

# In 1000 words: #TimelsUp, Academics and Organization Studies

## *Special Unplugged*

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M@n@gement offers here a mosaic of short and reflexive essays dedicated to the topic: *#TimelsUp, Academics and Organization Studies*. Papers may engage in a poetic, controversial, academic, auto-ethnographical, or fictional style but all share strong ideas around the question of academia, gender and organizing.

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## **#TIMESUP... SILENT NO MORE. FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES**

**Silence... reticence... secrecy... shame... censorship... hush... shut down... hide... iron curtain... threatened with abuse on blogs... not believed ... / Time's up.**

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When it seems that everything has been said  
I feel this urge to voice my pain, my anger and my hope  
Bygone fears kept at bay  
To speak out, despite the price, and find freedom in my voice  
To tap into my vulnerability, find strength in this wave and acknowledge the anger  
For so long, like so many, I have repressed my voice  
It was not to be heard, as I was explicitly and symbolically made to understand

**Dress modestly... hide...show... not too much... maintain... suppress... control... shave... improve... from home, to school, to dance floors, to university, to workplaces, to the streets, to the sheets... disciplined body... inappropriate... dirty... smelly... hairy... tempting... provocative... dangerous... distracting... there for the taking... but smile... why don't you smile? / Time's up.**

Catcalling, sexualization, objectification in every aspect of our lives  
Sexist advertisements, the female body being used to sell everything  
Supporting roles in organizations and movies  
Mansplaining, interrupting, condescending... the boys' club reproducing itself  
The groping and grinding on dance floors, watch your drink, don't walk alone  
Stay home, don't drink too much, be careful, hide, be cautious  
School codes, dress codes, mom codes, slut shaming, endless list of warnings...  
Cross your legs, don't take up too much space, be a good girl...  
Learning that sexual harassment is part of being (mainly) a girl or a woman  
Insidious building of a culture that (still) refuses to see women as people  
Deeply ingrained messages from an early age...  
Stop telling me what I can say or not say, feel or not feel, what I can or cannot do with my body...  
No more "boys will be boys"! No more casting girls and women as victims!

**Forcing your will... systemic abuse... power... inequality... degradation... discrimination... control... (in)justice system... annoyed... sad... bitter... exasperated... heartbroken... furious... outraged... not broken... organizing... resisting... galvanizing collective... speaking up... sorry not sorry.../ Time's up.**

Blinders being taken off...  
The uproar, the pain, the solidarity...  
A gigantic wave of people, mostly women, but also men and non-binary survivors, by the tens of thousands expressing their hidden truth  
The toll mounting... the staggering ubiquity of sexual predation  
Freedom to grab no more... rape apology no more...  
Alpha male, under the light, has lost his landmarks  
It will take more to shake patriarchal power

So much to reinvent

**Puritanical influence... political correctness... feminist prudes...  
what about seduction... what about difference...  
what about “freedom to bother”... / Time’s up.**

Nothing puritanical about sexual liberty... for everyone...  
Seduction without coercion, seeking joy on our own terms  
Most people get the difference  
Let’s celebrate these furious voices  
The backlash will not break the wave

**Cooperation...association... struggle... solidarity... partnership...  
teamwork... alliance... responsibility... intersectionality... / Time for  
change.**

This tide was just the beginning. Sexual norms are shifting  
Desire, consent and seduction take multiple forms. Let’s re-imagine the  
rules of attraction  
Let’s use our platform, our voice and our power to be part of the change  
Let’s stop being complicit and examine toxic, privileged masculinity and  
sexism of a more subtle, everyday nature  
Let’s hear all voices and not just the white hetero-cis-normative privileged  
voices  
Let’s deal with the awkwardness, the doubts and the questions  
Let’s debate the gray areas of power dynamics  
Let’s find the language to talk about bodies, desires and sexuality

Universities teach about human rights, freedom, critical management and  
feminist theory  
But sexual harassment and abuse of power isn’t left outside their walls  
This is not a men's problem or a women's problem  
This is not an American problem, or a movie business problem or an  
academic problem... It’s everyone's problem!  
We are responsible for exposing and dismantling systems of inequality  
Let’s start by looking at our own academic set of rules and behaviours and  
how they contribute to (re)produce patriarchal culture where male voices,  
words, behaviour, work and desires continue to be the norm and different  
voices continue to be silenced, (self)censored and disciplined... because  
we’re part of the problem... /Time’s up.

## I FEEL LUCKY

He had no right. No right to make me feel that way. No right to lecture me when I explained how uncomfortable I was with his salacious comments. No right to make fun of me when he realized I was uncomfortable with the situation.

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It all began when I started a job at a new university. I was a postdoc and I did not know a lot of people there. I was spending my days doing literature reviews and I felt a bit lonely. Being a very sociable person, I appreciate having conversations with colleagues and friends about all sort of topics. I missed that sort of company at that new workplace. As a result, when a professor first invited me for lunch, I was thrilled. I was going to meet a new person in the department.

We had lunch and started talking about attending conferences. After chatting about papers and plenary sessions, I mentioned I was planning on sharing a room with a colleague and friend whom I had known for 15 years, going back to our undergraduate days. The professor asked what my husband was thinking about that. I was surprised by the question: why would my husband care if I shared a room with a friend? He went on to tell me that if he were to share a room with a beautiful woman like me, “something” would happen for sure. Red flags raised in my head. I immediately said that I knew some people liked fooling around at conferences, but that I was not interested in doing so myself. He pressed on, saying he liked having fun at conferences. I asked what his wife thought about the whole thing. He replied: “what she doesn’t know doesn’t hurt her”. I could not repress an expression of disgust. I thought he noticed that I did not share his opinion on the matter and that the issue was settled. Oh, how wrong was I!

He started inviting me to lunch every day. His insistence made me uncomfortable, so I felt compelled to say yes once in a while. Each time, I would have an uneasy feeling about the misplaced comments he would make, or the lecherous way he looked at me. Once, he brought me to a restaurant and insisted that I drink beer with him, which I refused. Later, I told my husband about this and his conclusion came down in less than five seconds: this guy was hitting on me. I still couldn’t see how that could be. After all, I had told him I was not interested in that sort of thing. I would soon learn that this person only hears what he wants to hear.

Spring came, and he asked me again to go have lunch together. At the cafeteria, he started asking eerie questions about what I was looking for in a man. Uncomfortable, I try to change the topic by suggesting that we go outside to enjoy the sun a little bit. He wanted that we go walk in the nearby woods, the campus’ so-called “rapewood”. I said no and turned around to walk toward a university building. He cornered me in a remote spot and tried to sit very close to me. I managed to keep him at bay by putting my legs in the way. I was trying to keep the conversation casual. When I mentioned that I liked eating outside and enjoying the sun, he asked: “Will you wear a bikini? I hope you do, I bet you have a nice body”. I was taken aback and warned him: “You crossed a line here”. After that, I was not feeling well, and eventually I left him and went back inside.

When I arrived in my office and closed the door, I sat in my chair with a pain in my chest. I thought: "This is it. I have been a victim of sexual harassment in the workplace".

Some may think that I was overreacting, that the sentence was not that obscene or explicit, perhaps even that the sentence was in fact rather harmless and innocent. What made it harassment was the whole context and the repetition, day after day. The web of sexual allusions, embarrassing questions, inappropriate remarks he had spun around me during the last weeks. This sentence was the culmination of the entire process.

I felt guilty. Maybe I had been too nice? Not clear enough about not wanting to be involved in this? And I was mad. Mad that he had made me a victim. Indeed, a victim I was: because I was a postdoc wanting a job, I was worried he could find himself on a hiring committee, and thus be in a position of power towards me. I also felt fear. Fear of what could happen if he managed to corner me again. I started suffering from insomnia and feeling anxiety at the thought of crossing his path in the hallways. I started bringing scissors with me when I went to the photocopier next to his office even though I knew it was ridiculous, but fear is irrational.

I told a more senior professor about what was going on. Her first reaction was: "Oh dear, it was so worse when I was your age, if you knew!" She agreed that his behavior was indeed inappropriate, and did her best to comfort and help me, but she wasn't sure what could be done in a situation where it was my word against his. Also, she felt she was in a delicate position, as he was, after all, a colleague.

I avoided him as much as I could during the following months. He would still invite me for lunch, ask me what was wrong, and insisted he wasn't hitting on me and that I should give him another chance. I finally granted him 10 minutes, at the cafeteria, to explain himself. He made fun of me when I said I would not eat, just hear him out and that I had arranged to meet friends afterwards. He started telling me that I should not react like that because women like receiving compliments. I could not believe what I was hearing. I reminded him that some behaviors were not appropriate in the workplace. According to him, that was bullshit, because the workplace was just a place like any other. Like in the "real world", these sorts of things could be told to women. A typical case of mansplaining. His behavior shattered any remaining belief that I may have had that I had been responsible in any way for what had happened. It wasn't my fault, it was his. He was a total jerk, a definite macho, beyond redemption. I made it clear I never wanted to talk to him again, and walked away, feeling relieved.

During the following months I learned that several similar and even worse stories were circulating about him. I was not his first inappropriate flirt, nor his last. Later that year he insisted on having lunch with a visiting PhD student and made her feel very uncomfortable. I tried to help by advising her to ignore him. He wasn't lying when he told me he was particularly active at conferences, especially with young and beautiful PhD students. He would make them drink a lot and ask for their phone number. Then he would send them text messages and call them, inviting them to his hotel room at 11 pm. He would go to conference parties and rub himself on young women, professors and students alike.

Two years passed. Discussions about sexual harassment on campuses started to emerge. A professor that had heard about my story asked me to tell her the details of what had happened. With my permission, she then told the whole story to the school's dean. The latter met with me in presence of an HR employee. I told them my story, as well as all the other cases I was aware of. They were mortified. I gave a list of 12 victims or witnesses. They corroborated the stories. Finally, the university administrators met with him, warning him that he had to stop this kind of behavior.

Six months later, I learned he was leaving my university, because he had accepted a better position with enough resources to hire PhD students and post-docs. He would be their boss. He would meet with them alone in his office. He would accompany them at conferences. I know there are students who admire him and would want to work with him. Students who, in the same situation, may not receive the kind of support my husband and my university provided me. Since then, I have also heard he is still continuing his inappropriate behavior at conferences.

What can I do? What can we do?

So, this is my story. The worst part of it is: I feel lucky. I feel lucky that nothing worse than this happened to me. Salacious remarks, but no physical contacts, no assault, no rape. I feel lucky that I do not have a more serious story to tell, like so many others. Mine is just another story of sexual harassment in the workplace, of mansplaining a woman how she should feel and act about it, and her feeling guilty just for being nice. It's another story of a woman thinking she is responsible for what's happening.

Call it typical flirt. Ordinary compliments. Casual harassment. Usual mansplaining. Call it what you will. After all, it is common to trivialize this kind of behavior, despite the suffering it causes. It doesn't make it acceptable. It's doesn't make it ok. It just makes it revolting.

When such behaviors and trivialization keep going on, can we really say #TimesUp ?

## THE 'PERKS' OF AN ACADEMIC CAREER

Most women academics would write about the challenges that they experienced in their academic careers, especially in terms of their career advancement. Yes, I too have experienced challenges in my career. However, challenges to my upward mobility are minimal. Therefore, in this piece, I want to focus on the positive side of my career and what I believe are 'perks' for women in academia.

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My academic career commenced in April 2008. Before entering the academic environment, I was a Human Resource Manager in the corporate world. After completing my Masters' degree in 2006 and passing with a cum laude, I was head hunted by the academics in the department I am currently working in. After pursuing me for two years I finally gave in and joined academia.

I initially did not enjoy being an academic, as I felt extremely lonely in this environment. We all worked in silos behind closed doors and there was minimal interactions amongst colleagues. In the first 4 years of my academic career, I used to leave the office by midday and work at home on my PhD dissertation instead. The loneliness was too much for me to handle. After completing my PhD I was at a cross road where I felt I could either stay in academia or go back into the corporate environment.

However, in the interim I enjoyed my career and the freedom it gave me to explore new avenues for research. I was also doing lots of reading across disciplines for my PhD research, which explored Indian women managers' experiences in the workplace. My interest in the field of diversity management was piqued due to my readings. Reading interesting articles and conceptualising varied topics on diversity management for students to explore captured my imagination and stimulated my thought processes. This type of mental stimulation I never experienced in the corporate environment. I attend local and international conferences where I meet with scholars from diverse fields and learn about new and mentally stimulating subject areas. For me engaging with scholars and forming networks is rewarding as I am able to ask advice and tips on advancing my research. Most of the time scholars are eager to share ideas and their experiences. These 'perks' kept me in academia.

Not only do I enjoy conducting research in diversity management but I also feel stimulated in my interactions with students during class. For me, changing the mind-set of students is a challenge. It is not a daunting task but one, which I perceive as a sweet challenge. The debates that I engage in during classes stimulates my mind and results in excitement within students and me. There is never a dull moment for me in class and I look forward to presenting classes.

While I am mentally stimulated by different views and perspectives not all students are comfortable with certain topics. At the same time, I allow students to leave the classroom if they are not comfortable with a particular topic. I remember when I first started talking about sexual orientation of employees in the workplace in 2012 I had many Christian students walking out on me during class as they felt uncomfortable. Times have changed since 2012. For me it is amazing to see how students these days engage with 'controversial' topics. In 2015, I gave the post-graduate class an assignment that focused on "*A day in the life of a subjugated identity*". Two students pretended to be lesbians during their experiment in a mall and presented their experiences of assuming such an identity in class. One of the students in class became emotional during the

presentation and the discussion that ensued revealed that she was a lesbian. I was pleasantly surprised that none of the students in class rejected her. In fact, they embraced her and indicated to her that they accept and respect her. This reaction from the class bolstered her self-esteem and through their acceptance, she voiced her opinions much more during class discussions.

Nevertheless, some students are close-minded. I occasionally have students who become extremely emotional in class when we discuss sensitive topics such as colonialism. I have had a student outburst in 2017 and thereafter leaving class because I spoke about how colonialism still negatively influences present-day Africa. However, after informal discussions with colleagues in my department, I came to find out that he could not deal with topics such as Affirmative Action and Employment Equity as he firmly believed that we were 'picking' on white people. He however did apologise to all the academics for being rude in their classes.

Another 'perk' for me is that I am able to explore unexplored 'territories' in my research in diversity management. As I notice happenings in my country and surroundings, I want to explore more. Alas! I just do not have the personal capacity to explore all the topics that I want to investigate.

A 'perk' that I believe benefits both male and female academics, is that one can have an 'office' anywhere in the world. Thus, if I am travelling I can still do research and answer e-mails. If I need to talk to a student, I can use Skype or Whatsapp and still be just as effective.

Thus, if anyone sees academia as a boring career I would definitely disagree. We are not the nerdish, grey-suited, scatter-brained, boring individuals as per some perceptions. For me academia is one of the most rewarding and exciting careers. Perhaps that is also due to the nature of my research and the module that I teach. I look forward to come to work because I know every day brings a new challenge in my life. Every day I begin a new task that is not the same as the previous day's task. For me these 'perks' will definitely keep me in academia and I don't believe I would want to move back to the corporate environment.



## REDOING FEMINISM: DIGITAL ACTIVISM & PRECARIOUS BODIES

### PRELUDE

The Women's March, the day after Donald Trump's inauguration (January 20, 2017), would become one of the largest demonstrations in American history. A few months later, on March the 8<sup>th</sup>, women all over the world celebrated International Women's Day with a one-day strike and protested in solidarity with women in Argentina and elsewhere, against gender-based violence (*#NiUnaMenos*: "Not One Less", see Image 1). Soon after the 2017 marches, which laid the groundwork for a broader critique of women's oppression, we witnessed worldwide solidarity mobilizations and organized movements that culminated in *#BuildMovementsNotWalls*, *#MeToo*, originally started by Tarana Burke, and after that, *#TimelsUp*.

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Image 1

<https://twitter.com/Madridinformer/status/987351370075443201>

More recently, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2018, Marielle Franco, a Brazilian lesbian feminist activist, recently elected city councilor and fierce critic of police brutality, was assassinated. She fought for the rights of women, single mothers like herself, gay people and favela residents. Latest reports suggested that Marielle was most likely killed by 'militias'<sup>1</sup> (Popularresistance.org, April 19, 2018). The days after her assassination, *#MariellePresente* and *#MarielleVive* flooded social media (Image 2), and a month later, about 3,000 tweets from all over the world are posted every week, demanding Marielle's murder to be resolved.

1. Militias refer to criminal groups whose members are former police officers or active and corrupted officers, controlling large parts of the city.



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Follow

#MariellePresente #MarielleVive



**"Marielle: Presente!" - a prova de vestibular que virou exposição**

Marielle com uma bandeira branca, enfrentando escudos militares, o corpo cravejado de balas, de onde escorrem pássaros de sangue. Marielle à frente de u...  
edgardigital.ufba.br

4:29 AM - 22 Apr 2018

Image 2

<https://twitter.com/carlaodabahia/status/988016962159677440>

#### SELF-ORGANIZED, DIGITALLY NETWORKED SPACES OF DIS/ AFFILIATION

Drawing on prior studies on feminist digital activism (e.g. Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Baer, 2016; Berridge, & Portwood-Stacer, 2015), we argue that feminist meme events such as #MariellePresente or #MarielleVive, #YesAllWomen and #TimelsUp, constitute new spaces for organizing local and translocal activist interventions and foster feminist solidarity. Hashtag feminism (e.g. Clark, 2016), feminist activism that mostly unfolds through Twitter hashtags, has become a powerful tactic for fighting gender inequalities and violence against women around the world. Rather than perpetuating narratives of social progress, digital activism emphasizes *'the process* of searching for new political paradigms, languages, and symbols that combat the neoliberal reduction of the political to the personal' (Baer, 2016: 30, emphasis added).

In a similar way that occupied spaces have traditionally worked for social movements, hashtags create spaces of 'autonomous communication', separate from controlling powers, which ultimately become spaces 'for sovereign assemblies to meet and to recover their rights of representation' (Castells, 2012: 11; Gerbaudo, 2012; Treré, 2015). What normally starts as a personal call for action, through specific digital practices, is soon communicated to wider audiences through less hierarchical and more participatory channels. The rise of digitally networked action thus enables the formation of communication networks, in which group ties are being replaced by large-scale, fluid social networks

that operate through specific organizing processes operating in social media contexts. These processes do not involve 'strong organizational control or the symbolic construction of a united "we"' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013: 748; Kavada, 2015). Instead, they entail 'acts of identification' (Leppänen et al., 2014) during which identities are being performed through interrelated chains of events, foregrounding the role of interconnectedness, dis/affiliation and solidarity in social media.

The expression of dis/affiliation and solidarity through hashtag activism involves creativity, interactivity and the creation and constant circulation of semiotic resources (Vladimirou, 2018). These resources can be textual or multimodal and are highly entextualisable<sup>2</sup> (Leppänen et al., 2014). Entextualisation is connected to the process of resemiotisation (Iedema 2003), the latter referring to the process of meaning re-articulation across various modes, modalities and platforms, emphasising the cultural and socio-historical dimension in carving up meaning-making trajectories. To illustrate, in Image 3, a photograph of Latin American women protesting against sexual violence in 1936 is decontextualized and entextualised in a digital context (Twitter), where it becomes a powerful resource to contemporary struggles against gender abuse. Both the caption 'Thousands seize on Twitter to denounce gender abuse' and the hashtags #NiUnaMenos and #MeToo play a crucial role in the process of resemiotisation, bringing together a community with shared ideologies and emphasising the historical continuity of feminist struggles. Thus, entextualisation and resemiotisation allow us to trace back the process through which the re-circulation of semiotic resources makes possible the creation of solidarity spaces across various social media platforms.

2. 'Entextualisation' (Bauman and Briggs 1990) refers to the process of lifting a linguistic or semiotic resource from one context and meaningfully placing it into another.

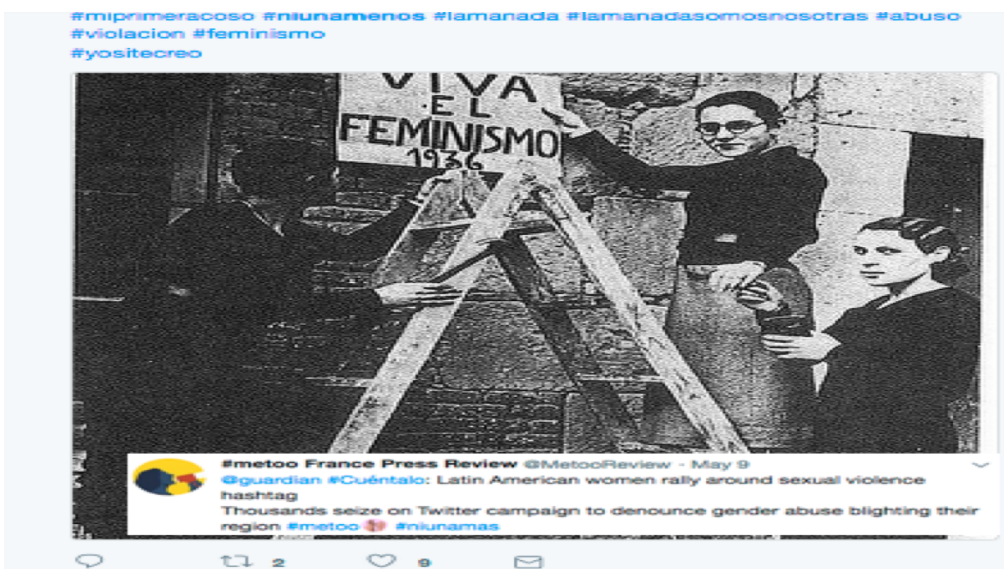


Image 3

<https://twitter.com/MetooReview/status/994272918011031553>

Thus, in mediated environments, the affordances and constraints of technologisation are rapidly changing; yet, they offer immense opportunities for the production of future actions, which take place across various modalities, genres and platforms. Such self-organizing platforms are generating a distinctive form of protest activity, and through the logic of 'connective action' (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013) contribute to the formation of translocal spaces of feminist solidarity. The section that follows explores the role of the body in the creation of such spaces and how embodiment and precarity are performed in digital contexts.

#### HASHTAG FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND THE BODY

Feminist analysis of capitalism has clearly shown that its crises are both gendering and gendered. Feminists have drawn attention to the tacit assumptions that the default activist is male and challenged the tendency to consider gender as an add-on variable rather than a constitutive feature of social movements (Dean & Aune, 2015). 'Gliding over and disregarding the embodied aspect of politics', Daskalaki and Fotaki (2017: 134) argue, 'underplays the ways in which the neoliberal order has been imposed and maintained through the gendered mechanization of the female and/or feminine body, its exploitation and commodification under capitalism, and its objectification as a site of reproduction'.

Self-organizing activist digital spaces present us with a paradoxical and contradictory terrain for theorizing the female (activist) body in the context of digital feminism. Hashtaging, (re-) tweeting and memes become constitutive resources through which communities of feminist activism are formed. These resources become involved in the production of an 'intimate publics': individuals who are affectively brought together also share worldviews and orientations towards the objects of concern (Berlant, 2011: 22; Khoja-Moolji, 2015). This is precisely what happens during the hashtag feminism: For example, participation in events such as #TimesUp or #DressLikeaWoman, is premised upon tweeters 'prior affective situation' (Ahmed, 2010: 40; emphasis added). Reflecting on this, Khoja-Moolji (2015: 348) explains: 'we are not neutral bodies; we bring with ourselves impressions of history and its affects, which make it possible for us to enter into particular kinds of affective relationships, or not, with the objects that we encounter'. To illustrate, Tananarive Due, in her tweet that was shared 12,000 times and liked 29,000 times (Image 4), includes the photo of her late mother being dragged by the police back in 1963 during civil rights demonstrations. Through the use of this personal black and white photo, her intervention evokes not only an affective reaction to her mother's and other women's embodied struggle back then but also links herstory with contemporary women's mobilization against Donald Trump and his misogynistic views (*#DressLikeaWoman*).



Image 4

<https://twitter.com/TananariveDue/status/827346203549372416>

Material and immaterial flows across space and time (see also the work of Appadurai, 1990) *affect* a dis-continual process of transformative engagement with the *other*, which could institute affective relationships and alternative organizing subjectivities. Yet, these affective relationships that flourish in the Twittersphere often remain ephemeral and precarious. For Berlant (2011), however, precarity is the key structure of affect in an era marked by the collapsing hopes of progress and equality. Precarity can be mobilized as an oppressive neoliberal force yet, at the same time, can also be seen as a potentiality that 'institutes new subjectivities, new socio-spatialities and new kinds of politics' (Gill & Pratt, 2008: 3). Ephemeral and precarious affective relations can provide re-embodiments and positional re-entanglements 'based on the acknowledgment of the always-messy process of constructing one's political standpoint' (Tuzku, 2016: 160).

Echoing Braidotti's (2006) nomadic subject, the digital activist 'is an in-between: a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding-outwards of affects. A mobile entity, in space and time, and also an enfolded kind of memory, this subject is in-process but is also capable of lasting through sets of discontinuous variations, while remaining extraordinarily faithful to itself' (Braidotti, 2006: 135). Embodying nomadic, digital subjectivities is way to transform creatively the understanding of a free subject: one who remains connected to material and affective processes. Following this, affects are not merely experienced viscerally, but instead they are 'infused with forces of desire and power' and 'are invested in institutional and ideological constructs such as the gendered organization, as well as in the political ideas, acts and movements that challenge it' (Pullen et al., 2016: 109). The affective dimension of collective action, as experienced in these contexts, can produce opportunities for alternative forms of engagement and organizing driven by reflexive participants who 'critically review and alter everyday systems that [they] live by' (Wals et al., 2009: 9) and are prepared to experiment with a range of possibilities.

## INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

Hashtag movements unfold in online and offline spaces and spark and/or reinforce local and translocal struggles. Their emergence and evolution highlight how visible female bodies in the street (Butler, 2015) and digital, cyber-bodies (Haraway, 1992) are brought together towards a contemporary feminist politics of space, embodiment and difference. We thus suggest that the emergence of such ephemeral yet momentous digital communities indicates that social media not only represent the organizational backbone for instituting new possibilities of politics of difference but also sustain and promote process-based political actions and feminist solidarities.

Concluding, we hope that our contribution, in this short unplugged intervention, will spark a debate in relation to: a) the organizing tools or resources that digital (hashtag) activism can offer in collective attempts to build sustainable, self-organized feminist movements; and b) the extent to which, through the intensification of affective connections, digital feminist communities, with their own limits, are creating spaces of solidarity where new forms of revolutionary politics could be performed.

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## RECLAIMING THE EROTIC AS A SOURCE OF POWER

“I am not only a casualty, I am also a warrior”(Lorde, 1977)

As victims of sexual assault, within academia and elsewhere, we must figure out how to live and *what* we want to become. These experiences of violence shape us. The way society treats our stories shapes us too: we are casualties, liars, dangerous, pathetic, hysterical, fools, snitches, teasers, ungrateful, survivors, to blame or to save. Everyone has something to say about what we are. This is why we must reclaim our lives for ourselves. For myself, I chose to reclaim the Erotic as my source of power, and maybe it makes me a witch. Or a warrior. Or an amazon. All that matters is to reinvent oneself.

“In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort [the] various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. For women, this has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives”(Lorde, 1978). Reclaiming the erotic as a source of knowledge and power is about getting in touch with our deepest emotions. It is about living our lives according to the phrase: “it feels right to me”. It is about being in touch with our capacity to feel joy, and our legitimacy to feel joy.

We have learnt that the erotic is what pleases someone else. We have learnt that it is what pleases the male gaze. But not what pleases ourselves. Finding power in the Erotic necessitates that we change what the Erotic means. The patriarchal and heterosexist oppression have made a specific use of the word, and this constrained meaning reinforces its power over our lives.

The patriarchal attempts to “equate pornography and eroticism” are ways to deprive women from the power they can channel from the Erotic (Lorde, 1978). These endeavours to subsume sex to violence, and to define the Erotic as part of that sexually violent narratives and practices, is an attempt to hide away the power we could draw from the Erotic. This use of the Erotic is narrow. For it is reduced to what women have to embody to please men in a heterosexual script. It is a way of depriving women of sexual agency, of making them objects that men have at their disposal, and thus of excusing any sexual assault or rape committed on women. We can understand why it is so hard to reclaim the Erotic as something positive in our lives.

This sexist use of the Erotic led to a general distrust of this idea among women and feminists. It is so much associated with sexual and sexist domination that we have come to believe that we can only be powerful if we suppress the Erotic from our lives. In doing so we accept the sexist definition of strength and power, and agree with ways of conceiving of power that were fashioned to dominate us. I also believe that we deprive ourselves of a very important way of talking and conceiving of our sexual lives, and of our lives in general.

I chose to reclaim the Erotic as a source of power. It is not something women do to comply to heterosexual scripts of sexuality. It refers to the power of every women to be in touch with what brings her joy, “whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual” (Lorde, 1978). I have often been told that I am an erotic being, although people would generally not phrase it like that. They would say that I am not aware of the “signals” I send to people, of how my “behaviour” can be “misinterpreted”. All these euphemisms censure my body, what I do with it, the amount of alcohol I drink, the way I talk and smile to people, the way I openly talk about the

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fact that I am a lesbian, purposely not being evasive about my love and sex life. All of the censure, basically, centres around men's arousal. I struggled a lot with that (and I still do). One way of dealing with that would have been to try to be "less erotic", to embody a more respectable femininity, to adopt the features that patriarchy defines as characteristic of a serious, successful and trustworthy academic. And to some extent I would have done that if it had been an option. But not all women can perform a respectable femininity; women of colour or queer women never fully fulfil what is required of women to be respectable. My choice to reclaim the Erotic as a source of power is the consequence of that inability. It also made me realise that even if we try to suppress it from our lives, we will still be suffering the consequences of its patriarchal uses. So, we should as well try to transform it and gain power through it.

Reclaiming the Erotic as a source of power delineates a practice of empowerment that redefines what we want power to mean. It is about getting rid of power as "power-over", which means domination, to learn that we all possess "power-from within", which is enabling and creative (Starhawk, 1990). As we have learned to cut ourselves off from our power-from-within, we need to become conscious of it to gain empowerment. This might require us to become witches, that master "the art of changing consciousness, of shifting shapes and dimensions, of bending reality" (Starhawk, 1990: 15).

This work of consciousness-raising necessitates that we get rid of all the definitions, concepts and dichotomies that shape our lives (what is power, what is knowledge, what is sex). It makes sense to reclaim magic as a legitimate academic and political practice, as magic has been dismissed as "evil or delusionary" (Starhawk, 1990: 7). Becoming witches might be the safest way to challenge the assumptions on which domination systems rely, since it highlights how huge our task of raising consciousness and challenging these systems is. As witches, our motivations "are erotic in the broadest sense of the deep drives in us to experience and share pleasure, to connect, to create" (Starhawk, 1990: 15). And since we live in a patriarchal society, the Erotic is only seen as part of sexual-private scripts, it is denied any sort of legitimacy as what could be grounds for political engagement.

But I have found a great power in the Erotic. I don't want to survive by gaining power-over anyone, but I do want to transform what we mean by power, so that gaining power might bring joy to my life. I want to write, plant, sing, think, bond, make love. Reclaiming the Erotic is a way to reclaim sexuality, to highlight that our society's conception of heterosexual sex is deeply rooted in violence. Sex should not be about performing power-over. It should be about encounters of powers-from-within. But the transformation of the world called for definitely requires some magic.

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## **BECOMING A RESEARCHER: A SHORT TALE OF A REFLEXIVE JOURNEY THROUGH DETERRITORIALIZATION & RETERRITORIALISATION**

Dear Regina Ferreira Bento:

Out of respect for your courage and lucidity, I want to reply to your question raised in “Reflexivity in research: Three encounters and the I-index” (M@n@gement, 2017, Vol. 20(5): 523-528): How can we take care of our authenticity, freedom and “all the best’ in our academic journey? *How about you?* Did you write in the first lines...?

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I feel compelled to answer as I am questioning myself: who am I? Who am I becoming as an apprentice researcher on the eve of a second career (or a maybe a third)? While weaving my own story by tying up each thread of my self-reflexivity—as one traces backward the patterns of her life, her philosophical commitments and her worldview—your letter makes me feel less alone.

You speak generously of your encounters, moments of inflection after which everything changed. The timing could not be better. In my sometimes chaotic exercise of radical reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2003), I have come to see my future as a PhD researcher through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of territorialization/deterritorialization and reterritorialization. To deterritorialize oneself is to leave one’s habits or sedentary lifestyle to escape or transcend alienation, to escape processes of precise subjectivation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In practice, this can be a complex task. I would therefore like to talk to you about how I passed through these three movements in my year as a visiting PhD researcher at the Department of Organization at the Copenhagen Business School. Now I can see how significant these concepts are as they allow the interpretation of pre-established meanings within my researcher identity. They have created new constellations of meaning by opening up new worlds of reference. These are Deleuzian cartographic moments: “they survey possible new spaces of life, knowledge and action” (Sibertin-Blanc, 2010: 227). It is a journey from both the inside and the outside that involves vectors of change, lines of flight.

1) Experience: The first days in a foreign country teach us to feel the great differences in cultural constructions of meaning. When we experience these everyday and worldly incongruities, theoretical contradictions and conceptual tensions that we think are real, we experience the Other’s world. One cannot emerge unscathed: humility and vulnerability are basically the only ways to understand that any knowledge is incomplete without locating it within its larger context in which it is embedded. As Corbin and Strauss (2008: 17) put it, there is so much to know about “process or the ongoing and changing forms of action/interaction/emotions that are taken in responses to events and the problems that arise to inhibit action/interaction”. What seemed to me a strong intuition emerges as a solution: experience is more than the participants’ experiences: it is a relational unity. John Dewey will be my next good reading.

2) My subjectivity: The day that I allowed myself to become present.

—Who's "we?"

My head recoiled each time I was asked—like a surprise attack.

One beautiful spring day—March 27, 2017—I accepted the burden of the "I" and assumed the consequences of not hiding behind the "we" anymore.

However, this presence is far from self-evident. How much I am "being there," how much I—really—want "to be there" and how much is "being reported" are endless questions (Langley & Klag, 2017). "Radically reflexive researchers do not attempt to mask, mitigate or explain away the ambiguous implications of involvement"(Langley & Klag, 2017: 16). Point taken. Discourse is sometimes performative but also anxiety-provoking. The conflict, doubt and chaos that I felt at different moments bring my questions of reflexivity into areas of anguish and non-action. How do you become, be and assert yourself as a researcher, all at the same time, and in the frozen time of an article?

3) A relational view: Studying the texts of methodology, epistemology and analysis techniques cannot in itself teach us how to be a qualitative researcher: "We become researchers through the accumulation of experienced moments" (Carlsen & Dutton, 2011).

These moments are drawn from various incongruous registers: doubt, fear, loneliness, wonder or awakening. But at the center, there is always an idea of human relationship. Taken from my own territory, where I had to defend these moments of building relationships, I landed in another place where this component appeared to be taken for granted. Notes from my research diary hint that relationships seemed to be nurtured by daily conversations that are less hierarchical yet sometimes provocative discussions. In a conducive architecture to meeting and creativity, this creative mindset cumulated in a workshop, held at the margin of the 2017 EGOS conference in Copenhagen, where we, as researchers, were invited to feel and touch the city, walking down the streets holding a rope while reflecting on our researcher identities. The activity, "Doing Experimentation with Dirty Knowledge and Wild Disciplines," offered me a moment that threw me out of the former me, endowing me with inner peace and comfort. Under the so (seldom) sunny and beautiful sky of Christianshavn, I felt that a new vector had been traced. The way we research is constructed, as is its environment, be it physical, natural or personal. Knowing that others could feel that too, I decided to keep this insight. Dominant research paradigms are not the only true realities: they depend on their territory. A *reterritorialization* will never be the same.

In these trivial but generative research moments, I am becoming. It is a becoming straddling different cartography, different geographies. In reinhabiting my territory, I wish to make room, as you suggest Regina, for authenticity, freedom and, hopefully, all the best.

Being is a sum of becomings. Always open, this sum subjects the being to heterogeneous and chaotic variations, thus destroying any principle of subjectivation at work. It is, therefore, through the becoming, a multiplicity in action that draws the whole being. Becomings intersect and project an open set of lines  
(Sasso & Villani, 2003: 102 [translation]).

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## REVISITING STRUGGLES OVER GENDER INEQUALITIES: AN ACCOUNT OF THREE ACADEMICS

A newcomer entering the professional context of academia as a doctoral student or an early career researcher may not necessarily realise that navigating power imbalances and inequalities based on our sociologically ascribed categories – such as gender, sexuality and age – is going to be a key task. At least for two of us, reflecting back on the first few years of our academic socialisation, a strong memory emerges of a certain naivety about what it would take to start feeling that we belong in this environment, and in particular about how gender-related issues manifest in different aspects of the profession. For the other, there was a sense of resigned acceptance that there were inequalities but a lack of strategy to tackle them. This naivety is understandable in a profession that pursues knowledge and is predominantly marked by a focus on scholarly ideas and pedagogy, as well as having a reputation for collegiality and an interest in the social good. Why one should feel disempowered to challenge inequalities in such a community is, however, more difficult to explain. This is particularly striking since there is an extensive literature on gender discrimination impacting the academic workplace, teaching and recognition for research (e.g. Cohen & Duberley, 2017; van den Brink and Benschop, 2012); something that chimes with our own exploration of the experiences of researcher collaborations (Jeanes, Loacker & Śliwa, 2018). In practice, sooner or later, everyone experiences or witnesses these inequalities but we do not seem to do much about it, even if we write about it.

Where workplace relationships are discriminatory and have an adverse effect on academic women's workplace experiences and career progression (e.g. Weisshaar, 2017), it is reasonable to assume that they occur within institutional structures which do not adequately address gender inequalities and as such perpetuate them. Within such structures, it might be difficult for the affected academic to realise and 'find words' for gender-based discrimination and marginalisation and to develop a 'response repertoire' to them. Such discrimination and marginalisation are not limited to the more widely discussed forms, for example sexual harassment, which the #Time'sUp and #MeToo movements seek to call out and put an end to. They also have less visible aspects, the extent of which one becomes increasingly aware of over time.

Between us we have experienced multiple forms of unequal treatment, sometimes perceived as rather subtle, such as having a sense of not being treated respectfully by colleagues, or being perceived by students as having less academic gravitas. Other examples include a feeling that one needs to work harder than men academics to convince others of one's professional competence and credibility, witnessing male colleagues being promoted on potential and females only on high performance, unpleasant surprises when prospective male collaborators might have a less 'professional agenda', being asked – more often than men academics – to take on demanding administrative roles that do not 'count' for much in promotion and pay rise applications, or witnessing the tight-rope walked in interviews by female applicants who are trying to be judged as neither 'too feminine' nor 'too masculine'.

These are just some examples of how gender comes into play in the process of academic becoming. While on the surface, these examples might seem almost benign in comparison to the abuses of sexual harassment, they share with it a certain unspeakability. This unspeakability is, in the first place, connected to the traditional societal norms and negative judgements about women complaining about damage done to

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them. It is also a consequence of organisational structures and policies which do not consider such experiences as worthy of attention or that somehow try to 'resolve' them by, for instance, women-only leadership empowerment training. The lack of explicit attention given to gender discrimination in the academic workplace is also compounded by the fact that the naivety of women scholars, especially in the early stages of their careers, is often matched by the naivety (or equality-blindness) of male colleagues.

Reflecting back on our own academic becoming, we wish we had engaged more critically with institutional and community-internal power dynamics and relations, as well as established images of 'good academic performance' earlier on. At the same time, we recognise the challenges and risks in doing so, and question the responsibility placed on women to find the resources to 'lean in' and tackle the inequalities along the way. We also wish there had been more spaces for women to share stories, and for these stories to have been taken seriously.

It is important, however, to acknowledge that since we first entered the profession, the academic field has changed and so have we. This is not to say that current times are much 'better' (i.e., equal and fair) than past times, but we do observe a few changes on the institutional, organisational and also collective level that we assess as rather positive. For example, the espoused principles underlying programmes such as the UK-based Athena Swan, that proclaim the ambition to 'fix the system' and not just 'fix women', are a welcome development. Organisational discourses surrounding what is acceptable and unacceptable talk and behaviour in relation to gender matters have also changed. Besides, the #Time'sUp initiative provides a welcome opportunity, also for academics, to share stories – and not just amongst those affected.

These encouraging signs notwithstanding, struggles over power, control and domination remain in place. Certainly, much more work is still necessary to develop effective institutional and organisational structures for dealing with gender inequalities, whatever forms these take. In terms of collective support mechanisms and action, more needs to be done to build a sense of sustained 'sisterhood' among women (and men) in academia: to help each other recognise signs of unequal treatment and when one might be engaging in it, identify where it happens; to create a sense of community and solidarity, especially at the beginning of one's career, which is often a professionally vulnerable time; and to support each other in speaking up against discrimination, inequality and harassment both individually and collectively. The aspiration to reduce domination to a minimum and 'not to be governed like that and at that cost' (Foucault, 2003: 265) may be a good starting point in our collective endeavour to strive for a more just and equal academic world.

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## ON WORK AND PEACE

I had a dream that times had changed and it became unacceptable and even unthinkable to treat work the way it is being treated today, just like slavery had become unacceptable, just like treating children as objects is now regarded as depraved and indefensible. In my dream many of today's "effective leaders" went down the same way in social memory of our posterity as has now become the fate of Johnny Savile.

It was literally a dream, but I awoke with a strong feeling of having been present in a future collective state of mind. No, it is not okay to abuse children. It is not okay to employ slavery. And it is not okay to manage people in the starkly depersonalized, brutally instrumental way that is today's hallmark of "human researches management".

Take, for instance, the professional group I know best, as I have been one of its members for now almost 30 years in different countries – the academics. This group has, during this time, been subjected to a number of "reforms" and attempts at "more effective" management. It has all been explained as a social and economic necessity and, of course, an improvement. But is it really? The Swedish sociologist Stefan Svallfors (2012) soberly and rightly points out that not once have we been consulted, asked, what work conditions are good for us. These are not so much reforms, as attempts at external control. They prove that we are not trusted to do our job – something we both know how to and care about doing well. In a book dedicated to the future of higher education, together with Michał Izak and Michał Zawadzki, we say:

*For the past 25 to 30 years now we have been defined externally by a business, often perceiving us as a more or less unreasonable curiosity, and by an administration that is suspicious towards us. Both have been busying themselves to constrain that which should not be constrained, "make transparent" that which cannot possibly remain other than obscure, the darkroom of emerging thought, schedule what is beyond linear time. Creative work is a mystery. Yes, there may be attempts to deceive and misuse academia by crooks and unserious practitioners. But these can best be hindered and prevented by collegial effort from the inside of the profession (2017: 333).*

And it is this collegial effort that always has been making it possible for us to do our job. It has been far from ideal most of the time: excluding, misogynist, racist and classist but we should have been given the possibility to struggle against all these failings, not lined up against a managerialist wall. What used to be a profession based on passion and dedication, not so much a job even but a calling, is now an occupation as alienated – or perhaps more – than any other in the neoliberal labour market, which Peter Fleming (2017) pertinently likens to a labour camp. Academics suffer, have all kinds of so called mental health problems (on such a mass scale this should be, surely, recognized for what it is? not problems of the individuals' health but the condition of the community). If you think the fate of academics is peanuts compared with the horrendous wars and deprivation of our times, then think again. Yes, the wars and misery are the utmost human tragedy, but the persistence and omnipresence of work alienation and dehumanized management is the root of many ills, such as demoralization, hopelessness; it is why accidents such as the Grenfell fire are so likely to occur and why there does not seem to be a ready to adopt viable alternative for policy and the economy.

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The latter should be our job, this is for this reason why, ultimately, social sciences exist: to think further, holistically, systemically and critically and bring forward new ideas that the other sectors cannot produce. And alienating management is, in itself, a serious abuse, especially when practiced on creative people. The best of us – and we are many – feel seriously and profoundly invaded and hurt by this approach. One day it may become recognized as a kind of mental rape. Creative people are like children in that we often take in everything, have very weak defences, and feel invaded by guilt and overpowering shame for things that are being done against us. This is not individual but systemic, the institutions promote this kind of behaviour, which I know very well from my experience in UK academia: genuine experience and creativity are being punished and sometimes spectacularly suppressed while bullies and people with serious ethical issues are being promoted to even higher managerial positions and professional ones, and as steeply as from lecturer on probation to professor in one year's time. The institutional support for such behaviour not only makes bullying and mental rape possible, likely even, but makes a norm out of them, which everyone believes they have to either emulate or accept as given and correct.

One day we will wake up from the nightmare called the neoliberal work ethics and may we then feel wiser, but may we also tremble. The horrors we do with full institutional support are precisely the ones that we, social scientists, are here to forewarn about – not in order to produce “reffable” papers no one reads or “draw in” funding for things we often could do better and more effectively without the preposterously Byzantine granting system.

The Swedes, who are now seeking to reclaim their academia, have a word which should become the new “hygge” in each and every workplace around the world, and especially in creative professions such as academia: *arbetsro*. The peace of work. Lets' end the war on work and fly the flags of peace.



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## MY DEAREST FRIENDS OF COLOUR,

Since the Enlightenment man emerged from his self-incurred immaturity, he has wielded science to cut us down to size and to fashion us into objects of amusement and derision. Through his theorising, he extended his greedy limbs into our lands, tore the words off our tongues, and stamped his name over our labour.

Because the ivory tower is crafted through white supremacy, many of our white colleagues have come to expect that everything is about them. They assume that only they have the ability to know and only they have the right to speak. They believe, and it seems some of us do too, that everything we do ought to be in their service.

Two years ago in the winter, I was travelling through the pallid English countryside on my way to a conference. As an elderly white man boarded my train and started towards my direction, he stopped suddenly and looked at me with effluent disgust. Retching, he turned away and sat as far away from me as possible in our carriage. I arrived at the conference feeling less than human. That afternoon a white British professor with a paltry CV presented on his quarter-million pound research project in India. He concluded that Indians cannot deal with paradox and was knighted on the spot by Queen Victoria.

When their violence is normalised, set into the very foundations of our universities, our defence becomes the offence. I recently received a rancorous review for an article I wrote on white supremacy that accused me of being alienating and abrasive. The reviewer warned me to watch my tone, to stand down from what they perceived as an “attack”, and speak instead from a place of “inclusion” (before rejecting my article anyway).

Unless we play the docile native kowtowing to our betters, it seems white scholars prefer to pretend we do not exist. As a reviewer, I am inundated with papers where the reference lists are virtually exclusively white. Even in fields where we’ve managed to break some ground, like feminist theory or critical diversity studies, there it’ll be again: the academic equivalent of a Unite the Right rally. When I call on the authors to critically interrogate whiteness, my feedback is frequently relegated to ‘minor revisions’ by an all-white editorial team.

The workplace isn’t safe either. I work from home most days because racist remarks, slurs and jokes strike from every corner. At the skittering start of a department meeting, I overheard a white colleague telling another how sick she was of “those Chinese” in her classrooms. Her bald proclamation caught me by surprise, but she returned my look with a defiance that scalded away my faith in white allies.

“*Sak-shee*,” a student carefully enunciated her name for me on our first day of semester. She said one of my colleagues had complained that her name is too foreign and resorted to calling her “the Selena Gomez girl” for their likeness. Even with a Shakespearian name like Helena I was not spared the hostility. When I was a student, a tutor insisted that my name could not be “real.” In front of our whole class, she announced that I had made a feeble attempt at mimicking my white peers. She demanded that I perform race on her terms at once and assume an exotic sounding name that traced back to my origins in faraway lands. You know, like Mulan, or Cio-Cio-san.

My friends, despite all this, I crawl out from under my blanket every morning and bumble over to my old dusty computer because of you. My reviewers might expect me to speak to white people, murmuring only the softest and sweetest words for their tender ears and fragile nerves. But I am tired of speaking to white people.

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With this letter, I speak to you, and only you:

I see you wading your way through the torrent of white nonsense too. I see them ridiculing your work at conferences, I see them underpaying you, I see them denying you promotion, I see them coercing you to write their papers, I see them pretending to have lost your funding application, I see them keeping their colonial legacy alive as they scale the tower, using you as their foothold. But I also see you rising from the cruel tide. At times, you respond with a humour so generous and light that I think all the hate in the world will melt away at its touch. Other times, your righteous rage blazes through this corrupt landscape and purifies it with hope.

Let the affronted reviewers clutch their pearls. If they don't want to hear about white supremacy, then they ought to stop enacting it.

Let the Tone Police send in their tactical units. If they don't want to hear about imperialism, then they never should have set sail, declared *terra nullius* on our lands, and laid waste to everything we've got.

I refuse to include those who feel entitled to my inclusion. Instead, I will start within our own communities, with those of us who have made their home in the margins and who are spoken for and spoken over so many times that they have forgotten the sound of their own voice. I hope my words find you and you may know that I need you now more than ever. Because when you speak your truth, I can feel the sound of your courage rumble across the oceans and shake me to the marrow of my bones. Its music lifts me higher and makes me whole. Together, our call has the power to reverberate through the hollowness of hegemony and fracture the most solid structures of white power.

In solidarity,  
Helena

## UNBLINDING PRIVILEGE: REPOLITICIZING THE IDEA(LS) OF AN EQUAL SOCIETY

### DE-POLITICIZING GENDERED ISSUES

Less than six months after #metoo saturated the space of Hollywood and SoMe – as well as many other spheres of news media, policy, workplaces and private homes across the globe, we are already witnessing politicians, managers and other people of power claiming that #metoo has “done its part”, that “we have gotten the point”, and that “we’re over it”. We will, in this note, challenge the “innocence” of such acts, and we will argue that they become guilty of reproducing gender issues – by blinding and silencing their current relevance. Thus, we stress the importance of continued public resistance by, e.g., SoMe campaigns such as #metoo and #timesup. Because we are certainly “not there”! Various EU reports have for years shown the vast numbers of women exposed to harassment (EU, 2014, 2017). However, it was not until #metoo emerged that the existence of such continuous systematic harassment and violation of women was publicly acknowledged. Hence, the processes of changing practices and policies has only just begun. It is, therefore, of uttermost importance that we keep resisting rejections of this matter, keep resisting attempts of silencing us, keep speaking up although voices of power may claim that “we have gotten the point”. It is *not* time to move on! Moving on would mean bypassing this political moment and opportunity for change that is materialising right now, right here. An opportunity to let these matters be heard, be seen, be accounted for!

On a cold night in the middle of February, a national Danish live TV show<sup>3</sup> had invited several discussants to debate issues of sexual harassment and #metoo, amongst others the chair(wo)man of the Danish Parliament, Kjærsgaard. During the show, she expressed how she dislikes the discussion, and that she “as a women doesn’t feel comfortable being in a debate that just wants to call out men as assholes”. Although she does not think that we “should accept serious harassment”, she argues that women should be able to deal with “small everyday incidences on their own” – without having to call them out in public. Moreover, she argues that it is pointless to discuss sexism and sexual harassment in relation to patriarchal power structures, asking rhetorically: “aren’t we over all this?” In addition to being the chair(wo)man of the Danish Parliament, Pia Kjærsgaard is a key figure in a far-right political party that – despite being the third biggest party in Denmark – does not usually get much public support from neither young voters, nor pop-cultural personalities. However, this time it is different. The next morning, a prime-time radio show on the biggest national radio channel targeting young people, picks up the debate<sup>4</sup>. The hosts, a man and a woman in their mid-20’ies, start by agreeing that by now they “are getting pretty sick and tired of #metoo”, and after replaying some of Kjærsgaard’s points from the TV show, they end by stressing that although they “have never ever agreed with her politics before”, this time she is “spot on”.

Both Pia Kjærsgaard, the two radio-hosts – and many other voices claiming that #metoo is “behind us” – contribute to a problematic de-politicization and normalization of everyday sexism. According to a recent EU report, 80% of Danish women have experienced sexual harassment

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3. <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/debatten/debatten-dr2/debatten-2018-02-15>, all translations made by us, for the purpose of this note.

4. <https://www.dr.dk/radio/p3/gomorgenp3/gomorgen-p3-2018-02-16>, all translations made by us, for the purpose of this note.

since the age of 15 (EU, 2014: 99). Thus, it seems misleading when public figures – many of them women – publicly claim that “we are there” and that we don’t have to deal with sexism and harassment anymore. It is problematic, we argue, as such public discourse constructs sexism and sexual harassment as something to deal with quietly, rather than publicly or politically – as something that is not relevant, but rather untimely in today’s supposedly equal and progressive societies. In other words, this discourse de-politicizes issues of gender-related harassment. The problem is that such de-politicization re-produces myths of a gender equal, progressive society, which makes it extremely difficult for its members to see, voice and act upon gendered issues. However, we must not let this moment pass quietly: it is time to call out the blindness and silencing of gender issues that de-politicizing (re-)produces.

#### POSITION OF PRIVILEGE MAKES BLIND AND SILENCES

Denmark is a privileged country – a so-called welfare state in many respects: free or reduced pricing of public health care, education from nursery to university, social care, elderly care, library services, legal advisory services etc (Romani, Holck, Holgersson, & Muhr, 2017). It has even been called ‘the happiest country’ in the world and, indeed, the privileged conditions of the Danish society may well produce many happy citizens. However, this does not prevent the simultaneous production of less fortunate subjects who struggle to reconcile their less than privileged life stories with the dominant narrative of happiness (Davies, 2000). Unfortunately, the very subject position of privilege is likely to blind its subjects of their privilege just as it is likely to blind them to their blindness. Thus, it may be particularly difficult for privileged Danes as well as many others in privileged positions to recognize their own fortune. Although some of us are lucky enough to be born in a privileged country with ideals of a progressive society, we should not fool ourselves into thinking that inequality and injustice are no longer relevant or timely issues. In fact, we argue, blindness to privilege re-produces and enhances social barriers, making it all the more relevant and timely to call these out.

Furthermore, being blind silences. In Denmark – and in the other Nordic countries applying Scandinavian welfare models, many families enrol their children in public nursery and education services from the age of down to 9 months and up to their college graduation, and many women pursue a career simultaneously with having children. However, statistics still show that such welfare models have not solved issues related to gender pay-gap, to the unequal distribution of maternity/paternity leave, and to the dominance of certain norms of masculinity in finance, politics and board-chairs. Denmark has, despite its self-image of being an equal country, only 6 % of female CEOs in private companies and an overall gender pay-gap of 16 %. Still, most people believe in meritocracy and are blind to the continued discrimination that these numbers are proof of (Christensen & Muhr, 2018). Thus, calling out discrimination is a challenge in itself.

The idea(l)s of equality of many privileged countries, such as those in Scandinavia, we argue, produce privileged subjects that blind themselves to their privileges, to their blindness to those privileges, and to facts of inequality, thereby not only re-producing positions of privileged/unprivileged, but also silencing those who might speak up and call out those issues. As such, stating that time has passed for #metoo de-

politicizes the norms of differences that allow some to be (happily) blind, while others are (sadly) seeing, but silenced.

#### #TIMESUP! REPOLITICIZING BY UNBLINDING AND UNSILENCING

*“The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.” (Lorde, 1977)*

Indeed, it seems that #timesup! The de-politicization of blindness and silence that reproduces and legitimizes the power-infused discourses, positionings and practices of privilege, luckily, is self-implosion. It may, in fact, energize the feminist resistance, it seeks to eliminate (Thomas & Davies, 2005). As long as positions of privilege – despite massive amounts of facts – argue that everyday sexism, discrimination and other normative gender differences are no longer relevant issues, they manifest the very problem to which they themselves are blind. As such, they co-constitute gender inequality and privileged/unprivileged norms of difference by ignoring those norms and the problems they involve (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Pullen & Knights, 2007). And as long as this is the case, feminist resistance is fuelled and will form new critical perspectives in theory and practice.

Hence, it is time for unblinding and unsilencing by insisting on the relevance of these issues, by speaking up and keep on having this conversation, by re-addressing the dominant relations of power and the norms of difference, they constitute, and by talking to and about and against certain positions of privilege. It is time to re-politicize gender issues! And for organizations and politicians to take part in unblinding and unsilencing. NOT because all men are assholes, they are most certainly not! But because the ways in which we all (re-)produce dominant power relations and positions of privilege enable some humans, regardless of their gender identity, to think that they are entitled to behave like assholes, that they have “the right” to do so (Essed & Muhr, 2018). And that this right is not debatable, but this – exactly this – is what #timesup for! Neither being blinded and silenced anymore, nor letting the privileged blind themselves and silence others, no matter if they are politicians, radio hosts, movie stars or professors.

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## WHERE DO YOU STAND?

An old friend of mine told me yesterday they had recently 'unfriended' a mutual acquaintance on Facebook. An acquaintance whom I've known for a quarter of a century and first met at anti-fascist demonstrations attended over many years. Those chance meetings lead to drinks in the pub afterwards and from there to other social events in public places and at home. A quarter of a century grounded in our mutual concern for vulnerable minorities. Or so I thought.

My friend had 'unfriended' the acquaintance due to a 'large number of offensive posts' on that person's personal Facebook page. Out of curiosity I looked at the Facebook page and quickly found what offended my friend. There were multiple 'gender critical feminist' posts stretching back over considerably more than a year. So many posts that they probably outnumbered all the others combined by about 4:1 and with a majority 'liked' by others in Newcastle's left wing political circles including many whom I have also known for many years. I checked if I was a 'friend' – I wasn't but most probably as I rarely post on Facebook rather than any active decision by me not to be. If I had been I would have 'unfriended' the acquaintance and all those applauding her 'gender critical' posts.

...

'Gender critical feminist' is a label adopted recently by transphobic people keen to make their bigotry and hatred towards transgender folk appear palatable. The gender critical feminist<sup>5</sup> movement in England has come to the fore on social media, politics and in the traditional media since September 2017. The UK popular press has published at least one transphobic article every day since October 2017 (Serrano, 2017). There has been no let-up in this transphobic tide since Serrano's article was published late November, 2017. Despite all of this transphobic media attention gender critical feminists complain they are silenced and 'no platformed' – an issue I will return to later). Where once those aligned with leftist politics would have opposed such bigoted views there now exists an apparent confluence that brings them together with conservative journalists, politicians, ultraorthodox religious groups and the far right. Perreau (2016) and Villa (2017) have written of the connections between anti LGBT gender critical feminists, extreme religious groups and the far right in Europe that Villa terms anti-genderism.

I am a non-binary transsexual and consequently someone whom my acquaintance and those posters clearly despise. I no longer feel welcome in left wing circles in my city.

...

A gender critical feminist group was recently invited to speak at the House of Commons by a Conservative MP notorious for his homophobia and misogynistic views (Glass, 2018). That ticket only meeting welcomed and warmly applauded the MP as a panel member along with several individuals currently under investigation by the police for transphobic hate crimes including doxing transgender children. Other panel speakers included a transphobic academic at a UK University and an Australian Emeritus Professor who flew to England to voice her hatred. These academics not only opposed the legal rights of transgender folk but expressed their desire to erase us from history. A desire that has obvious parallels in recent world history. The only people refused tickets to attend were transgender folk.

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5. I stop using scare quotes only because to continue would result in an essay thicketed by them.

Another gender critical group tours cities in the UK repeating their transphobic rhetoric and distorted lies under the guise of feminism and free speech. They come to my home city in May 2018 – my old acquaintance helpfully publicises the event and their intention to attend this ticket only event on their Facebook page. I no longer feel welcome in left wing groups in my city and come May may no longer feel welcome in my city.

...

So what has this to do with management academia? Wrapped up in this daily onslaught is a continued professed concern with ‘freedom of speech’ and ‘no-platforming’. Jo Johnson, when Conservative Government Minister, told UK Universities and student groups that ‘no-platforming’ would not be tolerated at UK universities (Fae, 2017). He stated that hate speech aimed at certain protected identities was not acceptable but carefully excluded transgender folk from that protection. UK Universities must allow gender critical speakers and meetings space to repeat their particular brand of hate speech. That Universities include vulnerable gender non-confirming students and staff seemed lost on Johnson as was the simple fact that those gender critical feminists already have their views lauded daily in the mainstream UK press, host regular meetings in public venues including the Houses of Parliament and circulate their propaganda on social media. Despite all the cries of being silenced and no-platformed from gender critical feminists, they are not.

And for all the cries of tolerance it would seem to exclude the most vulnerable – gender non-conforming students. Universities must host transphobic events under the guise of free speech but transgender folk are not allowed a right to protest.

I was told recently by the former head of a UK University Business School in the city where I live, ‘We have no LGBT students. I don’t need *your* sort and *your* research here.’ If I was at his School would I feel safe to come out? Would I feel supported? Would I feel welcome? Would I dare to come out?

Transphobic academics openly and repeatedly express hatred and desire our erasure yet no concern is shown over the impact on vulnerable students in a society that violently stigmatises them and denies their rights.

...

Some 20 years ago I attended the first 3 Critical Management Conferences in the UK. I was hopeful then that there was space in management academia to argue for understanding and tolerance. Does that space exist anymore? I’m no longer sure. It seems ignorance, hate and bigotry now pollutes University space.

But must it? Do you stand with the vulnerable who are routinely denied rights and are stigmatised or with those parading their ignorance and bigotry?

A better world is possible if we make it happen.

Where do you stand?



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## HOW TO HOLD ON TO YOUR SANITY IN ACADEMIA

Be pretty, but not too pretty. Wear make-up but not too much. Wear lipstick but not the wrong colour. Do your hair but don't wear it too short or too long or too curly or too voluminous. Colour your hair the right kind of average. Exercise but not too much. Be fit but not too muscular. Be skinny but not too skinny. Don't be fat.

Be feminine, but not too feminine. Wear skirts, but no shorter than knee-length and no longer than knee-length. Wear skirts, but nothing tight or playful. Wear blouses, but button up and no thin fabric. Wear shirts, but nothing that shows your form. Wear heels, but not movie-lawyer high and not sandalwood-burning-hippy low. Walk the tightrope. Don't lose your balance.

Be white. As a woman of colour, you'll be exoticized or the 'diversity hire'. Sometimes both. Be middle class. As woman from the working class, life in academia will be lonely.

Be more competent than every man but don't show it. Read everything but don't be a know it all. Prepare everything but share the praise. Cooperate but not just with women. Men can work with just men but not you, sister. You need to work with men and women and genderfluid people.

Be more than prepared for teaching. You need to know everything and some. Don't show weakness, don't ever be unprepared for whatever students throw at you. Be accommodating to your students' special demands. Be gentle, you are a woman after all. Be strict but flexible. You will be questioned about your marking. Students will expect you to meet with them and discuss everything from grades to essay projects and their personal blog. They will ask for your personal phone number. Remember, no matter what, your course evaluations will be 0.4 lower than those of your male colleagues (Mitchell & Martin, 2018).

Be interested in the 'right' (manly) topics. Use the 'right' theories. Quote the 'right' (white, male) academics. If you are in a field dominated by women, you are looked down upon. Men do the 'important' research. They will be invited to all-male panels and they will be invited as keynote speakers, because you are not qualified enough or there aren't any women in the field.

Be prepared to wait up to six months more during the peer-review process (Hengel, 2017) even though your writing is more readable. It's called the 'time tax' and there is no tax refund.

You will feel incompetent. People will use any and every chance they get to tell you privately and publicly that your thoughts are incoherent, your arguments unconvincing and that you really shouldn't be so emotional at work. That emotions really have no place at work. They will conveniently ignore that they cause the distress in the first place. If you seek help or advice from other faculty members, they will make sure to tell you that no one talks about those issues at work. Divide and conquer is a winning strategy.

When you receive a scholarship, or grant despite everyone else's best efforts, your efforts are belittled. Responses to such announcements are ranging from "You just received this because you know X" to "You just received this because you are a woman" to "This is how life as a woman in academia is nowadays. Handouts and freebies."

Men in academia will harass you. Sometimes sexually, sometimes they'll just bully you. Why didn't you report it, they'll ask you? Take it to the head of the school but don't expect the man to be sanctioned. There are no repercussions for men in academia. Make sure you are never alone in an

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office, hall way, copy room, kitchen, etc. with a man cause men's behaviour is your responsibility, they'll say. In this world, it's always your fault.

You must change the system. You must refuse to attend those male-dominated conferences to make a statement. You must sit on every committee to offer the 'diversity perspective'. You must mentor female/genderfluid/trans students to change the system bottom up. You must demand pay transparency because you will be underpaid and it is your job to fix the problem. You must make sure that you won't have more teaching and more administration than your male colleagues. You must make sure to never be alone with a man in a room because you must take responsibility for men's behaviour. You can't trust the system to treat you fairly.

This isn't the Handmaiden's tale. This is every woman's tale. You want to quit? #metoo

Don't quit. For the sake of diversity in research and teaching. Higher education needs your brilliance, persistence and creativity. But I am going to be honest, I need you to stick around and don't quit. For me and all other women and transgender people's. We need you to stay and change the system.

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## #METOO AND #TIMEISUP IN ACADEMIA: FROM SCHOLARLY CERTAINTIES TO PRACTICAL AMBIGUITIES

The hashtag #TimeIsUp and its even more famous predecessor #MeToo have not only agitated the media but also triggered debates and calls to action in the workplace, including Academia. What is specific about Academia, I would argue, is that the topic of harassment tends to be considered as something that occurs in *ordinary* workplaces, and that we are here to research the topic, explain it and try to solve it. Academia, as we know, often considers itself as a bit of a *different* or *extraordinary* workplace. After all, it is also here that we produce knowledge. As #MeToo and #TimeIsUp in part relate to workplace relations and practices, many of us in business schools and social sciences universities have indeed addressed the issue not only from a personal point of view but also as experts of human resources, organizational behavior, gender studies, etc.

It is indeed vital that we do this academic work, and that we convey a strong narrative about harassment in the workplace. Condemning it. Analyzing why and how it takes place. Proposing future research avenues and developing tools to tackle the issue in practice – including in the academic workplace. What I believe is also important to consider, is what we academics do and say in our everyday interactions. How do we think, how do we act when faced with potential #MeToo situation? How do we think and act when we take part in a discussion *about* #MeToo or #TimeIsUp? Are we ‘walking the talk’? Is it more complicated than that? Rather than developing an academic argument or voicing a definitive view, I would like to propose something open and inconclusive. I am taking inspiration from the work of colleagues (Munar et al., 2017) who have developed a captivating handbook on relationships and emotions in academia. In this handbook, they present 15 vignettes describing equivocal, ‘grey-area’ situations. A dilemma statement follows each story. Finally, readers are invited to reflect upon the story and dilemma. The following vignette reports on a fictionalized case and takes in part the form of a dialogue.

### STORY

The scene takes place in a European capital city. It involves academics from the same department of a reputed business school. The main characters are Sarah and Paul. They differ in gender, status, nationality, among other possible categorizations. Sarah has been an assistant professor in the department for a few years now, and she moved to that country and city for that job. Paul is a regarded and influential senior professor; he is a local.

*It is a cold winter evening, some weeks before the end of year break. The whole research department is gathered for a dinner party, as the tradition goes. It is a buffet, and everyone fills their plate and finds a seat at one of the tables. Conversations are light, and people just want to relax and have a nice time in this informal setting. Sarah chooses a table where some of the seats are taken. Sarah was one of the first at the buffet, so she has also finished with her starter a bit ahead of her table companions. Before going for the main dish, she thinks it would be nice to smoke a cigarette, even though it is freezing cold outside. She gets her pack out of her handbag and stands up. The scene catches the eye of Paul.*

**Paul:** Ah, you are going for a cigarette.

**Sarah:** Yes, bad habits, I know.

**Paul:** I have that bad habit too, once in a while!

**Sarah:** Do you want to join?

**Paul:** Sure, do you have one for me? (*looks around him*) Someone else up for a smoke? (*nobody is interested*). OK but you know, these days it can be a tricky situation, haha (*a few people at the table laugh along*)!

**Sarah:** (*laughs too*) I'm sure it will be just fine.

*They step outside through the glass door – there is indeed no one else smoking at that time. It is dark out, but one can see everything that is going on inside through the large bay windows.*

**Paul:** So here we are, alone in the dark, haha. I am joking, but I also talked about this with Clara (*an associate professor who researches gender, like Sarah*) and she agrees that it will change things...

**Sarah:** Yes, for sure, it will change things...

*(some seconds of silence)*

**Paul:** I mean, I am getting old now, I had my fun when I was younger, so now it does not matter so much to me, but still!

**Sarah:** Sure. (*looks inside*) Oh, I think there's going to be a talk or some game soon? I can see someone distributing sheets of paper or something.

**Paul:** Ah yes, let's get back inside, it's too cold anyway. But you know what, when you go in you should make a joke with #MeToo! You could say that when you come in? That would be funny!

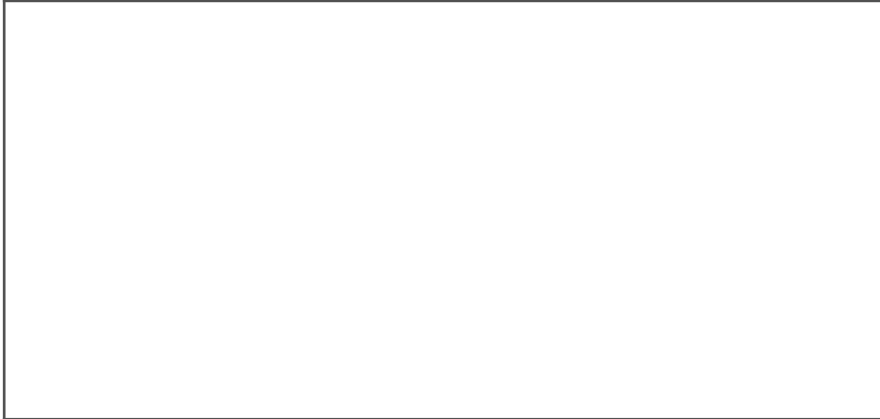
**Sarah:** Mmm, haha, yes sure I can do that.

*Paul opens the glass door, and Sarah goes in shouting: "Me too!" Some colleagues at the table laugh, some others stare blankly at them, and yet others do not even notice the scene. The party goes on.*

**Dilemma:** In hindsight, Sarah feels that she should have behaved differently. She feels she should have addressed the innuendo about #MeToo. She wonders if it was just totally dumb to play along with the joke idea. Sarah also feels that as a gender scholar she should know better.

QUESTION FOR THE READERS

How did I feel when reading this **story**? Can I relate to it?



How did I feel and how would I act in relation to the **dilemma** (1) if I was the protagonist of the story and (2) if I was a colleague who was a witness to the story?

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