



DECOLONIAL FEMINIST PUBLISHING
A HYBRID WORKSHOP OF FEMINIST JOURNAL EDITORS

Geneva, 21-22 OCTOBER 2021

Workshop report by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The workshop “De-Colonial Feminist Publishing: A Hybrid Workshop of Feminist Journal Editors” took place on 21 and 22 October 2021 at the Grand Morillon Student Residence of the Graduate Institute in Geneva. Its main objective was to bring together feminist journal editors from across the world to exchange information about feminist and de-colonial publishing practices and explore opportunities for collaboration and for strengthening the influence of feminist journals in the academy and the policy world.

To guarantee inclusive access to the workshop, a hybrid format was chosen, with the possibility of attending in person as well as online via Cisco Webex videoconferencing. Before and between workshop sessions, hallway snacks were provided. These created the spaces for networking and deepening the discussions of the workshop sessions and were also specifically used to develop ideas for the way forward. Online participants participated likewise in these activities, as a separate group, since they shared the respective half hour before the workshop sessions and the lunch break. In total, 36 people participated in person and online, all of them taking active roles in the course of the workshop.

The background research for the workshop and the basis for discussions was provided by the working paper [Everyday Decolonialities of Feminist Publishing. A Social Cartography](#) written by Juliana Santos de Carvalho and Carolina Oliveira Beghelli and published by the Gender Centre at the Graduate Institute. Based on interviews with eight feminist journal editors also taking part in the workshop, this working paper draws out as emerging themes the thematic areas of the workshop sessions. It was widely commented on and commended by workshop participants.

The workshop was organised in four thematic sessions. Workshop participants altered their roles as participants, moderators, and speakers: each session was framed by the opening remarks of three different journal editors and moderated by another.

The **first session “A Room of Our Own”**, focused on feminist publishing practices in individual journals and on the space that feminist journals have carved out for themselves in academia. Its primary aim was to learn from each other and to envision new strategies for strengthening feminist and de-colonial practices. During the discussion, it quickly became evident that, in the face of widespread gender-mainstreaming efforts across conventional “mainstream” journals, the “room of our own” and its position in academia have to be revised. It also became clear that decolonial is a controversial concept for feminist editors from different world regions, and that “decolonial” is accordingly interpreted differently.

The **second session “From a Room of our Own to a Community of our Own”** delved deeper into questions of collaboration among feminist journals and on how this can be done without reproducing the North-South neo-colonial power relations. In the **third session, titled “In the House of International Politics”**, the focus was on how to develop and successfully disseminate knowledge products that are relevant and accessible to practitioners, including activists and policymakers. Lastly, the **fourth session “In the House of the Neoliberal Academy”** focused on the modalities of publishing with the dominant publishing houses and university presses in the Global North, and on negotiations for open access.

Throughout the workshop, participants shared their rich and diverse perspectives and identified **good practices** of relevance to all. They also drew out where feminist journals in different geographic regions and academic institutional settings face **different challenges** and adopt different decolonial practices.

For the near future, the workshop participants envision **strengthening and expanding the network** that has been started through the workshop, exchanging contacts and deepening the bilateral and multilateral conversations about possible collaborations, mutual support, and different ways of exchanging knowledge and experiences. Joint publications, a collaborative funding proposal, and a medium-term project to construct an online platform that functions as an archive for feminist journals and their respective contents are among the priority areas.

THURSDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2021

Introductory comments

Elisabeth Prügl, Co-director at the Gender Centre at the Graduate Institute, Geneva, and incoming co-editor of the *International Feminist Journal of Politics (IFJP)*, opened the workshop with welcoming comments, explained the main objective and the house rules, and a *tour de table* for online and in-person participants. Participants introduced themselves and the feminist journals they are the editors of. Particular attention was paid to the workshop format as an interactive and practical space for knowledge exchange, for exploring collaborations and sharing experiences. Everybody in the virtual and physical room was invited to proactively engage, and many participants had an active moderating or speaker role during one of the sessions.

Session 1: A Room of Our Own

The first session was moderated by Elisabeth Prügl, with opening remarks by Adriana Piscitelli, editor of *Cadernos Pagu* (Brazil); Ji Young Jung (online), editor of the *Asian Journal of Women Studies (AJWS)*; and Brooke Ackerly (online), outgoing co-editor-in-chief of the *International Feminist Journal of Politics (IFJP)*. Session 1 was designed to review **feminist publishing practices** in individual journals to learn from each other, and to envision new strategies for strengthening feminist and de-colonial practices. **Guiding questions** sought to foster a discussion about the “room of our own” that feminist journals have carved out in the world of publishing (as opposed to mainstreaming themselves into the academy); about what innovative (feminist and de-colonial) practices this has enabled, for example in soliciting manuscripts, reviewing them, making them publicly available, and fostering relationships with readers. It further addressed what kinds of work/research this has enabled; what de-colonial, feminist publishing means to journal editors with different positionalities in politically, culturally, and geographically different spaces; what communities these practices have sought to build and how inclusive these are; and how all of this has influenced the understandings of quality and excellence from feminist points of view. As on **outcome**, this first session sought to identify what are or could be **good practices for de-colonial, feminist journal editing**.

The key themes, which emerged during this rich first session and which set the stage for the subsequent workshop sessions, were:

- 1) walking the fine line between ensuring mainstream quality standards/indexation/ranking and preserving feminist methodologies and knowledge products (which include non-academic productions of knowledge and collaborations with artists, activists and policymakers);
- 2) mentoring as an important element of feminist publishing that can be a form of decolonial resistance, but also bears risks of reinforcing neocolonial power relations;
- 3) translation and multi-linguistic publishing as decolonial practices;
- 4) the question of where feminist journals’ “room of our own” is situated today in academic publishing (at the margins or in the centre of mainstream publications with a gender perspective), and where feminist journals want to situate it in the future.

These themes reflect **the main overlapping points of concern** for feminist editors in the Global South and Global North. In a rich exchange of experiences and perspectives, the workshop participants further drew out how they have **different opinions on, practices for, and challenges with these emerging themes**. For example, most feel the tension between feminist journals’ aspirations to provide a space for different and diverse knowledge production methodologies and products (genres) and the pressure on feminist scholars to publish articles in indexed and highly-ranked academic journals. Most editors shared the concern of their journals’ inability to attract mid-career scholars because their journals are not indexed or not ranked high enough to provide “career points”.

But not all feminist journals relate to the same indexed “mainstream”: for feminist journals in the Global North, the “mainstream” is clearly delineated by academic journals and the criteria of the main university presses and private

publishing houses in the Global North. Some feminist journals from the Global South, e.g. the *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, share this perspective and criticise the neo-colonial power relations that are installed by the pressure for Asian scholars to publish in mainstream journals from the Global North, including the pressure to use hegemonic academic concepts and standardised language (English). For other journals from Latin America in particular, the "mainstream" is national or regional, like SCIELO for the Brazilian *Revista Estudos Feminista (REF)*. While the dilemmas faced by feminist journals are similar, there is more room for feminist journals to shape the indexing and ranking system from within.

Good practices of decolonial feminist publishing were collected, for instance:

- Publishing **different genres** is important as a decolonial feminist practice and is both a way to reflect feminist methodologies and to engage collaborations with non-academic authors, e.g. feminist activists or policymakers, as does the Lebanese journal *Al-Raida*.
- Encouraging non-Western theorising, conceptualisation and terminology was highlighted.
- Importantly, some journals like *Meridians* have found ways to publish different genres and **elevate the status of non-conventional writing** within mainstream academia by ensuring that all publications are doubly blind peer-reviewed (i.e. fulfil the criteria of mainstream publishing in the Global North).
- A good practice identified by this journal is also **taking the "peer" element of peer review seriously** and matching reviewers and authors in a way that ensures a common understanding of the subject of the publication under review.
- In terms of **mentoring**, a term that raised controversy and engaged discussions by itself among workshop participants, good practices were shared that seek to avoid, or at least mitigate, the neo-colonial, unilateral, and hierarchical mentoring practices (from Global North editors and reviewers towards Global South authors). For example, the contributions for the Conversations section of *IFJP* undergo a long process of back-and-forth between editors and authors, which resembles more a mutual mentoring, a horizontal learning process. **Special issues** were also identified as a good opportunity to accompany authors and work jointly on a piece prior to submission for peer review. Nonetheless, the term and its connotation (hierarchical North-South power relations) were rejected by some workshop participants.
- **Multi-linguistic publishing and translations of publications:** publications are made available in the original language and English (and potentially other relevant languages, depending on the target audience of the journal). This has a doubly beneficial effect: on the one hand, translating research into English allows for research from the Global South to be published in the Global North. This strengthens access to careers in the global neoliberal academia. But it also gives Global North scholars access to authors and knowledge that they are unaware of (and fail to engage with). On the other hand, translating English publications into other languages gives access to the mainstream knowledge produced and allows scholars from the Global South to engage with this literature (without necessarily wanting to make a career in the Global North). The biggest challenge identified to this important practice is that translations are expensive and often rejected by mainstream journals because these seek to publish only original research.
- Where no funding for full translations is available, **one article per issue in various languages** has been mentioned as a good practice. Having **abstracts in several languages** was highlighted as a must and can be done even where the journal criteria do not allow translations.

The session ended with the recognition that, despite many good practices, there is a lot to do still: engaging in more peer support including in more South-South cooperation among feminist journals, and building **a network of solidarity and collaboration**; working more with the publishing houses to achieve greater acceptance of different genres, within the neoliberal academia; finding ways (e.g. funding sources for additional staff and specific positions) to reduce the unpaid invisible labour of feminist journal editors, which is not only against feminist principles but also highly limiting to what can be achieved by feminist journals. Finally, regarding the question of where the "room of our own" is situated, participants agreed that preserving their identities and freedom in methodological terms was important. At the same time, however, they also agreed that self-isolation and marginalisation are not the aims of feminist journals and that the

inclusion of feminist scholarship in mainstream journals is to be welcomed (a concern more for editors in the Global North).

Session 2: From a Room of our Own to a Community of our Own

The second session was moderated by Natália Félix de Souza, incoming co-editor of the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Opening remarks were given by Myriam Sfeir, *Al-Raida* (Lebanon), Patricia Mohammed (online), *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*; and Cristina Scheibe Wolff (online), *Revista Estudos Feministas* (Brazil). Session 2 aimed to reflect on the community of feminist journals and the body of knowledge they advance.

Questions addressed the way journals relate to each other and/or compete with each other; the kinds of knowledge journals produce collectively, and the way this constitutes global/transnational feminism; the kinds of knowledge that surfaces and becomes salient in different (or all?) journals, and the kinds of knowledge that remains invisible; and the way knowledges travel and are translated within and across language barriers. The demand for more collaboration, identified in the first session and further discussed in small groups over lunch, was at the centre of the discussion: where is room for collaboration between journals and how can such collaboration overcome problems of epistemic privilege?

Good practices shared and ideas for future collaboration include:

- **A good practice of feminist publishing and collaboration** is seen in *Cadernos Pagu's* (Brazil) practice of mapping topics covered by the journal and identifying gaps and silences, which can then be explicitly filled, e.g. through calls for special issues.
- **Special issues and guest editing** is also seen as a way to invite transnational collaboration among feminist journals and to bring thematically overlapping work together in one issue. The participants discussed the possibilities of doing this more extensively and further whether there would be room for bringing these collaborations then into publications of different formats in various journals (and languages).
 - o **Working on a joint publication after this workshop** was proposed both bilaterally among some journals, as well as in the entire workshop group as a joint endeavour (e.g. for Conversations section in *IFJP*).
- Further ideas for collaboration include:
 - o **Sitting on each other's editorial boards** and potentially re-organising review boards to ensure diversity on the board, including in geographic coverage.
 - o **Sharing submissions** that cannot be published in one journal with the others, to ensure good work is visible and can be published in another.
- A need for a **more systematic network** with some kind of platform was announced, where feminist journal editors could share content (a transnational feminist archive) as well as practical information (e.g. reviewer and translator databases). A solid research of what platforms/consortia exist to date was identified as a necessary first step in this direction.

FRIDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2021

Session 3: In the House of International Politics

The third session was moderated by Swati Parashar, incoming co-editor of the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Opening remarks were given by Gioconda Herrera, *Íconos* (Ecuador), Laura Turquet, UN Women (New York), and Annie Paul, University of the West Indies Press. Session 3 discussed how feminist journals can gain traction in the worlds of politics, development, and activism. The topics included questions about what it means to be political as journal editors and what are our responsibilities; how feminist journals gain influence in the worlds of (inter)national politics, development practice, and activism; what role digital media can play, including websites, social media and

blogs; how to communicate feminist knowledge so that it resonates in policy worlds; how such communication can make visible in particular subjugated knowledges; and how feminist journal editors can navigate power relations in this space responsibly.

The session deepened the discussions about innovative modes of research communication, which had already been introduced on the first day, and identified more sites where feminist knowledge and the policy world meet, in particular drawing on the experience of some feminist journals working closely with activists and policymakers (e.g. *Al-Raida* in Lebanon).

The session also provided an important opportunity to learn about the challenge policy-oriented researchers at UN Women face with regards to academic feminist journal publications (including finding relevant publications, drawing out the key content in limited time attributed to research, getting access to academic publications as non-academics). A need for summaries, blogs or shorter and more accessible communication, which is also open access, was identified.

A key question of concern to participants was thus how they can reach policymakers and communicate research effectively and in a language and format that is relevant for and accessible to policymakers. A **policy brief and commentary series**, installed as a platform that aims at communicating the research specifically to policymakers, was mentioned as a good practice in this regard.

Another issue of the debate was how to make visible subjugated knowledges. **Telling stories of change and lived experiences** in an appealing way was discussed as a good practice, which makes visible non-Western perspectives, and which resonates with policymakers and activists.

The effective use of digital channels and social media emerged as a key for success and an important way to link feminist academic work with activist work. In Latin America, this is done already successfully, and academia and activism often go hand in hand (activists are academics and vice versa, or they collaborate more closely than elsewhere). A good example is the *Red de politólogas*, a network of women political scientists who follow important policy-making processes within Latin America and help each other to disseminate and influence these, e.g. for revising the Chilean Constitution. **A good practice example potentially to be replicated by the group of workshop participants in the future was identified in social media workshops**, organised within the network for each other on how to deal with social media for effective lobbying.

At the same time, such **effective social media use** was identified as the best channel to communicate research to policymakers: **Twitter** stands out as the best social media therefore, and **a website/platform that provides research summaries/short blog articles/bullet-point lists and links** to the full articles would be useful for policymakers. **Innovative and policy-relevant research communication** could further include audiovisual products, such as **videos and podcasts**, as well as **theatre plays** and **TEDx talks**.

The proposition was made to think of these as a chain (Twitter – bullet points – podcasts/videos – blogs – policy briefs), which could be communicated through different channels and disseminated widely, *in addition to the journal publication*.

The idea of a network with a working platform to implement these innovative ways of knowledge communication in a collaborative manner solidified in this session. The participants underlined that collaboration is key and competition should be avoided. At the same time, **the core problematic of funding** reemerged: how to fund such a network, an accompanying platform and its maintenance?

Session 4: In the House of the Neoliberal Academy

The last workshop session was moderated by Amy Lind, incoming co-editor of the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Kick-off remarks were given by Ginetta Candelario, editor of *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*; Catherine Brendow, librarian at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies; and Elissa Braunstein

(online), editor of *Feminist Economics*. Session 4 interrogated the constraints journals face because they are embedded in a neoliberal world, including the academy and the associated publishing industry. Specifically, it was guided by the following questions: How to navigate understandings of quality and excellence that de-legitimize feminist knowledge (the politics of rankings); how to counteract such standards, infuse feminist and de-colonial understandings into systems of accountability, and open up narrow epistemes; how to ensure the financial viability of journals; how to negotiate with publishing conglomerates, university administrators, and foundations; how to deal with the shift towards Open Access and the new exclusions it generates; how to retain editorial autonomy amidst exclusionary structures and financial constraints; and how to institutionalise journals (attach to university centres, create associations).

The feminist editors of US-based journals highlighted their **good practices** with regards to:

- negotiating open access concessions with their publishers;
- seeking diversity of funding sources by combining university presses, private publishers and grants;
- and supporting through dedicated funds scholars from the Global South with mentoring or research exchanges.

Catherine Brendow, who manages open access at the Graduate Institute library, explained in detail how libraries engage with publishing houses and what open access and free access agreements entail in terms of costs and politics. A lack of transparency about contracts, costs and revenues of the private publishing houses was identified as a main source of concern to both libraries (which have to buy expensive open access or publish-and-read packages) and for feminist journal editors (who have to negotiate open access agreements for their journals with publishers, within the limitations of their contracts and the ownership of the journal). The alternative of publishing with smaller feminist publishing houses (as an alternative to university presses and the large private publishers) was discussed and placed again in the tension identified in the first session: the neoliberal academia of the Global North is dominated by the big publishers, their names are prestigious, and careers are built by publishing in the highly ranked journals.

Open access issues and the relationship to publishers had emerged as a core theme of concern during the second session. The concerns about having to negotiate open access, the power of publishing houses and the differences between university presses and private publishing houses, as well as the problems of limiting contracts, stood out as concerns that were exclusive to the editors of the Global North. Global South editors underlined that their systems are different and that the discussion did not resonate with their experiences. Notably, for many, universities have been very supportive and a source of stability in their funding, even when the overall political support for academia declined, as has been the case in Brazil. And in South America, for example, almost all journals are open access and this consideration does not form part of negotiations with publishers. Participants from the Global South underlined, however, that learning about these difficulties was important for their overall understanding of academia in the Global North (and of the measures taken by peers in the Global North regarding publishing, which might not be logical to them in their respective contexts). **Overall, there was agreement that knowing each other's different working environments and collaborating across the boundaries these impose, is crucial.**

CONCLUSIONS, OUTCOMES, AND CONTINUATION

Overall, during the two-day workshop of feminist journal editors in Geneva, the workshop participants identified

- (1) good practices;
- (2) a desire to continue and strengthen the network of feminist journal editors and to develop a platform for sharing knowledge products as well as practical information;
- (3) ideas for joint publications (bilaterally; as well as in collaborative projects among several journals).

Other concrete next steps include:

- (1) Establishing regular call meetings to update each other, share information, experiences and strategies, in particular before important conferences;

- (2) Pursue the joint publications ideas, including the concrete plan to develop a *IFJP* Conversations piece out of the workshop insights;
- (3) Explore how multi-linguistic knowledge products (e.g. podcasts) could be produced through collaboration;
- (4) Make a strategic plan for the network (what exactly needs to be included, how much it costs) and:
 - a. Start including a specific budget line for the network/platform maintenance in grant proposals;
 - b. Reach out to the publishers for support;
 - c. Explore the possibility of a joint grant proposal.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Journal/Institution	Last name	First name
<i>Al-Raida</i> / Lebanese American University	Sfeir	Myriam
<i>Asian Journal of Women Studies</i> / Ewha Womans University	Young	Jung Ji
<i>Asian Journal of Women Studies</i> / Ewha Womans University	Park	Aileen
<i>Asian Journal of Women Studies</i> / Ewha Womans University	Khullar	Mala
<i>Asian Journal of Women Studies</i> / Ewha Womans University	Park	Seo Yeon
<i>Cadernos Pagu</i>	Piscitelli	Adriana
<i>Caribbean Review of Gender Studies</i> / University of West Indies	Mohammed	Patricia
<i>Debate Feminista</i> / Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	Ortega Garay	Paola
<i>Debate Feminista</i> / Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	Moreno	Hortensia
<i>Feminist Africa</i> / University of Ghana	Tsikata	Dzodzi
<i>Feminist Africa</i> / University of Ghana	Torvikey	Dzifa
<i>Feminist Economics</i> / Colorado State University	Braunstein	Elissa
FLACSO Ecuador	Herrera	Gioconda
<i>Gender, Place & Culture</i> / Karlstad University	Grip	Lena
<i>Gender, Place & Culture</i> / Koç University	Altan Olcay	Özlem
Geneva Academy	Beghelli	Carolina
Graduate Institute, Geneva	Schöb	Mia
Graduate Institute, Geneva	Santos de Carvalho	Juliana
Graduate Institute, Geneva	Verschuur	Christine
Graduate Institute Library	Brendow	Catherine
<i>Íconos</i> / FLACSO Ecuador	Pontón	Jenny
<i>IFJP</i> / Graduate Institute, Geneva	Prügl	Lisa
<i>IFJP</i> / Massey University	Choi	Shine

<i>IFJP</i> / Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP)	Felix de Souza	Natália
<i>IFJP</i> / University of Cardiff	Zalewski	Marysia
<i>IFJP</i> / University of Cincinnati	Lind	Amy
<i>IFJP</i> / University of Gothenburg	Parashar	Swati
<i>IFJP</i> / Vanderbilt University	Ackerly	Brooke
<i>KANITA</i> / Universiti Sains Malaysia	Endut	Noraida
<i>Meridians</i> / Columbia University	Deb	Basuli
<i>Meridians</i> / Smith College	Candelario	Ginetta
<i>Meridians</i> / Smith College	Buckwalter	Melinda
<i>Revista Estudos Feministas</i> / Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina	Scheibe Wolff	Christina
UN Women	Turquet	Laura
University of Cologne	Duarte	Jazmin
University of Connecticut	Desai	Manisha
University of the West Indies Press	Paul	Annie
N.A.	Hyebinn	Kim