



EDIT: EQUALITY AS DEMOCRACY IN TRANSFORMATION

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EDIT examines and supports scholarship and teaching on gender in selected universities in Ethiopia, Finland and South Africa. The aim is to develop the research and teaching in universities towards a more societally relevant and contextually attuned practice. The project will analyse universities' societal engagements to better understand the overall principles and concrete processes for promotion of equality and democracy. These processes and the negotiations in feminist communities can teach lessons on how transformation processes towards equality can be enabled and strengthened, what their dimensions are and what obstacles must be attended to. Universities can be key drivers of societal change, but in this project this promise will be under investigation, rather than assumed.

The aim is motivated by three observations: first, there are global questions about the ideals and value of higher education that translate to questions of Gender Studies theory and practice in locally contextualized knowledge production. Continuous work on how curricula and research address globally connected local issues is needed everywhere, especially at times of urgent calls to decolonize academia. The discussion of universality, particularity, and locally and historically bound and shifting meanings given to rights is not new yet it is still no less important for democracy. In this project the aim is to generate novel theoretical thinking from empirical work on knowledge generating activism, teaching and policy engagement.

Second, there is an urgent need to study the concept of "societal relevance". Being "relevant" is a demand that academics are increasingly aware of not only because funders mandate it but for a sense of purpose, but there is alarmingly little research on how "relevance" is understood by different actors and what its dimensions are.

The project analyses expectations, implicit and explicit ideals, for how scientific knowledge should matter among academics, university students, the general public, media, activists and policy makers. Epistemic questions are often regarded as internal debates of quality; here the questions are about future oriented affective desires for how knowledge should matter in the world. By asking how visions of relevance, aspirations of hope and a commitment to political and ethical change is formulated, expressed and felt in academia, the project asks how relevance becomes a matter of not only vision, but affect.

Third, the project wishes to approach the theme resistance from a novel angle and present it as a productive force that can be harnessed to work towards a positive change rather than an obstacle standing in the way for gender equality.

The three key areas - context, relevance and resistance - are studied on three levels: the individual, the institutional and the societal. This work on gender research and teaching is tightly connected to the broader call for reformulating academic ideals.



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