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Transnational Sexualities and Intimacies: Exploring Politics, Labour and Emotions

The prominence of the theme of globalisation has brought new perspectives to our understanding of sexual identities, sexual practices, erotic relationships, and intimate connections. Migratory experiences bring to the fore questions of identification, cultural translation and transformation. Migration processes provide the backdrop to studies into diasporic intimacies and sexualities and transnational, cross-cultural and/or interethnic relationship practices. Yet negotiations in the field of the cultural are always mediated by the political and the economic. In the context of migration, the question of differential access to citizenship, the exploitation of migrant labour power, and the implication of racialised gender and sexuality discourses in the regulation of migration and multi-ethnic populations are pressing issues.

Another way in which the transnational has powerfully established itself in the realm of intimacy and sexuality is through the form of transnational human rights activism and social movement politics. Transnational campaigns around LGBT rights have scrutinised legal and other forms of oppression in many territories across the globe. These forms of activism have created both transnational solidarities and sharpened cultural divisions. LGBT rights supporters and their opponents tend to embed their arguments in culturalist discourses based on geo-political territorialisation. What impact do conflicts in transnational gender and sexual politics have on discourses on sexuality and intimacy? Transnational activism does not only take place in the sphere of discourse. Activism has the potential to bring people together. Encounters in the field of activism raise a different set of questions on sexuality and intimacy. It is a potential space for the negotiation of different understandings of and ideas about sexuality, intimacy and politics. At the same time, it is also a space in which intimate relations are established and desires are felt and enacted. It creates screens for imagination and projection.

This session is dedicated to the exploration of the workings of global politics and economics in the intimate and sexual. Speakers may explore the transnational dimensions of intimacy and sexuality either through a focus of the 'discursive' or the emotional, embodied, or affective dimensions of interpersonal encounters.