

Kommission
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17th Meeting of the Committee for Women- and Gender-Studies of the German Association for European Ethnology (dgv)

CALL FOR PAPERS

Troubling Gender: New Upheavals in the Politics of Gender in Europe

09-11 April 2021, University of Goettingen

Organized by the *dgv Committee for Women- and Gender-Studies* in cooperation with the *dgv Committee for Europeanization/Globalization: Ethnographies of the Political* and the *Department for Cultural Anthropology/European Ethnology* of the University of Goettingen

The latest events in Europe indicate that the politics of gender and sexuality is becoming extremely hostile. Many gender-related topics are (again) open for a discussion, including transgender and queer rights, legal regulation of sexual offences, gender mainstreaming, or the regulation of reproductive bodies through abortion, reproductive technologies, or infrastructures of care. We can also notice that gender plays a major role in the reshaping of diversity and anti-discrimination policies, formations of care and social reproduction, as well as in sustainable economies in the light of global intersectional inequalities. Diverse actors are involved in these new processes: gender and sexual orientation are becoming points of contention and controversy for political parties, law-makers, (international) political bodies, the media, various publics and social movements, in scholarly discussions, and so on.

The seriousness of the situation becomes clear when we look across Europe: in Poland, Hungary, and Croatia there are attempts to limit or to revoke the right to abortion; Gender Studies have been banned at universities in Hungary and Bulgaria; Austrian FPÖ/ÖVP government has severely limited the money for the research of gender politics. LGBT rights have been questioned in France and Italy, while in Poland we witness the emergence of the so-called “LGBT-free zones” and the diminishment of LGBT rights. With the rise of the AfD in Germany, gender imaginaries and anti-feminist discourses (believed to had been long overcome) gain more and more prominence at local, state and federal levels, while the successes of gender democracy and the attained liberalization of gender relations and sexual practices are increasingly framed as threats (Lang/Peters 2018; Villa/Hark 2015; Sauer 2017).

At the same time, arguments for gender equality are used to criticize immigration, while gender is used as a marker of modernity and distinction in Western countries as well as in post-socialist societies. The gender-mainstreaming politics of the EU, which defines “gender compatibility” as a condition of the accession negotiations, also contributes to the politicization of gender, without producing notable successes.

How can we support the struggle against gender oppression and discrimination in such discursive conditions, without reproducing the idea that certain regions and groups are “back-

ward” or that they need to “catch up”? How can we think about gender justice beyond liberal models? And can we find an inspiration for progressive gender politics in places and knowledges beyond Europe?

Gender seems to be a kind of a kaleidoscope through which one can study broad social, economic, cultural, and political transformations and upheavals. All of these fields are concerned with illegitimate bodies and subjectivities, power and positionality, and above all else with opening or foreclosing particular life-chances and possibilities for personal biographies. We also need to question which groups, subjects, and infrastructures will profit from particular constellations of gender regulations.

The conference will provide a place to discuss such questions on the basis of empirical, ethnographically informed research. Due to these shifts and ambiguities, gender studies scholars must continuously study new constellations of conflicts, actors, and discourses; they are also increasingly required to cultivate a new sensibility to explore which levels, politics, and interests are involved. A praxeological perspective seems to be especially suitable for looking at such complex assemblages of actors, discourses, and practices, alongside their contradictory effects and dynamics, without losing from sight the multiplicity of intentions, motivations, meanings, and acts of various actors.

Anthropology of Policy as well as Science and Technology Studies provide important insights – based on Shore & Wright (2011) – into how to research new relationalities, political subjects, interwoven meanings and their joint effects.

Furthermore, it is necessary to look at these fields of conflict and controversy from a transnational perspective and to develop analysis and criticism by going beyond the framework of national borders. Diverse appeals to and instrumentalizations of gender as a point of contention strongly prompt gender studies to adopt the interest of the postcolonial studies in interdependencies and interconnectivities when doing research and thinking. In order to develop a comparative perspective, we invite contributions from the whole Europe – and especially from Eastern, South, and Southeast Europe.

Last but not least, the questions raised here also draw attention to feminist movements and practices, that is, to the nexus of activism – science – practice: How do the approaches implied by phrases such as “diversity” or “gender mainstreaming” affect gender? How can and what should feminist cooperation look like? Which joint goals are there and what forms of cooperating in utmost freedom can we think of? How can we protect, rethink, and keep the (jointly) won victories? Which challenges can be faced simultaneously? And what can gender studies offer to the ethnographic approaches? What new answers and approaches are required at this time of upheaval?

Considering such dynamics, we want to structure the discussions at the conference around the three following problems:

1. Regulations: Policy, Regime, Right, Knowledge

In and through which places, scales, politics, instruments, knowledges and/or body images can we see attempts to regulate gender relations? What moral/ethical forms of structuring, standardisation, classification and naming are taking place today? What is their relationship to exclusion, subjectivities, and fields of action? In what ways are knowledge and politics interwoven today? Which negotiations, collaborations, and conflicts become visible?

2. Gender as a Point of Contention in Politics

Here it would be particularly important to ask: In whose name are arguments concerning gender articulated? Whose knowledge about gender is taken as relevant? And which (intended as well as unintended) consequences does this have?

3. Practices and politics of feminist intervention

Here it is especially important to re-examine the following: How are feminisms themselves in motion and which feminisms are becoming virulent in social movements? How are feminisms articulated? And which old-new links between activism, knowledge, and feminism appear today?

During the conference “**Troubling Gender: New Upheavals in the Politics of Gender in Europe**”, we aim to discuss these three strands of topics in various formats: in addition to the more conventional panels and open forums, we plan also roundtables and World Cafés. We explicitly invite transnational/European and interdisciplinary perspectives. We will also gladly support panels organized by early-career scholars and the presentation of graduate works.

Submissions

We look forward to receiving your proposals for presentations, panels, and other formats. Eligible are contributions from all empirically-based social sciences and humanities.

Abstracts of 2000 characters should introduce the research question, empirical background, and the key argument and they should include brief information about the author. Please send abstracts by 30. June to: shess@uni-goettigen.de

The call can be found: https://www.d-g-v.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2021_CfP_Troubling_Gender_eng-002.pdf

Conception and organization

the *dgv Committee for Women- and Gender-Studies* (Sabine Hess, Beate Binder) and the *dgv Committee for Europeanization/Globalization: Ethnographies of the Political* (Jens Adam, Asta Vonderau, and Patrick Wielowiejski)

Organizing team: Carna Brkovic, Johanna Elle, Marie Fröhlich, Sabine Hess with the support of Marion Näser-Lather