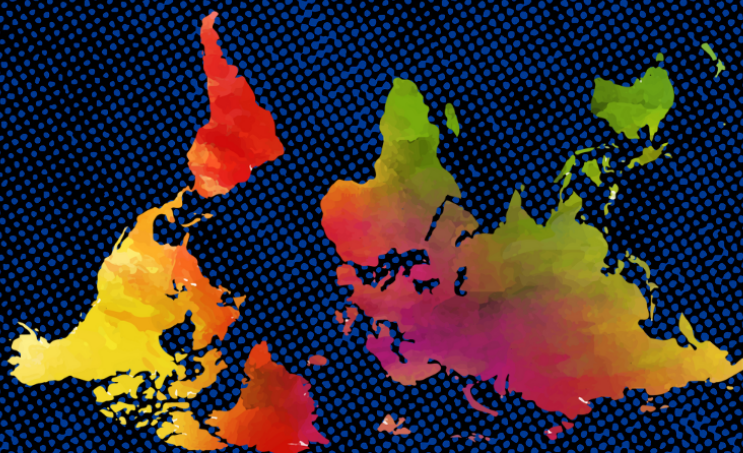


Sexual Politics from August to November 2022

December 2022



Preface

Due to its relevance in Brazil and the rest of the world, we rescheduled the publication of our newsletter to be able to include the results of the Brazilian elections that, thanks to the votes of the poorest people, women, the black population, and indigenous peoples, mean the end of the neo-fascist threat that had haunted Brazil since 2019. This postponement also allows us to invite our audience to read our newest publication: the e-book “[Antigender Policies in Latin America in the Pandemic Context](#)”, which presents the results of the second research phase of the Gender and Politics in Latin America project. Our launch debate with Tomás Ojeda, Almudena Rodríguez and Françoise Girard is also [available on Youtube](#). Tomás Ojeda (University of Brighton) adapted his intervention into an [article that we are pleased to publish on our website](#). Françoise Girard also published a generous [review of the e-book in the latest number of her newsletter](#).

For the Spanish-speaking readers, we also recommend the [debate](#) “Changes in the Latin

American political scene and challenges for the agendas of gender, sexuality, and human rights”, promoted by SPW's joint forum with Akahatá, PROMSEX, Synergia and Bridges. With great pleasure, in this issue, we are also publishing an [interview](#) with political scientist Massimo Prearo on Georgia Meloni's rise to power in Italy and [Françoise Girard's assessment](#) of the mid-term elections in the US.

Good reading!

The SPW Team (Sonia Corrêa, Nana Soares, and Fábio Grotz)

Detours and new paths of democracy

Between August and October, ultra-right forces won two elections in important European countries: [Sweden](#) and [Italy](#). In Italy, the coalition led by Giorgia Meloni won the legislative elections, making her the first woman prime minister and giving a significant role to the ultra-right in Europe. As Massimo Prearo analyzes in the interview mentioned above and in a [Página 12 article](#), her coming to power cannot be understood without reference to her background in the intensive anti-gender and anti-abortion campaigns that have been underway in Italy since the early 2010s.

In Brazil, by contrast, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva defeated Jair Bolsonaro. The electoral result was widely celebrated in the streets. Despite the relatively small margin of votes that won Lula's election, democracy was preserved. The defeat of the far-right president allows society to breathe again, opening space for the principles, values, and processes that had been eroding since 2019 to be rescued and revalued. However, as [Sonia Corrêa and Juan Elman](#) analyze in an article for openDemocracy, Bolsonaro's defeat does not mean that the ultra-right will disappear in the country, and this can be seen in the [continuing protests](#) against the electoral result and the [attempts to judicially challenge](#) it that remain ongoing at the end of November.

Moreover, as the authors stress, regional economic and political conditions and the transnational scope of the so-called new right suggest that these forces will remain influential in other Latin American countries. A mid-November [CPAC conference in Mexico](#) that brought together right-wing leaders from around the world is a sign of this.

On the other hand, the [international response](#) to Lula's victory was broad and energetic, as shown by the [reception](#) of the president-elect at the Climate Summit in Egypt. On that occasion, Lula gave a [speech](#) in which he signalled substantive changes in Brazilian foreign policy, especially regarding the environmental crisis and the fight against hunger, as well as the need for changes in the global governance system.

Meanwhile, in Brazil, even though Bolsonaro has [disappeared](#) from the public sphere since early November, the [transition of government](#) is underway, involving 31 working groups and more than 300 people, consultations with experts, and civil society mobilizations to influence this process. One of these initiatives was the drafting of a [letter](#) requesting that the new government, like the Biden and Petro administrations, immediately abandon the so-called Geneva Consensus. The transition teams are reporting the results of their work on a [website](#) dedicated to this process. In their publications and press conferences, one can see the scale of the devastation produced by four years of neo-fascist misgovernment. To more deeply understand the electoral process and future challenges, SPW has compiled [analyses](#) (in Portuguese) on the significance and ramifications of Lula's election.

Not less importantly, the results of the US mid-term elections were much more positive than expected. The Democratic Party secured control of the Senate and several state governments that were at risk, and more than 300 LGBTTIA+ candidates were elected to state and federal legislatures (read a [compilation](#) about the election). And, as [Françoise Girard](#) emphasizes in her assessment, an important cause of the outcome was the resistance to the restrictions imposed on abortion rights after the [June 2022 Dobbs decision](#), especially among younger people.

On the other hand, the Chinese regime's authoritarian backsliding had broad repercussions in late November. Protests erupted in several cities across the country, prompted by the insistence on the Xi Jinping government's zero Covid policy. The restrictive measures implemented to deal with outbreaks of the disease that in many other quarters of the globe have been tackled with other strategies have generated exhaustion, frustration, anger, and revolt. We offer a brief [compilation](#) of articles on the Chinese political scenario.

And, as this English edition was being finalized, the protracted political crisis underway in Peru for the last few years reached a point of culmination in early December. Pedro Castillo, the leftist president elected in 2022 enacted a self-coup closing the Congress and imposing a state of exception triggering an immediate reaction of the Parliament, the Judiciary, and the Armed Forces. He was voided and his vice-president Dina Boluarte assumed the presidency. Criminally indicted, Castillo was arrested when trying to flee the country. His eviction and imprisonment triggered a wave of protests in the interior of the country, especially in his region of origin. Check two articles from the NYT ([here](#) and [here](#)) and the [BBC](#) analysis.

LGBTQIA+ Rights

Very significantly, the last few months have brought good news in the field of LGBTQIA+ rights in Mexico, Singapore, Vietnam, and Slovenia. But this does not mean that systematic attacks on the rights of this population have ceased, an example being new [setbacks](#) in Russia.

In Latin America, the most significant news comes from Mexico, where the states of [Guerrero](#), the [State of Mexico](#), Tabasco, and Tamaulipas approved same-sex marriage. With these, the right is now [enshrined throughout the country](#). In the Caribbean, on the island of St. Kitts and Nevis, a court decision in late August [overturned](#) colonial-era legislation that criminalized sex between men and recognized the conduct as protected by the right to privacy. [Barbados' High Court](#), a few months later, also issued an oral ruling that decriminalized consensual same-sex relations. In Cuba, a referendum approved the new Cuban Family Code that [recognizes](#) same-sex marriage. This result displeased evangelical forces that since the approval of the new constitution – in February 2019 – have attacked equal marriage. However, the referendum was [criticized](#) by dissenting voices, according to which the government used it to conceal the many other dissatisfactions and demands of society. For those who wish to learn more about the debate around LGBTQIA+ rights in Cuba, we recommend Liudmila Morales Alfonso's excellent article from the book [Derechos en Riesgo](#).

In Asia, events of recent months tell us that even victories need to be approached with sobriety. The Singaporean government announced in August its plan to [decriminalize](#) sex between men, abolishing a law bequeathed by colonial Britain. However, this advance, whose implementation timeframe has not been defined, came with making same-sex marriage impossible through a measure that "protects" the constitutional definition of marriage (read more in [SCMP](#), [Time](#) and [Aljazeera](#)). The decision, therefore, was [modestly celebrated](#) by the country's LGBT movement, which is still fighting to [guarantee its rights](#).

In contrast, the Supreme Court of India ruled that same-sex couples are [entitled](#) to social benefits, a decision that takes another step towards eliminating the colonial legacy. However, it must be kept in mind that this advance comes in a political context in which civic spaces are increasingly restricted and communal violence against the Muslim population is growing, as is the arbitrariness of the Modi government. Also significant was the decision of the Vietnamese Ministry of Health [announcing](#) that it will no longer consider homosexuality a disease and that so-called conversion therapies would be [banned](#). Despite recent gradual liberalizations, Vietnam does not meet the requirements of a fully democratic state either. In Pakistan there is also regrettable news: the film "Joyland", selected to represent the country at the Oscars in the category of best international film, has been [censored](#) by the Ministry of Information. The reason is that

the film tells the story of a man who falls in love with a trans woman (learn more [here](#) and [here](#)).

In Europe, the biggest advances were recorded in Slovenia, which [approved](#) marriage and adoption for LGBTQIA+ couples, becoming the first country in Eastern Europe to do so, and in Greece, which [banned](#) surgeries on intersex babies, while Bosnia [adopted](#) its first policy protecting LGBTQIA+ rights, including those of transgender people.

The Russian government has further [tightened](#) its anti-LGBT legislation, which punishes what it calls "LGBT propaganda" in books, films, and advertising. The law, which was limited to materials aimed at people under 18, will now apply to any content, including for adults. Even before its announcement in July, the old law was [used against a journalist](#) opposed to the war in Ukraine. Before the law was passed in November 2022, openDemocracy analyzed in detail what the [deleterious effects](#) of this change will be for LGBTQIA+ people. It is also worth remembering that Putin, in his speech on the annexation of Ukrainian territories in late September, once again declared that the war he initiated is just because it [protects](#) Ukraine from Western "gender ideology". In such circumstances, it is very significant that a debate is underway in Ukraine about [legalizing](#) same-sex marriage, motivated by the situations arising from the brutal conflict that specifically affects LGBTQIA+ people.

It should also be noted that Europride only took place in Belgrade, Serbia, after pressure and mobilizations against the [initial ban](#) announced by President Vucic. However, even though it was authorized, the event was [manipulated](#) by the government, and its [political significance](#), although positive for the Balkan LGBTQIA+ community, as Evelyn Paradis of ILGA Europe analyzes, must be [viewed](#) in light of the growing threats to democracy in the country.

Physical attacks, legal convictions, and state offensives against the LGBTQIA+ population were also in the news in [Germany](#), the [UK](#), [Turkey](#), [Slovakia](#), [Montenegro](#), the [Maldives](#), [Lebanon](#), [Iran](#), [Nigeria](#), [Ghana](#) and [Uganda](#), which makes timely an [excellent article](#) by ILGA that takes stock of the global dynamics of criminalization of LGBTQIA+ people and the different strategies that have been used for this purpose. We also recommend the [excellent article](#) by Claire Provost and Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah in CNN that analyses how bilateral development funds have been channelled to religious organizations involved in the vicious campaign against LGBTTI+ rights underway in Ghana in recent years.

Anti-trans offensives

Although there is progress to celebrate in relation to some LGBTQIA+ rights, resistance to and offensives against trans rights continue to escalate. A survey presented at the 24th International AIDS Conference reports that by 2021 only 8% of countries with high

HIV prevalence have [fully included](#) trans people in their national HIV strategies, with several making not a single mention of this group.

As is well known, Latin America is the most violent place for trans people in the world. A story in [openDemocracy](#) shows that in at least 10 countries in the region, there are growing assaults on the rights of this population, which are associated with the erosion of democracy and broader attacks on "gender", as, for example, in the effects of anti-gender campaigns on education in Brazil analyzed in a recent [report](#) by Human Rights Watch, which also recently published a [report](#) on restrictions on transgender rights in El Salvador.

But these attacks are everywhere today.

In Japan, a court [denied](#) a trans woman the right to register her baby, and in Nigeria, where restrictions on the rights of LGBTQIA+ people are severe, a [bill is being debated](#) that would criminalize cross-dressing. In this troubled landscape, the UK, Spain, and the US are places where anti-trans politics have become increasingly intense. In the case of the US, these offensives have been amplified in sports and health care. An [article](#) in the Huffington Post shows that bans on trans people in sports have been implemented even in states where no trans athletes are reported, such as Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and West Virginia. In addition, there has been an [increasing ban](#) on healthcare services for trans children and adolescents. Catholic Church authorities have also made proposals for the [guidance](#) of trans students, and, of note, as the New Republic [reports](#), Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter is also creating what the magazine calls an anti-trans regime on the social network.

In the UK, attacks on trans rights have gained traction and visibility. Examples include the [closure](#) of the UK's only clinic for trans children and young people and the [suspension](#) of service by the UK's largest organization for the care and support of trans youth, Mermaids. Attacks on trans-[rowing](#) and [triathlon](#) athletes have also occurred. In Scotland, [attacks](#) against a trans manager led to the shuttering of a refuge facility for rape victims. Not surprisingly, Scotland's first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has been the [target of attacks](#) by writer and anti-trans campaigner JK Rowling over a government bill aimed at facilitating legal gender reassignment. Finally, the anti-trans drift on the island has lamentably strengthened after it was announced that the new prime minister, Rishi Sunak, intends to [revise and roll back](#) legislation that recognizes transgender rights. The move is in line with the positions of the English Conservative Party, which has for some time been linked to anti-trans discourse and efforts; in the leadership contest in August, [trans-exclusionary rhetoric](#) was a staple of the debates.

In Spain, the Gender Identity Law [has finally been sent](#) by the Council of Ministers to Congress. This does not mean, however, that conflicts and tensions regarding trans rights have cooled down in the feminist camp or even within the government, as [RFI's](#)

[story](#) and an [interview](#) with Carla Antonelli, the first trans-Spanish MP, representing the PSOE, show.

Good News

However, there is also good news to report. Scotland has become the first country in the world to ensure free access to sanitary pads for all people who menstruate, regardless of gender. The [new law](#) was much celebrated given the climate averse to trans rights and the severe economic crisis the UK is experiencing.

In Argentina, there have also been two important victories for the trans population. In September, Catamarca became the first province in the country with a [school protocol](#) for trans children. In the same month, the Federal Appeals Court of La Plata confirmed the decision to prosecute dozens of civilians, military personnel, and retired police officers for crimes committed [ESP] against the trans and transvestite population during the country's most recent military dictatorship.

And, finally, as this English bulletin was in its final days of making, US Congress has approved - in a [bipartisan push](#) - a [bill](#) aimed at protecting same-sex marriage. This was a very relevant move as the country's conservative majority Supreme Court has been rolling back rights in the latest years.

Abortion and reproductive rights

In the field of abortion rights, bad and good news from different parts of the world has overlapped in recent months. On September 28, the streets from [Morocco](#) to [Venezuela](#) were filled with feminist protests demanding this right. In some countries there were legal successes: in India, the Supreme Court [extended](#), in September, the [right to abortion](#) for unmarried women, as well as for [victims of marital rape](#), although it remains [tied to causes](#). Earlier, in August, England and Wales made access to the [abortion pill permanent](#). In October, the Mexican state of Quintana Roo [approved](#) the legalization of the procedure until the 12th week. Finally, as we were finishing this newsletter, the National Assembly of France passed an amendment to [include](#) abortion in the country's constitution.

However, worrying and even grim news has come from countries where the right to abortion has deteriorated in recent years. The most emblematic case is Hungary, where the Orbán government has passed a [law](#) requiring pregnant women to listen to the fetal heartbeat before performing the procedure. Iran has also [increased restrictions](#) on abortion as part of a pronatalist policy that will be costly for women.

Back in Europe, in [Switzerland](#) and the [UK](#), anti-abortion forces have diversified their strategies, as reported by SwissInfo and Vice, respectively. In Switzerland, conservative

movements have broadened their strategies to gain popular support, proposing plebiscites as well as discounts and benefits in health plans for women who decide not to undergo the procedure. In the UK, the anti-abortion movement is directing efforts in the digital world to sway the minds and hearts of the younger generations against a right that has been guaranteed since the 1960s.

In the US, the overturning of Roe v. Wade in June rapidly eroded access to abortion. More than 66 clinics across 15 states [closed](#) in less than 100 days, and an estimated 17 million women [have lost access to the procedure](#). Some cases are extreme, such as [Arizona](#), where the new ban dates back to the 19th century. The [Washington Post](#) and [Mother Jones](#) report on and analyze this phenomenon in more depth. Among the many consequences of the rollback of abortion rights, one should also include digital surveillance and the [potential persecution](#) of women who search for information about the procedure (read more in [Democracy Now](#), [Telegraph](#), and [Axios](#)).

As we already anticipated at the time of the Dobbs decision, attacks are now taking place at the [state level](#), especially in the states that continue to guarantee this right. But the repeal of Roe v. Wade and the judicial and political battles that followed were also [crucial](#) for the November 8 elections, both for [Republicans](#) and Democrats. The former tried to sell the image of moderation because they know that the majority of Americans are against the abolition of abortion rights. The Democrats, on the other hand, heavily [exploited](#) the issue and the Supreme Court's decision to garner votes and try to secure a majority in Congress. As Françoise Girard shows in her article, the strategy was successful.

Finally, in Brazil, the Bolsonaro government is trying to [curtail](#) access to the right while it can. In September, the Ministry of Health released a revised version of the booklet "Technical Attention for Prevention, Evaluation, and Conduct in Cases of Abortion" which, when released in June, lied and contradicted the penal code by claiming that all abortion is a crime in the country. The new version, however, [continues](#) with distorted information and no evidence, constituting a "blatant anti-abortion campaign", in the [words](#) of Andrea Dip. On the other hand, when she took office as president of the Supreme Court, Rosa Weber made it clear that she will keep under her rapporteurship ADPF 442, which discusses the decriminalization of abortion up to the 12th week of gestation. As the minister leaves the court at the end of 2023, it is likely that the issue will be back on the court's agenda before she retires.

Feminist meetings in Latin America

Two very significant feminist events took place in Argentina. The first of them was the famous annual National Women's Meeting that, since 1986, has brought together an increasing number of participants whose views have always been very heterogeneous. In 2022, for the first time, this historically unified meeting split in two due to [multiple](#)

[disagreements](#), especially regarding the presence of trans people and the multinational definition of the event. This split, however, as Stefania Santoro [reports](#) in Página 12, did not reduce the scale or lessen the energy of the Plurinational Women's Meeting that took place in the city of San Luis in October, with more than 100,000 participants.

A month later, the 15th Regional Conference on Women was held in Buenos Aires, convened by CEPAL with the theme “The Caring Society: Horizon for a Recovery”. The conference also brought together thousands of participants and was preceded by a Feminist Forum in which there were also tensions regarding the presence and rights of sex workers. Mariana Carbajal also [covered](#) the conference for Página 12 and, in her article, she details the process and debated issues to reach the 54 points of the [Buenos Aires Commitment](#) which defined the right of people to care and be cared for based on the premises of equality, universality, and shared responsibility as a non-negotiable principle.

We recommend

Articles

[Empty promises: Continuing the fight for trans rights in India – Jashodhara Dasgupta](#)

[An Anti-Abortion Activist’s Quest to End the Rape Exception - New Yorker](#)

[An unholy alliance – Aeon](#)

[A Hacked Newsroom Brings a Spyware Maker to U.S. Court - New Yorker](#)

[Conservatives complain abortion bans not enforced, want jail time for pill ‘trafficking’ - Washington Post](#)

[Is development work still so straight? Heteronormativity in the development sector over a decade on – Susie Jolly – Development in Practice Review](#)

Publications and resources

[Launching the CEDAW Implementation Map on women’s health – The George Institute for Global Health](#)

[The Abortion Issue - Columbia Journalism Review](#)

[Susie Jolly's blog \(Institute of Development Studies-IDS\)](#)

[Troubling Anti-gender Attacks Transnational Activist & Academic Perspectives](#)

Art & Sexuality

[Uýra Sodom's organised revolt](#)