

# History and Memory of Dissident Sexualities from Latin America: An Analysis of the Foundation, Current Activities, and Projects of AMAI LGBTQIA+

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## Abstract

This article focuses on Red Latinoamericana de Archivos, Museos, Acervos y Investigadores LGBTQIA+ (AMAI LGBTQIA+), a network composed of researchers and institutions related to LGBTQIA+ memory in Latin America, founded in 2019. First, the authors analyse the network's creation arising from the discontent of some participants of the June 2019 Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) Conference, in Berlin, who felt bothered by the lack of attention given to subaltern perspectives on LGBTQIA+ history and memory. Next, the authors describe and analyse the network's first year of activities communicated through its Facebook group. Multiple challenges arose from creating a network with members from different national origins, languages, and identities, especially considering the conservative political contexts of several Latin American countries and the social distancing measures imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, the authors present a general profile of the network's members and a map of partner institutions. Finally, the article points out some challenges to the network's continuity and its desire to render Latin America more visible in the broader panorama of global LGBTQIA+ history. The authors conclude by highlighting the importance of AMAI LGBTQIA+ in stimulating further discussions about the participation of global-south researchers and perspectives on global queer history initiatives.

**Keywords:** archives and collections; global south perspectives; Latin America; LGBTQIA+ memory; queer history

**Publication Type:** research article

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## Introduction

This article presents and analyses the foundation, current activities, and projects of Red Latinoamericana de Archivos, Museos, Acervos y Investigadores LGBTQIA+ (AMAI-LGBTQIA+), a network established in 2019 by a group of Latin-American researchers and activists dedicated to LGBTQIA+ memory. The authors divided it into four parts. First (“Which place do we occupy?”), we begin by describing the network's foundation at the 2019 Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) Conference in Berlin. Some conference participants noticed an underrepresentation of Latin American contributions. Therefore, they decided to create a network that would foster the exchange of experiences and provide mutual support. Second (“What have we been doing?”), the authors describe and analyse the network's first year of activities. Our discussion focuses on understanding the impacts of political contexts, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the challenges of creating a network with members from different

backgrounds, national origins, languages<sup>1</sup> and identities. Third (“Who are we?”), we present a general profile of the network’s members and a map of partner institutions. Finally (“What place do we want to occupy?”), we point to some challenges to the network’s continuity and its desire to render Latin America more visible in the broader panorama of global LGBTQIA+ history. Our goal is to stimulate further discussions about the participation of global-south researchers and perspectives--in this case from Latin America--on global queer history initiatives.

Before we proceed, it seems essential to situate two points that help contextualise the network’s foundation and the format of this text. The first point relates to the broader picture of LGBTQIA+ rights in Latin America, especially concerning the right to memory and history through heritage conservation. The second refers to our simultaneous position as authors and participants of AMAL LGBTQIA+. We intend to show that this apparent methodological dilemma is a standard feature and not an impediment in studies about LGBTQIA+ experiences.

### **LGBTQIA+ Rights, History, and Memory and Heritage in Latin America: Brief Comments on a Besieged Landscape**

Societal and political hostilities towards LGBTQIA+ people in Latin America substantially influence the lack of resources and initiatives to protect LGBTQIA+ memory, history, and heritage. Moreover, colonisation and the Catholic presence have significantly impacted the history of dissident sexualities in the region through persecution and extermination (Trevisan, 2018). According to Fernandes (2017), European colonisation has introduced an administrative, bureaucratic, political, and psychological apparatus to address indigenous sexualities from the paradigm of the Catholic binary gaze on gender and sexuality.

Subsequently, the rise of authoritarian regimes during the second half of the XX century left a long-lasting mark of systemic violence that outlived dictatorships across the region. Brazil’s Cold War-era discourse on “national security” included state-sponsored homophobia and transphobia that targeted LGBTQIA+ people as enemies of the military government (1964-1985), as Colaço (2012) and Cowan (2016) demonstrated. Similar persecution of cis-heteronormative dissidents from that era occurred in other Latin American countries such as Uruguay between 1973 and 1985 (Sempol, 2013), and Argentina between 1976 and 1983 (Simonetto, 2017). Despite the brutality of Argentinean, Brazilian and Uruguayan military regimes, new political organisations flourished in the 1970s and 1980s and prepared the ground for current struggles.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s also dramatically affected the LGBTQIA+ population in Latin America. Conservative and religious sectors labelled it a “gay cancer” caused by a “sinful” lifestyle. Such a conservative reaction has led to inaction by several governments in the region, leaving many people without assistance. At the beginning of the 21st century, approximately 43.5% of AIDS cases in Latin America were related to homo-bisexual transmission. Nonetheless, less than 5% of the total resources employed in HIV/AIDS prevention was destined for this population (Cáceres & Chequer, 2000).

Despite this, the epidemic sparked a fight against government lethargy and negligence, which influenced the HIV/AIDS movement’s rise. Brazil’s HIV/AIDS movement achieved significant outcomes, such as free distribution of retroviral drugs and free medical assistance. Additionally, the epidemic has increased the visibility of people non-conforming to cis heterosexuality to the rest of society.

According to Corrales (2020), “in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, Latin America experienced a remarkable improvement in LGBT rights and policies. Outside of the North Atlantic, no region has had more progress on LGBT rights” (p. 185). For example, a 2020 report by The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) observed that 24 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>2</sup> had decriminalised same-sex consensual relations. Belize, Trinidad, and Tobago were the latest to do so in 2016 and 2018, respectively. However, in response to such progress a new backlash by conservative sectors has also emerged. Corrales (2020) argues:

[...] that conservative groups challenging LGBT rights in Latin America have undergone a major change in organisational composition—the entry of evangelical groups. These churches have acquired an impressive capacity to influence politics. Homo-/transphobia, of course, has always existed. But as LGBT rights have expanded, evangelicals are now providing forms, organisations, arguments, resources, and alliances to challenge new or existing progress. (p. 186)

The so-called crusades against gender ideology have been at the root of the new wave of conservative governments in Latin America, taking power since the middle of the 2010s. Bridging anti-abortion, anti-gender rights, anti-sexuality rights, anti-feminist, anti-human-rights, and anti-leftist agendas, the crusade against gender ideology in Latin America has been gaining space in the political debate. Employing Education as the primary field of action, the campaign against gender ideology has targeted research concerning LGBTQIA+ (in every disciplinary area) and universities as ideological disseminators. In this regard, in the last couple of years, there has been widespread persecution and censorship towards research and researchers. The alliance between religious and far-right groups has flourished with political and financial support from governments and international think tanks around the globe (Miskolci, 2018; Correa, 2018).

As an example of the aggressive and virulent modus operandi of such groups in Brazil, we mention the recent and shameful demonstration against the visit of US philosophers Judith Butler and Wendy Brown in November 2017. Butler and Brown were invited to participate in several events in Brazil. Religious, conservative, and right-wing groups collected 370,000 signatures protesting their visit, which was understood as “a threat to the natural order of gender, sexuality, and family.” They organised demonstrations at places where Butler spoke. Despite support from progressive groups who countered right-wing protesters during their visit, Butler and Brown experienced harassment at Congonhas Airport in São Paulo while waiting for a flight to Rio de Janeiro.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding more direct violence, a 2020 report by Red Sin Violencia with data from nine Latin American and Caribbean countries found that, from 2014 to 2019, more than 1,300 LGBTQIA+ people were assassinated in the region. That same report states that Brazil accounts for an estimated 1,600 fatal victims. A 2020 report from Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB) shows that 329 LGBTQIA+ people were killed in Brazil in 2019.

Latin America accounts for astounding rates of murders of transgender and gender-diverse people. The latest update on the Transgender Murder Monitoring (TMM)<sup>4</sup> by Transgender Europe (TGEU) shows Brazil as the world’s most deadly place for transgender and gender-diverse people (with a total of 1,520 murders), followed by Mexico in second place (528 murders), and Colombia in fourth place (180 murders). South and Central America, according to the report, account for a total of 2,894 fatal victims in the period, a number nine times higher than Asia, the second

deadliest region (303 victims in total), and ten times higher than North America (U.S. and Canada with 280 victims) in third place. Data from the latest report from Brazil's National Association of Travestis and Transexuals (ANTRA) and the Brazilian Trans Institute of Education (IBTE) shows that in 2020, amidst a global pandemic, 175 transgender and gender-diverse people were murdered in Brazil, with 51 more victims than 2019 (Benevides & Nogueira, 2021).

Such violence and erasure have harmed the preservation of LGBTQIA+ history and memory in the region. Throughout history, groups dissonating from cis-hetero-normativity had to conceal or destroy traces of their existence to survive. The constant changes in the political orientation of Latin American countries, often resulting from violence and coups, have not favoured public policies of conservation and public display of LGBTQIA+ collections. As Boita (2017) suggests, the denial of heritage and memory negates human dignity for marginalised populations. Due to disinvestment, censorship, persecution, and extermination, LGBTQIA+ history in Latin America has been severely marginalised in scholarly discourse and official public narratives. In this sense, AMAI LGBTQIA+ intends to fight this scenario by bridging local initiatives.

### From Which Place Do We Speak From

Before proceeding to the next section, we will discuss our connection with AMAI-LGBTQIA+, our position as researchers, and our identities. This step will help us situate our writing and knowledge about this network, pointing to our benefits and limitations when describing and analysing this organisation. Both authors are part of the 105 members of AMAI-LGBTQIA+ (as of March 2021). Rubens was one of the founders back in 2019, and Benito joined the network later that year. We are both Brazilian and native Portuguese speakers. We also identify as cisgender gay men. In Brazil we can be identified as white, but not in Europe and North America. Like all network members, we have distinct forms of insertion in academia and activism. It is also worth mentioning that we are part of the network's over-represented groups: cisgender people, Portuguese speakers, and Brazilians. Such belongings situate us in a specific and limited place to narrate some of these processes.

Writing about events that we took part in echoes research on the history of political processes. In Brazil, as shown by França et al. (2016), there is a voluminous body of academic work produced by people who took part in political activities based on the exchanges among Black, Feminist, and LGBT movements. We will address those events where the researchers have played a role in the processes they analysed.

González (2020),<sup>5</sup> in her analysis of the trajectory and political organisation of Black movements and Black Women's/Feminist movements in Brazil since the 1970s, offers a broader perspective from a researcher and activist who participated in those changes. Correa (2001), addressing the connections between Feminist movements and gender studies in Brazil, reveals aspects of the tandem consolidation of these academic and political fields while actively participating in this process. Likewise, De Jesus & Alves (2012), on a theoretical and historical analysis about the articulation of trans and transfeminist movements in Brazil, reflect upon a process in which they were protagonists.

One example is Grupo Somos of São Paulo, one of the first known "homosexual activist groups" in Brazil. Some of its members analysed its trajectory and actions, such as Edward MacRae and James Green. MacRae (2018), who participated in the first meetings of Grupo Somos in São Paulo in 1978, observes how its meetings were central to developing a "homosexual activist identity".

Green (2000) explains that Grupo Somos named themselves after the Argentinean newspaper *Somos*, edited between 1971 and 1976 by Frente de Liberación Homosexual Argentina. These writings transpose the challenges and potentialities of a process in which one was, or is, engaged.

We, the authors, hope to highlight our double effort of producing a text “from within” alongside the network that narrates an ongoing process in which we participate as constituents. Our positions as “founding member” and “member” allow us to access events first-hand. In this sense, we will employ “us” throughout the text to speak about the network. The discussion comes from documentary research about the foundation of the network, and debates in the private group on Facebook “Archivos, Museos, Acervos y Investigadores LGBTQIA+ (AMAI LGBTQIA+)”. Additionally, we have consulted blogs and pages that interacted with the network.

### “Which place do we occupy?”, The Foundation of the Network

The foundation of a network dedicated to integrating and connecting archives, collections, museums, and researchers from Latin America was motivated by the encounter of its eight founding members at the Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) Conference in Berlin between June 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This first group consisted of eight people from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia (six cisgender men and two cisgender women). A quarter of this group was residing in Europe to study. The members decided to organise the network due to their shared impressions and experiences from the conference, an inspiring moment and an excellent opportunity to connect people worldwide. ALMS was described in the 2019 conference announcement<sup>6</sup> as follows,

[ALMS] is a series of international conferences focused on public, private, academic, and grassroots archives collecting and preserving materials of all types from LGBTQIA+ communities. Its mission is to ensure that our history continues to be preserved and shared. The series was initiated in 2006 in Minnesota, and the last two conferences took place in Amsterdam in 2012 and in London in 2016. These conferences provide an opportunity for archivists, activists and scholars from around the world to gather, share their stories and discuss the issues around documenting LGBTQIA+ lives. ALMS is an exceptional event as it offers the encouraging experience of being part of an international network overcoming borders and on track for the future.

The conference took place at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), a historical building next to the Tiergarten and the Bundestag (German Parliament building). ALMS 2019 was also a celebration of “the 100th anniversary of the world’s first queer archive, library, museum and special collection”, founded in 1919 by German activist and researcher Magnus Hirschfeld.

In 1919 Magnus Hirschfeld opened the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sex Research) which was destroyed by the Nazis in 1933. This institute was located at the very place where the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* stands today, and where ALMS Berlin will convene. (Queering Memory, 2019, para. 5)

In its announcement, the conference was seeking to answer two central questions: “What does ‘queering memory’ mean under the political, social and cultural conditions of the present? And how can the diversity of queer histories be made visible in these digitised times?”. During the three-day conference, presentations were divided into themed sessions. Members of archives, museums, universities, groups, and institutions with different resources and funding explored

the possibilities of preserving, researching, protecting, and exhibiting queer history. Overall, the goal was to share experiences and build alternatives.

Nonetheless, it was clear that there was an influential presence of conference participants from Western Europe, Australia, and the United States, which impacted subject coverage and the tone of discussion. English became the common language of the event to make communication possible among international participants. Problems with simultaneous interpretation limited other linguistic options to English, German, and Russian.

Six of the founding members presented papers at the conference. Three presented in a session dedicated to Latin America, while others spoke in two sessions on broader themes. Overall, the founding members' presentations focused on research, conservation activities, and activism in our home countries.

One of the network's founders took part in the conference's closing session, dedicated to discussing the situation of countries governed by hostile LGBTQIA+ strongmen. The panel, composed of members from the United States, Russia, Hungary, and Brazil, debated strategies to guarantee the existence and functioning of less-formal and less-institutionalised archives and collections. While presenting on this panel, our Brazilian colleague announced interest in organising a regional event like ALMS in Latin America. In the end, a voting process took place to select the next city to host the conference, in which only global-north cities named candidates.

Our group became closer between sessions and during lunch and dinner when we shared our thoughts. Three points of discussion were fundamental to the proposition of forming a network: overcoming the language barrier, the economic and material barriers preventing more people from participating, and the under-representation of Latin-American perspectives.

In the months after the conference, some founding members wrote reports about their experiences<sup>7</sup>. One of them reflected upon the place given at the conference to subaltern perspectives. According to this report, the lack of representation of participants from Latin America, Africa, and Asia involuntarily universalised European narratives about sexual diversity, undermining efforts to construct a global queer history. Without ignoring pioneer figures such as Karl von Ulrichs and Magnus Hirschfeld or the importance of historical facts such as the Stonewall Riots (1969), the report highlighted that the absence of more perspectives and narratives resulted in the reinforcement of hegemonic notions.

Another report pointed out that travel costs from Latin American countries to Europe or the US, alongside other expenses, restrict the participation of more people, resulting in under-representation. While registering on the first day of the event, one member noticed two fellow compatriots' nametags who could not attend the conference due to financial reasons.

The linguistic barrier was another point of discussion. Even though there were distinctions among us regarding English, the group noticed this aspect collectively. The linguistic barrier was manifested as a token of the place we occupied there. Other participants also felt this discomfort and complained about not following the sessions entirely due to the limited option of simultaneous interpretation. In one of the caucus meetings, some of our partners felt excluded due to the dominance of English, resulting in a focus on global north realities. A member reported the feeling of not being speaking, hearing, and being heard accurately.

Curiously, even though the founding members did not share the same mother tongue,<sup>8</sup> their proximity was understood as a point of commonality instead of a barrier. We often mixed Spanish and Portuguese during our talks to express our ideas better. This language mixture, commonly named *portunhol/portuñol*, would later become central to the network. Some days after the end of the event, we announced on the blog *Memórias e Histórias das Homossexualidades*<sup>9</sup> that we were forming a network from our encounter at that conference. Our first intention was to organise a regional event to discuss Latin American perspectives on queer history. As described by a member, a relation of “affective, academic, and activist complicity” cements the creation of the network. This collaboration resulted from common academic interests in LGBTQIA+ history and memory, political engagement, and solidarity.

### What have we been doing? Strengthening ties amidst the chaos

The negotiations to form AMAI-LGBTQIA+ continued after the founders returned to their home countries or cities of residence in Europe. This initial group invited researchers of LGBTQIA+ history, activists, and institutions practising LGBTQIA+ cultural heritage preservation (mainly archives and museums) to join the network. The founding members created a private group on Facebook to assemble the new participants and organise a seminar in São Paulo in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the initial excitement dampened. On May 9, 2020, a member wrote a message suggesting an alternative virtual meeting.

Pergunto se não poderíamos, nesse período de isolamento, realizar uma reunião virtual, para discutir a possibilidade de realizarmos um evento via virtual, de modo a combater esse isolamento e construímos formas de ação, dentro de nossa proposta.

Aguardo as considerações de vocês. Saludos / abraços.<sup>10</sup>

Several people promptly answered the call, excited about the possibility of collaborating and staying in contact, especially during social isolation. The first discussions focused on selecting subjects to be addressed in the meetings, the best day of the week, and the online platform of preference. Although they may seem like “minor” bureaucratic and administrative issues, they are determinants for an initiative like ours, in reality. For example, the choice of the day and time for virtual meetings influences, to some extent, the degree of participation since the members have other academic and professional activities. A vital aspect to consider in a severe economic crisis is rising unemployment in the region. Additionally, the time zones crossing Latin America, along with several members living permanently or temporarily in European time zones, causes different availability. Answering to the call, a member commented:

lo primero qué hay que empatar es horarios, en Latinoamérica no hay ¿mucho? problema pues la diferencia es de 2 o hasta 3 horas pero para los compañeros en Europa la diferencia de horario va hasta más de 6 horas, escoger un primer día hora y motivo de reunión....<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the choice of the online communication platforms impacts participants’ safety, especially in the face of advancing far-right and conservative governments and groups that target gender and sexuality discussions. Under Jair Bolsonaro’s rule, many internet groups dedicated to spreading hate speech have invaded or disrupted online events in Brazil. In the end, the group decided to meet on Saturdays through Zoom.

## Bilingualism: From the Point of Contact to an Organisational Challenge

There is another aspect related to communication that is central to the functionality of the network: bilingualism. While most Latin American countries employ Spanish as their primary language, there is a large contingent of Brazilian Portuguese-speaking participants in AMAI-LGBTQIA+. Therefore, we must all make an effort to speak slowly, to clarify the meanings of some words, and to use *portunhol/portuñol*.

Unlike the initial proposal of planning a virtual event, the call resulted in 10 virtual meetings throughout 2020 (from May to December). They resumed after a break in January 2021. These virtual encounters occurred alongside the creation and dissemination of documents, videos, databases, interviews, and presentations constitute the current activities of AMAI-LGBTQIA+.

The COVID-19 pandemic ended up playing a contradictory role in the network's trajectory. On one hand, it turned plans of a face-to-face meeting impossible and led to the physical isolation of the group's members. On the other, it allowed us to overcome national boundaries through online communication technologies and devices.

The first meeting occurred on May 23, 2020, with 18 participants aiming to connect and share activities and research agendas. Participants also debated how the network should be structured. The following meetings alternated between administrative issues and discussions on LGBTQIA+ memory and history in Latin America. The organisational and administrative meetings addressed, among other themes, public presentation of the network, social media, definition of workgroups (for archive identification, for example) and identity of the network.

## Defining a Visual Identity: *el Sur es nuestro Norte*

One of the longest debates concerned the logo, chosen through polls in the Facebook group. The current logo is inspired by the work of Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres García, "America invertida", from 1943. On his manifest "La Escuela del Sur", reproduced in Müller-Bergh & Teles (2009), Torres García affirms

He dicho Escuela del Sur; porque en realidad, *nuestro norte es el Sur*. No debe de haber norte, para nosotros, sino por oposición a nuestro Sur.

Por eso ahora ponemos el mapa al revés, y entonces ya tenemos justa idea de nuestra posición, y no como quieren en el resto del mundo. La punta de América, desde ahora, prolongándose, señala insistentemente el Sur, nuestro norte. Igualmente nuestra brújula: se inclina irremisiblemente siempre hacia el Sur, hacia nuestro polo. Los buques, cuando se van de aquí, *bajan, no suben*, como antes, para irse hacia el norte. Porque el norte ahora está *abajo*. Y levante, poniéndonos frente a nuestro Sur, está a nuestra izquierda.

Esta rectificación era necesaria; por esto ahora sabemos dónde estamos. (p.393)<sup>12</sup>

The proposal for our network perfectly matches the group's objective of not thinking about LGBTQIA+ history and memory of Latin America as a defined geographic space but from Latin America as a place of enunciation, taking the "South as our north" as a perspective for past, present, and future. From our Latin American realities, AMAI-LGBTQIA+ aims to observe, think,



reflect, research, safeguard, and present LGBTQIA+ history and memory by considering subjects, periodisation, and questions overlooked in hegemonic narratives centred on the global north.



Figure 1. Logo of AMAI-LGBTQIA+ in Portuguese

The different colours of the line accompanying the inverted map intend to represent the different groups that compose the so-called LGBTQIA+ community, alongside the representation of people of colour (the Black and Brown rectangles). When talking about our realities, we can highlight gender and sexual diversity among indigenous peoples in the colonial past, counter normative violence imposed by metropolitan powers and the Catholic Church, identify intersections and exchanges among race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity peculiar to Latin American realities, explore the role of Afro-Latin American religions in configuring of gender and sexual identities alternative to heteronormativity, and identify and document Latin American social movements of sexual dissidence beyond Stonewall.

### A Decolonial Inspiration?

Such vision coincides with decolonizing initiatives seeking to overcome Eurocentrism and propose new historical periodisation drawing from other references, especially those produced in Latin America and the Global South. Even though the network has not addressed theoretical debates around decolonization, one of its goals is to de-center the privileged place of enunciation of global queer history from Europe and the US. The network, in this sense, can be understood as another initiative to tackle the *coloniality of power* and its developments (especially *coloniality of knowledge* and *coloniality of gender*) as elaborated by decolonial thinkers such as Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, and María Lugones. Coloniality of power stresses the role of the colonisation of the Americas in the constitution of European modernity and capitalism. For these scholars, European colonial powers took the Americas as places for social, political, economic, and symbolic experimentation by imposing European rationality as the only legitimate expression of thought.<sup>13</sup> When taking decolonial feminism as a possibility to overcome the coloniality of gender, Lugones (2010) highlights the importance of thinking about gender outside colonial, European, Catholic, and binary schemes, using other matrices (indigenous, non-white, non-

Christian) to reflect upon our societies.

One of the reports about the experience of the 2019 conference acknowledges this form of resistance by claiming other historical milestones and references beyond current global history projects. AMAI LGBTQIA+ seems to draw inspiration from decolonial thinking to address issues in memory and heritage.

### A Comment on the Identities

The adoption of the abbreviation LGBTQIA+ was (and still is) debated in the meetings. Members reached some degree of consensus by following international organisations' categories, in which generally (L) stands for Lesbians, (G) for Gay men, (B) for Bisexuals, (T) for Transgender, (Q) for Queer, (I) for Intersex, (A) for Asexuals, and (+) for Allies. Nevertheless, when considering the national contexts of many Latin American countries, the network follows some suggestions from activists across the region, especially regarding the (T) that stands for Travestis, Transexual, and Transgender people. Such discussions are close to what Facchini (2005) called *sopa de letrinhas* [alphabet soup]. In her analysis of the Brazilian and international LGBTQIA+ movements, she stresses that the choices of identities represented in the movement's abbreviation delimit outsiders and insiders. In AMAI, such articulation considered identities not yet represented in the group, such as asexual people. As discussed in the first meetings, this strategy was to form alliances and expand the network's representativity.

Another point of recurring debate is related to the category "queer", once considered a derogatory term later reclaimed as an identity by movements in the English-speaking countries. While, in a certain sense, it follows the effort of staying in tune with terminologies adopted on local and global activism, its usage still causes some estrangement. Some members understand that "queer" is a category forged in a White, Anglo-Saxon, and North-centred context<sup>14</sup>. Colling's (2011) analysis about the refusals regarding queer theory within the LGBTQIA+ movement and academia at the beginning of the 2010s in Brazil points to similar estrangements.

In AMAI, there is even a creative investment in the network to consider alternatives to describe identities, often employing and resignifying Spanish or Portuguese categories. That is the case with the word "marica", which is present in both languages. The members debated the usage of this category in a couple of the meetings as an alternative to "queer". However, the group agreed that the word is too focused on male and cisgender homosexuality and decided not to use it.

### Getting to Know Each Other

Regarding discussions on research and experiences on LGBTQIA+ history and memory, the network organised internal presentations about such initiatives in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. These presentations fostered comparisons between our national histories and contexts, especially concerning the challenges of safeguarding and protecting sexual dissidents' memories.

We also conducted a collective interview with one of the directors of Archivo de la Memoria Trans Argentina, who shared personal, political, and professional experiences as a transgender woman and activist who preserves the memories of transgender people in Latin America. The network has been mapping archives and collections in Latin America. A dedicated workgroup with 11 participants from Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico is responsible for this initiative. So far,

the workgroup has succeeded in contacting 14 archives and five personal collections of Brazilian LGBTQIA+ activists. Furthermore, AMAI recently started a YouTube channel<sup>15</sup> to broadcast thematic sessions and debates proposed by its members.

### Who Are We?

105 members of the network have different academic and political backgrounds. Most of us have degrees or training in History and Museology, Sociology, Anthropology, Media Studies, Literature, Law, and Arts. Most members have or had contact with activist groups, art collectives, and archives. Regarding nationalities, a brief analysis from data available in the profiles of network members<sup>16</sup> shows a predominance of Brazilians (51%), followed by Mexicans (12%), Argentinians (10%), Colombians (3%), and Spaniards (3%). Salvadoreans, Costa-Ricans, Paraguayans, Ecuadorians and Uruguayans correspond each to 2% of the members. Nicaraguans, French, Italian, Portuguese, and people from the United States correspond to 1% each. Such data corroborates the overall perception by the members of the massive presence of Brazilians in the network.

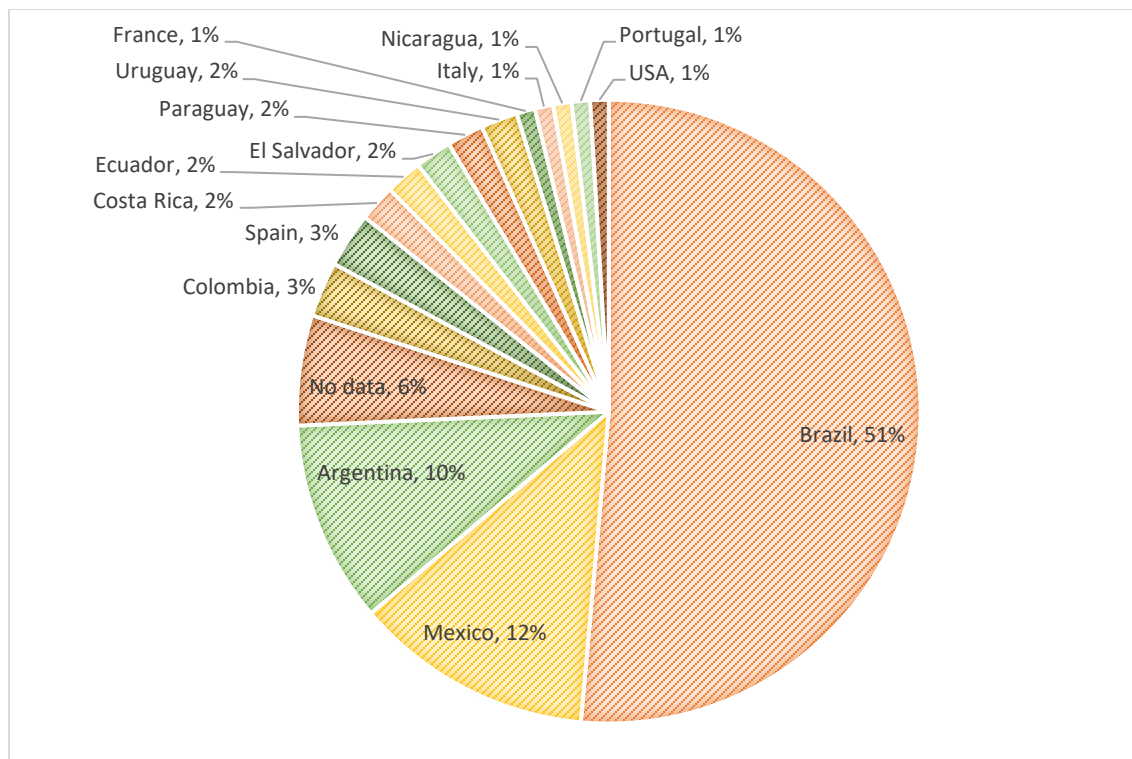


Figure 2. Distribution of members by country of origin

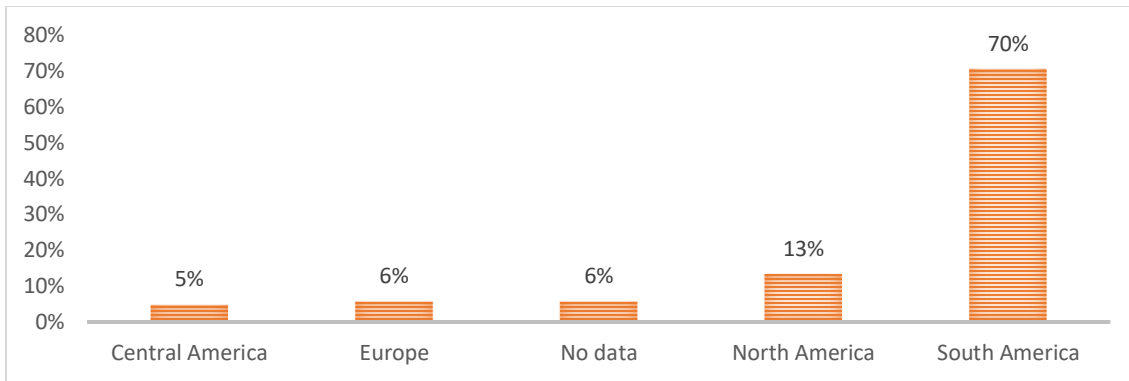


Figure 3. Distribution of members by region of origin

When looking at the countries where the members reside, it is noticeable that most of us live in Latin America, and that 70% of the group come from South America. Brazil (49%), México (11%), and Argentina (7%) are the leading countries of residence for network’s members. South America is followed by Europe (14%) as the second most important region of residence, with Germany as the home for 5% of the members, followed by Portugal and Spain with 3% each.

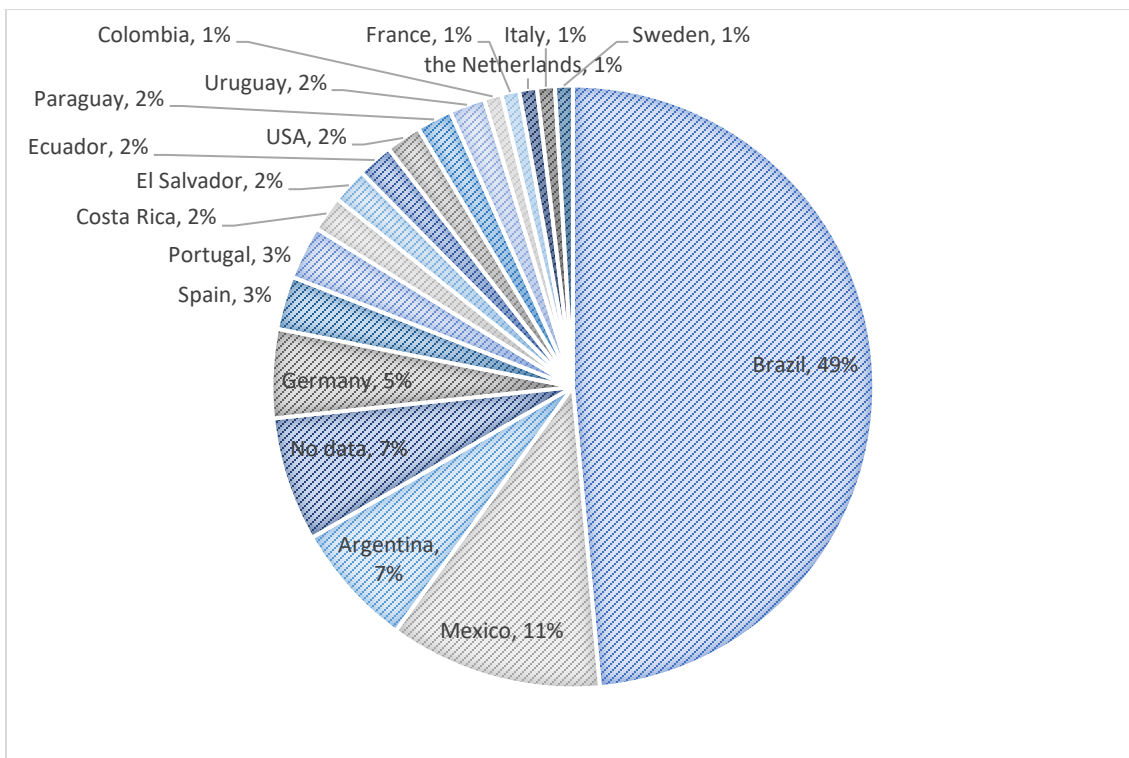


Figure 4. Distribution of members by country of residence

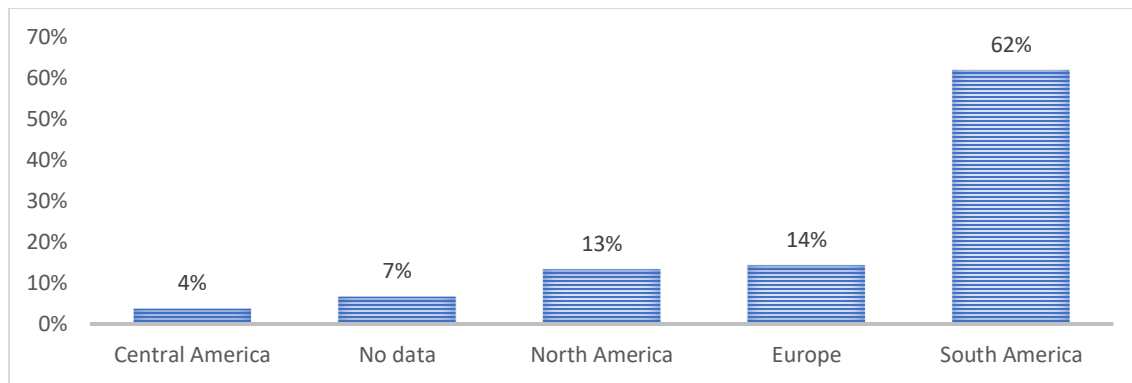


Figure 5. Distribution of members by region of residence

Regarding the representation of gender and sexual identities, there is a visible over-representation of cisgender people, especially cisgender gay men. Amongst the 105 members, only seven people identify as transgender. In this sense, the network still reflects some tendencies observed in some LGBTQIA+ activist groups, especially in Brazil, regarding the under-representation of women and, more visibly, transgender women, transgender men, travestis, and non-binary people.

The Facebook group has made it possible to exchange information about events dedicated to LGBTQIA+ memory and history. A considerable volume of information circulates daily, including news about LGBTQIA+ people in Latin America, texts, articles and books written by network members, virtual events, and petitions. Apart from sharing information, members use the Facebook group for administrative purposes. We publish the minutes of previous meetings, general information regarding the network, suggestions of discussion topics, and live streams of the meetings. It is interesting to notice that despite the massive presence of Brazilians, most posts and news articles shared in the group are written in Spanish.

Table 1. Partner Organizations

Name	Country	Website
Moléculas Malucas	Argentina	<a href="https://www.moleculasmalucas.com">https://www.moleculasmalucas.com</a>
Archivo de la Memória Trans	Argentina	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/archivotrans">https://www.facebook.com/archivotrans</a>
Memórias e Histórias das Homossexualidades	Brazil	<a href="https://memoriamhb.blogspot.com">https://memoriamhb.blogspot.com</a>
Acervo Bajubá	Brazil	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/acervobajuba/">https://www.facebook.com/acervobajuba/</a>

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Close: Centro de Referência da Histórias LGBTQI+ do Rio Grande do Sul	Brazil	<a href="https://www.ufrgs.br/close/">https://www.ufrgs.br/close/</a>
Museu da Diversidade Sexual de São Paulo	Brazil	<a href="http://www.mds.org.br">http://www.mds.org.br</a>
Museu Bajubá	Brazil	<a href="https://museubajuba.org">https://museubajuba.org</a>
Lésbicas na História	Brazil	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/lesbicasna/historia/">https://www.instagram.com/lesbicasna/historia/</a>
Museu Q	Colombia	<a href="https://museoq.org">https://museoq.org</a>
Archivo Digital de Liberación Homosexual en Colombia	Colombia	<a href="https://archivodlhc.blogspot.com">https://archivodlhc.blogspot.com</a>
Museo Identidad y Orgullo	Costa Rica	<a href="http://www.museomiocr.com">http://www.museomiocr.com</a>
Cosmopolitrans	Germany	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/transUmbrellahannover">https://www.facebook.com/transUmbrellahannover</a>
Archivos y Memorias Diversas	Mexico	<a href="http://www.archivosmemoriasdiversas.org.mx">http://www.archivosmemoriasdiversas.org.mx</a>
Hilacha Voladora	Mexico	<a href="https://soundcloud.com/hilacha-voladora">https://soundcloud.com/hilacha-voladora</a>
Queerquivo - Arquivo LGBT Português	Portugal	<a href="https://queerquivo.wordpress.com/">https://queerquivo.wordpress.com/</a>

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Representatives of 15 organisations are part of AMAI, including archives, museums, blogs, and activist groups from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Germany, Mexico, and Portugal. The partner organisations and the network support each other by amplifying campaigns, announcing events, and technical collaboration.<sup>17</sup>

### Conclusion: What Place do We Want to Occupy?

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, after a year of debates and activities, AMAI-LGBTQIA+ published a short manifesto condensing its history, goals, and plans.

A formação da Rede Latinoamericana de Arquivos, Museus, Acervos e Investigadores LGTBQIA+, se inicia a partir do encontro de pesquisadores do Brasil, México, Argentina e Colômbia na *Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) Conference* em Berlim no ano de 2019.

O desejo de constituição da rede emergiu durante a conferência, com a angústia desses pesquisadores ao constatar a sub-representação latino-americana no evento e a falta de referências bibliográficas e patrimoniais no Sul global.

Assim, iniciou-se a articulação para a constituição da rede, buscando aumentar a participação e representatividade de nossa região, em eventos de dimensão internacional, e também propor uma integração latino-americana de pesquisadores e acervos LGBTQIA+. Buscando descentralizar as propostas e narrativas hegemônicas sobre uma *História Queer Global*, que não se aprofunda e insere com precisão os marcos latino-americanos.

Hoje, um ano após sua criação, a rede segue articulando pesquisadores, acervos e museus do nosso continente, propondo uma integração de nossas referências, patrimônio, território para intervir de forma organizada na disputa por uma narrativa que contemple as histórias LGBTQIA+ latinoamericanas.

Assim, a partir de discussões foram eleitos os seguintes princípios para a rede:

- Promover a interação de pesquisadores e instituições latino-americanas que trabalham com acervos e memória LGBTQIA+;
- Lutar pela salvaguarda e bem estar dos acervos LGBTQIA+ latino-americanos, mapeando seus possíveis riscos e possibilidades de comunicação, ampliação e pesquisa;
- Mapear os acervos LGBTQIA+ latino americanos, criando índices remissivos para a consulta por pesquisadores que trabalham com a temática;
- Realizar encontros virtuais e presenciais para a discussão de tópicos da diversidade sexual e gênero, com centralidade na região que ocupamos;
- Participar de eventos globais como um coletivo organizado, visando suprir a sub-representação de nosso continente;

Colaborar e compartilhar a produção científica sobre a temática da diversidade sexual e de gênero na América Latina, a fim de propor a difusão e expansão do tema;<sup>18</sup>

By the end of 2020, a member sent the following message to the group: “Neste difícil ano hemos estado juntas y en colectivo fuimos construyendo nuestra Red AMAI. Que em 2021 possamos seguir ainda mais fortes!”<sup>19</sup> The words, tenderly written in a mixture between Portuguese and Spanish, express the difficulties we faced as a group through 2020 but, above all, reinforce the hope of a collective struggle for LGBTQIA+ memory and history and the strengthening of regional solidarities.

So far, the path of AMAI-LGBTQIA+ has been one of creative adaptation to old and new contingencies and external situations. The network was idealised to answer a political and epistemological need for visibility in the narratives on global queer history. Perhaps it was precisely this encounter at a non-Latin-American country that drew the group’s attention to the underrepresentation of Latin-American perspectives. Had a similar event occurred in Latin-America<sup>20</sup>, the presence of Latin-American and Global South perspectives could have been more significant. However, if not organised by a Global-North international association, such an event could be deemed regionally focused.

If the COVID-19 pandemic prevented a regional meeting, it was during the necessary social

isolation that the network decided, by digital means, to focus on expanding, meeting periodically, and promoting digital events. The group benefited from the network's fluidity, especially by avoiding the investment of energy and resources in bureaucratic and organisational actions. Nevertheless, it also led to oscillating participation in the activities, sometimes resulting in non-attended meetings and the interruption of some events. Uncertain participation is understandable since the commitment of its members is voluntary and each person has their own personal, professional, and political obligations. The acknowledgement of these aspects changed the frequency of the meetings from once every 15 days to once a month. In this sense, there is a constant effort to intensify the contact between members and expand the mobilisation capacity whilst minding the current hardships we face in the region.

It is also a goal to keep reaching out to more people from other Latin American countries and diversify the profile of its members. The network's main and relevant political goals are rendering Latin American LGBTQIA+ history visible, contributing to elaborations on memory from a global south perspective, and disputing meanings and narratives about global history, whether queer or any other category that better describes ourselves.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> We decided to maintain the quotations in their original language, to expose the reader to the feeling shared by some network members as non-native English speakers. The reader will find a free translation in the footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> For the scope of the article, we will not address the situation of the Caribbean regarding LGBTQIA+ rights. But the report shows that most countries that maintain a criminalization of same-sex consensual relations are in the Caribbean.

<sup>3</sup> Later in that month, Butler wrote an article on *Folha de São Paulo* ("The Phantom of Gender: Reflections on Freedom and Violence") in which she comments these events. Sexuality Policy Watch released a briefing ("Judith Butler attacked in Brazil: a briefing") in January 2018 analysing the incident. See: Butler, J. (November 21, 2017). *The Phantom of Gender: Reflections on Freedom and Violence. Folha de São Paulo*. <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/culture/2017/11/1936921-the-phantom-of-gender-reflections-on-freedom-and-violence.shtml>. See also: Sexuality Policy Watch (2018, the 18th of January). Judith Butler attacked in Brazil: a briefing. *Around the world*. <https://sxpolitics.org/judith-butler-in-brazil-a-briefing/17916>.

<sup>4</sup> The report uses data from 2008 to 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Recently compiled in an anthology edited by Rios and Lima (2020).

<sup>6</sup> This information is available at the conference website (<https://queeralmsberlin2019.de/announcement/>). Information of previous editions of 2012



and 2016 can be found at: <http://lgbtqalms.co.uk>; <http://lgbtialms2012.blogspot.com>. (Accessed on: June 28, 2021)

<sup>7</sup> These accounts were published after the conference. We borrowed the title of this section from one of the accounts. We decided to make all the texts' mentions indirect and paraphrased to protect the authors' identities.

<sup>8</sup> There were Portuguese and Spanish speakers in the same number in our group.

<sup>9</sup> The blog can be accessed here: <https://memoriamhb.blogspot.com/>.

<sup>10</sup> During this isolation period, I'm wondering whether we could organize a virtual meeting to discuss the possibility of organizing a virtual event, aiming to tackle isolation and build forms of action together in the guidelines of our network. I will wait for your thoughts on that. Saludos [cheers]/abraços [hugs].

<sup>11</sup> The first thing is thinking about the time the meetings will take place, in Latin America, there are not “many” problems, because the difference is 2 or 3 hours. But for our partners in Europe, the difference can reach up to 6 hours; then we should choose first a day and time, and then, a subject for our meeting...

<sup>12</sup> I have said School of the South because, in reality, our north is the South. There cannot be north for us, only if by opposition to our South.

Therefore, we now put the map upside down, and we have a clear idea of our position, not the way the rest of the world wants. The tip of America, from now on, prolonging, points insistently to the South, our north. Just like our compass: always leaning unmistakably towards the South, towards our pole. The boats, when leaving here, go down not up as before to go to the north. Because the north, now, is below. And ascending, putting us in front of our South, is our left.

This rectification was necessary, so we now know where we are.

<sup>13</sup> For a balance of decolonial discussions, see Quintero et al. (2019) and Ballestrin (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Miskolci & Simões (2007), when tracing a genealogy of the category and its uses on Brazilian academia and activism, points to significant potentialities not limited to the mere acknowledgement of a theoretical “delay”, but of valuable critical contributions produced from local perspectives. For a critic on the canons of queer theory, centred on the US, see Hames-García (2011) and Lugones' (2011) comments on Hames-García's article.

<sup>15</sup> The channel can be accessed here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTwLlkKIVsUTWp8ZasE2Paw>.

<sup>16</sup> Information, such as countries of origin and residence, were collected from public data on the members' Facebook profiles. Nonetheless, some of the members did not disclose this information on their profiles.

<sup>17</sup> The virtual meetings are organized and hosted in Zoom with technical support from Hilacha Voladora and Archivos y Memorias Diversas. Some of them were live streamed inside the group and recorded.

<sup>18</sup> The formation of the Latin American Network of LGBTQIA+ started from the encounter of researchers from Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia at the Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) Conference in Berlin in the year 2019.

The desire to form the network emerged from the researchers' agony when confronted with Latin American under-representation and the lack of bibliographic and patrimonial references about the global South during the conference.

Thus, we began articulating to constitute the network, hoping to increase the participation and representation of our region in events of international dimension and to propose a Latin American integration of LGBTQIA+ researchers and collections. We seek to de-centre hegemonic proposals and narratives about a Global Queer History that do not acknowledge and insert Latin American contributions with precision.

Today, one year after its foundation, the network continues to articulate researchers, collections, and museums in our continent, proposing integration of our references, heritage, and territory to intervene in an organized form in the dispute for a narrative that contemplates Latin American LGBTQIA+ histories.

Therefore, from the discussions, we elected the following guidelines to the network:

- Promoting interaction between Latin American researchers and institutions that work with LGBTQIA+ collections and memory.
- Fighting for the safekeeping and conservation of Latin American LGBTQIA+ collections, mapping its possible risks, as well as its possibilities of communication, expansion, and research.
- Mapping Latin American LGBTQIA+ collections by creating reference indexes for consultation by researchers that work with the theme.
- Organizing virtual and face-to-face meetings for discussing topics on gender and sexual diversity, with a focus on the region we occupy.
- Participating in global conferences as an organised collective, aiming to overcome the under-representation of our continent.
- Collaborating and sharing scientific production about sexual and gender diversity in Latin America, fostering the diffusion and expansion of the subject.

<sup>19</sup> In this challenging year, we have stood together, and collectively we have been building our network AMAI. In 2021, Let us keep moving forward and growing stronger!

<sup>20</sup> This, however, would also incur similar difficulties regarding funding for both the event and the participants, translation and potentially security.

## Acknowledgements

Assistance provided by Archivos, Museos, Acervos y Investigadores LGBTQIA+ and partner organisations was greatly appreciated.

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