EDITORIAL

The call for papers of this number of LES Online has invited researchers and activists to submit papers on the topic “Activism and Academia: Intersections, Conflicts and Potentialities”. The motivations for the launching of this challenge are related to the importance of promoting academic research on lesbian sexual orientation, as well as to the need of promoting the linkage between activism and academic research on that topic.

For the first time, all the papers of a number of LES Online are from Portuguese authors. A probable explanation to this fact is the special importance of the present topic to Portugal, given that sexual orientation issues are almost completely absent of academic curricula and research projects. Based on a set of interviews with activists and academic researchers, Ferreira and Silva (2010) refer that, despite of the increasing interest of graduates and postgraduates students in addressing sexuality, and specifically sexual orientation, on their research, the Portuguese academia is characterised by a pervasive resistance and unwillingness to invest on research related to sexual orientation issues.

Another possible justification for the Portuguese tone of this number is that most of the Portuguese academic researchers that are working on sexual orientation issues are also in some way related with Feminist or LGBT activism (Ferreira and Silva, 2010). Furthermore, in recent years, some of the Portuguese LGBT activists are entering or re-entering university for graduate or postgraduate studies and doing research on sexual orientation issues, in diverse scientific areas such as sociology, psychology, geography and anthropology (Ferreira and Silva, 2010).

The paper “Activism in the «Academia Without Walls»: The (Im)Possibilities of Political Intervention in Performative and Precarious Times” of Maria do Mar Pereira presents an analysis of the recent transformations of working conditions in academia and of the consequent impacts of those transformations on the articulation of activism and academic work, and specifically on the obstacles for social and political intervention outside the academia.

“Sex and Dissident Citizenship: «…Where All Colors Mix…»” is the title of the paper written by Hugo Monteiro. The topic of this paper is situated in the intersection of two topics: the one of the present number of LES Online and the one of the previous number (“Lesbianism and Education”). Centred on the “critical potentiality held by the expression «sexual citizenship»”, this paper explores «the lesbian silencing on citizenship ideals» in the contexts of academy and activism, queering gender and identities.

The paper of Cristina Santos, “At the crossroads: thoughts on activism, sociology and LGBTQ studies”, is based on the personal experience of the author, arguing that there is a need of merging activism and academic research to support and make possible a more socially relevant and more ethically responsible research.
The subsequent paper, “Social Commitment to LGBT cause: activism and academia”, is another personal and professional statement that argues for the need of linking activism and academy. This paper includes reflections based on the participation of Liliana Rodrigues on the first Portuguese research project that is focused on the topic “lesbian sexual orientation” and supported by the Portuguese Science and Technology Foundation.

In the paper “Lesbianisms and Feminisms: Encounters, Divergences, and Links between Activism and Academia”, Manuela Tavares offers a different approach of the topic “Activism and academia”: she emphasizes that the encounters and divergences of lesbianisms and feminisms began in the context of activism and highlights that the origin of the academic research on those areas was situated in that context. This paper (re)visits the theme of the first number of LES Online: the links between lesbianism and feminism, and the need for autonomy of lesbian issues in the LGBT context.

Maria João Silva and Eduarda Ferreira are the authors of “Activism and Academy: Multiple Visibilities”, the last paper of this number. This paper reflects on the (in)visibilities of LGBT issues and identities in Portuguese academia, aiming at improving the inclusiveness of the activist and academic approaches to lesbian sexual orientation.

The present number of LES Online is a contribution to the understanding of the intersections, conflicts and potentialities of academia and LGBT activism, with a special focus on Portugal. We hope that the diverse approaches on this issue inspire further reflections and debates on this topic.

REFERENCES: