

No. 177

September 2022

à propos

The KOFF
Peacebuilding
Magazine



Identities & Positionalities
in Peacebuilding

editorial

What are the different identities and positionalities represented within the KOFF platform? What impact do they have on existing conflicts and peacebuilding?

In our polycentric world, urgent demands for decolonization, racial, and gender justice have increased and infiltrated political and civil concerns. The humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding fields have not been spared. As a result, many organizations have questioned the power dynamics that shape their work and the legitimacy they have in attempting to act for peace based on their positionality.

Challenging structures and operational models that have been established for years require self-reflexivity. Then, translating the awareness gained into concrete inclusive and ethical peace programming requires diverse efforts: a reassessment of values, structural changes (in terms of funding, staff, choice of contexts to work on, etc.), and/or the implementation of methods such as conflict sensitivity.

In this edition, the KOFF organizations share their views, concerns, and experiences on this controversial and topical issue.

Wishing you a pleasant read.

Sanjally Jobarteh, Editor of KOFF magazine

By publishing the à propos magazine, the Swiss platform for peacebuilding KOFF creates a medium for its members and partners to communicate about their experiences and perspectives. The articles of this magazine reflect the views of the authors only and not those of KOFF or swisspeace.

focus

It's not just how, it's also who



Reflection on being conflict-sensitive in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, 2019. Regula Gattiker/Helvetas

In the aid world, a series of reflections on the unintended negative impact of international aid in conflict-affected contexts, and a long-term research project by the Collaborative for Development Action in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide events, led to the development of the “Do-no-Harm approach.” This approach has greatly increased INGO’s awareness of and reflection on the importance of working with everyone on the same level and focusing on technical support. Many organizations, including Helvetas, engage in eye-level dialogue and exchange on the analysis and implementation level.

Yet, when working in conflict-affected contexts, be it with a focus on conflict-sensitive development, humanitarian aid, or transforming conflicts and building peace, we are immediately confronted with positionalities: how people position themselves in terms of the conflict(s) at stake, the roles they assume we have, the individual positions of our staff and partners involved in the project toward the different conflicts, to name a few. Mostly, those positionalities are neither made transparent nor discussed; except for those of the main actors in the conflict, during conflict analysis.

Here are some challenging situations we found ourselves in over the last couple of years:

In West Africa, we started a workshop and were soon interrupted by a participant, asking us why and with what right we came to “teach” them about how to deal with their conflicts when we – he meant Europeans and referred to a particular nationality – were the ones responsible for the mess they now must cope with.

In Southeast Asia, in a highly contested conflict context, we were asked to challenge some of our partner’s collaborators’ discriminating viewpoints without “teaching” them what was right or wrong. Our project would have been at risk if we had not managed to change the group’s attitudes and behavior towards an ethnic group in a subtle, effective and sustainable manner.

When people with completely different backgrounds and life experiences collaborate, there is often some tension that – if not taken care of with diligence – can put fruitful cooperation at risk.

Positionalities, perceptions, prejudices

Our life experience shapes our positions: where and by whom we were raised, the groups we feel we belong to, the stories we were told, and the experiences we went through. All of this influences how we think about and interact with others as we grow up. The more our worlds overlap, the more we feel we belong. The less overlap we have with others, the less we tend to trust them. Humans’ negative perception of the other intensifies in conflict-affected contexts^[1]: Our fear increases, we consider others as a threat, we polarize more, and our positions harden.

Positionalities in practice: sensibly and sensitively dealing with differing perceptions

Helvetas has experienced positionality challenges when promoting women’s rights in political participation, access to justice, or land property. We are also sometimes challenged to question our values regarding political systems: to what extent is our assumption that democratic systems work best in any context adequate? Often, what we try to achieve goes against cultural norms. It is therefore delicate to navigate systemic changes around good governance. Working on such change processes in a sensitive manner takes time and must include a wide range of actors.

In contexts with severe conflicts, it is particularly difficult for our local staff to work impartially, as they tend to empathize with some conflict parties more than with others. Yet, expats can also be challenged with positionalities: we all tend to judge, generalize, and compartmentalize people. It is then our task to question our prejudice and deal with it constructively, to remain professional, and conflict-sensitive.

How has this insight informed our work since then, and how did we deal with the situations described earlier?

In the past, our Helvetas “Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management” (CSPM) methodology had a rather technocratic focus. We taught our staff and partners to include our organization and projects in their conflict analysis. However, a few years back, we realized that knowing that we automatically perceive others and are perceived by others in

certain ways and being aware of the consequences this entails is a prerequisite for working conflict-sensitively. Thus, we introduced another level of analysis in our approach: *the individual level*. It entails:

1. analyzing how our and others' attitudes and behavior towards others have been shaped by our and others' socialization.
2. reflecting on how our attitudes and behavior shape our relations with others.
3. reflecting on how to mitigate potential tension, e.g., by engaging with the actors that might have a negative impression of us and build trust or by being cautious with proximities that might be perceived as suspicious by other actors.
4. including all these reflections in our conflict-sensitivity analysis and strategy.

In the situation described above in West Africa, our strategy was to listen to the participant and show empathy. We explained that all opinions were welcome and it was precisely due to such issues that we created a space to discuss ways to deal with tensions more constructively and thus contribute to the population's well-being. At the end of the workshop, the same participant thanked us for offering a friendly atmosphere, where bridges and trust were built, which seemed impossible to him before.

In Southeast Asia, we invited our partner's collaborators to a workshop to create common ground and a fruitful basis for our collaboration. We carried out exercises that helped them to stand in the shoes of those they had negative prejudice towards. These simulations greatly moved the collaborators, which allowed for a shift in their perception. A thorough reflection of the exercises helped to minimize their suspicion against other groups and increased their understanding of others. The group developed a more pluralistic and equitable attitude, understood the need for social cohesion, and finally agreed that all ethnic and religious groups in the country deserved the same rights and treatment.

Lessons learned & conclusions

We believe that professional peace and development workers with a Western background have significantly enhanced their awareness of positionalities and their sensitivity towards political economies, power relations, and conflicts.

At Helvetas, positionality challenges prevail mostly in contexts marked by neo-colonialism, for example, through European or American military presence, when working with new partners, until we have established a reputation as an equitable partner doing locally relevant and impactful work. Positioning ourselves as "tools" for idea-generation and facilitators of processes for mutual learning often helps to foster trust and create good relations.

Despite this, there is still room for improvement regarding the methods addressing positionalities in our work. Therefore, we are working on:

1. developing a curriculum fostering *more self-awareness and reflection* for our staff

and partners focusing on *being conflict-sensitive*. This training has been piloted in Mozambique and Mali and is now requested in many other countries;

2. regular *learning & exchange sessions on conflict sensitivity on all levels to internalize conflict sensitivity* in our staff's heads, hearts, and hands – and building up focal points in all countries who can train and facilitate support to our partners, too.
3. starting an internal exchange on working in a trauma-informed way.

We still have much to learn and improve to enable collaboration on an equal playing field. Let us jointly explore more ways to do this and share our experiences!

[1] Le Shan, L. (1992). *The Psychology of War*. Chicago: Noble Press.

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reports

Women, peace, and security – a binary agenda



Rosa Irene Betancourt/Alamy Stock Photo

All around the world, LGBT+ people and those defying rigid gender norms find themselves marginalized, targeted for abuse, and scapegoated in times of conflict. If it is to stop failing LGBT+ people, the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda must include sexual and gender minorities explicitly and move beyond a binary understandings of gender.

New research released next month by International Alert with conflict-affected LGBT+ communities in Nepal and Myanmar finds that too often, they live in constant fear due to threats from family, society, or the state. Frequently, they are excluded from family, community or stable formal employment. They report being denied access to the healthcare they need. They do not see themselves represented in policy-making spaces. They are more vulnerable to all forms of violence. Their basic human rights are threatened every day.

Homophobia and transphobia intensify during periods of conflict. During the military coup in Myanmar, LGBT+ groups reported use of sexual violence, torture and intimidation against them, as well as an increase in violence and illegal detention from law enforcement officers. LGBT+ activist groups found it almost impossible to support their members.

In systems dominated by patriarchal norms and masculinities, LGBT+ people and women share many experiences of exclusion. In both Nepal and Myanmar, groups told researchers how heterosexual men dominate decision-making in the public and private spheres, but also how stronger collaboration or unity between LGBT+ and women's groups could help forge a longer-term, "positive" peace. In Nepal, women's rights organizations are adopting intersectional and inclusive approaches in their advocacy. In Myanmar, however, civil society groups continue to be strictly monitored by the state, making collaboration between women's and LGBT+ groups extremely risky.

A broader 'gender, peace and security' agenda that ends the abuse and violence against people based on traditional gender roles could be game-changing. When LGBT+ and women's groups collaborate together, they can force transformative discussions and effect real change on masculinities and patriarchal norms. Yet, with no mention in the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 or the eight subsequent resolutions, lesbian, bisexual, and trans women have been effectively erased from the UN's WPS agenda.

The WPS agenda is rooted in national change and, if designed differently, could translate into real inclusion. In Nepal, for example, the government have expressed their commitment to explicitly include LGBT+ issues and rights for the first time in the second draft of the country's National Action Plan on WPS.

Twenty-two years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, gender inclusion cannot come fast enough for those shut out of how the world thinks, talks and acts on WPS.

To find out more, including recommendations for policy-makers and peacebuilders, read Alert's research report, which will be published in October 2022.

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reports

The media – mirrors of society, tackling the challenge of inclusivity



Mariam Maiga, a journalist with Studio Tamani (Fondation Hirondelle's media outlet in Mali), talks with her guests during a program on migration in Kayes. Fondation Hirondelle

Understanding and showing awareness of the various identities within an audience is a constant challenge for media across the globe – and a significant one too. Making sure all voices are heard, including those of the most marginalized communities, is often an important issue in particularly sensitive contexts, such as violent conflict situations. Yet, this inclusivity is crucial for recreating the basis for meaningful dialog, which is the first step toward a return to peace. To meet this challenge, teams of journalists within the media need to be representatives of their society too.

Fondation Hironnelle is tackling this issue through its projects and media activities in places such as the Sahel region (Studio Tamani in Mali, Studio Kalangou in Niger, Studio Yafa in Burkina Faso), the Central African Republic (Radio Ndeke Luka), the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Madagascar. Its work is underpinned by studies conducted by its academic partners. These present approaches that could enable a better understanding of an audience's multiple identities (communities, ethnicities, genders) and better ways of taking them into account so that their concerns can be incorporated into media content, they are more fairly represented in press reports, and they are given more of a voice.

In 2019 and 2020, studies carried out in Niger and Mali by Dr. Emma Heywood from the University of Sheffield revealed that two of Fondation Hironnelle's media outlets, Studio Kalangou and Studio Tamani, can have a tendency to talk about the emancipation of women as a long-term process that affects women as members of a specific group. However, their listeners are of the opinion that emancipation needs to become a more established part of their everyday lives, at a more personal level. The studios' editorial teams have used this study to help them tailor their programs more closely to the needs expressed by these Nigerian and Malian women.

The role of a journalist is to strike a balance between the need to satisfy an audience's requirements and the need to inform them. As various research has demonstrated, it is important for the media not to rely solely on responding to perceived needs when developing their programs but also to adopt a forward-looking approach and anticipate needs that have not yet been expressed.

Moreover, showing awareness of an identity should not be exclusive. Programs that are strictly dedicated to women, as necessary and beneficial as they may be, are not necessarily enough to bring about a shift in social norms if they only target women and fail to address men too. There may also be female presenters who do not necessarily reflect a diverse range of perspectives and in fact reinforce traditional, stereotyped views of the role of women in society, or it may be that most of the allotted speaking time in programs intended to promote gender equality is taken up by men.

To tackle the challenges of inclusivity and find the best way to represent different identities in societies undermined by crises, Fondation Hironnelle has come up with some practical measures to implement within the media it is developing:

- Deploying networks of correspondents across different regions to avoid focusing exclusively on the capital.
- Ensuring that programs are broadcast in different languages (those that are more representative of the various communities within the country).
- Making sure a diverse range of presenters and participant stories are used in programs and that women, in particular, are given the chance to speak.
- Taking generational differences into account, with social media use being more prevalent among younger people, and adapting formats and broadcasting channels to suit audiences.

- Following different communities online (work undertaken in collaboration with partners such as the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a think tank that has been working with us to develop a Facebook monitoring tool) and using digital technology to enhance our ability to “listen at scale”.
- Using mailing lists and WhatsApp voice messages to collect feedback from audiences on their information needs and their reactions to our programs.

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- [Radio Ndeke Luka, In the Central African Republic](#)
- [Dr. Emma Heywood's study: « Evaluation de l'impact du Studio Kalangou sur les droits et l'empowerment des femmes au Niger »](#)

reports

Reflecting on our positionality – a never- ending task



Women Protection Teams during a community security meeting in Bentiu, South Sudan, February 2021.
Nonviolent Peaceforce

An interview with Tiffany Easthom, General Director of Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP)

How would you describe NP's identities and positionalities?

NP (Nonviolent Peaceforce) reimagines security and civilian protection in areas most impacted by conflict by working alongside communities to interrupt and prevent violence. NP has a forward-leaning, highly adaptable model allowing us to work in both the humanitarian and peace space, contributing to creating enabling conditions for development.

Over the past 20 years, we have continually reflected on what NP's identity means, particularly in terms of operating as a values-based organization, committed to embodying and evolving our values as we learn more and as the world around us develops.

This has meant that we have thought a great deal about positionality. NP was founded largely as a peace organization, developing the humanitarian elements over time as our

programming became increasingly responsive to protection needs arising in acute crises and protracted conflict.

It felt important, to be honest with ourselves about some aspects of having a humanitarian identity. While there are important reasons for investing in coordination, minimum standards, accountability, and so on, the downside is the top-down and complex nature of the system making it challenging for robust localized participation. As a result, we can end up inadvertently replicating the asymmetrical power relations between the global north and south.

We have found it important to push ourselves to evolve and innovate as an organization to ensure that we are working in a collaborative and inclusive way through a feminist management approach. We are challenging ourselves to move beyond what we have for years recognized as the primacy of the local actors, to explore what it will take to radically center those most impacted by violence in all aspects of our work.

How does this core value translate into your operational model?

All development, humanitarian, or peacebuilding organizations would tell you that they work with communities. But let's be honest with ourselves, in reality there is a large spectrum of what that can look like and many different ways to define "working with". If we are honest with ourselves, we have recognized that sometimes we do it very well, sometimes less well. For NP operationalizing this core value of radically centering those most impacted is largely informed by our programs being rooted in direct action, from a position of living and working within the communities we support. The very foundation of what we do is relationship-building, allowing a sound understanding of local needs, expectations of peace, and the various positionalities and identities across the stakeholder landscape. We strengthen spaces of trust and mutual engagement, try to find common interests, and work from existing practices. We are committed to maintaining a certain level of flexibility and adaptability to support local resources in a sensitive and sustainable way.

How do you handle the proportion of expats and local staff?

To determine the right team composition, we analyze in what context foreign presence is needed. It is obviously not the business of anybody from outside to come in and presume to build peace for someone else. People who will have to live within and maintain that peace need to be the builders of what works for them. This means that we largely depend on the context, specifically the stage of conflict, to help us determine the proportion of expats and local staff in any given location. In situations of acute violence, the presence of an outsider can offer an element of deterrence. Foreigners can disrupt and disturb patterns of abuse or violence because they are not from the conflict-affected space. They represent the eyes of a broader community concerned about the security and well-being of the people at risk. It does not mean that these expatriates must come from the Global North or be white-skinned. The simple fact that an expat is not from the immediate location can trigger a change in outcomes.

When we see that external presence helps, there will be more expats in our team. When it does add unique value, we adapt the ratio to ensure that locals form the majority of, if not, the whole team to support the community that we are in service of.

For example, in the Philippines, where we have been active since 2006, there is currently no particular need for an expat presence, but that has not always been the case. When the ceasefire in Mindanao broke down in 2008, there was a return to active conflict. At this point, as our colleagues from the area were at an elevated risk of violence themselves, we had a much higher presence of expat staff in the team. Now, in 2022 with peace implementation well under way, our team is entirely composed of local staff.

When the war broke out in South Sudan, locals were being targeted based on their ethnicity. No matter how committed they were to working for peace and protection, it was much more difficult for our local colleagues to be perceived as nonpartisan, one of our core operating principles. Increasing the number of expats in our teams helped to both extend safety through deterrence as well as to strengthen neutrality and non-partisanship.

Do you train expats before going on assignment abroad, and if so, how?

Our local and international staff are trained together. We find it contributes to building a common organizational culture. Of course, the expats get additional information, homework, and assignments on context studies to help them get ready for being in a new country but once they arrive, they attend the same preparedness training as their local colleagues. It is essential for us that everybody gets the same grounding in the organizational culture, values, and the basics of unarmed civilian protection work.

How do you deal with the different positionalities and identities of your staff, especially when they can be put at risk in certain countries?

Our organizational ethos is come as you are, your whole self, with the goal that NP will be a brave, welcoming, and comforting space for all. The idea of a “brave space” comes from the poem credited to Micky ScottBey Jones, “An Invitation to a Brave Space”. This is hard work, while as one line in the poem says, “in this space, we seek to turn down the volume of the outside world” in practice this can be incredibly difficult. We work in a diverse number of places where some identities are stigmatized, targeted, and some actions associated with identities are illegal. We need to make sure our teams are aware of the legal framework of the place they are working in and what kind of intolerance they might encounter based on gender identity, religion, and so on so that people can make informed choices about joining. We do extensive work as an organization, working on ourselves and with each other, intercultural competency development, inclusivity and belonging, trying to facilitate a space where we can each thrive as a person and together with a common cause. It is far from perfect, we have good moments and some failures – it will be our forever work together. It is the responsibility of anybody joining to know if he/she/they fit into those categories and to make an informed choice.

Would you like to add something?

Peace colonialism is a risk. We must be careful not to transplant and implant what peace

means to us as organizations from the global north. Every culture has practices of nonviolence, dialogue, mediation, negotiation, and healing processes, which might not look like what we are used to in our home countries. But if it works for those most impacted by violence, then we need to open our hearts and minds to learning and supporting theirs. As external actors we can offer what we have learned from other experiences, what we have come to know about things like assessing risks, recognizing violence triggers and correlations between interpersonal violence and intercommunal violence. We can work to inspire generative creativity and most importantly, offer our presence to bear witness and stand in solidarity with those working on nonviolence.

We cannot just assume that because we are a humanitarian organization with all our good intentions, we don't come with our own biases, mistakes, and assumptions. We must have uncomfortable conversations and be willing to receive negative feedback about our impact. Reflecting on our positionality is work that will never end; at the personal, team, and organizational levels.

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Horizontal and plural networks for peace in the Global South



Luiz Eduardo Lopes Silva presenting the work of The Network for Studies of the Periphery (REP - Rede de Estudos Periféricos) during a KOFF roundtable in Basel. terre des hommes schweiz

Brazilian cities are marked by high levels of armed violence that often have the characteristics of an “undeclared conflict” due to the war-like police operations that terrorize entire peripheral and racialized neighborhoods. This violence is embedded in much larger economic, cultural, and political forms of violence that especially affect the racialized and urban poor.

In the Brazilian state of Maranhão, with one of the world’s highest levels of social inequality and a deep slavery heritage, we recognize a “state of emergency” in the urban and rural communities. Large portions of the population, with a well-defined racial and class divide, are recurrent targets of violence by private and State agents. In the public debate as well as policy responses, the structural root causes of urban violence are generally overlooked.

Therefore, excluded and discriminated populations in the periphery are crucial actors in deepening public discourse and changing perspectives in policy making. The Network for Studies of the Periphery (REP – Rede de Estudos Periféricos) is an outstanding example of how these actors can produce knowledge in contexts where official statistics do not

realistically reflect the extent of violence, especially police violence. This organization gathers researchers from marginalized communities to document and reveal officially neglected and denied facts about urban violence. Starting from the point that knowledge is built in a complex network of collaborations, the REP emphasizes knowledge's cumulative, democratic and horizontal character. It conducts research based on a pluralist and analytical method by engaging peripheral actors, their practices, and their form of representation.

The initiative is the result of an education policy between 2003 and 2016 implemented by a left-wing government in Brazil, which promoted the access of millions of young black, indigenous, and people of color to universities. In many cases, these young people were the first generation in their families to benefit from this opportunity. Today, they produce knowledge in several areas.

Such networks, composed of actors with significant research and pedagogical experiences, exchange knowledge between universities and marginalized communities and propose new reflections and points of view. With a multidisciplinary and inter-institutional approach, they specialize in the Brazilian periphery, are linked to the Federal University (UFMA) and the Federal Institute (IFMA), and have a particular focus on Maranhão, understood as a social complex marked by the diversity of political-economic and cultural phenomena.

To criticize and deconstruct the “war paradigm” that has become dominant in Brazil’s public security field, REP’s partner, the Safety Observatories Network, works as a network of networks where different initiatives connect. In the area of “data activism,” seven organizations from the seven states Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo have united to monitor, interpret, and publish data and information about public security, violence and human rights, in permanent dialogue with civil society and social movements.

REP and Safety Observatories Network bring together those who have experienced the most brutal side of daily life on the periphery. They contribute to rewriting history from the point of view of the oppressed, with a critical analysis of the usual dominant narratives – the State, the media, and corporations.

[REP - Rede de Estudos Periféricos](#)

Luiz Eduardo Lopes Silva

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[links](#)

- [Synthesis of the KOFF Roundtable “Community-led responses to violence in Brazil” \(June 2022\)](#)
- [The Network for Studies of the Periphery \(REP - Rede de Estudos Periféricos\)](#)
- [terre des hommes article \(de\) "Mein schwarzer Körper eine Zielscheibe"](#)

in depth

The place of love in international cooperation



UN compound in Antananarivon, Madagascar. Andrea Grossenbacher/swisspeace

all about love promises new visions. And indeed, bell hook's idea of "a proactive new ethic for a people and a society bereft with lovelessness" made me wonder what would change if the proposed "love ethic" were the basis upon which practitioners in international cooperation worked. How would organizations be structured? How would the work culture change? What impact would it have on performance, results, and most importantly, people's well-being?

The working conditions in international cooperation can be difficult due to the challenging contexts people work and live in, the frequent traveling, the pressure to secure funding for projects, the unstable and highly competitive job market, and an increasingly limited pool of resources. In addition, there are power dynamics at play. (Neo-)colonialism, white saviorism, patriarchy, capitalism, racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia, among others, shape the way the so-called "international community" operates. Thereby, the system perpetuates structural and cultural violence within its own community and beyond, creating divisions rather than connections. For many reasons, this is largely left unaddressed at an individual and systemic level. While staff well-being policies are developed and can be referred to if needed, this often requires an individual proactive

effort. In other words, these policies are not at the heart of our work culture. As a result, people become stressed, bitter, cynical, and unhappy. In fact, cynicism is seen as a necessary coping mechanism and burnouts are normalized. All of this impacts the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of professionals in the sector and their interactions with external partners. Ultimately, it leads to frustration and disconnection between the humanitarian professionals and the people they are working with/for.

In such an environment, it takes courage to *openly and honestly express care, affection, respect, commitment, and trust* in internal and external work relations. All of which are elements that hooks uses to define what love is. As a result, the work environment becomes – as most places in modern society, according to hooks – a place where love is lacking, and people are encouraged to adapt to such loveless circumstances. A way out of this, suggested by hooks, is to embrace a ‘love ethic’. While it might indeed take courage to embrace a love ethic, it is a rewarding path. Love lays the foundation for constructive community building. It teaches us to be generous and willing to make sacrifices. This, in turn, reminds us of our interdependency. Therefore, choosing to embrace a love ethic brings us closer to the values that should guide this kind of work in the first place. hooks encourages us to recognize love as an *action* that is informed by intention and will and has consequences. Love becomes more than a feeling that we have no control over, and we begin to assume responsibility for it. The principles of a “love ethic” are essential to any type of humanitarian work, i.e., *showing care, respect, knowledge, integrity, and the will to cooperate*.

This humanitarian work is informed by our different identities and positionalities. However, it is also rooted in the values that we uphold. While the former is not something I can change, the latter is in my hands. It is up to me as an individual to define what values guide me in my life *and* work and how I choose to nurture and practice them. bell hooks’ “all about love” offers us ideas on how to do that. Taking it from there, we can build communities and hold institutions accountable for their responsibility to encourage the development and sharing of strategies to become more loving.

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in depth

A Global Southern feminist approach to peace research



Alanis Bello's field research work in Colombia. Alanis Bello

Feminisms and queer theories have emphasized the importance of problematizing the place of enunciation in knowledge production. In peacebuilding processes, it is asked: Where is peace made? Which institutions configure their knowledge production? Which agents participate in the configuration? In this sense, we are interested in proposing reflections from feminist perspectives concerning research ethics on these processes in the Global South.

In countries such as Colombia, this field of studies is not exempt from the reproduction of power and knowledge relations. In this article, we question the logic of epistemic extractivism. Research practices that qualify as such subtract information from war victims without advocating for immediate improvements or better living conditions and reduce victims to “informants,” whose stories and experiences are collected only as input for theoretical experiments.

Reflexivity is not only limited to the researcher’s identity, the recognition of privileges, or an intimate confession of his or her vital marks. In our research, for example, we reflect on the following questions: How do we reflect on the research design? What commitments and

exchanges do we want to foster with the communities we work in research? How do we plan the fieldwork, methods selection, and research writing? Based on these reflections, we evoke an epistemic and ethical turn in social research that assumes a serious commitment to the communities.

The Indian anthropologist Richa Nagar (2019) calls this type of reflexivity “situated solidarity.” It consists not only of the researcher reflecting theoretically on the place of enunciation but also in daring to think about the geopolitical inequalities while researching. Richa Nagar invites us to ask how research with communities in the Global South produces new theories and contributes to strengthening peace processes.

Feminist ethics in research implies a commitment to war-affected communities, a coexistence with them, but, above all, building knowledge that does not reproduce colonialism, sexism, and racism. Peace research demands responsibility and care for the victims. It implies establishing knowledge practices that do not seek to annul the voices of the communities, nor to see them as subjects without agency, but rather to build with them and not over them.

Feminists advocate for peace research where those who wish to investigate are challenged to break with the tradition of the “modest witness,” as a distant observer who does not get involved and extracts information for their multiple academic subjects. In this tradition, we defend engaged, collaborative, careful, and horizontal research agendas in peace research.

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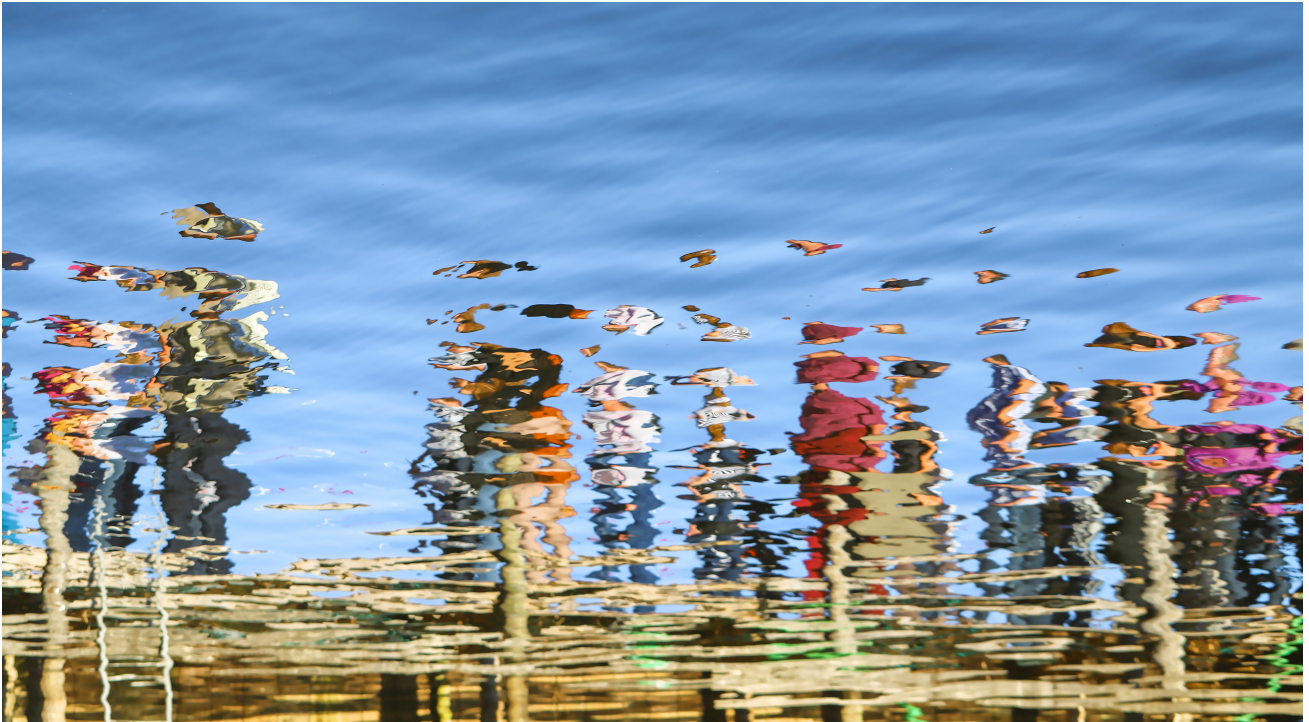
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in depth

A universal identity for “positioning” peace



Mariola Grobelska/Unsplash

1. Universality is a necessary ethical position. It is the only approach that paves the way for gaining a proper understanding of what it means to be human and the global issues we face. It also encourages acknowledgment of an “other”, thus, creating an alternative – one that is genuine and can be put into effect – to discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes, and ultimately, racism. These two elements, the universal and the individual, also open up the possibility of equal relationships. Individually, a human being is as important as the human race itself; it is also as important as any other human being. Knowing that this equality is possible is the start of a process of making it happen, but, more importantly, it provides a meaningful and constructive basis for sharing positions. *And everyone is happy!*
2. Peace is a necessary practical position. It is not a matter of building it – that comes with putting it into use – so much as living it, as peace is also something we feel so that we can understand and explain it, measure it, apply practical tools that allow it into our personal and social life, as well as using political

participation, to which everyone has a right, for example, to create peace by means of public policy. *And the world has a future.*

3. Once the universal nature of being human and the idea of peace being both a precondition and an outcome of all successful forms of harmonious human cohabitation and cooperation have been raised, it is easy to broach questions relating to identity and establishing positions. *A world where everyone has the right to live and to live well!*
4. Identity needs to be worked on, given shape, and managed based on knowledge and learning, but also in light of choices and circumstances. Identity is, above all, an ethical and introspective matter: self-care and self-awareness are things we have to work on, along with maintaining and understanding healthy relationships. But there is also a social aspect to identity: our social environment and the times we live in influence our choices and habits, and sometimes our reflexes and instincts too. But we can also influence our cultures, the circles we move in, and our futures, partly through the way in which we manage our personal, social, and political identities. *A world in which everyone is involved!*
5. Establishing a position is first and foremost a matter of choice. Choices with no ethical basis are all about gain and are rarely sustainable. Choices based on fundamental values are usually easier to share. Non-violence and prevention are more than enough to provide a basis of conscience or “guide values” for making these choices and playing a part in developing attitudes and behavior. Dialog – inclusive dialog between equals – or, if necessary, mediation and reconciliation, create the spaces needed for choices and practices to be expressed, but they also allow attitudes to be managed if the effects they generate go against the principles of universality, equality, well-being, and peace. *A world where everyone contributes to the common good!*
6. On a planet with limited space and resources, any relationship is, in part, universal and if any disagreements threaten to emerge, the relationship needs to continue and progress on every level until harmony is mutually restored, if necessary through adapting identities and changing positions.

APRED

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[links](#)

- APRED

news

"Communicating Peace & Conflict" course



How do mass media shape public opinion on peace and conflict? What new opportunities and risks arise from digital technologies? How do you communicate ethically? Join us virtually for our Communicating Peace & Conflict course and discover trends, challenges, and practices of communication in peacebuilding.

links

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news

Throwback to the second edition of the Ilanzer Sommer



Maria Tkachuk/Ilanzer Sommer

With around 40 cultural, educational, and debate activities on the theme of conversational culture, the “Ilanzer Sommer” took place for the second time in August. In the evening, the topic “Peace in Europe: What role does Switzerland play?”, with a focus on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, brought together people from international peace policy for a presentation and subsequent panel discussion. In his presentation, the head of the GSPC (Geneva Center for Security Policy), Thomas Greminger, gave an overview of the Ukraine conflict and developed a few keywords on what Switzerland can contribute to a peaceful solution. This was followed by a panel discussion on the same topic with Andreas Zumach (journalist for TAZ), Angela Mattli (Public Eye) and Leandra Bias (swisspeace), moderated by Laurent Goetschel (swisspeace). The third edition of the Ilanzer Sommer will take place next summer.

[Forum für Friedenskultur](#)

links

- [Ilanzer Sommer](#)

calendar

Events

KOFF MEMBER NEWS SITE

Upcoming events organized by KOFF member organizations can be found on our [KOFF MEMBER NEWS SITE](#).

A MOMENT OF SILENCE – Join us!

Women for Peace

Every first Monday of the month from 6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. in Basel's Market Square.

A mobilization against gun violence and for investment in life:

Social security and education for all, climate-saving production and lifestyles, just trade, conflict prevention.

CRITICAL REFLECTION, PRACTICES AND ETHICS DAY

Iamaneh, terre des hommes schweiz, Fund for Development and Partnership in Africa, Centre for African Studies

6 September 2022, 9am-5pm in Kollegienhaus, Petersplatz 1, Basel, room 111 (“Regenzzimmer”), 1st floor

The Day aims at a self-reflective and interdisciplinary discussion of how to re-think and practice equitable partnerships and collaborations. In the pursuit of alleviating some of the current inequalities, we seek to address, explore and establish approaches and examples of transformative change.

The Day is planned in a hybrid face-to-face/online format.

[Registration: reflectionday-zasb@unibas.ch](mailto:reflectionday-zasb@unibas.ch)

FEMINIST DIVERSITY – GLOBALLY EMBEDDED, LOCALLY SHAPED

cfid – the feminist organization

7. 09.2022, 6.30-8pm in Käfigturm, Bern

What causes are feminists fighting for in the Maghreb and Southeastern Europe? What kind of resistance do they encounter? Which topics are controversial? To what extent do they reflect women's concerns? How do they deal with patriarchal structures and power systems?

During this event, we will discuss these questions with three cfid coordinators from our project countries who will report on different feminism-related matters in their countries. They will underline how feminist thinking and action are shaped by concrete discrimination and challenges faced by women in local everyday life but also mention the global developments influencing local everyday life, local priorities and thus local gender relations.

This event is part of the cfid series FeminisTisch. In English, no translation.

[More information](#)

PEACE CONFERENCE 2022

KOFF, swisspeace, Politesse Publique

21 September 2022, 2-9pm

Curious, how arts, peace, and the future come together? Take the chance and join us to discuss and explore perspectives, experiences, and opportunities for peacebuilding in thematic workshops. These will inform an artistic future scenario that takes us to the year 2049, and back to today, to a panel discussion in the evening.

[Registration](#)

HEADING FOR THE AGROECOLOGY DAYS

Swissaid

October 2022

The second edition of the Agroecology Days will be held throughout October in Switzerland. Farm visits, conferences, cider production, workshops and podiums: 75 events proposed by 90 organizations are on the program. The objective? To raise awareness of these ecological and social farming methods that are bearing fruit in Switzerland and abroad.

[Program and information](#)

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Read à propos: www.swisspeace.ch/apropos

Publisher	KOFF
Contact	kHaus, Kasernenhof 8, 4058 Basel Phone: +41 61 551 56 56
Editing	Sanjally Jobarteh, Chiara Lanfranchi, Dorothea Schiewer
Translation	Übersetzergruppe Zürich, Furrer Übersetzungen
Cover	Tom Barrett/Unsplash

KOFF

Die Schweizer Plattform für Friedensförderung
La plateforme suisse de promotion de la paix
La piattaforma svizzera per la promozione della pace
The Swiss platform for peacebuilding

KOFF is a dialogue and exchange platform facilitated by swisspeace. It is jointly supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the following Swiss NGOs which are members of the platform:

ae-Centre	HEKS	Stiftung für Integrale
Alliance Sud	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation	Friedensförderung
APRED	IAMANEH Schweiz	Swiss Academy for Development
artasfoundation	Interpeace	Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund
Baha'i	Lucerne Initiative for Peace and	Swiss Peace Council
Brücke · Le pont	Security (LIPS)	Swiss Red Cross
Caritas Switzerland	medico international schweiz	Swiss Refugee Council
Caux – Initiatives of Change	MIR Switzerland	SWISSAID
Coexistences	mission 21	Terre des Femmes Switzerland
Foundation	miva – transporte l'aide	terre des hommes schweiz
cfd	Peace Brigades International	Women for Peace Switzerland
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Green Cross Switzerland	Schweizerischer Katholischer	
Group for a Switzerland without an	Frauenbund	
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