



Gender Studies Research Group

RINGS Conference and Annual Meeting 2019

**Genders and Feminisms in a Polarised World:
Sustainability, Futures and Utopias**

October 2-4, 2019
Tallinn, Estonia

Call for Papers

This call is for RINGS members. However, member organisations are encouraged to invite others towards extending membership, with particular emphasis on strengthening the participation of those from countries in the Global South.

RINGS, the International Research Association of Institutions of Advanced Gender Studies (ringsgender.org) is a global association of centres of advanced gender studies. The participating centres span Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and the Americas. Four RINGS assembly meetings and conferences have been held since the inauguration of RINGS in October 2014 at Örebro University: Prague (2015), Cape Town (2016), Reykjavik (2017) and Lisbon (2018). The fifth RINGS annual meeting and conference will be hosted by the Gender Studies Research Group at Tallinn University, Estonia.

We are living at a time of increasing political polarisations, deepening divisions shaped by conflicting values and the troubling rise of populism. This is evidenced by disturbing developments such as the rise of far-right political forces, misogynistic neoconservatism as well as the emergence of anti-gender sentiments and movements globally. In this context, gender studies occupies a precarious position. It is typically seen by conservative and far right political stakeholders as a radical attempt to restructure society and culture, as they fight against the “gender ideology” and have even succeeded in banning some academic gender studies programmes.

At the same time, we inhabit the age of the Anthropocene where human-induced climate change threatens the wellbeing and sustainability of not only our communities and societies but the entire planet. We need urgent ways of dealing with this ecological crisis. Responses to this have to be collective and move beyond individual solutions as typically promoted by the hegemonic neoliberal ideology prevalent in many societies today. Forging alliances, solidarities and developing joint interventions to deal with the ecological crisis is challenging at the time of polarisation which further exacerbates the global sustainability crisis.

Despite the marginalisation and precarious position of gender studies in many national contexts, gender and feminist perspectives can make important contributions to making sense of the increasingly polarised world and how this poses a threat to sustainability on local and global levels. This way, gender and feminist studies could provide visions of more sustainable futures - socially, culturally, and ecologically.

To achieve this, we need new theoretical insights and directions that help us to make sense of and challenge the currently unfolding environmental crisis and political polarisations, as our existing frameworks may be inadequate to explain these phenomena. Here, inspiration may be drawn from many directions, for example, posthumanist thinking and ecofeminist theories that have critically addressed how people relate to and intra-act with the more-than-human, thus redefining the very category of the human, in light of sustainability.

This conference invites contributions that interrogate the meanings of genders, feminisms and the role of gender and feminist studies at the time of polarisation and global sustainability crises. Sustainability is often understood in three broad dimensions: social, environmental and economic. We encourage forward looking perspectives and invite papers to address, for example, the following issues:

- How do anti-gender movements and sentiments operate in local contexts and how do they threaten sustainability on local and global levels?
- What language should we use to talk about gender, feminism and gender studies in a context where gender, feminism and gender studies are often misunderstood and misrepresented? How can we counter essentialism?
- How can we as gender scholars practice critical self-reflexivity, notice and address our own blind spots, omissions, and ways in which we are part of aggravating the sustainability crisis? What possible solutions can gender and feminist knowledge offer to deal with the crisis and move towards a more sustainable world?
- How do we relate to various stakeholders in the academia, as well as the broader society, in the context of political polarisation and increasing divisions based on conflicting values? How to overcome echo chambers? How to develop meaningful dialogue to bridge gaps and overcome divisions?
- How can gender and feminist knowledge help make sense of and transform our relationship to other subjects beyond the human? How do gender studies help to rethink the human in an era when our species is threatening planetary sustainability?
- How do polarisations and ecological challenges shape and are shaped by gender relations and politics in particular geographical and geopolitical areas, such as the Global South?
- How can we use (eco)feminist and decolonial approaches to understand issues and phenomena such as identity, race, sexuality, material inequalities and migration in the context of sustainability?
- What kind of intersectional alliances can be formed to overcome divides, embrace pluralities and work towards a more sustainable world? What kinds of activisms are relevant?
- What could gender and gender relations look like in the future? Where could/should gender studies be heading? What are our ideals, desired futures, utopias and ecotopias?

In addition to these themes, presentations on urgent matters (e.g. political developments affecting the situation of gender studies in a national context) could be included. Formats other than presentations, particularly more interactive formats (such as panels) are welcome.

Practical information

Host organisation: Gender Studies Research Group, Tallinn University

Venue: Tallinn University, Uus-Sadama 5, 10120, Tallinn, Estonia

Registration fee: a minimum of 100 euros for institutions variable by location. The fee will support RINGS solidarity fund. Members from lower income countries can apply for funding from the solidarity fund to offset participation costs. Assistance from the solidarity fund is subject to sufficient availability of funds. Please contact conference organisers for possible assistance after June 15.

Accommodation and travel: Accommodation and travel costs are to be covered by the participants. The hosts will suggest accommodation options and arrange reduced prices.

Deadlines and important dates:

- Abstracts of a maximum of 350 words are to be submitted by **April 30, 2019** to rings2019@tlu.ee, with the subject line "RINGS abstract"
- Acceptance notifications will be issued by **May 31, 2019**
- Conference registration will open on **June 1, 2019**

Contact for inquiries:

- rings2019@tlu.ee

Conference Committee:

Local organising committee

- Kadri Aavik, Associate Professor of Gender Studies, Tallinn University
- Uku Lember, Research Fellow and Lecturer of General History, Tallinn University
- Julia Tofantšuk, Associate Professor of British Literature, Tallinn University
- Pille Ubakivi-Hadachi, Early-Stage Researcher, Tallinn University

International advisory committee

- Analia Torres, Professor of Sociology, University of Lisbon
- Paula Pinto, Associate Professor, University of Lisbon
- Iva Šmidova, Associate Professor, Masaryk University
- Deevia Bhana, Professor, University of Kwazulu-Natal
- Jeff Hearn, Senior Professor of Gender Studies, Örebro University
- Tamara Shefer, Professor of Women and Gender Studies, University of the Western Cape