

Introduction

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Welcome to the 43rd edition of the *LOVA Journal for Feminist Anthropology and Gender Studies*. This edition has been produced in the context of what some have identified as the fourth wave of feminism. This wave is characterised by a focus on empowerment, intersectionality and justice (Molyneux et al. 2020; 2021), but also by the subsequent backlash it has faced. While public debates have highlighted the ways in which power imbalances and dominance are reinforced in heteropatriarchal society, a paradox of emancipation seems that advancements in women's rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights, lead to a reactionary movement of people who feel threatened by these social transformations. What is referred to as the anti-gender movement, is an assemblage of actors opposing what they call gender ideology, gender theory, or genderism. Often embedded in right-wing political or religiously conservative organisations, this movement opposes developments such as the rise of gender studies departments and sexual and reproductive rights.

Over the past couple of years, this reactionary movement has not just engaged in fierce public debates. The material and political consequences of anti-gender thinking have become apparent on numerous occasions: from the Supreme Court overturning the *Roe v. Wade* decision that gave women access to safe abortions in the U.S. in 2022, to the rising popularity of the self-described misogynist media personality Andrew Tate, and to the creation of so-called LGBT-free zones in Poland in 2020, with some 100 municipalities declaring to become LGBT-free, prohibiting any sexual rights-related events. In a similar vein, Russia expanded in 2022 a law from 2013 that prohibits "the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations," criminalising any mention of LGBTQIA+ persons in books, films or media.

The emergence of this anti-gender movement might be explained by a variety of factors, including socio-economic crises ensuing from a neoliberal world order that deepens inequalities and leads to growing precarity of the working classes. Anti-gender rhetoric is then a reactionary critique on neoliberalism, with the blame being placed on feminist and LGBTQI+ movements, and other out-groups that supposedly threaten the stability and prosperity of nations (Graff and Korolczuk 2022; Kováts 2016).

Anti-gender movements have also directed their attacks on gender studies in academia. In 2018, the Central European University in Budapest was forced to move to the University's campus in Vienna, as the result of Hungary's crackdown on academic freedom, which included a ban on gender studies programmes. And in 2021, the Danish parliament adopted a statement on "excessive activism" in academia, expressing worry that politics disguised as science was produced at universities. It led to public attacks in the media on a number of scholars working in gender studies, postcolonial studies and migration studies.

Given this backlash against feminist activism and academia, we are happy to provide you with a collection of articles, essays and conversations that, in different ways, demonstrate hope rather than despair. In many different ways, the articles in this issue touch on hope as an affective and political dimension for activism and social transformations. Iepke Rijcken's article "Hope and Disappointment in Activism for Women's Rights," for example, shows how activists for reproductive rights in Poland might experience hope and disappointment simultaneously. Rijcken shows how feminist organising and activism for abortion rights in Poland can on the one hand create hopeful understandings of feminist futures in the country, but can also lose momentum under COVID-19 circumstances. This loss of momentum makes space for new ways of understanding and envisioning abortion rights questions for feminist activists in Poland. Thus, Rijcken illustrates how disappointment, too, can be productive.

The article by Roos Huisman, then, continues on the topic of hope and opens up the discussions towards queerness and the experiences of (to-be) parents in the Netherlands as they navigate the medical, legal and social landscapes on their way to parenthood. With compelling statements from their interlocutors, Huisman shows how queer parenting involves negotiating cis-heteronormativity at many different levels, and the impact thereof on the wellbeing of these parents.

In the next section of the journal, a conversation between Aloïta van Maris and Fabius Schöndube further explores queerness and its intersections with the vocabulary of disability studies and education. This section opens up on a statement co-written by both authors. Together, they question what it means to be doing research at the intersection of queerness and neurodivergence, and show the potentialities such voices could represent not just for feminist anthropology but for social sciences more broadly. The first article, written by Van Maris, is tailored around interviews conducted with Schöndube as they explore the experiences of autistic subjects, often perceived as deviant from a neurotypical epistemic norm. Infusing her ethnography with critical phenomenology and queer theory, Van Maris proposes that the experience of the autistic subject be a form of situated knowledge and that the place of the autistic subject with regards to the epistemic norm be reconsidered. The second article, written by Schöndube, enacts what Van Maris proposes in her article. Writing as an autistic subject, the author explores how queer theory and critical race theory can help illuminate the way disability and in that case autism, fits into a broader discourse on education and knowledge.

This year's edition also includes a dialogue between Kathrine van den Bogert and Jasmijn Rana about their research. Both scholars recently published an ethnographic monograph on a similar topic, namely the participation of young girls and women in sports, and the ways in which they negotiate ethnic, gendered and religious norms within their sports practice. While Jasmijn analyses young Muslim women

who take up kickboxing, Kathrine focuses on girls with a Moroccan-Dutch or Muslim background playing street football in urban playgrounds. The result is a conversation that highlights the interesting dynamics between the perception of women empowerment through sports, the “national” representation of sports and athletes, political debates about gender segregation, and interlocutors’ own motivations, challenges and gender expressions.

Two reports were written this year about the LOVA Winter School on Motherhood and Feminisms, organised in December. Simone Hasse Stavnsbo describes the open and stimulating environment of the school, which brought together a mix of academics and practitioners of different nationalities and with different regional expertise. In four interactive days, participants reflected on western discourses surrounding mothering, gendered parental roles and practices, and more holistic and inclusive understandings of maternalism, including non-human insights. Simone highlights in particular the presentations which spoke to her own research, including discussions about the mobilisation of motherhood for political legitimacy. Paulina Mendez, then, describes how the presentations at the Winter School made her reflect on the relationality of pregnancy. Drawing on a very personal story by one of the speakers, Paulina argues that while definitions of motherhood often focus on the individual, communal practices of care demonstrate a subversive potential to such dominant understandings.

Furthermore, as usual, recent news and publications from our members can be found in the section Personalia. Two LOVA members were made honorary members in 2022, which merits a separate section in our journal. On the occasion of the retirement of Gerdien Steenbeek, she and Annelou Ypeij, who retired in 2020, received an honorary pin from LOVA board member Tine Davids. Reading about everything they did and achieved with LOVA sheds a light onto the history of LOVA and the consolidation of feminist anthropology in the Netherlands.

Lastly, as an editorial board we are taking various steps to make the journal more accessible to a wider audience. One of those steps includes making the previous editions digitally accessible on a new and revamped website. We are currently also looking into the requirements for having the journal indexed, as we believe this will increase our visibility and will honour our authors' work by offering the possibility to add publications to research profiles.

Another development that we encourage is the inclusion of different formats of knowledge dissemination. While written text has remained the dominant medium within our discipline, the last decades have witnessed an increasing interest among students and scholars in the use of audiovisual and digital methods. These methods may complement our research processes, valorise different kinds of knowledge, including those we acquire through our senses, and they can challenge the distinction between our "online" and our supposedly "real" lives. Where the previous LOVA issue incorporated a diversity of textual forms such as poetry in addition to essays and scholarly articles, in this issue, Iepke Rijcken drew ethnographic illustrations in her article to represent, translate, and reflect upon the complexity of the anthropological encounter. In these drawings, you may recognise the lightning bolt that is featured on the cover of this year's journal. As the symbol of the feminist grassroots organisation that Rijcken has studied, this photo showcases research in its various, and striking, representations.

We hope you enjoy reading, for now on paper, but perhaps also digitally in the future!



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