

What Difference Does Feminist Solidarity Make?

Sebastian Garbe

University of Applied Sciences Fulda

sebastian.garbe@sk.hs-fulda.de

Abstract:

At the center of this volume edited by Janet M. Conway, Pascale Dufour, and Dominique Mason are experiences of cross-border, feminist, and antiracist solidarity in the 21st century. By focusing on the very different positionalities of the Involved actors, this book showcases how difference is produced and negotiated within transnational feminist mobilizations and why an Intersectional-feminist lens on solidarity makes an important conceptual difference within solidarity studies.

Welchen Unterschied macht feministische Solidarität?

German Abstract:

Im Mittelpunkt dieses Sammelbandes stehen Erfahrungen mit grenzüberschreitender, feministischer und antirassistischer Solidarität im 21. Jahrhundert. Indem es sich auf die sehr unterschiedlichen Positionierungen der beteiligten Akteur_innen fokussiert, zeigt dieses Buch, wie Differenz innerhalb transnationaler feministischer Mobilisierungen produziert und verhandelt wird und warum eine intersektional-feministische Sichtweise auf Solidarität einen wichtigen konzeptionellen Unterschied innerhalb der Solidaritätsforschung macht.

How to cite:

Garbe, Sebastian: „What Difference Does Feminist Solidarity Make? [Review of: Conway, Janet M., Dufour, Pascale and Dominique Mason (eds.): Cross-Border Solidarities in Twenty-First Century Contexts – Feminist Perspectives and Activist Practices. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021.]“ In: KULT_online 66 (2022).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22029/ko.2022.1331>



What Difference Does Feminist Solidarity Make?

Sebastian Garbe

University of Applied Sciences Fulda

Conway, Janet M., Dufour, Pascale and Dominique Mason (eds.). *Cross-Border Solidarities in Twenty-First Century Contexts – Feminist Perspectives and Activist Practices*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021. 240 pages, 105,00 USD. ISBN: 978-1-5381-5769-5.

With several cases of transnational feminist mobilization and solidarity-building from the last decades as a point of departure in, this book “engages the question of organizing across political borders and across spatialized differences, in a variety of places, and at a range of scales” and “addresses conceptual debates about solidarities as socio-spatial praxes” (p. viii). The contributions of this volume share a common theoretical and empirical interest: on a theoretical and conceptual level, they critique that “[i]n the literature on transnational social movements, solidarity usually is undefined and untheorized” (p. x). On an empirical level they look at a variety of transnational feminist struggles between Eastern and Western Europe, mobilizations around the World March of Women, as well as decolonial and anti-extractivist protests in Latin America. In all of these settings, the authors interrogate “how solidarities are being understood and constructed in a variety of cross-border struggles, and for what ends, under twenty-first century conditions” (p. x).

The framework of the volume is laid down by Janet M. Conway, Dominique Masson, Khalil Habrih, and Pascale Dufour in a conceptual and thematic introduction. They critique the traditional and hegemonic theoretizations of solidarity that usually ignore gender or race as an “axis of subalternity, difference, or conflict” (p. xiv) and make the case for “intersectional and transnational feminist reformulations of solidarity [which] foreground projects for racial and gender justice within an anti-colonial frame” (p. xx). Finally, the introduction provides a conceptual lens for the subsequent contributions “through which cross-border solidarities are currently being imagined and undertaken: counter-hegemonic, intersectional-feminist, and pluriversal” (p. xxiv).

The first section engages with the transnationalization of feminist, gay, and lesbian solidarities between Eastern and Western Europe. In a historical chapter on the geopolitics of women's rights between 1975 and 1995, Ioana Cîrstocea convincingly shows how the idea of a 'global feminism' became "one of the privileged settings for producing the (post)Cold War ideological order" (p. 22) in which certain feminist struggles and traditions, e.g. from the Global South and (post)socialist countries, were dismissed while others were "performed as universal (here 'global')" (p. 23). Next, Agnès Chetaille vividly analyses the tensions, conflicts, and inequalities of transnational solidarity building between Polish lesbian and gay organizations and their Western European allies in the context of the political crisis that the death of the former Polish pope John Paul II created in the country.

The next section engages with three local, yet transnational and translocal expressions of feminist solidarity-building as a political practice across differences. In reference to transnational solidarizations with anti-extractivist struggles in Peru, Dominique Masson and Anabel Paulos propose a compelling conceptual framework of "solidarity as a praxis made of three interrelated types of practices – discursive, material, and spatial" (p. 62) and discuss the limits of feminist allyship when it comes to indigenous difference. In an innovative way, Renata Motta and Marco Antonio Teixeira demonstrate the importance of understanding a social movement based on its own categories. They show how a movement of rural women in today's Brazil, the *Marcha das Marginadas*, organize difference and commonalities through the endogenous category of 'rurality.' In a thought-provoking chapter, Johanna Leinius takes us back to two case studies in Peru and discusses the (im)possibilities of articulating and negotiating difference within transnational and intersectional feminist solidarity.

The last section critically discusses "the multiple and conflicting power dynamics ubiquitous in the processes of conceptual translation" (p. 119–120) within transnational solidarity networks. First, Geneviève Pagé showcases how such dynamics complicate the conceptual translation of 'intersectionality' by the Montreal feminist movement in Canada. Second, Nathalie Lebon discusses the "missteps and failures in conceptual translation" of the indigenous feminist concept *cuerpo-territorio* and how they reveal "deeper differences in positionality among network participants" (p. 135–137). The volume closes with an inspiring afterword by Manisha Desai who invites transnational feminist analytic to engage in conversation with non-

Eurocentric epistemologies such as *Ubuntu* or *Sarva Vishwa Kutumb* as well as with decolonial, subaltern-postcolonial and postsocialist feminisms.

The volume confirms a rising scholarly interest in solidarity studies and stands out due to its innovative engagement with cross-border solidarities from feminist, intersectional, antiracist, and decolonial perspectives. The authors provide exciting case studies and develop critical conceptual frameworks for the study of solidarity, which in other investigations too often remain rather abstract yet undertheorized. This book is a valuable contribution to transnational feminist and social movement studies and a much-needed intersectional-feminist landmark in theoretical, conceptual, and empirical debates on solidarity.