

# Anthropologie & développement

## Call for papers

### Special issue: Gender and Development: A contested landscape

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This special issue of *Anthropologie et développement* invites contributors to place the sub-field of Gender and Development (GAD) under the microscope by unpacking, through fine-grained empirical case studies, how concepts related to gender, sexuality, feminism and decolonisation are imagined, produced, imposed, appropriated, and resisted through concrete development practices and projects.

#### Doing Gender and Development

As our starting point, we understand 'development' to comprise the industry of aid agencies, government ministries, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, and knowledge-for-development institutions including think tanks, dedicated to delivering an output (development) but also to reproducing themselves through discourses, techniques and processes for bringing about change (White, 2006, p. 56). To a greater or lesser extent, therefore, academic researchers and university departments are also implicated within the fabric of development as knowledge producers and teachers/trainers of future development professionals.

As a sub-field of development, GAD can trace its origins back to feminist critics in the late 1970s who criticized development approaches for their failure to address the specific needs and experiences of women, thereby reproducing gender inequalities. Since the mid '80s, GAD has mushroomed. It seeks to transform power relations, challenge constraining norms linked to gender and sexuality, and promote social justice and equality within development processes and outcomes to improve the well-being of women, children and (sometimes) groups marginalized by hetero- and cis-normativity. Work in the field of GAD involves research and knowledge generation to understand the complex dynamics of inequalities related to gender and sexuality and their implications for development, evidence that is then used to inform policy-making and programme design. Common activities include gender-responsive policy development and advocacy, gender mainstreaming, and capacity-building of individuals and within institutions. Key areas of intervention include economic and political empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and reducing gender-based - and increasingly homophobic and transphobic - discrimination and violence.

Far from being hegemonic, the GAD field is riddled with contradictions, where diverse and competing interests do battle. This special issue seeks to explore these dynamics at the current juncture, where GAD faces increasing critique and resistance from both the traditional 'right' (conservative political

forces and religious fundamentalisms) and the 'left' (postcolonial and decolonial movements, feminists, queer activists, etc.).

### **Gender and sexuality: Whose definitions for what futures, and how?**

The very premise of GAD - to reduce gender inequality - is fraught with contestation. Whether 'gender' is used in discourse and practical interventions to refer to 'women', or the complex and co-constructed relationships between femininities, masculinities, and other gendered categories, has long been a point of contention between different actors working in the field (Kanji, 2003). Understandings of what 'gender', 'sex', 'sexual orientation', 'gender/sexual identity' even are, and what exactly is the nature of their relationship to political and economic inequalities, remains highly debated - with the existence of contrasting gender ontologies and cultural norms among different donor agencies, organisations, and community members often creating confusion and conflict (Waites, 2018; Istratii, 2021).

Moreover, if understandings of the present are cause for debate, this is nothing compared to disagreements over the intended outcomes of GAD - namely the ideal gendered norms, rights or relations that actors strive to realise. Finally, systems theorists and anthropologists have long pointed out that relationships between development visions, objectives, approaches, and outcomes are never linear, but rather chaotic and unpredictable. The implementation of methods conceived to bring about gender equality (however defined) – such as 'girls empowerment', 'human rights-based approaches' or more recently 'gender transformative approaches' to name but a few – yields complex and diverse outcomes.

Contributors to this special issue are invited to critically investigate such dynamics in specific contexts, particularly by focusing on the diversity of perspectives relating to gender and sexuality, and the power dynamics at play in shaping the direction and modalities of directed change processes.

### **Feminist, queer and decolonial perspectives in practice**

Despite its origins, since GAD has become institutionalized, its policies, programmes and methods have not necessarily been informed by an explicitly feminist theoretical or political approach (Kanji, 2003). However, in reality, feminist intellectual production and activist movements are never far from GAD. This can take the form of the often-implicit assumptions about gender which largely stem from feminist theoretical paradigms generated in the United States and Northern/Western Europe which permeate the objectives and strategies of dominant donors and organisations in the field (Jolly, 2011; Istratii, 2021). Alternatively, this relationship can be seen in the vocal critiques of GAD made by postcolonial feminist and queer commentators over the last several decades (Mama, 1997; Jolly, 2000, 2011; Falquet, 2011; Verschuur and Destremau, 2012; Arnfred, 2014). Recently, such critique has been amplified and brought to the mainstream following calls from activists and critical scholars to decolonize development. The result has been a sudden increase in publications by feminists and queer people of colour from the Global South, demanding a shift in decision-making, resources and knowledge production from the Global North to South in relation to GAD (Weerawardhana, 2018; Vergès, 2019; Tamale, 2020; Khan, Dickson and Sondarjee, 2023).

However, other voices consider the current 'decolonising development' movement to have been co-opted by the agendas of Northern actors and institutions, and argue that its current articulation and mobilisation remains removed from the realities and struggles of the people on the receiving end of global inequalities, who are targeted by development interventions (Opara, 2021). Meanwhile, others

have shown how, just like White-dominated feminist movements from the Global North, feminist collectives in the Global South can also be exclusionary and reproduce local hierarchies including along the lines of class, Europhone language proficiency, urban location, education levels, ethnicity, religion, hetero- and cisnormativity, etc. (Mohammed, 2022).

Ultimately, there is little scholarship which critically analyses how donors and organisations working in GAD – beyond the activist groups and social movements - define, understand or operationalise ‘feminism’, ‘queer inclusion’ and/or ‘decolonisation’ in the context of current debates. Contributors to the special issue are therefore invited to unpack through empirical case studies how concepts, theories or methods derived from diverse postcolonial, decolonial, feminist and/or queer intellectual and activist traditions are mobilised or appropriated within development practice – whether in relation to knowledge production, policymaking, or programme design – as well as what agendas and logics inform these strategies, and what dynamics or power relations are (re)produced through these activities. Such analyses should show attention to diversity, intersectionality and the operation of power in specific contexts.

### **Publication timeline**

Proposals for articles should be submitted by 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 to Anneke Newman, [anneke.newman@ugent.be](mailto:anneke.newman@ugent.be) and the journal editorial team [revue@apad-association.org](mailto:revue@apad-association.org). Proposals may be written in either French or English, and should present a draft article of around 4,000 characters (including spaces), or approximately 500 words. The proposal must include: a title; an abstract detailing the research question, the positionality of the author(s), the theoretical framework, the field studied, and the main results; some main bibliographic titles (not included in the sign count). The proposal must include the first and last names of the author(s), their status and institutional affiliation, and their e-mail address.

4 September 2023	Deadline to submit proposals.
14 September 2023	Authors are notified of the editorial board’s decision.
10 November 2023	Deadline to submit manuscripts via <a href="http://apad-association.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/NoteAuteursRevueAPAD-10juin16.pdf">http://apad-association.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/NoteAuteursRevueAPAD-10juin16.pdf</a>
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