



(En)gendering new conversations: ethnographic research and its contribution to politicized debates on gender and sexuality



Dates: 23-24th of November

Location: Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Oude Boteringestraat 38, 9712 GK, Groningen, the Netherlands

This workshop of the Network for the Anthropology of Gender and Sexuality (NAGS) of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) aims to bring together anthropologists from all over Europe. It is coordinated by Kim Knibbe (University of Groningen) and Anna Fedele (CRIA, Lisbon University Institute) and organized in cooperation with EASA, with Marina de Regt of the Dutch Association of Feminist Anthropologists (LOVA), Brenda Bartelink and Jelle Wiering of the Centre for Religion, Conflict and Globalization at the University of Groningen.

The themes for the panels respond to the intense public debates around issues to do with gender and sexuality, which, at least in Europe and the US, often problematize migrants in particular. At a time when many countries are passing legislation that infringes on the rights of women and sexual minorities, and the protest within countries that initiate more progressive legislation is quite loud, we think it is important to initiate a very wide-ranging conversation among anthropologists how we can best contribute to these politicized debates.

For this reason, in this workshop we will have (maximum of 15 minutes) presentations in the form of 'think pieces' and facilitate interactive discussion formats to enable researchers to 1) reflect on the underpinnings of their own research both theoretically and methodologically and 2) engage in public debates based on their research expertise, placed within a comparative context.

In addition, the workshop will have a roundtable discussion on gender, race and precarity in academia, with the aim to prepare a working document with themes to be addressed and suggestions for ways to address these to be discussed during the network meeting at the next EASA conference.

Program (detailed)

DAY 1 - Thursday 23 November

12:00 - 13:00 registration

13:00 - 14:15 welcome by organizers and opening speech by Tamsin Bradley

14:15 - 16:00 Anthropology, development, gender and sexuality

Convenors and discussants: Brenda Bartelink (Groningen) and Marina de Regt (VU, LOVA).

Anthropologists have been engaged in doing ethnographic research on the lived experiences of women around the world. Informed by this research they have critiqued structural gender injustices and the biases against taking seriously the lived realities and perspectives of women in society, policy and politics. Some anthropologists have taken a position of reflecting critically on how international development have worked on advancing the human rights of women and girls. These anthropologists question how attempts to liberate women affirms their subordinate position as subjects in need of saving (Abu Lughod 2002, 2013), and pointed out the cultural imperialism underlying the concern with women's bodies in the global south while turning a blind eye to bodily practices and beauty ideals in the global north (Boddy, 2016). Others have engaged more consciously with activists, civil society organizations as well as development donor organizations in their efforts to improve the lives of women and girls, aiming at contributing to more inclusive, cultural sensitive as well as reflexive practices informed by research (Longman and Bradley 2015). This panel has the aim of investigating how anthropologist navigate critical, intersectional methodologies and ethnographic research on women's lived realities around the world, with their roles in activism, civil society as well as influencing policy.

Speakers:

- **Rahil Roodsaz**, *"Reflecting on a Dutch-Bangladeshi Adolescent Sexuality Education Project from an Anthropological, Feminist and Intersectional Perspective"*
- **Shuchi Karim**, *"Doing Research in the Murky Waters of Development-Agenda Led Sexuality Rights Activism in Bangladesh: Dangers and Dilemmas of a Scholar Activist"*
- **May Ngo**, *"The Politics of Presence: Religion, Development, Gender and Ethnographic Practice"*
- **Francesca Mininel**, *"Vagina Politics. How the Medicalization of Ethnicity and Gender Identities Have Affected Women's Social Life in Togo."*

16:00 - 16:15 Coffee

16:15 - 18:00 Gender, anthropology, and new imperial history

Convenor and discussant: Iris Busschers (Groningen)

This panel aims to explore how work done in the fields of new imperial history and anthropology on the intersections of gender, sexuality and race can be fruitfully brought into conversation, making the longevity and contemporary relevance of some of these configurations visible. Gender and sexuality have become focal points in discussions on national identities and migration in recent years. Both anthropologists and historians have provided critical readings of these intersections in relation to their specific areas of expertise, highlighting the reconfiguration and reproduction of specific (imperial) discourses and practices. In the Netherlands, a society with a tradition of collective amnesia with respect to its colonial past, a critical reassessment of the intertwining of gender, sexuality, and race in relation to imperialism and nationalism has become more visible in recent years, but a systematic engagement with the topics remains marginal. How can we make these efforts more sustained or visible? In the field of imperial history, anthropological perspectives on gender and sexuality have exerted great influence (e.g. the work of Ann Laura Stoler). Conversely, anthropologists of gender have often drawn on historical work to understand present day discussions on gender and sexuality (e.g. the renewed legislations against homosexuality in many African countries). This panel calls on scholars working on these intersections to propose 'think pieces' reflecting on grounds for conversation between these disciplinary fields with a view to current societal debates, without losing the particular reflexivity and perimeters of both disciplines. How can historians and anthropologists help each other to develop new research perspectives? What methods, concepts and new perspectives can be transferred between these fields, or could be developed by bringing these fields together? What are particularly promising avenues of research or thematic foci? What can these disciplines learn from each other in making specific studies 'speak' to larger issues?

Speakers:

- **Ruari McBride**, *"Violence Against Women in South Africa and the Limited Utility of Knowledge"*
- **Miriam di Paola**, *"Nursing in South Africa: Knowledge, Race, Gender and Sexual Division of Labour."*
- **Monika Baer**, *"Still Premodern? Gender/Sexuality on the Fringe of the EU "Empire."*

17:30 - 18:15 drinks

Evening program

[TBC] 20:00 – 21:30 Public lecture

DAY 2 – Friday 24 November

9:00- 11:00 The anthropology of religion and the anthropology of gender: mutually blind?

Convenors: Anna Fedele (Uil) and Kim Knibbe (Groningen). Discussant: Joram Tarusarira (Groningen)

Within the anthropology of religion, gender is very often not a topic. Conversely, to (often feminist and/or queer) anthropologists specialized in gender, religion is an unexciting topic, since it is usually strongly associated with patriarchal gender ideologies. However, in recent years there has been an increase in scholarship that connects the two fields, notably via scholarship on paganism and contemporary spiritualities, and the anthropology of Islam. These developments have led to new research, in particular on the intersections between gender, sexuality and secularism, which is developing into a very interesting field of study. This panel invites contributions that bridge the two sub-disciplines and explore avenues for further engagement and the development of new research agenda's, but also for engagement with societal debates.

Speakers:

- ***Kathrine van den Bogert***, *"The Anthropology of Muslim Women, Islam, and Gender: Beyond "Everyday Islam"."*
- ***An van Raemdonck***, *"Gender-Conservative Religion in a Comparative and Interdisciplinary Perspective."*
- ***Jasmijn Rana***, *"Gender, Religion and Kickboxing: The Empowerment-Paradigm in Sport Participation."*
- ***Elisabetta Costa***, *"The Morality of Pre-Marital Romances: Social Media, Flirting and Love in Southeast Turkey."*
- ***Anna Fedele***, *"Confirming and Challenging Traditional Gender Roles on the Way to Fátima."*

11:00 - 11:15 Coffee

11:15 -12: 15 Roundtable and discussion with participants: Precarity and gender in academia

Convenors: Iris Busschers (Groningen), Kim Knibbe (Groningen)

In this round table discussion, we ask various academics from within anthropology and outside the discipline to reflect on the themes of precarity and gender in academia, to enable an exploration and exchange of experiences with these issues across the diverse contexts of the participants. During this session, we will work towards creating a document listing the threats to gender equality and academic integrity that we perceive to exist in current academic practice and conditions, and the measures we think are necessary to work on improving both. This document can be made available to anyone via the EASA and LOVA webpages, to provide a basis for campaigning at local and national levels.

12:15 - 13:30 Lunch

13:30- 15:15 Sex education in the Netherlands, reports from the field (round table discussion)

Convenor: Jelle Wiering (Groningen)

Speakers: Lieke Schrijvers, Rachel Galama, Nikki Eleveld, Marijke Naezer

This panel focuses on the stories and experiences of Dutch sex educators in their sex educations. What do sex educators, in their educations for youth but also parents, observe to be important issues to pay attention to? On what levels do they deem their sex education particularly successful and necessary? What are prevalent misunderstandings of sex commonly shared among people they encounter and how have they come about? What are the difficult parts of teaching about sex, and how do these educators deal with these? How have the educations changed the educators themselves personally in their own lives? And, how might sex educations perhaps be improved? Exploring such questions, this panel aims to present a qualitative perspective of sex education, highlighting actual stories and experiences of educators rather than the more commonly seen emphasis on quantitative data. In doing so, the panel not only adds an interesting qualitative account to a topic that is mainly approached quantitatively, it also provides us with a lens to zoom in on the encounters and interactions between discourses and individuals.

15:15- 15:30 coffee

15:30- 17:15 Gender, race, religion. National(ist) conversations, transnational scholarship (open session)

Convenor: Kim Knibbe (Groningen), discussant: Erin Wilson

This panel invites anthropologists from different parts of Europe to summarize the debates on migration going on everywhere in Europe, highlighting how gender, racialisation and religion play in a role in these debates, but also which political parties, civil society actors etc.. take up more critical positions. This can then provide a starting point to think through strategies for public interventions by anthropologists.

Speakers:

Markus Balkenhol, “[TBC]”

Saara Toukolehto, “Values and Gender in Anthropology of Acculturation and Policy Making.”

Sylva Frisk & Klara Öberg, “Contemporary Debates on Culture and Gender: The Case of Sexual Abuse in Public Space.”

17: 15 - 18:00 New engagements? Engendering new conversations on the public role of the anthropology of gender and sexuality in a post-colonial Europe

Reflections on the conference by Marina de Regt, Brenda Bartelink, and Anna Fedele.

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18:00 - 18:30 drinks

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17:15 - 18:00 Closing reflections: New engagements? Engendering new conversations on the public role of the anthropology of gender and sexuality in a post-colonial Europe