



DiGeSt

Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies

Editorial

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As this semester is drawing to a close, we are reflecting on a tumultuous academic year that has been marked by the recent wave of violence in the Middle East, and more particularly the ongoing genocide and humanitarian disaster in Gaza. Over the past nine months, numerous academics struggled to find ways to ethically position themselves vis-à-vis this violence. Being able to witness on our screens the deaths of tens of thousands of citizens and children, the bombing of hospitals and refugee camps, or the wiping out of all academic institutions in Gaza has affected many of us.

DiGeSt is being hosted by Ghent University and two of its editors-in-chief are affiliated with the same university. Students at Ghent University followed in the footsteps of US students in May 2024 and started to occupy parts of the university grounds and buildings in a bid to protest universities' ongoing collaboration with the state of Israel. The students occupied the central administrative building of UGent, the university forum (UFO), and renamed it Refaat Alareer building in honour of the Palestinian academic and poet who was killed along with his family in his home by an Israeli air strike in December 2023. Refaat Alareer was only one of hundreds of academics, writers, artists and intellectuals who have been attacked by Israel and, already known as 'the voice of Gaza', he became representative of the ongoing *scholasticide* and *educide* that aims at obliterating Palestinian cultural and intellectual life.

In this context, UGent students joined the international call for a complete academic boycott of Israeli institutions to end the illegal land occupation, the forced displacement and killing of thousands, and the apartheid regime that is in place in Israel. After a six week occupation they were ordered to leave the building, but not after obtaining the university's promise to cut ties with current Israeli academic institutions. Throughout this period, staff and students have been involved in organizing teach-ins and public lectures by Middle East and human rights law experts. As a Journal dedicated to enhancing comprehension of the mechanisms behind the production of difference, social exclusion, discrimination, racism, inequality and increasing our understanding of all social groups being marginalized, we can only support all actors who have been advancing our knowledge and taking a principled and moral stance against this genocidal violence.

Months ago, however, we expected to start this editorial much differently, as this year marks the tenth-year anniversary of *DiGeSt*. Moreover, in this anniversary year, the journal's managing editorial team expanded to include Chloé Janssen and Louise Benson James. At the same time, Florian Vanlee is now our new associate editor after serving as editor-in-chief and leading *DiGeSt* through the stormy waters of the pandemic years. We have been much looking forward to celebrating *DiGeSt*'s tenth-year anniversary and proudly present five Roundtable contributions by leading experts to reflect on the last decade(s) of research on gender and diversity in their fields. **Marysa Demoor**, full professor emerita of English Literature and Culture at Ghent University, was founding editor of *DiGeSt* and narrates the journal's genesis and journey up to our current day. We are grateful for her invaluable guidance and support throughout the years.

In her contribution, political scientist **Petra Meier** gives an overview of developments in the field of democratic political representation and participation in relation to women and gender, hinting at the field's shortcomings and recent new directions and commitments. Sociologist and gender and sexuality scholar **Paul Mepschen** reviews his own work and the notion of sexual nationalism in particular, in light of the last decades' political and social changes in Western Europe. His observations of the politicization of sexuality in terms of belonging to a national moral community has only become more relevant in recent years of growing anti-gender, gender-critical and TERF sentiments, particularly in connection with right-wing nationalist discourses.

Joke Hermes, scholar of media studies, has been a leading voice in scholarship on women and gender in popular culture and media. In her contribution, she reflects on the past decades of gender and diversity scholarship, while making a passionate plea to retain a focus on political and unequal power relationships in a future research agenda. The final *DiGeSt*'s

tenth-year anniversary Roundtable contribution, by **Patrizia Zanoni**, reviews the growing stream of critical diversity scholarship in organisation and management research. As a landmark and leading voice in shaping this critical literature, she argues and illustrates in her contribution that critical diversity studies in the field of organization is ‘not only theoretical and empirical, but also explicitly political.’ Indeed, the centrality of politics and the role of the political in gender and diversity scholarship runs through all five contributions in different ways. Combined, these contributions illustrate the empirical and theoretical richness that has been developed in diversity and gender research and suggest new future research agendas.

Other articles in this General Issue include a contribution by **Zahra Runderkamp**, discussing the experiences of women in local governance and specifically why they choose to ‘drop out’ and leave their terms in local councils in the Netherlands. Identifying the different reasons affecting their decision-making, the article indicates that perpetuating gendered social and family norms play a significant role in women’s (non-)participation and representation in local politics. In a second contribution, **Florian Vanlee** critically examines the meanings of (non-academic) impact in research governance, particularly in the context of the UK’s ‘Research Excellence Framework’. By scrutinizing the narratives of ‘impact cases’ focused on gender and sexuality submitted to the REF, Vanlee traces how impact in this field is constructed and validated (and consequently which other types of impact is not).

Babette Lagrange’s article investigates the discriminations faced by bisexual individuals, uniting queer theory, affect theory, and findings from interviews to explore the forms of shame experienced by this community and to deepen our understanding of biphobia. Finally, a collaborative study from **Myrtati Dyah Artaria, Sayf Muhammad Alaydrus, Azzah Kania Budianto, Dwi Prasetyo, Charanjit Kaur** and **Maciej Henneberg** provides insight into the experience of Indonesian *priawan*: female-to-male transmasculine individuals. Their article unites findings from interviews with *priawan* individuals with an overview of social and cultural factors that impact queer experience in Indonesia, shining new light on this understudied topic.

This issue’s ‘What Are You Reading’ section contains a rich array of book reviews whose critical breadth exemplifies DiGeSt’s interests. Our reviewers – **Carla Besora Barti, Alexia Debbaut, Yishi Pan, Sarah Postema-Toews, Zuzanna Ściborska and Luisa Voss, Jonas Vanderschueren, Nina Van der Sype, and Eva Van de Wiele** – are early career scholars whose research interests encompass a diverse range of fields, and particularly cross-disciplinary research. They reflect on how these scholarly texts have influenced their thinking and methodological approaches and involve different fields such as aging studies, critical feminism, domestic space in literature and history, ecocritical anthropology, migration studies, antifascism, disability and classics, and childhood and media studies.

Finally, we wish to thank our two fabulous interns who have contributed to creating a new DiGeSt issue with great enthusiasm and fervor: thank you Alexia Debbaut and Katelijne Lievens!