

# New Feminisms? Intergenerational Connections and Conflicts Between Feminists

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**Abstract:** *In this article, we will discuss the idea of “new feminisms”, an increasingly common notion in the media and in academic analysis, presenting the generational debate as it stands today among the youngest and most experienced feminist activists. After this contextualization, we analyze how this debate is lived by young artists – activists who use art as the key means of activism – and feminist cultural producers in activity in Rio de Janeiro, exploring intergenerational connections and conflicts within contemporary feminisms.*

**Keywords:** *Feminisms; Artists; Cultural production; Intergenerational dialogues.*

## **Novos feminismos? Conexões e conflitos intergeracionais entre feministas**

**Resumo:** *Neste artigo problematizamos a ideia de “novos feminismos”, noção cada vez mais corrente na mídia e em análises acadêmicas, apresentando o debate geracional tal como posto atualmente entre as ativistas feministas mais jovens e as mais experientes. Após essa contextualização, analisamos como esse debate é vivido por jovens artistas – que utilizam a arte como principal forma de ativismo – e produtoras culturais feministas em atividade no Rio de Janeiro, explorando conexões e conflitos intergeracionais que permeiam os feminismos contemporâneos.*

**Palavras-chave:** *feminismos; artistas; produção cultural; diálogos intergeracionais.*

## **Intergenerational connections and conflicts between feminists in Rio de Janeiro**

Our starting point in this article is the contemporary scene for collectives of young artists and cultural producers whose works disseminate feminist ideas in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. These groups multiply and articulate themselves through actions such as festivals, film club sessions, shows, graffiti workshops and other urban interventions, conversation circles and so on, marking feminist activism with many colors and sounds.

It is a scene that allows us to explore the intersection between cultural production, urban arts and feminist activism, as well as the place of such cultural and artistic expressions as communicative strategies within the wider universe of contemporary feminisms, and which is inserted in a broader context of expanding feminisms – in the streets, on the internet, and in the media.

This entire movement is often characterized as something new: the “new feminism” or “new feminisms,” usually in a celebratory tone, both in the media and in some academic analyses (Heloisa Buarque de HOLLANDA, 2018; Flávia BIROLI, 2019) and by certain activists. To what extent, however, can we speak of “new feminisms”?

Beyond a certain media frisson around young feminist activism in recent years, the idea of “new feminisms” is related to another broader and more structuring debate in feminist movements,

which is the generational debate about the transmission of knowledge within the movement, hierarchies and distribution of powers, autonomy and institutionalization, among others.

In this article we will address this current notion of “new feminisms”, introduce the generational debate as it is currently posed among both the youngest and the more experienced activists, before analyzing how this debate is perceived by young *artists* (Paulo RAPOSO, 2015)<sup>1</sup> and feminist cultural producers in Rio de Janeiro, exploring the intergenerational connections and conflicts that pervade contemporary feminisms.

At first we show how there is a contemporary media discourse that, while at first glance may sell a positive image of feminism, consists of updating the historically predominant anti-feminist discourse in the press – including the so-called left-wing (SOIHET, 2013). We then situate the idea of “new feminisms” in the broader generational debate that marks feminist movements, drawing on authors such as Eliane Gonçalves et al. (2013), Julia Zanetti (2011) and Karla Adrião and Ricardo Mello (2009), to then analyze such issues through feminist events, statements and trajectories of young artists.

### “Lighter, more plural and ‘pop’”

When it appeared on the cover of the Brazilian magazine *Revista O Globo*, in April 2015 (Joana DALE, 2016), “New feminism” was presented as “Lighter, more plural and ‘pop’”. Another magazine, *Revista IstoÉ* (Natalia MARTINO; Rodrigo CARDOSO, 2012) had already mentioned new feminism in 2012, referring above all to nudity as a form of protest, saying that feminism “continues to reinvent itself in the form of young activists who are now using their bodies to express themselves – read: showing their breasts”. “These women are raising the flag of freedom and diversity and have set themselves up to defend minority rights, all the while with a touch of irreverence and daring, befitting their age range”, the report continued.

A striking feature of neo-feminist ideology, the agenda that informs these activists is much broader than the demonstrations against gender specific abuses. They have taken positions on development models and have challenged capitalism as well as violations of the rights of indigenous female communities, among other issues. “Fighting for rights in general and not only for women has revitalized the feminist movement,” says Carla Regina, a PhD in philosophy from *Universidade Federal Fluminense* (UFF). The manner of protesting has lent an air of irreverence to the movement and taken away the rancor that conservatism had attached to the term feminist. This is the opinion of Margaret Rago, professor in the Department of History at *Universidade Estadual de Campinas* (Unicamp). For her, the feminist caricature of the 70s and 80s was that of a serious, aseptic and not at all erotic woman. “The young women who participate in the *Marchas das Vadias* (Slut Marches), for example, enter in scene using other colors, play with their bodies and question all convictions,” says the gender and feminism researcher (MARTINO; CARDOSO, 2012).

The Brazilian edition of the magazine *ELLE* (J. de FARIA, 2013) explained to its readers that “in the new feminism, the important thing is to have freedom of choice”, and that “the activism of these newer times allows women to be fashionable and sensual, get married while still a virgin, dye their hair, fight for their rights, twerk or none of that”.

Feminism today is represented in different ways, including on a stage, dressed in a low-cut Givenchy [a reference to the singer Beyoncé, who is an icon of the so-called new feminisms]. Its modern version aims to expand women’s choices and respect each one’s wishes, in counterpoint to the militancy of the past, which repressed everything that might have appeared to be the result of chauvinist oppression.

According to the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso* (Carolina REIS, 2016), the new feminism “is growing on social networks instead of being centered on academia. It is less political and more community-based. And it accepts all kinds of women”. As a result, “feminism is normalizing itself, losing its negative connotation. And not even the most powerful heads of state are afraid to use the word”. In a less categorical way, the Brazilian newspaper *Correio Braziliense* (2015) says: “Experts admit the emergence of ‘new feminism’, with the help of the Internet”:

*The ease of internet communication has given rise to “a new feminism,” explains Joana Maria Pedro, historian and Vice-Dean at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). She highlights how today’s activists “have fewer reservations, and are more diverse” using social networks as a means of raising awareness. “Many girls don’t even call it feminism, but they are clear about their rights,” she notes.*

<sup>1</sup> “Artivism” is an expression increasingly used to indicate artistic production that originates from the desire to provoke or explain a cause, as well as social and political actions that employ artistic, aesthetic or symbolic strategies, and which has been particularly boosted by new information and communication technologies. According to Raposo, the expression entered the academic context in 2008, appearing in an article by Chela Sandoval and Gisela Latorre about chicano digital activism (RAPOSO, Paulo. “*Artivismo: articulando dissidências, criando insurgências*”. *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia*, v. 4, n. 2, p. 3-12, 2015. Available at <https://doi.org/10.4000/cadernosaa.909>. Accessed on 19/11/2018).

Supposedly light, pop, daring, irreverent, and open, the so-called new feminism is, in the terms seen in the most common media expressions, an update of the anti-feminist discourse that reduces activists who fought for women's rights throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to an absolutely negative stereotype. The new feminism seems so positive because it differentiates itself from the previous feminism – that is, from the whole feminist struggle throughout history – practiced and defended by “ugly”, “radical”, “imposing”, “aggressive” women.

The broad use of mocking as an anti-feminist weapon was the subject of fundamental research by Rachel Soihet (2013), who noted the work of the French cartoonist Honoré Daumier, who in 1844 poured ridicule on women who sought to act outside the domestic environment, “women who do not want to resign themselves to being women”; and the misogynistic discourses conveyed in *O Pasquim*, an important counter-cultural periodical opposed to the Brazilian military regime.

Many writers from *O Pasquim* took pot shots at these women, the dreaded “feminists”. Old stereotypes are restored, among others, ugliness, lesser intelligence or, conversely, the danger of this attribute's presence, inconsequence, tendency to transgression, and masculinity in order to negatively identify those who postulated roles considered exclusive to men. Numerous articles register such ‘qualities’ in feminists, which brings the libertarians of this newspaper closer to the counter-culture of misogynists from other times. In fact, discrediting those who dared to threaten the traditional gender order was its constant goal. (SOIHET, 2013, p. 170-171)

Most of the news and reporting that has appeared in recent years regarding new feminism has therefore reinforced these old and infamous stereotypes, albeit indirectly.

### Youth as category and agent of dispute

Beyond the anti-feminist traps that may be present in “neo-feminist” discourses, the idea of “new feminisms” is related to a long and controversial generational debate within the feminist movement – a debate that is especially heated in the current context of broadening and diversifying the feminist struggle.

Eliane Gonçalves and Joana Pinto (2011) present themselves as “feminist activists and scholars, facing the problem of the passage of time and emptying of the ‘nest’ in our organizations and groups” and highlight that “as a collective political movement, whose demands for recognition and legitimization presuppose continuous formation strategies, feminism faces, from time to time, impasses that are related to its existence in the present and continuity in the future” (p. 27).

This dimension of feminism, which we may call “generational”, has been provoked within the movement by the intervention of certain younger segments who claim a voice and presence in established spaces. However, the fact of suggesting a new political force called “young feminists” is not sufficient to understand if, and how, the Brazilian feminist movement is succeeding in its ambition of continuity, considering the importance for any social movement in having strategies to “transmit” its ideology, including its forms of action or methodologies (GONÇALVES; PINTO, 2011, p. 28).

There have always been young people in the feminist movements, but only in the 2000s did they come to articulate themselves as a “category”, as agents who claim recognition, their own space, and a specific voice within the movement. Julia Zanetti (2011) compares this process with what has been done by Black and lesbian feminists since the 1980s and especially in the 1990s; by challenging the generalization of the experiences of white, heterosexual, middle-class women within the movement, Blacks and lesbians began to claim the affirmation of other identities: Black feminists, lesbian feminists, and to create spaces for strengthening these identities. “And, as has happened in much of Latin America, encouraging the recognition of difference and conflict in the movement's political practice, acknowledging the exercise of power within it, and embracing it as a resource for transformation have become new challenges for feminism” (ZANETTI, 2011, p. 49).

The 10<sup>th</sup> Latin-American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter (EFLAC), in October 2005, which took place in São Paulo, is considered a benchmark in this affirmation of a young feminist identity. EFLAC was born in 1981, in Bogotá, and is the region's largest feminist encounter. In the Sao Paulo edition, more than 100 young people came together to launch the Latin American and Caribbean Young Women's Manifest, read out at the Encounter's final session:

*We recognize that this Encounter has opened up a first space for reflection and exchange, including the theme of young people as a debate of interest within the movement. Similarly, we would like to acknowledge that we count on the support of adult allies in this space in order to stimulate this debate. Discussing the radicalization of democracy implies rethinking power relations and overcoming adult-centrism within the feminist movement [fervent applause], which means understanding and recognizing that to talk about young women is to place unequal power relations in the political debate due to generational differences. As young women, belonging to the diverse feminist expressions, we believe that we share a common agenda as feminists and are contributing to the construction of the feminist movement by perceiving the generational, interracial, and sexual orientation condition as a complex*

*issue, with its own specificities and dynamics, in which new intersections and challenges for the feminist movement appear.*

*Black feminist youth demands assurances on the inter-racial debate and the confrontation of racism, lesbophobia, questions of class and territory within the feminisms as well as a guarantee of protagonism for new Black leaderships in feminist politics [...].<sup>2</sup>*

To more rapturous applause, the young activists went on to ask the organizing committees of the Latin-American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters to ensure “intergenerational dialogue to overcome the visions that fragment us and inhibit the strengthening of our commitment as feminists”.

Karla Adrião and Ricardo Mello (2009) interviewed young activists in 2005 and concluded that:

They found no room for autonomous constitution, neither in the feminist movement, nor in the youth movements. In the former, those who joined remained a long time without occupying leadership spaces, because even if they were sometimes perceived as “heirs” to the gains made by feminism, they ended up being deemed inexperienced, a condition that would only be altered if the “historical feminists” were no longer occupying leadership positions in the movement. Regarding the youth movements, the criticism that the young women who were surveyed made was that they were assigned functions “at the base” or in operational work, having few opportunities to assume positions of leadership and power (ADRIÃO; MELLO, 2009, p. 3).

From the mobilization that took place in the 10<sup>th</sup> EFLAC came the National Encounter of Feminist Youth, which took place in March 2008 in Fortaleza, and subsequently the 1<sup>st</sup> National Encounter of Black Feminist Youth, in 2009, in Salvador, bringing together approximately 100 young people. The 2<sup>nd</sup> National Encounter of Black Feminist Youth was held between September 6 and 10, 2017, in São Paulo, convening Black feminists between 15 and 35 years of age with the “objective of strengthening the actions of Black feminist youth [...] with a focus on intergenerational relations, to develop action strategies capable of promoting the wellbeing of the Black population in the context of the post-Black Women’s March”,<sup>3</sup> which was a broad – and historic – national mobilization that brought more than 50,000 women to Brasília in November 2015. It is important to highlight that feminist encounters, whether national or Latin American, are important spaces for building and reinforcing the feminist movement, places where ways of being feminist and doing feminism are forged and exercised (Sonia ALVAREZ *et al.*, 2003).

It is also worth highlighting that young Black feminists are undergoing a growing and successful process of articulation, asserting themselves first and foremost as “Black” and even promoting “*orgulho crespo*” (afro-hair pride) marches in various states around Brazil.

In the speeches and agendas of these young women, it is increasingly difficult for the gender issue to be considered in isolation – or, if it is, it will not be long before criticism emerges indicating the need to view gender in articulation with other social markers of difference, especially race, in the case of Brazil. In recent years, they have successfully introduced the notions of intersectional feminism and intersectionality – which encompass both a political posture and a theoretical and methodological paradigm.

The concept of intersectionality was proposed by lawyer and college professor Kimberlé Crenshaw (2002) in the late 1980s to address the gender aspects of racial discrimination and the racial aspects of gender discrimination, which, as the author said then, “are not fully grasped by human rights discourses”.

There is a growing recognition that the simultaneous treatment of the various differences that characterize the problems and difficulties of different women’s groups can operate in the sense of obscuring or denying the protection of human rights that all women should have. Just as it is true that all women are somehow subject to the burden of gender discrimination, it is also true that other factors related to their social identities, such as class, caste, race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation, are ‘differences that make a difference’ in the way various groups of women experience discrimination. Such differential elements can create problems and vulnerabilities unique to specific subgroups of women, or that disproportionately affect only a few women. Just as gender-specific vulnerabilities can no longer be used as a justification for denying the protection of women’s human rights in general, differences among women cannot be allowed to marginalize certain women’s human rights problems, nor can they be denied equal care and concern under the prevailing human rights regime. Both the logic of incorporating gender and the current focus on racism and related forms of intolerance reflect the need to integrate race and other differences into the gender-focused work of human rights institutions (CRENSHAW, 2012, p. 173).

<sup>2</sup> A video recording of this moment is available on YouTube at <https://bit.ly/2HmIV2o>.

<sup>3</sup> Call for the event available at <https://www.facebook.com/events/casa-das-pretas/2%C2%AA-pr%C3%A9-do-rio-2%C2%BA-encontro-nacional-de-negras-jovens-feministas/1754018528231473>.

This underlines the need to consider multiple and complex systems of subordination and oppression in an associated manner, articulating gender, race, class, sexual orientation, territory, age, and other markers.

Returning to the issue of age as a social and political marker, years after young activists claimed in the 10<sup>th</sup> EFLAC that the feminist movement in Latin America should reassess “unequal power relations due to generational differences,” the agenda continues to be present, generating debates and conflicts, as I observed in a major feminist encounter held in January 2017 in Rio de Janeiro.

The event to which I refer was the *I Diálogo Mulheres em Movimento: Direitos e Novos Rumos* (Women in Movement Dialogue: Rights and New Directions), promoted by *Fundo ELAS*, which brought together more than 120 feminist activists from Brazil and other Latin American countries. The encounter debated the political context of feminist and pro-democracy struggles in Brazil, seeking to unite activists in resistance to the current wave of conservative and anti-rights movements. It also aimed to develop an agenda for feminist action that would serve as a basis for the program's second activity: a funding call for feminist action in Brazil, which was launched in July 2017.

I worked on the production of the encounter, which was transmitted live and made available online, and I consider myself to be part of the feminist networks woven into this text. As an organic and engaged feminist researcher, I seek a polyphonic and dialogical perspective, understanding that “what is strongest in ethnographic research as a thinking-method is that it clearly shows the marks of collective production” (Janice CAIAFA, 2007, p. 150). This process of collective production does not have a stable starting or ending point, but rather connections, an agency – in the Deleuzian sense of a heterogeneous array in which I include myself as one more element.

The Women in Movement Dialogue included the participation of Black, indigenous, LGBT, youth, domestic workers, college students, high school students, bloggers, activists who took to the streets in the Feminist Spring, social media activists, community leaders, in addition to experts and strategic guests from the areas of communication, mobility, public administrators, academics, intellectuals, and artists.

The generational issue was mentioned at various stages, as when Juliana,<sup>4</sup> a 25 year-old blogger, said that traditional spaces for feminist political organization are not welcoming of young people:

*What I have noticed since becoming involved in activism both on the streets, in more... organized spaces, the traditional ones, and on the Internet is that young girls are not reaching these spaces, and you know it. Do you know why we aren't appearing in the organized traditional spaces? Because they are not inviting spaces. Know what I mean? In the sense that when you go to some meeting or march, it's always a predetermined hierarchy, so you never know where you fit in there. And my only experience as a young woman who spent time in an organization was such a bad experience that after that I was afraid to re-enter those spaces, I was apprehensive. Because I spent a year running around after the organized women who only saw me as someone to help out with security during a march or hand out pamphlets, but when I gave my political opinion about the content, the ideologies, I was not heard.<sup>5</sup>*

She continues by calling on the more experienced women who are part of the older organizations to integrate the young women, not only in offering political training courses, but involving them in the political construction of these organizations, and demands that the more experienced women give the others a chance. She adds that the girls who are actively participating on the Internet do not even know that these organizations exist, and that many of the youth collectives that are emerging are not sanctioned by the movement.

Juliana's speech generated an atmosphere of discomfort at the encounter, and several participants reacted to her throughout the event, both young and old. Amanda, 18 years old, from the *Coletivo Feminismo de ¾*, for students from *Colégio Pedro II*, while highlighting her respect for the lifetime and activism of the women present, spoke of the need to discuss “the issue of ageism, which is the idea that knowledge increases in line with years of life, which is not necessarily true. This hierarchy within the movement, which determines knowledge according to lifespan, is problematic and needs to be revisited”. Marcela, from *Universidade Livre Feminista*, said that “the Internet needs to be populated by all of our diverse generational voices”.

Luciana, who works at *Fundo Frida*, a global fund that finances initiatives by young feminists, was critical of the adult-centrism within the feminist movements:

*It is important to think about age within feminism. There is a strong history of young feminist movements in Latin America and the Caribbean, but they ended up not sharing much with each other, which contributes to a Eurocentric thesis that in the 1990s and 2000s young women lost interest in feminism, which is not a regional reality. There is a record of agendas and demands specific to the feminist movement at Latin American and Caribbean feminist*

<sup>4</sup> Fictitious name, as are the ones that follow.

<sup>5</sup> The *Diálogo Mulheres em Movimento* was transmitted on-line and is available on the Fundo ELAS YouTube channel.

encounters. In Brazil, there is a history of participation in women's policy conferences, where the issues of young women are sought to be transversally addressed. The student movement is also a reality for young women. An attempt is made to destabilize the idea of youth as a male, straight and white subject, but within the feminist movement it is also necessary to deconstruct adult-centrism, a theme that has gained no visibility. The age of women matters and is a reality. We need to think about the effects of time on our body and our psyche, on our life and our sexuality. [...] In relation to resources, we need to reflect on ways to guarantee the autonomy of young women in feminist organizations, who have the capacity and desire to conceive their own projects and also manage the money for these projects. [...] Age is still one of the dominant axes of patriarchy. The patriarch dominates women and also the young people and children of the family.

Hilda, 73 years of age, stated the importance of exchanging experiences between women of different generations:

*We don't have to follow the European hierarchy where the eldest "has the last word", but rather our own tradition in which young people, adults and children exchange ideas together. It is not the case of spending one's whole life fighting in an institution and dying in the same place; one starts to occupy another place and this path needs to be recognized, to serve as an example. We went through a lot of things that can be skipped by the youth of today. The exchange of experience and dialogue between the generations are good for everyone and that is what must be done in this event. We need to put an end to generational prejudice.*

Maria also spoke of the importance of jointly creating with young people:

*At the ripe age of 61, I think we are experiencing the worst crisis that we have yet faced in Brazil and Latin America, regionally and in the world [...] Resisting is creating and the young feminisms, with their new way of being, new language, and new agenda are doing this. Resisting means creating new forms of struggle, theories that contemplate the inequalities of race, gender and generation.*

Certain traditional organizations from the feminist movement in Rio de Janeiro have sought to integrate young people. CAMTRA – *Casa da Mulher Trabalhadora* (House of the Working Woman), founded in 1997, created a Nucleus of Young Women, in 2001, "based on the demand for specific actions in this segment from young people who were already in the institution". Since 2012, the Nucleus has been included in the organization's statute, comprising of women aged between 14 and 29, whose role is to assess and give their opinion on "subjects related to the management and execution of CAMTRA programs and projects that concern young women".<sup>6</sup>

Cepia, created in 1990, also follows this line, as explained by a young woman representing the organization in the Women in Movement Dialogue:

*Youth is creative, flexible, takes care of many things during the day and has the ability to organize and promote new things, so it is important to absorb the youth collectives and "show a face" of renewal. Cepia is an example of renewal. It is an organization that has worked hard for women's rights and has sought to invest in youth. In 2015 a participative methodology was created and an application called "Partiu Papo Reto" was developed, developed along with young people from the periphery of Baixada, in order to disseminate information on sexual and reproductive rights for adolescents.*

In the view of a rapper and filmmaker present, "the issue now is not opening up the organization to young people or those young people asking for entrance to the older organizations, but rather to forge partnerships".

*The knowledge of an historical feminist activist and the knowledge of young women involved in cyber activism are different and have to complement each other [...]. While the younger women master the technology, the older women dominate the knowledge and there must be an exchange of know-how between these groups. This geniality needs to be mixed, shared and mutually respected.*

Other important historical activists from the movement in Rio de Janeiro have also advocated greater articulation between young and old. Janaína, more than 60 years old, argued for the expansion of dialogue and a more intense articulation with feminist collectives of young women, "bearers of a vital energy for the present and future feminist movements, with emphasis on the communication capacity of young women through social media and public demonstrations, bringing vitality to the public space". Another experienced feminist said that it is still "necessary to have a serious and frank conversation about the generational question involving the polarity between older and younger activists, especially when the criticism comes from so-called 'young' Black feminists".

There is a certain tension and controversy in the feminist spaces where the generational debate comes to the surface. In the last edition of the *Seminário Internacional Fazendo Gênero*

<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://www.camtra.org.br/index.php/noticias/acoes-recentes/item/49-primeiro-encontro-de-formacao-do-nucleo-de-mulheres-jovens-da-camtra>.

(International Doing Gender Seminar), in August 2017, a dialogue at the Thematic Symposium “Youth, Gender, Feminisms and Human Rights: Interlocutions from Displacements, Breaks or Recurrences in Generational Transitions” was particularly representative in this sense. In presenting her work entitled “Youth and Feminism: Dialogues on political and generational ruptures”, Keli Rodrigues (2017), a young woman from São Paulo, argued that the period of Lula’s government brought a “cooling down of social struggles through a process that institutionalized these struggles, through Conferences, for example,” which she labeled a “domestication” of the traditional feminist movement. According to Rodrigues, in the context of this tension between autonomy and institutionalization in the movement, it is the young women who confront old forms of organizing the struggle, seeking more horizontal forms of organization because they do not feel represented by parties, unions, councils, etc. As an activist and researcher, she noted the constitution of a feminist youth subject and argues that it is necessary to “reinstate the movement’s principle of autonomy in the face of the challenges presented by institutionalization”.

At the time, Ismália Afonso, of CFEMEA - *Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria* (Feminist Center for Studies and Consultancy), an NGO founded in 1989 and working mainly with articulation and mobilization, advocacy and social control, presented herself as a “Jurassic” feminist (term used within the movement to refer to the most experienced activists) and disagreed with the analysis made by her young colleague.

*There is a narrative attempt to separate “old” and “new”, but this feminist ebullience that is happening today is only possible because feminism has historically constituted itself as the main factor in the struggle for women’s rights. Our process of struggle is not “domesticated” at all, even in dialogue with the State. The process of creating the Maria da Penha Law is not domesticated in the least. Separating these things is neither valid nor strategic. We have not been domesticated.*

While Ismália Afonso calls attention to the importance of observing continuity within the movement and between generations, the researcher Flávia Biroli, of UnB, notes a disconnection between traditional organizations and what she calls “new type feminisms”. Also at the 2017 *Fazendo Gênero Seminar*, at the round table “*Feminismos históricos e contemporâneos*” (Historical and contemporary feminisms), which counted on the participation of Eva Alterman Blay (USP), the activist Analba Brazão Teixeira (AMB/SOS Corpo), Montserrat Sagot (*Universidad de Costa Rica*) and Jules Falquet (CEDREF U. Paris Diderot) – no young women –, Biroli (2017) asserted that “there is a divide” between the new collectives and the feminist movements characterized by actions in the State sphere in recent decades:

*I’ve had this experience when dialoguing with women who are protagonists of the new type of feminisms in Brazil. I won’t cite examples but rather situations of people in charge of important campaigns in recent years who weren’t aware of the Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras, having had no reference for this organization. And there is not necessarily any contact with the type of action that was established after the Constituent, but particularly from 2003 onwards at state level. [...] This potency [of the new collectives] is a power that needs to be registered at a point – which I think we need to deal with – which is the fact that there is a gap, a distance regarding the experiences of action at state level of other segments in feminist movements over recent decades. This action at state level has been aligned and marked out, but on the one hand, while it is understandable that part of these collectives, this new type of movement, may turn their backs on political parties and on the alternative of acting at state level, given that this depoliticized and dehydrated democracy is increasingly impermeable to our agendas, on the other hand, it is understandable that there remains a question of what the possibilities for action will be since we do not see a dialogue either with many of the movements that have gained experience in acting with the state or with other institutions and organizations that have been through these recent experiences and their effects.*

It is clear, therefore, that the generational debate has not been exhausted or resolved within the feminist movements, and that the ‘new vs. old’ tension permeates the entire movement. It is a debate that continues to mobilize affections and disagreements regarding internal hierarchies as well as methods and spaces for action. The theme is increasingly discussed, both at the academic level and in the trenches of the social movement, but it continues to be a “thorny” agenda.

## Between new and old, conflicts and connections

In fieldwork with cultural collectives of activist women working in the Metropolitan Region of Rio de Janeiro, I observed that it is necessary to disrupt dichotomies regarding the clashes between “new vs. old” and “autonomy vs. institutionalization,” oppositions that reduce the performance and political expressiveness of both new and old groups and that sometimes inhibit dialogue rather than stimulating it. In this sense we agree with Ismália Afonso when she states that this opposition is neither valid nor strategic.

What I have found is that, although there are marked differences between contemporary activism and that of previous decades, such as this generational debate, which is sometimes confrontational and tense, there is a dialogue between the cultural collectives that we analyze in this work and the so-called traditional feminist organizations.

While these groups may not seek to involve themselves at state level, or even become part of the “feminist movement” in the sense of participating in acts and marches alongside traditional organizations, and produce engaged art and culture, albeit within their cultural niche, they also look to recognize traditional leaderships of the movement and establish exchanges with the historical feminists.

It is what the collective *Roque Pense* did when, for example, it invited Schuma Schumacher, a feminist who has been active since the 1970s and creator of REDEH – *Rede de Desenvolvimento Humano* (Human Development Network), an NGO created in 1990, to the round table of their festival, or when it began a cycle of anti-sexist cultural production training via a conversation with Amalia Fischer, founder and coordinator of *Fundo ELAS*, on the theme of “Thinking on Feminism”. *Roque Pense* is an anti-sexist culture collective that uses music, skateboarding, graffiti, cinema and other languages to combat gender inequalities in *Baixada Fluminense*. The group is mainly active against discrimination in the realm of music and urban culture. Some young women from the collective have already participated in political training activities in Cepia, another traditional NGO founded and led by historical feminists in Rio de Janeiro.

Renowned feminists from *Baixada Fluminense* and icons in the global history of feminism are also acknowledged and honored by *Roque Pense*, as Giordana Moreira told me in an interview:

*It is for us to tell the story of these women's struggle nowadays, those who continue, and continue in different forms, including through rock & roll. So she [Rosa Luxemburgo] was the first person, figure we honored [...] For the second one, we stopped and thought about who we would pay tribute to, and in our conversation, Lidi brought up Armanda [Álvaro Alberto], we ourselves didn't know her, but Dani did, and she is from [Duque de] Caxias, and has the background of the [cine-club] Mate com Angu, and the school, but we didn't know her whole story. And when she mentioned it, we saw the book, her background, that she had done the music festival with women, her school had a radio transmitter, and had the region's first library; she was involved with culture, feminism, and in the Baixada Fluminense. For us she is one of the greatest Brazilian feminists, and she isn't well-known. [...] That way we have lots of women who are benchmarks, women companions in the struggle; Marlúcia Santos who is an historian from here in Duque de Caxias and works with the history of Baixada in a way that we always admired, and other women who are close to us and serve as a reference; I'm trying to recall some of them now, but Armanda and Rosa have their stories, because we want to associate the women's struggle that is done through rock & roll as well, which is our thing; we use rock & roll for this, and it is all for the same purpose (SAAVEDRA, 27/08/2014).*

Beyond this interest and effort to associate their actions with an historical struggle, certain activists establish quite direct relations with feminist NGOs.

Although the internet is a central space for the expression and articulation of these activists, through which the majority of young women who participate in their actions are reached, many of our interlocutors arrived at the feminist movement through traditional organizations.

For example, the graffiti artist J. Lo Borges first discovered CAMTRA – *Casa da Mulher Trabalhadora*, before getting to know the *Rede NAMI*, eventually creating the *Coletiva Visibilidade Lésbica* (Lesbian Visibility Collective). She told me she heard about CAMTRA from her mother: “At the time I was still living with her, and she used to tell me whenever she saw anything about feminism. One day she opened her school email and there was an ad for a course in CAMTRA, “for a non-sexist education”. When I asked her if she had already had any relation with other feminist organizations, besides those two NGOs, she explained that there were in her network of contacts even though she wasn't “part of them”:

*Therefore, I have the contacts, I'm not part of them. I do work with them, understand? I help as far as I can, when I think they're institutions that are serious. In the construction for March 8th I ended up coming into contact with the girls from the Marcha Mundial das Mulheres (World March of Women), who wanted me to give a graffiti workshop and depending on when it is and so on, I'll do it no problem (SAAVEDRA, 06/08/2015).*

Similarly, the activist Lidi de Oliveira, founder of the group *Pagufunk*, also mentions a traditional NGO, Cfemea, when talking about her entrance into feminism, and says that she went through institutionalized spaces of activism before creating an informal collective. She said she was encouraged by a female History teacher to do research on feminism online, and found the Cfemea website – years later she went on to approach the organization, participating in some of their activities. She collaborated with CAMTRA also.

*When Pagufunk was still incipient, taking shape, I broke away [from the traditional organizations] and I think Pagufunk was when I had my greatest freedom to create, in a non-hierarchical*



*sense...The others were hierarchized organizations, where you had to go through certain people for something to happen, and it couldn't be spontaneous. "Ah, let's sing there, let's talk?" and that was what I wanted (SAAVEDRA, 15/07/2015).*

On the part of the more experienced, we have seen that there is a broad understanding of the need to "pass the baton", although, in practice, the process of power redistribution within the movement is not so simple.

Above all, there is recognition of the communications power of groups and collectives of young feminists that have multiplied especially since 2010. In several of the statements that we have presented here this dimension is highlighted: there are recurrent testimonies that underline the importance of new languages and the use of the internet as a tool to amplify feminist voices – and here I also include the practices and knowledge of the activists in the cultural collectives that we have seen, who, beyond the internet, build communicative, artistic and cultural networks very dear to this process of expansion and diversification within contemporary feminisms.

There is growing recognition that the struggle is also fundamentally in the field of culture and forms of communication, as well as in the self-appropriation of the right to speech, expression and meaning (Ana Lucia ENNE; Lia RIBEIRO, 2014, p. 3). This struggle in the field of cultural and artistic production, waged by these collectives on the basis of a gender bias, is today configured as

*an important center of disputes regarding rights, and we believe that the historical subjects that live and act in regions disqualified by excluding value systems, such as favelas and the peripheries, are seeking increasingly to appropriate technological resources that enable and facilitate their entry and permanence in spheres of production for the senses, creating openings to empower themselves as protagonists in the counter hegemonic struggle against the historically established powers that systematically relegate them to conditions of subalternity and exploitation (ENNE; RIBEIRO, 2014, p. 2).*

Here, we are referring to communication networks that "are fundamental tools for creating new formats for social movements and the production of subjectivities, permitting new forms of connection, insertion and expression" (ENNE; RIBEIRO, 2014, p. 1).

It is from these communication networks and plural cultural strategies that the "new" or not so new feminisms are nourished when addressing such rooted agendas as gender violence and the legalization of abortion.

Between the young feminists and the "historical" activists there are still many challenges to be faced, as highlighted by Anaiba Brazão Teixeira (2017), of the NGO, SOS Corpo, also at the *Seminário Fazendo Gênero*, on the day after her 57<sup>th</sup> birthday:

*We are experiencing a moment of transition in feminism, with the growth, both in Brazil and in several other countries, of diverse feminist collectives that have brought reinterpretations, new ways of conducting the feminist struggle, but also bring to the table principles inherent to feminism such as autonomy, horizontality, and self-organization. But in this transition I think there is a great challenge, which has revealed itself more and more, whereby there has been a lack of transmission of the feminism we refer to as historical feminism to this feminism that is pulsing in Brazil and in many other places. I think this is a challenge [...] And there is also the challenge that comes in many struggles, new struggles, and how we as feminist women who have been around longer, how we welcome this, how we add the new struggles to the struggles that we started way back and that still remain present, such as the struggle for the legalization of abortion. [...] A long time ago, we older feminists in Brazil were greatly concerned with renewing feminism [...] today we see that there is this renewal, with [new] formats.*

In the midst of so many challenges, I would like to draw attention to the constructive potential of conflict, using Georg Simmel (1955), who states that conflict should be seen as a form of sociability, not only as a locus for building society, but as the very reason for the existence of the social group. The absence of conflict, says the German sociologist, is not peace or harmony, but indifference. Conflict can act, within the feminist movements, as an important integrating force.

The Uruguayan historical activist Lilian Celiberti (2009) argues along these lines when she says that "the relationships between adults and young people always presuppose a certain degree of conflict, but conflict is by no means the undesirable place they taught us; on the contrary, it is a space of exchange, the renewal of one's gaze, leading to reformulations and revisions". Celiberti (2009) continues:

*Feminism has opened the possibility for us, women, to build ourselves as political subjects, architects of our own trajectory and, from this perspective, has also opened the field to diversity and plurality. However, the management of these diversities has often positioned the movement as a paralyzing element, or at least infertile, in the sense of motivating the debate of ideas, intellectual confrontation, theoretical and political enrichment.*

*When debating with a young woman, I run the risk of being accused of adult-centrism; if a young woman disagrees with me, she may not be able to separate me from the whole, and thus paint all the "old" feminists with the same brush. So those paths, which we opened and which have*

represented significant epistemological ruptures, are closed again in our political practice. Diversity is not the depoliticized space for everyone to be as they want in this consumerist and mercantilist world. But neither is it a witch-hunt of political correctness.

To recognize the uniqueness of each one – young, Black, lesbian, rural worker, laborer and all the infinite possible combinations between any of these nomadic categories – for me means knowing that each one will challenge me to look from an angle that I don't see and that, by considering this point of view, I completely change my perspective. But of course I also expect and desire reciprocity in this exchange. (p. 153)

We therefore conclude that there is a need to overcome dichotomies and recognize that the generational confrontations that integrate the feminist movement are processes of mutual recognition, in which dialogue and connections between younger and more experienced feminists overlap with differences in age and practices.

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