

NNI – (Nordic Network of Intimacy Research)

The objective of this transdisciplinary Nordic Network is to discuss contemporary and historic conditions for intimacies in culture, society, research and politics. We define intimacy loosely as a term describing various intimate and personal relations, and want to investigate how these relations are embedded in genders, sexualities, identities, emotions, social collectives and publics.

The transformations of intimacies taking place in Europe during the last 40 years are often seen as opening up new possibilities and expectations in personal relationships, and as radically transforming gender relations, sexualities, family life and public relations. The changing practices have challenged hegemonic discourses regarding intimacies, and non-normative or non-standard practices have become a part of the public as well as private negotiations around intimacies. The most obvious public discourses of this kind concern liberalisation of gender - and sexual norms including tolerance of same sex sexuality, increased emphasis on the individual in relation to family of origin and gender equality. However, closer scrutiny will reveal much more complex discursive developments. The researchers in NNI will investigate how different representations and productions of intimacy, both in public and in private life, lead to constant negotiations around the aesthetics, ethics, and politics of intimacy.

Changing patterns of migrations in Europe are also producing increasing cultural diversity, and adding to the complexities of intimate practices as well as issues regarding intimate citizenship. The prime focus of particularly low brow media has been on fears of a conservative influence of Muslim immigration in western countries while, again, the whole picture is more intricate. The network will open up discussions around the complexities of Nordic Intimacies, as well as discuss the uneven impact of social change depending on conditions such as social class and different minority positions.

The objective of the NNI network is to engage in a Nordic transdisciplinary academic conversation about the conditions for Nordic intimacies, as well as grounding this conversation in international research and international networks. The NNI network will host

workshops and conferences as well as work to develop research proposals and joint publications.

The reflections and discussions in the network will primarily build on ongoing studies of 1) public intimacies 2) the gendering of emotions, 3) gender, eroticity and power in organisation 4) the negotiations of intimacy in the 1970s women's movement, 5) life conditions and resistance strategies in two generations lgbt- women, 6) masculinities and self-depictions within recent Danish art, 7) same-sex intimacies, religion, and democracy , 8) translations and transformations of queer theory in local contexts. The network also has as its purpose to expand and continually engage new researchers and/or projects within the frameworks of this research field.

The network is truly transdisciplinary, and crossing the social science/ humanities boundary in its focus on the changing social conditions for intimacies. It engages with, and contributes to, art and literary studies, film and media studies, sociology, ethnological/cultural anthropology, history, feminist, queer and masculinity theory discussions of intimacy, affects, and the instable relationship between the public and the private.

PROJECTS:

1) Being Together: Remaking Public Intimacies

A Research Project at Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo

This project is about public intimacies. Public intimacies describe the current situation in which intimate, sexual and personal matters are part of the public domain. Cultural repertoires and discourses in the form of representations and aesthetic, performative and communicative modes forge and inform about new intimate and sexual relationships. Leading questions are: What implications do the changing discourses and values concerning intimacy in the Norwegian public culture have for contemporary understandings of intimacy, sexuality and gender? How do public representations of intimacy change the public landscape? The project has three broad objectives: to develop new knowledge from the perspectives of the humanities about public intimacies and the interrelations between cultural representations and the politicizing of these matters in Norway, to engage in dialogue with international theories and

debates in the field, and to communicate with public audiences on reflections and understanding of new forms of intimacy and sexuality.

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2) Challenging emotions

A research project at the University of Umeå

In Swedish and Nordic welfare society the gendering of emotions/emotionality and emotional narratives form a relevant research field. The debate on modernity and the welfare state in all its expressions contains a hidden, gendered agenda in which the gendering of feelings and emotional behaviour is central. Within disciplines such as literature, art history, history, philosophy, history of ideas and ethnology/cultural anthropology the emotion-theme charts the range of modern emotional narratives and representations and the ways they have been gendered. A special attention is paid to questions on meta-theoretical and interdisciplinary aspects of the study of gender, modernity and emotions.

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3.) Power and Privilege, Meaning and Management – Gender in the Boardroom

A Research Project at the Centre for Gender Studies, NTNU, Trondheim

The erotic aspect of working life is barely recognised within organisational studies, even as feminist studies have contributed to the field and launched new questions for the last 30-40 years. When sex and the erotic is addressed, it is more often than not as a question of sexual harassment and violence. The project asks how ‘everyday eroticity’ is woven together with organisational power, and how sexuality and eroticity might give meaning to the negotiations that take place in organisations.

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4) When the Personal Became Political. The Norwegian Women's Movement in the 1970s

A Research Project at the Rokkan Centre for Social Research, University of Bergen

During the 1970s, thousands of women and men became involved in a revolutionary struggle around gender issues. These struggles created change both in the overall society, and in our everyday lives. The project *When the personal became political* is aimed at elaborating why and how some women decided to engage in these struggles. We will analyze how new understandings of the private and political were lived, articulated and negotiated in the women's liberation movement in the 1970s. We focus on motives, meanings, practices and actions in everyday lives. We will elaborate the interactions between possibilities and identities, structures and cultures, within the women's movement. We will analyze political options as well as paradigms on collective identities, and scrutinize the tensions between the movements' internal dynamic and their external context. The transformations of intimacy is a field well suited to shed light on demands and new ideals concerning autonomy, authenticity and liberation, all central concerns in the women's liberation movement.

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5) Queer kids, baby-butches and lesbians. Life conditions and resistance strategies in two generations lgbt- women.

A Research project at the Centre for Gender Studies, Stockholm University

The situation for lgbt-people (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) has changed radically in Sweden during the later years. Several laws have been altered so that same-sex couples can

marry, be tried for adoption and have the right to assisted reproduction through insemination. Simultaneously, violence and discrimination against lgbt-persons have increased. Several large health surveys show that lgbt persons generally have lower self-evaluated physical and mental health than the average population. The most exposed groups are young lesbians and transpersons and elder lesbian and bisexual women. This study aims at looking at how younger and older lgbt-women experience and handle society's norms of gender, sexuality and age. We will further study and compare the individual and collective resistance strategies that are created. How is heteronormativity experienced in different age groups? What parts do historical time, age and generation play for the choice of strategies? How do gender, sexuality and age intersect with other social categories (such as race, class and ethnicity) in relation to how people form and experience their lives? Through comparing lgbt-women aged 60+ with a younger generation under 30 years old, we want to trace historical changes and continuities when it comes to individual and collective experiences of sexuality, intimacy and power.

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6) Performing masculinities: Intimacies and gender in Danish art

A research Project at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen

This research project discusses masculinities and self-depictions within recent Danish art. The primary object of study will be the literary and visual work of Richard Winther (1926-2007), who continuously developed his idiosyncratic ideas about intimacy and gender through re-enacting and reworking classical and mythological tropes while simultaneously reacting both creatively and dramatically to the rise of the feminist movement in the 1970s. Winther's both heroic and ironic posing of gender relations playfully rework ideas about masculinity and introduce new ways of conceiving masculinity. Technical as well as aesthetic innovation combined with synchronic as well as diachronic engagements make Winther's art a particularly interesting case, reflecting both an individual and very distinct project and a marked response to changing gender roles in society. The research project seeks to compare Winther's art with that of other and more recent Danish artists such as John Davidsen (1944-2007), Peter Land (b. 1966) and Jesper Just (b. 1974), whose projects have also focused on

representations of masculinity and gender. The comparative method seeks to demonstrate how art throughout the postwar era functions as an emblematic mediator of the relation between private and public, reflecting the negotiations of gender roles that take place on a general cultural level while simultaneously radically experimenting with these.

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7) Same-sex intimacies, religion, and democracy

A Research Project at Roskilde University, The Department of Society and Globalisation

Public acknowledgment of same-sex intimacies is a contested issue not only in contemporary political discourse in Denmark, but also within the majority religious community, Evangelical-Lutheran Protestantism, institutionalized as the Danish People's Church. Among theological scholars, the clergy and members of the Church there are intense deliberations about how the community ought to regard same-sex sexual/intimate relations and behaviors; and about whether the community and its individual members should oppose, support, or take no public position on civil rights protections and other legal rights, including same-sex marriage and parenting, for gays and lesbians. The project aims at analyzing these church debates, as well as their impact on the formation of laws and policies on same-sex relations in light of the relationship between state and church in Denmark. The main objective is to contribute to the present debate about the place of religion in the public domain; and to point out ways to foster a dialogue and translation between reasoning based on secular and religious premises within the framework of liberal democracies.

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8) Minority Identities in a Postmodern Society? Translations and Transformations of Queer Theory in Local Contexts

A Research Project at Department of Sociology, Åbo Akademi University

The gay and lesbian, LGBTI and queer movement has contributed to making one of the very intimate spheres of life, sexuality, into an issue of public and political debate, particularly through discourses that employ the concept of identity as a public account of private emotions. In this research project, I will analyse the collective construction of meaning and discourses of individual experience of gender and sexuality. The emergence of the queer perspective in the 1990s with its poststructuralist analysis of identities as cultural and discursive products, and therefore deconstructable, shook the LGBT movement in which identity used to be a crucial political concept both as a basis for demands for rights and as the basis for the commitment of the members. By means of a comparative analysis of queer activist discourses in three Nordic countries – Norway, Sweden and Finland – this study focuses on the significance of cultural and social contexts for the formation of local variations of the widely diffused queer perspective. In the first (present) stage the study is based on interviews of activists. However, the second stage will include analysis of media coverage of queer activism, focusing particularly on representations of transgendered people, mainly in print media.

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9) Tolerant, affirming and equal. Youthrelated sex, health and relationship clinics (UMOs) in multicultural environments – a tool for sexual integration.

A Research Project at the Section for Ethnology, Stockholm University

Many of today's burning issues relate to the individual's rights and circumstances in complex globalised societies. In particular, in contemporary multicultural Sweden a multitude of different ideas abound as to what constitutes appropriate sexual behaviour. By drawing attention to the specific prerequisites relating to UMOs in multicultural environments, the project connects with current research on sexuality, gender, integration and the dissemination of information. At the same time it is clear that UMOs – both in general and in environments in which several sexual norm systems coexist – is a surprisingly neglected research field. In addition, research into what the multicultural environment means for staff's possibilities to create a fruitful dialogue with their young clients is virtually non-existent. With a point of departure in theoretical research into gender and sexuality, the project is designed to meet the

growing need for knowledge about the subject. A consequently applied ethnographic method means that the study is undertaken in the studied context. In this way, the project contributes insights into the actual encounters that take place in the UMOs and in associated activities.

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