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Images beyond borders. The production of knowledge about women's activism against the colonial wars

Imagens para além das fronteiras. A produção de conhecimento sobre o ativismo de mulheres contra as guerras coloniais

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Abstract

By focusing on the study of images and other archival sources, this article points out that women's engagement against the colonial wars of the Portuguese Estado Novo occurred on a scale that largely overcame national state borders. In these movements across the globe, a plural scenario of roles and representations of women emerge. In discussing the connection between methodology and epistemology, the article aims to contribute to the debate on the relationship between the production of knowledge about women and the transnational, feminist and decolonial perspectives.

Keywords

Women's activism | colonial wars | images| decolonisation

Resumo

Com base no estúdio de imagens e de outras fontes de arquivo, este artigo argumenta que o envolvimento político das mulheres contra as guerras coloniais do Estado Novo aconteceu numa escala que vai para além das fronteiras

do estado nação. Ao traçar os movimentos das mulheres pelo mundo emerge um panorama plural de muitos papéis e representações de mulheres em luta. A partir da conexão entre metodologia e epistemologia, este artigo pretende contribuir para o debate sobre a relação entre produção de conhecimento sobre as mulheres e uma perspetiva transnacional, feminista e decolonial.

Palavras-chave
mulheres militantes | guerra coloniais | imagens | descolonização

The use of images for studying women's activism

This article uses multiple archive sources to illustrate women's commitment against the Estado Novo and the colonial wars of Portugal (1961-1974). It demonstrates that women's engagement occurred on a transnational dimension and is characterised by the plurality of experiences, representations, and alliances among women.

Images have, for many years, been an important part of historical research, especially for methodologies focused on social and cultural processes and for those that clearly value the importance of oral history, literary archives, memory, visual documents and so forth.[1] By using images as historical sources to address issues concerning the struggle against the regime and the colonial wars, the article aims to contribute to works in which images are analysed and interpreted in order to provide critical knowledge about the topic. Images have been a powerful tool in the construction of imperialist ideologies, and the act of representing the Other has contributed to the perpetuation of racial and hierarchical prejudices that today still influence the reception of images and people's representations (Sealy 2019).

On the other hand, through images scholars have analysed and deconstructed the imperialist ideology, by furnishing critical perspectives on the colonial mission, on the colonised territories, and on the sense of empire. In the historical context of the Portuguese Estado Novo, propaganda was used to represent the wholeness of the regime and that of the empire, propagating ideas about assimilation, the ecumenical mission and "peaceful" effects of colonialism. Thus building an ideological view about Portugal and its "Overseas provinces" as being "multiracial" and "multicontinental" territories. In-depth research into photographs and films in the Portuguese colonial context have

1 Consider for instance the value of visual documents and other sources developed by the feminist postcolonial research method. See: Kolawole, 1999; Srigley, 2018.

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deconstructed these ideas, by showing and re-interpreting the images produced by the Estado Novo dictatorship.[2]

In the following paragraphs, sources are interpreted to value the transnational dimension of the struggle of women against war, thus challenging the narratives where women are absent, or silent, or victims, or do not move and do not struggle.

The focus on transnational relationships among women, on internationalist contents of women's struggles and on the plurality of experiences of their political commitment provides a new interpretation to works that have "feminized Africa" by focusing on Portuguese women who accompanied their husbands on military missions (Calafate Ribeiro 2004). It also takes into account works that have mostly pointed out the relationships and contrapositions between women's experiences — analysed within national borders — and male parties such as the Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português, PCP), the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, FRELIMO), the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, MPLA), the African Party for the Liberation of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde, PAIGC) (Ly 2014; 2015; Melo 2016; Stucki 2018; Galvão-Laranjeiro 2019).

Approaching women's commitment by placing focus on other aspects, like women's movements, roles in political organisations, establishment of political alliances among groups, women's contributions to politics, art, culture, seems to be more adequate in achieving a history of women not overly dependent and shaped by the confrontation with male-dominated organisations. Images convey a plurality of representations of women: guerrilla fighters, mothers portrayed with children, women doing everyday tasks, women at work, activists in demonstrations, politicians travelling abroad, and so forth — images representing the variety of women's experiences during the wars.

From the sources it is evident that women's struggles during this period occurred on a scale that overcame the national state borders and that can be defined as international, internationalist, global or transnational. The use of these terms is in line with the historical processes and historical interpretations and scholars who have focused on the scale of women's interventions and their political implications. Juliet Mitchell's pioneering study on relationships between women, feminist theory and socialism has interpreted the international character — if not in the organisation, then in the identification and sharing of goals — as the distinguishing character of women's liberation movements born in the second half of the twentieth century (Mitchell 1971, 11).[3] The workers' associations that characterised the history of socialism until World War II have been popular with the name "First International" (1864-1876), "Second International"

2 I am especially referring to works by Filipa Lowndes Vicente, 2014, and Maria do Carmo Piçarra, 2015.

3 Mitchell proposed a schematic conceptualisation of the debate between radical feminists and abstract socialism, to demonstrate the limits of both the development of a feminist consciousness and of the scientific socialist analysis, therefore pointing to the necessary conjunction of the two processes (pp. 94-96).

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(1889-1916), "Third International" (1919-1943) — and the most important women's association born at the end of the war called Women International Democratic Federation (WIDF). Moreover, since the mid-nineteenth century, the left-wing movement has been influenced by internationalist aims with the establishment of relationships beyond the national state limits, and by the alliances among left-wing groups — like anarchist, socialist, Marxist. Although historiography has mostly linked internationalism to workers' organisations, such as political parties and trade-unions, this does not mean that women's engagement has been less internationalist. In sum, the terms "international" and "internationalist" refer to the relationships between national states as well as to shared goals and political aims. These terms take into account the history of socialism and socialist organisations, and also refer to women's circulation at conferences and institutional meetings, since, at least, the establishment of the United Nations Women's International Year, in 1975[4].

The terms "global" and "transnational" have implied, in recent decades, an epistemological challenge to Eurocentric and methodologically ethnocentric narratives that are based on national state borders. The two terms do not refer to the history of the entire world, nor to comparative analysis, but are rather focused on circulation, networks, exchanges, the relational aspect of historical phenomena, entanglements, flows and encounters. Studies centred on the global dimension of feminisms — explicitly written in the plural — have stressed the various dimensions of an extensive circulation that not only involves people and their actions, but also ideas, objects, fashion, dreams, feelings and songs. These contributions have shed light on movement, the crossing of spaces and borders — physical and cultural—, the encounters, the celebration and memory as tools for travelling across time and space, all elements that deserve to be given further value.[5] Transnational refers to movements across borders, but also to the conceptualisation of the other scales of activism (local, regional, national, global) in a transnational discourse, revealing that using transnational implies not only a description, but also the construction and shaping of the movement.[6] Moreover, the term transnational, more than global, at least in feminist studies, is linked to intersectional analysis, to feminist political alliances in an anti-imperialistic and anti-capitalist sense and to cross-cultural practices for decolonial purposes.[7] By underlining the transnational dimension of historical phenomena, the article refers mostly to practices and theories that have overcome material and

4 On the International Women's Year and the interpretation of the encounters between First World and Third World women and feminists see Olcott, 2017. For a transnational perspective on Women's International Year see the ongoing project coordinated by Natalia Jarska at Complutense University, "International Women´s Year in 1975 and the UN Decade of Women. Reception, impact and legacies".

5 Among the most recent publications consider Delap, 2020.

6 See: Desai, 2005. The author also explains that for some authors transnational has been one more term, after international and global, while for others it implies different political meanings. Desai is aware that in some activism contexts — she mentions the case of Latin American Feminists at the *Feminist Dialogues* in Brazil, in 2005 — the use of the term is contested.

7 See: C. Talpade Mohanty, 2003.

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immaterial borders, to circulation and encounters among women, beyond national state borders, and to a theoretical conceptualisation of history interested in left-wing social changes, and in the transformative ideas of feminist and decolonial projects.

The theoretical reflection on historical ideas and narratives has been particularly important in projects that in the last decade have focused on issues concerning women. These studies have not only strongly contributed to historical knowledge about women's activism, but have also furnished alternative proposals to the conceptualisation of historical frameworks; by rethinking the time and space boundaries of the research, new periodisation and new focuses have emerged.[8]

The relationships between methodology and the production of knowledge

Feminist studies, women's history, gender studies and transnational perspectives are some of the areas that in recent decades have most contributed to innovations in historical knowledge. By enhancing the understanding of the past, these perspectives have also stimulated a discourse on the present, addressing the issue of the relationship between the researcher, the object of research, and the political implications of producing knowledge. In challenging the conceptualisation of the national state borders, the androcentric visions of the world and the established White narratives, scholars and activists have not only created alternative conceptions of history, but they have also created new epistemologies.

"Gaze", "eyes", "vision", "perspective", "look" have long been recurrent terms used in the elaboration of feminist epistemologies of knowledge. Laura Mulvey, in her pioneering contribution titled "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema" (Mulvey 1975), deconstructed the pleasure of looking at women by way of a psychoanalytical analysis. Donna Haraway (1988) elaborated a proposal focused on ethical and political implications of knowledge, on feminist objectivity as being local and partial, and always in connection with other forms of knowledge. In one of the chapters of her essay "The Persistence of Vision" (Haraway 1988, 581), she questions the "gaze from nowhere" to argue about situated knowledge. Some years before, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her essay "Under the Western Eyes", posited her critique of Western feminist production on the Other, in particular on *Third World Woman* (Talpade Mohanty 1984). In the collection called "Black Looks" (2015), hooks demonstrates how the gaze is political and how the act of looking can be a manifestation of resistance and subversion.

8 In terms of global and transnational women's activism, in different contexts, consider in particular De Hann 2013, Bonfiglioli 2016, Donert 2017, Ghodsee 2019. I am also referring to topics concerning women's networks in: Brazzoduro 2020. For the discussion on periodisation and focus on space-time boundaries I am grateful to all the researchers of the group involved in the project "Women's Rights and Global Socialism: Feminism, Communism, and Nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World", coordinated by Celia Donert. I am particularly grateful to Allison Drew, Celia Donert, Mallarika Sinha Roy, for their contributions.

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As these — and other — feminist contributions point out the gaze is neither universal, nor neutral; it is always located somewhere. Feminist theory is not accomplished, nor univocal and for instance the questioning of the production of knowledge on non-White women is born of feminist studies. Mostly referring to the evolution of second-wave feminism in the US, Obioma Nnaemeka (2005) furnished an in-depth demonstration of the necessary scrutiny of the conceptualisation, by feminist scholarship, of marginalised women, particularly African women. The author has established a direct link between the construction, the teaching, and the dissemination of knowledge of the Other and the promotion — or the undermining — of the alliances among women.

The relationships between Western culture, racialised and marginalised people and knowledge all problematise the gaze. The acknowledgement of the existence of a hegemonic white culture implies a necessary recognition of this very culture's components, such as — among others — eurocentrism, hierarchisation of peoples, racism, violence, ignorance. This culture, across time, has perfected its tools and justifications to muting other people, whose histories of enslavement, oppression, and marginalisation still find no place within its narrative. Scholars, artists, writers, performers, activists, poets, and so forth have, in different forms, explained the mechanisms through which people are muted and their histories cancelled. All in all, these works add up to the evidence of continuous resistance and struggle against these processes.[9]

Giving visibility to other narratives as opposed to the continuous whitening of history is, presently, the focus of numerous Black feminist movements, mostly in contexts where the feminist wave has been particularly active and strong during the last few years. In a recent work, Djamila Ribeiro (2019) builds on ideas developed by Patricia Collin Hills at the end of the nineties,[10] arguing that thinking about the "locus of enunciation" ('*lugar de fala*') breaks the silence of people who, over time, were relegated to a subaltern position. Ribeiro connects this ethical attitude to the idea of a decolonised knowledge, basing her arguments mostly on contributions by Linda Alcoff (2016). Proposals concerning the decolonisation of knowledge have unpacked the "coloniality of power", a concept first forged by Aníbal Quijano (1991; 2000) and have stimulated new epistemologies of knowledge, as demonstrated in the works of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses (2008). Feminist perspectives largely contributed to the debate on the possibilities of a decolonised knowledge by discussing, for instance, the relationships between coloniality and gender, as can be seen in María Lugones's contributions (Lugones 2008). The link between gender perspective, feminisms and reflection on coloniality has been strengthened in the last few years, thereby broadening the debate on the pertinence of using the category of "gender" and on the intersection

9 Consider, for instance: hooks (1984), Lorde (1984), Gonzalez (1988), Carneiro (1985; 2001), Anzaldúa (1987), Evaristo (1990; 2011), Kilomba (2019 [2008]), Condé (1986).

10 On feminist standpoint see: Collins 1997.

between feminism and decolonisation (Miñoso, Correal, Muñoz, 2014). Proposals and processes on the decolonisation of knowledge have also implied a reflection on the relationship between the decolonisation of bodies and minds and the construction of a new hegemony (in a Gramscian sense), a decolonial political project[11] for instance as in Catherine Walsh's important analysis (2009; 2020).

The awareness of the relevance of feminist epistemologies and decolonial purposes is considered crucial in an article that focuses on women's engagement during the colonial wars, but not because of the simplistic equation "if we talk about colonial wars, we must quote the decolonial" or "if women are implied, gender and feminism are implied." Why, beyond the formal writing of an article, are these references (and others missing here) fundamental for a history of women's activism during the colonial wars? Because Feminist epistemologies and decolonial perspectives have long questioned globally accepted narratives constructed around gender-blindness, Eurocentric, androcentric perspectives and White visions of the world, and by doing this they have stimulated new interests of research and new perspectives on history.

If the focus of this article are the transnational encounters among women, their political actions, the plurality of their experiences, this is a result of two essentials reasons: the activism of transnational left-wing movements oriented to anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, feminist goals and the development of feminist and decolonial epistemologies. Without the political actions of movements and without the development of these epistemologies — no matter the level of accordance with political struggles or with feminist and decolonial narratives — a focus on a transnational and plural level of women's commitment during Portugal's colonial wars would be unlikely to emerge. The political actions of movements and the theoretical proposals on the production of knowledge are part of the same reality, oriented to political projects for social changes and transformation. It is difficult to imagine the interest in women's transnationalism — the object of this article — arising without existing practices, movements and theories that have challenged the narratives that have excluded women, and mostly non-White women, from the frame, or that have positioned them where their political intervention was hardly visible and their transformative impact on society decidedly ignored.

11 In some languages, like Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, two terms are involved: one is spelled with an "s", like the Spanish *descolonización* (decolonization); and one without the "s", like the Spanish *decolonialidad* (decoloniality). Though the two processes are not different, the second term moves beyond the transformation of something that exists already and towards the re-foundation or reconstruction of totally different conditions of existence. See Walsh (2009, 55).

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Women producing images

Women have produced images about the colonial wars and the liberation movements. Photographs, documentaries, fictions, images were born from women's movements across the geographical spaces and from their encounters with people who were struggling. The process has involved women from different nationalities, with different paths as activists, photographers, or directors, and, of course, each with a different gaze on the representation of the war and the fight against it.

Augusta Conchiglia is Italian and her work as film director and photographer supported and promoted the struggle of the Angolan people.[12] During her first trip to Angola, in 1968, with director Stefano De Stefani, Conchiglia, besides photographing extensively, she directed two documentaries, one of which was presented in Algiers, in 1969, at the Pan-African Festival (Piçarra 2018, 177). In 1970, the two film directors went back to Angola with a larger crew to shoot yet another film, inspired by *The Battle of Algiers* (*La Battaglia di Algeri*). Maria do Carmo Piçarra has accurately reconstructed the different steps of their work, the splitting of the team into two groups, which enabled the production of two other films, *A Proposito dell'Angola* (Concerning Angola) by Augusta Conchiglia and Stefano de Stefani, and *La Vittoria è Certa* (Victory is Certain) by Lionello Massobrio, with Randi Krokaa (Piçarra 2018, 178-180). This docufiction features many women, MPLA and OMA[13] activists. In addition, two women worked in the shooting of the film. Randi, of Norwegian origin, is the main character: she was the narrator, but she also photographed, spoke with guerrilla fighters, visited the Ngangula camp, while Massobrio was filming. Bella, of Angolan origin, is an MPLA militant and recorded the sound — she had taken a course in the Soviet Union, where she learnt to receive and send coded messages. There is a moment, in the film, when Bella and Randi are filmed while they are talking and relaxing with a small group of fighters; Bella is recording the audio and tells Randi that it is a good moment to take photos, thus, right before sunset, Randi starts to photograph. Bella and Randi are activists from different countries and with different experiences and they both shared the same goal: producing a documentary about the liberation struggle. The film sequences in which they appear together, though not explicitly framed within a formal political alliance between women's groups, constitute one of the countless pieces of plural collaboration among women, in the frame of the struggle against the colonial wars — in this specific case, thanks to their skills: one as reporter and the other as audio technician.

Other examples can be found in the almost unknown films of Sarah Maldoror,

12 ARMAL, *Guerra di popolo in Angola*. Preface by Joyce Lussu, photographs by Augusta Conchiglia, Lerici, 1969.

13 OMA was born in 1962 inside MPLA. Throughout the colonial wars it published periodical news on the struggles of Angolan women. See: *O papel da mulher da Revolução angolana*, n/d. AHD, UI 7512: Organização da Mulher em Angola; see also Paredes (2015).

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which, as recently proposed by Leroy and Schefer, should be "restored and resignified in the perspective of a feminine and feminist counter-narrative on revolutionary cinema" (Leroy and Schefer 2021, 168). Maldoror's cinema is transnational on multiple dimensions: her own biography, the topics addressed in her films, the political messages, the materiality of the shooting and production of the films, and their circulation. *Sambizanga*, her film on the fictional character Maria and her involvement in the Angolan liberation movement, distributed in Europe and in the Unites States, was remarkable for three reasons: its pioneer role as an African film production, its inspiration on the national liberation movements, and the adoption of a feminine point of view (Piçarra 2017, 25). The above-mentioned scholars, when working on Sarah Maldoror's cinema, have included various images in their writings: portraits of her, photographs from the shooting sets, film frames. These images place Sarah Maldoror and her films in different countries and places, represent the multiple forms of militant activism and engaged cinema, and refer to different representations of women's involvement in the resistance and struggle against the Portuguese colonial wars.

The distribution and circulation of Maldoror's films testify to some of the numerous ways that ideas and objects have circulated worldwide. Sarah Maldoror's presence at the International Festival Women and Film (Toronto, 1973), as attested by a postcard[14] addressed to her husband and MPLA leader Mário de Andrade, is a testimony of the importance of relating women's history within a transnational dimension — encounters and the migration of people, films, images, and women's political ideas.

Other women photographers travelled to Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique. With their cameras, they represented moments of struggle and everyday life. Bruna Polimeni mostly worked on Amílcar Cabral's political activity in Guinea and Cape Verde. Sent as a reporter to the Khartoum Conference (Sudan, 1969) by left wing newspaper *Mondo Operaio*, she formed her initial contacts with the leaders of the African liberation movements. The following year, during the conference organised in Rome in solidarity with the people of the Portuguese colonies, Polimeni organised, with Cabral, her first travel to the liberated zones of Guinea.

The work of yet another photographer and journalist, Stephanie Urdang (1979; 1989), is of specific interest for this article since she dedicated her research to women in Guinea and Mozambique. Her images represent the multidimensional militancy of women, who are photographed during their political activity, in ceremonies, in moments of rest, and so forth. Urdang, born in South Africa and an immigrant in the United States, had been engaged in anti-apartheid movements since the end of the sixties, working in the Southern African Committee in New York, as she recalls in her book on Guinean women (Urdang 1979). In her case, the transnational aspect is manifested not

14 (1973), Fundação Mário Soares — Arquivo Mário Pinto de Andrade, http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_82927 (2021-1-25).

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so much in a political-institutional alliance, rather emerging on her return to Africa and the encounters she had with Guinean and Mozambican women[15].

Margarida Paredes, Portuguese by birth, abandoned her studies at the University in Belgium, in 1974, to join the MPLA as a guerrilla fighter. Years later, as a researcher, she published a book on Angolan women during the armed struggle and the images portrayed in her book mainly focus on these years. In addition to printing their portraits, Paredes has included interviews with and accounts of ethnographic work among women guerrilla fighters who shared their past and present struggles with the researcher (Paredes 2015).

Women in the images

Transnational relationships and contacts occurred on multiple occasions, on different scales, with different aims and in the context of different levels of organisation, for instance through seminars and congresses organised by the Women International Democratic Federation (WIDF) or by the Pan-African Women's Conference, which received delegates from all countries. Other images open up to a transnational space wherein women from the liberation movements of Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique meet at large conferences and take advantage of the opportunity to interact with women from all over the world. This is the case with the photograph portraying the participation of Francisca Pereira, leader of UDEMU and PAIGC, at a conference given by Angela Davis, in which women from the entire globe participated.[16] This is also highlighted in the article about the seminar of Arab-African Women, which was published together with pictures of the delegates,[17] and in propaganda brochures authored by women's groups, namely the images included in the information bulletin published by OMA (Quarterly Issue of 1971), wherein Angolan delegates are pictured in Dar-Er-Salaam next to women from all over the world, on the occasion of the X Conference of All African Women.[18] In these photographs, women are attending institutional events such as conferences and seminars: they share the same space and, the observer supposes, they are debating common issues. The photographs prove not only that women have travelled to join other women, but also that they moved within different scales of political engagement, by participating in organisations born out of national contexts, as well as in international organisations that have gathered women from different countries.

WIDF's publications reproduced images taken during the meetings of women from all over the world, including delegates' portraits. This large production of images,

15 Michèle Manceaux, French, travelled to Mozambique to collect the stories of Mozambican women, on which she published a book, in French and Portuguese. See: Manceaux 1975; 1976.

16 (1970), "Francisca Pereira durante uma conferência com Angela Davis", FMS, http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_43603 (2021-1-20).

17 Argel, March 4th-6th 1974. AHD, UI 7769, I Seminário internacional das mulheres árabes e africanas (recortes jornais).

18 Organização das Mulheres de Angola PIDE/DGS Ac Sc SR 1446/62 UI 3195.

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besides being a testimony of the presence of women to the events, provides a representation of what was a truly global organisation, with its discussions and debates, efforts and troubles, and the joy that accompanied congresses and seminars. These aspects are part and parcel of transnational political alliances between women and women's groups in the period of the colonial wars against the Portuguese Estado Novo, a time when the conditions imposed by the dictatorship — including the fact that many women had to remain underground and taking into account the ongoing wars — did not ease communication and travel.

The archive collected by the Portuguese political police PIDE and other control organisms of the regime contains documents about women's political activities. This archive, organised in trial folders, includes pictures collected with other personal belongings at the moment of incarceration, as well as photos taken at PIDE headquarters for identification purposes. Susana de Sousa Dias' documentary cinema (*Natureza Morta*, 2005; *48,* 2010) has used the photographs taken by the political police and combined them with oral history and memory into a narrative focused on the political prisoners. In doing so, it offers a different perspective to that created by the Estado Novo discourse, challenging the tendency to forget or of "silencing the past".

Passport-size images of prisoners were also used in international awareness campaigns, for instance by WIDF, which used them on various occasions calling on women all around the world to stand in solidarity with imprisoned Portuguese women or those who were part of the underground resistance.[19] Through these campaigns, the faces of political prisoners crossed Portugal's borders. This is the case of Maria Luísa da Costa Dias, one of the founders of the Women's Democratic Movement (Movimento Democrático de Mulheres — MDM), an organisation of Portuguese women founded at the end of the sixties. When, after two stints in prison, Dias could travel for militant actions to denounce the regime's crimes, various newspapers and magazines published her photographs. During her travels within Latin America, in 1965/1966, various newspapers published articles about her conferences and meetings using passport-size images of her face, thus creating a strong contrast between those decontextualised images devoid of space-time references, and the militant action that she was developing, namely through encounters, relationships and transnational movements. In other cases, the newspapers accompanied the information about the conference given by the "ambassador of political prisoners" with an image taken at the previous conference, on the same tour. It was the case, for instance, of the Brazilian *Portugal Democrático* that opened the December 1965 issue with a large title dedicated to Maria Luísa da Costa Dias, "the voice from fascist prisons" who was moving Latin America. The article consists of a lengthy text and a photo of the Portuguese activist taken in São Paulo a few

19 PIDE/DGS SC SR 51/54 Pt 3

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days before, during a conference. Maria Luísa da Costa Dias is represented while she is talking; she is sitting, her head is slightly bent to the left, her right hand is making a forward gesture, the left one is on the table. Unfortunately, the photographs do not represent the audience, but all the articles, in different newspapers, underline the international solidarity developed around the visit of Maria Luísa da Costa Dias to Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay. In Uruguay, the visit was organised by the group Unión de las Mujeres Portuguesas (Union of Portuguese women) based in Montevideo, that during her imprisonment had mobilised people for her liberation.[20]

Some biographies provide exceptional examples that demonstrate how the women's movements and their political engagement occurred in line with the historical processes and political aims rather than in accordance with their nationality. The biography of Joyce Lussu reflects the revolutionary circulation of people and ideals after World War II. Lussu was an antifascist militant, *partigiana* in the Italian Resistance, poet, writer, translator, and an activist in the Peace World Movement. She explained her engagement in anticolonial struggles as the awareness that other *partigiani*, in other parts of the world, were conducting right and necessary wars, started because the Nazi-fascist roots were not completely extinct, as proven by racism, colonialism and exploitation supported by the armies.[21] Fascism and colonialism, conceived as expressions of the same phenomena, influenced her political involvement, initially in the Italian Resistance and then in African national liberation movements, where she embraced the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle's dimensions.[22] Lussu visited the three countries that were at war against the Portuguese colonial army. There she established relationships with militants from the liberation movements, and she travelled; in 1966, she was in Guinea-Bissau, as attested in a letter to Cabral written by Lucette de Andrade.[23] Joyce Lussu's images reveal a relentless border crossing. Numerous images place her "far away", "abroad", "travelling", or in the company of politicians of the liberation movements.[24] In other images, neither the place portrayed, nor the presence of other people — face close-ups, for instance — directly create a scenario conceivable as transnational. Yet these images do refer to a transnational level of interpretation, since this was the horizon of her life and the oeuvre, both characterised by the importance given to encounters and solidarity among people. In 1966, Lussu founded the Association

20 PIDE, SC, SR 1699/51, NT 2696

21 A recent analysis of Italian anticolonialism emphasises how Joyce Lussu's accounts exemplify the idea — in *partigiane* memoirs — of continuity, similarity and convergence between the Italian Resistance and liberation struggles in Africa (Russo 2020, IV).

22 According to some interpretations, Lussu was among the first European who have understood the anti-imperialist level of the anti-colonial struggle. See Marco Albano, in Plaisant, 2003. For anti-fascism and anti-colonialism as part of the same thing, as the will of transforming the world from within, see Srivastava 2018.

23 FMS, http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_35059 (2021-1-19). Lucette de Andrade was a PAIGC militant and Amílcar Cabral's sister in law. For more information on her and other Cape-Verdian women activists see Benoliel Coutinho (2020).

24 See the front cover of one of her biographies, when Lussu is portrayed in 1969 with Oscar Monteiro, one of the representatives of FRELIMO.

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for the Relationships with African Liberation Movements (Associazione per i Rapporti con i Movimenti Africani di Liberazione — ARMAL), with the double aim of supporting their struggles and making them visible in Italy. A 1969 publication, edited by ARMAL and prefaced by Lussu, consists of dialogues with Augusta Conchiglia's images.

Among the women who have travelled the globe and whose faces have been used in campaigns to support the political struggles, but also as a way to demonstrate the force and history of the various groups, some represent women who had since died. Indeed, OMA brochures often published those images, namely the faces of Deolinda Rodrigues, Engrácia dos Santos, Irene Cohen, Lucrécia Paim and Teresa Afonso, and a group of women captured by the Angolan Peoples' Union (União da Populações de Angola — UPA), tortured in a concentration camp and murdered.[25] Their faces are accompanied by a text with their biographies and the history of their capture and death, but also of the celebration of March 2nd as the day of Angolan women, in their honour. In the same brochure, beyond celebrating its revolutionary heroines, OMA dedicated an entire page to Angela Davis, publishing a photograph of her along with her history, in the context of the global campaign for her liberation. These representations reveal a crossroad, produced by transnational militancy, between life and death, celebration and action, Africa and North America, Angolan women's struggles and the struggle of Davis and her comrades. The five heroines also appear in a photograph with Limbânia Jiménez Rodriguez (Nancy) and other Cuban women, who were part of the Cuban team sent to contribute to the military training of Angolan women. Years afterwards, Rodriguez dedicated the book *Heroínas de Angola* (1985) to the Angolan fighters (Paredes 2015, 122).

The Mozambican Women Organization — OMM[26] established the Day of the Mozambican Woman as April 7th — the anniversary of Josina Machel's passing, leader of OMM and FRELIMO, in 1971. Her smiling face, her body language marching while engaged in the war are often reproduced in brochures printed by FRELIMO in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, from where they travelled throughout the globe. The pictures of Josina Machel and other Mozambican women circulated in militant committees that supported the liberation movements globally.[27] These images are not war photographs in the classical sense: there are no dead bodies (all the images celebrating dead women represent them alive), there is no atrocity. The war is present, but is not represented through attacks, injuries, mutilation, violation, or death. On the contrary, militants used them to show the vital presence of women and their connections, with the goal of underlining women's political ideas and connected struggles. However, this does not cancel the

25 OMA, n. 1, 1971, PT_AHS_ICS_AHS_MNA_59.

26 Founded at the beginning of the seventies within the FRELIMO, the organisation replaced the Feminine Detachment. The first OMM conference took place in March 1973.

27 See, for instance, the brochure, in English, 'Anniversary of the death of Josina Machel', printed and distributed by Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Portugal's African Colonies (TCLPAC): http://www.mozambiquehistory.net/people/josina/anniversary_pamphlet.pdf

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pain, and one should keep in mind what remains out of focus and out of the frame: in this case the violence of the dictatorship and the colonial wars.

Conclusions

Together with more traditional sources, images of women within the context of the Portuguese colonial wars provide evidence of two main historical processes: first, women's struggles have been transnational and, second, they have created and nurtured long term political alliances among women. These alliances and their legacies, in turn, have often been more important for women than other issues, including women's emancipation in the framework of confrontation with men or male parties. More than traditional sources, images question the gaze of observers and have, for many years, stimulated feminist contributions to the existing links between perspective, knowledge, political intervention. The attention to the ways and implications of looking has shed light not only on the "abuses of gaze", but also on the agency and power of spectatorship, and on the spectators' questioning, problematization, evaluation of images. The development of an "oppositional gaze" (hooks 2015) enabled spectators — black female spectators — to resist white supremacist narratives, to deconstruct and struggle against the dominant ways of looking and, by doing so, to create new practices. The awareness of the non-neutrality of gazes and knowledge has implied a reflection on the definitions and variations of knowledge itself. This happened in strict relation to epistemological turns directed at decolonial projects, with their political engagement, which in turn links to the topic of this article, women's intervention against the colonial wars.

The relevance of political alliances of women in the past is related to the proportions of solidarity and alliances in the present. Mostly initiated in the new millennium, feminist practices have taken on a transnational scale. More than ever before, alliances among women worldwide are extensive and visible. The circulation of "Un violador en tu camino" (A rapist in your way), a flash mob created by Chilean feminists, and now performed at a global level, exemplifies the dimensions of a practice that immediately overcame national state borders. The existence, in several contexts, of collectives carrying out the coverage of feminist struggles, is one among other possible examples of the significant level of attention that women and feminist group have paid to the production and circulation of information and images in the context of political engagement. In Argentina, the network called "Mujeres Audiovisuales" (Audiovisual women)[28] carried out the collaborative coverage of struggles for decriminalisation of abortion. In Spain, Teresa Font and other directors engaged in the production of the collective film *Yo decido, el tren de la libertad* (2014), filmed during the struggle against the reform of abortion

28 https://www.plataformamua.com.ar/. I am grateful to Paz Bustamante for letting me know about this platform.

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rights.[29] Women's struggles and feminist practices — including the relevant production of images — are nowadays circulating on a transnational scale and they are strongly connected with theoretical reflections on the production of knowledge, as well as proposals for transforming the world through an antiracist and decolonial way. In this scenario, to not mention the transnational, feminist, decolonial contributions, whose history I have sketched here, rather than an epistemological choice among others, is to forget part of the history that was unleashed by feminist groups.

Other questions have accompanied the process of writing. To what extent is it reasonable to expect the academic space of debate — seminars, journals, editions, conferences, with all their variations and differences — as potentially transformative (and transformed)? And, academically, what practices — such as organising events, writing, publishing, applying to funding, teaching, and so forth — need to be scrutinised? In different contexts, activists and scholars have focused on the strength and the risks of institutionalisation and academisation of feminist studies. Starting with a reflection of her own experience, bell hooks has shown how the legitimation of feminist studies has allowed, for instance, the transmission of feminist theory and the development of feminist consciousness, but also how some obstacles to the advancement of feminist thought have emerged, regarding, for instance, the creation of elitist practices of dialogue, or the weakening of the links between academia and the outside realm, or feminist thinkers and feminist movements.[30] Moreover, in the twenty-first century the impressive production — in terms of quantity, quality, and circulation — of feminist studies, women's history, gender studies, have stimulated research and debate on the implications of the visibility of these contributions, inside the academy, through internet and in society[31].

This article ends with the hope of having stimulated the reflection on the strong links, past and present, between women's alliances, feminist consciousness, social intervention and the production of knowledge.

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29 Jesús Ramé has presented the work by Teresa Font in the framework of the encounters of History and Images Lab, IHC, March 2021.

30 Consider, for instance, the chapter "Feminist education for critical consciousness" in bell hooks. 2014.

31 See, for instance, the chapter "Na Academia" in Buarque de Hollanda, 2018. In the field of historical studies, a project led by Karen Offen and Cheng Yan in recent years has been dedicated to comparative analysis, in different countries, of the institutionalisation of women's history, feminist and gender studies. See Offen, Yan, 2018.

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