

Ethnologie française

Call for Papers

“Gender and Sexualities in (Post-) Revolutionary Situations”

Coordinators

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Presentation

Since 2009, Middle Eastern and North African countries including Iran, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Turkey, Syria, and Bahrain have experienced multi-sectorial upheavals¹ of an intensity not seen since the era of independences. These periods of political effervescence have involved widespread participation by women. Graduates, the unemployed, peasants, students, artists, prostitutes, judges and lawyers, bloggers, mothers or the wounded or “martyrs,” feminists, union activists, anti-racists, veiled women, and LGBT activists have contributed in highly diverse ways by occupying factories, taking to the streets, militating via the internet and public spaces, and engaging with official agencies and elected officials, as well as more “transitory” institutions [Ait Mous & Berriane, 2013; Kréfa, 2016].

Women have been involved in each of these many large social uprisings, whether multi-sectorial, explicitly focused on sexual equality, or in opposition to governments or ruling parties. Both the wide variety of ways in which women have been involved and the specific nature of their demands have been largely neglected by scholarly studies of recent revolutionary situations, however [Bennani- Chraïbi & Fillileule, 2012; Hmed & Jeanpierre, 2016]. As a consequence, this growing body of research tends to perpetuate the assumption that the typical protestor is a heterosexual man. Some recent collective publications [Hasso & Salime, 2016; Gillot & Martinez, 2016; Sadiqi, 2016] and special issues [Jasser, Mahfoudh, Lalami et al., 2016] have focused on the roles of women and/or feminists, but very few have been grounded in fieldwork. For their part, Western media have primarily treated the “question of women” and “sexual minorities” outgrowths of an ideological opposition between “Islamists” and “modernists.” In Middle Eastern and North African countries, controversies that involve gender relations or “sexual minorities” often focus on an assumed opposition between “cultural authenticity” and “imports.”

The journal *Ethnologie française* is currently soliciting proposals for contributions to a special issue to be published in 2019 that will focus on gender and sexuality. We encourage contributions from fields including sociology, anthropology, political science, and history.

¹ These movements brought together highly diverse individuals and social groups, to the point that they even had divergent interests. This is characteristic of such critical periods, by contrast with more routine movements [Dobry, 1992].

However, because one objective of the issue is to “departicularize” events that have taken place in the Middle East and North Africa, proposals based in other countries or cultural areas such as Eastern, Western, or Southern Europe, Latin America, or Asia will receive particular consideration. By incorporating other socio-historical contexts, the journal wishes to broaden the scope of the issue beyond Arab countries that recently experienced revolutionary uprisings.

In terms of theoretical positions and methodology, studies that will ultimately be selected for this issue should be grounded in a view of gender as a transversal – as opposed to “variable” – category [Clair, 2012]. Our purpose is not simply to “add” women’s previously neglected involvement in recent historical events to men’s participation. Instead, our intention is to reflect the extent to which gender, as socially defined, ought to be a critical aspect of any scholarly study of revolutionary situations, and conversely, the ways in which such situations enable or authorize renewed development of studies of gender relations.

One central question is how field-based studies grounded in the position that gender is a highly naturalized social relationship are able to demonstrate that critical contexts make it possible to develop a critique of certain assumptions about gender and sexualities. In tandem with the effects of revolutionary situations on social relationships, the issue also seeks to reveal the extent to which recent social upheavals appear to have the return of earlier perspectives regarding gender and sexualities. Our ultimate goal is to argue that diverse movements and involvement in social events necessarily occur at the point at which local dynamics and international circulations intersect with each other.

We particularly seek contributions that pursue one or more of the following analytical strands:

Revolutionary Situations and a Critique of the (Heterosexual) Gendered Order

Because they represent moments in which everything that is established or assumed is overturned, including what was previously considered possible or conceivable, revolutionary situations are propitious to a form of defatalization of social relations [Damamme, Gobile, Matonti *et al.*, 2008]. An unimaginable outcome of these upheavals that was unthinkable for the vast majority of the population, including the most radical activists was the fall of a number of authoritarian leaders who had been in power for decades, provoking the denaturalization of existing social and political orders. Because revolutionary situations are by definition extraordinary, routinized practices are abandoned, symbolic and spatial boundaries between genders are transgressed, and previously in conceivable demands and causes emerge [Zancarini-Fournel, 2002]. In this sense, these convergences create spatio-temporal moments that can produce new gender arrangements [Goffman, 2002; Fillieule & Roux, 2009].

Indeed, critical contexts are associated with the powerful politicization of the body [Dakhli, 2012; Lachenal, 2013] and sexualities, as well as increased visibility for new “feminities” and “masculinities” [Connell, 2005], including those that are supported by collectivities and associations committed to promoting the rights of “sexual minorities” and new ways of understanding gender. This raises questions that include: What is the sociological composition of groups and social movements that promote these demands and gender identities? To what extent do they represent a continuity of and/or a break with previous generations? Revolutionary situations have also allowed a wide range of symbolic and spatial transgressions. Although under ordinary circumstances men dominate nocturnal urban environments, both men and women invest sites that become transformed into revolutionary symbols during social upheavals. The collection of studies assembled in this issue will demonstrate that, while these movements and practices appear to be new, they do not arise out of a structural vacuum [Taylor, 1989].

To the extent that gender represents a transversal analytical category [Scott, 1988], the studies selected for the issue will not be restricted to social movements that are explicitly focused on gender relations. Indeed, organized labor movements seeking improved access to employment and working conditions, another subject generally overlooked by scholarly research, should to be amply represented by the studies in this issue. Examining labor movements through the lens of gender is of particular interest because women are far more profoundly impacted than men by unemployment and the deregulation of economic exchanges. Last, although working class women tend to maintain a certain distance from feminism, which is sometimes perceived as a “bourgeois” ideology and/or way of life, revolutionary situations make improbable encounters possible [Zancarini-Fournel, 2002] and can also fuel an awareness of gender that can become an important feature of their evolutions and outcomes.

A Return to the Previous Gendered and Sexual Order?

The special issue also seeks to explore the extent to which returning to a routinized pattern can be correlated with a return to a previous system of gender and of gendered roles and relationships. Researchers who have studied regime change, particularly in Latin America and Eastern Europe [Alvarez, 1990; Jaquette & Wolchik, 1998; Matland & Montgomery, 2003], have highlighted women’s decisive contributions to protests against authoritarian institutions and, at the same time, to their subsequent marginalization by the professional political sphere following the crises. The gender distribution of elected institutions in the Middle East and North Africa appears to support this observation, even in countries like Tunisia that adopted strict rules governing equal representation or parity.

This collection of studies will endeavor to shed light on this pattern by shifting away from the professional political sphere and towards a close examination of individual trajectories, dispositions, and practices. Departing from a strict focus on the professional political field will enable less visible but equally important transformations to be apparent, including the appropriation of urban space, the impact of events on familial and conjugal environments [McAdam, 1993; Pagis, 2014], and the emergent networks and new forms of gendered commitments.

International Circulations and Local Re-appropriations

Movements in each country can also be analyzed in light of the intersection between local dynamics and international circulations, including causes and specific actions or financial and cognitive resources. The Arab revolutions, for example, gave rise to significant mobility among activists and experts between the Arab countries themselves on the one hand, and between Arab countries and Europe on the other. International organizations that support action against violence towards women and the digital representation between the two gender classes for several years [Lacombe, Marteu, Jarry-Omarova et al., 2011] have augmented the flow of resources towards certain feminine and/or feminist associations. As a result, it would now be problematic to analyze relations between genders and/or sexualities in revolutionary or post-revolutionary contexts without taking international circulations into account.

The resources and/or limitations of globalization are not automatically transferrable, however, because they tend to be re-appropriated by local actors [Jaunait, Le Renard & Marteu, 2013]. Contributions of particular interest to the reviewers of proposed contributions to the special issue include studies that explore how populations and groups from countries where revolutions occurred experienced the revolutions “from a distance” (for example in France). Proposed contributions that examine how the revolutions affected the mobilities of these groups and individuals are also of great interest.

Timetable

Proposals, consisting of titles and summaries as well as bibliographies should be between 4,000 and 6,000 characters in length. Proposals must be received by the issue coordinators, Abir Kréfa (abir.krefa@ens-lyon.fr) and Sarah Barrières (sarah.barrieres@yahoo.fr), by **September 10, 2017.**)

Proposals should describe principal lines of inquiry and arguments as well as the resources, methods, and materials (investigations and/or archives). They should be accompanied by a biographical/bibliographical presentation of the author/s.

Acceptance decisions will be announced during the month of October 2017.

Completed versions of accepted contributions should be between 35,000 and 70,000 characters in length, including spaces and bibliographies in length and must be received **by January 31, 2018.**

The special issue of *Ethnologie française* is scheduled for publication in **Spring 2019.**

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