

Epistemic injustice and the task of ‘staying with the trouble’ in academic publishing: A conversation with Rebecca Lund

KIRSTEN LOCKE and REBECCA LUND

On a sunny autumn afternoon in Copenhagen I sat down with Dr Rebecca Lund to talk about her incoming group editorial tenure for *NORA: The Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*. Dr Lund is a post-doctoral fellow in Gender Studies at the University of Tampere in Finland. The conversation traversed many facets of academic publishing and I have chosen to call on Donna Haraway’s notion of ‘staying with the trouble’ (2016) as an appropriate theme that linked many of Dr Lund’s insights to her feminist publishing agenda. As a feminist academic activist now tasked with the editorship of a prominent Nordic feminist academic journal, Dr Lund explores her ethical obligations to provide a platform that is inclusive and makes some kind of intervention to the edifices of patriarchal power so embedded in the academic publishing space. Dr Lund provides an interesting account of how her own research focus on epistemic injustice can be reflexively used in the academic leadership role of editorship by engaging ‘head on’ with the prominent debates and challenges facing Nordic academia around intersectionality, race, gender, class, and the political economy of gender politics. As Haraway insists, ‘staying with the trouble’ involves the ability to face challenges head on while also recognising the importance of working together, ‘in unexpected collaborations and combinations ... we become-with each other or not at all (2016, p. 4). Dr Lund provides a wonderful demonstration of a feminist approach to collaboration in academic publishing and the importance of insisting all voices can be heard and visibilised on and through the conventional platform of the academic journal. As the first issue of the new editorial collective in *WSJ*, Dr Lund’s experiences and hopes fit well with our own feminist agenda of continuing the political work of academic publishing in these often ‘troubling’ times.

K: *Thank you for doing this interview with me. I would like to start off with a few questions about NORA. What kind of journal is it, what is its focus, and what is its standing amongst feminist scholarship in Scandinavia and internationally?*

R: So *NORA* is shorthand for the *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* and it is a journal that was originally part of institutionalising the Nordic network of feminist studies and was founded in 1993. It has been running since then. It publishes articles in English. We are a Taylor & Francis journal and we publish multidisciplinary work, so all sorts of disciplines, but, I would say, mostly social sciences and humanities and we are currently in the process of formally taking over the editorial office to the university where I’m based, the University of Tampere, in Finland. For the last two years it has been based at Oslo University in Norway. So it travels every two years and changes editorial office hands.

So with this change also comes an opportunity to think about what we mean by Nordic, because of course the focus of the journal has very much been the Nordic and particularly Nordic focus, in terms of, for instance, archival material, literature, or empirical data of various

sorts. However, as we write in English we are also, of course, hoping to make it relevant to a wider audience. As a journal, it is essential and important. But there is a bit of a difference between the Nordic countries in terms of how much *NORA* is read and published in. For instance Finland, where I'm based now, does not use *NORA* that much as a publishing outlet compared to other Nordic countries and I think that relates to the academic history of Finland. Even though Finland is definitely part of the Nordic countries, it is a little bit on the periphery and there is also a language difference. So internationally at least, Finland has always orientated itself more towards England and the United States and publishing channels there, with some exceptions from the Swedish-speaking universities in Finland. There are two formal languages in Finland: Finnish is number one and Swedish is number two. There is a long history behind that, which means that those few institutions that do research and teaching in Swedish are very orientated towards the Nordic, whereas those institutions that are less so, apart from a few individuals with strong Nordic networks, tend to orientate elsewhere. So that also shows in who publishes in *NORA*.

We have informally taken over the editorial office already over the summer of 2018, but now we are in the process of formally taking over, which involves establishing a national board, an editorial board, and deciding if we want to make any additions to the advisory board. Our aim is to have a group of very diverse feminist scholars, people with specialities and interests in different kinds of feminist research and gender research. And we are going to have a meeting now in November at the annual Finnish Gender Studies conference, a Kick-Off meeting where we want to discuss how we want to define Nordic, what we mean by Nordic. Do we want to keep this rather narrow geopolitical definition of what counts as Nordic, or do we want to think broader about it, do we want to open it up a little bit?

K: So one of the interesting things I find about you taking over the editorial-ship that is similar to the approach taken by the Women's Studies Journal of Aotearoa/New Zealand, is that you are doing it with two others. Can you talk a little bit about why you are doing this academic leadership role as a group and how you came to be a group? Very often, the head editor fulfils an individualised heroic and masculinised form of leadership and I find it interesting that you are doing this as a group. Can you just talk to me about that?

R: You can see the *NORA* advisory board on our website and to be quite honest I personally think it is a very impressive list, a very internationally renowned group of people and one of them is Marianne Liljestöm, who is a Swedish/Finnish professor in gender studies at the University of Turku in Southern Finland. Now, as far as I can remember, Marianne contacted the head of the department of Gender Studies in Tampere, Johanna Kantola, and asked whether Gender Studies in Tampere would be interested in taking over the editorial office from Oslo. Basically, Johanna said in principle yes, but we would have to find out whether we could get money for an editorial secretary first. So she went on to negotiate that with the faculty and ended up getting money for an editorial secretary. That would involve hiring a PhD student who then takes care of all the administrative work of dividing papers and other administration tasks. Then Johanna wrote an email to the faculty and said we would like someone to be the editor for *NORA*. If anyone is interested please come forward.

That email also asked whether anyone would want to come forward for the editorial secretary position. I thought to myself, okay I am a post-doctoral fellow, I am still rather junior so I didn't want to put myself forward for the editorial post because I thought that would maybe be a little too early in my career to do such a thing. So I wrote to Johanna and said if you can't

find a PhD student to do the job I would be willing to be the secretary because it would give me good experience working with the journal, thinking through how to run a journal.

Then Johanna got back to me and said, ‘No, you are totally in the right place to be an editor and actually two other people have contacted me and they would also like to take on the editorial role’, and I knew both of them, but all three of us come from slightly different disciplinary backgrounds in the way we work with gender and feminist research. So Johanna suggested that three of us should work together. We then had a meeting and we agreed that was a really good idea because it would mean that we could divide the workload between us. We could draw on our different competencies and experiences and all of us have big networks, but we have different networks. So that is actually how it came about, in a very practical way. Maybe you could say it is a typical sort of Finnish pragmatic way of solving the issue. A chief editorship is a massive amount of work and you don’t get any payment for it, so this is an example of how do you deal with that. If you want to argue that it should be junior scholars putting their time into being editors, you need to make it something that doesn’t become a hindrance to their career and other work, but instead becomes a possibility to gain experience that is valuable without being a problem for doing all the other work that they are required to do. This was a way of solving the problem really.

K: You have spoken a little bit about the direction that you want to take NORA as a group and I will come back to that, but what does your role as joint editor of NORA involve on just a very practical level?

R: I can tell you about the sort of process a little bit and how it works. So basically the editorial secretary takes care of paper submissions. She knows what our profiles are, and she divides the papers between us within the journal management system. Then the three of us have our own papers to deal with, but it means that none of us have, like, ten at a time to deal with. Then we try to meet once a month. We have an editorial board meeting which involves the three editors, the editorial secretary, and the book review editors. So that is two PhD students who do the book reviews. They find books, they make suggestions or ask around, and they deal with anything that comes up related to that.

So we meet and we discuss which sort of articles we have in process, where they are in the process in terms of reviews, whether they are ready to be finalised and all that sort of thing. We also discuss if we have difficulties finding reviewers for a particular paper and we help each other out giving names and for people we know who might be relevant to contact. We also discuss very ethical issues, and there are several types of examples I could give with that.

One example would be that we have had some problems with the system where, for instance, a paper wasn’t blinded and in the system it should actually not even be possible, but it happened anyway. So we have to discuss who makes contact with Taylor and Francis to make sure that they check up on the system and that it works the way it is supposed to work. Another example is with the email templates that you edit before sending an email out to reviewers or authors. We may want to reformulate the template because we don’t like the way it is formulated.

An important dimension to the editorial direction could be discussing a publishing profile broadly. So for me personally it is very important that we go beyond gender to include other feminist issues such as trans issues, queer issues, and critical debates on intersexuality. For me also post-colonialism, race, these sorts of things. It is important for me to broaden the scope of the journal so it doesn’t just become focused on gender which unfortunately often can become a tendency in a Nordic setting, and I suppose many other places as well. The others will bring in other things that are important for them also. So discussing, like, how we make the

journal attractive to scholars who write on those kinds of feminist issues is an important ethical consideration.

K: *You have spoken about wanting to redefine, clarify, or take forward the notion of Nordic and what Nordic means in terms of gender feminist research. Can you speak further to what you hope to achieve together in your two year editorial tenure?*

R: It is hard for me to say exactly what we want to achieve because we are still in the process of discussing that, but for me I would like to see certain things, and I think the others would agree with that as well, actually.

Firstly, to make *NORA* more present in Finland as well as in the other Nordic countries, to increase its visibility at least in the European countries. It is a visible journal. Taylor & Francis are very happy with us and we are doing very well, but I think we can do more to increase our visibility and be an even more relevant journal.

And in terms of thinking about the Nordic dimension, I think it's a dilemma. On the one hand I would like to broaden it more. On the other hand I would like to hold on to the Nordic profile because it gives us an edge that makes us different from a lot of other gender studies journals.

K: *Can you talk to that different 'Nordic' edge?*

R: So you have the European journals of women's studies or women's forum or gender studies and all these sorts of things, and they speak very broadly and could be basically speaking to empirical or theoretical debates in various countries. If we just make another of those journals we wouldn't be special, we would just be another of those that already exists. And it's also important and essential to have an outlet for Nordic studies that does not require massive amounts of contextual explanations every time. So of course the Nordic aspect gives it something particular. So if you want to know what is going on in the Nordic countries in terms of the Nordic gender feminist studies debates, you would look to our journal to see what is going on.

K: *What are some of the key debates right now in 2018?*

R: So I think it is quite important to mention here there is always a delay between the debates that are happening and when things are actually being published – the process can be quite long. But the debates that I think are very important at the moment are intersectionality, what does intersectionality mean in a Nordic setting, and here I am particularly thinking about questions of race, for instance, whiteness. How and to what degree do we do incorporate the critique or the awareness of whiteness and white privilege in studies of Nordic inequality issues?

It also relates to Sami questions. Sami are the indigenous people of the Nordic countries. That is a topic that I think is becoming increasingly important now. I think New Zealand can relate to the question of indigenous people. I know Sami and Māori scholars have been interacting with each other and I know that Māori have been to speak to Sami people about their strategies for becoming acknowledged and recognised so that reconciliation can take place. Universities in Finland as well as northern universities of Sweden and Norway have activities going on around Sami issues which again relate to the decolonisation of the curriculum and the decolonisation of feminist thought. So I think those are definitely some major current debates that have been around Nordic scholarship since the '90s, but I think maybe in the '90s it wasn't as big a debate as it could have been.

Related to these debates are questions of what happens when we import theories and concepts from America. For instance, what happens to these theories and what happens to the material we use? This is a debate that one scholar, Karin Widerberg, tried to start in 1998 in *NORA* where she critiqued the concept of gender and the use of the English language in the context of the Nordic countries and how that could actually be problematic in terms of understanding the particularities of the Nordic countries' context.

So I think these are some of the issues that come up at the moment and then also the changing welfare state, neo-liberalism, and the ways in which that is reshaping state feminism and gender politics. Also the issues of new nationalism and right wing populism and how these are also on the rise and changing things.

K: In terms of incorporating your own disciplinary background and also your interest in epistemological injustice, would you be able to articulate how you would reflexively incorporate this research focus into your work with this kind of academic leadership position?

R: Yes, I hope so. I think that actually with the work that I'm doing on epistemological injustice; I have been travelling around thus far mostly in southern Finnish universities and I plan to go to northern Finnish universities as well. I have learned a lot about the different kinds of work people do in feminism research both as members of gender studies as an institutionalised discipline, but also as people who do gender or feminism research in other disciplines.

So I have learned a lot about the kinds of experiences in producing knowledge and whether or not they have a platform to speak from and if they are considered legitimate in the Finnish context. I have learned a lot from that and it has also taught me to see which debates have barriers and areas that need to be studied, especially when they are debated and studied around the world but are still not really strong in the context of Finland and the Nordic countries. Issues of epistemological injustice are important for me as a member of the editorial team to make sure that these very important voices actually get a chance from where they can speak in the Nordic context.

So I think that is definitely something I have learned and I'm trying to think a lot about the practice, the way in which we make decisions in the journal, to, you know, make it collective, making sure everyone gets a say and gets involved not only in getting a say from the discipline, but also from different people. To make it relevant at different levels and not just the top of the academic hierarchy, to make it relevant to PhD students, post-docs, professors as well.

K: You mentioned gender studies is an institutional discipline and I'm interested in that historically in the Scandinavian context. Are you able to speak to that?

R: Yes I can say something about it. So the Nordic countries are quite different in terms of the status and position of gender studies and also I should say that there have been some changes over time. Most of the networks, like the women's studies networks as they used to be called, were something individuals did in different disciplines and they came together in teaching networks in the '80s and '90s in particular. Already in the '70s and '80s, both national networks and Nordic networks were only beginning to be established because it was still a relatively small group of people. They would come together around various issues that also related very much to critiquing the university as a place that was for men and by men and which excluded women – not only women as members of the academic staff, but also women as knowers, and feminist epistemologies.

So they came together both with the aim of producing new insights, but also with the aim of challenging the existing university structures and dominant epistemologies. Around the beginning of the late 80's and early '90s, they organised the sort of teaching networks in different Nordic countries you would be able to see; like there would be teacher networks that would have a course here or a course there and different sorts of economic foundations for providing courses depending on the university and so on. But that sort of thing would take place.

Then in the '90s things happened. Many places across the Nordics and various institutions at that time, like *NORA*, for instance, but also the Nordic Centre of Women and Gender Research, formed sort of a coordinating platform. Funding was allocated to women's studies and professors in the '90s and, for a short period of time, rather substantial amounts of funding were given to women's studies research. This was just around the time when the debate about the name change from women's studies to gender studies happened. So it turned into gender studies sometimes, depending on where you looked, during the 2000s.

K: Can I stop you there and just talk to you about that name change from women's studies to gender studies because this journal that this interview is being published in is the Women's Studies Journal of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and of course it is a big debate and one that you and I know intimately.

I would like to hear how you are grappling with that change or what that change from women's studies to gender studies signifies more broadly, probably conceptually and epistemologically, maybe ethically.

R: So I think there is an argument to say it was not massively debated at the time.

K: In Scandinavia?

R: It was debated somewhat, but not massively and that comes back to what I was saying about before the 1998 article by Karin Widerberg, who was criticising the importation of English concepts, and she was speaking particularly of gender in that article and it didn't create a lot of debate, it didn't. Of course, it was debated, but it wasn't massively debated and it wasn't massively controversial either and some people claimed that the reason that it wasn't massively controversial was that it spoke rather well to some of the ideas that were already embedded in the understanding of sex and sexuality and these sorts of things in the Nordic context. The change to gender studies spoke to that quite well, so therefore it fitted in quite neatly to our context. So the notion of gender rather than women's rights wasn't considered that problematic in terms of the kind of research that people were doing. Of course, one can argue there is, you know, the shift in the political in many ways because, of course, it involved a broadening of what women's studies was to be about, and that also relates to how women's studies developed from being interdisciplinary to being transdisciplinary.

So instead of looking at various disciplines through the perspective of gender or women's perspectives or something like that, the shift to gender studies would be a discipline that had its own particular contributions theoretically and that could in principle be useful in several disciplines but would not speak to any one discipline in particular. Within this transdisciplinary environment, there would be some trans, queer, lesbian studies, critical masculinity studies, race studies – all these sorts of things. Using women as a category – or through the act of naming, claiming women to be the main object of research – is deeply problematic and does not describe or capture the huge variation of work done.

You could say that gender doesn't do that either, but at least it is more open because it speaks very much to the way in which gender is socially constituted or culturally constituted and constructed, and, not least, related more strongly to sexuality, which of course relates to the whole post-structuralist discussion and the work of Judith Butler, which was hugely influential at the time.

K: *So I am interested in linking what you just said to standpoint epistemology and also the difference between the 'category' women and the 'concept' of woman.*

R: In that regard it is important to distinguish between the standpoint of feminists and the standpoint of women. Women may hold very different experiences, but they come together around some systemic relations or structures of capitalism and patriarchy that touch and shape women's lives in one way or the other, and they speak to particular forms of exploitation that take place because you are a woman and particular expectations are attached to the female body. The standpoint of women is shaped by material historical processes that have limited certain things and enabled certain things for those categorised as women. So this is rooted in a Marxist tradition, which emphasises the divisions of labour and the standing in relation to power.

In terms of taking the standpoint of women in, for instance, a research project where you use standpoint epistemology, I think it is important to emphasise that ascribing epistemic status to a particular standpoint is never automatic. It has to be empirically and contextually justified. Otherwise you risk drawing a straight line from social category to social experience. And that would be very problematic. But the idea in the end is that experiences of women would be able to point us towards ways in which power constitutes itself in everyday life to further understand how that came to be. As such, it can be a point of entry to interrogating institutional orders and representations and to explicating systemic processes of exclusion and exploitation. This way of producing knowledge can be extremely interesting and useful. But it requires careful grounding in empirical and contextual insights, attention to complexities and differences between women, and attention to avoiding reproducing institutional ways of knowing. In short, one should never treat epistemic advantage of women as an automatic thing, never assume to know social experience on the basis of 'knowing' the social category they have been ascribed.

K: *And now to the concept of woman.*

R: And now the concept probably relates less to social science empirical investigations and more to unpacking how the notion of what a woman is, how she has been constituted as a subject over time in various philosophical and political debates related to the construction of the modern political subject. I know one amazing Italian scholar, Paola Rudan, whom I met at a symposium in Oslo last week, has worked on this. Telling the history of woman as an 'impossible subject' and not least how it intersects with race and class within colonial, capitalist, patriarchal orders is part of showing how it may make sense to speak of a certain 'privileged' perspective towards power and exploitation. This involves exposing the modern political subject. I think you could look at, for instance, the work of Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the witch* (2004), or you could look at several other historical fantastic descriptions, for instance bell hooks' 'Aint I a Woman?' (1981). Because of the historical position as an 'impossible subject', it can be a point of departure for organizing resistance. Woman is a strategic political concept. For instance, people like Luce Irigaray use very much the notion of woman in that way.

K: I now want to turn to feminism and academic publishing. To what extent do you think academic publishing perpetuates the edifices of patriarchal power through academic work? That probably needs a little bit more context, in that as academics, we need to have publishing records and be cited and be published in the right places and those kinds of things.

R: So this is one of my big interests research-wise. I think very much it reproduces these relations, not in the sense that it is inherently male, but in the sense that the massive set of processes and procedures related to peer review, which journals count as good and which kinds of knowledge get a voice in the journals that count, privileges relations and ways of knowing that one might name masculine.

K: Just clarify this some more.

R: What I mean is it certainly reifies and reproduces certain forms of domination including patriarchy, colonialism, or imperialism. So I will take one at a time. In terms of colonialism or imperialism, the journals that have a certain ranking are located in certain areas. I saw this in a massive map that Raewyn Connell showed at the ‘Gender, Work, and Organization’ conference in Sydney this summer. The map showed how the vast majority of journals in the world are based in the US and UK, and most of the top journals in the world are based in the US, followed by the UK. Everyone else on this world map were more or less none existent in comparison. This basically speaks to whose knowledge counts, and who everyone else has their knowledge measured against. This includes [the belief] that you always have to make sure your work is relevant for a dominant UK and US scholarship and the dominant notions of what counts as ‘good’ knowledge there.

So if I send a manuscript with Finnish empirical material to a journal in the USA I have to make it relevant for a US readership and they will often say, why should we be interested in Finnish experiences? It has nothing to do with us! So you have to produce data in the UK and USA to be relevant for them, which once again boosts the enormous amounts of knowledge produced in and about those contexts, while slowly (in principle) making invisible knowledge from and about other places. But back in Finland, for instance, I will not be able get a permanent position if I don’t publish in these top journals. So we are all in the game of reproducing particular countries’ dominance of scholarly debates and particular ways of knowing. And, for instance, in Finland this shows in the fact that the *Finnish Gender Studies Journal* is no longer receiving enough submissions to be able to publish the annual amounts of issues they used to be able to. It’s in Finnish and often about Finnish debates and is based on empirical materials from Finland.

That also relates, then, to the question of language and of course in New Zealand that is not as big a problem because you are almost all English speakers, but in many other non-English speaking countries, such as the Nordics, we also have to write in English. So we are always in a position of deficit because when we are submitting an article we are being told that this is not very well written or ‘You need to have this sent out for language review’, and you are constantly in a position where you can’t express yourself as well as you would be able to do in your native tongue.

K: What about racial issues in publishing?

R: So when I speak about race, it is a question of what kind of knowledge gets published in what kinds of journals. The concentration of the ‘top’ journals in the USA and the UK produces certain effects and can play a part in reproducing racial hierarchies in which voices

get heard and which voices do not get heard, which knowledge counts and which knowledge does not count. I think that is also a debate you have with Linda Smith in New Zealand in terms of decolonising methodologies and the ways in which some forms of knowledge count, in this case western knowledge, and that is part of reproducing colonial relations and racial hierarchies and racial forms of subordination in academia.

K: I think we can say that is reflected in the stats on who are the academics that work in universities, what is their profile. In my own research in the Scandinavian context, everyone is white.

R: Exactly, and the white sea of academics in universities also means that because people are never confronted with their race, they are not aware of their race. It becomes something we don't think of, white as a colour, because we are, in that regard, so privileged that we don't have to. When we think of race we think of everyone else. So whiteness is not a topic that is taken up that often in a place like the Nordic countries and I assume the same would be the case in New Zealand. Even though the Māori community, including Māori scholars, have been trying to pinpoint the problematics of this invisibility.

K: So what about strategies, I mean, I keep on coming back to your position of academic leadership as a chief editor which is a position of influence. What are our forms of resistance, what are our forms of political activism in terms of trying to break down the patriarchy, trying to pull out issues of white privilege and masculinised power within our academic context? What can we do?

R: So I think in order to answer that I have to go a little bit back to the question you asked before about how publishing reproduces patriarchy, for instance, and that relates a little bit to how we format publishing. Academic publishing requires particular standardised epistemologies, particular kinds of writing, there are all these white male canonised academic contributions and ways of knowing, and then there are all these massive amounts of people of colour and people from around the world that have done fabulous work and made great contributions to scholarship but they haven't been canonised in this white world. We hardly know of their existence. So that would be an example of how academic publishing reproduces these things – who cites whom, who we are expected to cite, who gets to define who should be cited.

One way of trying to challenge those sorts of processes is to look towards different groups of people submitting research. We have a profile that is Nordic, so if you want to send in something about Muslim literature, for instance, you need to somehow position it in terms of debates or problematics or lack of knowledge about something in the Nordic setting. Then you often need to look at the references, you need to find an expert who can even review such a manuscript and then you need to be sure, as an editor, to keep an eye on the fact that you are actually also trying to take seriously the epistemic commitments – the knowledge base that the person who has submitted and the person who is reviewing are coming from.

So I'm not saying that I'm able to do it every time, but I'm saying at least you have to 'stay with the trouble' and try to make sure that you actually take their commitments seriously. I mean, of course, you can be helpful and point towards particular kinds of readings that they can take on board, but also be open towards other readings aside from those canonised ones in this context. This requires work from me and the reviewers. Making sure that we acknowledge what is going on elsewhere.

Another thing I think is that we try to introduce and encourage other formats, rather than the standard conventional article format. So we have essay formats and we have what we call more commentary formats so that people can write political pieces that don't have to follow the conventional academic form, and they can be quite provoking. So in that way we try to find other ways that you can engage because, of course, the textual form remains quite central. We still have not opened up for people to be able to submit a cartoon or video or something like that, but at least we are open to different ways of writing.

K: So this leads me to a kind of a futuristic question. What is the future of academic publishing from a feminist agenda?

R: So I think one of the issues we are facing is with the developments and restructuring and the reforms of academia and the pressure that is put on academics to publish in journals, and in good journals, and the pressure that is put on people to review for free. The whole system is unsustainable, it is a complete farce. So in saying that even though I love the journal that I'm an editor for, and I think it is a fantastic journal, it is not a sustainable solution for anyone, including the reviewers. It is big business, someone is earning a lot of money, but not the people who are doing the work. It is quite incredible that this is possible. I could go on being critical about this, but I think we are facing another issue and that relates to the constant pushing of academics to be relevant not only within academia, but to a broader audience. As it currently is, you see some people, and I don't know how they do it, but they manage to be publishing machines in the right journals plus every second day blogging about something super relevant, plus giving speeches in all sorts of places and writing articles for regular newspapers. I don't know how they do it. The work is their life and that is fantastic for them, but I think for many people they also need a break from that sometimes.

I don't think journals will ever completely lose relevance. I mean they will continue to be a relevant outlet and I think they are. I can't predict the future but I can just say what I hope. I hope there will be less journals and I hope there will be more of a sort of bullshit filter, where you ask people to only submit so many manuscripts a year instead of just sending off things when they are half-done. It would be great if all journals were open access but everything is so costly at the moment because it runs through a capitalist system where there are these massive publishing houses.

K: So just to bring this back to you as a younger woman if you are prepared to accept that label.

R: I identify as a woman.

K: Obviously you can't speak for everyone, but what are the challenges for women in academia from your own perspective?

R: I think there are several challenges. Some challenges are not just women's challenges, and I think that is very important. Some of it just relates to the organisation of labour and the restructuring of higher education that means that people are overworked, stressed. There is a lot of pressure economically and we are constantly having to justify our own existence. It depends very much on which discipline you look at also. I think there is a massive difference between the humanities and sciences for instance. But I think one of the debates going on now in Europe has been the critique of gender. Gender studies has been critiqued from both

a nationalist, sort of right-wing, position, but also just more generally. I think we are facing a dilemma, and engagement with questions of gender are being seen as provocative in a time where nationhood and identity is reappearing as an important topic on the political agenda. Gender studies and feminism are perceived as something that critiques nationalism and critiques these very exclusive ideas of nationhood and citizenship and stuff like that.

K: *From a Scandinavian point of view, or are you talking generally?*

R: I am speaking about Europe right now. For instance, in Hungary gender studies has closed down after critiquing how the populist xenophobic government came into power. They shut down gender studies in Hungary and that is of course Hungary, but you see similar debates going on in Poland, in Spain, in Italy and so on, and I'm not saying the debate is exactly going to be similar in the Nordic countries because we have a different history related to questions of equality and gender and so on. But nonetheless, it means that gender studies has to justify its own existence in a way more than it has had to for quite a while, but also I think we have two positions that are going on at the same time. On the one hand feminism is sort of re-radicalising; if you look at Denmark and many other places you see real growth in the radical activist feminist movements. There is really something going on there and they are responding to all sorts of issues.

From the other position, in academia and in many political contexts, equality is perceived as a mission accomplished now women have access to work. Equality has been reduced to questions of access to work, access to a career. It doesn't mean it becomes a career, or all people have the same possibility of actually achieving it, but in principle they have the opportunity and therefore people just conclude it is mission accomplished and we don't need state-run programmes to secure gender equality. So it is like questions of equality have become domesticated. It is massively problematic because it means that inequality is reduced to an individualised question and a problem that should be handled by making wise and strategic individual choices, instead of dealing with it on a structural level. These two positions are, of course, not independent of each other. I think they are responding to each other somehow, but I think these parts of the problem that I see for women and racial minorities and also social class, for that matter. I mean, you see a growing polarisation in our society. Denmark has never been as polarised since before the Second World War, which means we are literally facing an issue of how to make sure that education is still a site for social mobility.

K: *That is the big question.*

R: Yes, and on the one hand we have a massification of the university on student levels, but on the other hand it seems that in other layers of academia it still remains middle class white men that are very much privileged.

K: *Thank you Rebecca, for an insightful and interesting conversation.*

KIRSTEN LOCKE is senior lecturer in the School of Critical Studies in Education at the University of Auckland. As a philosopher of education, she is particularly interested in the philosophical theories that underpin mass education systems and the ways these shape issues of gender equity and democracy in education more broadly. Kirsten's recent research has focused on women in academia and the ways in which women navigate the university landscape. Kirsten sits on the Executive Board of the innovative publishing platform for the

Association of Visual Pedagogies and has a long association with the editorial board for the journal Educational Philosophy and Theory.

REBECCA LUND is a post-doctoral fellow in Gender Studies at the University of Tampere in Finland. Her research focuses on the social organisation of academic work and knowledge production more broadly. Her current work is centred on epistemic injustice in feminist knowledge production and more particularly uses institutional ethnography to explicate relations of class, race and gender in the ascription of epistemic status. She is editor-in-chief of NORA: Nordic Journal for Gender and Feminist Research and Coordinator for the Thematic Working Group on Institutional Ethnography at the International Sociological Association.

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