DiGeSt

Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies

Editorial

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By the time this Spring issue reaches you, summer is already well underway. This delay reflects a period of significant change for *DiGeSt*, during which we have not only prepared the present issue but also undertaken a series of developments aimed at strengthening the journal's editorial structure and future.

A lot of amazing things have happened for *DiGeSt*. The journal was indexed in the Scopus database, and with this recognition we have seen the number of new submissions rise to levels we had never seen before. We have been publishing Special Issues that engage the field of Gender and Diversity Studies in highly relevant and significant ways, offering innovative interdisciplinary work by leading scholars in their fields. These developments reflect not only the growing visibility of the journal but also its value to the field. This is particularly encouraging at a time when gender, sexuality, and diversity studies are increasingly confronted with political and societal backlash. It reminds us that research and scholarship remain powerful tools not only to resist such attacks but also to analyse and challenge them.

But every success has its downsides, and it became extremely difficult for our small team of editors-in-chief to handle this amazing number of submissions alongside other responsibilities. *DiGeST* has always differentiated itself as a journal of an emerging field that prioritizes strong research and publishing ethics, proudly publishing both accomplished and early career scholars. Editors have consciously supported early career scholars from across the globe, at times offering invaluable feedback and guidance in the intricacies of academic writing. Our vision of fairness involves allowing authors to receive a response to their submission in a time lap deemed 'short', and to hold the reviewing process within a 'reasonable' period. But 'short' and 'reasonable' can only extend to the possible. Between the rising number of submissions and the struggle to find reviewers, these notions of 'short' and 'reasonable' could not align with our own sense of fairness anymore.

In light of this, we decided to make the necessary structural changes by appointing three new co-editors-in-chief. We thus have the pleasure to welcome **Sinem Yilmaz** (VUB), **Clara Vlessing** (UGent), and **Paulien Broens** (VUB). This interuniversity team demonstrates that, while DiGeSt is hosted by UGent, its ambitions extend beyond a single institution. These new co-editors-in-chiefs have all been selected for their strong background in gender and diversity studies, covering disciplines from law, to anthropology and sociology, and literature. We wish them all the best in this new adventure, and we look forward to guiding them in this transition to *DiGeSt*'s next chapter, continuing along the path paved by all previous editors-in-chief.

Alongside them, we have also appointed seven desk editors - an entirely new role within *DiGeSt's* editorial structure. Their primary responsibility is to assist with the initial desk screening of new submissions, and if necessary, providing authors with constructive feedback. Again, this reflects our commitment to making the editorial process as fair as possible for authors. Expanding the editorial team with desk editors will enable us to continue upholding these principles. Our goal was to compose a diverse and interdisciplinary team of more junior researchers, giving them the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in academic publishing. We are pleased to welcome on board **Romain Biesemans** (ULB), **Danielle Fernandes** (VUB), **Nika Looman** (UAntwerp), **Lei Decappelle** (UGent), **Alice Königstetter** (VUB), **Irene Rodríguez Pintado** (University of Murcia), and **Jody Metcalfe** (Utrecht University).

While these matters demanded our full attention, the delay in this year's Spring issue publication in no way detracts from its quality. We are thus proud to present this issue; the last one we will publish as the current team of three co-editors-in-chief.

This year's General Issue includes four articles on various topics: Flemish political parties' communication on sexual and gender diversity issues during the last elections in Belgium; the work and relationship of diversity change agents within the Dutch military; crisis line service providers' perspective on 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals unique needs; and the

role of a women's magazine in shaping ideas about modern domestic life in authoritarian Portugal.

In their contribution, **Thalia Van Wichelen, Priscilla Hau, and Alexander Dhoest** explore the political communication of Flemish parties on sexual and gender diversity during the 2024 elections in Belgium. By analysing election manifestos, social media, and television debates, this study maps how Flemish political parties frame LGBTQ issues across the ideological spectrum. It demonstrates that political discourse is increasingly polarized, with far-right anti-gender rhetoric and broader ideological conflict often overshadowing substantive discussions of LGBTQ rights. In a second research article, **Nina van Douwen, Marieke Van Den Brink, and Yvonne Benschop** investigate the role of diversity change agents within the Dutch military and explore the relationships among these agents. Their study shows how various factors, among which the organization's structure and culture, shape diversity change agents' strategies for collaboration and competition. The third article, authored by **Monica Sesma-Vazquez, Tara Collins, Kendra Neeb, Melissa Mostert, Karen Lazaruk, Tristan McSwiney, Nathanael Hammond, and Mike Velthuis Kroeze**, explores the unique needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals through the perception of crisis line service providers. The findings of this research bring insight into how trauma-informed and gender- and sexual identity-affirming practices can be adapted to respond to these special needs. Finally, **João Almeida e Silva**'s contribution examines how the Portuguese women's magazine *Eva* popularized modern domestic architecture during the *Estado Novo* through its annual *Casas da Eva* campaigns. This research overall highlights the role of print media in shaping domestic modernity under an authoritarian regime.

Apart from the four research articles, this General Issue proudly features a Roundtable on 'Academic Freedom, Gender and Diversity'. Six scholars demonstrate the need to foreground Gender and Diversity scholarship in order to understand the current wave of academic and political attention for the challenges to academic freedom. Each of these contributions interrogates the meanings of academic freedom within critical research traditions. They analyse far-right uses and abuses of academic freedom (**David Paternotte**; **Sarah Bracke**), its varying political-economic conditions of possibility across Eastern-Western borders (**Ramil Zamanov**), the shrinking space for academic freedom in contemporary discussions of Iranian politics (**Ladan Rahbari**), Gender Studies' inherent radical analytical potential and radical practice of academic freedom in the form of its continuous self-reflective redefining and expanding of academic work (**Christina Chiotaki**), and finally, through the lens of Gaza and the deeply unsettling academic censorship unfolding in the wake of Israel's genocidal violence (**Elhadj Moussa BenMoussa**). With this Roundtable we wish to highlight *DiGeSt*'s commitment to interrogating contemporary socio-political developments drawing from critical interdisciplinary scholarship of gender, race and ethnicity.

As a final change, last year's intern **Femke Beutels** got appointed as the new editor for the 'What Are You Reading' section, as a replacement to **Leni Van Goidsenhoven**. We want to warmly thank Leni for her years-long commitment to *DiGeSt* as book review editor. Beutels has commissioned seven book reviews, by **Lula Maris**, **Paulien Muls**, **Lauren Ottaviani**, **Aslıhan Öztürk**, **Helena Baeck**, **Sophie Bols** and **Moé Suzuki**, and **Jai Lloyd**. These personal reviews cover books on gender, race, identity, language, power, colonialism, and social justice, drawing on works from feminist, queer, and critical race theory alongside contemporary literary fiction.