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Under Construction: Toward a Theory and Praxis of Queer Peacebuilding*

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Abstract | This article explores what *queer* as a concept brings to peacebuilding, presenting a guiding framework and introduction for a special issue on queer peacebuilding. It offers an initial approach to the topic, which means to center queer and trans perspectives of peace and bring queer epistemologies to bear on how peace is constituted so as to rearticulate the concept both in theory and praxis. In doing so, it addresses an unexamined gap in peacebuilding efforts to achieve gender justice and inclusive security in conflict-affected societies, namely the unique experiences of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer) individuals and their collective efforts to achieve social justice in these contexts. The authors approach the topic of queer peacebuilding through three questions: What is queer peacebuilding?, 'Why is queer peacebuilding important? and What can queer peacebuilding contribute? While the impacts of queer peacebuilding in sites of contentious politics around the globe are visible, it remains an emergent and somewhat elusive concept, still under construction within peace and security scholarship and practice. By presenting a conceptualization of the notion of *queer peacebuiling*, the authors seek to further academic efforts to construct and analyze queer peace.

Keywords | conflict resolution; LGBT; peace; peacebuilding; queering; queer theory

En construcción: hacia una teoría y praxis de la construcción de paz *queer*/cuir

Resumen | Este artículo explora lo que aporta el concepto *queer/cuir* a la construcción de paz, exponiendo un marco de referencia y una introducción para un número temático sobre la construcción de paz *queer*/cuir. Se presenta una aproximación inicial a este tema, lo que significa centrar las perspectivas *queer*/cuir y trans de la paz, así como aportar epistemologías *queer*/cuir a la forma en que se constituye la paz para rearticular el concepto tanto en la teoría, como en la práctica. Con ello, se aborda un vacío en los esfuerzos de construcción de la paz que buscan alcanzar justicia de género y seguridad inclusiva en sociedades afectadas por conflictos, es decir, se examinan las experiencias únicas de las personas LGBTQ (lesbianas, gays, bisexuales, trans y queer) y sus esfuerzos colectivos en pos de lograr la justicia social en esos contextos. Los autores abordan el tema de la construcción de la paz *queer*/cuir a través de tres preguntas:

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¿qué es la construcción de la paz *queer*/cuir?, ¿por qué es importante la construcción de la paz *queer*/cuir? y ¿en qué puede contribuir la construcción de la paz *queer*/cuir?. Aunque los impactos de la consolidación de la paz *queer*/cuir en los lugares de conflicto político de todo el mundo son visibles, este sigue siendo un concepto emergente y un tanto esquivo, que todavía se está construyendo dentro de los estudios y las prácticas de paz y seguridad. Al presentar una conceptualización de la noción de *construcción de la paz queer/cuir*, los autores pretenden impulsar los esfuerzos académicos para construirla y analizarla.

Palabras clave | construcción de paz; LGBT; paz; *queering*; resolución de conflicto; teoría *queer*

Em construção: rumo a uma teoria e práxis da construção da paz *queer*/cuir

Resumo | Neste artigo, é explorado o que o conceito *queer/cuir* contribui para a construção da paz, apresentando um referencial e uma introdução para um número temático sobre a construção da paz *queer*/cuir. É apresentada uma abordagem inicial do tema, o que significa centralizar as perspectivas *queer*/cuir e trans da paz, bem como trazer epistemologias *queer*/cuir para a forma em que a paz é constituída a fim de rearticular o conceito tanto na teoria quanto na prática. Com isso, é abordada uma lacuna nos esforços de construção da paz que buscam atingir justiça de gênero e segurança inclusiva em sociedades afetadas por conflitos; nesse sentido, são examinadas as experiências únicas das pessoas LGBTQ (lésbicas, gays, bissexuais, trans e queer) e seus esforços coletivos em prol de atingir a justiça social nesses contextos. Os autores abordam o tema da construção da paz *queer*/cuir por meio de três perguntas: o que é a construção da paz *queer*/cuir? Por que a construção da paz *queer*/cuir é importante? E para que a construção da paz *queer*/cuir pode contribuir? Embora os impactos da consolidação da paz *queer*/cuir nos lugares de conflito político de todo o mundo sejam visíveis, esse conceito continua sendo emergente e um tanto esquivo, que ainda está sendo construído dentro dos estudos e práticas de paz e segurança. Ao apresentar uma conceituação da noção de *construção da paz queer/cuir*, os autores pretendem fomentar os esforços acadêmicos para construí-la e analisá-la.

Palavras-chave | construção da paz; LGBT; paz; *queering*; resolução de conflito; teoria *queer*

Introduction

In a context where LGBTQ[1] (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) persons face various forms of violence and exclusion the world over, it is not always the first instance that queer is considered alongside peace. Accordingly, much has been written about how queers come to know and counter violence and less so about how queers come to know and construct peace (See, Amar 2013; CNMH 2015, 2019; Díaz Villamil 2020; Duggan 2012; Green and Quinalha 2014; Guerra 2019; Hagen 2016, 2017; IARAN 2018; Judge 2018; Mason 2002; Ritholtz 2022a; Serrano-Amaya 2017; Stanley 2021; Swarr 2012; Weber 2016). Yet, it is precisely the implication of violence in the targeting of queer

1 In this formative attempt at conceptualizing the notion of queer peacebuilding, the authors use LGBTQ as a way to describe people with non-hegemonic sexual orientations and gender identities. As much as the acronym is widely used by academics, activists, and policy makers, it is also one of constant contention as it risks homogenizing disparate identities, politics, and positions within gender and sexual orders. It is used here with acknowledgement of its conflictive nature. The "I" for intersex is not included as issues of endosexism and prejudice and discrimination based on sex characteristics are not explicitly covered, either in this article's analysis or in other contributions to the special issue. We hope that intersex experiences of conflict and related activism, and the role that queer peacebuilding can play in challenging endosexist social structures of conflict, will be explored in future research that is stimulated by this special issue. For those interested in learning more about endosexism, see Zelada and Quesada Nicoli (2019).

people —a violence rooted in the perception that those who are queer are less-than and worthy targets— that requires a turning of the lens towards the generative potential of peacebuilding *by* and *for* LGBTQ persons.

This special issue explores what *queer* as a concept brings to peacebuilding. In this sense, it presents an initial approach to queer peacebuilding, which means to center queer and trans perspectives of peace as well as bring queer epistemologies to bear on how peace is constituted, so as to rearticulate the concept both in theory and praxis. In doing so, it addresses an unexamined gap in peacebuilding efforts to achieve gender justice and inclusive security in conflict-affected societies, namely the unique experiences of LGBTQ individuals and their collective efforts to achieve social justice in these contexts. The intellectual foundation of queer peacebuilding comes from queer and feminist epistemic critiques that recognize the situated nature of knowledge based on intersecting identities, and contest social constructions that erase the experiences of LGBTQ people (Browne and Nash 2016; Hammers and Brown III 2004; Haraway 1988; Zelada 2018). Applying a queer epistemology to the study of peacebuilding reflects Browne and Nashe's (2016, 7) observation of how queer research "is anti-normative and seeks to subvert, challenge and critique a host of taken for granted 'stabilities' in our social lives." To challenge accepted conventions of LGBTQ inclusion in peacebuilding efforts, a critical approach to queer peacebuilding requires us to follow Mohanty's (1991, 1995) guidance to go beyond an individualized identity politics. This means to go beyond merely accepting public proclamations of LGBTQ inclusion, to explore the ontological implications of these proclamations through queer epistemologies.

Although there is now over two decades of scholarship that includes attention to gender in peacebuilding efforts, little of this literature focuses specifically on sexuality or queer and trans perspectives (Agathangelou 2010; Ashe 2018a, 2018b; Cockburn 2010; Daigle and Myrttinen 2017; Hagen 2020; Karamé and Tryggestad 2000; López, Canchari, and Sánchez 2017; Merkel 2021; Moser and Clark 2001; Myzze and Bryne 2015; Pankhurst 1999). A queer perspective recognizes the importance of unearthing and expressing stories that in turn produce regimes of truth about LGBTQ experiences of —and responses to— conflict.

Peacebuilding is a core analytical concept for analyzing and transforming protracted conflicts. This concept was articulated before the international community in the 1992 United Nations document "An Agenda for Peace" (United Nations Secretary-General 1992). The need to connect peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding is recognized as the key strategy to create durable conditions that prevent the return of violent conflict. Peacebuilding displaced those conflict resolution strategies that were limited to a focus on negotiations among powerful parties or on militarized security, and instead encouraged a commitment to establishing long-term and sustainable conditions for peace through structural reforms. With peacebuilding, and subsequent global peace efforts, came a focus on the key role of civil society in leading pre- and post- conflict transformations (Belloni 2001); the search for reconciliation as a horizon for peace (Lambourne 2003); and the need for gender equity to address the roots of conflict (Strickland and Duvvury 2003).

However, peacebuilding is not a neutral or technical concept. It was developed in a context where the promotion of liberal democratic governance, together with the creation and strengthening of state institutions and market-oriented economics, prevailed, affecting responses to violent conflict. The embedding of peacebuilding within a predominant model of liberal peace has been a matter of intense discussions that exposes both its values and problems (Chandler 2010; Mac Ginty 2008; Paris 1997; Richmond and Franks 2009). Paris (2010) argues that there has been a pendular movement from presenting liberal peacebuilding as the innovation that led the change in conflict management strategies in the 1990s, to the denouncing of its failures, problems, and limitations by the early 2000s. The contradictory results of peacebuilding missions in the 1990s and the

War on Terror were key to moving the pendulum away from liberal peacebuilding and raised concerns and suspicions about the neoliberal and colonial agendas underlying the concept of peacebuilding itself.

Amid debates in academic and practitioners' circles in the Global North about the problems, possibilities, and the need to save the liberal peacebuilding paradigm, those in the Global South were doing the same analytical and empirical work. South-based practitioners, particularly those in Latin America, were exploring post-conflict approaches centering civil resistance and grassroots response rather than state institutions and market development as their point of reference (Baranyi 1998; García-Durán 2006; Hernández Delgado 2004; Ortiz 2005; Pearce 1999; 2005; Sandoval Forero 2012). These approaches from the South are in dialogue with local theorizations of peacebuilding and its affiliated practices, as seen in Colombian scholarship on the topic as well in other Global South contexts explored in this Special Issue. This literature challenges the neat division of war and peace, as well as the linear step-by-step models that locate peacebuilding and reconciliation at the highest and most advanced level of peace. Instead, the literature reveals the overlapping and iterative nature between these neat divisions (Papacchini, Henao Restrepo and Estrada 2001; Restrepo and Aponte 2009). Drawing on long traditions of social movements' search for justice and structural change, analyses of collective action for peace (García-Durán 2006) show how diverse civil society actors lead peace efforts rooted in local initiatives and popular education. Whilst peacebuilding entered into the repertoire of international organizations and cooperation agencies in the mid-1990s (Rettberg 2012), it obtained local meaning in the hybrid practice of churches, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations.

From a decolonial perspective, understanding peacebuilding in its hybrid and localized forms challenges the largescale peace promoted through liberal peacebuilding (Parada Rodríguez 2020). The call made in recent Colombian literature to talk about peacebuilding in plural ways is not only a way to criticize the hegemony of the liberal peace paradigm, but also provides a protagonist role for emancipatory possibilities of peace to those in subordinated power positions. It is a call that enters into dialogue with earlier perspectives that promoted a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches to peace that had liberal peace as their point of reference (Mac Ginty 2010). However, it also raises the long-term history of hybridity as an analytical and political concept in Latin America, emphasizing the hybrid nature of state institutions and cultural and political practices already acting at local levels, and not just imposing liberal peace interventions. Thinking about peacebuilding in hybrid ways helps to understand the tensions caused in contexts where a liberal peace is weakly implemented, and an emancipatory peace has little potential. Simangan (2018) explores this dynamic in Cambodia, where there are overlapping systems of security and markets. Similar dynamics have been described by Rolandsen (2019) in South Sudan, where peace and conflict overlap, as well as by Battaglino (2012) in Venezuela and Brazil. However, hybridity is also a problematic concept to theorize and implement in peace interventions, since the disparate set of practices, legal frames and politics under the peacebuilding umbrella often produce problematic power relations (Millar 2014).

There is value to linking queer peacebuilding efforts in Colombia and elsewhere with ongoing feminist, trans, and other transformative peacebuilding efforts. Within patriarchal paradigms, queer can default to a cis-and-masculine norm, prioritizing the perspectives of those who are most accessible and most visible. As such, it is also important to disaggregate between members of the LGBTQ community, or groups within the LGBTQ community (Reid and Ritholtz 2020). Intersectional feminist peacebuilding helps us understand why it matters that it was Black queer organizers who founded Black Lives Matter in the United States with an abolitionist vision for justice, and why fighting for peace must also be anti-racist. Not only do these Black queer women bridge movements in their organizing for social justice, they also highlight the

experiences of Black women and Black trans women who may otherwise not draw media or political attention (Taylor 2016, 164) Transgender organizations are also finding transformative ways to confront violence and insecurities in Latin America as found in research and activism in Colombia (Prada Prada *et al*. 2012; Rocha, Ruiz and Salamanca 2022) and Ecuador (Garriga-Lopez 2016).

In taking up the discussion of queer peacebuilding, the editors share concern about the problematics of liberal peacebuilding that make queer peacebuilding just another issue in the list of topics to be included in accounts of peace. Liberal peacebuilding persists in multicultural contexts that use superficial efforts of diversity and inclusion to undermine alternative and radical agendas for social, cultural, economic, and political change. From this perspective, queer peacebuilding can be perceived as a threat to the liberal peace paradigm, which seeks compromises that favor those who benefit from existing political and socioeconomic power structures. Recognizing how queer peacebuilding can be framed as a threat to liberal peace underscores the importance of bringing the hidden stories of queer social struggles —and their gendered, sexualized, and racialized dimensions— to the fore within analyses of political transitions and of international relations more broadly. These concerns emanate at the intersections of prior scholarship on, amongst others, the entanglements of homophobia and racism in post-colonial contexts (Judge 2018); homophobic violence in armed conflicts (Serrano-Amaya 2017); the queering of gender and security agendas (Hagen 2016, 2017); and queer conceptualizations of violence and displacement (Ritholtz 2022a, 2022b). Such considerations bring to the topic a longer-term commitment to exploring the assumptions that have constrained more critical engagements with questions of sexualities, gender, political transitions, and struggles for social justice in countries dealing with protracted conflicts.

An existing progressive narrative of the inclusion of LGBTQ people in peace processes (particularly in Colombia), however, has been taken for granted by much of the international community and is frequently presented as a positive model for policy action without meaningful engagement with its challenges. These challenges include questions of how such inclusion was achieved, what collaborations were necessary to advance activist agendas, what trade-offs were made in the process, and what the material impacts have been on the lives of LGBTQ people (in Colombia's post-conflict society, and elsewhere). Adopting an international perspective on such questions serves to challenge grand narratives of LGBTQ inclusion and progress within peace deals and transitional justice. Such a perspective seeks to render visible the hidden realities of the post-peace condition and its violent continua, as articulated in the struggles of LGBTQ people in Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Peru, South Africa, and elsewhere.

As a novel concept, queer peacebuilding can be situated within broader literatures on peace, security, LGBTQ politics and activism, and post-conflict transitional justice. The articles in this special issue serve as key contributions towards the development of the concept's theory and praxis. With an eye toward the analytical and political potential of queer peacebuilding, this introductory article provides a space in which to engage with an emergent conversation that surveys the ongoing struggles and historical legacies of LGBTQ people working for peace. As a whole, the special issue provides an academic forum through which scholars, activists, and policymakers can address the gap between past violence and atrocities, and aspirations for more inclusive and less violent futures.

The topic of queer peacebuilding is approached through three guiding questions: What is queer peacebuilding?, Why is queer peacebuilding important? and What can queer peacebuilding contribute? With these questions, the editors attempt to parse out a term that is still in a state of becoming: while its impact in sites of contentious politics around the globe

is visible, there is not, as yet, a language[2] to call it what it is. This is because queer peacebuilding is an emergent and somewhat elusive concept, with its meanings and uses still under construction within peace and security scholarship and practice.

What is queer peacebuilding?

Queer peacebuilding, in its central focus on queer lives and struggles in conflict-affected societies, seeks to pose new questions about how to provide security and access to justice for all while building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions along with more equitable and non-violent social relations. A queer perspective allows for key concepts such as peacebuilding or even peace itself to be challenged, as these have been taken for granted in the normative modalities of peace settlements. In this sense, the concept critically engages with the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of LGBTQ groups in peace processes —and their aftermath— not only to understand how discrimination operates but also how anti-LGBTQ and anti-gender attacks gain traction in times of political transition and post-conflict reconstruction (Serrano-Amaya 2019). This approach reflects Haraway's concept (1988) of subjugated knowledge, which recognizes that how one understands the world results from their own experience. In centering LGBTQ lives and perspectives, queer peacebuilding reflects a queer epistemology that questions underlying cisheterosexist assumptions in the study and construction of peace. A queer approach to the study of peacebuilding builds on Hammers and Brown's III (2004, 95) suggestion to use queer theory to look "towards the historical (time) and contextual (space) to deconstruct our (hetero)normative social order that we are all implicated (wittingly and unwittingly) in reaffirming."

Academic interest in queer peacebuilding (Ashe 2018a, 2018b; Hagen 2016; Maier 2020; Nagle 2020) has a limited but increasing space in discussions on transitional justice, conflict resolution and international relations. This scholarship is grounded in activism by grassroots organizations to document the experiences of LGBTQ people during conflicts, with a focus on memorializing victims' experiences and lobbying for their rights to be recognized. It is a scholarship that bridges not only academic fields but also political claims for social change, locally and globally. There is also more recent academic literature calling explicitly for queer perspectives on LGBTQ inclusion in transitional justice as well as on dynamics of violence during conflicts, and on sociopolitical violence more broadly (Bueno-Hansen 2018; Duggan 2012; Loken and Hagen 2022; Judge 2018; Ritholtz 2022a; Serrano-Amaya 2017, 2021).

Against this backdrop, and as a starting conceptualization, queer peacebuilding can be approached through four dimensions that make visible the experiences of LGBTQ individuals in sociopolitical conflicts, thus complicating existing peace and conflict theories and practices. These are various dimensions through which peace itself may be *queered*, challenging the normative sexual and gender frameworks that structure dominant ideologies

2 On the topic of language, it is worth noting that this introduction was originally written in English. As such, many of the terms used (and translated) might appear strange, or out of place, in Spanish or Portuguese. Since the beginning of the putting together of this special issue, there have been constant discussions on translation, language, and dialogue between concepts, words, and contexts. Discussions around queer in Spanish have moved in diverse directions that cannot be unified in linear ways. Early discussions for example, focused on the possibilities and limitations of its translation and the finding of equivalents such as *raro, joto* or *marica* (Echevarría 1997). Other discussions have acknowledged the presence of queer as theories, politics, and practices in Latin America and explore its deployments in social analysis, arts, pedagogy and activism (Blanco 2016; Flores 2017; Bidaseca and Nuñez Lodwick 2020; Vidal-Ortiz, Viteri and Serrano-Amaya 2014). Another set of discussions considers the contradictory ways to relate with queer (Falconí, Castellanos and Viteri 2014) and even its resistance to any kind of framing, genealogy, or canonization (Pierce *et al*. 2021). These tensions around translation are discursive, conceptual, and political, reflecting culturally specific social constructs (Viteri 2017). Thus, in the Spanish version of this article, we decided to translate *queer* as queer/cuir, in order to keep its sense of oddity, rarity, and foreignness but also its presence and life in Spanish-speaking contexts.

of peace. These four dimensions are based on theory building and academic research, as well as on political analyses of why and how to affect social change from a queer vantage point. In doing so, they provide epistemological and ontological entry points into the concept of queer peacebuilding —linked to struggle (as lived experience), to situated knowledge (as theorization), and to practices of peace (as praxis). These dimensions serve as points of departure for further scholarly engagement.

The first dimension of queer peacebuilding concerns documenting the histories of queer activists and activism in order to properly historicize their paths to peace. An extensive literature on the impact of sociopolitical violence and armed conflicts on queer individuals in diverse settings (Bérubé 1990; CNMH 2015; Duggan 2012; Montalvo Cifuentes 2005; Swarr 2012), and on individual and organizational participation in peacebuilding (Jugovic, Pikic and Bokan 2007; Mršević 2013; Serrano-Amaya 2004), reflects the activist work to render visible both victimization in violence and participation in peace.

The second dimension for exploring the concept of queer peacebuilding is one that connects queer histories with feminist histories as well as broader debates on queering the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, an important space to bring a gender perspective into peace and security with the now ten UN Security Council WPS resolutions.[3] A discussion on queer peacebuilding necessarily considers when and if women's rights and LGBTQ organizations work together, and how the WPS architecture includes (or excludes) attention to violence targeting LGBTQ individuals. Of relevance here are the intersections of feminist and queer advocacy movements through the framework of the WPS agenda as outlined in Hagen's work on queering that agenda (2016) in Colombia (2017). This intersection sheds light on the multiple actors involved in peacebuilding, the differences among them, and the alliances they are able to create in order to pursue gender and queer perspectives in and through peace.

The third dimension for conceptualizing queer peacebuilding builds on queer epistemic critiques to interrogate how peace features in the lived experiences of LGBTQ people. The concern here has to do with the tensions found in applying international conceptions of security to local contexts and the differential impacts that gender, sexuality, indigeneity, race, and disability have on those conceptions. As such, by recognizing the concept of peace to be situated, more work can be done to understand its meaning for LGBTQ people. At this level, queer peacebuilding is an exploration of what peace means in highly violent contexts. Feminist scholars of war argue that there is an unhelpful separation of what is viewed by some as a more serious form of gender-based violence in times of war from the prevalence of similar forms of gender-based violence which are ongoing during so-called times of peace (Boesten 2014; Byrne, Mizzi and Hansen 2017; Zulver 2022). For LGBTQ people, persisting violence in post-war settings similarly challenges the ontology of peace and calls into question whether peace can be achieved in highly violent post-war contexts. By questioning what peace means, queer peacebuilding seeks to redefine conceptions of (in)security and challenge the established terms used by scholars and policymakers (Ben Daniel and Berwick 2020; Ritholtz 2022a; Wilkinson 2017).

The fourth dimension for queer peacebuilding considers the transformative potential of queer inclusion in peacebuilding efforts, both for LGBTQ populations and their cis and heterosexual counterparts. This relates to the substantive implications for how post-conflict societies are

3 The first of the WPS resolutions, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, was passed in 2000. The resolution marks the first time the Security Council agreed to the need for a gender perspective in all peace and security efforts. Two decades later, the agenda has been further institutionalized globally, with the four pillars of the agenda understood as bringing a gender perspective to: 1) participation and representation in peacebuilding, 2) prevention of conflict, 3) protection against conflict, and 4) relief and recovery in post-conflict (United Nations Security Council 2000).

imagined and structured, particularly in respect of gender and sexuality-related injuries/harms; as well as how governing power arrangements are (or are not) transformed in the transition to and during peacetime (Bueno-Hansen 2018; Fobear 2014; Fobear and Baines 2020). These dynamics speak to the more radical potential of a queering project, as well as to post-conflict transformational imperatives and approaches more broadly.

These four dimensions situate the multiple meanings and potentialities of queer peacebuilding, trace its various articulations, and surface associated sources of contention as well as opportunities for its further de/reconstruction. This in turn reveals the complex and transformative potential of queer peacebuilding for reshaping cisheteronormative conceptions of peace in favor of more equitable, queer, and inclusive ones.

Why queer peacebuilding?

Queer peacebuilding requires us first to engage with how militarism serves to manipulate and manage heteronormativity as a dimension of conflict. Feminist military studies on militarized masculinities (Breines, Connell and Eide 2000: Connell 1995; George 2008; Henry 2017; Rossdale 2019) and feminist analyses of the militarization of armed groups in general offers important insights into how gender norms are managed during conflict. The militarism of societies in states of war is predicated on violent masculinities and gendered notions of conflict. In this context, sexuality and gender are deployed through, amongst others, "sexualized militarism" that defines enemy men and enemy women (Nagel 1998), the weaponization of the rape of women (Cock 1991), of gender-based violence more broadly (Cohen 2016; Loken and Hagen 2022; Schulz and Touquet 2020), and other forms of violence that also target LGBTQ people (Ritholtz 2022a; Serrano-Amaya 2018). Although post-conflict peacebuilding includes commitments to reforming the security sector, such institutional processes fail to dismantle the cultures of violent masculinity that sustained the conflict, and which endure in the post-conflict period. These cultures rely on a patriarchal binary of masculinity and femininity and its attendant violence, both in war and peace. This is exacerbated when post-conflict nationalisms reinforce patriarchal standards of masculinity whereby women and queer people remain structurally oppressed. Such dynamics have consequences for how security in peacetime is understood and structured. Feminist scholars have thus argued for a concerted challenging of masculinity as a peacebuilding strategy within WPS policies and practices (Wright 2020).

Recent scholarship shows that LGBTQ individuals are persecuted during both war and peacetime due to social prejudice and wartime logics (Díaz Villamil 2020). Much has been written about Nazi persecution of LGBTQ populations in Europe (Farges *et al*. 2018), while other scholarship explores further patterns of prejudice-based victimization by the Francoist and Stalinist regimes in Europe, as well as the Shining Path in Peru, the FARC and paramilitaries in Colombia, ISIS in Iraq, Indonesia, and much of the authoritarian regimes in the Southern Cone of Latin America (Blackburn 1999; Lessa 2022; Montalvo Cifuentes 2005; Payne 2007; Sanz Romero 2021; Sempol 2019). Moreover, activists and academics alike have recorded how LGBTQ populations are targets of violence in times of peace through, for example, moral panics (Epprecht 2008), scapegoating by means of political homophobia (Boellstorff 2004; Currier 2010; Weiss and Bosia 2013; McKay and Angotti 2016), and systematic hate-mongering (Gitari and Walters 2020).

Significantly, societies in political transition throughout the world have begun to consider the lived experiences of LGBTQ people, as both victims of war and as active participants in peacebuilding. Yet despite recent advances in inclusion, many formal peace processes intended to reckon with past atrocities committed by oppressive regimes, frequently overlook the ways in which sex, sexuality, and gender are governed through violence by those very regimes. A signifying feature of this is the disproportionate violence perpetrated

against women and LGBTQ persons during but also pre-dating conflict. In this context, peace —as more than the mere absence of war— has productive power in how it constitutes societies, and this raises the question, what does queer peace, and a peace for queer people, look like?

Conceptualizing queer peace challenges existing thought that leaves the sexual and gender margins outside of both transitional and post-transition political arrangements. This is particularly the case when such arrangements map onto established power relations that continue to place LGBTQ people in positions of precarity. One example is the continued siloing and marginalization of those working within the WPS agenda by not taking seriously the experiences of women, and gender more broadly, within peace and security (Basu, Kirby and Shepherd 2020). This paradox of peace is characterized by transitions of power that fail to dismantle the historical hierarchies and inequalities which produce discrimination and violence, resulting in their continuities into the present. These continuities are exacerbated when a full account of past atrocities is thwarted or marginalized, as was the case in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission that gave limited regard to the gendered violence (Goldblatt and Meintjies 1998) and LGBTQ-related violence that took place during apartheid (Kusafuka 2009). Furthermore, these historical silences cannot be confronted if acknowledging patriarchy in the day-to-day workings of creating a post-conflict peace is not viewed as central to the peacebuilding project (Puechguirbal 2010). There is also a tension in centering anti-queer violence within conceptualizations of queer peacebuilding in that as much as it is necessary to denounce the suffering of those facing the consequences of cis-and-heteronormative orders, it is important not to reinscribe and reduce LGBTQ persons solely to their violent victimization and subordination. A counterstrategy to this is the inclusion of a chapter on the violence against —as well as resistance strategies of— LGBTQ individuals and collectives in the recent report of the Colombian Truth Commission (Comisión de la Verdad 2022). As such, queering peacebuilding can provide the opportunity to humanize LGBTQ individuals as people who have full, complex lives rather than simply being vulnerable people who are violently targeted.

The liberatory potential of queer peacebuilding is evident in the struggles and aspirations of queer people who remain minoritized, including by regimes based on race, class, migration status, and ability, within prevailing social orders. Queer knowledges of what peace brings, or fails to bring, cast light on its potential as a political project: one in which social norms and power relations can be radically transformed, and where queer bodies can act, rather than being acted upon, in order to create meaningful post-conflict safety, security, and freedom. Linked to the ways in which widespread violence, marginalization, and exclusion have demanded that injury be a site of queer resistance (Judge 2018), queer peacebuilding urges the politicization of peace. One example of this is how queer communities have challenged the institutional procedures that deny their lives as worthy of grieving and recognition (Butler 2006). From this vantage point, a queer politics of peace is animated by the losses from which its necessity arises and by the promise of a future constituted by less grief.

What can queer peacebuilding contribute?

A focus on queering peacebuilding brings together scholarship not often in conversation with one another, opening up opportunities for a rich interdisciplinary discussion. Within international relations and conflict studies, much focus on LGBTQ experiences continues to be on the need to document that queer people exist in conflict, and the harms they experience. The historical exclusion of queer stories from mainstream scholarship about peace and conflict means in many instances, that LGBTQ stories are treated as emerging, despite the decades of organizing within domestic, regional, and international LGBTQ

spaces. Taking queer peacebuilding seriously as part of transnational feminist activism requires us to work to repair this harm and historical erasure.

In the case of Colombia, the protagonistic role of LGBTQ organizations in the implementation of peace in territories affected by conflict has expanded the meaning of local peace, created new forms of alliances between social movements, and demanded institutional adjustments not previously imaginable (Serrano-Amaya 2019, 2021). The need for reparations to LGBTQ collectives following the harms caused by conflict has challenged core ideas at the center of peace efforts. To begin with, LGTBQ groups have questioned the idea of what is, or who is entitled to be, a collective subject of rights (to reparations) by the government's agency for victims, *La Unidad para las Víctimas* (Caribe Afirmativo 2016). Furthermore, these groups have rearticulated the concept of kinship beyond blood to include chosen family as those responsible and able to demand that the government agency searching for missing persons, *La Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas*, implement a search for the forcibly disappeared during the conflict. The inclusion of the violence faced by LGBTQ people and their role in peacebuilding has further expanded ideas of gender and sexual violence in the work of the government truth commission, *La Comisión de la Verdad*, which has gone to great lengths to incorporate queer truths and related concepts (2022).

As demonstrated in Colombia, queer peacebuilding provides opportunities to include the experiences of queer individuals and collectives during conflicts, in political transitions, and in peace efforts, thereby rearticulating core concepts associated with these practices. Such rearticulations are especially relevant, considering the long history of denial and invisibility faced by these communities in official accounts of conflicts as well as in compensation, reparation, and post-conflict reconstruction. This becomes more urgent if one considers the practical knowledge that queer individuals and collectives have developed to deal with conflict and violence in efforts to create, for themselves and others, a life worth living. Thus, developing a concept of queer peacebuilding is key to expanding the field beyond the assumed cis-and-heteronormative experience of what is desired in a future peace.

As a concept, queer peacebuilding challenges normative discourses and approaches to addressing socio-political conflicts. Through queering, initiatives to build peace such as negotiations, peace agreements or transitional justice, are transformed to incorporate queer and trans perspective. Much has already been said in queer analyses of political violence, international relations, and gender politics, to show how theory and practice is embedded in the very structures of oppression they intend to transform. Thus, this normative challenge, as a practice of queer epistemic critique, is necessary to deliver justice as a basic demand in the effort for peace. Queer peacebuilding can go a step further than inclusion or the challenge to normative discourses. Connecting the queer, the peace, and the building signifies a strategy, a possibility, and a demand for transformative change and social justice. These three dimensions of queer peacebuilding offer a way to navigate the space between the politics of conflict and of peace. Navigating this in-between space implies resisting the dichotomist divisions between conflict and peace or between negative and positive peace that have been discussed in feminist and queer readings of the gendered dimensions of conflict (Atshan 2020; Berry 2018; Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Cohn 2013; El-Bushra 2007; McLeod and O'Reilly 2019; Savci 2021; Väyrynen 2019). The common tropes of peacebuilding must be considered critically for their liberal tendencies to stabilize, strengthen, and rebuild structures that have been harmful to queer and trans lives, such as state institutions or (in)justice systems. Moreover, such navigation acknowledges the many political, social, and cultural practices that make queer lives possible in insecure contexts. It also recognizes that queer individuals and collectives make peace a space for productive power that goes beyond the simplistic division of negative and positive peace. In this sense, queer peacebuilding is also an entry point for critically reviewing existing political practices and politics of knowledge, at the same time as producing new ones.

As a strategy, queer peacebuilding indicates the kind of actions needed for a radical transformation of the origins and consequences of violent conflicts necessary to achieve social justice. Such actions include the production of knowledges situated, reflective of, and relevant to those facing the impacts and effects of structural oppression and inequality which also makes queer peacebuilding a research agenda. Consequently, queer peacebuilding is more than connecting theory and practice or acknowledging the importance of communities participating in collaborative activism in the search for change: it constitutes activist knowledge that destabilizes an established concept, making intellectual space for new ontological and epistemological perspectives.

As a possibility, queer peacebuilding concerns imagining and giving space to unexpected, less recognized, or legitimized ways of dealing with conflict and the creation of social relationships. Queering as a practice is often represented as a resistance, a reaction, and a challenge. Such elements are indeed inherent to queer peacebuilding, however, approaching queer peacebuilding solely as a form of critique may reduce its potential as a driver of emancipatory change. If peacebuilding is conceptualized as a way to actively disassemble and remake normative sexual and gender relations within prevailing paradigms of peace, it has the potential to create new forms of kinship, solidarity, connection, and interaction.

As a demand, queer peacebuilding shares with other approaches to peacebuilding the call to involve all people in making peace both sustainable and permanent (Mac Ginty 2011; Richmond 2010; Woodhouse 1999). But queer perspectives also serve as a reminder that such mobilizing for a common purpose sometimes implies that the needs of *some* are presented as the needs of *all*. Reviewing the basis and content of these calls for common purpose in peace talks is part of the initiative undertaken through queer peacebuilding. Yet the peace involved in queer peacebuilding requires going beyond a return to existing norms; it also seeks to remove stigma, prejudice, or trans/homophobic practices from society. Instead of the idea of peace as a static pact that results from negotiation, queer politics and practices have shown the possibilities of living in and with conflict, diversity, and heterogeneity, thus recognizing peace as a dynamic concept.

Queer peacebuilding offers entry points for rethinking what peace means through the lens of queer theory's refusing of binary norms such as peace/conflict, male/female, and combatant/survivor (Browne and Nash 2016). To do this, queering efforts need to revisit what types of conflict count as relevant to peacebuilding work, and which violence needs to be addressed within transitional justice arrangements. The source of queer and trans people's experiences of conflict are not just those violent perpetrators recognized within the peace process, but also, often, themselves, their families, and their communities. For example, given a lack of material resources, tension may occur across different LGBTQ organizations who have to compete for funds. These tensions may arise exponentially when official accounts of violence stress some forms of violence whilst overlooking others, or when regimes of representation in media and public opinion create hierarchies of suffering and victimization. Within these dynamics, one form of peacebuilding that is arguably of significance to small, under-resourced queer and feminist organizations, is external support to establish networks and capacity for communities of practice, as legitimate actors within the peace process.

Bringing forth a queer peacebuilding project is also about highlighting the role of queer peacebuilders. Who are queer peacebuilders today, and who were they historically? Queer peacebuilders may be those who are LGBTQ, and also those who think queerly about what is required to bring peace, who is to provide justice, and what a society should aim for in transition and beyond a return to so-called normalcy prior to the conflict. Queer and trans visions of abolitionism and transformative justice offer some insights into what this type of peacebuilding can look like beyond the strictures of state-based solutions.

Constructing a multivocal[4] queer peace

The special issue charts how subjects normatively associated with social disorder and instability, feature as legitimate participants in national and global struggles for peace. Particular attention is paid to challenging traditional notions and practices of peacebuilding that are linked to dominant gender and sexual norms through the political agency of LGBTQ people in shaping the form and substance of post-conflict social and political conditions. In centering queer narratives, the special issue also seeks to invite a more expansive conceptualization of peacebuilding that accounts for entanglements with enduring legacies of sexuality, gender, and racial inequality. Bringing the margins to the center has been a long-term strategy of queer analysis of the social, political and cultural spheres, and queer peacebuilding continues this task (Fuss 1991). This centering recognizes how the materialization of peace itself is continual and contested and has the transformative impetus to undo legacies of state repression against LGBTQ people.

This issue also documents and analyzes the practices and impacts of queer inclusion efforts, as well as how these translate in meaningful ways for future peacebuilding. Its contribution seeks to inform the practice of local and international actors working to draw attention to LGBTQ individuals and communities in peace, security, and social justice agendas, informed by the Colombian and other contexts. Furthermore, the issue sets out to complicate existing understandings of inclusion and visibility on the one hand, and exclusion and denial on the other, when it comes to gender and sexual diversity in political transitions in order to reveal previously unexplored dynamics of queering peace and security.

The Colombian case is a point of departure for this collection of contributions about queer peacebuilding efforts elsewhere in the world. The 2016 Colombian Peace Agreement has been heralded globally as novel, because of its inclusion of LGBTQ actors in the peacemaking discussions, signaling the first time that a gender-inclusive peace deal has mainstreamed LGBTQ participation. The Colombian case is a relevant one for examining queer peacebuilding not only because the peace deal includes attention to harms against LGBTQ people, but also as a context for considering what transformative justice looks like from the perspective of queer communities and the role of the post-conflict state in this transformation. LGBTQ participation was evident in the gender subcommittee, a group working to ensure gender equality and that women's voices were heard as a dimension of the peace process. Moreover, the differential approach applied within Colombia's Peace Agreement draws attention to social inequality based on sexuality, gender, and/or race as well as highlighting the marginalized experiences of rural women, those living with a disability, and indigenous women. This differential approach makes the Colombian case a unique opportunity for actualizing intersectional feminist and queer commitments in the implementation of the peace agreement serving to empirically ground the concept of queer peace.

However, as the articles in this collection attest, this queer inclusion is also a topic of intense public and political debate and still presents several challenges including in some instances, intense anti-LGBTQ backlash that can occur after progress or successful efforts of queer inclusion. Precisely this happened in Colombia during the 2016 plebiscite on the peace agreement between government and FARC guerrilla (Serrano-Amaya 2019). Drawing further on how queer peacebuilding is understood within and across the contexts of Brazil, Chile, Peru, and South Africa, similar and distinct challenges are also raised.

4 This idea of multivocal queer peace resonates with what Londoño *et al*. (2020) call *paces creativas y polifónicas* —creative and poliphonic plural peace, a peace that comes from intercultural dialogues, narrative, and situated practice/knowledge. In our case, we understand multivocal queer/cuir peace as having multiple meanings, often contradictory and sometimes vociferous. A queer perspective adds to multivocal peace an attempt to cause noise, to incommodate and unsettle, to produce a meaning that may contribute to the harmonious sound of a poliphony.

Such a dialogue across diverse international experiences and environments contributes to understanding the implementation of gender and sexual inclusion objectives. It also explores key concepts of relevance, and their use, in queer peacebuilding initiatives globally. In what follows, authors explore the lived experiences of LGBTQ people as a matter for collective mobilizations. They discuss security issues in international, national, and local milieus, while bringing attention to the problems of an uncritical call for inclusion in peacebuilding advocacy and public policies. Six articles from scholars around the world present their own interrogation of queer peacebuilding in the contexts of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and South Africa.

Diana Paola Garcés-Amaya proposes a queer approach to analyze the emerging notions of LGBTQ people as "victim" in the institutional developments of two very different Colombian transitional justice processes: the demobilization of the paramilitaries through the Justice and Peace Law (2005) and the recent Peace Accord (2016) with the FARC guerrilla group. Engaging official policy documents in dialogue with existing queer literature on the subject, Garcés-Amaya analyzes the conditions for the possibility of naming heterosexual violence and cisprivilege as constitutive of structural and armed violence. Her article illustrates how those notions have been expanding meaning in the transitional justice system in Colombia, making it more complex and more difficult to translate from paper to practice.

Writing on Brazil, Laan Mendes de Barros and Luiz Fernando Wlian analyze the film *Negrum3* to situate alterior perspectives in considerations of queer peace, particularly in societies affected by colonialism, neoliberalism, and state-abetted homo/transphobia. In recognizing how artistic and aesthetic expression can challenge and reimagine inclusive and redemptive approaches to peace, they make a forceful claim for the inclusion of cultural analysis in the study and conceptualization of queer peacebuilding. The contribution expands on the idea of peace as a powerful emancipatory aesthetic experience, and as a site of cultural production.

Through an exploration of migration and sexual diversity politics in post-dictatorship Chile, Caterine Galaz, Fernanda Stang, and Antonia Lara show how political transitions, with their calls for unity and consensus, risk blurring differences and antagonisms. As they argue, core ideas such as "diversity," which may sound useful for inclusion and expansion of democratic projects, can also restrict how difference is allowed to exist. The article develops an argument connecting policies on migration and LGBTQ rights, showing their sometimes separate development and other times, intersection in regimes of governmentality. The authors' contribution criticizes the grand narrative of post-conflict agreement and transition, raising issues relevant to other contexts.

Miyerlandy Cabanzo Valencia and Rebecca Gindele explore the participation of LGBTQ activists in the Colombian 2016 Peace Accord's Territorial Councils of Peace, Reconciliation, and Coexistence. The Colombian case is emblematic in the creation of institutional mechanisms for participatory peacebuilding and the article gives this an in-depth treatment. The authors explore how the Peace Accord allowed LGBTQ populations to engage in an attempted construction of a post-liberal peace but find challenges to full inclusion that would improve the human rights of many. They argue that the implementation of legal innovations is still the biggest challenge, and that this shortcoming risks causing more deception than hope in the promise of a more diverse and expanded idea of peace.

Gabriela Pinheiro considers a queering of the peace and security discourse as mobilized through the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and in the form of South Africa's National Action Plan. Through a queer feminist analysis, Pinheiro considers how policy discourse can be used to harness gendered language and generate possibilities for radical (re)imaginings of peace. The analysis reveals how policy instruments are a hybrid

interaction between the international and the local, with implications for how security, peace, and gender justice —and their subjects— are constituted.

In exploring the advocacy of the late Peruvian queer activist, Gio Infante, in response to homo-transphobic violence during the Peruvian Civil War, Giancarlo Cornejo argues for the importance of travesti and queer political coalitions in Latin America in establishing a queer peace. In close reading Infante's essay "Other Memories", Cornejo acknowledges the political importance of historicizing and mourning travesti lives during the war, while also recognizing the continued violence and insecurity of the present. The author offers a close reading of the late and limited inclusion of trans/homophobic violence in the Peruvian Truth Commission's Report, including some of the later problems in the appropriation and contestation of the document, which relates to works of comparison between the Peruvian case and others.

This special issue emerged as an attempt to document the richness and creativity displayed by LGBTQ activism and committed scholarship in confronting the impacts and consequences of protracted conflicts. The purpose of our intervention is to displace the focus on LGBTQ people as mere victims of human rights violations and instead, uplift their active participation and protagonist role in peacebuilding: as queer peacebuilders. Following the lead of the activism of these queer peacebuilders, the special issue argues against "the politics of not-knowing" (Nordstrom 1999), which ignored forms of harm produced by gendered and sexualised violence. It also struggles with the politics of knowledge that locates the Global South as source of data and the Global North as theory producers (Connell 2007) searching instead for the knowledge produced in and by those located in Southern positions of power/knowledge. Finally, the collection presented, as in this article, navigates inside several regimes of language and theoretical backgrounds, from English, Spanish, Portuguese, and in between; and from South Africa, Colombia, the United Kingdom, and the USA. These navigations, rather that anecdotical, impacted the selection of contributions as a project to exemplify and give shape to a queer/cuir perspective on peace from multiple voices, locations, pasts, and possible futures.

We hope that these contributions will deepen scholarly conceptions of peacebuilding from a queer perspective, as well as expose the radical potential of queer-inclusive peace processes. We intend for these contributions to be only the beginning of academic efforts to construct and conceptualize a queer peace.

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