NEW CHALLENGES TO FEMINISM AND GENDER RESEARCH

MID-TERM CONFERENCE
Milan, Italy
June 13th-14th 2022

Chair: Elisabetta Ruspini
Co-Chair: Ana Vidu

PLENARIES AND EVENING EVENT

Monday 13th June 2022

Opening Plenary Session: 14.30-16.00 (Room U7-01, Building U7-Civitas)
Chair: Elisabetta Ruspini (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Keynote speakers:

Lise Widding Isaksen (University of Bergen)
Care mobilities in transforming European welfare states

The question of who cares for children and the elderly is a key dilemma in most societies. This is particularly true regarding societies with a strong egalitarian tradition of women’s high labour market participation but a curtailed set of welfare state services in the name of economic austerity or re-traditionalization. Using the concepts of ‘care loops’ and daily care mobilities, this paper discusses how neo-liberal policies cause gendered, socio-economic inequalities and how they are expressed in various kinds of mobilities in Nordic and post-socialist countries. An interesting and significant change in post-socialist and post-social democratic societies is the return to the essentialist idea of women as part of a ‘caregiver pool’. This comes in the form of either retirement policies that ensure working mothers’ access to grandmothers’ informal childcare or in the form of migrant care workers who were born, raised, and educated in less affluent countries. Today, caregiver pools are local, national, transnational, and racialized. Here, welfare state transformations are discussed as part of neo-liberal processes of normalization, not as a quick-fix response to the care crisis. The ‘new normal’ seems to be stretched, and elastic care relations, new mixes of gender essentialist, racialized, egalitarian norms and policies in both post-socialist and post-social democratic societies.

Lise Widding Isaksen is professor at the Department of Sociology at the University of Bergen, Norway. Her research interests are gender, social stratification, sociology of the body, international migration, and welfare/social politics. She has written extensively on gender, power, and the welfare state, with special emphasis on the social and political organization of public and private care work. She is a member of Norwegian Sociological Association and Nordic Migration Network. She was coordinator for Research Network 33 ‘Women’s and Gender Studies’ in European Sociological Association (2017-2021). Among her selected publications: ‘Egalitarian Ideologies on the Move: Changing Care Practices and Gender Studies in European Sociological Association, 2019, ‘Local loops and micro-mobilities of care. Rethinking care in egalitarian contexts’ (with Lena Näre) Journal of European Social Policy, 2019, ‘Migration, Gender dynamics and Social Reproduction: Polish and Italian Mothers in Norway’ (with Ela Czapka) in Haukanes and Pine (2020) Intimacy and mobility in the era of hardening borders: Gender, reproduction, regulation Manchester University Press. Among her recent publications (with Lena Näre) the edited book Care Loops and Mobilities in Nordic, Central, and Eastern European Welfare States (Springer, 2022).
For further information: https://www.unimib.it/marina-calloni.

Sergio Mattarella, bestowed upon her the honor of citizenship and fundamental freedoms; gender studies; critical theory of society; critique of violence; and published more than 250 scientific works in several languages.

Research topics: human rights, gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination. She has given lectures in 48 different countries, UN.I.RE, consultant for the “Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on femicide” at the Senate of the departmental research center ADV - Against Domestic Violence, director of the academic network UNiversità In REte contro la violenza di genere (known as the Istanbul Convention) stresses in several parts - mainly in the section devoted to “Prevention” - the crucial function that the academia and the educational system can perform. Within this frame, the case of the academic network UN.I.RE (UNiversità In REte contro la violenza di genere - Network of Universities against Gender-based Violence) will be considered as “an example of good practice, which other universities in other states party to the convention might wish to draw inspiration from”, as mentioned by the GREVIO – Council of Europe in the Baseline Evaluation Report Italy (2020). The constitution of a synergic network of universities can contribute to promote fundamental changes in academic, social and political systems and to make effective European/ international conventions, national legislations, regional action plans and local policies thanks to joint learning processes.

Marina Calloni is full professor and chair of Social Political and Philosophy at the University of Milano-Bicocca. She is deputy president of the Italian Society of Political Philosophy, chair of the departmental research center ADV - Against Domestic Violence, director of the academic network UN.I.RE, consultant for the “Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on femicide” at the Senate of the Republic, delegate of the Minister of University and Research on issues related to combating gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination. She has given lectures in 48 different countries, participated in numerous cross-border researches also in collaboration with supranational institutions, and published more than 250 scientific works in several languages. Research topics: human rights, citizenship and fundamental freedoms; gender studies; critical theory of society; critique of violence; research networks and international cooperation. In 2020, the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, bestowed upon her the honor of Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. For further information: https://www.unimib.it/marina-calloni.

Gender-based, sexual and domestic violence was recognized by the United Nations as a violation of human rights only in 1993 thanks to the mobilization of international women’s movements. Until recent decades, this phenomenon was politically and socially neglected because it was regarded as a purely private matter. Nowadays this issue has become an integral part of the public debate at the global level and a constitutive element for the legitimation of political institutions, able to deliberate and apply specific social policies in order to prevent and persecute this crime. The university system can play a pivotal role in the fight against gender-based violence thanks to researches and the institutionalization of ad hoc educational programs, reinforcing cross-border academic networks that can contribute to a radical cultural, social and political change from a cross-cultural viewpoint.

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The problem of sexual violence in institutions worldwide is getting international attention. Sexual harassment at the workplace is one of the reasons why most women drop out of their career trajectories and academic environments. Power structures and complicity are often limiting solidarity networks from effective organizing in preventing harassment. Framed under the UniswithHeart Marie Skłodowska-Curie project, this speech will focus on underlying key features of the emerging and articulation of Networks of Support, based on successful social movements present in academic settings and other hierarchical institutions, which contribute to eradicating GBV and create zero-tolerance contexts for victims to speak up. In the post-pandemic world we are currently living, going back to work in-person needs to involve a safe space and a comfortable environment at the workplace. In this sense, after many years of research on how to overcome GBV and harassment, it has been shown that networks of solidarity achieve both, supporting survivors and pressing institutions to change. In this historical #MeToo and #TimesUp moment, the successful networks of support analyzed in this project, focus on social actors engaged, resistances faced, and how contexts of zero tolerance towards GBV are shaped. The aim of doing this in top US universities is to inform European institutions with effective policies and regulations, beyond academia and the workplace.

Drawing on this, I would like to focus on two key elements. (1) On one hand, the emergence and success of these social movements, counts on the support of active bystanders committed to improving the existing civil society. In this sense, the Isolating Gender Violence will be approached, meaning the need to support those who defend victims. This concept has already been legislated in two Autonomous communities in Spain. (2) On the other hand, sexual consent is also crucial to be tackled when approaching sexual harassment. In this line, I will inquire about the importance of considering the interactive power, besides the institutional power, as a context in which free consent cannot be asked nor given.

Finally, in line with the articulation of networks of solidarity—in different hierarchical institutions and at the workplace- I will highlight the case of the World MeToo University, as a concrete example of a strong immediate impact that is already successfully influencing administrations, political spheres, and fostering pioneer regulations against GBV. Overall, this speech is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which entails building actions for gender equality, also building a bridge between feminism and institutions for a free harassment society.

Ana Vidu holds a Marie Skłodowska-Curie post-doctoral fellowship at the University of California-Berkeley, conducting the #UniswithHeart project on solidarity networks and mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in universities. Ana is also an elected member of Executie Committee of the ESA (European Sociological Association) and co-coordinator of the Research Network: Women’s and Gender Studies. In addition, Dr. Vidu is member of the ESA Research Stream on Sociology of Law as well as member of the International Sociological Association (ISA) and the American Sociological Association (ASA), among other associations, such as the European Women Lawyers Association (EWLA). Dr. Vidu has been Editorial Assistant of the ISA journal International Sociology (indexed in JCR) from 2015 to 2020. She received the Distinction Award for her Bachelor’s Degree and also for her Master’s in Sociology. Her doctoral dissertation provided pioneering scientific knowledge in Spain on the treatment of one of the first complaints against a professor for sexual harassment at the University of Barcelona, comparing it with the first complaint at UC Berkeley.

The fundamental role of the university system in the struggle against gender-based violence

Teaching, researching, acting. The fundamental role of the university system in the struggle against gender-based violence

Marina Calloni (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Ana Vidu (University of Deusto & UC Berkeley)

Networks of solidarity leading the struggle for free of violence organizations

Networks of solidarity leading the struggle for free of violence organizations

Ana Vidu (University of Deusto & UC Berkeley)
Ana is one of the co-founders of the “Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence in Universities”, currently called “MeToo Universidad” (built in 2013) recognized as “Best practice” by the Women’s Foundation of the Spanish Equality Observatory. Dr. Vidu has participated in many international conferences in sociology and law spheres, also in competitive research projects and has published on gender violence, sexual consent, and isolating gender violence, in top journals such as *Qualitative Inquiry, Frontiers in Psychology, Masculinities and Social Change, Feminist Media Studies or Sexuality Research and Social Policy*.

**Evening event: 17.30-18.30** (Room U6-07, Building U6-Agorà)
Bicocca Choir: Programme of songs by women composers - sung by the Choir leader and Choirmembers
Bicocca Choir
https://en.unimib.it/services/bicocca-campus/cultural-activities/choir

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**PLENARIES AND EVENING EVENT**

**Tuesday 14th June 2022**

**Closing Plenary Session: 16.30-17.30** (Room U7-02, Building U7-Civitas)
Chair: Monica Massari (University of Milan)

**Keynote speakers:**

*Ursula Apitzsch (University of Frankfurt)*

*Transnational surrogacy in times of Covid*

The process of the outsourcing of care in the rich countries can be seen at its most dramatic form in the phenomenon of transnational surrogate mothers that is made possible by new reproductive technologies. In “emotional capitalism” (Hochschild 2010), the right to one’s own child is seen by many couples or even singles as an important feature of a fulfilled life, also by gay couples or in cases where one or both partners in a couple who want to have children are infertile. This fulfilled life is made possible by those who are paid by persons from the rich countries in order to carry a child to full term for them. Indian, Ukrainian, Nepalese reproductive clinics—among others all over the world—offer, quite legally, donated egg cells (ova) and sperm that can be selected from catalogues and purchased, if necessary. Human reproduction in the strict biological sense, the manufacture of the child one wants to have, thus becomes the “ultimate commodity” (ibid.) available on a global ‘free’ market.

However, what happens if in this production process the “chain of delivery” is being interrupted by catastrophic events like an earthquake or a pandemic? What is about the woman, what happens to the child?

This paper tries to find categories how to criticize the phenomenon of transnational surrogacy with a focus on the development of global gender orders. The first step is to ask whether Karl Polanyi’s term of a “fictive commodity” (that cannot be sold on the market without threatening the development of the existence of human beings as such) can help to criticize this extreme form of exploitation of female bodies and emotions. The second step is to ask whether Nancy Fraser’s critique of Polanyi’s concept of the necessary “embeddedness” of all forms of economy can be applied to a phenomenon of commodification like surrogacy. Fraser — for the sake of a more “emancipatory” concept than Polanyi’s — demands that in all cases the “circumstances” of commodification have to be discussed in order to decide whether the “emancipation” of women is being supported.

*Ursula Apitzsch* is Professor of Political Science and Sociology at the Goethe-University of Frankfurt/Main and Director of the Cornelia Goethe Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies (CGC). She is a founding member of the ESA RN 33. She has published broadly in the fields of migration, culture, and biography with special regard to the analysis of gender relations.
Gendered migration regimes and social reproduction

Social reproductive labour is key to capitalist economies and as long as productive labour depends on humans, productive and reproductive labour spheres are closely entangled. Increasingly restrictive gendered migration regimes that not only use physical but also administrative and temporal means of control, perceive migrants as temporary, productive and flexible labour force without their own reproductive rights. European states obstruct the social reproduction of migrant workers, by hindering family reunification of migrant workers from outside the EU. As migrant workers are struggling to meet the demands of family reunification in order to reunite with their families, often by working in an accelerated phase, or juggling several jobs at once, they are both engaged in a struggle for their own social reproduction as labour power as well as the social reproduction of their families. In this paper, drawing on various qualitative research conducted with migrant workers employed in care and domestic work in Finland, I propose to engage with theories on social reproduction in the analysis of gendered migration regimes. I offer an analysis of the political economy of social reproduction in gendered migration regimes that includes an everyday perspective on migration, employment and migration regimes, social and tax policies.

Lena Näre is Associate Professor of Sociology (tenure track) at the University of Helsinki, Finland. She holds a DPhil in Migration Studies from the University of Sussex, UK and a PhD in Sociology from the University of Helsinki, Finland. Her research focuses on migration, asylum, transnationalism, ageing, care work, precarity and ethnographic methods. Her research has been published in Sociology, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Citizenship Studies, Journal of European Social Policy, among others. She has served as Vice-President and Member of the Executive Board of European Sociological Association in 2015-2019. She is the Editor-in-Chief of Nordic Journal of Migration Research (Helsinki University Press) and an Associate Editor of Global Social Challenges Journal (Bristol University Press).