



***The UN Conferences on Women and the Global Rise of Feminism: Tensions and Interactions***

Call for Papers

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Edited by Marica Tolomelli and Anna Nasser

*Genesis* intends to dedicate a special issue to the theme “UN Conferences on Women and the Global Growth of Feminism: Tensions and Interactions.” We invite researchers at all career stages who engage with this theme to submit original articles that advance new perspectives, sources and methodologies.

The major UN Conferences on Women held between 1975 and 1995 marked significant milestones in the development of feminist movements on a global scale, building on pre-existing trajectories of international relations among women’s movements while also marking significant phases in the UN’s role as an interpreter of demands for social justice and respect for human rights.

Despite the limitations imposed by its status as a supranational body, the UN indirectly contributed to stimulate the emergence of women’s liberation movements in various parts of the world by strengthening networks – albeit heterogeneous and fragmented – that were increasingly aware of the global interconnections binding them.

This perspective aims to provide an overview of the development of feminism/feminisms in the last quarter of the 20th century, focusing on the following thematic areas:

1. **The United Nations as a subject, actor, interpreter, promoter and also regulator of social change, with particular regard to the issue of the oppression of women.** In this sense, it seems important to shed light on the decision-making processes that governed the organization of the Conferences, with a focus on the interaction between bodies and figures of particular significance operating within the UN, and the demands expressed by civil society, often through the channels of accredited NGOs and to some extent involved in UN initiatives.
2. **The programmatic points discussed within the individual Conferences, seeking to highlight**
  - a. whether and how they related to the prevailing contexts (which differed greatly between 1970s and the mid-1990s) in which the Conferences respectively took place
  - b. whether and how the programs adopted directed government policies and movements aimed at overcoming the conditions of women’s oppression. Equality, Peace, and Development were the three watchwords that shaped the ten-year Action Plan resulting from the work of the first Conference Mexico City in 1975. The issue of international development, in a context that saw the launch and subsequent rise of the neoliberal agenda on a global scale, proved highly controversial. Felt most acutely by women in Latin America and the Global South, it was the subject of critical analysis and innovative approaches that guided the formation of new strands of transnational feminism
  - c. the paths and dynamics that emerged around the themes of peace, equality, rights, with particular attention to reproductive rights.



3. **Criticisms and Reactions.** Historiography and testimonies have documented some of the main criticisms of the Conferences from a feminist perspective, expressed often, but not exclusively, by activists from the Global South. Particularly lively contexts of criticism and debate were represented by the women’s forums that took place in parallel with the meetings of official delegations. From the Mexico City Tribune (1975), in which some six thousand women from numerous associations from all over the world took part, participation in the Forums that brought together the voice of NGOs, feminists, pacifists, activists in cooperation and volunteer work, etc., grew progressively, so much so that it had more than quintupled by the time of the Houairou Forum, the “counter-summit” that accompanied the Beijing Conference in 1995. Particular attention must be paid to the factors that, against the background of the geopolitical, economic, and social changes that occurred during the two-decade period under consideration, had the greatest impact on feminist movements on a global scale, in terms of both unifying and divisive forces, starting with the choice of strategies.
  
4. **Continuity/Discontinuity in the dialogue between feminisms and “feminists of a single world,”** entangled in the web of intersectional relationships that gave rise to quite heterogeneous positions. While in 1975 the limits and difficulties of a presumed “universal sisterhood” seemed to depend on the asymmetrical relationships between the “three worlds” in which the geopolitical space was perceived, from the late 1990s to the present day, awareness, theoretical elaborations, and experiences have accounted for the fragmentation of the feminist universe, stemming from the complexity of the multiple dimensions—social, cultural, economic, and political—present in the configuration of gender relations.

This special issue draws inspiration from the discussions that took place during the conference “Tensions and Interactions between the UN Women’s Conferences and the Global Growth of Feminism,” organized by the Department of History, Culture, and Civilization at the University of Bologna, held on October 16–17, 2025.

Call for Papers with a deadline of **April 25, 2026**.

Abstracts (max 450 words) and a brief CV (max 2 pages) must be submitted by the deadline to: [marica.tolomelli@unibo.it](mailto:marica.tolomelli@unibo.it) and [anna.nasser@sant.ox.ac.uk](mailto:anna.nasser@sant.ox.ac.uk) .

Proposals must include first name, last name, affiliation, and institutional contact information.

**Selection results will be announced on May 8, 2026.**

**The deadline for submitting papers is October 15, 2026.**