

Conference of the Swiss Association for Gender Studies (SGGF/SSEG)

«Violent Times, Rising Protests. Structures, Experiences, and Feelings»

12/13 September 2019, University of Bern

TRACK 1

12 September 2019

10:15 – 11:45

Panel 1

Room 006, Chair: Ruramisai Charumbira

Organized Fear: State Intervention and Power Reproduction

«Fear and loathing in a post-conflict city: performativity, affect, space»

Sunčana Laketa, Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Cities nowadays are the frontlines of international conflict. From urbicide – targeted destruction of urban public space as a strategy of war – to international terrorism and the implementation of ubiquitous security measures, urban spaces are gradually becoming sites where (geo)political violence is actualized and acutely felt. With multiple violences that scar contemporary urban life, I turn my attention to its intimate, affective and emotional dimensions in post-conflict sites and spaces. The paper draws insights from my work in the city of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina and presents an ethnographic account of the quotidian affective and emotional landscapes of this divided city, twenty years after the devastating war. Using an analytical framework developed at the intersection of Butler's performativity theory and Ahmed's cultural politics of emotions, this paper builds upon and extends long-standing feminist debates on the notion of materiality and the matter of corporeal life as performatively constituted. My work points to how through emotional and affective intensities social fixities are reproduced and meanings are stabilized, but also on the ways bodies and lived spaces come together to undermine dominant notions of social difference.

**«State, Violence and Tribal communities in India:
A Case of Mass Rape of Kondh Adivasi Women in South India»**

Ashitha Mandakathingal, Guest Researcher, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany

My larger research interest is state violence against tribal communities (Adivasis) in South India. I am looking at how the militant initiatives of state in suppressing the Maoist movements in Adivasi regions lead to sexual violence against Adivasi women and how their struggle for justice is confronted with extreme forms of vulnerability. My paper critically examines the mass rape of eleven women who belong to Kondh tribal community residents of Vakapalli Village in the Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, South India in the year of 2007, by the twenty one armed men of 'greyhound police force'. This case is noticeable in the contemporary Indian scenario where a particular political culture already emerged and developed in which sexual violence is used as a weapon to reaffirm power over the marginalized communities by the dominant caste and class. By using ethnographic fieldwork and analyzing the judicial discourse, the paper focuses on how a masculine state creates a public fear by using the repressive apparatus and how the ideological apparatus is used to justify these horrific violence and how such justification is done through effective deployment of notions like 'anti-nationals' and 'Naxals' against the victims and survivors who raised their voice against the violence. By taking the multiple marginality of tribal women as critical point of enquiry, this paper complicates the prevailing discourse on how the issues related to the rape discourse such as 'honour, shame, purity' etc. are constructed and related to the community identity of the rape survivors in the Indian society.

**««Pedagogies of cruelty», masculinity, and the patriarchal order of the
Colombian nation-state: The *Falsos Positivos* as a paradigmatic example»**

Isis Giraldo, Université de Lausanne, Switzerland

Between 2002 and 2010, under Álvaro Uribe's administration, Colombian state forces executed thousands of young, poor men that were moved out of their living area with the promise of jobs. After being murdered, the victims were dressed as guerrilla fighters and presented as such with the aim of proving that the war against insurgency defined by Uribe's 'Democratic Security' was being successful. Denoted in Colombia as *Falsos Positivos*, these extrajudicial killings have been described by Human Rights Watch as 'one of the worst episodes of mass atrocity in the Western Hemisphere in recent decades' (Human Rights Watch 2015). In this paper I argue that from within a broad taxonomy, all types of violence converge in the *Falsos Positivos*: socio-economic, political, symbolic, epistemic, and affective. They constitute a paradigmatic example of what Rita Segato denotes as 'pedagogies of cruelty' (Segato 2018), which emerge in the context of Colombia —where neverending multi-modal violence has been raging for decades on end— with singular ferocity. Further, that these crimes constitute a media event that allows for the performance and reinforcement of the patriarchal order that underlies the moderncolonial Colombian Nation-State. Accordingly, I propose a reading of them —the very possibility of their occurrence, their staging, their symbolic function, their scale, and the nearly-zero empathy they generated in the general population— that focuses on masculinity and on Álvaro Uribe's projected image as the patriarch of 'the Colombian family'.

Panel 2

Room 007, Chair: Isabel Boni-Le Goff / Charlène Calderaro

Sexuality and Violence

Lucile Quéré, Centre en Etudes Genre CEG, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Marta Roca i Escoda, Centre en Etudes Genre CEG, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Thierry Delessert, Centre en Etudes Genre CEG, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Charlène Calderaro, Centre en Etudes Genre CEG, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Isabel Boni-Le Goff, Centre en Etudes Genre CEG, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

This panel proposes to shed light on the ways violence and sexuality are interacting and produce intersectional relations of power in different social spheres: in the «public» and in the «private» spheres, in the productive and in the reproductive labor. In this purpose, it gathers papers dealing with violence and sexuality in various contexts and social spheres and with the way violence and sexuality affect different groups of women: two papers deal with questions generally identified as belonging to the private or intimate sphere (the practice of marital rape in Switzerland, the movement against gynaecological violence) and two papers deal with the sphere of (re)productive labor (on sex work and at work). The panel also aims at questioning the links and continuity between different types of productive labor in the neoliberal context, from the socially legitimate types of work to the more stigmatized ones, from qualified and socially dominant professionals – such as managers – to the socially invisible sex workers. Besides, it aims at showing that despite a rich body of empirical studies using the notion, the concept of sexual harassment involves certain theoretical ambiguities while helping to describe certain social mechanisms. While dealing with the question of violence, this panel also aims at exploring the forms of protests and resistance against multidimensional and structural forms of violence endured by different dominated groups.

Four presentations:

Lucile Quéré: «**Framing and resisting gynecological violence – Belgium, France, Switzerland**»

Marta Roca i Escoda and Thierry Delessert: «**Conjugal Duty to Marital Rape**»

Charlène Calderaro: «**Violent times for sex workers: Resisting the multidimensional violence of neo-abolitionist policies**»

Isabel Boni-Le Goff: «**Sexual violence as an invisible process in white-collar work**»

Panel 3

Room 106, Chair: Crispin Thurlow

Trans* – Politics, Violence, and Cultures of Resistance

«Contingent Comfort – Embodied, Lived Experiences of Singing in a Trans* Chorus»

Holly Patch, Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld University, Germany

While trans* people in the US-American context are vulnerable to different kinds of violence, in this paper, I rather start from a joyful endeavor, of singing, to find out what the 'sensuous knowledge' in singing as a member of a trans* chorus can tell us both about the social contingency of embodied, lived experience and the agency of trans* vocal expression. Drawing on ethnographic data consisting of in-depth interviews with trans* identified singers in a trans* chorus and observations of their chorus rehearsals, this paper seeks to articulate how singing relates to the conditions of the possibility to feel comfort in one's gendered body. By analyzing the reports of these singers of their embodied, lived experiences, I show how the spaces and atmospheres they are collectively materializing in their singing compare to the spaces they move through in their everyday lives – how they articulate the differences between how it is with the chorus versus their experiences on the street, at the workplace, at home. Further, this paper will explore how these experiences in singing and performing with the chorus potentially counteract everyday lived experiences of violence. What does being able to take the stage as a collective of trans* singers provide these singing subjects who, with their singing bodies, are making themselves vulnerable to audiences?

«Trans* and non-binary existences: intersubjective guerrillas into feminist's solidarities»

Gustavo Santos Elpes, Centre for Social Studies (CES) of the University of Coimbra, Portugal

Transgender and non-binary people experience multiple intersecting inequalities and oppression. Overall, inclusive transformative projects and politics must face the challenging engagement of the many different actors across social divisions (such as those related to, e.g., disability and sexuality) in coalition building and the adoption of intersectional strategies and agendas. Throughout the lens of marginalisation and social justice, trans* and non-binary people have moved beyond representation and inclusion within social movements, addressing a cathartic realignment of political strategies towards LGBTQIA+ communities and activism. By focusing on intersecting oppressions among trans* and non-binary people with and without disabilities within forms of activism in the city of Madrid, Spain, this presentation will address the creativity of alliances, and the resistances throughout bodily/identity dissidence in transfeminist embodied agendas. Epistemic and affective forms of violence against specific forms of lives and existence (through abjection, silencing, invisibilisation etc.) affects differently the people who live in different positionalities. Is through a distinctive rebellious politics of emancipation that many subjects may (re)signify their non-normative bodies and self-expression. In this struggle, they will deal with their experience of inclusion and exclusion,

conflicting constituencies and interests, and a range of social markers, which multiplies inequalities and feeds intersubjective violence. However, they will also put forward competitive identity politics and bring together heterogeneous constituencies in order to nurture a shared culture of resistance and to maintain a working alliance. In this context lies the interest in understanding people embodiment in relation to politics, and how a situated intersectional praxis that struggles for new politics of visibility can expand the repertoires of action and nurture emerging coalitions and agencies stemmed from a variety of hybrid-political subjects.

«You are supposed to know it better» – Responsibility and symbolic violence in trans* health care»

Alex Stern, Researcher, AG 3 Epidemiology & International Public Health, School of Public Health, Bielefeld University, Germany

Addressed as «special» cases, trans* patients experience uncomfortable situations in mainstream health care, as well as in trans* specific health services. Before success, patients' search for trans*-open practices and a respectful treatment may lead to adverse experiences caused by symbolic violence repeatedly. The main responsibility to prevent adverse experiences in health care encounters should be held by professionals, as they have more situational and epistemic power than their patients. Instead, some types of adverse experiences described by trans* patients can easily be professionally legitimized by the reference to underlying structures, and lead to a shift of responsibility. The status as «special» cases, which trans* patients face, combined with the epistemic invisibility of trans* patients in issues of day-to-day health care can legitimize any lack of scientific or professional knowledge. On the other hand, epistemic power can be used by professionals to legitimize inappropriate intimate questions. The legitimization by structural aspects (i.e. legal framework, insurances' guidelines) leads to a shift of responsibility for patients' adverse experiences towards the macro-level of the health system or legislation. Legitimization strategies addressing patients' epistemic invisibility or professionals' epistemic power result in a shift of responsibility towards the trans* patients. Both ways of shifting responsibility complicate protest or other self-protecting action for the patients.

Panel 4

Room 107, Chair: Dominique Grisard / Andrea Zimmermann

Affect of Intervention

«Antigone – affect and resistance in contemporary theater»

Andrea Zimmermann, Zentrum Gender Studies, Universität Basel, Switzerland

Talking about resistance in violent times, Antigone is the heroine that comes to the mind. In theatre around the globe it is her that enters the stage, when we discuss questions like: How is political resistance possible? How can we think of feminist coalitions and affective solidarity with regard to memory and queer temporalities? And how can we develop a vision of transnational political agency that embraces not only affective dissonance, but also histories of marginalization, colonization and abjection? Different structures of violence and different conditions of production lead to different responses of critique and resistance on stage and ask for different aesthetic concepts. In this talk I will have a closer look at four contemporary re-readings, re-writings and performances of Antigone that address specific and complex structures of power and violence. At the same time all performances articulate a queer feminist critique of the gender order, the ongoing effects of colonization, the organization of private and public, family and state as well as bodies. Using affect studies as analytical lens, anger, rage, grief, happiness, hope and love become visible as powerful agents and starting points for movements of resistance and transformation.

«Melancholic protests: Seeing racism in Lila Quintero Weaver's Graphic Memoir «Darkroom»»

Sophie Bürgi, Zentrum Gender Studies, Universität Basel, Switzerland

The US has a long history of racist violence and protests against racial injustice. Lila Quintero Weaver's autobiographical comic «Darkroom. A Memoir in Black and White» (2012) critically engages with this history, as I will show in my presentation. The comic presents Lila's personal experience of migration when her family moved from Argentina to Alabama in the 1960s. At the same time, «Darkroom» also gives account of important events of the Civil Rights Movement (e.g. the Selma to Montgomery Marches), many of which had taken place in close distance to the protagonist's home. In this way, racist violence and protests against racism are on the one hand located in the public sphere. On the other hand, the comic reveals the embodied dimension of violence in everyday life, like the painful process of female socialization and the ordinary racist structures in the 60s, where black citizens face dehumanization and social exclusion. My presentation will show how «Darkroom» sheds light on these traumatic power structures with the metaphor of seeing. In this way, the comic brings out the importance of recognizing racist violence in the public *and* in the private sphere. Furthermore, I will analyze the *affective* impact of this violence by using Sarah Ahmed's concept of «The Melancholic Migrant». I will show how the feeling of melancholy is enacted in the comic's characters as well as in its narrative structure as a form of affective resistance.

«Coloring Protest, Affecting Change? The Color Pink in Queer-Feminist Performative Activism»

Dominique Grisard, Zentrum Gender Studies, Universität Basel, Switzerland

As attention grabbing symbols and colors such as pink Pussyhats at the 2016 Women's March or pink and blue balloons at the Manif pour tous take on a central role in current protest movements, this paper aims to reflect on the symbolic and affective use of color in queer-feminist performances of resistance. On the one hand the color pink exerts «soft violence» in the way it pervasively shapes the preferences, identifications and desires of children, reinforces the notion of Woman = pink vagina in Pussyhat feminism, or reaffirms the gender binary in anti-gender protests. On the other hand, pink contributed to making the history of violence against LGBTQIA visible and to fostering feminist, queer and trans community. How can one and the same color guard the gender binary so violently, and at the same time open up space for emotional connections, dialogue and collaborations? Color has been persistently linked to sexuality, gender, class, race and colonialism since the 19th century. This paper will discuss color as an ambivalent tool of performative activism by training an eye on two interventions: First the Chicago based radical feminist dance troupe Pink Bloque's direct actions and second trans artist Morty Diamond's long-duration performance «My Year in Pink». I argue that the affective resonance of performing pink hyperfemininity in the case of Pink Bloque and of creating pink gender ambiguity in Diamond's daily interactions with the urban environment of New York manage to expand the political imaginary - one tiny pink glimmer of hope at a time.

«Queer peripheries and the topic of violence in Brazilian popular music»

Nicolas Wasser, Brazil

In recent years, a heterogeneous queer / LGBT music scene has emerged in Brazil. The performances of artists as diverse as Pablo Vittar, Liniker or Mc Linn da Quebrada not only question heteronormative, racist and transphobic violence, but also emerge as the voices of the periphery, those that seek, through their performance, other bodily representations of gender and affection. This paper explores the question of how these queer artists elaborate a new way of expressing sexual dissidence and at the same time discusses the role of popular music-performance as modes of resistance against urban violence in times of political backlash and the so-called «gender ideology».