

Is Gender Dangerous?
**Unravelling anti-gender and anti-migrant movements and reflecting on the current
challenges of doing research on gender**

Two-day workshop on 19-20 September 2019, Free University of Amsterdam

Call for papers

The Network for the Anthropology of Gender and Sexuality (NAGS) of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) will hold its Interannual Meeting and two-day workshop on 19-20 September 2019 at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Over the last years, we have witnessed a growing importance of gender and sexuality issues in public and political debate, particularly in relation to migration and refugee issues. During this NAGS interannual meeting, we aim to interrogate the roles of anthropologists and students of gender and sexuality in current changing social landscapes marked by heightened nationalism and the rise of populist and right-wing thought. Anthropologists have an important role to play in sketching and analysing current contestations of gender, and gender-related discursive practices in specific contexts and communities, and the variety of political threats against it. At the same time, we remain interested in the 'anthropology of the good' (Ortner 2016) by examining how involvement with gender studies across Europe keeps playing important positive and transformative roles, even in structurally precarious positions.

We welcome all contributions that engage with current social, political and cultural entanglements of uses, abuses and resistances against gender as a concept and analytical tool. We particularly invite contributions that engage broadly with the themes below.

Please send your abstracts (250 words) to easanags@gmail.com

Deadline for abstracts: 15 June 2019. Notifications will be sent on 30 June 2019.

The workshop will be structured around panel sessions and roundtable sessions. Please indicate if you prefer to present your paper in a panel session or in a roundtable session. If you have any questions or want to discuss your paper proposal, please write to easanags@gmail.com. We will invite authors of accepted papers to send their draft papers by 10 September 2019 in order to enable engaged discussion and feedback.

Theme 1:

Entanglements of Right-wing, Gender and Migration

Far right parties have succeeded in influencing the political agenda and public debate in Europe for decades. Crucial themes that emerged from this dominance are gender equality and migration. Gender, family relations and family ideology - and particularly topics that became known under the umbrella term of harmful cultural practices - have played an important role in shifting political debate concerning multiculturalism in Europe. In countries such as Norway and the Netherlands, these controversies had a share in leftist parties' distancing from the multicultural ideal as a guiding principle for policy making, while they aided right-wing parties to increase their appeal to the large public (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007, Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010). Many right-wing groups have formally embraced gender and sexual equality values. Some of these developments have been conceptualized through the notions of homonationalism (Puar 2007), femonationalism (Farris 2017), and sexual nationalisms (Mepschen and Duyvendak 2012). These concepts denote the instrumentalisation of gender and sexual equality values in an effort to distinguish 'us' versus 'them' (Muslims, minorities, refugees etc.). Such re-appropriations have served to widen racial boundaries between communities and to advance a restrictive policy toward migrants and refugees. However, the concept of homonationalism has also been criticized for employing an unquestioned division between a 'progressive global North' and a 'conservative global South'. Postsocialist countries in Central/Eastern Europe show different histories and realities of the well-known dichotomies of right-wing and left-wing, conservative and progressive (Mishtal 2015).

Activists and scholars have discussed the current state of gender equality values globally through an analysis of anti-gender discourses and movements, especially in Europe (Kováts and Poim 2015, Köttig, Bitzan, and Petó 2017, Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). Some of these scholars argue that anti-gender movements are a new phenomenon in European politics which requires new methods for study and different counter strategies from progressive forces. Against the background of these developments, Joan Scott argues that the term gender has become more elusive with time instead of more clear (Scott 2013). The term has become the center of intense struggle over meaning, in diverse social and political contexts, within and among religious and secular groups. The entanglements between anti-gender and anti-migration movements are therefore complex, diverse and changing. We welcome papers on the above developments across Europe.

Theme 2:
How can gender scholars respond to current threats against the field?

In the above context, we want to take stock of on-going threats against gender studies programs and scholars across Europe and reflect on possible responses and strategies. How does questioning the scientific value of gender studies by anti-gender movements challenge teaching gender studies? What kind of responses are possible when illiberal governments are questioning autonomy of education? We invite all scholars working on gender and sexuality issues and particularly anthropologists to reflect on the current state of studying gender in Europe. How can we understand and face the current attacks and threats against gender studies as a discipline and against academic freedom? What is the meaning of gender studies in the public consciousness and which differences occur across different regional and political contexts? How can researchers of gender and sexuality occupy a larger space in the public debate? We aim to provide space to discuss different experiences with types of academic threat and precarity by those working in the study of gender. At the same time, we hope to provide opportunity for exchange of positive experiences, responses and strategies. We equally want to focus on the various ways in which involvements with gender studies across Europe have kept playing constructive and transformative roles.

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