

## Editorial

# Emancipation and Politicisation

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Politicisation is a common theme in the articles of this issue, and the concept of emancipation is one its focal concepts. “Emancipation” originated as a Roman practice; the term refers to the single legal acts through which a *pater familias* could free his adult sons, allowing them to make their own economic and marital decisions. Much later the concept was still used partly in this meaning of single legal acts, for example in expressions such as the “emancipation of Jews” and “emancipation of slaves.” However, according to Reinhard Koselleck’s account, the use of “emancipation” went through some decisive changes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One of the most interesting of these was that a new self-reflexive use appeared. It was not only that a person could be “emancipated” by someone who had more power, but “emancipation” also referred to the process that the subjugated people directed to themselves. The “emancipation of women” is a prime example of the use of the concept in this self-reflexive sense. Feminist movements – and later sexual and gender minority movements – strongly involve the idea of self-emancipation through self-transformation. Emancipation in this sense also crucially involves politicizing issues which have not been seen as being political before.

In the first article of the issue, *Dimensions of Emancipation: Rethinking Subjectivity, Domination and Temporality in Feminist Theory*, Susanne Lettow takes up the concept of emancipation itself and its ambivalent history, and uses it as a prism through which to think about contemporary feminist theory. Lettow builds her analysis on Koselleck’s account of the major changes in the use of the concept: the new reflexive understanding of emancipation as self-emancipation, as well as its politicisation and temporalisation, and engages these three dimensions in an interesting analysis of the discussions within contemporary feminist theory, involving scholars such as Amy Allen, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, Nancy Frazer, and Elizabeth Grosz.

Lettow argues that in order to analyze gendered dominations, the current feminist re-engagements with economic issues, and the critique of capitalism, should be supplemented by a re-engagement with work on new conceptual tools. In her discussion on contemporary feminist theory, she identifies a lack of vocabulary in specifically gendered forms of power and domination, and a need for theoretical discussion which would be able to pinpoint and capture the specific forms of power and domination in gender relations. In her view, the lack of such notions in the face of more complexly intertwined and globally differentiated forms of gendered domination poses a serious problem when old notions such as “patriarchy” have not been replaced by more subtle conceptual tools while gender hierarchies persist. Ultimately Lettow’s article calls for politicisation of the under-theorized concept of emancipation understood as self-transformation, and for realizing how its different and contested uses might contribute to the re-politicisation of feminist theory.

A good example of a field where the lack of vocabulary for gendered domination is evident is presented in the article by Karen Green, *Reassessing the Impact of the “Republican Virago,”* which makes reference to the male-centered and homosocial practices evident in the writing of intellectual history and creation of the canon of political thought. Green’s article elaborates on the influence on Catharine Macaulay, a female political philosopher of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and argues that, due to her gender, Macaulay’s thoughts and writings have not been given the place and recognition that they deserve in the general story of history of political thought.

Making use of some letters not available before, Green builds on the recent work of other (female) historians of the Enlightenment regarding this remarkable political thinker in order to elaborate on Macaulay’s considerable influence in the political discussions in the American colonies on their way to the declaration of Independence in the 1770’s. According to Green, Macaulay may also be the earliest source for the exact phrase “equal rights of men,” for which Thomas Paine is often credited in contemporary research. In the world of research and scholarship, the unwritten regulations of gender have ruled and continue to rule in terms of who is noticed, who is cited, who is credited, and who is considered to be a part of the discussion. Green writes that within the accounts of republicanism, contemporary discussions of the origins of Thomas Paine’s thought neglect to mention Macaulay almost entirely.

It is well known that erasure and discrimination in academic contexts does not usually occur through one big omission but through several repeated small episodes of forgetting, which generates a cumulative gender and sexuality bias. We are all familiar with these homosocial practices, and they do not only belong to distant past. The conservative practices of intellectual history writing undoubtedly require further politicisation of gender.

A similar pattern of large amounts of small decisions which add to huge injustices is present in the Tuula Juvonen's article, *Out and Elected: Political Careers of Openly Gay and Lesbian Politicians in Germany and Finland*. Just a short while ago, for a politician coming out as gay or lesbian in any country would have led to a vicious destruction of their reputation. Yet the politicisation of diverse sexualities has quite quickly changed this previously inevitable result of coming out – and Juvonen's article looks at this process in two North European countries that both have multiparty systems. Juvonen argues against the idea of the pivotal role of the gay and lesbian political movement in paving the way for the existence of openly gay and lesbian politicians, and suggests that the story is much more complicated and differs in particular contexts and times.

Interestingly, gender appears to also be crucial in these processes. While Juvonen's study on Germany and Finland shows that in both countries, a politician's known homosexuality has transformed from a devastating problem to a potential benefit, this does not appear to be gender neutral. Since the early 2000's it has become possible for high-ranking gay male politicians even in the more established parties to turn their homosexuality into a political asset, while similar openness has been possible for lesbians only in the smaller and younger parties. In Germany the few out lesbians have had a notably higher likelihood of shorter, unstable or ruined careers than their gay male counterparts, and in Finland there has only ever been one elected out lesbian politician. Juvonen's article concentrates on Germany and Finland; it would be interesting to compare her results with contemporary Britain and Scotland, where some high ranking out lesbian politicians are visible at the moment in the conservative end of the political life (e.g. Ruth Davidson MSP, the Leader of the Scottish Conservative Party; and Justine Greening MP, currently Secretary of State for Education, and also Minister for Women and Equalities). This confirms further the complicated and contingent path of politicisation of sexuality and gender in politics.

The fourth article by Niilo Kauppi, Claudia Wiesner and Kari Palonen, *The Politification and Politicisation of the EU*, politicizes contemporary accounts of "EU politicisation," and simultaneously brings new nuances to the concept of "politicisation". The authors consider what is and could be meant by the phrase "politicisation of the EU". Kauppi, Wiesner and Palonen argue that European integration has always involved a process of politicisation, which is constitutive of EU integration, and analyses this process by introducing new concepts. The writers distinguish distinct senses of politicisation: *politisation* in their use refers to a passive form, a precondition for acts and claims that a political aspect can be found in a phenomenon or situation that was not previously marked as political. Another term they introduce is *politification*, which refers to a depoliticised modality of politicisation. The article builds on Kari

Palonen's well-known understanding of politics as action instead of a sphere. In this framework, "politicisation" refers to rendering something contested or controversial.

Taken together, the articles of this issue point to a renewed awareness of politicizing, which is connected to the self-reflexive use of emancipation as referring to self-transformation and awareness of contingency. The last two articles also reflect upon the political landscape in Europe of the past few decades. The final article argues that EU integration has politicized the idea of a nation state as a natural unit of politics. Since finalising this issue of *Redescriptions*, the British Brexit vote has already introduced another step towards an unknown direction, and it remains to be seen whether this has anything to do with either politicisation or emancipation in Europe.