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# Feminist Resistance to the Rise of Nationalism and Populism

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# Abstracts





# PRESENTERS

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- **Alemann, Annette von**, Guest Professor, Center for Gender Studies, University of Paderborn, Germany
- **Auga, Ulrike E.**, Professor, Center of Transdisciplinary Gender Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany
- **Bhana, Deevia**, Professor in Gender and Childhood Sexuality at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- **Bóasdóttir, Sólveig Anna**, Professor of Theological Ethics, University of Iceland
- **Cidlinska, Katerina**, Research Assistant, National Contact Centre for Gender & Science, Czech Academy of Sciences and **Iva Smidova**, Associate Professor, Masaryk University, Czech Republic
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- **Edenheim, Sara**, Associate Professor, History, Centre for Gender Studies, Umeå University, Sweden
- **Erlingsdóttir, Irma**, Associate Professor, University of Iceland
- **Gray, Tricia**, Assistant Professor, University of Louisville, United States
- **Hearn, Jeff**, Senior Professor, GEXcel Örebro University, Sweden
- **Husu, Liisa**, Professor, Örebro University, GEXcel, Sweden
- **Karlsdóttir, Anna**, Senior Research Fellow at Nordregio and Senior Researcher at EDDA Center of Excellence, Sweden and Iceland
- **Kjaran, Jón Ingvar**, Assistant Professor, University of Iceland and **Ge Wei**, Assistant Professor, Peking University, China
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*Aavik, Kadri, Lecturer in Sociology Tallinn University, Estonia and Triin Roosalu, Associate Professor, Tallinn University, Estonia*

### Challenges to Academic Knowledge in the Post-Truth Era: Lessons from Estonia

In January 2017, the NGO Social Science Research Institute, an increasingly visible “think-tank”, “aiming to reflect as accurately as possible the opinions of the Estonian population” (webpage of the NGO, <http://www.inst.ee/instituudist>), conducted a survey “aiming to map the values of Estonian citizens”. The most prominent finding, highlighted in the press release of the NGO, and subsequently circulated in the mainstream media, was that “as many as 58% of people never find sexual relations between same sex people justified”. This result was arrived at by asking respondents to answer the following question in the survey: “On a scale from 1-10, please indicate whether sexual relations between people of the same sex are never justified, are always justified or does the truth lie somewhere in between?”

Particularly in recent years, as an apt manifestation of the post-truth era, some ideologically and ethically dubious and methodologically non-transparent and flawed research has emerged in Estonia that nevertheless is presented by its authors as serious social science scholarship. This is best exemplified by the case of the aforementioned politically conservative NGO Social Science Research Institute, which deliberately mimics the identity of established academic institutions to legitimise itself as a body engaged in professional sociological research. However, this is not the only instance of the described malpractice. Other sloppy research, perhaps not as intentionally manipulative, has also appeared. The results of such research have been usually uncritically taken up by journalists and used in political debates to form opinions and make conclusions about social trends in the Estonian society.

In this presentation, we reflect on the recent challenges that academic social science research and academic freedom face in the post-truth era, based on the case of the NGO Social Science Research Institute in Estonia, as well as other examples. We are interested in the role of universities and academics in this process – whether and in what ways are they complicit in the emergence of “posttruth knowledge”? What are some trends in the neoliberal academia that enable the side-lining of academic knowledge in favour of dubious scholarship and distorted knowledge produced by some non-academic entities? What are some ways that universities and social science scholars might challenge such developments?

We argue that the current neoliberal conditions in the academia can lead Estonian social scientists to be complicit in producing research that can be easily taken out of context and may be vulnerable to exploitation for ideological purposes. At a time of decline of state funding to higher education, Estonian social scientists, in order to secure their income, are increasingly conducting applied research, commissioned primarily by state institutions or even the business sector. The entity which commissions the research is in charge of formulating the research questions, and can publish the findings selectively and out of context. This has clear and serious consequences for academic freedom and the role of academic knowledge in the society. We discuss some of these cases from our own experience.

On the other hand, social scientists in Estonia are faced by another neoliberal demand – to publish in English, in internationally recognised top journals. This means that their principal research, other than the commissioned and applied research, might not find its way to Estonian audiences. This leaves more space open in the Estonian media for entities such as the aforementioned NGO, financed by conservative businessmen, to promote their views. Also, there is a worrying implication regarding gender: only those who have secured their academic position – having reached a permanent professorship contract for example, can afford to become public intellectuals and these tend to be mostly men.





*Abirafeh, Lina, Director, Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at the Lebanese American University, Lebanon*

### **Gender Equality Legislation in Lebanon: Piecemeal Progress or Genuine Reform?**

No minimum age for marriage exists in Lebanon, despite the country's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child without reservations. Marriage age is set based on personal status laws and religious courts, open to interpretation. Civil society is actively committed to preventing (girl) child marriage through awareness campaigns and advocacy. In 2014, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in collaboration with the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) launched an advocacy campaign to Protect Underage Girls from Early Marriage. The Institute is now working with the Women's Refugee Commission and Johns Hopkins to complete a prevalence study on child marriage among Syrian refugees in Lebanon – this presentation will share preliminary findings of this study as well as current updates to child marriage legislation, presently underway. Previous attempts at legislative reform sought to regulate child marriage rather than prevent it, allowing exceptions for religious laws. This year, Lebanon was represented at the Committee of the Rights of the Child to submit its national report: child marriage was the most prominent recommendation by the Committee. In March 2017, a draft law to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 with no exceptions was submitted, along with a strong media campaign and civil society activism. While this appears to be a positive step, there are significant obstacles such as the precarious security situation, political challenges, and preparations for the parliamentary elections in May 2018. More problematic, passing the draft law would be considered an attack on the religious sectarian system that controls the family, given that family issues are governed by religious laws in the country. This is coupled with Hezbollah's strong stance against determining the age of marriage, as well as the rejection of the official religious institutions. During work on the 2014 domestic violence law, religious institutions presented strong opposition, and the government conceded, resulting in a watered-down version of the law that fails to recognize marital rape as a crime. Additionally, parliament is currently challenged by a range of women's issues: their failure to pass the 30% quota law and the need to abolish Article 522 allowing a rapist to be absolved of his crime by marrying the victim. The media and popular opinion fail to view any of these issues as priorities. Finally, the terminology of this violence remains problematic. It is incorrect to refer interchangeably to early marriage, child marriage, forced marriage. The reality is these marriages affect girls. And a marriage of a girl under 18 likely entails a sexual relationship – in which case this is considered rape of a girl. Interchanging (and rather benign) terminology fails to convey the seriousness of this crime. Given the above challenges, and the weak record in terms of implementing laws that prioritize protection and prevention for vulnerable women and girls, the attack on women's rights in Lebanon will remain inadequately addressed.





*Alemann, Annette von, Guest Professor, Center for Gender Studies, University of Paderborn, Germany*

### **Regimes of Discrimination and Gender Inequalities in Organizations: The Role of Care and Organizational Culture**

Organizational cultures are a key factor in the understanding of regimes of discrimination and social inequalities in organizations. Representing the system of shared values and meanings in organizations, they provide a frame of reference for the interpretation and evaluation of behaviours, situations and persons. While claiming to be equitable and gender-neutral, many of them contain gendering notions about valuable and non-valuable tasks, organizational positions and spheres of life, and they associate them unequally to men and women. Organizational cultures include assumptions about the relationship between the organization and private life, and about how (and to whom) responsibility is assigned for achieving work-life balance, and they are interwoven with constructions of gender. The paper focuses on one element of organizational cultures: hidden rules, and their role in the production of inequalities and discrimination between men and women in organizations. It is based on empirical research about “work organizations and life conduct of fathers” (funded by the German Research Foundation, DFG) with systematically chosen case studies in organizations of different size and economic sectors. Starting from the observation that more and more women and men perceive a good work-family balance as an important life goal, the paper presents empirical evidence about hidden rules and their potential to cause inequality between those who are able to achieve this goal and those who are not. Hidden rules are based on organizationally established assumptions about the employees’ behaviour, suggesting how to behave and legitimizing the behaviour deemed appropriate. They may contradict values officially expressed by the organization, and run counter to organizational programmes of family-friendliness. Thus, they are able to prevent the use of organizational programmes and stately guaranteed rights such as parental leave, and they can reduce the employees’ sense of entitlement to those rights and programmes, many times associating their use with discriminations. Our empirical data lead to the assumption that employees in organizational environments with this type of hidden rules tend to restrain their life-goals adapting to the organizational expectations and thus preventing possible discrimination, either renouncing their desires for active parenthood, or for career positions. What has been studied thoroughly for women becomes empirically evident also for men. In this way, care-obligations and the wish to fulfil them becomes a dimension of inequality not only between women and men but also between members of the same gender. What is more, the chance to achieve important life goals becomes a new dimension of inequality apart from the classical (economic) dimensions of inequality, but it is also intertwined with those since the fulfilment of care-obligations still leads to lesser career perspectives and a lower income.





*Auga, Ulrike E., Professor, Center of Transdisciplinary Gender Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany*

### **Sexual Violence in and beyond Cologne: Controversies surrounding 'Religion', 'Gender', 'Race', 'Class', and 'Nation' in the Context of Migration**

The New Year 2016 started with a shock in Germany, with criminal, violent, and sexual attacks of men against hundreds of women in public places in different German cities. Because several of the attackers seemed to be recent migrants, a new debate emerged about the relation between sexism and racism, which is prevalent up until today throughout Europe. For the media, the perpetrator-victim relations seem to be clear-cut: The discourse is about 'white' women and 'black' perpetrators – a stereotypical curtailment which emphasizes people's origins. It depicts colonial and racist stereotypes against construed groups of perpetrators instead of fundamentally talking about social and cultural conditions of gender-based violence. The 'Event Cologne' (Dietze) shows how racist truth production has been furthered with the help of sexual politics and new safety discourses. Nationalistic concepts of thoughts are drawn upon in a prominent way – using the vulnerability of women in order to protect a 'national collective'. The debates charged with racism and sexism are falling on dangerously fertile ground in times of very influential new right wing parties, and a worldwide shift to the Right. The events in and beyond Cologne are marking a watershed calling for decisive positions, acts of solidarity from civil society, but also indicate the lack of a deeper understanding of the efficacy of sexual or more complex gender-based violence. Especially after the terrorist attack of 9-11 (2001), there was another debate prevalent, namely on the notion of 'religion', asking whether Muslim immigrants were per se sexually conservative, fundamentalist, would oppress and veil their wives, and were a threat to democracy. A further connection was drawn between the presumed homophobic stances of all Muslim migrants. However, refugee policies often favour heteronormative families, while popular culture pathologizes both migrant sexualities and foreign regimes of LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer) oppression. The examples question whether an undoing of violence could alone be reached by an improvement of the legal system. The question of the symbolic gender order and the consequences of a traditional understanding of gender and sexuality informed by Christian thought and their processes of 'truth generation' (Foucault) in the West need to be investigated, as well as their intersection with 'Race', 'Class', 'Nation', 'Ability', 'Species' and other categories. However, it has already earlier been underlined that the dominant Western concept of democracy and freedom lacks the capacity of understanding multiple ways of subject formation, agency and human flourishing. The paper discusses this notion of 'Compulsory Freedom' (Sauer/Strasser) from a genderqueer, postcolonial, and post-secular perspective. In that way, after an analyzes of different forms of violence – where especially an essentialized notion of 'identity' is challenged – some strategies for the Undoing of 'Othering' (Said, Spivak) will be offered. Beyond certain secularist feminist stances (Spivak), a dis-identified notion of 'Religion' (Auga) as space for the 'radical social imaginary' (Castoriadis) will be claimed.





*Bhana, Deevia, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

### **Forced Love and Teenage Masculine Resistance in Heterosexual Relationship Dynamics**

In the context of escalating concerns in South Africa about men and boys violence and men and boys 'liberation' from violent masculinities, this paper addresses the enduring problem of domination and violence within heterosexual relationships. Drawing on single sex male focus group discussions, the paper explores teenage boys' knowledge of and complicity in masculine domination within heterosexual relationships. The paper focuses on love-as-force to illustrate the paradoxical position through which desire for comfort and companionship sits uncomfortably with male violence and female subordination. Teenage boys construct meaning in relationships while negotiating wider social conditions that make them vulnerable to constricted versions of masculinity. These vulnerabilities shape and inform destructive relationship dynamics as, for example, through whoonga boys. Drug use by whoonga boys is connected to socio-economic marginalisation, chronic unemployment and male weakness. Violent heterosexual relationships are a means for disempowered men to claim power. However, while teenage boys accommodate some dominant forms of masculinity, they resist the construction of love-as-force. Resistant masculinity, where teenage boys articulate the importance of caring in relationships, thus emerges from the very social conditions that create vulnerability in gender relations. Their ideals of love are based on girls' freedom and agency. These alternate pathways to creating their notions of masculinity are juxtaposed and situated in a vision of love where resistant masculinity is only imaginable through ideals of income security, family stability, and middle class values. These ideals are situated in and governed by future masculine orientation where materiality is intricately connected to different and better options for doing masculinity in ways that resist violence and are gender sensitive. The paper argues that efforts to address the liberation of masculinities in South Africa cannot be romanticized when alternate possibilities are deeply entwined with and based upon an idealization of economic success and provider masculinity. Finally the paper concludes with some reflection on the question of male resistance to violent gender relations.

*Bóasdóttir, Sólveig Anna, Professor of Theological Ethics, University of Iceland*

### **Refugees and Internally Displaced People: Responsibility across Borders**

A view widely accepted in everyday discussion on refugees and internally displaced people holds that the possibility of obligations of justice is defined by membership in a common political community. On this account, people have obligation of justice only to other people with whom they live together under a common constitution, or whom they recognize as belonging to the same nation as themselves. Examples of this view can be found everywhere, no least in Iceland. In this paper I seek to account for Iris Marion Young's reaction to this view, underlining especially her reasoning on responsibility. Further, I add a theological view of justice, claiming that there is no justice until we stand in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized.





*Cidlinska, Katerina, Research Assistant, National Contact Centre for Gender & Science, Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic and Iva Smidova, Associate Professor, Masaryk University, Czech Republic*  
**Czech Ambivalences and the Fragility of Feminism**

The Czech Republic is a European country where “Western” and “Eastern” values coexist and create a specific ambivalent mixture. This can be reflected in current nationalist and populist discourse on the “European crisis” connected to the “migrant crisis” and analysis of its gender and feminist aspects. The fall of the Iron curtain has not brought feminism and gender equality into the Czech Republic as a needed or positive aspect for the newly established democracy and gender equality has never been perceived as “our” Czech issue. Rather, it was considered an import from the West. We acclaimed “Western-like” democracy and aspired to become one very fast, while at the very same time being suspicious about human rights, equality and especially gender equality policies. The historical, social and cultural historical and current context for this situation will frame our presentation. Today, this ambivalence is fuelled by the “migrant crisis” and Czech anti-feminism that became mainstream in politics as well as in social movements together with a populism trampling human rights. In such rhetoric’s, feminism is constructed as an EU import, associated with clumsy policies, and represented as the cause of the crisis of masculinity and the loss of traditional family values, which both make European societies weaker and unable to resist Muslim attempts to colonize “us” and subjugate “our” women. Thus, the argument follows, Czech women lose their current equal status, which is a national value now to be protected. Our presentation will analyse this particular case of appropriation of (“our”) women’s equality by populist (male) representatives of Czech anti-migrant and anti-gender justice initiatives. Radicalization of such thought and the mainstreaming of anti-feminism has consequences in various aspects of social life and structures. One of them is a newly intensified threat against institutionalized Gender Studies Programs at the university level. Circumstances of this situation will be elaborated in the second part of our paper as a case study of one of these programs. Attitudes towards Gender Studies have never been value free and many efforts were required to establish them as a ‘proper scientific’ discipline in the Czech Republic. The existing two Gender Studies Programs were established around 2004-2005, coinciding with the time of the massification of tertiary education, and after substantial efforts from feminist researchers and scholars. Today, when numbers of students decrease due to population trends, these programs are under serious threat, while using positivist and neoliberal arguments and newly added populist, anti-plurality and essentialist arguments. We will argue for the need to preserve and develop Gender Studies as a study subject and a research field as one of the laboratories of critical thinking which is threatened in the situation of rising nationalism and populism. The situation of Gender Studies in Czech Republic shows frailty of recently established democratic structures in the Post-Soviet or Post-Socialist region that needs special attention from feminist scholars concerned with inequalities. Besides the anti-feminist or anti-gender backlash experienced throughout traditional Western democracies, this region adds on further specific “rules” and twisted strategies towards curtailing gender equality. And we believe a joint action is needed as time-proven trends from Western and Northern Europe do not work here.





*Danaj, Ermira, Doctoral Student, University of Neuchatel, Switzerland*  
“Spiderman won’t clean our windows” – (Homo) Sexuality, Gender and Politics in Post-Socialist Albania

The proposed presentation revolves around how politicians in post-socialist Albania have used ‘homosexuality’, sexism and constructed gender norms for their own political legitimation. I will centre my analysis on how Albanian post-socialist politics, by often embodying homophobic and sexist discourse, have contributed to the construction of ‘homosexuality’ as a threat to ‘Albanian’ traditional family values, (i.e. unequal and hierarchical constructed gender roles). Similarly, but also differently, to other neighbouring and/or post-socialist countries there exists a discursive entanglement between nationhood and ‘homosexuality’ in the case of Albania. Nationalism in Albania is linked more to the concept of the ‘other’, the ‘western’, the ‘oriental’, who is devalued by being treated as a homosexual, and not man enough compared to the ideal ‘Albanian’ man. According to McClintock (1993) “all nationalisms are gendered” and make use of constructions of gender. The intertwinement between ‘homosexuality’, nationalism and praise of masculinity constitute one of the expressions of the gendering of nationalism. The entanglement of nationalism and ‘homosexuality’ is further linked to manhood and masculinity, where the discourse considers (and constructs) ‘homosexuality’ as a threat to masculinity (Kimmel 1994). ‘Homosexuality’ is portrayed as a foreign threat to ‘Albanian’ hegemonic masculinity. Paradoxically, the ‘foreign’ influence of the ‘homosexual’ threat is presented as both oriental (thus anti-European-Albanian values) and European (thus anti-traditional with regard to ‘core Albanian values’). The position taken depends on which side of the political spectrum we look at. The so-called left wing politicians refer to ‘homosexuality’ as the ‘ottoman’ oriental heritage and the so-called right wing politicians refer to it as a western liberal influence. The other side of the political discourse is that same sex marriage is seen as a clear ‘attack’ on the values of the ‘traditional’ family in Albania. The more emphasis on masculinity is observed in the anti-LGBTIQ discourse, the more emphasis is put on the preservation of the ‘traditional’ family and “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The ‘attack’ that LGBTQI rights would bring about on dominant constructed gender roles and on Albanian manhood, was again used as political ammunition. This brings me to an additional point of analysis which argues that the political class has influenced by further constructing same sex relationships as a threat to hegemonic masculinity as well as to the re-traditionalised gender roles in Albania. My main objective in this research is to investigate and understand how by often drawing on various social, cultural and historical patterns of Albanian society such as traditionalised gender roles, hegemonic masculinity, ‘oriental heritage’, and so on, political actors have weaponised ‘homosexuality’ to their benefit. I argue that through its discourse and actions, the political class has fashioned ‘homosexuality’ into a threat (sometimes constructed as a ‘foreign’ one) to the social configurations often presented as the essence of Albanian society, thus perpetuating unequal gender relations as well as racist and homophobic practices.





*Edenheim, Sara, Associate Professor, History, Centre for Gender Studies, Umeå University, Sweden*

**Resident Evil: Measuring Intolerance, Regulating Populations, Depoliticizing Identities or, A Study in Metaphysics as Public Management**

The concept tolerance, as used in a Western tradition, has moved from describing the medieval church's relation to other religions and unwanted minorities to becoming a secularized political discourse, symbolizing a modern democracy. Today, tolerance is mainly used in political discourse, together with concepts such as gender equality and diversity, and is considered a central democratic virtue. It positions the "good" and the "bad" citizen in relation to each other and is used to identify threats towards liberal democracies. This very specific and late modern use of the concept of tolerance serves a specific function in present-day liberal democracies, especially in relation to strategies of societal changes. Using the case-study of a Swedish governmental agency and the theoretical work of Wendy Brown, this paper focuses on the specific functions of tolerance as praxis.

I focus on the implementation of tolerance as policy in Sweden, and specifically on the institutionalization of the Swedish governmental agency Forum for Living History. The aim is to trace how tolerance has been defined and applied by the agency over time and how these definitions and applications contribute to regulating different parts of the population. Before 2004, the agency – as well as The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande Rådet) – only attributed intolerance to racist groups and outspoken individual racists, assuming a young, uneducated, white man with an unstable socio-economic background looking for comradeship and a sense of belonging. The reasons for intolerance were hence closely connected to explicit White Power movements, and the victims of this intolerance were distinctly defined ethnic and religious minorities, as well as LGBT-people. This focus was an effect of the governmental use of tolerance as a majority-tolerance (see Forst). The majority (white, heterosexual, Christian/secular) population tolerated minorities, while right wing extremists did not. The minorities' level of intolerance was not measured in any of the surveys until 2009.

In the 2010's, the majority-tolerance was challenged both by anti-racist and gay activists and lobby organizations that pointed out the paternalism imbedded in this view. This contributed to a shift from the focus on the white male racist towards intolerance in and between minorities, especially the measured intolerance towards homosexuals and Jews within Muslim groups. Efforts were now directed towards "vulnerable populations", a.k.a. young men with immigrant background in socio-economically poor areas (see, e.g., URBAN 15 and the debate on "No-go-zones"). The focus on socio-economic background that provided the white racist with a sociological rationale was replaced by a focus on religious extremists with no discernible rationale.





*Erlingsdóttir, Irma, Associate Professor and Director, University of Iceland, Iceland*  
**The Fascist Option in a Moral Crisis: Populist Politics in H el ene Cixous’s Perjured City or the Awakening of the Furies**

H el ene Cixous’s play *La Ville parjure ou le r eveil des  Erinyes* is an epic tragedy about the collapse of core values, abuse of power and human suffering. As Slavoj  i zek and Ernest Laclau have stressed, when the immorality of a political order has reached a boiling point, the “people” usually wake up from their apolitical slumber in the guise of a rightist populist revolt. In the paper, I approach the politics of populism by examining how the play deals with the French Blood Affair in the 1990s, which involved the French political establishment’s collusion with physicians who exposed hemophiliacs to the HIV virus, leaving thousands infected. It opened up political space for chauvinistic exploitation by politicians, on the one hand, and “entrepreneurial” space for graft by health officials and corporations, on the other.

In *La Ville parjure*, the liberal-democratic order is run by a “weak” King and “enlightened technocrats” who neither recognize a moral crisis nor know how to respond to it. With her moralizing attack on the democratic system, Cixous argues that pathological deviations or sickening outbursts have become indicators for the “normal” functioning of a power structure. I show that the political moral of Cixous’s narrative is that those responsible for the betrayal of a “so-called” democratic order not only make Fascism possible but create the conditions for its success. It is when democracy has turned into a system only concerned with stability—either through conservative apathy or “redemptive destruction.”

*Gray, Tricia, University of Louisville, United States*

**Gender Parity and Electoral Quotas: Regional Analysis of Latin America**

The theory of critical mass has only recently had the empirical conditions available for testing hypotheses, like do quotas increase the gender parity in politics? Does gender parity in politics make a difference? International norms advocating gender equality propelled states around the world to adopt electoral gender quotas to varying impacts, both in electoral results and legislative outcomes. The study of quotas allows a quasi-experimental approach in which to isolate the different steps along the stages of electoral politics to evaluate the effects of institutions on women’s elections and the reciprocal effects on the legislative process. Latin America includes both early and late adopters as well as strong quota and weak quota regimes. The regional analysis of different states, which adopted quotas in relatively close succession and with similar critical junctures, allows comparisons of the distinct effects of various policy reforms. Thus, a regional analysis of quotas in Latin America helps investigate the intermestic processes of international norms provoking domestic changes that then hone transnational norms toward parity. Comparative analysis of case studies will help frame different models, sequencing and policy implications for others in the region as well as other new adopters in other developing regions.





*Hearn, Jeff, Senior Professor, GEXcel, Örebro University, Sweden*

#### A LURKING DOOM THIS SIDE OF THE ABYSS: WORKING IN, AROUND AND AWAY FROM NATION AND NATIONALISM IN STUDYING MEN AND MASCULINITIES

In this presentation, I consider some different ways of engaging with, relating to, and ignoring what I call a 'lurking doom', the prospect of the worst of worlds:

- crushing crises: environmental, economic, socio-political, violent, migratory;
- proposing of "alternative facts", "alternative truths", "post-facts" or "post-truths";
- explicit claiming of authoritarianism as positive virtue within what appear nationalistic proto-fascist times; and
- convergence of economy, business, politics, culture, even entertainment.

But, how on earth are we, researchers, to respond to all this? And how in these contexts are research, policy and activism to be connected? As a way into discussing a little of this vast canvas, I focus on how working, individually and collectively, on nation and nationalism, and thus in turn race/ethnicity and migration, figures in the geopolitics of critical studies on men and masculinities, especially European-based studies on men and masculinities, and collaborations beyond Europe, including between South Africa, Finland and Sweden. In addressing these questions, I build on the notions of both the gap between feminism and men, and the colonial or global abyss, the interminable gap, that is and is left by colonialism, including that much colonised knowledge is absent(ed) and life/lives are absent(ed). These matters bear on the construction of Gender Studies, including institutional initiatives around feminist theorising and intersectionality, as well as wider transnational academic collaborations across disciplines. If this situation may seem novel, it is not; the histories and memories of nationalistic, colonialist, fascist, and populist discourses are very close, in several senses; a lurking doom is not new. In my own case violent empire was part of a normalised history and upbringing, and thus familiar. Now, some key questions seem to include: the continuing and intensifying relations of capitalism, (neo)colonialism and (neo)imperialism; the place of global violence for nationalism, racism and xenophobia; and the political concepts of patriarchy, neo-patriarchy, neoliberal patriarchy, and transnational patriarchies. These are urgent, and still often neglected, questions for the geopolitics of critical studies on men and masculinities.

*Husu, Liisa, Professor, GEXcel, Örebro University, Sweden*

#### ENGAGING NATIONAL RESEARCH POLICY STAKEHOLDERS FOR GENDER EQUALITY: RECENT SWEDISH DEVELOPMENTS

Major national research policy stakeholders – Education and Science Ministries, national research funding agencies and various science stakeholder advocate organisations – have a pivotal role as gatekeepers when it comes to gender equality in research policy and in the scientific community. They can, on the one hand, promote and enhance gender equality in research, including gender research, or, on the other, resist, impede, hinder and block such development. In the European Union research policy, gender equality has been on the agenda since the late 1990s, lately also including the gender dimension in research content itself. However, in the EU member states the situation is very diverse in this respect. Within this context, the paper discusses recent developments in Sweden, a country with long history and high international profile in and attainment of overall gender equality, and an active gender research community. Despite this,





gender inequality in Swedish academia is persistent especially when it comes to career advancement to the highest levels, and horizontal segregation is entrenched. Initiatives discussed and assessed include gender mainstreaming directive to all universities by the government, a Ministerial advisory group on gender and gender equality in European research policy, collaboration of public funding agencies around gender equality, as well as gender equality promotion project of the largest private funding agency for humanities and social sciences. What dilemmas and paradoxes can be identified in this kind of research and policy landscape, and what are the lessons to be learned from the Swedish experience for related activities in other countries?

*Karlsdóttir, Anna, Senior Research Fellow at Nordregio and Senior Researcher at EDDA Center of Excellence, Sweden and Iceland*

#### REFUGEE WOMEN'S OBSTACLES TO GET JOB IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VALIDATION PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCE, SOCIO-CULTURAL TABOOS AND RECOGNISED ASPECTS

In this paper I will focus on refugee women in the Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland) and the effect of integration programs – based on a Nordic cooperation initiative on integration and ways to catalyse faster integration to the labour market. The establishment question is in focus. How long time, does it take for different cohorts of refugees to become citizens with jobs or under education, and what are the main characteristics of the process? Female refugees lag behind in the integration process towards gaining jobs and income in the Nordic countries. Non formal skills, non-documented qualifications and low education levels are barriers to enter, but with various programs in place, and validation programs the Nordic Countries seek to improve progress for this group. A special recent initiative in Sweden will be explored, with references to social science research on refugee women, family status and conditions and language training. Lastly it will be discussed what aspects of integration are recognised and valid considerations in the integration process for women and what obstacles are non-spoken of (taboos).

*Kjaran, Jón Ingvar, Assistant Professor, University of Iceland and Ge Wei, Assistant Professor, Peking University, China*

#### GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION IN CHINA AND ICELAND: OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATING A TRANSFORMATIVE SPACE OF INCLUSION

In 1995 Beijing hosted the fourth United Nations (UN) world conference on women. Among the issues for actions agreed upon at the conference were in relation to education and training of women, e.g. to ensure equal access to educational opportunities and equality within education (UN, 1995). Thus, this paper addresses the changes implemented, both at practical and policy level in terms of equality in education in Iceland and China, the smallest and largest UN member nations in terms of populations.

We understand policy in broad terms, referring here both to legal documents, regulations, and the curriculum. In Iceland, legal requirements about education on gender equality have been in place for decades without being fulfilled. The Compulsory School Act from 2008 and the 2011 national curricula contain clauses on education about equality. The term refers to equality in a broad sense while gender is assumed to be intertwined with other diversity markers. In China, education has historically been perceived as a tool to achieve social equality while addressing equality issues in education itself did not gain prominence until the 1990s. However, policy makers and the educational system in general are influenced by the mobility of new ideas on gender, the continuing development of the teaching profession, the





internationalization of education, and critiques from academics. These factors can be seen as constituting an interconnected power to create a transformative space for gender equality in education.

This paper aims to present a comparative perspective guided by the research question, "How to create a transformative space for gender equality in education, based on the experience and practice in China and Iceland?"

The theoretical framework draws on Vygotsky's (1997) "transformative agency" and applies a feminist perspective in the form of "emancipatory discourse" (Butler, 2004). The policy or practice of gender equality in education is seen as an object-oriented activity (Leont'ev, 1978), which has the potential for social change and renewal towards a more democratic world.

In this paper we draw on various data from our research experience in the last five years, which includes interviews with teachers and students, curriculum texts, and policy documents in China and Iceland. We apply critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) to examine the teachers' and students' narratives, as well as national policies on gender equality.

The authors conclude that the current local-global situation with diversity contains opportunities if gender equality is established as the core of equality education. Based on the empirical data and comparative analysis, we propose "transformative space" as a conceptualization for theorizing current educational practice on gender equality. This term will contribute to connecting individual agency and collective societal construction at an activist stance (Stetsenko, 2008) in the era of globalization and increased cross-cultural interactions.

### *Largueche, Dalenda, Director of Centre for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women, Tunisia*

#### **THE MAKING OF GENDER EQUALITY IN TUNISIA'S TRANSITION**

Since 1956, Tunisia witnessed the first steps on the road of gender equality that worked progressively on women's rights. For this reason I would like to share our Tunisian feminist experience in its gender dimensions (political, social and cultural).

My criticism sheds light on the politic of gender in the new political Tunisian context after the revolution. Women's rights are very clear under Bourguiba and Ben Ali but in the post revolution Tunisia the democratic transition brings a new political context, a contradictory one affected by the religio-political resistance. Different actors have played an important role in fighting inequalities.

In my analysis, I will first point out the role of Tunisian legislators and leaders who show a big political will to enhance the situation of women. Second, I will accentuate the role of civil society, especially its feminist component, with the government in raising awareness and changing laws and mentalities.

Third, I will stress on the needed reforms that were or should be taken to fit the new constitution.

Finally, I will point out the political and social resistance that we face against the equality and the necessary preventive measures to make our stakes real and concrete.





*Ramme, Jennifer, Research Assistant and Lecturer, German-Polish Cultural and Literary Relations and Gender Studies, Social and Cultural Sciences at European University Viadrina, Frankfurt Oder Germany*

#### THE RIGHT WING TAKEOVER AND PITFALLS OF FEMINIST COUNTER-DISCOURSES

Politics of fear crying out the decline of the Nation and the crisis of family have become a popular mode of doing successful right wing politics in many European countries, including Poland. Instead of witnessing a "decline" it seems that in Poland fundamentalist catholic, right wing and ethnic constructions of national identity archived a hegemonic status and sets the discursive framework for political debates. The hegemony of nationalist concepts of belonging becomes especially visible, while analyzing feminist (counter)discourses. On examples of influential Warsaw based feminist initiatives/actors and recent mobilizations of so called "ordinary" women, I aim to show patterns and shifts in feminist discourses: while in the 90s feminists often referred to "global" feminism, especially since the membership of Poland in the EU, the Nation became (next to a "Europe") a central reference point. Besides discussing reasons for such developments, the main focus of this presentation is on: 1)

the structuring of the field of political discourses 2) the ambivalence in feminist (counter) discourses. When looking at the political debates it appears, that there are two main modes of distinction structuring the political field, both aiming to essentialize and exclude political opponents: The not-polish and the backward. Those two ways of distinction are linked to two major competing discourses: catholic ethno-nationalism and a (neoliberal) discourse of "becoming Europe". But there is also another tendency visible in political debates: the claim of national belonging and use of patriotism in order to legitimize a critique of nationalism. Such tendencies can be as well be observed in arguments of opponents of the right wing, among them feminists, LGBT's or even antifascists. This presentation addresses pitfalls of feminists and LGBT's argumentative strategies against the far right and examines the role a teleological understanding of (sexual) modernity, but as well "post-coloniality" plays in contemporary political struggles.

*Rúðólfsdóttir, Annadís G., Associate Professor in Research Methodology, Faculty of Education, University of Iceland and Ásta Jóhannsdóttir, PhD student in Sociology, University of Iceland, teacher at the Icelandic Academy of Arts and the UI*  
Emerging Feminist Movements: The #freethenipple Protests in Iceland in 2015

In this paper we discuss young women's emerging feminist movements or feminist counter-publics in the digital age. The focus is on the #freethenipple protests in Iceland in 2015 organised by young women and the ensuing debates in mainstream digital news media and popular ezines. We adopt a feminist, post-structuralist perspective to analyse the discursive context in which the debates and discussions about the protest are embedded, but we are also informed by recent theories about the role of affect in triggering and sustaining political movements. The data our research is based on consists of 60 texts from the digital public domain published during and after the protests. We argue that the young women's political movement is construed as a revolution centering on reclaiming the body from the oppressive structures of patriarchy which, through shame and pornification, have taken their bodies and their ability to choose, in a post-feminist context, from them. Public representations of the protest are mostly supportive and many older feminists are affectively pulled by the young women's rhetoric about how patriarchy has blighted their lives. We argue that the young women manage to claim space as agents of change but highlight the importance of the support or affective sustenance they receive from older feminists.





*Shefer, Tamara, Professor, University of Western Cape, South-Africa*

#### YOUNG WOMEN, POLITICS AND PERFORMANCE IN THE PROJECT OF GENDER AND SEXUAL JUSTICE IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA: LOCAL FEMINIST RESISTANCES IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

In the context of proliferating conservative, right-wing politics, the relatively new South African democracy faces both local and global challenges to its social and gender justice agenda. It is therefore particularly encouraging that the last two years of the South African political landscape has been characterized by young people's activism, starting in higher education but also in the public domain more broadly. Student movements such as #Rhodesmustfall and #feesmustfall, amongst others, have made calls for radical change in higher education, including decolonizing the curriculum and providing free and equal education. Such calls also speak to larger social inequalities in a society that continues to repeat the injustices and inequalities of decades of apartheid, a system of institutionalized racial and patriarchal capitalism, and centuries of colonization. One of the notable features of these current struggles has been the presence of strong feminist and queer activist voices which have mobilized around intersectionality within the decolonial project and engaged in particular in what may be termed performative activism. The paper shares some poignant examples of gender and justice activism among young people in current South Africa, illustrating a nuanced and intersectional understanding of the challenges facing contemporary South Africa that is cognizant of both past and present injustice. In particular, I explore the value of such activist and pedagogical interventions within public spaces, both virtual and material, that disrupt normative gendered, sexual, raced and other social identities and inequalities. I conclude with a reflection on the generative impact of such activism to the larger project of sexual and gender justice in South African and in global contexts.

*Shnyrova, Olga, Director, Center of Gender Studies, Ivanovo State University, Russia*

#### FEMINISM VS TRADITIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA: NEW FORMS OF RESISTANCE

The political and societal situation in Russia can be described as conservative and nationalist, with strong appeal to traditionalism and patriarchy. The words "gender", "gender equality", "gender politics" were excluded from the official discourse and even considered to be dangerous for the nation by Orthodox activists whose influence is growing. All this puts the great challenges for women's activism and feminism in Russia. But does it mean that feminism disappears? No, but it is transforming and taking different forms. In my paper I am going to explore different forms and types of feminist activity in Russia: from radical and left feminist groups to the manifestation of feminist ideology in Muslim and Orthodox communities. I will also analyze major campaigns against attempts of the government to establish new laws increasing gender discrimination and main actors of feminist movement in Russia, investigating difference between feminist and other forms of female activity supported by the state.





*Tamale, Diana, Youth Crime Watch, Uganda*

THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL COMMERCIAL MEDIA ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEVELOPING PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN CULTURAL IDENTITY AND THE LIFESTYLE CHOICES AVAILABLE TO THEM

This paper explores the impact of global commercial media on young people's developing perceptions of their own cultural identity and how the lifestyle choices available to them, when they assume or reject a particular cultural identity, are inflected by the intermingling of global media, local tradition and changing cultural demographics. The paper works from the premise that local cultures are not so much being replaced by 'global culture' as inflecting it by coexisting with it. The fact is that there have been some dramatic developments in the ways young people in different parts of the world perceive themselves and their relation to their local and global environment.

*Thym, Anika, Doctoral Student, Network Gender Studies Switzerland and University of Basel, Switzerland*

ANTI-FEMINIST, RIGHT WING AND NEOLIBERAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SWITZERLAND

The goal of my talk is:

a) To give insights into a Swiss right wing, anti-feminist, nationalist, anti-migration and islamophobic insider perspective by drawing on an interview that was published in the Swiss left wing weekly newspaper WOZ in July 2016. A public debate about feminism and anti-feminism, left wing and right wing politics had been launched after two women from the Swiss Socialist Party (SP) had discovered a lie by the right-wing politician Andreas Glarner (SVP; Swiss People's Party).

The interview was conducted with a man who had posted a comment below a misogynist Facebook post by Glarner. The interviewee argues that "not so attractive women" "have a difficult time finding a Swiss man" and that they therefore support the immigration of young male refugees. He himself has a well-paid job as a programmer and is married to a Ukrainian woman. He thinks that "Swiss men should have the privilege to get and marry a woman from the Ukraine, if he likes her" (all his colleagues "have Ukrainian or Russian women"). The problem with refugees, above all Muslims, was that they "chose to come by themselves" and that there were too many. He complains that as an introverted, shy, Swiss man, he doesn't have a chance of 'getting' attractive Swiss women. His wife was "very attractive" and she was only with him, because he can "care for her financially".

b) There are many parallels between the views of this interviewee and Georg Seeßlen's (2017) description of "Trump women" and "Sugardaddies". He argues that there is a new gender order, a "neoliberal renaissance of patriarchy" (ibid., 41), in which what he calls 'Trump women' oppose liberal feminists as much as 'Trump men' hate their upright and tolerant male opponents (ibid., 44). They oppose equality-oriented gender and family orders and live a "sexual economy" in which the status of a woman as "luxury good" is accepted (ibid., 43), as long as "the price is right" (ibid., 39). The 'Trump woman' knows what she is worth and how to increase her value and therefore does not feel oppressed (ibid., 42).

Using the interview from the Swiss case as example, I will trace some aspects of the inner logic of right wing populist discourse and its gender order (including its anti-feminist tendencies) in its neoliberal context from within.





c) Thirdly, I will situate these observations in the current Swiss context. The antifeminist and lately also antigenderist discourses are an “expression of an increasing polarisation in the struggle concerning the (neoliberally transformed) maintenance respectively the emancipatory overcoming of the traditional social and gender order in Switzerland” (Maihofer/Schutzbach 2015, 203). The debate is about the social meaning of gender, sexuality, family and nation as well as norms such as justice, freedom and equality (ibid.). It is about which lives are seen as liveable and which ones are not. Gender Studies thereby represent a ‘threat’, because they not only illustrate the continuity of male supremacy and related power relations, but also question it and therefore endanger its legitimacy (ibid.).

*Trakilović, Milica, PhD Student, Graduate Gender Programme, Utrecht University, Netherlands*

#### **TSUNAMIS, FLOODS & RISING TIDES: FRAMING MIGRATION AS A NATURAL DISASTER IN POPULAR & POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

The mediatization of the current European ‘migration crisis’ is, in both popular and political jargon, often described through the use of so-called maritime metaphors; expressions connected to bodies of water. There is talk about migrants “flooding” Europe and refugees arriving in “waves.” The emphasis on aquatic-border crossings in popular discourse makes Europe appear as an island at times. Water is both a bridge and an obstacle, a reality and a metaphor. In this paper, I want to argue that the framing of migration as a natural disaster by politicians and media not only dehumanizes the migrants themselves but also promotes the notion of an enlightened European ‘Self’ that is under threat. To frame migration as a natural disaster is to invoke a generative metaphor that secures the boundaries of Europeanness. For example, the Dutch right-wing populist politician Geert Wilders talked of a “tsunami of islamization” heading for the Netherlands, prompting the need to make the Dutch borders “waterproof.” Moreover, this aquatic metaphor carries with it a sense of threat as it has a distinctly gendered dimension; reports and news articles on the disproportionate number of male migrants/refugees abound. This “stream” of migrants therefore corresponds to the notion of the threatening male Other, doubly obscuring the lived realities of women migrants and other gender and sexual minorities, which this paper will pay particular attention to. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have argued, metaphors can play a fundamental role in how we view the world and our role in it. What does it mean to speak of migration as a tsunami tidal wave? In order to demonstrate the workings of this maritime metaphor, I will conduct a discourse analysis of selected media texts, paying particular attention to Dutch popular and political discourse. Since the Netherlands has, according to Gloria Wekker, historically conceived of itself as a small but enlightened nation, and since this country has experienced formidable water disasters in the past against which formidable mechanisms of flood control have been built, the ‘maritime metaphor’ resonates particularly strongly here and will in this paper be considered in a larger European context.