

Perspectives on Gender Studies in Europe

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Gender studies have a quite recent life-history in the academic field³, following different patterns of recognition and institutionalisation in the European scenario⁴. Despite political, economic, social and intellectual changes and challenges, however, they seem to continue “to be a vibrant, dynamic, innovative and influential area of study” (Richardson and Robinson 2008, xvii), bringing to the fore innovative theoretical ideas, research approaches and pedagogical practices.

The aim of this round table is to explore the state of Gender Studies in some European countries and to try to foresee possible perspectives for their forthcoming transformations.

We have chosen to focus on a generation of scholars grown up after the second wave of feminism, in a changed cultural scenario, often experiencing, in their training as well

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³ As Richardson and Robinson (2008) pointed out, since the 1990s in the naming of research centres and degree courses, there has been a shift from the term “women’s studies” to the use of the label “gender studies”, witnessing their establishment in the canon of the social sciences, arts and humanities disciplines.

⁴ The peculiarity of gender studies in Italy has been recently under debate (see Pravadelli 2010, Magaraggia and Leone 2010).

as in their personal life, the tensions between an increasing commodification of feminist culture and the challenge provided by the new instances and concerns (postcolonialism, globalization, fluidity of identities, to name some) of the third wave of feminism.

The participants provide reflexive accounts from their training, research and teaching experience, bringing together historical, institutional and biographical dimensions.

1. To contextualize our debate, we want to ask you: What is the state of gender studies - strengths and weaknesses- in your country?

Ruspini: In Italy the institutionalization of gender studies arrived late, has been slow and is still going on. One of the elements that may explain this delay is the familistic (Italian) culture. By familism we mean a set of normative beliefs that describes a strong attachment and loyalty to one's family, emphasizes the centrality of the family unit, and stresses the obligations and support that family members owe to both nuclear and extended kin. If family is seen as the crucial foundation of society, public trust in government and political institutions and people's sense of the state are—specularly—not strong (Ginsborg 1989 and 1994). Family members, perceived as dependable sources of material and emotional help, should be united and have close relationships. The familistic culture also tends to assume that all family members experience family life in the same basically positive ways. This assumption persists despite considerable evidence that women and men often experience the rhythms of a family's life together from quite different perspectives (see for example Rubin 1976; Code 1987; Badinter 1981; Balbo 1991). If, on the one hand, familism has contributed to reinforce family solidarity between generations, as well as to create broad family networks, on the other hand, the negative compensation of this family economy model has affected the female collective: familism implies a prioritization of the needs of the family over those of women (Saraceno 1994). Familism has thus influenced the visibility of women in history: women were rendered invisible and marginalized by the lack of acknowledgement of their overall contribution to society, both in the private sphere and in the public, political and professional areas. Following Valentini (2012), familism is

one of the key elements explaining why in Italy the question of women's rights and roles is probably the "last thing" to be dealt with.

The debate on the possible causes of such a weak institutionalisation is still open. On the one hand, this may be linked to some features of the Italian feminist movement. Following Pravadelli (2010), both its non-institutional basis and separatist orientation may explain the lack of institutionalisation of women's and gender studies (see also Bono and Kemp 1991; Cavarero 1993). On the other hand, in Chiara Saraceno's opinion (Saraceno 2010), the weak institutionalisation of gender studies was the consequence both of the Italian institutional framework and of the weak position women academics occupied within it. It is also true that the gender perspective is increasingly present, also in Italy, in sociology, economics, linguistics, psychology, literature and within the "hard sciences", as well.

The consequences of such a weak institutionalisation seem evident. Education on gender change is still lacking in Italy, both in the process of primary socialisation and in educational programmes. The questions of gender and sexuality continue to be a taboo subject in Italian families. Modesty and the need to maintain their privacy force boys and girls to seek the answers to their doubts and curiosities outside the family. People outside the family (often friends) in fact seem to be the main vehicles of information on these issues, which information is, however, often inexact, distorted or in any case insufficient. Moreover, in Italy there is no national legislation regulating gender and sex education in schools, and the prevalent forms of learning in school educational and professional training systems are still essentially constructed in order to highlight values and behaviours linked to traditional masculine and feminine roles (Boffo *et al.* 2003). Together with the many prejudices and stereotypes on gender and sexuality, this lack of information offers fertile ground for a definite increase of phenomena such as bullying, femicide and violence against women, sexual harassment, homophobia and transphobia, testified by recent, multiple, dramatic events. The joint research report by EURES and ANSA⁵ found that between 2000 and 2012 more than 2,200 women were murdered in

⁵ *Il femminicidio in Italia nell'ultimo decennio. Dimensioni, caratteristiche e profili di rischio*, Indagine istituzionale, Eures, Ansa, Dicembre 2012.

Italy, an average of 171 per year. 70.8 percent of the women were killed by family members and 79.7 percent of the femicides were committed at home.

The need to understand gender change, to contribute to the advancement of gender studies and to open a formal dialogue with the institutions prompted us to found, in 2012, a “Gender Studies” Section⁶, part of the AIS-Italian Sociological Association. The Section, open to women, men, and Lgbttiq (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer) people, has different aims. On the one hand, the promotion of research and curriculum development on the patterns of gender, gendered social relations, and sexualities. On the other hand, to serve as a meeting place for scholars, young researchers and students who want to start working in these directions. These goals require a broad range of activities including continuing commitment to support the multiplication of specific educational, research, and training programs; the establishment of new ways to meet and cooperate with the other AIS-Italian Sociological Association Sections and with the national and international scientific community (ESA-European Sociological Association and ISA-International Sociological Association). In addition to these activities, another key task will be to strengthen communication with universities, departments, research centres and individual scholars who are interested in issues concerning gender theory and research.

Robinson: I would like to use a biographical account, in part, and in the context of institutional and publishing changes to reflect on the state of women’s and gender studies in the UK and Europe more widely.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, along with other part time tutors, I established one of the first undergraduate BA Women’s Studies in England, at the University of Sheffield in an Adult Continuing Education department outside the mainstream university. This was a time when such courses proliferated in the UK, and on this specific course many women as mature students were able to gain a degree, engage with

⁶ Section officers (2012-2015) are: Chair: Elisabetta Ruspini; Secretary: Emanuela Abbatecola; Council: Francesco Antonelli; Ignazia Bartholini; Fabio Corbisiero; Isabella Crespi; Alessandra Decataldo; Sara Garbagnoli; Claudia Santoni; Sabrina Perra; Luca Toschi. Web site: <http://www.ais-sociologia.it/sezioni/studi-genere/>

feminism and feminist theory, including those from working class backgrounds, and often without formal qualifications. Over time, gender studies came, at least to some extent, to replace women's studies courses, and a focus on men and masculinity was also placed on the intellectual agenda.

Moving to the contemporary UK, the landscape looks somewhat different for women's and gender studies, at least in some ways. The Feminist and Women's Studies Association (UK and Ireland) (FWSA), which is the main organizing body in the field, currently lists mainly post-graduate courses in both areas⁷. Though there are some general MA women's and gender studies listed, many are now more specialised, for example, in the areas of sexuality and queer theory, health, history, media and culture, international relations, gender identity in the Middle East, development, management and European gender studies. Notably, only two institutions are listed as providing dedicated undergraduate courses, Edge Hill, BA Women's Health and University of Lancaster, BA Women's Studies, whilst Warwick has a BA Sociology with a gender specialization. Such a list reveals a continued focus both on women and gender but also movement from undergraduate to post graduate, the latter which, in some institutions at least, could be seen to be thriving and often reflects particular specialisms which have both national and international student appeal, but also reflects theoretical shifts in the field. However, some courses may struggle in attracting enough students.

While aspects such as a decline in named undergraduate courses, separate women-only space in the academy and lack of access to such courses for those on low incomes, often from working class backgrounds, given that adult, part-time provision has borne the brunt of educational cuts are to be lamented, it is important to note more positive shifts. Even though, as Claire Hemmings (2006) argues, women's and gender studies still have to struggle for both national resources and recognition, many disciplines now have gender courses integrated in undergraduate programmes, including education, sociology, cultural and media studies, history, literature and philosophy, even if not yet in

⁷ For instances, at Aberdeen, Bangor, Birkbeck, University of London, Lancaster, Kingston, Institute of Education, London Metropolitan University, LSE, London South Bank, Northumbria, Plymouth, Queens University Belfast, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Goldsmiths, Swansea, Trinity College Dublin, Birmingham, Bradford, Cambridge, Exeter, Dundee, Glasgow, Hull, Leeds, Limerick, Manchester, Oxford, Sheffield, Sussex, Warwick and York.

the sciences, for example. This ensures that a younger generation of scholars, of both sexes, can engage with feminism (even if definitions of feminism are contested between students and tutors). For example, older feminists such as myself, sometimes feel frustrated due to some younger students' refusal to define themselves as feminists, or at their adopting a neo-liberalist stance on inequality and gender relations, where agency and choice are prioritised at the expense of stressing power relations and structural constraints such as sexuality, race/ethnicity or class are downplayed. However, if tutors and students engage in honest and reflexive dialogue, both preparing to have their ideas challenged, then new theories emerge which progress the discourses in the field. The large number of PhD students researching into women and gender, and the continued popularity of modules on gender for undergraduates in the UK attests to the continuing significance of both the theoretical issues and the wider political relevance to lives, that such courses have. Furthermore, the existence of either a focus on masculinity in diverse disciplines, or separate modules on men and masculinities can, arguably, also be seen as a strength, widening out further the audience for feminist ideas and debate.

Sanchez Espinosa: Women and Gender Studies have become consolidated in Spain within the last 30 years. The Spanish 80s followed not only the momentum of Second Wave feminist movements all over the world but also the new waves of liberation from the Francoist dictatorial oppression⁸, recovering the feminist fights for gender equality in the previous Republican period (1931-36) leading to the inclusion in the new 1931 constitution of the right to divorce and to women's vote. In 1983 the Socialist government created the "Instituto de la Mujer", which became instrumental in its financial support of the initiatives (postgraduate studies and research activities) taken by universities to implement Gender Studies. In 2007 the "Ley Orgánica para la igualdad efectiva de hombres y mujeres" (Organic Law for Effective Equality between Men and Women) was approved, including the mandate to "promote teaching and research on gender equality and on anti-discrimination policies", "implementing policies leading to

⁸ Franco created a counter feminist unit called "La sección femenina", the fascist women's section, which became an extremely active sector in the imposition of patriarchal policies of control over women and the destruction of women's rights and feminist thinking. See Augustin Puerta (2003).

the eradication of sexism in language", supporting the "promotion of non-sexist communication within all social spheres", the "elaboration of equality plans at any company where there are more than 250 women employees", "equal participation of women and men within the university", the "creation of specific university programmes for gender equality". Following the law, "the university must play a fundamental role in the transmission of essential values and the challenge of reaching an equalitarian society respectful of the fundamental rights of women and men" "enhancing specific research on gender issues which can help the university achieve the abovementioned goals" with the "creation of equality units at universities". In 2008 the Ministry of Equality (lasting until 2010) was created, promoting Gender mainstreaming. All this has fomented the creation of groups and lines of research (around 60) on gender from multivarious perspectives and from many different departments within universities, gathered in some cases in a University Research Institute (like Granada, pioneer in having the first PhD in Gender Studies in Spain in 1991) or Center, in other cases in "seminars". Although nowadays there are no Gender graduate degrees in Spain, most universities have gender postgraduate studies (master or PhDs).

This said, perhaps the worst threat is the one represented by the present neoliberal right wing government. Its promotion of "commonsensical language" (ie. sexist language), the rephrasing of "gender violence" as "domestic violence" (a return to discussions which were solved over 30 years ago) and very specially the new law for the regulation of abortion (which gets rid of all advances since the death of Franco) does not sketch a very favourable picture for the near future.

Hence, now it is the moment for feminist cooperative action which can use the transnational potential of Women's Studies and Gender and take the discipline further into the construction of transnational knowledges. These knowledges are essential before the present situation of neoliberal destruction of the humanities and the blatant attack on critical thinking that is now taking place at national level all over the world but particularly in Spain. We are now before national spaces where even the masquerade of political correctness is wearing out in spite of national protest, where the demands of the markets and the austerity of the "crisis" are killing individual liberties and this is obviously affecting women's rights. We are confronted with new places, like

Spain, which is becoming an alien setting where dearly achieved rights such as the rights to abortion, to free education or health for all, to nonconfessional training, to pensions, and so on and so forth, are about to become items in the old curiosity shop of the good years in the past. And this attack on freedom is first attained by a meticulous destruction of critical resistance, the resistance of knowledge, and particularly the resistance of knowledge generated by collective critical thinking, that type of thinking that empowers the individuals when in collective action. So, European cooperation is essential at this stage.

2. Let's talk about teaching gender studies nowadays: What are the emergent challenges in your opinion?

Ruspini: The present historical moment demands to a far-seeing approach on our part. There is a need to understand individual and family change and to gain new insights about changing generational and gender dynamics in the workforce, workplaces and families.

Social change has favoured a convergence of male and female life courses both from the structural point of view (an increase in women's employment and schooling, delayed entry into adult life, a shared, lesser inclination towards marriage and procreation, the assumption by women of responsibilities which previously belonged exclusively to men, etc.), and in the way in which life courses are desired, planned, constructed, and changed by individuals themselves.

Today young women place work and financial independence at the head of their priorities and perceive it at the core of their identity. Research conducted among women in their late twenties and early thirties in Italy present quite a different picture from the past (Piazza 2003). These women feel no sense of inferiority with regard to their male contemporaries and expect equal treatment. They tend to see family, work and education primarily in terms of self fulfilment. Also the choice to remain childfree—that is, women and men who have made a personal decision not to have children—is growing (Tanturri and Mencarini 2008). Changes in female identities have increasing implications for male partners, workers and fathers. Younger men are beginning to

claim a greater share in bringing up their children although, in the father-child relationship, playing dominates the other dimensions. The number of men willing to question the hegemonic, stereotyped model of traditional masculinity (Connell 1995) is also growing (see for example Ruspini, Hearn, Pease, Pringle 2011; Perra and Ruspini 2013). This convergence challenges the polarization of gender roles.

Moreover, the Millennial generation is growing up. Currently including young people up to 30 years of age, the Millennials have surpassed the Baby Boomers as the larger and more influential generation worldwide. These young women and young men are politically and socially independent, and they are thus spearheading a period of sweeping change around the world (Greenberg and Weber, 2008). The Millennials are more tolerant than adults in other generations of a wide range of “nontraditional” behaviors related to sexuality, marriage and parenting. There is thus a strong need to understand and manage the generation turnover, also within the field of gender studies.

It therefore is becoming necessary to prepare the new generations for their encounter with gender change (“new” women and “new” models of masculinity). The re-composition, through dialogue and mutual knowledge, of the historical rupture between male and female, may be accompanied by equally positive effects. Concerning women, this means deconstructing the processes of financial dependence on male income; increasing their share in the labour market; re-balancing time schedules to facilitate the conciliation between life and work demands and, at the same time, improving their health and wellbeing. Regarding men, the positive effects include the possibility of re-appropriating a part of their gender identity, historically denied (i.e. the functions of nursing, care and socialisation), opening up a wide range of actions which enable children, young boys and men to broaden the scope of their emotional and communicative skills.

Robinson: In 2010, Diane Richardson and I were interviewed for the FWSA, where we reflected on our long term feminist collaboration over a period of more than two decades. Together we edited the textbook *Introducing Women’s Studies*, first published by Macmillan in 1993, with the revised second edition in 1997, followed by a third edition in 2008, and the 4th edition currently in preparation for publication in 2014.

The various editions in some way mirror the changes that have taken place over time in the development and teaching of gender and women's studies in UK academia. The 3rd edition was re-titled *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*, reflecting not only the shift from women's to gender studies that has taken place, but also commercial interests, as publishers are keen to ensure such texts sell to as wide an audience as possible. It also incorporated new scholars and themes that have emerged over the ten years that had elapsed between the second and third editions. The study of gender has developed dramatically in recent years, with a changing theoretical landscape, seeing innovative work on identity, the body and embodiment, queer theory, technology, space, and the concept of gender itself. There has been an increasing focus on sexuality and new theorizing on masculinities. The 3rd edition also reflected these developments and was informed by new student demand for such topics, and by the trend for more men to be interested in taking gender and masculinity courses.

The new 4th edition reflects even further changes, in that incorporated in this will be more extensive coverage of international/transnational feminism and contemporary global perspectives throughout, using international case examples and referencing as well as comparative data and coverage of the global South/developing worlds.

There will also be greater emphasis placed on recent debates on masculinities as we expect the potential of this aspect of gender studies to develop even further in future years. As well, there will be new chapters on violence (re-instated from the first two editions) and on the environment/nature, further, the concept of intersectionality and an understanding of intersecting inequalities will inform the book as a whole, incorporating work of feminist gerontologists on age as an intersecting aspect of inequality, as well as on class and work on disability.

To be able to produce four editions of this textbook, to reach a wider audience, of different ages and levels of study, we have had to make some compromises, over, for example, as I note above, the title, or the exclusion of some chapters in favour of others, depending on what publishers' priorities are. All the editions of the book have been informed by student feedback on what issues they wanted to see included, and what the text should look like in terms of how 'user friendly' it was. However, in reality, it is we as editors who make the decision of, for example, whom to ask to contribute, balancing

this with publishers' demands, which change as the global market place shifts. As Gail Lewis (2010) remarks, regarding books that do not make it to even a 2nd edition due to censorship, this reminds her '...that the need for feminist research praxis that simultaneously pushes at and exposes the workings of power while remaining open to internal critique and development is as urgent now as it ever was' (2010, 103).

Sanchez Espinosa: For a very comprehensive analysis both of the situation of Gender Studies in Europe and of teaching Gender at present we can refer to Waaldjik and Wagenaar's analysis of the reference points for programmes in Gender conducted by under the umbrella of the tuning education structures in Europe project (*Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Gender Studies*⁹). The interest of this report resides in how it collects the deliveries of the ATHENA Socrates Thematic Network (a European project which collected over 100 European institutions teaching and researching on Gender). One of this deliveries was the series of publications *Teaching with Gender*¹⁰: running for over 10 years and financed by the project, it had published the analyses conducted by the network on the teaching of gender in Europe. It thus collects ideas on teaching methodologies and challenges and attempts at an analysis of the difference between teaching gender and any other subjects.

We can read, for instance, that "Gender Studies is known as a creative, critical, research oriented and pedagogically innovative area in academic study programmes" (Tuning, 88). Among its innovations the report points out the importance of "team-teaching" since it has an intergenerational aspect that makes the learning more "valuable for [students'] lives" and of principles such as "positive group reliance, open and diverse communication, and conscious development of cooperation". (88 & 90). It also emphasizes that "the activity of learning is not limited to the conventional academic settings but also covers creative and experimental approaches to scientific texts and the collection of empirical data" and that "Students' creative activities and engagement are

⁹ The report can be downloaded at the link <http://eige.europa.eu/content/tuning-educational-structures-in-europe-reference-points-for-the-design-and-delivery-of-degr>.

¹⁰ All the series publications can be be downloaded at the link: <http://www.atgender.eu/index.php/initiativesmenu/teachingwgen>.

also reinforced by introducing elements of artistic production such as creative writing or various forms of performances"(90). As forms or evaluation and assessment the report highlights "peer-evaluation and peer-feedback" since it empowers students and levels up the relationship between teacher and student: "Students' self-evaluations appear to be realistic which also implies that the teacher trusts them and gives them an active role and responsibility in the learning process" (91). The report focuses also on the main challenges of the field. One of them is the measuring of the "know-how", given the multidisciplinary and critical nature of Gender Studies: "The assessment should address not only the knowledge acquired in the course, but also the learning process itself. It should also include students' progress during their learning process. The assessment must address commentary, argumentative, oral and writing skills together with the ability to work in groups" (92). The other is the taking into account of the high political nature of the field which makes both teachers and students be involved in a more special way than with any other field.

Other texts suggesting different specific methodologies for the teaching of Gender can be the articles by Esperanza Bosch and Victoria Ferrer, suggesting that text commentaries are fundamental as a feminist methodology (2003) and Jasmina Lukic and Adelina Sánchez's vindication to "close reading" as a feminist strategy for reading texts differently (2011).

But perhaps the best way is to talk about a "good practice" example, the joint Erasmus Mundus master programme in Women's Studies and Gender, GEMMA¹¹, within which I am the scientific coordinator and the coordinator of the consortium of universities which runs it.

GEMMA came out of the networking we had started within ATHENA. We had been discussing how to put together a joint master degree for quite a few years but we simply did not have the funds to do so. When the Erasmus Mundus call started in 2004 it

¹¹ Gemma is the first Erasmus Mundus Joint European Master Degree in Women's and Gender Studies supported by the European Commission. Eight universities participate in Gemma: Granada University (Spain, coordinator); Bologna University (Italy); Central European University (Hungary); Hull University (United Kingdom); Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis (Slovenia); Lodz University (Poland); Oviedo University (Spain) and Utrecht University (Netherlands). Gemma is an interdisciplinary programme that provides high quality academic education and professional competences. See (<http://www.ugr.es/~gemma/>).

became the golden opportunity to finance our long cherished project. And so we had three meetings (in Barcelona, Granada and Budapest) in the course of 2 years, we communicated daily via email and eventually submitted the project to the European Commission which selected it after a very tough competition (23 projects were selected out of almost 300 applications). Thanks to the European Commission we can run the programme until 2018. The prestige of having been selected twice (in 2006 and in 2011) and that we were ranked as the best Erasmus Mundus master in 2011 has granted us support from many other national and institutional institutions.¹² Most of these grants are no longer there, however and we are making ends meet almost exclusively on the Commission funds. At this new stage, after its re-selection by the EC in 2011, the Consortium is advancing towards the creation of a GEMMA synergic online programme run by the transatlantic institutions: "GEMMA IberoAmerican feminisms".

As a good feminist programme, GEMMA focuses very much on the connection between teaching and research, and on Students' activities and the incorporation of these into the training. Examples of this can be the seminars organised by students on the 8th of March, the collaboration in the running of feminist film festivals in Granada, the collaboration in the organisation of the European Conferences for Gender Research or the participation in the "Voices of GEMMA" forum that takes place biannually on the occasion of GEMMA graduations.

Among the weaknesses of the GEMMA consortium there is the large number of institutions that participate fully or are associated with it. This makes it more difficult to coordinate, particularly when one has to bear in mind the various degrees of red tape at the different universities and the challenge of increasing university fees in countries such as the UK or the Netherlands. Since the EC demands a unified fee policy for the degree, this has been one of the most difficult issues to cope with. On the positive side, the programme is very attractive since it collects the gender teaching experience of many institutions, it is multidisciplinary, it brings together cultures from all cardinal

¹² Such as the Andalusian Government Women's Institute, the former Ministry of Equality (unfortunately extinct now giving way to the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality), the Ministry of Education, the Ford Foundation, the Euroarabic Foundation, the National Plan for the Alliance of Civilisations (which financed the first GEMMA graduation)

points in Europe and beyond and, last but not least, allows students to choose and combine from any of the three official languages in GEMMA: Spanish, English and Italian. As the European Commission experts stated in their report, the programme is truly "a la carte".

3. Looking ahead, can you try to identify some trends and perspectives for gender studies in Europe?

Ruspini: Gender studies today face many challenges emerging from acute tension between the local and the global, the past and the future.

First, the field of women's studies—formed in the wake of the feminist movement—is finding itself in a precarious position in what is now called a “post-modern”, “post-feminist” society. Are the aims and goals of feminism still relevant in the 21st century,? How must the field adjust its goals and methods to continue to affect change in the future? (Lapovsky Kennedy, Beins 2005). This raises challenging issues for universities, students, and administrators.

More specifically, women's and gender studies should face both generational and men's change. As has been said, there is a move towards more individualised and flexible decision-making processes, distant from the formal frameworks that used to shape women's and men's decisions in matters of relationships and family life. While, these trends seem to lead towards a flattening of the gender differences and to a convergence of life courses, socialisation agencies are still unable to guarantee adequate training for the needs arising from recent changes in female and male identities.

Another challenge has to do with the role of men in gender equality. Men's role and problems have traditionally been overlooked, not least by men themselves. Nevertheless, in recent decades men and masculinities have increasingly become subjects of studies and gender policies in the EU and, in the past decade, the role of men has emerged as a relevant topic for international policy on gender equality. Indeed, sustainable change occurs when both men and women support equality.

Notwithstanding these key challenges, the future of gender studies seems uncertain. Universities are undergoing serious funding cuts in order to facilitate many

Governments' proposed reforms. This is also because most people think that gender studies lead to no tangible educational and employment benefits. However, the role of gender education in fighting bullying, femicide, gender violence, sexual harassment, homophobia and transphobia is crucial: gender equality is a crucial element for social justice. Gender education is also a prerequisite for sustainable development, conflict prevention and peace building.

Gender education is also a prerequisite for sustainable development, conflict prevention and peace building. There is thus a general and growing awareness of the need to budget the problem of a gender-inclusive curriculum. More and more authors maintain that, for gender mainstreaming to be successful, adequate financial support from institutions is required, to design and offer courses, to train specialists, to organize conferences and to support research work.

Robinson: Griffin and Braidotti (2002) argue that the production and circulation of knowledge in women's studies in Europe has been dominated, in the main, by British and American feminisms, and though other countries, for example, Nordic ones, have well-established programmes and research centres, they do not receive the international recognition that they deserve. In addition, they posit that the UK, US and Northern Europe have most influence on curricula and teaching materials and that English language feminism has hegemony over women's and gender studies in Europe. Amongst other things, this can partly be explained by the early institutionalisation of these fields in the academy in the US/UK and the publishing opportunities which followed. However, since their book was published, what has happened to allow us to make European dialogues both more frequent and more meaningful, with no hierarchies acknowledged?

Is this now an opportune time to revisit these contentions? To take just one country as an example, (and there are many others I could have chosen who raise both similar and different issues), in an Italian context, Pravadelli (2010) argues that historically, sexual difference has been of crucial importance to feminist subjectivity and thought. However, she states that now a different approach is needed and women of a certain generation, many in their 40s, have new ideas on how gender studies and feminist

theory should be conceptualised. This is due to possessing what she defines as a transnational gender studies approach, shaped more by sources outside the Italian feminist tradition. She calls for a convergence of gender, cultural and historical perspectives to carry this agenda forward so that gender can be rescued 'from the marginal position it has always had in Italian academia' (2010, 66). One issue that arises for me from this argument is: How can we have a dialogue when voices within this transnational debate are not always equal, either between, for example, the UK/US and Europe, or also internally in Europe? Is it still true that the UK does not look outwards enough to countries where gender and women's studies are not as established or have different traditions? How do we compare experiences when we are at different stages of institutionalisation or integration, and what measures do we adopt in doing so?

Further, Sveva Magaraggia and Mariagrazia Leone (2010) argue that since the 1970s women's studies research and theory have become prevalent inside and outside Italian universities, yet there was a lack of institutional visibility till the late 1990s, with women's studies residing in the disciplines existing prior to this. However, if, as they argue, there is currently a growth in women's studies in Italy at all levels, then their stressing of the need for links/alliances inside and outside academia, as well as calling for more established feminist academics who wield power to be central to these changes, whilst arguing also for international ties and working in European networks, could be seen to be timely. In such times of change, with a global recession and so competition for institutional and research resources, I would ask: How do we ensure cross-European initiatives that include the diversity of European countries engaged in gender and women's studies, and recognize the (sometimes different) pressing issues we face as well as acknowledging differing theoretical frameworks? On a more personal level, for example, as an established UK feminist, how can I foster such diverse alliances when it may not be an institutional or research funder's priority for me to do so? These are all thorny questions indeed, some new, some old, but in increasingly shifting and diverse contexts.

Sanchez Espinosa: The items above already approach this issue partly. To all that I would like to add the following considerations.

The field of Women's Studies has by nature a multidisciplinary composition as it collects a wide array of knowledges deriving from the exercise of many disciplines that come together by their finding in gender the transversal element to them all. It is, thus, a multiple field, where the generation of new knowledges is produced precisely because of the coming together, intersecting and eventually summing up of all the knowledges produced by the formerly individually isolated disciplines which now become invigorated by their coexistence, by their sharing of this new interdisciplinary space. Together with transdisciplinarity, transnationality is equally inherent in Women's Studies.

The Bologna process has given transnational comparability of degrees a bad name. But this is simply because of the degeneration of what started as a brilliant idea. Many of us subscribed faithfully to Bologna in the late 90s since we believed that it was about time we validated transnationally what us and our students had learnt at national level. We took it, then, perhaps rather naively, I must confess, as the utopic universalisation of knowledges, as the first step for a European Space for mobility, a passport for the exchange of learned experiences beyond our own local settings. The process, as we know, has become something else. It has been manipulated into the tool to kill diversity of knowledge and to mutilate the least marketable knowledges, those associated to creative practices, to critical thinking which the multinational firms find so inconvenient nowadays. Gender Studies are obviously at risk.

There is no space here to go into detail on the most important actions on Gender Studies at European level. Let me just mention the ones which, in my opinion, have been fundamental in order to advance in the European cooperation I have commented above:

- SOCRATES Thematic Networks: TN ATHENA (coordinated by Utrecht University over 100 institutions specialised in Gender Studies in Europe), TN ACUME (coordinated by Bologna University, over 60 institutions working on European memory and the interface between the sciences and the humanities);
- Publications: all deliveries from the ATHENA network. In particular the series on *The Making of European Gender Studies* (10 volumes);

- European Research Projects within 5th and 6th FP (Marie Curie, Gendergraduates, Research Methods in the Social Sciences and Humanities, Employment and Women's Studies);
- European Associations (AOIFE, ATHENA, ATGENDER);
- Biannual European Gender Research Conference (latest taking place at CEU Budapest, 2012) and annual ATGENDER conference;
- GEMMA;
- NOISE summer school (IP);
- ESF Gender Studies panel (for the selection of publication rankings within ERIH);
- Tuning Educational Structures project: gender analysis brochure EDGES (European PhD in Gender studies. Just granted to the GEMMA consortium to be run during the next two years).

By funding transnational degrees, and in particular the Erasmus Mundus call for masters taught by several universities in different countries, it has been made possible for lots of us to get to know other feminists from other countries who felt like us and shared with us many of their/our concerns. Thanks to it we became working partners first and friends, later on. That was the first new feminist knowledge we generated: the knowledge of good cooperation which, in many cases, developed into the knowledge of real friendship. And these are essential cooperative knowledges, the most instrumental knowledges nowadays to counteract the blind servitude imposed by the Europe of "governance" and "excellence", a Europe that prefers competition to cooperation, that forces its citizens to prove their "excellence" by accepting longer working hours and stepping over competitors while those who protest will simply be the excedent surplus. The "excellent" versus the "excedent".¹³ Transnational cooperation versus isolated competition. Solidary cooperation: partnership, friendship, solidarity, sharing. These are

¹³ And here two footnotes: 1. the new employment Act in Spain (which legalises precarious jobs and flashbacks to the times before basic rights for the workers were re-instaurated after Franco's death, in negotiations with the Trade Unions) 2. the 14/2012 Royal Decree on education, the infamous so-called "urgent measures for the rationalisation of public expenditure on education" which "rationalises" the funding of education by increasing student fees and forcing university professors to take on a 50% extra teaching load, thus automatically generating an increase on the unemployment rate among the least senior staff at universities.

things that you learn when you sit at a table with your working partner but also when you walk to a meeting with her/him chit-chatting about silly anecdotes, when you share breakfast with them in the hotel where you are bound to stay for those few days, at the coffee break, during the celebratory drinks afterwards. This is what I, myself, learnt by participating in European actions such as ATHENA, AOIFE, ATGENDER, ACUME and now GEMMA. You learn to lead the way and to be led in turn. You learn to listen. To respect the other. Other points of view, sometimes very different from the way we had thought things to be before we were exposed to them, when we were in the isolated ivory towers of our respective institutions and we had only read and learnt they were the good practices, the good knowledges of good feminisms (which is, by the way, a tautology). Rosi Braidotti's ATHENA was the best exemplification of her inspiring nomadism. A network of curious nomads eagerly inquiring into each others' knowledges.

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