

CALL FOR PAPERS – INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 30TH - OCTOBER 2ND, 2009

PLACE : PARIS DIDEROT UNIVERSITY, FRANCE

Genre en mouvement
Conflits, négociations et recompositions

Moving Gender
Conflicts, Negotiations and Redefinitions



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CALL FOR PAPERS

Economic, social and cultural changes have impacted contemporary societies in many ways, thus redefining the role, status and social position of both men and women. In light of such changes, it is important to challenge conventional ways of framing gender relations as well as to rethink and deconstruct the cultural making of both femininities and masculinities.

Though it is clear that gender patterns are undergoing significant changes, arguably, these shifts do not always lead to more equitable gender relationships. Gender asymmetry remains prevalent. Moreover, changes often occur through contradictory processes and thus cannot always be understood as following a linear trajectory.

It is important, therefore, to gain a better understanding about the way status and sexual identity are reshaped without being altered in one way or another. From this perspective, the remaking of social norms can be regarded as a process involving both their redefinition and reinterpretation, without necessarily involving the abandon of such norms.

Women whose behaviour is seen as transgressive may try to readjust or conform to norms. At the same time, men can also feel uncomfortable with normative injunctions regarding their masculinity, even when their position within society is dominant. In other words, social norms and values such as heterosexuality or virility may not oppress only women. On the other hand, the effects of woman-specific practices regarded as subversive or empowering, may be softened through various dissimulation strategies such as keeping secrets or lying. Hence, women may be able to preserve the existing order, all the while carving out a space in which they can operate to lessen aggressive charges directed against them due to the disruption of social norms.

In other words, we propose to challenge the current accepted notion of norms as oppressive and acting in opposition to counter-current practices and representations. Presumably, we often neglect to take into consideration the analysis of norms as practices held by individuals within a larger picture of trajectories and achievements. Moreover, the fact that different sets of norms and references are tangled within inferred acts means that tensions and contradictions between the perception of normalcy and the reality within social realms are more likely to occur.

These tensions may nonetheless develop in an atmosphere of conflict and violence when some practices strenuously undo assigned roles, refusing to conform with normative prescriptions. As a result, negotiation strategies emerge as a means to prevent or resolve these conflicts. Therefore, once obvious, transgressive practices such as violence often occur in order to attempt to reassert the existence of one social order. In addition, many different kinds of violence, constantly in the process of being redefined – social, symbolic, psychological, physical abuse – complicate the qualitative analysis.

The multiple understandings of what constitutes the norm render the individual search for autonomy quite complex. Its continued negotiation is nevertheless a process of ‘individualization within a set of limitations’; the negotiation is conducted under constraint and causes suffering.

Papers focusing on the following topics will be particularly welcomed:

1. Work, productive activity and the labor market

Women's involvement in productive activity was often underestimated when their contribution did not correspond to market criteria or did not conform to socially dominant perceptions of what constitutes 'productive work'. Nowadays, patterns of women's market integration are being diversified through salaried work, informal activities, entrepreneurship and precarious work. They reveal contrasts in a variety of ways. The conditions under which these activities are carried out entail economic and social constraints and disclose strategies of autonomy worth analysing. Also, thanks to their increased labour market activity, women are using new strategies to achieve greater access to resources. From this perspective, it is important to explore the effects of market segmentation and substandard labour conditions on gender roles, especially with respect to labour division and decision-making process.

2. Family, solidarities and inequalities

If family networks continue to act as a buffer against socio-economic uncertainty providing economic support and being the warrant for solidarity and security, they can also bring about inequalities by allowing stigmatizing judgments against individual members. Currently, in a context of rapid change and economic hardship, family ties are being challenged by the strengthening of individual choices that may be incompatible with family norms. In other words, individual choices dictate different trajectories whereby individuals embrace multiple cultural references, thus, revealing strong individual aspirations.

The fact that individual norms are widely subjected to family control does not always mean that they undermine family solidarities. If they threaten to weaken family bonds, they contribute, nonetheless, to the development of new negotiation strategies for the re-establishment of social ties in new forms. In light of these profound changes, the emergence of new strategies of negotiating family norms can give rise to conflicts and even violence, which might be an interesting topic for further research. On the other hand, we can observe the implications of these changes having productive and positive effects on family networks. Here, it is interesting to highlight the changes in family configurations, especially with respect to gender and intergenerational relationships, and identify the processes by which they are redefined.

3. Intimacies and sexualities

Though traditionally thought of as being in the private sphere only, intimacy and sexuality can be important because they allow us to get away from the classically postulated dichotomies of private/public or tradition/modernity. It also enables us to emphasize how the "outside" disruptions affect and impact the domain of intimacy. Therefore, including intimacies and sexualities as one of the symposium's themes is a way to encourage the study of patterns and sources in the learning process that manufacture the terms which we use to speak about sexuality; it would equally allow us to study its effects on intimacies. An additional objective is to highlight how intimacies play with the dualisms that determine it: margins/centers and secrets, lies and discourses, etc.

4. Marginalities and transgressions

The recent resurging interest in the study of the transgression of norms has in general increased the amount of research about feminized social marginalities. This trend reflects a growing concern with questions of women's homelessness, drug addiction, prostitution, aggressive behaviours, and female street gangs. The prevalence of the male criminal offence is worth investigating in order to shed light on aspects inherent in violating social norms in general. From this perspective, analyzing female practices in the context of norms transgression forces us to recognize the importance of analysing the extent to which gender has an impact on the rise of violent practices. Hence, it should be noted that such questions can be raised without necessarily linking violence to socio-economic precariousness. The most relevant question, however, concerns factors that tend to interact in causing violence. It is important thus to highlight the various strategies developed by women to manage conflict and to override its effects. The many insights which might be revealed through the study of male transgressive practices, the way they are perceived and articulated, and their relation to female transgressive practices are an apt portrayal of the experiences within marginal contexts.

5. Social forms and violent spaces

The configuration of space(s) allows for differences between feminine and male practices to emerge. To question the modalities of access to 'space' is to reveal the asymmetry in everyday lives such as the dichotomies of private/public, day/night spaces, accommodation/workspaces, among others. The study of different territorialisation processes in connection with these dichotomies and the observation of socio-spatial practices which underlie them help us address the question: Do they create differences in the nature of violence and conflict? To what degree are the initiation of conflicts and the emergence of violence specific to spaces affected by gender?

6. Spatial mobilities and circulation

To which extent different practices of mobility (circulation, migration, home/workplace mobility) are gender specific? Are transformations in women's mobility practices a means for social change? The case of international migration, among other possible topics, is to be investigated here. Today 50% of international migrants are women. Whether women are followers or independent migrants, part of their migratory project is necessarily individually-driven. The specificity of women's motivations must be investigated by questioning their economic trajectories as well as their social promotion and personal well-being strategies. More broadly, female migration – whether it is independent, forced, economic, political, in pursuit of education, etc. – transforms the positions and the status of both men and women in the private and the public realms. We thus need to investigate female migrants changing statuses and activities, the redefinition of norms and the compensation of absence that are connected to the migratory process, the changing nature and intensity of social ties within the family, the multiplicity of roles and identities that are produced by mobility and as well as its different impacts on sex relations.

7. Citizenship, participation and political mobilisations

In a context of socio-economic change, the variety and multiplicity of modern demands related to democratization, citizenship, rights to the city, environmental rights, and social rights speak to the distressing state of social realities such as unemployment, bad housing and discrimination. Such mobilisation of civil society can be observed in the violence that is felt when new actors emerge and new subjects of study appear as a result of the new modes of mobilisation. From a comparative perspective, will the social changes that accompany new modes of contention produce a gendered influence on the management of conflicts and on the violence that ensues from such management practices?

SUBMISSION

Papers abstracts (in French or in English) should be submitted by **April 26th, 2009** to the following address: femmagh@gmail.com Please include in the same file a short biography mentioning the institution and status of the applicant, a valid electronic address as well as recent publications related to the conference issue.

Final papers will be expected by **September 13th, 2009**.

REGISTRATION FEES

The registration fee is inclusive of all lunches and coffee breaks.

Standard registration fee: 80 €

Postgraduate and unwaged registration fee: 20 €