

Doing gender studies across regimes of oppression: challenges and openings

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Abstract

How can we make networks of solidarity that work across different kinds of regimes of oppression? In this paper, we discuss the conditions of possibility for doing border- crossing scholarly cooperation and the ways in which we can challenge the different kinds of brick walls that we experience in institutional, national and other contexts, and that we need to get up against (c.f Ahmed 2012). In earlier work, we have written about the internal activism and strategies of ambivalence we need to adopt in order to navigate the changing academic landscape in order to make gender studies part of our university at all (Fahlgren, Giritli-Nygren & Sjöstedt Landén 2015; Sjöstedt Landén & Giritli-Nygren 2016). International networking practices are very idealized in academia through the promotion of 'internationalisation' for excellence (Mählck 2013), but there is a strong need to critically assess what the conditions and possibilities for feminist scholarship that arise in the landscape of internationalisation across different regimes of oppression. Efforts to make feminist unity in the name of gender studies across different sets of borders also inevitably unveils the cracks and differences dividing feminist communities. How do we account for this while doing solidarity that can cut across regimes of oppression?

Our examples span between cooperation with scholars acting in northern and southern hemispheres as well the north and northernmost north constituting a community of 'northern circumpolar' relations of feminist scholarly cooperation. We take examples from the experiences of working in a variety of international networks of feminist scholars and activists that aims to transgress boundaries of academic and national regimes through efforts of setting up northern circumpolar connections as well as connections and communities of feminist scholars crossing the equator. It is therefore not to say that this is something we are doing 'elsewhere'. In this paper, we examine our own positionality and conditions of possibility for going forward with such work (see Essed 2013). However, Essed (2013) points out that social justice, not least, anti-racist work is a kind of leadership. We want to cling to this thought very hard, but how do we actually do it? What are the strategies, challenges and the openings?