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# Gender, Diversity and Trans-national Citizenship

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## Introduction

The paper addresses the intersections between diversity and gender equality from a citizenship frame. It discusses two related challenges: One is to combine visions of gender equality with respect for cultural diversity. This issue is addressed in political and gender theory (Okin, 1999; Eisenberg et. al. 2005). The other is to combine universalism with diversity/particularism. This issue is addressed in comparative research for example on gender and citizenship (Lister et al 2007)..

Globalization, increased migration and multiculturalism represent a major theoretical and political challenge to gender equality because of the increased diversity in and between the national, trans-national and global arenas. Many of the classical concepts in social and political theory, like democracy, citizenship, the welfare state, feminism have been tied to the nation state and even some of the new concepts like intersectionality. Feminist research in the new century therefore needs to go beyond what has been called methodological nationalism and understand how gender and diversity at the national level is linked to globalization– not only from a political perspective as international feminist – but also on a conceptual level.

There is an increasing feminist awareness of diversity and about the intersections of gender and other kinds of diversities attached for example to ethnicity/race, sexuality and class. Feminist scholarship has recently started to debate the intersections of globalisation, multiculturalism and gender equality (Lister 2007). Feminist scholars have been divided in their perceptions of what is the meaning of multiculturalism and diversity and what are the consequences for feminism, gender equality and women's rights. The main point in this paper is that in order to understand the intersections of gender and diversity we need to overcome the dominant methodological nationalism and conceptualize trans-nationalism – for example trans-national democracy, citizenship, agency and feminisms.

The trans-national concept refers to the intersections between the local, national and the global arenas. Citizenship is about rights and obligations, identities and practices, and it must be understood both as a contextual concept and as a lived experience (see Lister 2007). At the national level citizenship is divided in two dimensions, an external dimension that refers to rules about access to the country for so called aliens and an internal dimension that refers to

inclusion/integration of the people living legally in the country. Citizenship is multilayered and the spaces of citizenship stretch from the domestic sphere through the national and European level to the global. Trans-nationalist citizenship refers to rules beyond the boundaries of the nation state, for example in the EU, and the trans-national space is the space beyond the limits of the nation state. Trans-nationalism challenges established research paradigms connected to the nation states and arguably the challenge for trans-national feminism is to focus on women's social and political agency in a globalizing context

In the following I first look at feminist debates about multiculturalism. Secondly I look at the intersections of gender and diversity in the Nordic countries. The conclusion returns to the multilevel and trans-national conceptualisations of citizenship. It reflects on models to overcome the tensions in social justice between universal equality and the particularism of places and spaces and between gender equality and cultural recognition.

### **Feminist debates about multiculturalism and globalisation**

Multiculturalism is contested and one question is whether multiculturalism and increased cultural diversity among women represent a threat or a challenge to gender equality <sup>1</sup>(see Siim 2003, 2006; 2007) One of the central themes in international feminist research has been the dilemma in women's struggles for equal citizenship between claims for equal rights and claims based upon gender difference Feminist theory has addressed the linkage between the democratic struggles of women and ethnic minority groups. Many theories were premise on beliefs in women's common interest 'as women' and to some extent also among women and other marginalised social groups. Political theory has analysed the inclusion of women and marginalised social groups in democracy and has conceptualised women's agency. For example the work of two influential scholars Iris Marion Young and Anne Phillips, who have conceptualised a 'politics of difference' (Young 1990, 2000) and the 'politics of presence' (Phillips 1995) and have both introduced strategies to include women in democracy based upon an alliance between women and marginalised groups.

This alliance between women and ethnic minority groups in their struggles for equal citizenship, democracy and justice was challenged by the American political scientist Susan Moller Okin. In a provocative essay titled: "Is multiculturalism bad for women?," originally printed in the

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<sup>1</sup> The main points about the relation between multiculturalism and feminism have been developed more extensively in a number of articles, see for example Siim 2003 and 2006. For a more comparative analysis of the relation see Ruth Lister et. al. 2007, especially chapter three "Gendering citizenship: migration and multiculturalism". For a Nordic perspective on multiculturalism and feminism see Siim 2006 & 2007.

*Boston Review* (1999). Her work has been influential, also in the Nordic countries (see Mørck 2002), and it placed the relationship between multiculturalism and gender equality on the research agenda.

According to Okin, feminism is a paradigm for women's rights based on the claim that men and women are moral equals "that women should not be discriminated against because of their sex that they should be recognized as human beings with a dignity of the same value as men's and that they should have the same possibilities to live a life as rich and freely as men" (Okin, 1999;10). This is contrasted with multiculturalism, which she defines as protection of cultural diversity "the claim that minority cultures or ways of life... should also be respected through special *group* rights or privileges", for example the right to polygamous marriages or guaranteed political representation (Okin, 1999;10).

The claim that there is a contradiction between multiculturalism, defined as protection of the cultural rights of minorities, and women's rights provoked an intense debate in the US and the main contributions were later published in a book under the same title (Cohen, 1999). Okin's article was interpreted as a sharp attack on the multicultural paradigm and group rights from a liberal feminist perspective. The claim was that group rights such as forced marriages are potentially and, in many cases in practice, anti-feminist and harmful for women. First, group rights strengthen men's patriarchal control over women in minority cultures, and second it is the most powerful men who formulate the interests, values and practices of the group.

The debate about Okin's essay (1999) illustrates that the definition of multiculturalism is contested, because it refers both to theories about minority rights and to a pattern characteristic of migration and integration policies, for example the right to teaching in your mother-tongue, as well as to normative positions that emphasise the recognition of cultural diversity. Okin's definition emphasises protection of cultural diversity. This contrasts with her opponents definition of multiculturalism as "the radical idea that people of other cultures, foreign or domestic, are human beings too – moral equals , entitled to equal respect and concern, not to be discounted or treated as a subordinate cast" (Cohen, 1999; 4).

The book gives an overview of dominant positions in the debate about gender and multiculturalism: while Okin's (feminist) position gives priority to gender equality over ethnic equality, the dominant liberal position prioritises ethnic equality over gender (Parekh, 1999; 69-75). Will Kymlicka's approach in many ways represents a third position that intends to combine individual and collective rights, and his concept of a multicultural citizenship (1995) differentiates

between two kinds of group rights, external protections and internal restrictions. This position defends collective rights that protect minorities against the majority through external restrictions, for example language rights, and is against collective rights that impose 'internal' restrictions of individual rights/autonomy within the group (1999; 31-34). I agree with Kymlicka's claim that feminism and multiculturalism are potential allies in a struggle for a more inclusive concept of justice based upon a combination of individual and collective rights that takes account of both gender-based and ethnic diversity. I find that the relation between gender-based and ethnic diversity as well as between individual and collective rights need to be explored further. Group rights have not been connected solely to minorities. Claims for gender equality include both individual and collective rights, for example affirmative action and gender balance in representation<sup>i</sup>.

Okin's contribution points towards real dilemmas and she was surely right in identifying a tension between multiculturalism and women's rights, but her approach to multiculturalism has been criticised from different perspectives (see Eisenberg 2005). I find Okin's approach to culture, ethnicity and power problematic because it tends to perceive culture as the universal explanation of women's oppression and to treat family and religion mainly as elements in men's patriarchal control over women's reproduction and sexuality. From that perspective women are perceived primarily as 'bearers of culture' and not as 'transformers of culture' and as social and political actors.

From a more social constructivist approach, culture is not universal but an arena for dynamic negotiations not only between the majority and the minorities but also within minorities (Phillips 2005). From a deliberative democratic perspective, women and minorities are social and political actors and I suggest that it is fruitful to explore their struggles for recognition, alongside the meaning of religion and the family, further through historical and cross-national studies (see Hobson 2003).

There is an intense debate in political theory about the relationship between universal rights and cultural particularism and a growing concern framed as "the paradox of multicultural vulnerability" (that vulnerable social groups' needs and interests can be undermined by group rights) (Schacher 2001), especially about ensuring that women and other vulnerable groups have a voice and influence both in minority cultures and in society (see for example Eisenberg et. Al. 2005; Modood et. al.2006). It is emphasised that women in minority cultures need to be respected both as culturally different from the majority in society and to be treated as equals by both the

majority and minority cultures. Okin has in a later article “No simple questions – no simple answers” (2005) emphasised that she is not against collective rights per se, and she has specified and contextualised her position somewhat<sup>ii</sup> The debate illustrates that political and gender theory is getting more sensitive to the contextual nature of conflicts and cultural clashes between religious and family values, including the intersections between gender and ethnicity (see Phillips 2005).

The debate also illustrates that liberal theorists generally give priority to principles of ethnic/racial equality above gender equality. In much feminist literature gender equality takes priority and Anne Phillips has recently noted that gender equality becomes a non-negotiable condition for any practices of multiculturalism (Phillips 2005; 115). She suggests that the key problems for minorities within minorities may be those that arise from the perspective of the political activist rather than those of the constitutional lawyer, or even the deliberative democrat (134). I agree that problems of how to negotiate gender equality with recognition of cultural diversity are democratic problems that should be solved by negotiations. I would emphasise that they arise both from the perspective of the deliberative democrat and the political activist and. I find that one way to advance the debate about feminism and multiculturalism is through comparative research that explores the intersections of gender equality and cultural recognition of ethnic minority women cross-nationally by looking at the intersections between political institutions, agency and identities (Lister et al. 2007).

### **The multicultural challenge to the Nordic gender model**

Globalisation and migration represent new political and theoretical challenges to the Nordic model often perceived to be a model for social equality, democratic citizenship and gender equality (Siim 2007). The increased diversity in the populations and the subsequent marginalisation of migrants and refugees on the labour market, in politics and society represents serious problems for the Nordic citizenship and gender models. The Nordic welfare states are said to belong to the same welfare and gender model (Hernes 1987), but they have different approaches to migration with Sweden being the only country that has officially adopted a multicultural politics (Hedetoft et. al, 2006). In spite of this, research indicate that the key problem in all the Nordic countries is ‘failed integration’ (Brochmann and Hageman 2004).

Arguably the increased cultural diversity among women represents a special challenge to the Nordic gender model, which has since Helga Maria Hernes’ influential book, *The Welfare State and Women Power* (1987) been praised by many feminist scholars for its ‘women-friendly’

potentials (Borchorst & Siim 2002). Hernes defined state feminism as the combination of inclusion 'from below' through political participation and inclusion 'from above' in political institutions, and research confirmed that women's political participation and inclusion in the political elite since the 1970s represents one of the most radical changes in political institutions and political cultures in Nordic democracies (see Bergqvist et. al. 1999).

Critics claim that the Nordic gender equality model needs re-formulation in the new post-national era. Feminist scholars have challenged the normative assumptions behind universal welfare states from the perspective of migrant women (Los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari 2003), and the principle of 'women-friendliness' has been criticized from a post-colonial diversity perspective because it hides diversity among and between women (Mulinari 2006). It is possible to identify a main tension in Nordic feminist research between the more structuralist approaches, for example represented by Yvonne Hirdman's influential concept of the gender system (1990) based upon segregation and hierarchy, and the more institutional approaches, for example represented by Helga Maria Hernes (1987)' and her influential concepts about the Scandinavian welfare states as potential 'women-friendliness' and 'state feminism'. Arguably both frames are based upon a premise about women's common interests 'as women'.

Feminist scholarship has started to analyse whether state feminism has contributed to strengthen the claims for recognition of ethnic minority women and to what extent democratic opportunity structures are open to all women (Siim 2003; 2006; Skjeie 2006). In spite of Danish exceptionalism on migration and family-unification, studies of the lived citizenship of ethnic minority women has identified common problems connected to the Nordic gender equality norm, women's rights and multiculturalism (Bredal, 2005; Siim, 2007). They indicate that there are limits to welfare and illustrate that the women-friendly social policies do not include all women (De los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005).

In a recent investigation of gender equality policies and multiculturalism in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, Trude Langvasbråten (2006) concludes that neither the Swedish, Danish nor Norwegian gender equality policies can legitimately claim to live up to Hernes' vision of 'women-friendly societies', where injustice on the basis of gender would be eliminated without an increase in other forms of inequalities, such as among groups of women (Hernes 1987; 15).

Today there is clearly a need to develop new understandings, frames and concepts to understand the new multicultural reality. I find that it is a gender-political challenge to confront the old frames with the new cultural diversity among women and a theoretical challenge to develop

new frames and concepts in the Nordic welfare states that acknowledges the cultural diversity of women. Migrant women are marginalised on the labour market, in the public arena as well as in relation to democratic politics. New important questions are: who has the power to represent whom and who has the power to define women's interests and the meaning of feminism and gender equality.

The concept of intersectionality is one of the ways to conceptualize the new cultural diversity among women. However, intersectionality is also contested and the concept has many meanings in different theoretical frames (see Christensen & Siim 2007). It was developed in the US and the UK by black feminists as a way to articulate intersections between gender and race/ethnicity, and it has been taken over by poststructuralists and post-colonialists scholars in the Nordic countries. As a consequence scholars focus both on dominant discourses, on individual identities and on social structures, for example on the intersections of racism and capitalism as social systems. I have recently argued that it is important to develop a framework able to bridges between micro-studies focusing on individual identities and macro-studies focusing on social structures (Christensen & Siim 2006). One alternative to the existing dualism are frames that focuses on the institutional meso-level, for example on the interactions of frame analysis and claim analysis (Hobson 2003).

There are examples of feminist that have employed relatively sophisticated frames that include the dynamic relations between structures, institutions and subjectivity (Christensen & Siim, 2006). One example is Beverly Skeggs (1997) who differentiates between three levels of discourses, a) abstract discourses embedded in social institutions like education and the media, b) specific discourses developed in social movements and trade unions and c) concrete discourses often connected with specific experiences of individual women. Another example is Nira Yuval-Davis (2005), who suggests that social differences can be analysed on three different levels that all include material and symbolic meanings: a) an institutional- and organisational level including state institutions and legislation, b) a relational level that concerns power and love relations both on a formal and informal level, c) representative level related to texts, pictures symbols and ideologies

I suggest that Nordic feminist research needs to reflect critically upon the roots of the concept as well as on the tensions connected to the different levels. Intersectionality is a travelling concept that has been taken over by poststructuralists and post-colonialists scholars in the Nordic countries. I find that it would be useful to contextualize the concept from a cross-national perspective because the relation between different categories and forms of inequality are different in



different welfare, citizenship and gender regimes. The implication is feminist scholars should start to reflect upon inter-sectionality from a Nordic context. The intersections between the key categories, for example between gender and ethnicity/race, are different in the Nordic welfare and gender regimes than in the US and the UK. Arguably the US has a strong tradition for recognition of cultural diversity but a relatively weak tradition for equality, whereas the Nordic countries have a strong tradition for equality, including gender equality, and a relatively weak tradition for recognition of cultural diversity

### **Gender justice, diversity and equality – intersections of local, national and global**

In the final section I return to the implications of the multileveled and trans-national conceptualizations of citizenship. I look at how the feminist models overcome tensions in gender justice between diversity and equality and discuss to what extent they conceptualize the trans-national arena. Feminist scholarship has introduced a number of models to overcome the tensions between different principles of justice, for example equality and recognition of diversity and between universalism and the particularism of gender and diversity. One example is Carole Pateman's ideal about a "gender differentiated citizenship" capable of integrating women's and men's differences in public life, e.g. by making care for children a public responsibility (1989). Another more recent example is Ruth Lister's suggestion that the tension between gender equality and post-modern diversity is a creative tension that can be overcome in practice through the notion of "differentiated universalism" (2003; 9).

Arguably gender justice refers to the links between local, national and trans-national demands about cultural recognition and redistribution and representation. The two different principles of justice must be linked within theoretical frames as well as in practical politics. A major issue is to link women's recognition struggles with redistribution of resources from men to women within and between countries. Claims for recognition based upon respect and valuation of group difference, and claims for redistribution based on a fairer and a more equal division of resources are both principles that belong to different frames of justice that are analytically distinct (Fraser 1997). The growing emphasis on claims for recognition and recognition struggles has been interpreted as a paradigmatic shift away from claims for redistribution. In practice there is often a dynamic interplay between the different dimensions and research has illuminated the many ways struggles for recognition and redistribution are often intertwined (Hobson 2003). Nancy Fraser's theoretical frame of social justice intends combines cultural recognition with economic redistribution and she

has recently argued that the principle of equal representation represents a third political dimension of justice (2003)

Citizenship includes equal rights, cultural recognition as well as participation and representation in democratic politics and strategies to link the different dimensions of justice are not universal but contextual. Comparative research has started to analyse how the different citizenship and gender regimes influence the intersections between multiculturalism as the recognition of cultural difference on the one hand and the struggle for gender equality and women's rights on the other hand is influenced.

The Nordic countries represent a special case: They have similar citizenship and gender regimes and in spite of different approaches to migration and integration, they also have similar problems with the social and political marginalisation of ethnic minorities. Feminist studies have started to analyze the new intersections of gender, race and ethnicity and to raise critical questions about who has the power and authority to represent women and define the movements' objectives and strategy. Feminist scholarship has recently identified common tensions and conflicts between the Nordic gender equality policies and respect for cultural diversity. The studies indicate that the strong tradition for gender equality has made it difficult to recognise the cultural diversity of ethnic minority women. As a result neither the Swedish, Danish nor Norwegian gender equality policies can claim to live up to the requirement of the feminist vision for 'women-friendly' societies that should be non-discriminatory and include all women.

There has been a hierarchy of rights and it is contested how to link the different rights in practice. Liberal frames generally have given priority to cultural rights, especially religious, over women's rights and gender equality, while feminist scholars often give priority to gender equality over cultural equality and have tended to make gender equality a non-negotiable condition for multiculturalist practices. A main issue is thus to develop policies and strategies capable of bridging claims for gender equality with claims for cultural diversity. Arguable the universal discourse about gender equality, women's and human rights must be interpreted in the light of cultural diversity and with sensitivity to particular contexts, including the diversity of spaces, places and social groups. It follows that strategies involve democratic negotiations and dialogues between social and political actors with all relevant parties are represented. It is a challenge for feminist research to develop gender theories and strategies sensitive to the intersections of gender and ethnicity premised on both gender equality and ethnic equality and on recognition of cultural diversity and to link struggles at the national and trans-national levels.

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## Notes:

<sup>i</sup> The Nordic countries have generally had a strong tradition for collective gender rights and a weak tradition for collective rights based on ethnicity. One example is the adoption of gender quotas in political parties and another is reserved rights to fathers in Norway and Sweden (see Bergqvist et al. 1999)

<sup>ii</sup> In a recent article Okin (2005) answers her opponents and here she differentiates between patriarchal religious minorities, for example the Catholic Church, and subordinated cultural minorities. She also discusses different solutions about how to handle the contradictions between collective rights and women’s interests in practice from a liberal and democratic approach. She is for example sympathetic towards the deliberative democratic approach that focuses on the need to mediate and negotiate about cultural conflicts in liberal democracies (Okin 2005: 79-85).