

Marianne Liljeström

Epistemic habits and gestures within Nordic academic feminism

A fundamental thematic within the critical self-understanding of feminist research entails re-evaluation of the narratives of feminist knowledge production, its places/spaces, geopolitical formations and locations. Within this activity it is regularly underlined that knowledge production is always also about power relations linked to representations, i.e. who and what is included and excluded from the archives of feminist knowledge. Fresh discussions about critique, new ways of reading and queer methods show an increasing consciousness of our deep-rooted and strictly established, and often self-evident epistemic habits.

In this presentation, I discuss routinized epistemic gestures in connection to Nordic academic feminism referring to statements and debates about such subjects as the self-evidence of Nordic uniformity and cohesion, its culture of consensus as the Nordic we-ness. Other examples include the focus on intersectionality; the demand of necessary positionality and on our habit to deal with complex questions in an encompassing or universalistic way in spite of the constant emphasis on the importance of differences and identity diversity. Thus, some careless and perhaps sloppily used routine phrases have turned into self-evident “truths”, to somewhat of clichés avoiding reflection. However, we can also decide to ponder on such “clichés” not as used-up, but as useful for further critical reflection.

I conclude my talk with reflections about how to imagine new, changing and dynamic epistemic communities and different genealogies within Nordic academic feminism: how in the midst of a strong culture of consensus actually take into consideration the existence of multiple feminisms, the inner conflicts and controversies of feminism? Besides functioning as both identity and community, academic feminism is importantly a critique involving both different theoretical traditions and current conflicting opinions and discrepancies of views and visions.

Bio



Marianne Liljeström is Professor (emerita) of Gender Studies at the University of Turku, Finland. Her research fields include Nordic and Russian/Soviet gender history with special perspective on the formation of Women's and Gender studies as academic disciplines; second, autobiographical examination of selves, identities and memory, and third, theoretical discussions on feminist and queer epistemologies, critique, experience, affects and habitual thinking. She has published articles widely on these subjects, and she is the author of *Useful Selves. Russian Women's Autobiographical Texts from the Postwar Period* (2004), co-editor of *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences* (2010, with Susanna Paasonen) and of the special issue of the journal *Feminist Encounters, A Critique of Our Own? On the Epistemic Habits of Academic Feminism* (2017, with Salla Peltonen) and co-author of *The Geopolitics of Nordic and Russian Gender Research 1975-2005* (2016, with Ulrika Dahl and Ulla Manns). Currently her main interest is in exploring timelines and history of academic feminism.