Evidence Bite - Sticky feeling politics: affective feminist resilience to anti-gender politics in the Spanish Parliament

This article by CCINDLE partners Silvia Díaz Fernández, Paloma Caravantes, and Emanuela Lombardo considers the role of emotions (or 'affect') in shaping anti-gender politics and feminist responses in the Spanish National Parliament. Anti-gender politics frequently relies on affective dynamics such as anger, fear, and hostility to mobilise support and animate its challenges to feminist or LGBTQIA+ agendas. The article examines how feminist actors in the Spanish Parliament respond, showing that resistance is not only strategic and institutional but also deeply emotional and subjectively experienced. This evidence bite offers a concise summary of its conclusions.

The **key observations** of the article include that:

1. Anti-gender politics operates through affective dynamics

The study shows that parliamentary debates are shaped by 'sticky' emotions, i.e. feelings that become unevenly attached to particular ideas, groups, or bodies (like feminists, migrants, or LGBTQIA+ groups). These emotions may intensify polarisation, frame feminist actors as threatening or illegitimate, and ultimately create a hostile environment for equality politics. Anti-gender actors weaponise these sentiments to influence debates and public perception.

2. Feminist resilience is also emotional and collective

Feminist MPs do not react with facts or policy arguments alone, they marshal their own affective methods of resistance. These range from indignation and the calling out of injustice, and humour to defuse hostility or highlight contradictions, to rage that communicates moral clarity and urgency. These emotional responses help to sustain solidarity and political commitment in an unwelcoming institutional context.

3. The notion of 'sticky feeling politics' explains how power and resistance intersect

The authors introduce the concept of 'sticky feeling politics' as a model for how emotions circulate and adhere to political actors and issues, how power operates through these emotional attachments, and the ways in which feminist actors can rework and redirect emotions to resist exclusion. They emphasise that political struggle is not just about ideas or policies, but also about how people feel and how those feelings are channelled.

The **key takeaway messages** of the article include that:

- **Emotions are central to politics:** Political debates are not shaped by arguments alone, but by the feelings that influence how issues and actors are perceived.

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- **Feminist resistance is both rational and emotional:** Effective responses combine evidence with affect, with humour, anger, and kindness playing their parts.
- **Hostile environments require collective resilience:** Shared emotional strategies help feminist actors to endure and challenge exclusionary politics.

The study shows that anti-gender politics does not operate through institutions and discourses alone, but through emotional dynamics that shape what feels legitimate, threatening, or acceptable in democratic spaces. Feminist resilience, in turn, depends on the ability to mobilise and transform these emotions collectively; sustaining solidarity and resistance in difficult environments. Understanding these sticky emotional processes is essential for developing more effective strategies to defend inclusive democracy and counter exclusionary politics. You can read the article in full here.

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