

Call for Papers, Special Issue

***The “Categories of Emancipation” in Feminist and Queer
Anthropology***

by the AFQ Collective¹: anthropologiefeministequeer@proton.me

This special issue explores the contemporary challenges facing feminist anthropology at the intersection of tensions both internal and external to the discipline. It examines how what we call the “categories of emancipation” circulate across different social, political, and intellectual contexts, becoming the object of contestation, transformation, and conflicting appropriations.

Anthropology has long been shaped by a dual movement: on the one hand, the classification of cultures and social groups; on the other, the critical examination of those classifications and of the hierarchies they produce. As a field-based, politically engaged discipline, anthropology has continually renewed itself through critiques emerging both from within its own traditions and from their margins. Over the past decades, the discipline has undergone profound theoretical and methodological transformations.

The emergence of feminist anthropology during the 1960s and 1970s, alongside women's liberation movements, marked a decisive turning point. Two collective volumes, *Woman, Culture and Society* (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974) and *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (Reiter, 1975), became foundational texts for a new research agenda. Feminist anthropology did not simply seek to include women within existing analyses; it fundamentally challenged the categories through which societies were described and compared (Lewin, 2006). Feminist critique therefore concerned not only the empirical content of

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anthropological research but also the conditions under which anthropological knowledge itself is produced (Strathern, 1987). Reflexivity became a defining feature of the discipline, requiring anthropologists to situate both their analytical categories and their own position as producers of knowledge.

The work of feminist anthropologists such as Gayle Rubin (1975) and Nicole-Claude Mathieu (1991) profoundly reshaped ethnographic inquiry. They demonstrated that certain voices, particularly, those of women had been systematically marginalized within scholarly representations. Challenging anthropological accounts in which women appeared merely as a secondary domain or a particular sphere to be added onto a supposedly universal social analysis, feminist anthropologists argued instead that women must be understood as constitutive subjects of social life itself. From this perspective, androcentrism lies not only in the exclusion of women but also in the very construction of what counts as central and peripheral within anthropological knowledge.

From the 1990s onward, the emergence of queer politics opened up new debates within anthropology (Boellstorff, 2007). By questioning the stability of sexual identities, highlighting the diversity of gender configurations, and challenging the naturalization of binary sex categories, queer anthropology extended several key insights developed by feminist anthropology on gender relations (Rubin, 1984; Blackwood, 2010; Weiss, 2016). At the same time, coalitions among marginalized subjects (Cohen, 1997), together with critiques of gay, lesbian, and trans identity categories, shifted and, in some cases, challenged the centrality of "woman" as the primary political subject of feminist struggle (Butler, 1990).

At the same time, postcolonial and decolonial scholarship, together with Black feminism (McClaurin, 2025; Ebron, 2006), has profoundly challenged the universalist assumptions of hegemonic feminism by exposing its Euro-Atlantic and white historical foundations as well as its normative effects on the global circulation of knowledge (Mohanty, 1988). In *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (1997) demonstrates the culturally specific meanings of gender categories within Yorùbá society and shows how colonial rule imposed Western understandings of social relations, particularly through the binaries of man/woman and husband/wife.

Building on these critiques, community feminisms (Paredes, 2010) propose an alternative analytical perspective grounded in Indigenous cosmologies. They emphasize forms of political organization shaped by local understandings of gender while reaffirming that the categories through which social life is organized are historically situated, relational, and never universal.

From this perspective, challenges to established categories open new possibilities for theoretical innovation grounded in experiences that have long remained at the margins. Lélia Gonzalez's concept of "Amefricanity" (1988) highlights the historical processes of memory, resistance, and subject formation that characterize Afro-descendant communities throughout the Americas. Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of the borderlands (1987) draws attention to experiences of liminality and conflict in territories shaped by colonialism, patriarchy, and racial violence. Within this framework, Rita Segato (2008) argues that these forms of violence represent an extreme expression of power that is simultaneously territorial and gendered, inscribing itself directly onto the bodies of women in Ciudad Juárez, on the Mexican-US border.

Taken together, feminist anthropology, enriched by queer, postcolonial, and decolonial perspectives, has become a field shaped by ongoing methodological and theoretical debates. Critiques of androcentrism, systemic analyses of gender relations (Rubin, 1975), studies of intersecting systems of inequality, challenges to deterministic approaches, epistemological decentring, and analyses of transnational circulation all contribute to a vibrant and continually evolving body of scholarship.

Having emerged through these successive transformations, feminist anthropology now faces a new set of tensions that redefine both its analytical concerns and its political significance. Contemporary changes in gender and sexual politics, the rise of anti-gender and reactionary movements, the global circulation of feminist and queer frameworks, and ongoing postcolonial and decolonial critiques all invite us to reconsider the very categories that have structured anthropological debate over the past several decades.

We therefore seek to examine how concepts developed in scholarly, activist, and political debates, including gender, gender relations, emancipation, agency, domination, subject formation, transgression, and subversion, which we refer to collectively as the “categories of emancipation”, circulate across different contexts, are translated, transformed, reinterpreted, consolidated, or reconfigured as they encounter new social and political settings. More broadly, we ask how these concepts are mobilized, contested, and redefined in situated contexts, and how they interact with other ways of understanding political action and social change.

It is against this backdrop of circulation, contestation, and reappropriation that this special issue invites ethnographically grounded contributions exploring three sets of tensions that shape contemporary feminist anthropology and the wider feminist field.

1. Reactionary Appropriations of the “Categories of Emancipation”

Concepts that emerged from feminist and queer struggles, including equality, women's rights, autonomy, and sexual liberation, are now circulating in unexpected ways. In many contexts, they are being appropriated by political and institutional actors who redefine them within nationalist, authoritarian, or reactionary agendas.

Research on femonationalism (Farris, 2017; Della Sudda, 2022), homonationalism (Puar, 2007), and sexual imperialism (Massad, 2007) has shown how states and political movements invoke women's rights and the rights of sexual minorities to legitimize racist, securitarian, or imperial projects (Abu-Lughod, 2013). At the same time, anti-gender mobilizations (Butler, 2024), masculinist discourses, and contemporary forms of trans-exclusionary feminism, including TERF and gender-critical positions (Fusaschi, 2025), reinterpret the language of emancipation by turning it against feminist and LGBTQI+ movements themselves.

This section invites ethnographic analyses of these processes of appropriation and transformation. How are the categories of feminist and queer emancipation mobilized in political projects that fundamentally alter their meaning? How do reactionary actors appropriate these categories in order to redefine the boundaries of the nation, the family, or the social order?

We particularly welcome contributions based on ethnographic research that examine how these dynamics take shape in specific contexts through discursive circulation, political reinterpretation, the reconfiguration of alliances, and struggles over the very meaning of emancipation.

2. Situated Critiques and Contestations of the “Categories of Emancipation”

The categories of feminist and queer emancipation are not only appropriated by reactionary actors; they are also questioned, challenged, and reinterpreted in a wide range of social and political contexts (Mahmood, 2005; Lugones, 2010). In many settings, activists and social movements choose not to identify with feminism or with categories associated with sexual and gender minorities, not because they reject equality or autonomy, but because they question what they perceive as the Western-centered assumptions embedded in some formulations of feminism and queer theory (Mohanty, 2003; Blackwood, 1996; Oyěwùmí, 1997).

This section explores how the categories of feminist and queer emancipation travel, are translated, and acquire new meanings in contexts shaped by colonial and postcolonial histories, diverse religious traditions, and distinct political configurations.

How do particular movements or social formations combine demands for equality with moral, religious, or communal frameworks without necessarily adopting the language of hegemonic feminism (Kocadost, 2025; Masson, 2006)? How do struggles against sexual violence reshape concepts such as the body, honor, respectability, and autonomy? How do critiques of the importation of supposed or actual Western categories contribute to rethinking debates on gender, sexuality, and their conceptual frameworks?

We invite contributions grounded in ethnographic research that examine the tensions between globally circulating norms of gender and sexual emancipation and locally situated practices, as well as the processes through which feminist and queer categories are appropriated, transformed, contested, or redefined.

3. “The Categories of Emancipation”: Reflexivity, Method, and Engagement

The third section invites contributions that adopt a more reflexive perspective on the relationship between anthropologists and their field sites when the categories of feminist and queer emancipation are either appropriated for reactionary purposes or challenged in the name of critiques of their Western-centered assumptions (Mohanty, 1988; Abu-Lughod, 2002 and 1991; Weiss, 2011). We particularly welcome papers that reflect on the position of feminist and queer anthropologists in relation to the contemporary circulation, transformation, and reinterpretation of concepts such as gender, emancipation, agency, domination, and subject formation.

How can anthropology engage simultaneously with tensions internal to the discipline and with the broader political struggles surrounding the categories of feminist emancipation? What does it mean to apply feminist epistemologies to field sites shaped by reactionary politics? How can anthropologists account for these phenomena without imposing abstract universal frameworks or retreating into cultural relativism? More broadly, what are the epistemological

consequences of these shifts? Do ethnographic encounters require us to provincialize certain analytical categories while still preserving their critical potential?

By placing the contemporary circulation, contestation, and reappropriation of the “categories of emancipation” at the center of the discussion, this special issue seeks to contribute to renewed anthropological debates on the changing landscape of feminist politics and on the tensions currently reshaping feminist and queer anthropology.

General Guidelines:

We welcome contributions in any of the journal's five languages: French, English, Spanish, Italian, or Portuguese.

Submissions should:

- be grounded in clearly identifiable ethnographic research;
- explicitly engage with the intersections between feminist, queer, postcolonial, and decolonial perspectives;
- examine the effects of translation, circulation, conflict, and generative processes;
- avoid purely theoretical or broad survey papers.

The aim of this issue is to explore, through ethnographic inquiry, how feminist and queer anthropology is being reshaped by the contemporary transformation of regimes of power.

Submission Process:

Authors are invited to submit:

- an abstract of approximately 3,000 characters outlining the field site, methodology, and main argument, in Word or LibreOffice format, together with a short bibliography;
- a brief biographical note of no more than 150 words.

Proposals should include the author's name, institutional affiliation, and email address.

They should be sent to both, redaction.ch-cp@ehess.fr and anthropologiefeministequeer@proton.me with the subject line “CH/CP – Feminist and Queer Anthropology” no later than **15 September 2026**. Authors will be notified of the editorial committee's decision by **1 October 2026**.

Full articles should be between 25,000 and 40,000 characters, including notes and references. Manuscripts must be original, unpublished, and prepared according to the journal's style guidelines available on its website. They should also include a 3,000-character abstract in both French and English, in addition to the language of the article if it is different. Final manuscripts must be submitted by **22 January 2027**.

The selection process will take place in two stages. Following an initial review of the abstracts by the guest editors in consultation with the editorial board, selected authors will be invited to submit a full manuscript, which will then undergo double-blind peer review.

Calendar:

Receipt of abstracts: 15 September 2026

Notification of acceptance: 1 October 2026

Submission of full articles: 22 January 2027

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