive, at least in theory, women from Brazil still need to travel to Colombia to access safe abortions. With respect to the two terms previously introduced, there has been a change in "*la política*" but not in "*lo político*." Women are still denied full control over their bodies. The men occupying the presidency may have changed, but the environment is still such that proposals like PL 1904/2024, which classifies all abortions after 22 weeks of pregnancy as homicide, are tabled in the legislative chambers (PL 1904/2024).

With that in mind, it becomes evident that, for effective change to materialise, there must also be a transformation in symbolic and cultural perceptions. Feminist NGOs are not only working on classical political struggles, such as public policies or the inclusion of a gender perspective, but they are also entering the international level, getting entangled in disputes over meanings, engaging in discursive and cultural battles over the definitions of citizenship, development, democracy, and human rights (Alvarez, 1998).

2.1 Transnational Feminism: Bridging Divides and Building Solidarity

I choose 'feminism without borders', then, to stress that our most expansive and inclusive visions of feminism need to be attentive to borders while learning to transcend them" (Mohanty, 2003, p.2).

While globalisation has enabled large-scale feminist demonstrations, its intrinsic consequences for women have spurred the rise of feminist movements (Fraser, 2007). Transnational feminism emerges from a context in which hegemonic globalisation is criticised. Also crucial to this articulation in radical opposition to the prevailing neoliberal global system, according to Alvarez (2003), is the failure of neoliberal economic policies as evidenced by increasing levels of poverty, and gender disparities therein.

In these terms, the study of transnational feminist connections is enabling in the sense that it acknowledges the inequalities and devastating effects of the proliferation of capitalist regimes globally, while simultaneously drawing attention to the encouraging possibilities of the construction of networks among movements with different visions of social transformation (Thayer, 2009). Meanwhile, Grewal and Kaplan (1999) argue that transnational feminist cultural studies represent as a practice of resistance and critique, transforming traditional divides in ways crucial to ongoing and emergent cultural theories and politics.

Under Tarrow's (2005) view of transnational collective action, this process is not analysed as a unilateral dynamic of simple information exchange, but rather as complex webs established through actions and discourses that problematise multiple agendas. These interrelationships among places of resistance generate transnational circuits of ideas, of meanings of resistance and practices (Mandelli & Spyer, 2022).

This, however, does not imply that the movement's goals are uniform, nor that the scope and consequences of exclusions, power hierarchies, and patriarchy are identical across different contexts. For instance, when examining abortion rights in Brazil and Colombia, a clear distinction emerges. In Colombia, abortion is legal based on the relatively broad "health of the mother" understanding, whereas in Brazil a struggle is ongoing to preserve the already insufficient rights that have been established.

Thus, the realities of oppression do not need to be identical for networks of resistance to develop. Indeed, all that is required here for the same or similar values to be shared. For example, regardless of the structural, political, and contextual differences among the two South

American countries under focus here, Reis shared in the interview how she had built partnerships:

[I] went to the clinic to introduce myself. I developed a very strong, sisterly relationship with foundations dedicated to education, and sexual and reproductive rights in Colombia. Very strong, very supportive, and very, very, very sisterly, I would say, to the point of building bridges between the movement that existed in Brazil for the decriminalisation of abortion and the training of doctors to perform legal abortions in Brazil. We developed this in Colombia, taking Brazilian doctors there to study and do internships, to prepare for this work (Reis, 2024).

Efforts like those narrated in the interview transcend national, linguistic, cultural, class, race, and community barriers (Fraser, 2007), but this does not mean they are forged naturally. Extensive and diverse networks with other places are historically constructed, and the ways in which oppressions and inequalities are perceived tend not to be the same.

Given the diverse personal and political backgrounds as well as their engagement in the most diverse political practices, these webs are formed by people who share the will to dismantle patriarchal structures and declare political commitments to a wide range of feminist and social justice endeavours. Nevertheless, this shared goal does not mean there is a heterogeneity among those partnering within an affiliation. Such coalitions are formed by women who do not even speak the same language, and who are not contained by the same borders (literally and figuratively, and therefore have to travel to each other's world.

2.1.1 The Benefits of Affiliation: World Travelling and Beyond

I am incomplete and unreal without other women. I am profoundly dependent on others without having to be their subordinate, their slave, their servant (Lugones, 1987. p.8).

Feminist practice operates at many different levels, including in daily life through everyday actions that constitute one's identity and relational communities, or at the scholarly and academic level through practices pursuant to feminist production of knowledge. A further level at which

such practice occurs, and which serves as the focus of this chapter, is in collective action through networks constituted around visions of social change.

Contemporary feminism in Brazil, Colombia, and much of Latin America was born plural. Heterogeneous in their spheres of action, identities and also according to different strategies regarding the state (Vargas, 2008). Nevertheless, it is not like each country is a planet in its own orbit. In that feminist identities throughout the region have been constructed on the basis of intense and rich transnational dialogues, regional meetings, as well as formal and informal modes of affiliation (Matos, Paradis, 2013).

These affiliations encompass conflicts, interpretative struggles, and political-cultural disputes (Alvarez, 2014). They are also marked by difficulties stemming from unequal power relations. Nevertheless, forming networks does not presuppose uniformity among their members; instead, it necessitates recognition of differences and combating the structural inequalities on which hierarchies are built (Lagarde, 2013).

In fact, engaging with transnational feminism can also involve addressing intra-gender dynamics and other social hierarchies and differences within a single national context (Falcon, 2016). As Ahmed outlines: “The ‘we’ of feminism is shaped by some bodies, more than others” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 189). The “we” in affiliations is not a neutral one; it is affected by its surroundings, by what it is against and what it is for (Ahmed, 2014).

It is precisely in the alignment of the “we” with the “I,” acknowledging all the different bodies and inequalities that shape the composition of a collective, that a new grammar of social existence might materialise. In other words, in the imperfect coalition between the feminist subject and the feminist collective, a generative force may arise (Ahmed, 2014). Through networks, which Lagarde (2013) refers to as active political meetings, women fight against patriarchy, violence, and misogyny, and find it easier to invoke claims collectively (Alvarez, 1998; Lagarde, 2013).

Collective action was perceived in its potential to ensure more effective participation in the public arena. In addition, from a political strategy perspective, being part of a group may offer more safety for activists and individuals, particularly in contexts of criminalisation (Cristine de Souza, 2021). Besides these two possibilities, making abortion a plural collective experience is also seen as beneficial in helping to combat the stigma associated with the procedure.

Reis (2024) subtly described this sense of collective experience well in her word choices during the interview as follows: “Abortions that we ourselves had when we were young. Clandestine abortions. Abortions that almost put us on the death statistics” (Reis, 2024). Here, the use of “we” when mentioning a practice that is medically performed by the “I” is read as a powerful means of proposing that the silence be broken and a way of emphasising that point that the ones who carry out the procedure are not criminals but friends, siblings, coworkers, or even oneself.

In addition, the plural form is used to protect those who could be penalised, to secure care for those searching for realisation of their human right of complete bodily authority. Moreover, the “we” strengthens the demand, upgrading the claim from an individual one to a collective one. The shared voice is louder, as abortion is not solely a concern for those who can gestate, but a public health issue and a fundamental human rights demand.

For many, being part of a unity can be more personally fruitful than engaging in formal politics, which can often feel more hostile than empowering. Collective advocacy can enhance self-esteem, foster political awareness, and cultivate a sense of personal agency, which are all key elements of active citizenship (Cristine de Souza, 2021). For the many people who have sought out the help of Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres, the organisation has come to represent a tool for political action.

In our discussion, Reis below highlighted the example of women who, after having their right to a safe and legal abortion guaranteed with the support from the organisation she represents, chose to become part of the movement themselves, beginning by making initial contact with other individuals seeking assistance from Milhas pela Vida das Mulheres:

I was overtaken [of the role of main contact point for women seeking the organisation] at a time when women who had been accompanied by Milhas [...]reached a point in their stories where they said ‘I want to, I want to be part of this, I want to take part.’ And these women naturally ended up becoming supporters, because they entered through one door and were leaving through the other. They knew this journey with much more legitimacy than I did, right? (Reis, 2024)

When these women found support and a welcoming network, they felt compelled to engage and participate themselves. Furthermore, Reis, during our exchange, added carefully that the experience for many of those she accompanied had made their abortion “a very good thing that has happened in the lives of many women who have discovered themselves through contact with other women, who have had the courage to do things they didn't know they had the courage to do” (Reis, 2024).

For women, the decision to nurture each other is redemptive and it is inside this knowledge that one's real power is rediscovered (Lorde, 1983). The human development indexes used to measure gender (in)equality, development, and women's power do not yet account for what anthropology considers the social fabric, whose diverse wefts and warps sustain women. For some time now, women have not only supported each other but have also been forming pacts (Lagarde, 2009).

Establishing alliances and using them to transform lives radically and overcome exclusions has reconstituted women. It is also a viable path for occupying spaces, securing rights, consolidating protections among women, and eliminating isolation, feelings of being devalued, and abandonment. If it is true that every movement and cultural critique embodies its own utopia, feminism necessitates friendship, encounters, and solidarity (Lagarde, 2013).

Mohanty's (2003) critique of the term “universal sisterhood” explains why the process examined here is better understood as one of solidarity. According to her, the idea of an international kinship assumes an equalising notion, operating on the basis of common gender experiences across racial and national contexts and erasing the material and ideological power imbalances within and among groups of women, especially between the first and third worlds. Simultaneously, it displaces all women from their positions as historical and political agents (Mohanty, 2003).

Mohanty (2003) then argues for the need to craft an analytical space in which to understand third world women as subjects who are historically complex and positionally differentiated. She also posits “solidarity rather than sisterhood as the basis for mutually accountable and equitable relationships among different communities of women” (Mohanty, 2003. p. 202). Ultimately, solidarity embodies a praxis-oriented and active political struggle.

From this perspective, affiliation is not viewed as inherent but rather as a conscious choice to work and fight together. In other words, it is an achievement or the result of an effort. It

is recognised through the perception of common interests, and it is not assumed that experiences of oppression are uniform. In this sense, diversity and difference are central values for a feminism without borders (Mohanty, 2003).

Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground (Ahmed, 2014, p.189).

Ahmed (2014) asserts that the hope for transnational solidarity in the way proposed by Mohanty (2003) must entail facing the world through feminist lens. That includes confronting what is not known with people one does not yet know. It also involves adopting a different perspective, acknowledging that the things we advocate for when we oppose something are not always identifiable as tangible entities. In fact, fighting for something frequently entails embracing the uncertain possibilities within the world we occupy (Ahmed, 2014).

We can see here that a commonality in the theorisations of Ahmed (2014) and Mohanty (2003) is the fabricated characteristic of this solidarity affiliation. It is not something inherent on the basis of biological commonalities or the equality of oppression. Rather, it is something built and fought for. Women in different social locations are joined by political networks opposed to systemic forms of domination (Mohanty, 2003). That said, one central understanding is that these affiliations are material and ideological constructions created not innately but through processes of struggle and negotiation (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

In such efforts, the politics of location can serve as a powerful tool for coalition building. By identifying common grounds for historical and political differences and other similarities among women, alliances can be formed. Meanwhile, investigating the complexities inherent in temporal and spatial theories of subjectivity and identity is crucial in the course of delineating the conditions of transnational feminist practices (Kaplan, 1994). This approach paves the way for the creation of alternative histories and fosters new possibilities for affiliation.

Here, the understanding of affiliation follows that of Said (1983). San Juan Jr. 's (2006) interpretation of Said is particularly useful here because the author transplants the Saidian framework into the Latin American colonial context. According to this framework, filiation denotes natural ties, belonging, and conformity to received traditions, while affiliation signifies a

critical consciousness characterised by a deep analysis of, and response, to the dominant culture. It is important to note the biological clues here when Said states that affiliation becomes a form of representing the processes of filiation found in nature (Said, 1983).

Applying this idea in the context of this research would suggest that these women activists form affiliations due to a biological bond, which ignores the social construction of gender and instead relies on biological categories to define women. Setting aside biological materialism, we can employ Said's concept of affiliation if we consider its reference to the realms of culture and society. In line with this view, affiliation is a compensatory order that offers a new form of relationship (Said, 1983).

Adopting San Juan Jr. 's (2006) interpretation, affiliation is understood as a conscious act in response to oppressive forces. Here, there is an implied recognition that individuals with nuanced identities and subjectivities, which cannot be generalised or essentialised, form affiliations not due to natural callings but out of necessity. Getting together, therefore, is a way of responding more efficiently to multiple oppressions as well as an opportunity to promote structural change.

In debates regarding abortion specifically, this also holds true. While promoting discussions about a procedure where, from a medical perspective, the recipient is the “I,” the effectiveness of the “we” as a collective voice is enhanced. Thus, despite the variables that make each abortion experience unique, in the affiliation between the organisations under study here there seems to be an understanding of the power of a common tone. Reis illustrated this point in our conversation as follows:

Because you can't do it yourself. What you do alone is an individual solution. When I was pregnant, I solved my pregnancy, but changing it, making it a club, a team, a network, you don't do it alone (Reis, 2024).

Again, the perspective Reis takes in the passage above does not mean erasing the multiplicity of oppressions. Lugones (1987) in her articulation of the theory of location also acknowledges different temporalities and contexts of struggle. Situating the approach within different political and historical worlds, she articulates connections between women based on material histories bearing both differences and similarities. This kind of politics of location

subverts colonial linear notions of progress and development, and underlies the interpolation of past and present (Lugones, 1987).

Linked to this analysis is her theorisation of world travelling, a process involving displacement and placement that acknowledges various locations: “One can inhabit more than one of these worlds at the very same time” (Lugones, 1987, p. 11). She contends that those on the margins, or the subaltern counterpublic to use a term discussed in this work, are inherently world travellers for reasons of necessity and survival (Lugones, 1987).

The hostility one may encounter in different worlds as well as the compulsory and vital nature of travelling may obscure the value of travelling. Nevertheless, Lugones argues for the many advantages of going to other worlds. From her perspective, travelling to other worlds means identifying with the other, a recognition that does not come from evenness but from understanding. And without understanding “we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated, we are lacking” (Lugones, 1987, p. 8).

Via this process, one sees the other as a subject, and ceases to be separated and excluded from them. Crucially, here is where the difference between travelling to conquer and travelling with a loving and playful perception lies. In the former approach, travelling takes on an agonistic form, in which the other becomes a recipient of the traveller’s arrogant perception. In colonial ventures, it is represented by assimilation and the destruction of other people’s worlds (Lugones, 1987).

On the other hand, travelling with a loving and playful perception means being playful, not having an agonistic self importance. The traveller, in this case, is not fixed in particular constructions of themselves, they are open to surprise and self-(re)construction via encounters with others. By attempting to take hold of themselves and their relationships with habitants of other worlds, travellers may come to understand themselves. However, this does not mean abandoning or resigning oneself. It entails being creative rather than passive in another world. Moreover, it involves actively relinquishing arrogant perceptions, including those of our own and others' constructions of women (Lugones, 1987).

Lugones (1987) constructs this framework using the example of relations between racialised and white women in the United States as an example. Going further and unpacking the relations between collectives localised in the third world using this theorisation can indeed be fruitful. First, there is an initial necessary understanding of the multiplicity of “worlds” in the

third world". Second, there is a sense that we, individuals of the Third World, despite being geographically close, might not have travelled to each other's worlds.

In this regard, Reis raised a pertinent example when she mentioned the disconnection she perceived between Brazil and its Latin American neighbours regarding abortion regulation and activism for safe termination of pregnancy. Bearing in mind Lugones's (1987) theoretical framework when reading the passage from the interview reproduced below, one can conclude that, despite the physical and historical proximities, a travel from Brazil to the other nations in the region did not happen.

The fact is the casualties, the legal permissions that have been approved in law, in the Brazilian Penal Code since 1940, pre-war, right? They weren't invested in Brazil, they weren't developed in Brazil to the level of potential that they carried. The proof is that they were able to decriminalise abortion in Argentina, Colombia, and several Mexican states. Brazil is as if it had looked the other way. The associations, the contacts, maybe university contacts, maybe they were made with Europe, with the United States, but they weren't made with the *hermanos* countries, right? (Reis, 2024).

Analysing this passage, one can conclude that Brazil in many ways has distanced itself from Latin America. Although there are intense zones of contact along border areas, as highlighted by numerous studies, there is a significant disconnect, particularly concerning the issue of abortion. Ultimately, Brazilians did not travel to other worlds and "without knowing the other's world, one does not know the other, and without knowing the other, one is truly alone in the other's presence because the other is only dimly present" (Lugones, 1987, p. 18). Relatedly, Reis noted that Brazil preferred to look towards the first world instead:

Look around and you'll discover that no, we're not falling into the abyss. We're in the future and the future isn't the United States. Sorry [...] But if we don't recognize the force we're capable of unleashing as ourselves, we instead cling to the old inferiority complex, right? I'd rather think that we and Latin America are moving into the future than hanging on to the United States (Reis, 2024).

What is being conveyed here is that if inhabiting multiple worlds and travelling between them is an intrinsic part of marginalised experience (Lugones, 1987), then some places may be easier and more fruitful to navigate. Firstly, this is because they allow us to be more playful, which fosters openness to learning and finding sources of wisdom in ambiguity. Moreover, there are worlds in which we are more fluent speakers, which signifies a way of being at ease within them (Lugones, 1987). Brazil and Colombia may not share the same national language, but their shared history and present, as outlined in the first chapter, render Brazilians and Colombians more fluent in each other's worlds.

As a consequence, being open and unconcerned about competence and self-importance—traits Lugones identifies as integral to playfulness—can effectively create portals to creativity and invention, which are essential when reinventing citizenship and demanding protection of rights. The argument here is not that affiliations with feminists from the first world are impossible or lack generative potential, but rather that we are more 'at ease,' to use a Lugonian term, within Latin America.

Latin American women in the era of globalisation, whether integrated or excluded, come from the emergence of conquered and colonised societies and states that originated in violent and genocidal processes. Social and political malformations have cohabited with distorted democratic echoes and libertarian and humanist utopias. Where states were weak subsidiary mechanisms and social structures solidified into closed estates and marginalised communities, women were left further behind (Lagarde, 2013, p.613).

In the case being explored here, the travelling was in the Lugonian sense but also literal. Reis, as she narrated in the interview, physically travelled to Colombia:

The story I experienced when I arrived in Colombia and knocked on the door of a clinic like Oriéntame's and said, "Hi, I'm Brazilian, I'm undertaking an initiative, and I'd like to learn more" suddenly led me to be invited to speak with the director of Oriéntame. We talked, went to lunch, became great friends, and a strong solidarity developed (Reis, 2024).

Identification and mutual understanding only occurred when travel, in both senses, was undertaken. This process involves an understanding of oneself, as illustrated by Reis's narration of perceiving the disconnection between the Brazilian movement and the rest of the region upon arriving in Colombia. Travelling to each other's worlds then "would enable us to *be* through *loving* each other" (Lugones, 1987, p. 8, emphasis in original). It is via lovingly travelling to another world that one actively exists.

Through this playful and loving perception while travelling we come to know others. Furthermore, understanding other women's worlds is an integral part of knowing them, which is, in turn, a fundamental aspect of loving them. Love here is not viewed as a fusion or an erasure of differences, but as a revelation of plurality. It requires seeing things through another's eyes, and understanding how both individuals are constructed in that world, and witnessing one's own sense of self from their perspective (Lugones, 1987). This was exemplified by Reis in her recounting of her arrival at Oriéntame's clinic to present her organisation's work:

It was truly a story of solidarity because, in some way, we went there and they said, 'Come here, come here, come, the girls from Brazil are coming.' Brazil was not always present in these circumstances. [...] I can tell you that when I personally presented *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* in Colombia, I was warmly welcomed with 'Here come the Brazilians! Yes, come, join us.' I was received warmly, as someone who was expected, even though it took a while for the Brazilians to join in (Reis, 2024).

If, as argued before, Brazil was looking the other way, to Europe and the United States, the passage above demonstrates an example of turning the gaze towards a neighbouring country. By knowing the other, we cease to ignore, exclude, and separate ourselves from them (Lugones, 1987) and then a transnational network may be formed. Reis recalled that the following happened between *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and Oriéntame:

So, actually, we, somewhat unintentionally, ended up creating a bond with the Latin American approach to abortion support, which Brazil never seemed to embrace [...] because the feminist movement in Brazil had a different strategy (Reis, 2024).

The creation of such a bond was possible because there was a willingness to, with a loving and playful perception, engage in world travelling. As I have explored in this section, the benefits for feminist practice of encountering and knowing each other are multiple. In particular, these can include more effective participation in the public arena, more personal reward and empowerment, the marking of a more viable path to secure rights, and mitigating the psychological effects of feeling isolated in resistance.

Nevertheless, using Mohanty's (2003) conceptualisation of solidarity and Said's (1983) understanding of affiliation, I have argued that these networks are not formed on a natural basis. Instead, they result from an active and conscious choice to fight together. The individuals who come together in a feminist affiliation are not necessarily afflicted by the same inequalities or inhabit the same social place. Transnational feminisms, like the one being explored in this work, inherently entail crossing numerous borders.

2.2 Beyond Borders: Crafting a Transnational Feminist Future

Borders suggest both containment and safety, and women often pay a price for daring to claim the integrity, security, and safety of our bodies and our living spaces (Mohanty, 2003, p.1)

The scale and scope of transnational feminist activism, in alignment with the criticism levelled at the UN conferences mentioned in the introduction part of this work, has not yet reached everyone equally. The process of its development has been uneven across different classes, countries, and continents (Thayer, 2009). Many women, whether labelling themselves as feminists or not, have never had the opportunity to travel on a plane and/or be in a room with people from other countries who do not speak the same language. Many of these women are crossed by and can't cross borders.

The presence of borders in women's lives, dichotomous in the way it can be exclusionary and enabling, or can reflect restraint and security, and this called upon Mohanty (2003) to envision a critical transnational feminist praxis that would transcend but also acknowledge borders. Therefore, rather than a borderless feminism, what the scholar proposes is to "speak of feminism without silence and exclusions" (Mohanty, 2003, p.2). The call here is for the

conceiving of social change and justice across these demarcations and divisions, while not forgetting their existence.

It is important to add that, according to Mohanty (2003), there is no single concept of borders. There are lines between races, classes, sexualities, disabilities, and religions; they not only separate countries. It is important to note that borders in the classical sense, limits between countries, also have psychological and social implications. For example, a person may fear entering a country when the main reason for their trip is to have an abortion.

Reis, in the extract of the interview presented below, narrates precisely the emotional ramifications of a literal border crossing. The case she commented on concerns people assisted to travel to Mexico to terminate their pregnancies. Though this does not fall within the scope of this work, the example nevertheless illustrates the many intersectional factors that may be present at a physical border crossing:

The women got there and there were some who made the sign of the cross when they read the *laissez-passer* that we gave them, but they couldn't do anything, they couldn't stop the woman from entering Mexico, they couldn't refuse her entry into Mexican territory because there is a treaty at ministerial level, at the second level of government (Reis, 2024).

Borders can also be symbolic as Reis alluded to when mentioning a woman's arrival in the Colombian capital in December to terminate a pregnancy: "all she had taken with her was flip flops. No socks, no closed shoes. It was seven degrees in Bogotá" (Reis, 2024). Meanwhile, borders were present in the form of never having travelled by plane before and never having had a passport but travelling abroad to a country where the people speak a different language in other cases Reis (2024) noted. Indeed, a border can exist by having to travel elsewhere because a human right is not guaranteed in your country.

Mohanty's framework does not intend to ignore the existence of borders; rather, it acknowledges their real and varied impacts on individuals' lives. The objective is to emphasise the emancipatory potential of navigating and crossing these borders (Mohanty, 2003). Recognising this potential does not mean romanticising borders but rather understanding how they can generate new possibilities.

For instance, *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and *Oriéntame* formed an alliance partly because of borders, not only the physical one between Brazil and Colombia but also the metaphorical one that restricts Brazilians from having full control over their bodies. Thus, a feminism without borders arose from a profound acknowledgment of these boundaries. The movement's aim is to cross boundaries, in order to imagine a world without them.

Mohanty's (2003) proposal is to build a "feminism without borders" (Mohanty, 2003, p.2) that takes as its starting point the bodies and lives of women and girls from the third world, a space where global capitalism usually inscribes its rules. Her aim is to bring academic feminism closer to these global realities that are profoundly crossed by gender, class, and race.

Mohanty (2003) proposes achieving the collective construction of a feminist project that is localised and contextualised in its anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist form, while being attentive to the plurality and narrowness of borders. Therefore, transnational feminist practices hold potential but must still recognise the structural asymmetries inherent in borders, as well as the historical specificities of groups and subjectivities that universal categories of modernity tend to fail to capture (Mohanty, 2003).

Mohanty (2002, 2003) defends the view that cross-cultural feminist action must simultaneously address the micro-political aspects of contextualisation, subjectivities, and specific struggles, as well as the macro-political contexts of global political and economic systems. According to her, detailed and unique analyses should be connected to broader analyses, with the aim of developing strategies for feminist solidarity across borders that take into consideration the different scales of intervention, subnationalism, and regionalism (Mohanty, 2003).

In other words, gaining a comprehension of a visceral bond between micro-political dimensions of daily life and the macro-political and economic global context is vital. Indeed, a materialist examination that connects the experiences of local gender-specific power relations to the broader, transnational political and economic frameworks of capitalism would provide fertile ground for the collective construction of a transnational and anti-capitalist feminist solidarity practice (Matos, 2010; Mohanty, 2003).

Therefore, a core impetus of transnational feminism must be to expose the unwarranted universalisation of gender espoused by white global feminism, which "has elided the diversity of women's agency in favour of a universalised western model of women's liberation that celebrates

individuality" (Grewal and Kaplan, 2006, p. 17). Any attempt at construction based on a unified category of gender is misguided, as it homogenises differences among women and consequently leads to the exclusion of many (Mohanty, 2003).

This discussion is connected to Lorde's (1983) idea about the creative potential of differences. Lorde argues that differences should not merely be tolerated but recognised as sources of polarities where creativity can thrive. She emphasises that only through the interdependence of diverse strengths can the power to actively pursue new ways of being in the world be generated. Feminism, particularly within academia, often neglects to recognise differences as a fundamental strength though. This oversight allows the patriarchal tactic of divide and conquer to prevail. To overcome this, a philosophy of 'define and empower' must be embraced (Lorde, 1983).

It is, therefore, imperative to develop frameworks that elucidate how historical forms of oppression intersect with constructions of the category of women rather than attempting to derive one from the other. The ultimate goal here is to empower women in different realities who are working to dismantle various forms of patriarchal social structures and practices, fostering affiliations of transnational solidarities (Mohanty, 2003).

If this is indeed the main objective, it is critical to consider where it can be accomplished. The traditional public sphere has proved unwelcoming to those proposing changes to the status quo and well-established structures. Therefore, it is essential to rethink the locus of this endeavour, and to craft spaces where the marginalised and subaltern (Spivak, 2010) can speak, affiliate, share, and construct counter-discourses. With this need in mind, we now explore the idea of counterpublics.

2.2.1 Subaltern Counterpublics

Survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those other [sic] identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths (Lorde, 1983, p.26)

As a way of questioning the public sphere in general and who actively participates in it specifically, and the limits of democracy in a liberal state model, Fraser (1990) develops her

conception of the subaltern counterpublic. For this author, the subaltern counterpublic is an alternative and autonomous space where historically marginalised groups can come together, share their experiences, express demands, convey criticisms, and develop a collective consciousness to challenge the dominant power structures. Fraser (1990), in constructing her argument, builds on the work of Habermas.

The concept of the public sphere under the German philosopher's theory refers to a metaphorical locus in modern societies where citizens engage in political participation through discourse. This space allows people to deliberate on common issues and serves as an institutionalised arena for discussion. It is distinct from the state, as it is a platform for generating and circulating ideas that may hold the state to account. Moreover, for Habermas, the public sphere is isolated from the economy, and is rather a domain for dialogue and debate rather than commercial transactions. This distinction helps to maintain clarity between state mechanisms, economic markets, and democratic associations, which is crucial for democratic theory to endure (Habermas, 1989 cited in Fraser, 1990, p.57).

Fraser (1990) criticises Habermas for apparently failing to develop a new, post-bourgeois model of the public sphere. A renewal of the concept, she argues, is needed to problematise the limits of democracy in its current form. It is important to add that Fraser avoids dichotomising the concept of the public space as, on one hand, an elitist masculinist notion unfit as a critical tool to rethink democracy and, on the other, a good idea not realised in practice that still retains emancipatory potential.

According to Fraser, both possibilities are too extreme and a more nuanced answer would be preferable. To do so, she once again refers back to Habermas and the following four assumptions that are central to the elitist bourgeois conception of the public sphere (Fraser, 1990): social equality is not a necessary condition for democracy; a single heterogeneous public sphere is preferable to an intersection of multiple publics; the presence of "private" issues in the public sphere is always undesirable; and a sharp separation between civil society and the state is necessary (Habermas, 1989 in Fraser, 1990, p.62).

While considering inter-public relations, Fraser criticises Habermas's idea that a single, overarching public sphere is more desirable, and that multiple loci of debates would represent a step away from, rather than towards, democracy. In constructing her argument, she assesses

stratified and egalitarian multicultural societies (Fraser, 1990). Within the scope of this work, the focus is on the former type of society.

In a stratified society, public discussions tend to favour the privileged groups and disadvantage the subordinates. This effect becomes more pronounced when there is only one main public sphere. In such a scenario, marginalised groups lack spaces in which to discuss their own identities, demands, goals, and strategies independently. They have no opportunity for conversations that aren't silenced or overseen by the dominant groups (Fraser, 1990).

In this context, members of subordinate groups, such as women, have found more advantages in being the alternative publics, or what Fraser proposes calling “subaltern counterpublics.” Her aim is to theorise “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (Fraser, 1990, p.67). These counterpublics, therefore, emerge as a response to exclusions within the dominant scenario, and represent a forging of space to widen discursive contestation of meanings.

In sum, the goal of participatory parity and multiplicity of issues debated is more likely to be achieved by various publics than by a single public (Fraser, 1990). In stratified societies, subaltern counterpublics serve two key roles: providing spaces for marginalised groups to withdraw and regroup; and acting as bases from which to organise efforts aimed at the broader public. The interplay between these two roles gives these counterpublics potential to promote emancipation, making it possible to reduce disadvantages in the conditions for demanding (Fraser, 1990).

The vitality of this process relies on the public sphere being an important locus for the enactment of social identities. In these spaces, we revise our needs and identities, and come up with new terms to describe the social reality (Fraser, 1990). In this regard, Fraser notes: “participation means being able to speak in one’s own voice, thereby simultaneously constructing and expressing one’s cultural identity through idiom and style” (Fraser, 1990, p.69).

The diverse, differently situated, and geographically scattered feminists discussed in this work together form a counterpublic. In preparation for, and as a means of, critically engaging with dominant public spheres, members of these counterpublics debate discourses and strategies, construct alternative forms of social relations, and articulate discourses to challenge prevailing norms and institutions (Thayer, 2009).

The transnational feminist counterpublics in Latin America, as arenas constituted by political relationships, are more intangible and diverse compared to the region's feminist *encuentros*. However, it shares with them the indispensable function of providing shelter within which widely divergent movements and organisations, networks, and individuals can construct and negotiate their politics, develop and debate new critiques of gendered power, and engage in dialogues (Thayer, 2009).

In Latin America, this process is especially useful. Subaltern groups in the region have historically been treated as non-citizens. Therefore, establishing counterpublic spaces in which to contest and redefine sociocultural, gender-based, racial, and economic exclusions is crucial to the broadening and deepening of democratisation (Alvarez, 1998). The context is such that even within formally democratic systems, access to information, participation, and influence in the governmental decision-making processes have been limited to a small and privileged segment of the population (Alvarez, 2003).

Consequently, subaltern groups have been largely excluded from traditional arenas of debate, and their demands have been relegated to the private sphere (Alvarez, 2003). Publicly addressing these issues typically deemed private from an elitist and masculine perspective broadens the scope for discussion and fosters more innovative approaches. It also creates a favourable scenario for creative practices to flourish in, such as establishing a fund to allow women to undergo safe and humane abortions in another country.

This visionary strategy is read primarily as a means of ensuring human rights while at the same time generating debate in other spheres about abortion, challenging the taboo surrounding the topic, and consequently aiming to change the status quo in Brazil. Going back to the world travelling metaphor put forward by Lugones (1987), here it is argued that in the case of the affiliation between *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and *Oriéntame*, two worlds encountered each other seeking to transgressively envision a third (fourth, fifth..) world. Specifically, this would entail a more equitable space where people do not have to risk their lives to have abortions, and where new meanings, identities, practices, and resistance can be cultivated, allowing everyone to have control over their bodily choices.

The two organisations are innovatively proposing an alternative space in which to rethink the discourses and practices around abortion and sexual and reproductive rights. In this locus, new understandings are forged, experiences are shared, and the quality and diversity of discourse

are enhanced. This subaltern counterpublic is distinct from legislative houses, where debates on these topics are often hostile to people who can gestate and the conversations are influenced by religious doctrines rather than health guidelines and international human rights frameworks.

In this new space, the organisations propose open discussions on abortion. In particular, by “cheerfully and legally, visibly making a fuss and transforming abortion into a commonplace act in women's lives” (Reis, 2024), they are eschewing the clandestine strategies imposed by legislative measures like the aforementioned PL 1904/2024. One effective tactic here is recounting personal experiences while preserving privacy and anonymity.

Some women, after seeking out these organisations and having an abortion, have since chosen to disclose their experiences. A Brazilian woman who, guided by Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres, attended Orientame’s clinic in Colombia to terminate a pregnancy, decided to share her story in a magazine under a fictitious name (Weeks, 2022). Mariana recalled: "I don't feel guilty about anything, but I can't say that it's comfortable to touch or think about it either. We live in a sexist society and we were brought up not to have certain choices. Anyway, if it were today, I'd make exactly the same decision” (Weeks, 2022).

This indicates that these feminists engage within the realm of discourse, where concepts of safety, legality, and legitimacy are continuously formed, dismantled, and contested. To progress with this dialogue, it is essential to acknowledge discourse as a form of power. Foucault (1978) asserts that power is not static, rigid, or one-dimensional; instead, it is an ongoing, cyclical process that both suppresses and faces resistance, embedded within a network of dynamic and unequal relationships (Foucault, 1978).

Examples like that of Mariana, along with the public interviews given by Reis in Brazil, exemplify how the open discussion of abortion is emerging. The goal of doing so is to make this practice less of a taboo issue, a situation which leads to many clandestine procedures being undertaken and lives being lost. Reis outlined: “Obviously, when you take on the clandestine strategy, all you don't want to do is speak up” (Reis, 2024). But people like Mariana and Reis are speaking up to ensure that those forced to travel for abortions are not forgotten.

Besides the need for open debate, there is also a preoccupation with the quality of these conversations. Discussions must necessarily not only be broader but must focus on public health, human rights, and social issues rather than religious doctrines. It seems that when Mariana and Reis talk, they are careful not to be dramatic about a practice that is often associated with fear,

silence, and precariousness. in this light, the following passage of Reis's interview is illuminating:

Abortion is not a drama. Abortion is not a sadness. Abortion is something that happens in women's lives. Unless you want to turn menstruation into a bloodbath, right? Abortion is not a tragedy. Abortion is the regulation of your menstrual cycle. That's it, right? But you have to go to the end of that thought. You can't stay in the middle of it, can you? (Reis, 2024).

In the accounts shared by Reis and Mariana there seems to be a willingness to highlight the structuralities that made it necessary for people to go to another country to terminate a pregnancy. Therefore, open debate also appears to serve the purpose of questioning the inequalities that construct this reality. The two women, while talking, discuss why this is happening when, theoretically, there is an international human rights framework that binds states like Brazil. Thus, from this new place, where abortion is seen from a scientific and human rights perspective, it is possible to also analyse and review the legal framework that forces people into travelling abroad for abortions.

CHAPTER 3. TAKING RESISTANCE FROM THE "I" TO THE "WE": HETEROTOPIA AND PLURIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS

In the previous chapters, I outlined how the “I” relates to the state, as well as the construction of citizenship and the affiliations through which the “I” becomes a “we.” Drawing from theorisations of margins and the subaltern counterpublic, I explored how these processes occur. In this chapter, the aim is to analyse what the “we” can do specifically with respect to proposing a rewriting of human rights. To accomplish that, I refer back to the premise explained in the introduction of this work, namely that safe abortion is a human right.

With that in mind, I rely on the concept of a pluriversal declaration of human rights put forward by Fregoso (2014) to explore how this legal framework can be reimagined from a decolonial, intersectional, and feminist perspective. It is important here to add that, as was the case in the previous chapters, secondary sources will be combined with primary data obtained from the interview I conducted with Juliana Reis, the founder of Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres.

Throughout this chapter, passages of that conversation are reproduced to analyse the ways in which theory intertwines with practice in this specific context. For example, in the last section of this chapter, building on the Foucaultian concept of heterotopia and the interview transcript, I delve into how Reis’s organisation enact their desired reality and how its resistance is materialised.

For resistance, a counter language is needed. Specifically, one can express resistance and say “no” because a counter language exists (hooks, 1989). This tongue should not be mistaken with that of the oppressor. It has to have gone through a transformation, irrevocably changed by the “necessity of a resistance that is sustained by remembrance of the past, which includes recollections of broken tongues giving us ways to speak that decolonise our minds, our very beings” (hooks, 1989, p. 21).

It is essential to discuss the “tongue” with which the Colombian and Brazilian organisations talk after establishing where they are positioned (the margin) and where they propose and debate their causes (the subaltern counterpublic). In my exchange with Reis, she mentioned the word “rights” many times and more specifically how her organisation’s activities are all legal. For example, she said:

Since the beginning, our first act was based on the law. On what is legal and what is reinforced. In our practice, it is quite curious, and I am not sure if I am being clear, but it is the most subversive thing. At the same time, it is entirely anchored in legal action, in regular action, supported by the Brazilian Penal Code, the Brazilian Constitution, and human rights. How paradoxical is the situation in Brazil? Does it mean that demanding the enforcement of the law is subversive? (Reis, 2024).

Using Lorde's (1983) symbology, I interpreted this passage of the interview and the story being told not as a case of the master's tools being used to dismantle the master's house, but rather as a way of changing dominant political narratives. What organisations of this kind do is innovatively use an incredibly inhospitable vocabulary—the language of the laws—to paradoxically overcome the limits imposed by the hierarchical, patriarchal, trans-exclusionary, and misogynistic structures that created these laws.

As history has shown, and as Reis (2024) mentioned in our conversation, during times of crisis, women's rights are often the first to be compromised. This perspective, often attributed to Beauvoir, seems to have inspired *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres*, which understands that a political, economic, or religious crisis can challenge women's rights. In fact, what history proves is that even in times of no apparent crisis, like in Brazil currently, these rights are not to be taken for granted, and constant vigilance is required.

That said, it is understandable that Reis would repeatedly use the word “rights.” If reproductive rights are being taken away, then both organisations covered in this research are proposing a new way of perceiving and guaranteeing them. In the context of this work, it is essential to discuss rights and, more specifically, how they are being used by the affiliation being researched.

3.1 Alternative Human Rights Imaginaries

The language of human rights appeals to me [...] because its social justice ethos resonates with an internationalist gesture that transcends the nation-state (Fregoso, 2014, p.603).

For Kant and Hegel, the origins of law can be traced to the “natural” forms of ruling that preceded the convention of the state. According to this liberal conception of universal rights, a

person is entitled to the same rights and treatment irrespective of factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class. The citizen, who is a bearer of rights and capable of acting politically to secure more entitlements, is therefore, under this framework, neutral and unmarked by power hierarchies (Mukhopadhyay, 2015).

Proposing different views, feminist authors have been criticising this liberal understanding, arguing that it erases differences and overlooks the reality of social relations. They support the notion that rights are limited to formal guarantees that do not necessarily become practice. In this context, the assertion that everyone is equal under the law becomes merely a formality (Gonzalez, 1988). This is manifested in the substance of laws and policies, and in their interpretation and implementation (Mukhopadhyay, 2015; Das and Poole, 2008).

One of the great contributions of feminism has been the profound criticism and unmasking of the dominant paradigm that places (Western) men as the universal reference point and transforms women (and others) into different or invisible. In doing so, it moves in a contradictory space: on the one hand, the demand for equal rights with men and equal treatment; on the other hand, the right to differentiated treatment and the valorisation of women's specificities (Jelin, 1994, p.125).

The state, as the primary instrument of societal homogenisation, operates under the assumption of universal freedom and equality, yet remains inherently male from a jurisprudential perspective. Laws, in this sense, reflect elite male perspectives and interests, as well as their treatment of other groups, thereby reinforcing the state's male-centric nature (Mackinnon, 1989), as argued in this work's first chapter. While seemingly universal and blind, rights are, in reality, standards built on the understanding that elite males are the norm. Inequalities are therefore predicated upon a false premise of parity, so it is as if juridical commonalities are indicative of full and essential equality (Lagarde, 2013).

In addition, recognising that much of the modern state is built upon written practices, one must critically assess the claim of being democratic when it is made by a nation that systematically marginalises, via laws and their application, groups such as indigenous peoples, refugees, racialised individuals, and the trans community (Lagarde, 2013). In other words, one must ask how a state intends to have democratic legitimacy when it subjects its individuals to reification and exclusion, consistently treating rights as privileges.

To illustrate this point, we return to the Brazilian example concerning legally permitted abortions. The aim of doing so is to emphasise the fragility and ineffectiveness of this normative scenario for marginalised groups. In particular, those seeking to terminate a pregnancy under the three circumstances permitted by law face challenges in exercising what is in their constitutional rights. These rights, despite being guaranteed since 1940, are not being upheld. They, as Reis mentioned during our interview, are a privilege:

The struggle for abortion in Brazil has been a matter of privilege, the privilege of those who can afford a safe, albeit clandestine, abortion. Whose privilege? Those in university? Or those with friends in university? The privilege of being close to progressive public servants who would address demands and needs, but this has nothing to do with rights. Rights need to be communicated and widely known, access needs to be encouraged, not secretly protected (Reis, 2024).

The scenario painted in the extract above concerns the national sphere. At the international level, where the borders and margins in which the groups here being discussed operate, there is no overarching jurisdiction or universal constitution. Therefore, the solution found in this work is to draw on a progressive reading of the human rights framework concerning sexual and reproductive health.

This choice is primarily based on two reasons. First, it is influenced by an initial understanding, argued in this work's introduction, that safe abortion is a fundamental human right. Therefore, when organisations advocate for a rethink on abortion, they are inherently addressing a human rights issue. Second, building on this premise, we argue that the collaboration between the Brazilian and Colombian organisations is creative and unique in how they propose new ways of practising and advancing human rights.

Essential to this discussion is an understanding of human rights as the result of concrete social struggles. The corresponding legal framework is involved in social classification, as well as the creation of legitimacy and the formal expression of power (Wilson, 1997). Here, I invoke the concept of the "social life of rights" as articulated by Wilson (1997).

To understand the social life of rights, including their evolving perspectives and possibilities, one should not fixate on their ontological status but instead explore their meanings

and uses. This involves analysing the actions and intentions of social actors and considering the broader historical contexts of institutionalised power (Wilson, 1997). The social life of rights then becomes precisely where human rights can be remodelled.

To unpack this understanding further, I bring in Fregoso's (2014) ideas on decolonising human rights. This is useful because decolonial thinking, in the way she proposes, explores the social life of rights and the frictions between the classical liberal understanding of human rights and the diverse creative appropriation of it in struggles for social justice. According to her, this permits a shifting of the focus away from the liberal doctrine that was present around the birth of human rights to a more propositive stance.

It is necessary, she argues, to move the understanding from the state as playing an intrinsic part in determining the universal abstract individual towards alternative human rights possibilities modelled on collectivist politics and social justice and creative practices. Fregoso asserts: "Decolonizing human rights unearths an understanding of rights as potentially liberating praxis rather than as a mode of governing through formal procedures enacted by states" (Fregoso, 2014, p.586). In other words, it entails the conscious effort of perceiving the human rights framework in terms of its liberative potential rather than a mode of governing via state-centric formal procedures.

This is not in any way an easy task. As discussed before, bodies of rights, at national or international level, were not made by or for women and other groups in the margins. Here it is also worth mentioning the injustice of requiring certain groups, who already fight daily for their survival, to allocate energy and resources to rethink their citizenship and rights creatively. However, this is what the organisations being researched are having to do.

For example, Reis (2024) mentioned her organisation's partnership with Fundación ESAR, which trains healthcare professionals in sexual and reproductive health services. Even though this specific partnership does not fall within the scope of this work, it nevertheless illustrates how, by using legislation (here meaning the norms that permit abortion in three cases in Brazil and guidelines about capacitation of professionals working in the national health system) as a tool, the organisation manipulates written constraints in their favour, as Reis outlined:

We will forge and form teams within the hospitals. We will increase the number [of people accessing abortion in the Brazilian National Health System] So what we need to do is push the services, public health, to attend more and better, develop training, methodologies. Then we started sending obstetricians from Brazil to Colombia to do internships there (Reis, 2024).

Reading this part of the interview while taking into account Fregoso's (2014) ideas, I understand that the organisations concentrate on the creative adaptation and strategic embodiment of rights in various arenas of symbolic production. For example, in this case, it is a matter of ensuring that the limits that already exist cover people who need to have the procedure done. In this context, it is about making the state responsible for the margin that is neither seen nor served, by loudly demanding change, training professionals, and requiring compliance with the norms.

This understanding can also be applied to the cases where *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and *Oriéntame* assist in which the termination of a pregnancy does not fall under the legal permitted criteria in Brazil, effectively forcing people to travel to Colombia. These organisations, via their work, are creatively adapting and strategically re-signifying a pre-existing framework that does not accommodate them. This conception allows for the recognition of human rights in their practical application, beyond the abstract and universal guarantees that depend on the will of the state, which, as mentioned earlier, can grant or deny rights.

Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres, in response to what Reis in our conversation described as a "governmental fraud" (Reis, 2024), recognised that "the most subversive thing we can do is demand the enforcement of the law" (Reis, 2024). Given that the international human rights framework, which obliges Brazil to ensure access to safe abortion, is not enforced in practice, these organisations, via their affiliation, operate in the margins to realise their rights in practice.

Through bypassing the inactive state and ensuring that it fulfils its obligations, they have established a subaltern counterpublic. In this space, they can discuss abortion on their own terms and simultaneously assist individuals in accessing their rights. This is an example of Fregoso's (2014) view that the human rights framework can be (re)shaped through tangible actions.

This is achieved by proposing unconventional venues in which to express human rights discourse, such as borders and margins. Even though these women are not in the same country,

they reconfigure this bordered transnational locus, which is often unwelcoming, into a place where human rights discourse can be rethought and reshaped. In this space, human rights intersect with the symbolic political production of identities and hierarchies, thus becoming a tool for reconceptualising social justice and citizenship.

This effort necessarily entails unsettling the coloniality of power which has been present in human rights since their conception. It is essential to imagine beyond the conventional definition of human rights that, as argued before, is premised on a Western cosmology that perceives an autonomous individual disconnected from the surrounding context (Fregoso, 2014). As covered in the historical review in this work's first chapter, it involves projecting possibilities from epistemologies and cosmologies that were subalternised during colonisation. It implies thinking from places that "modernity" could not envision, using different imaginaries of what constitutes human, humanity, and rights (Fregoso, 2014).

Via an affiliation that acknowledges the multiple registers of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the struggle against inequality, *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and *Oriéntame* are questioning concepts long understood as given. Rethinking the eurocentric time and space, in which post-colonial states like Brazil and Colombia are embedded, is crucial to achieving alternative scenarios and devising a different imaginary of rights (Fregoso, 2014).

Fregoso (2014) adopts the perspective that we do not live in a universe but a pluriverse. A pluriversal perspective cuts short foundational theories that trace, using a Western universalist logic of rights as individual property, the beginning of human rights and history itself to the Age of Enlightenment. The proposal here is to locate human rights beyond European time and space, and bypass the understanding of rights as abstract legal principles. Consequently, it then opens up the possibility of the recovery of counter memories from liberal humanism about the coloniality of power (Fregoso, 2014).

The idea of human rights pluriversality is designed to recuperate the disagreeable versions of rights, those human and rights ethics too unruly to codify (and contain) within laws or in the positive law tradition of the liberal state: the counter-memories to the liberal humanism of European coloniality of power (Fregoso, 2014, p.593).

A key word in the excerpt above is "unruly." Relating this term to "subversive," a word mentioned by Reis in our interview, it is possible to conclude that safe abortion is an "unruly"

and “subversive” practice. Even though they could have been turned into norms in the positive tradition, contrary to the picture painted by Fregoso in the passage above, there is still a need to resort to counter memories.

Building on the discussion of different cosmologies of the first chapter, I briefly highlight here that indigeneity represents one of the counter memories of coloniality that Fregoso (2014) mentions. While being careful not to fall into the trap of essentialisation and exoticisation of indigeneity as a pure and homogenous entity in Latin America, the author sees it as a conceivable starting point from which to creatively envision human rights as a reality for all (Fregoso, 2014).

To elucidate this notion further, I take Speed’s (2006) example of the perspective of the Indigenous Zapatistas in Mexico that rights truly exist only when they can be actively exercised, rather than in their formalisation or being granted by an authority such as the state. By framing rights in this manner, they bypass the need for state endorsement and instead emphasise a collective imaginary of human rights as lived and embodied practices. This approach frees the concept of rights from the state's formal, colonial framework that traditionally mediates the collective experience (Speed, 2006).

That case is relevant to that of *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and Oriéntame* because they too do not operate under the logic that a guaranteed right and the formalisation of a norm is necessarily the endline of a struggle. Even though there is a national legislative framework in Brazil and it endorses international human rights treaties committed to substantiating the right to safe abortion, this is not guaranteed. Hence, through their affiliation and the use of counter memories and historical resistances, they propose a rethinking of the viability of rights.

They put forward an understanding that even if one woman manages to access her rights—whether it be a woman with the resources to go to Colombia on her own or one with connections in public networks or universities, as Reis mentioned in our conversation—the right must be for all. Otherwise, it is meaningless. The organisations creatively re-signify it from the perspective of solidarity, from this resourceful marginal space where it is possible to create a subaltern counterpublic.

In connection with Fregoso’s (2014) recipe of pluriversal and decolonial human rights, in their operations these organisations shift from languages of power to a vocabulary of solidarity. They stress collective rights and the shared achievement of them rather than the modern

emphasis on individualism. *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and *Oriéntame* act on the terrain of cultural disputes to create another space: a heterotopia.

3.2 Heterotopias of Resistance: Enacting Desired Realities

Feminist politics aims to end domination to free us to be who we are - to live lives where we love justice, where we can live in peace. Feminism is for everybody (hooks, 2014, p.118).

Historically, people who can gestate have always had abortions, and the feminist organisations researched here are trying to combat the barriers to safe termination of a pregnancy. Through an affiliation, they are creating channels of communication, adopting strategies to disseminate information, and thus establishing points of resistance. All of this aims to reduce the possible physical and emotional damage of an illegal procedure.

Situated on the margins of what is accepted as unquestioned state control, they question reproductive sex and compulsory motherhood at once, working towards the social decriminalisation of abortion. These groups, via their affiliation, conceive a new space, a locus which is not restricted by the effects and limitations imposed by the criminalisation of abortion, but a heterotopia, in Foucaultian (1986) terms, a real place where safe abortion exists outside the structural constraints.

When defining heterotopia, Foucault argues that it is “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (Foucault, 1986, p.25). It is a real locus that can at the same time be represented, contested, and inverted. Nevertheless, heterotopias are also real places, working like a counter site outside of all other places. Even though it may be feasible to mark their location in reality, heterotopias differ from all the sites they speak about and reflect on (Foucault, 1986).

Foucault uses the name heterotopia in a way to contrast with utopia. Both exist in relation to other sites in a way to neutralise, suspect, or invert the sets of processes they mirror. A utopia is a universal place without a real location, in a distant future constructed outside our tangible space and time. Utopias are therefore different from heterotopias in the sense that the latter, as proposed by Foucault, are counter-positions, real spaces that enact a utopia (Foucault, 1986).

Rago (2006), in her feminist reading of Foucault, argues that utopias console, since they transport one to an imaginary space and time projected onto a distant horizon. Reproducing, in what we value most and consider positively, the aspects and details of our society and world, consequently creates another essentially unreal locus. She further proposes that the value of heterotopias when it comes to feminist endeavours is that they open up the possibility of thinking about the creation of new spaces, based on a change of perspective (Rago, 2006).

Heterotopias thus allow for a perspective that diversifies and pluralises, making it possible to perceive the multiplicities in the context in which one is embedded. These new lenses are fruitful in the way they are more adequate than utopias both for proposing new ways out and for critically perceiving the place one is talking about (Rago, 2006). If utopia is a dream, heterotopia is a look in the mirror and the creation of a new real place based on lived reality and struggles.

The demand for freedom and the possibility of ethically reinventing ourselves, constructing ourselves in a way that differs from how we have been in the present, lead some feminists to ask about their own 'heterotopias in the society of control', according to Deleuze's definition of our time (Rago, 2006, p.110).

At present, opposing the patriarchal reality in which structural inequalities determine that many people cannot access safe abortion, Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and Oriéntame create a heterotopia. The heterotopia they are creating is at the border between Brazil and Colombia, in the room where abortions are performed in Oriéntame's clinic in Bogotá, and in the meetings between Reis and the director of Oriéntame that she recounted in our conversation. These spaces are in practice what Foucault (1986) theorises as heterotopia. They are deterritorialised spaces, where creativity can flourish and they favour the emergence of new feminist and intersectional meanings and experiences in relation to abortion.

In this way, feminist collectives create territories where scientific knowledge and diverse experiences of abortion intertwine with each other. In a welcoming way and seeking to guarantee the safety of the procedure, they consider the specificities of those who cannot afford a passport or a plane ticket to go elsewhere for an abortion. They ethically invent new modes of existence, which are more intersectional and humanised, so those who wish to have an abortion can do so in an informed and safe way.

In my interview with Reis and research on her organisation's work with Oriéntame, I recognised some characteristics of the heterotopia they imagine and create. Specifically, these are vulnerability as a means of resistance, protagonism of the person who aborts, and a playfulness in the way they act, thus returning back to the Lugones (1987) framework. Aiming to analyse the heterotopia they are creating, I unpack each one of these characteristics.

First, I highlight how these organisations use vulnerability as a tool for resistance. The most noticeable example of this dynamic lies precisely in the very reason these groups came together: the fact that Brazilian women cannot exercise their human right to a safe abortion. The feminist collectives mentioned here are working to guarantee safe access to termination of pregnancy, albeit in a limited way, for a group of people made vulnerable by the criminalisation of the practice in Brazil.

Butler (2016), in her theorisation acknowledges the criticism “that vulnerability cannot be the basis for group identification without strengthening paternalistic power” (Butler, 2016, p.24). In response, the philosopher contends that such critiques downplay the forms of political agency and resistance that arise within vulnerable populations and fail to consider how resistance and vulnerability can work together (Butler, 2016).

Accordingly, the Brazilian and Colombian organisations under study here seem to be trying to reconfigure the very notion of vulnerability, which is normally associated with a passive stance, to make it a position where resistance is produced. They use this shared susceptibility to materialise their heterotopia, conceiving a space where it is possible to guarantee a right. Those capable of gestation and abortion, when confronted with state omission and denial, have been compelled to forge bonds and establish forms of mutual care to survive under unfair conditions.

In the scope of this research, I try to show how ethnicity, race, age, and geographical location, among other markers, affect how people experience abortion. Indeed, they do so in multiple ways and in different safety and emotional; conditions. However, following Butler (2016), I argue that recognising resistance in vulnerability requires understanding the latter as autonomous yet not individual. The author sees vulnerability as a socially produced condition that mobilises resistance (Butler, 2016). Therefore, despite the structuralities that make vulnerabilities multiple, this sense of shared struggle is generative.

The organisations and those who search for them fill this space, that for many could be read of weakness, with tools to make this shared vulnerability among people who can gestate a

space of resistance but also of collecting evidence about their realities and thus holding the state accountable. Reis (2024) mentioned in our conversation that they "throw open the window, spit on the ground, and call for a fight" to expose the inertia and violence of the state towards these bodies and try to, in their terms and in their counterpublic, promote a debate and consequently a change.

When Reis used the plural form such as "we abort" and "the abortions we've performed" in our conversation or when Colombians who can access abortion extend their hands to Brazilians who cannot, they are embodying a collective "we" that unites them through their multiple vulnerabilities. This coming together, rooted in susceptibility, is recognised as having the potential to create a new reality. While it is evident that this reality is not yet ideal as people still need to travel abroad instead of terminating pregnancies in their own country, there is nevertheless a heterotopia where everyone can access safe abortions.

Another criticism of the interplay between resistance and vulnerability, addressed by Butler (2016), is that once groups are labelled as vulnerable within the human rights framework, they become entrenched in a position defined by powerlessness and a lack of agency. According to this perspective, the state and international institutions, now responsible for providing protection and advocacy, hold all the power.

The second part of this affirmation could be considered true for example in the context of United Nations humanitarian work. Changing contexts in which a paternalistic vision of making decisions in the name of the vulnerable is the *modus operandi*. Nevertheless, in the case of the Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and Oriéntame affiliation, Reis reiterated during our interview a preoccupation in not assuming a paternalistic lead and instead letting the people seeking their help be the protagonists:

We arranged for women who had never flown before to travel by plane, not only to board a plane but also to go on a journey to a country they didn't know, where they didn't speak the language, sometimes with just flip-flops on their feet. They took charge of significant moments in their own lives, which is somewhat out of the ordinary, isn't it? (Reis, 2024).

This passage of the interview alludes to the second characteristic I perceived in the heterotopia created by Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and Oriéntame: the principle that the person seeking them is the central figure, making their own choices and being responsible for their own life. The extract above shows that they understand that the usual liberal concept of helping the other involves taking a paternalistic view of aid, meaning vulnerable people cannot have control over their lives.

This is one of the reasons why I refer to this as an affiliation rather than a partnership, and solidarity rather than sisterhood⁸, as both of the terms avoided here are embedded in a liberal conceptualisation. This solidarity and affiliation, besides stemming from the lack of sexual and reproductive health rights guarantees in Brazil, also extend towards those seeking their support. Referring back to the discussion in the first chapter, the organisations see their actions as not only a means to work on their own citizenship, as Reis mentioned, as a way of providing tools for others to work on their own citizenship and to assert their rights.

Mariana, the woman who sought help from Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres to go to Colombia and goes by a fictitious name, as mentioned in the last chapter, did not share her story under the command of anyone but chose to speak out herself. Some women who terminated their pregnancies with the assistance of Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres have subsequently decided to volunteer with this organisation, handling first contact with new women seeking help. By doing so, they are making their own decisions and becoming the central figures in their abortion stories and their aftermath. Reis (2024) affirmed during our exchange that:

There is also an expectation that we are the charitable maternal figure, not to say paternalistic, the institution that will embrace, carry her, almost perform the abortion for her. And we are not, no, that's not the idea, that's not the desire, that's not what drives us. No, it's not. Not Milhas [...] What does it mean to contribute to making a woman a citizen? It is certainly not by putting her on my lap. So, we continue to be original and see how far we can go, how far we can get (Reis, 2024).

Regarding the third characteristic of heterotopia identified, the last sentence of the extract above is pertinent. Indeed, mentions of originality were recurrent in my conversation with Reis.

⁸ Apart from Mohanty's, (2003) critique of 'universal sisterhood' explored in the previous chapter (see Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem's (1999) examination of the term).

The founder of Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres reiterated the artistic vein of the project she leads, attributing this to her background in audiovisual arts. This manifested itself, she said, in "more room for creation, creativity, audacity, perhaps even impertinence" (Reis, 2024).

The creative adaptation and embodiment of rights proposed by the combined work of the Colombian and Brazilian organisations thus comes from a "more chaotic way [of thinking], perhaps more unconventional, perhaps more of a free-thinking. It was more poetic" (Reis, 2024). In terms of the adjectives mentioned in the interview, I would add "playful," again turning to the theoretical framework constructed by Lugones (1987). Essential to her theorisation of world travelling is the concept of playfulness, characterised, among other things, by "not taking norms as sacred" (Lugones, 1987, p.17).

It is evident that these organisations operate within legal boundaries; nothing they do is illegal. In fact, Reis illustrated their commitment to legality during our conversation by recounting a particular case. She described a situation in which a woman travelled to Argentina, which permits abortion up to the 14th week of pregnancy. Once in Argentina, the woman called Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres to ask where to obtain a prescription for the abortion pill. Reis, who was responsible for the case, recalled what she suggested:

If you've done all that, you have to go to a clinic for a ring, which is an intrauterine aspiration that will take ten minutes, will clean your uterus, and will allow you to return home in 24 hours without having committed any crime in Brazil. Because there's also that person who goes there, buys it, and what are they going to do? Return to Brazil with that medication, which is an illegal drug, in their pocket? (Reis, 2024).

In another stage of the interview, Reis noted:

Everything we do is entirely legal; we have a protective legal framework that precisely guides our actions. But it's obvious that we embody a spirit of civil disobedience. We operate within the law, but with a spirit of civil disobedience. And we know that perhaps the best way to disarm the enemy is to openly acknowledge this (Reis, 2024).

The groups operate in the space between legality and illegality. The boundaries between what is legal and illegal are neither linear nor dichotomous but are instead zones of tension and conflict. While adhering to the law, these groups communicate with and support women who could face criminalization. They adopt strategies centred on the concept of safe abortion, without ignoring the illegality of the practice in the countries where they operate. They, therefore, work within the powers and constraints defined by the laws while simultaneously engaging in acts of resistance and “civil disobedience,” to quote the expression used by Reis.

And it is precisely this sense of civil disobedience that I connect with Lugones’s (1987) concept of playfulness. A playful attitude is a form of rebellion. It entails, as Lugones (1987) describes, finding delight and wisdom in ambiguity and having an openness to (re)construction and surprise. The heterotopia the organisations are creating here is characterised by defiance, and by playing I accordance with the rules to show that they do not work.

When these organisations proposed helping people to access safe abortion and creating a heterotopia together they did not know what the outcome would be. With that in mind, their work requires some hope, which can keep them going in often complex and frustrating disputes.

3.3 Hope!

The future is both a question mark and a mark of questioning (Ahmed, 2014, p.183).

What we hope for when we set out to create a new reality is, most of the time, not available to us as something that can be delineated in the present. Speaking up for something brings with it uncertainty as to what is possible in the world we live in. In this sense, the hope Ahmed (2014) articulates comes from believing that what one is against is not inevitable, but at the same time it entails the possibility that the desired future might not materialise (Ahmed, 2014).

Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres and Oriéntame hope for a world where their joint work is no longer needed, but they do not know if and when this day will arrive. Faced with this doubt, hope plays a vital role in keeping their work going. Ultimately, hope can make involvement in

political activism somehow enjoyable. It is a feeling that can be nurtured in ways that invigorate rather than codify its object (Ahmed, 2014).

Politics in its many forms is not possible without hope. It helps to overcome fears that change may be impossible. Otherwise, a sense of anger without hope may arise, leading to despair and tiredness produced by the sense of inevitability that what one is speaking against will prevail. Hope requires action in the present, rather than waiting for a future that will always be ahead and never arrives. Hope is therefore crucial when it comes to protesting including in the realm of feminist activism, driving both movements and actions (Ahmed, 2014).

What do we hope when we place our hope in feminism? When we hope we usually hope for something; hope is intentional and directed towards the future only in relation to an object that is faced in the present. Such hope is a form of investment (Ahmed, 2014, p.184).

Hope also has bodily consequences, translating openness as the possibility of joy and consequently reshapes bodies. Whilst fear may lead an individual to feel like they are shrinking, hope can embolden someone as they reach towards what might be possible (Ahmed, 2014). Ahmed outlines: “Without hope, the future would become impossible: bodies would not reach for it” (Ahmed, 2014, p.185). Additionally, hope makes one reach not only for the future or for possibilities but also one for another.

It is about gathering together and claiming a space and a new world via affective bonds. One does not hope alone but for and with others whose pain they cannot feel. Nevertheless, it is through listening and sensing their pain and energy that a “we” is formed and an attachment is made. Openness permits a togetherness in the struggle that brings together different bodies. It is in these occasions that the feminist “we” becomes visceral (Ahmed, 2014).

The affiliation discussed in this work was made because the organisations share hope of a reality where people would not have to leave their country and support network to have a human right guaranteed in another country. Indeed, hope is what permitted these organisations to reach beyond colonially made borders and languages, and to find one another. Hope is also what allowed them to direct their focus towards the future in the face of an inhospitable object in the present.

Ahmed asserts that "placing hope in feminism is not about the future but recognising the persistence of the past in the present" (Ahmed, 2014, p.187). In this chapter, we have seen how these two feminist groups, recognising the persistence of the colonial, patriarchal, and racist past (and present) in the human rights framework, proposed a creative appropriation of norms and protocols. The goal of doing so is to produce other ways of experiencing and demanding the human right of safe abortion, consequently producing a feminist heterotopia.

It is not simply a matter of replacing the state, which is omissive when it comes to safe abortion policies, but rather of realising a utopia. *Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres* and *Oriéntame* exploit a legal vacuum, a space not standardised by the state, to create other experiences of termination of pregnancy. To do this, they operate with tools and institutions created and fuelled by the state, such as hospitals, protocols, legal texts, and supranational regulations, making sure their defiant actions are legal.

Furthermore, their heterotopia is built on knowledge of the ways in which vulnerability and resistance intertwine, thereby generating possibilities. The vulnerability here is not controlled by the paternalistic approach that robs them of their agency. On the contrary, here there is a clear motivation to make those on the margins the protagonists, in command of their own choices and lives.

CHAPTER 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

I began this work by arguing that the ways one resists, specifically in the Latin American context, come from multiple cosmologies. In particular, a clash between resistance and assimilation contributes to the numerous and different modern Latin American forms of “I” and, consequently, impacts how these individuals affiliate and resist. What I have posited is that those individuals, despite being located in the margins, use this potentially desperate place as a resourceful meeting point where they create.

By adopting this symbology, the intention is not to romantically portray the inequalities that have made it impossible for some people to access the centre. Rather, what I have tried to convey is that the margins can be a place for meeting and affiliating. As seen in the case explored in this work, two organisations located in the margins in global, patriarchal, and legal terms have managed to launch a creative means of feminist action.

This affiliation and its generative potential only arose because they travelled to each other's worlds though. Oriéntame, regardless of being embedded in a different reality where abortion is legally permitted until the 24th week of pregnancy, with a loving and playful perspective travelled to another world, where even in cases where abortion is permitted by law it is still difficult to access this human right. Meanwhile, Milhas Pela Vida das Mulheres went to another world to learn, share, and create.

This loving feminist travelling enabled the formulation of a space where abortion can be discussed in terms not hostile to those who wish to terminate a pregnancy. This ethical way of debating this issue can advance thanks to people like Mariana and Rebeca Mendes talking about their experiences and realities in their own voices. It involves discussing a matter of public health not on the basis of religious texts but on health guidelines and the human rights framework, as outlined by Reis in the interview conducted for this work.

In this place, a subaltern counterpublic, abortion can be discussed in feminist terms, and it is perceived that if a human right, namely free and safe abortion, is not available to everyone then it must be rethought and reworked. That is precisely what these two organisations are working towards together. They are creatively reassessing the validity of a norm that does not accommodate everyone. In addition, they are, to the extent possible, making their desired utopia

real. They are creating realities where people, irrespective of their nationality, class, and other intersectional identities, can access safe and affordable termination of their pregnancy. Ultimately, they are creating a heterotopia.

Moreover, they are establishing a real space where free and safe abortion is a reality, and even though this heterotopia has not fully materialised, as people still have to travel to another country to guarantee their human rights, it is a place of hope. By finalising the previous chapter with a theorisation of hope, I set out to convey a belief in the future, and a sense of confidence about a better reality to come. At the same time, hope can only exist when the desired object has still not emerged. We are thus reminded that the work of these organisations is still very much needed, and that widespread debate around abortion in ethical, medical, and feminist terms is also necessary. With that in mind, affiliating, finding each other, and coming together regardless of our differences to hope and to act is a must.

APPENDICES

1. Information Sheet

Title of the study

Latin American Transnational Feminist Solidarity: Alliance for Safe Abortion Access

Description

The MA research project aims to discover how feminist solidarity potentially redefines transnational movements within a rights-based approach, proposing a new perspective into International Relations. Your interview responses, as representatives of organisations engaged in transnational activities across Latin America focusing on rights-based feminist initiatives, will be cited and examined as part of the research project. These valuable insights will help to form a consistent understanding of the feminist practices that promote a shift in focus from capital to people in the relations between nations in our region. Ultimately, your interview is crucial to understanding Latin American specificity, but mainly to know how you perceive the work done, especially the relationship with other countries. Your insights are a unique source to analyse this movement.

Researcher

The researcher is Evelyn Luz, Erasmus Mundus Degree in Women and Gender Studies Master student. University of York and Utrecht University

The project is supervised by Dr. Rachel Alsop, professor at the University of York and director of the Center of Women Studies

Methods

60 minutes – 90 minutes interviews

Confidentiality and anonymity

- Your interview contributions may be incorporated into the dissertation. You have the option to be named or to remain anonymous. You retain the right to withdraw from the interview and revoke your consent up to three weeks after the transcribed interview is sent to you..
- The transcript of the interview will be returned to you for review. Any revisions need to be made within 2 weeks of the sending of the transcript. All interview data will be securely stored on the University's cloud platform. Once the interview has been transcribed the recording will be securely destroyed.
- The interview data will be used in my MA dissertation and related publications.

This research has been subject to ethical review by the University of York Center of Women Studies ethics committee. If you have any questions regarding the ethics process, please contact Ethics Officer Asha Abeyasekera (asha.abeyasekera@york.ac.uk)

2. Consent Form

	YES	NO
Have you read the information sheet for the project and fully understood its content?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you have enough opportunities to ask about the research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you voluntarily agree to participate in the research project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>If yes to the question above:</u>		
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the project up to three weeks after the interview transcript has been sent to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you require anonymity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you aware of the possible future uses of the information shared?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that you can refuse to answer any question or provide information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you aware that a transcript of the interview will be shared with you, and that any editing/deletion can be required by you within two weeks after receiving it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you consent to the transcribed text of the interview, after being approved by you, to be used in the dissertation by the named researcher?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you agree with the audio recording of your interview?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>If yes to the question above:</u>		
Do you understand and were well informed that at any point during the interview, you are able to stop the conversation or/and request to stop being recorded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that the interview recording will not be disclosed to any other researcher?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Interviewee

Signature:
Date:

Researcher

Signature:
Date:

3. Interview Guideline

The interview will be semi-structured, meaning that the guideline is not intended to be a full script of the interview but rather guiding points to direct the conversation. The goal is to lead the interview around structured, specific questions while still allowing for the full and complex participation of the interviewee.

For these interviews, I have divided what I want to know into five topics. For each general point of interest, I have elaborated questions. Once again, I reaffirm that not necessarily all the questions will be answered or approached in that way. It is also understood that these topics interconnect, and the answer to one question may be provided in another.

What do I want to find out from the interview?

1. How they see this cooperation
2. Whether they see any specificity in Latin American feminist work
3. What makes going beyond the state to seek rights distinct? - understand how they see going beyond the state to guarantee rights and international cooperation as a feminist strategy
4. the relationship between actions and the state
5. the relationship between actions and the law

1. How do they see this cooperation?

- How did the idea of cooperation come about?
- What was it based on?
- What made you think of looking for help in other countries? Why was this creativity necessary, in your opinion?
- What were the gains? What about difficulties? How easy was it?
- How do you analyse your work at the international level?
- Which cooperative mechanism do you consider most important?
- Would you call this a feminist international cooperation strategy? why?

2. Do they see any specificities in Latin American feminist work?

- Is being Latin American present in your work? And there is such a thing as being Latin American?
- If you consider yourself a feminist. Does it necessarily have to be the same type of feminism to work together?
- Would the joint struggle to guarantee a basic right be different if the cooperation, for example, was with a European country?
- Is the context of the two countries and its different aspects present in your joint action? And if so, how do you get around it?
- Is the intersectionality of the different contexts between the organisations and people who come to you present? How does it manifest itself?

3. What makes going beyond the state to seek rights distinct?

- What are the barriers to sending these people abroad?
- Do you think this represents a failure on the part of the Brazilian state?
- Is your action in a transnational network different from the movements woven at the national level?
- Understanding that at the same time you act beyond the state (e.g. by sending a Brazilian woman to another country) and at the same time with the state (by acting within what is allowed by Colombian law), how do you see this dichotomy?

4. The relationship between their actions and the state

- Do you act in a way that puts pressure on the state?
- Do you think that your work somehow puts pressure on the state?
- What role does the state play in your struggle? Not wanting to fall into a dichotomy of villain and good guy but wanting to know in what ways the relationship with the state weaves (or not) into your work.
- Do you consider yourself to be working beyond the limits of the state? Or with the state?

5. The relationship between actions and the law

- As an exercise in imagination and not necessarily in search of complete answers: if the laws in Colombia changed tomorrow, what would you do?
- Is there a demand/concern to act within the limits of the law?

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