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## Gender

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## GENDER

### Introduction

The protests which have been ongoing in North-African countries since February 2011 have contributed towards giving visibility to that component of society often neglected by the dominant male model: women. Female bodies occupied not only the front covers of important magazines (Libération, n.9253, 12th-13th February 2011; Los Angeles Times, Saturday 12th February), but also a traditional male space: the public space. This media visibility of women has given new food for thought on gender issues as well as on issues concerning dominating relationships that the ever reigning patriarchal system continues to perpetrate on a global level.

Assuming that in most of these societies such relationships largely determine people's roles and lives, can one speak of a specificity in the Mediterranean setting? The predominant image of the Mediterranean world is that of a closed context, refractory to transformation, anchored in sexist traditions and still a long way from effective equality and access to politics and positions of power. Just such a stereotype, legitimized by Anglo-Saxon traditional studies and research on the Mediterranean city (c.f. Minca 2004) and still commonly predominant, has been put into question by the active role played by women in social movements which have lately taken place in the whole of the Mediterranean basin<sup>1</sup>. The pictures of women engaged in protest and demonstration have gone around the world. However, what do the women of the Arab awakening and the Spanish *indignados* women<sup>2</sup> have in common? The presence of their bodies on town squares and streets.

Virtual space has also held a starring role in the protests. The role of technology and the network in social and political change has been vastly covered both in scientific contexts (e.g. Paradiso 2003, 2006) and in popular contexts; particular reference can be made to the Green Wave in Iran (Mouillard 2009; Hare and Darani 2010). Furthermore, with the 2011 protests, attention has been focused specifically on the relation between gender and new media. However, if internet and social networks have made the realtime circulation of news and considerations possible, the presence of women within the physical space has been crucial, even on a symbolic level. Although the history of women and of feminism demonstrate how the claims to rights of women have always passed through the occupation of public space (one may refer to Cavarero and Restaino 2002; Veauvy 2004), the pictures of the Arab women have contributed to bringing the attention of international public opinion back to women and thus undermine the idea of the existence of an indissoluble binomial which binds women to the private sphere.

It would however be wrong to believe the phenomenon is some kind of women's "awakening" in the face of the regimes, considering the fact that they have always played an active role in revolutions and in change, on the same level as men<sup>3</sup>.

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1 On women's role in the Arab spring please refer to Pepicelli (2011) and Curcio (2011). Furthermore, go through the debate on the web site Women in the City [http://www.womeninthecity.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=679:sur-les-femmes-moteurs-du-changement-au-maghreb-et-au-moyen-orient&catid=209:debate&Itemid=88](http://www.womeninthecity.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=679:sur-les-femmes-moteurs-du-changement-au-maghreb-et-au-moyen-orient&catid=209:debate&Itemid=88).

For a geopolitical analysis of protests read Eva (2011).

2 Please refer to the Feminist Manifiesto de Sol "Sin la mujeres no hay revolución! La revolución sera feminista o no será" <http://www.e-mujeres.net/noticias/revolucion-sera-feminista-o-sera> an <http://www.nodo50.org/xarxafeministapv/?MANIFIESTO-FEMINISTA-AL-MOVIMIENTO>

3 As Dina Vaiou (2006, p.46) says, regarding urban change, "women have not been absent from urban process, as traditional urban research and theory would like us to believe, but have been hidden

In this work goals are set to give a few examples of relations and claims that have to do with gender in the complex Mediterranean reality. Women and men occupy physical and virtual spaces to make claims for gender and sexual identity. Through the visibility of these actions, we will try to demonstrate how the image of backwardness, immobility and oppression long associated with the Mediterranean is, once again, a discursive construction justified by a certain type of literature (e.g. Minca 2004).

We have chosen not to divide cases into “Southern shore” and “Northern shore” of the Mediterranean, both not to legitimate, through a geographic metaphor, politics of exclusion implicitly born by such expressions, and because these phenomena are intimately bound and interacting.

We will start from the Maghreb context due to its territory’s privileged position in the last ten years’ research, moreover for the particular attention it deserves. In this case indeed, the presence of women on the streets is only the manifestation of a phenomenon which started visibly, continuously and in the open daylight at least a decade ago: activism and public involvement of the population’s feminine element in the ongoing change process<sup>4</sup>.

We will start by giving a big picture of feminine and feminist associative-life and activism. We are of course considering a non-exhaustive picture and especially filtered through our interest and the contact network we have developed during our research in Maghreb countries and the Francophone area<sup>5</sup>. We will give examples of virtual networks but also of empirical cases which concern directly gender researchers in Maghreb and activists from civil society associations and movements. We shall further evidence how, in the Maghreb as in other regions, research on gender has crosscut that on sexuality, generating numerous studies on homosexuality. In this case, the presence of these “bodies” within public space is still limited due to forced invisibility<sup>6</sup>. However, the occupation of numerous virtual spaces and the rising number of research conducted shows the desire of vindication by other than heterosexual identities and the will to react to imposed heteronormativity. It also proves the diffusion of queer theories - which are contested and considered radical also by a certain kind of feminism - in contexts which are prejudiced to be closed and refractory to change. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon queer theories have influenced not only scientific research, bringing attention to unexplored themes, some of which considered taboos until recently; but also the militant context. What may be considered more interesting still, is to see how queer theories in the Mediterranean context (in particular in Spain) have been particularly conjugated, generating cultural phenomena such as post-porn. In this new and most extreme attire, the passage from a gender approach to a queer one is, for many, shocking, revealing through the use of the body in the public sphere the contradictions of heteronormativity and the dichotomies (woman/man, hetero/homo, etc..) which determine the heteronormative order.

### **Gender issues in the Maghreb: from associative experiences to political activism.**

Although we have all witnessed, from the 90s onwards, an acceleration in studies and research on women’s status in Maghreb countries, only since 2000 have theoretical reflections gone hand in hand with political activism for equal rights and access to the public space.

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by/within it, as a result of research methodologies which correspond and reflect men’s experiences more than that of women”.

4 Let us recall the numerous studies on Arab feminism and its relation with first wave and second wave Western feminism. One may refer, for example, to Sorbera 2006, 2007; Salih 2006, 2008; Pepicelli 2010.

5 The results of this research in particular were collected using ethnographic methodology. Thanks to participant observation, we followed associations and groups. We have visited Hassilabiad several times between 2000 and October 2011. We have moreover carried out semi-directive interviews to privileged witnesses and attended on-line forums.

6 In many countries homosexuality is a crime punishable with fines and imprisonment.

In Paola Gandolfi's study (2005) on Moroccan civil society she affirms that the latter has played an active role at the forefront of the process of change, thanks to the capacity of getting organized in associations. These have indeed undertaken an important role, as they are considered to reflect the transformations that are taking place in Morocco and in the Maghreb, and a process of change which does not originate in cultural élites but "from the bottom". Many of the circa forty thousand associations registered in Morocco, for example, concentrate their activities on the improvement of women's conditions, with particular attention to rural contexts and the analysis of gender relations within these. Public politics have further contributed to women's entry in local associations on a managerial level. Yasmine Berriano (2011) highlights the different strategies that women managers have had to adopt to keep their positions. At the same time she underlines how their affirmation indicates a clear breaking point with the role distribution between men and women which in the past has made local associations a predominantly male field.

Hence, civil society's associations have enabled the advancement of claims and projects for the improvement of conditions of the female population and for their access to power. On the other hand, universities have favoured the diffusion of gender research on a transnational level. A significant example of this may be given by "GREGAM Groupe de recherche sur le genre au Maroc". Created in December 2006, this group connected to the Centre marocain de sciences sociales (CM2S - Université Hassan II Ain Chock, Casablanca) and to the Group of young researchers in social sciences and development. This is composed of young researchers (especially young PhD professionals) working on themes and problems regarding gender and/or women in Morocco. The principal goals concentrate on the "promotion of research on "gender" themes and /or women in Morocco, enhancement of "gender" themes amongst young Moroccan researchers, diffusion of young researchers' works, and the organization of seminars and study days. Moreover, they welcome professors and active role players in order to develop a wider and inclusive network. The creation of a blog has enabled the exchange of ideas and information but above all an opening towards realities external to those of the academic world. This opening up and the production of knowledge not destined for the academic sphere but aimed to have a strong social impact, was also one of the reasons which pushed Fatima Sadiqi, one of the most famous researchers on gender issues in Maghreb, to give life to ISIS<sup>7</sup>. The ISIS Centre for Women and Development has three main goals: enhancing women's and gender issues, bridging the gap between the University and civil society, and sharing in global synergy. ISIS was initially founded on July 4, 2006 in Fez by a group of University researchers and feminist leaders. The ISIS Centre aims at enhancing research and studies on gender, women, and development through the organisation of national and international conferences, the reinforcement of academic and cultural relations with national, Arab and Western academic institutions, the creation of a gender, women, and development studies library, the creation of a multilingual gender, women, and development studies journal, the promotion of comparative studies, the promotion of intercultural dialogue inside and outside Morocco, the promotion of Moroccan women's presence in scientific research.

ISIS furthermore organised the fifth edition of the International Forum "Mediterranean Women" on the theme "Women and the New Media in the Mediterranean Region" on June 24th, 25th and 26th 2011. Its target was to discuss and ponder the impact of new media on women, with particular reference to the Mediterranean context: "With the growing dominance of the Internet, blog, chat and mobile telephony, the great 'big bang' of the new media has begun, and consequently, communication is rapidly changing and becoming mobile, interactive, personalised and multi-channel. This extraordinary revolution is affecting the basic structure of Mediterranean societies, especially those in the south, and

is raising discussions and debates that are profoundly related to women: the rapid transformation of the boundaries between the public and the private spaces, the relationship between the new media and women's activism, the relationship between new technology and women's oral literature, changes in the relationship between written and oral languages, the (problematic) increase in the use of mother tongues (mainly oral) in the field of education, and the challenges of new transmissions of women's versatile knowledge"<sup>8</sup>.

In this case too, the primary goal of having an impact on an underprivileged population was further demonstrated through the follow-up workshop whose target was to train 20 women from Fez in the use of technology, especially internet, as an empowering tool.

The birth of new networks and the strengthening of existing ones was also the goal pursued by the research group on gender issues of Tizi Ouzou University in Algeria. "Genre, résistance et négociation" was the title of a conference organized in November 2010 in order to overturn the perspective from which the female condition is perceived<sup>9</sup>. Leaving behind the concept of victimization to highlight strategies of resistance in both the public and the private sphere, one can begin by remembering the stories of those women who fought for independence "This means, in an incontestable way, that women in battle, which started during the Algerian revolution - let us recall the massive participation of the first women moudjahidates - has continued until our day transforming itself, with constant efforts, into a struggle for women's emancipation and for the need of their presence within Algerian society"<sup>10</sup>.

### **An example of feminine activism in Morocco: the case of Hassilabiad association**

*L'Association Hassilabiad pour l'environnement, le développement et la coopération* (AHT) was established in 1998 in the village of Hassilabiad, which stands at the foot of the Erg Chebbi dunes (Tafilalet).

The basis of AHT's work is promotion of inhabitants' literacy and professional training, through the creation of animation centres, organizing awareness campaigns on health problems, family planning, environmental issues, civil and human rights and associative life development.

Women played a primary role in the Association's integration into Hassilabiad's community. The literacy courses, indeed, resulted in a first approach towards the Association by the feminine population, who took on the role of spreading the word about its activities within the village families. These women fiercely resisted the initial criticism made by the men and elders, driven by their will to learn to read and write and to acquire professional skills. The presence of a woman director of the Association and member of the executive board moreover favoured their approach and dialogue, further encouraged by the opening of a nursery for pre-school children (Borghi and El Amraoui 2005).

The literacy courses were amongst the first projects undertaken in Hassilabiad, as it was necessary, prior to any other intervention, to reduce the difference of education level between men and women. The response was positive and many women started visiting the Association's centre regularly. In the course of the interviews we conducted from 2003 to 2006, most of the women declared having immediately understood the importance of education. Precisely this aspect drove them to spread information regarding the course amongst the women of their families and to try to involve them, although this meant taking an important stand against many village men's disapproval. Married women were often put in a difficult position by their husbands, who were not used to imagine their own wives outside household space. Husbands justified their stance with the pretext that the women

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8 Excerpt from call for papers.

9 Please refer to the conference's official web-site <http://conferencegender.e-monsite.com//>

10 Excerpt from call for papers.

were too old to go to school. They were further afraid they would no longer carry out the tasks of bringing up children and taking care of housework. However, the weight of "tradition" and rigid social norms did not discourage the women who started organizing their time along with the other women involved in the Association. On the other hand, most teenagers declared they did not experience any kind of resistance on their family's side, where, on the contrary, they were encouraged. For other women still, the obstacle was not represented by their own family but by certain individuals in the community. Fear of being socially punished is still today an obstacle to change, both in rural and urban settings. Behavioural norms enable society to maintain its internal order, ruled by norms and behaviours determined by the *hchouma*, a kind of inhibition, self-control mechanism, which forces certain behaviours and forbids others vis-a-vis members of the family and of the community (Harrami 1998; Ait Hamza 1995). In the case of Hassilabiad community this did not represent an insurmountable obstacle since the Association received a kind of general approval and consensus from nearly the whole community.

Thanks to their ever-increasing attendance, women became the primary interlocutors of the Association, since they spread the news and awareness to other women who were still far from the Association's reality. The latter, indeed, ended up being excluded from a new kind of socialization connected with the attendance to courses. These became hence the factor at the basis of an inclusion/exclusion mechanism within the dominant group of women. They defined themselves either participants or not of the Association's activities. The common goal of finding time for course attendance drove them to organize their days together, dividing them between traditional tasks and new activities. Some of them, especially the older ones, declared they often met to study so as to receive help by the cleverest. They often met at the village mosque where they opened text books and studied lessons after prayer. This behaviour encouraged other women to participate in the courses driven by the desire to belong to the group. Moreover, the creation of a nursery school for children made things easier and favoured course enrolment. According to Ait Hamza (1995: 163) in societies which live in oases: "The woman always take on the essential part of the group's socialization work. She holds society's memory, she keeps its history and takes on herself the task of handing it down from generation to generation. Women are those who pass on social culture. They ensure small children's education. In this traditional setting, until the age of 4-5 years, a child only receives education from his/her mother. There is no nursery school, no child care. Women are the only transmission belt of social order and the only protectors of this order."

Considering this, one will not be surprised by the fact that the introduction of an aggregative, learning and amusement space for children in a setting such as that of Hassilabiad, represented a small revolution on a social and cultural level and eased mothers in their housework. At the same time the nursery school's courtyard became a meeting place for other children and this contributed towards giving centrality to the Association's centre within the village.

Literacy courses were not the only success of AHT; the institution of sewing and embroidery courses definitively confirmed the success of the venture and brought general consensus to a high level. Indeed the Moroccan government funded a project which provided sewing machines for the village women. In this way an activity which was traditionally done within the home on an individual level, became a collective activity exercised in a common place. The production of handicraft for retail sale increased. Women could hence actively contribute towards family budgets which aspect favoured an increase in self-esteem as well as of consideration in the eyes of men. Displaying those objects in a showroom on the premises then eliminated the need for the men to mediate in the selling process, since every woman brought her own work to the Association and collected any profits directly.

The women's "awakening" caused by the Association's activities, brought them to consider public health issues and made them aware in this regard.

Another important change in traditional structures which happened in the wake of the Association's establishment, was that regarding the village's General Assembly. This was a spatial transformation closely related to social change. The General Assembly brings together within a public space, the mosque, the representatives of every tribe from which the village families come from. For the most part it is composed of older men.

Today these meetings take place in the Association's centre and also involve women. Maintaining of course a rigid spatial division, women are allowed to participate in the Assembly which enables them to listen to men's decision taking and to have their own personal ideas on these facts, without the male representative's traditional mediation. This shows how the Association contributes towards the evolution, though in a slow way, of the traditional concept of public space, considered exclusively for men, and private space, an exclusively female prerogative.

### **From a gender approach to queer theories**

In spite of the diffusion within social sciences of gay and lesbian studies at first, and queer theories since the nineties, studies on homosexuality and on sexual relations between un-normed subjects did not, in most cases, take the Maghreb into consideration. Even the most interesting texts on geography of sexuality produced in the Anglo-Saxon world have always studied American, continental European or Asiatic cases (e.g. Binnie 2004). However in recent years, there has been an increase in academic research (e.g. Pratt 2007; Rebucini 2011) which accompanied the education and affirmation of many LGBTIQ associations. Although, LGBTIQ and queer studies originate in Anglo-Saxon countries<sup>11</sup>, in Europe<sup>12</sup> and the Mediterranean these have given birth to interesting kinds of activism and artistic experimentation.

Research attempts to explore daily practices LGBTIQ people enact in Muslim societies, describing complex negotiations and getting around religious, moral and legal prohibitions (Bergeaud-Blackler 2010; Beaumont 2010). The conference "Les sexualités de "transgression" dans le monde islamique. Nouvelles questions, nouvelles approches" (Transgressive sexualities in the Islamic world. New questions, new approaches), organized in Paris by EHESS (31st May 2010) demonstrated how the meaning, the role and the place of sexuality, generally speaking, and of "transgressive" sexuality particularly, are always in movement, in Islamic societies. These situations, therefore, undermine a monolithic vision which often leans on an ahistorical approach of Islamic societies.

The vitality of associations has further allowed life experiences and strategies to come to light. These associations principally occupy virtual space, since in nearly all "southern shore" countries homosexuality is still a crime. However, the rising number of these, as well as the increase in their registered members demonstrates a growing desire for visibility and for the claim to "other" identities. An emblematic case is that of Mithly ([www.mithly.net](http://www.mithly.net)), the first Arab monthly review dedicated to homosexuality, in internet download for the gay, lesbian bisexual and transgender community from Morocco and the

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11 Let us recall we owe the use of the term queer to Teresa de Lauretis (1991) who used it at a conference held at Santa Cruz University, California, in February 1990. Queer theory has born the merit of questioning sexual labels, highlighting the multiple and creative declinations of desire and its objects. The term refers to the "strange" phenomenology and all its meanings (eccentric, ambiguous, unclear, deviant) until it takes on a negative connotation (faggot, pansy) handed down from normative heterosexual language. Criticism of the asserted universality and naturalness of the hegemonic heterosexual paradigm has taken back the term to rehabilitate it, giving it a positive connotation (Dimen and Goldner 2006). Queer theoreticians aim to exercise a subversive action within that preconcerted order that oppresses other voices and identities and to play with codes and symbols of heterosexuality (Borghi and Rondinone 2009).

12 The first European conference on Geography of sexuality was held this year in Brussels (8th-10th September 2011)

Arab world. The Arab web-site published its first magazine in April 2010. The word *mithly* is a play on words: in Arab it means both “gay” and “like me”. The idea of a review written in Arabic that deals with homosexual cultural reality in Morocco came from Samir Bargashi, coordinator of Kif Kif<sup>13</sup>, the country’s first association for gay’s rights advocacy established in 2004. Despite harsh reactions from conservative environments, the review succeeded in creating a debate and in helping homosexual people to “no longer live in fear”<sup>14</sup>.

In Europe, especially in continental Europe, activism for LGBTIQ individuals focuses on the issue of access to rights, with relevant differences from country to country and different positions within the movements<sup>15</sup>. However, queer thought, often accused of being too theoretical, has also succeeded in contaminating practices, giving birth to forms of transgression to dominant norms which have found an effective vehicle in art. Regarding this Marco Pustianaz (s.d., p.5) asserts “Queer theorizations do not only promote desire (researches and studies) of stories and narratives where identity implications are always various and unreconciled, but are one aspect of a wider and more creative production of works: artistic (performance, cinema, theatre, etc.), activist and interventionist (direct action groups such as ACT-UP). The boundaries between these interventions -theoretical, activist, artistic - are ephemeral, impure.” A significant example of this is given by post-porn, a movement which in Europe (and especially in Spain) has developed from the work of Beatriz Preciado and Virginie Despentes, whose books are considered manifestos of a new feminism.

In post porn art, the centre of attention is the body in its most extreme and carnal sense, as a living and conscious fighting individual. Since the seventies, says performer Savoca, “so-called “canonical” arts undergo a definite change of direction, coming to a privileged and disturbing conquered land: the body. Extreme art takes shape: the appearance of flesh and its “violation” is an epochal event, an Epiphany, a territory where tensions and perversions which silently “crept” in earlier times explode” (Kyrham and Kaiser 2011).

The post-porn movement took off with Annie Sprinkle. A “post porn modernist”, her performances demystified the female body and took distance from a pornography which does not represent feminine sexuality. Freedom from this “trash sex”, Sprinkle says, enables one to start an eclectic exploration of the extreme limits of sexuality (Juno and Vale 1997, p.45). Post porn therefore sets its goal to “subvert and give voice to the imagery of all excluded, marginalized, humiliated individuals by male pornography which follows market requests and the binary gender division” (Kyrham and Kaiser 2011).

Marìa Llopis defines post porn “A political movement and as far as I’m concerned the visual conclusion, through images, performances, in the shape of written work or any other format, of the past years’ feminist and queer fights and of the radical political fight developed around body, gender, the construction of a new concept of sexuality. It would like to build a different language, sometimes a metaporn language; it is pornography but not as we classically understand it; it may take various shapes: performance, atelier, blog, artistic projects, videos, short or long films made with photographic film, etc..” (in Gricinella 2009). Post porn has not only subverted the body’s use in pornography, but has further vested it in extreme political value. This way it may be read as a proper concrete representation of *queer theory*, often accused of being “too theoretical” and of finding practical applications with difficulty. The body acquires a central role not only as a study object (subject) but as an instrument to create new spatialities. Un-normed bodies, indeed, hold a potential to subvert norms which regulate the public space, once they are used to

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13 *Kifkif* has produced another “spin-off”, *Menna w fena* web-site, for the lesbian, bisexual, trans women community (<http://www.mennawfena.net/fr/index.php>).

14 Taken from an interview with Bergashi on Tel Quel weekly review in 2009 ([http://www.telquel-online.com/432/interrogatoire\\_432.shtml](http://www.telquel-online.com/432/interrogatoire_432.shtml)).

15 Regarding this topic, please refer to the position of Facciamobreccia collective for Italy (<http://www.facciamobreccia.org/>).

subvert the dominant order. Through performances one may hence create “ruptures”, by interacting with spaces in a new way. As Derrida writes “it is the act of performance which produces its subject, and an act is performative when it succeeds in avoiding an imposed determination and in creating its own rules” (quote from Daniele 1997, p.8). The body and its sexuality leave the private sphere to enter the public one and especially the political one in its own right. Women performers, indeed, use public space to “break through the barriers between what is seen and what is unseen” (Diana Pornoterrorista), to shatter heteronormativity which is intrinsic to public space and to highlight its strongly normed and violently normalizing nature.

In *Oh Caña*, a collective performance which has become a post porn manifesto (Post Op, Quimera Rosa, Mistress Liar, Dj Doroti <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3hcXumYjUs>), the protagonists perform in the covered market place of the Ramblas in Barcelona, giving life to a show which is normally confined within venues and occupied buildings for an “insider” public. An “open” space performance, instead, presumes an ideal public composed of passers-by, that is of people which did not reach that place to see the show but are casually involved. Or maybe should one say “overcome”... The destabilizing effect of a post porn performance, indeed, is connected to an un-normed use of the body. The latter is considered to be a surface for experimentation, a laboratory, a place for sex dislocation and re-location through dildos and prostheses<sup>16</sup>. In *Manifiesto Contra-sexual* (2001), Beatriz Preciado, counterculture queer philosopher, talks about “dildotechtonics” that she defines as “a counter science which studies birth, development and usage of the dildo. It identifies deformations inflicted on the sex/gender system by dildos. [...] Counter-sexuality makes of dildotechtonics the counter-science assigned to pinpoint those resistance technologies in hetero and homosexual cultures that one may call, by extension, dildonical” (p.49).

Such a counterculture, that is self defined as anti-capitalist, postfeminist and subversive, cannot consequently not have the public space for a stage. This way sexuality leaves the private sphere to become an integral part of the public space. Thanks to performers who shatter the man/woman dichotomy by bursting into public space with bodies that do not lend themselves to categorizing labels, heterosexuality stops being the tacit “natural” characteristic of public space. “The impudence and folly of capitalism have determined authority by transforming bodies. The bodies of women, gay, lesbians, trans, bisexual, queer, ill people, madmen, handicapped, anorexics, fat men and women, too beautiful or too ugly people, children, perverts, foreigners, losers, occupied territories which are controlled by a continuous manipulation acting on all levels of perception of reality and existence. Communication turns into a commodity, relations take on attitudes of vigilant mistrust, a contact becomes a target, and life turns into a voided experience. [...] Sexuality itself incarnates the codes of these dead corporeity politics. Starting from the refusal of this mechanism and mediating between our head and our guts, we re-elaborate our bodies and minds with a feeling of crazy love and a daring full of poetry.” (Ideadestoryingmuros, s.d.).

Through “extreme” art, that least famous one which can uneasily find an expression outside a niche and virtual space, it is possible to give a contribute towards the slow process which creates spatial justice; a city will also belong to people like Diana pornoterrorista, who on insistent request by society of defining her/his gender and there from determine the practice enacted in public space, she/he prefers answering with “I love to switch”.

## Final thoughts

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16 Here, one can clearly note the influence of Donna Haraway’s cyborg theory (1995).

What do *post porn* and street protests have in common? The claim to full access to public space, an inclusive public space that would stop exercising such silent violence on individuals outsider to the norm. Both show well how social sciences' research faces new phenomena which imply re-thinking and elaborating old paradigms. Moreover, research faces the most important challenge: succeeding in breaking through the separation between theory and practice, knowledge production and activism. These are indissoluble and draw their own strength and legitimacy one from the other. Activism and the academy still seem though in contradiction. However, commitment for change has once before transformed oxymorons into synonymic expressions.

Spreading and giving visibility to collective action and particularly to that carried out by women, is hence vital. Not only to give further understanding to current events but also to shatter a series of stereotypes which result in a monolithic picture of "mediterranean" individuals, connecting them to a feeling of immobility.

We hope to have reached our target in these few pages in giving an idea of the activism, commitment for change and the vivacity that we have seen and met. We also wanted to demonstrate how all the tensions between different shapes of struggle and different approaches to feminism - that common opinion believes to characterize only the "western" world - are active in the Mediterranean and in particular in what is codified as "South" (that one automatically connects to backwardness and "tradition"). Maybe the only certain thing is that we still need to find new languages and new words to describe the world...

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