Guidelines for use of the term "gender" in work with socially vulnerable groups

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The Regional Project of "Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups"

Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has been implementing a regional project on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), ensuring that, on the one hand, state stakeholders be able to provide comprehensive social rights for vulnerable groups and, on the other, that members of vulnerable groups demand exercising of their rights and perceive themselves as equitable members of the society. This could lead to reinforcement of social inclusion, reduction of discrimination and suppression of poverty and other deficiencies in the long run.

The project is being carried out at the regional level (in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*[1], Macedonia and Serbia), at both national and local level, working with different partners and stakeholders. The project goal is to ensure that the key stakeholders improve the conditions for providing equal fundamental social rights for vulnerable groups in selected municipalities.

In the Serbian society, patriarchal values still prevail in all spheres of public and private life. This patriarchal paradigm gave rise to a gender regime with rigid partition between gender roles, gender prejudice and stereotypes that encourage discrimination against women and girls in all spheres of their lives. Patriarchal cultural patterns are particularly strong in certain ethnic minority groups, for instance Roma, who constitute majority returnees to Serbia. A high percentage of early and arranged marriages and early school drop-outs in order to get married and start a family is conspicuous among Roma girls. Also, women are faced with discrimination in access to labour market, well-paid jobs, career promotion, managerial positions and decision-making process, participation in politics and they are exposed to violence within domestic and professional relations, as well as to sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women. This is very prominent especially with women and girl returnees.

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[1] *This name is without prejudice to Kosovo's status, is in accordance with the UN SC Resolution 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

The risk of exposure to discrimination and marginalisation of women is enhanced in cases when gender as base of discrimination is intertwined with other bases of discrimination, such as age, gender, minority affiliation, social status, marital and family status, disability, health status, sexual orientation, etc. In order to adopt programmes and have adequate application on the basis of non-discrimination and gender equality, it is necessary to provide human resources and service providers without gender prejudice and stereotypes, gender-sensitive and aware of the importance of gender equality as a prerequisite for the community's development.

The overall objective of the project is to improve the key stakeholder's capacities to ensure equal social rights of vulnerable groups in selected municipalities within the SoRi Project region. Gender, alone or in combination with other inequality determinants, has a deep impact on interactions between service providers and beneficiaries (potential migrants and returnees). In cooperation with partner organizations, GIZ (SoRi Project) has launched the activities of Drop-In Centre in Belgrade and Obrenovac, followed by the Info centre in Niš, in Southern Serbia, as well as free legal aid providers in eleven Serbian towns. All the said activities are focused on returned and potential migrants. Up to this moment, the needs and gaps in the activities indicate that gender mainstreaming should be done so that the future services provided should be gender-sensitive. The SoRi Project has mapped the context of how gender is shaped through interaction between providers and clients and through the impact of these interactions in three areas: 1) different forms of care for men and women with the same problem; 2) differential forms of care by male and female service providers; 3) gender division in fields of social engagement (both service providers and users); 4) forms of gender-based violence and 5) gender-sensitive service provision. The Project has managed to provide a detailed elaboration on the nature of interactions of service users and thus gender impact on these interactions from the both user and provider prospective, such as:
• Awareness raising and gender sensitisation through basic training and continued development of service providers;
• Gender integration into social programmes aiming at awareness raising and

empowerment of users in their interaction with service providers;
•Gender inclusion into monitoring the quality of provided services; and
• Making sure that service integration does not threaten the relations between users and   providers.

As the final step, gender-specific policies and programme interventions in the system were considered in the context of improving the interpersonal dimension of social services, thus the service quality *ipso facto*.

Introductory notes

Theoretical and political analysis of the sex and gender issues, i.e. gender differences, have marked most of the theoretical discussions in the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, both in terms of theoretical premises for opinions (ethical, ontological, sociological and cultural) and their political implications.

Unlike the Anglo-Saxon feminist and philosophical tradition which uses the term *gender*, feminist theoreticians closer to the continental European tradition, (notably, the contemporary French philosophy) rather employ the term *sexual difference*.

Also, in different languages the notion of gender is designated by various terms: for example, in the English language *gender*, the basic meaning of which is grammatical category. In French, the term gender is translated as *genre* and its meaning indicates the individuality and specificity of one's expression. In German, gender is translated as *Geschlecht*, suggesting impact (on someone or something), for example with deeds or words, or impression with a pen, engraving, etc. This seemingly terminological confusion is not to make our understanding more difficult, on the contrary, but to enrich and expand our understanding of gender identity and difference issues, like any other complication.

The questions related to gender category are always political. In that sense, it is necessary to analyse the ideological, political, social, cultural and, ultimately, discursive context within which these issues are dealt with.

Nowadays it is common to articulate and substantiate gender issues in conservative and non-emancipatory contexts through various mainstreaming policies, reducing them to binary models of gender identity.

In this context we are interested in the type of dealing with gender category that seeks and finds its emancipatory, critical and transformative potential in it.

This, *inter alia*, implies:

- Understanding gender as a category that challenges the society as a whole and the dynamics of power relations

- Gender is a category that refers to all "minority", non-normative and non-dominant social positions
- Gender is a category which has the potential to go beyond the binary model of thinking and understanding sex and gender as opposition model.
- The category of gender recognizes the corporal and material as the key properties in analysing the gender political dynamics
- The category of gender depends on the context and cannot be used in its transformative capacity as a model of general solutions. The concept of gender changes by the way different political groupings use it, thus having a different meaning in, say, *queer* theory, to that in gender mainstreaming.
- The category of gender is understood as a discursive creation at the same time reflecting a discursive order and generating it.
- In order for gender category to keep its transformative potential, it needs to be a critical category challenging every type of normativity.

The historical and theoretical context of the etymology of gender as a notion

The question of sex and gender, as well as sexual difference, constitute one of the key points of conflict between different ethical and political considerations of the 'history of today.'

Although the notion of *gender* is a relatively new theoretical tool, the idea of social and cultural factors that gender refers to is as old as the considerations of this phenomenon. Almost every theoretical orientations starts from the assumption of

gender difference, entailing different ways of getting the members of *one* and *the other* sex capable of thinking and political actions. On the basis of sexual difference understood as biological difference established by mere fact of someone having primary and/or secondary sex features, the complex identity of man/woman is derived, identity assumed to have a universal application, at all times and in all places, for each and everyone individually. On the basis of sexual difference taken as a biological difference, normative conclusions are derived on capabilities to exercise freedom, autonomy, meaningful associations into various forms of community, i.e. to participate in public and political life.

Therefore, it is not only sex that is *natural*, thus inalterable and fixed, but it is also *identity* built on the premises of the given sex. The natural aspect of sexual difference – and the idea of *naturalness* is in manifold sense embedded in various traditions that have shaped the Western thinking – was taken as the foundation of every subsequent consideration of possibilities and boundaries of developing sex identities that rely on it. At the same time, naturalness and, in that sense, necessity and inalterability of sexual difference constitutes an assumption for various evaluations and hierarchical relations between the two sexes. So, hierarchical relations and inalterability of social roles intended for male and female sex are based precisely on the initial premise of the inalterable nature of sexual difference.

Thus, if continuity between biological assumptions of sex and all subsequent (social, cultural, historical and political) positions where identity is developed and perpetuated, it is presumed that almost every aspect of that identity is *natural* and, thus, inalterable. So, even though *gender* as a complex social identity has always been discussed, yet it was no earlier than the twentieth century, primarily owing to the feminists, that gender identity was discussed as something that does not emanate from nature, but as something *socially* conditioned in manifold ways. Among the pioneers was Kate Millet who followed up on Robert Stoller's research. Stoller used the term in 1968, in his academic study of *Sex and Gender*, in order to highlight the formative differences in development of sexuality and sex identity of children which concern cultural and social factors on the one hand, and those traditionally taken, biologically determined identities, on the other.

Thus, gender becomes something with a *historical*, not only natural dimension; something dynamic which, inveigled with universality, still *changed*, though slowly and slightly, thus making way for more radical change; something not predetermined as *nature*, so preceding policies and actions, recognisable as performance of power and means of its self-sustenance.

What should be underlined at any rate is the idea that the notion of gender, taken as social, historical and political construction, leaves room for *change,* for political actions in terms of deconstruction or reconstruction of gender potential, as well as for redirection of power and political action leading to change of the existing gender relations.

Simone de Beauvoir's (1982) maxim, that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" was articulated as early as in 1949, now getting renewed as one of the fundamental impetuses for feminist elaboration of difference between sex and gender. Psychological, historical and anthropological studies of gender appear, *inter alia*, a response to often rigid and one-sided explanations of sex asymmetry offered by the radical and Marxist feminism in the beginning of the second wave of feminist movement.

The invention of gender category in its beginning was supposed to de-essentialise sex and disencumber it from the inherited burden of *naturalness*, but also from the strict framework within which the first feminist theories developed. In words of Joan Scott (1986:1054): "In its latest use, *gender* appeared for the first time among American feminists who wanted to insist on the fundamentally social property of sex-based distinctions. The word denoted renunciation of biological determinism implicit in terms like 'sex' or 'sexual difference'." So, though keeping the link to sex, gender is not necessarily determined by it.

So, the comprehensive definition of *gender*, covering various traditions of feminism, could be as follows: gender is a "set of socially conditioned properties of one sex members, which emerged probably with the first division of labour, survived even having lost its original function as the instrument of sex policy, where, owing to a seeming naturalness, it is renewed in every individual within the process of growing

and upbringing". This entails that gender makes a necessary and integral part of status and social position of every entity.

Differences between the notions of *sex* and *gender* emerged as the need to underline the social, cultural and historical aspect of construction of the sexuality category juxtaposed to natural and biological determinants. What is the actual theoretical relevance, outreach and also possible limitations of differences between the notions of sex and gender – is one of the questions dealt with by some of the most eminent feminist theoreticians.

However, despite the fact that it practically brought about the emergence of specific feminist research field (gender studies), the notion of gender is not non-problematic per se. In her text »Gender«, feminist theoretician Drucilla Cornell (2003) attempts to break down the conceptual history of gender category, with references to first-wave feminism completely in spirit of fight for the right to vote and the ideas of the abolition movement, insisted on equality (in tradition of classical liberalism) which obliterates all differences, even those defined by gender. Contrary to that, the second-wave feminism, having borrowed the idea of gender roles from modern social theory, used the gender category to »create social identity for all women, *identity* that could work as the foundation of feminist analysis and criticism« (Cornell 2003:22, italics added). It could even be asserted that the notion of gender became a theoretical designation for feminist identity policy in the seventies.

The political stake of this concept had a prominent importance for development of feminist theory *and* practice within the second wave of feminism: the idea that *all* women, regardless of the existing differences among them, were subordinated and deprived in the patriarchal system was a call for women to get united in order to change their own condition. The assumption of this call was – differences aside – that all women to a great extent have similar, if not identical reasons to fight the condition imposed upon them. The global sisterhood ideology besides the victimising discourse that underpinned it was undermined precisely by the policy of sameness. Differences were indeed important: many women – lesbians, the so-called Third World women, black women, indigent women, and others – simply

couldn't identify with the seemingly self-descriptive category of »women«. Gender obviously failed to describe the universal condition – if something like that is describable at all – of all women. On the contrary, it provided a normative dimension of white, well-off heterosexual women's experience in the developed part of the world, presenting their own experience as the experience of *all* women. It is with this insight that the third phase of feminist theory begins: the phase where feminism reviews its own potential, the categorial apparatus it operates, exclusions it theoretically and practically generates and various effects of those exclusions.

Thus, gender is in intrinsic relation with a new type of »colonisation« - woman's identity replaced the sexually determined woman's identity prescribed by the patriarchal discourse, but it also imposed another form of homogeneity that does not comply with the living experience of all individual women it pleaded to refer to. Gender-based identity in a certain sense started operating in the same way as the category of sex, accordingly generating the same or similar problems that the notion of sex left as legacy. For, just as it was presumed that anatomy was destiny, i.e. that sex preceded and fully determined the identity of woman (man), now the gender identity of woman is supposed to precede all other identity formations and expressions of difference. »Gender trouble«, to quote Judith Butler (2000), starts when it turns out that »gender does not always get constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts« and that »gender crosses with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities«.

Despite the belief of a number of feminist theoreticians that the category of gender is becoming inadequate and/or conservative, Drucilla Cornell finds it difficult to discard because »this category was developed in the political context of feminism, and as the meaning changed in parallel with feminist challenges of different meanings that gender had assumed in feminist theories, gender itself as a category is inseparable from the way it is used in political movements. The future of gender is, thus, not only a theoretical question (...) and gender as a category can be deepened and reconsidered, just as well as challenged. The future of gender as an analytical category will remain connected to the policy that comprises its use and analytical efficiency. «

On the other hand, Judith Butler believes that the distinction of sex/gender is untenable and what we call sex, as well as what we call anatomy and body can be taken as *materialisation of norm rather than static matter*.

Starting precisely from the criticism of gender as a category in her book *Gender Trouble*, in her next book, *Bodies that Matter* Judith Butler claims that gender is also a socially constructed category and that instability and fluidity of our identities necessarily challenge the question of using gender as a category. More specifically, Butler believes that sexuality represents a form of repeating the imposed norms, a type of performance, i.e. performative effect that we perceive as natural identity.

Within the gender studies the questions of sex and/or gender, as well as of sexual difference, have inherited the extremely difficult and complicated philosophical legacy of questions on the difference *itself*, as one of the oldest questions in the history of philosophy. The argument to corroborate this claim, one of the oldest in the history of philosophy, is certainly the Pythagorean table of categorical oppositions discussed by Aristotle.

When regards the considerations of the notions of gender and sexual difference, many dissents and schools of thought within gender studies have and used to have their source precisely in this legacy of traditional, mainstream philosophy.

Let me name but a few key questions, issues and topics (besides the already mentioned question of difference itself) of consequence within the history of philosophical and political ideas, which necessarily bring the question of gender in connection with that of sexual difference. These are, first and foremost, the questions of subjectivity and subject-object relations, the question of identity logic, of otherness, as well as considerations concerning the binary structure of thinking – dichotomy thinking and opposition status such as in spirit/body, form/matter, reason/senses, interior/exterior, depth/surface, etc. These divisions are certainly not neutral. The main feature of dichotomy thinking, deeply rooted in the Western-European philosophical and political tradition, is in its necessary creation of hierarchies and ranking between the two polarized terms, by way of one term becoming the privileged one and the other one suppressed, subordinated and negatively opposed to the former one.

Gender discursive regimes

The important question imposed within gender studies concerning the status of sexual difference is the following: is sexual difference an ontological difference? Feminist theoretician Elisabeth Gross believes that the viewpoint of ontological neutrality and the claim that sexual difference is ontological necessarily include implications of one in the other. In the history of philosophy the most frequently found viewpoint is that of ontology as sex-neutral and that it (logically) precedes both the sexual and any other difference. In the well-known gesture of neutralisation, i.e. humanisation, we recognise the sly patriarchal culture and male domination which leaves it as such unmarked.

Yet, if ontology was claimed to be sex-neutral, then it must be indicated how sexual difference can be derived from such neutrality, i.e. that a trace of sexual difference must *be pre-existent*, even within postulating neutrality and non-differentiation. If presuming that sexual difference constitutes an ontological foundation, in that case it assumes all the forms we recognize only through subsequent inscription of binary differences (which at the same time take over and re-inscribe the sexual difference in that sense).

In this view, the question of gender and sexual difference implies the question of generating new discourse and knowledge, but also that of different understanding of representative practice forms – outside patriarchal framework, because political consequences are the yardstick of theoretical contribution. The task is no lesser than to remake culture, ask questions of *how* we think as well as to define politics and the political.

There is no gender ontology upon which we can construct politics, because gender ontologies always work within the framework of established political contexts as normative orders, identifying what qualifies as intelligible sex, invoking and consolidating the reproductive restrictions of sexuality, making prescriptive demands through which sexual or gender bodies reach cultural intelligibility. So, ontology is not a foundation but a normative order that insipidly operates chipping into political discourse as its necessary basis, because "I", the subject entering discursive regimes

considering it a matter of choice or free will is actually already inside and always has been: there is no possibility of acting or reality outside discursive practices which give those terms the meanings they have.

The space for action, engagement and political effectiveness taken as such implies changes in the spaces of redesignation of pre-determined normative, binary discursive practices. Therefore, the task is not whether to repeat gender patterns and norms but how to repeat them and, through radical gender proliferation, to dislocate the gender norms which enable only repetition.

Gender hierarchies – the gendered world

From the above presented historical and theoretical overview of the gender category development, the following political strategies are singed out:

A. Strategy of inclusion, based on the principle of equality

The inclusion strategy is most often advocated by liberal feminists; they advocate women's inclusion into the world as it is, into the political where women are excluded from. This strategy normally aspires to impartiality, treats people as autonomous and relates to equality policies. This strategy aspires to gender neutrality. Also, this strategy could be said to be working towards expanding the predominant system of values onto all, irrespective of gender.

B. The strategy of reversion, volte-face, reversibility, based on the principle of difference;

This strategy starts from the assumption of gender difference.

The basic strategy primarily relies on the idea of rearranging the existing policies (feminist, cultural, etc.) in terms of a growing openness towards gender individualities and particularities. Such strategy calls for recognition and acknowledgement of the specific feminine gender identity. In that sense, policies should be reconstructed in such a way as to make way for non-homogeneous gender identities and cultures.

C. Strategy of dislocation, based on the principle of multiplicity

Advocating for a policy of relationship to the other where the code of sexual marks would no longer be discriminating, French philosopher Jacques Derrida wrote: "The relationship would not be a-sexual, far from it, but would be sexual otherwise: *beyond the binary difference that governs the decorum of all codes*, beyond the opposition feminine/masculine, beyond bisexuality as well, beyond homosexuality and heterosexuality which come to the same thing. As I dream of saving the chance that this question offers I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices. I would like to believe in the masses, this indeterminable number of blended voices, this mobile of non-identified sexual marks whose choreography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each "individual," whether he be classified as "man" or as "woman" according to the criteria of usage.»[2]

Therefore, deconstruction of the notions of sex and/or gender challenges the binary structure of sexuality, moreover, it questions the entire Western European culture which, in words of feminist theoretician Luce Irigaray in her book *This Sex Which is Not One*, »seeks to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities.« In that sense, the notion of sex and/or gender actually *makes a difference vis-a-vis any other difference* – biological, social, cultural, political, etc. The question of sexual difference is actually that of thinking *itself*. The Western European model of thinking constructed upon the model of rational thinking is based on binary oppositions and in that sense on the idea of *exclusion*. The basic rule of thinking taken as such is the logic of exclusion – something is or is not (the rule of contradiction). By thinking, we make differences.

The question of gender and sexual difference is inextricably related to the questions of the very nature of our knowledge, as well as of our thinking. According to some contemporary male and female theoreticians, sexual difference is sexual difference is the difference that vertically cuts all other differences, and, in that sense, whatever we discuss, the question of sexual difference is inscribed by default.

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[2] https://www.philosophie.uni-wuppertal.de/fileadmin/philosophie/PDFs_allg/Seminarmaterialien/Klass/DERRIDA__Interview_Choreographies.pdf

Final considerations: identity policies and/or difference policies

Donna Haraway (2002), writing her »Manifesto Cyborg«, provides perhaps the best example of a different, transformative understanding of gender policies and their potential political effects indicating politics as a sphere of opening possibilities for something impossible. She questions the concept of *identity policy* and any establishment of boundaries between different identities (animal–man–machine). Thus, Haraway demonstrates the importance and achievements of endeavours to think heterogeneously and differently, in paradoxes, in aporias, to think contradictory claims simultaneously, to think *not logically,* i.e. to think *the policies of difference*: "Political struggle consists of viewing from both angles at the same time, because both reveal domination and opportunities inconceivable for the other viewpoint. One-sided views bring about illusions more perilous than dual views or multi-headed monsters. Cyborg-unities are monstrous and illegal; in our present political circumstances, we could hardly hope for more powerful myths for resistance and re-coupling. "I like to imagine LAG, the Livermore Action Group, as a kind of cyborg society, dedicated to realistically converting the laboratories that most fiercely embody and spew out the tools Of technological apocalypse, and committed to building a political form that actually manages to hold together witches, engineers, elders, perverts, Christians, mothers, and Leninists long enough to disarm the state".

These words of Donna Haraway bring us to the final thoughts where I shall endeavour to translate the prior theoretical analyses into examination of specific political practices known since the sixties and seventies as *policies of identity* and *policies of difference*. Politics and specific practical and political practices constitute a test for theoretical considerations.

The concept of *identity policies* fitting in with the overall contemporary political context is essentially determined by the problematic nature of the very term *identity*, which causes an array of both theoretical and practical political issues and dilemmas.

The phrase *identity policies* denotes a broad range of political activities and theorising based on common experience of exclusion, marginalisation and injustice towards members of different social groups.

Philosophical discussions of the identity concept advocated by identity policies most often take the course of identity-difference tension, but also of the exclusion problem, attitude to other and different as well as the possibility for solidarity when these two oppositions translate into specific political contexts.

The research in the second half of the twentieth century indicate to a phenomenon of a wide spectrum political movements – the second wave of feminism, African American liberation movements, gay and lesbian movements, etc, which are based on claims of injustice inflicted on certain social groups. These social movements are supported and encouraged by philosophic considerations questioning the nature, origin and future of the discussed identities. Identity policies as organisation models are closely related to the idea that some social groups are vulnerable. That means that someone's identity of, say, woman, or Roma woman, makes someone extremely vulnerable vis-a-vis the dominant models of cultural imperialism, including the production of stereotypes, obliteration or appropriation of a group identity, structural discrimination, violence, exploitation, marginalisation or deprivation. The scope of political movements that can be defined as identity policies is very wide: examples used in political philosophy are primarily those pertinent to the struggle of certain marginalised groups within the Western capitalist democracies, but there are also various other movements that are included worldwide, e.g. nationalist projects using a very similar arguments.

What primarily defines identity policies in this sense is seeking liberation and emancipation of specific groups within a broader social context. Members of those groups demand understanding and reconsideration of their collective identities and their individualities and particularities which, as such, necessarily reconsider and question the predominant, *ipso facto* universal and, as such, oppressive and excluding social characterisations.

What makes identity policies a relevant starting point compared to prior times, the pre-identity forms of recognition and acknowledgment policy, is their demand of recognition and inclusion *precisely on the basis of the properties* previously or still challenged; such a political demand does not pertain to the inclusion into the register of »universal humanity« based on common features, or to recognition and acknowledgment *despite* someone's being different. It is about respect and recognition of someone's identity (in this case, feminine) *precisely* on the basis of what someone is (in this case, a woman).

As one can infer, there is no single and singular, unequivocal way of political struggle representing an example of identity policies; however, certain streams of feminist movement did advocate for identity policies on the basis of belonging to a certain sex/gender, and it is precisely for this that they suffered criticism within the movement itself. Namely, this concept primarily suggests a loose »collection« of political projects within which each specific group or community (in this case, women) seeks to articulate its political demands for recognition given the extremely specific cultural, ideological and political conditions where their rights of individuals or communities have been questioned.

In that sense, the phrase *identity policies* also represents a type of philosophical »collection« of various forms of criticism. Public rhetoric of identity policies turned out to be useful and empowering in terms of efforts to develop subsequently and, in a theoretical sense, to articulate subtler philosophical understanding of what political liberation and emancipation implies and requires.

Whenever political theoreticians participate in discussions related to the importance of identity policies and their theoretical and political implications, they most often tend to agree on identity as a notion indispensable and extremely important for the contemporary political discourse, as well as it being extremely complex and bearing problematic implications in terms of the model of subjectivity, self, political involvement and our potential for solidarity and resistance at the same time. In that sense, due to complexity of the term itself as a way of its political application, at the same time with political philosophers starting to systematically present the principles of identity policies, their deconstruction starts.

One of the key reasons to criticise identity policies is in them relying on the concept of *sameness* in order to confirm political mobilisation of different social groups. This aspect of criticising identity policies is based on the idea that the quest of people similar to us with the purpose of political mobility should be replaced with the search for those who share our values, thus for a model of political *coalitions* as a heterogeneous model of social belonging.

The generally accepted beliefs in what characterises a community primarily imply the sense of being together, i.e. common identity, common goal, common beliefs, etc. What is entailed by this is that those who share common identity share beliefs and practices, and vice versa. Moreover, this sense of being together is often presented in idealistic terms as an »ecstatic sense of unity«, a sense of harmony which may not appear naturally, but marks (and should mark) political communities, such as feminist community, for example. Accordingly, community as political and ethical ideal is often presented as opposite to individualism and liberalism.

The twentieth century feminism has been steadily opposing biological determinism, i.e. the idea that certain biological features necessarily lead to the same social roles and functions, thus to a community.

Yet, within the twentieth century feminism there is a clear demarcation line and dissent when it comes to both theoretical assumptions for considering identity policies based on identity of sex/gender and "feminine" subjectivity and identity, as well as to the possibility of action and feminist politics.

Invoking the similar arguments like Butler, but also many other feminist theoreticians, Shane Phelan points to the fact that a "natural" basis for community does not necessarily guarantee a community. Feminist theoreticians of similar provenance like Phelan consider that it is possible for the natural basis of a community to become a fully fledged community only through social relations that Foster and encourage common awareness, recognition of *others* as ourselves. So, in this case, women do not constitute a full community as long as they don't actively establish a community based on their common identity as women, e.g. a feminist community. In this context, community can be considered as something we deliberately join, and

which is made of voluntary association of individuals, most often created to maintain the non-hegemonic or non-heteronormative identities and life styles.

Still, for a number of feminist theoreticians this concept of community is not free of complications: namely, the problem of such a definition of community is, firstly, the assumption that all women are originally the same, regardless the differences in race, class, religion, age, etc, and, secondly, the fact that a natural characteristic is given primacy over others. So, unity can sooner be constituted by the way choose, we think, we act – that what *we are*.

Also, one of the things that members of (political) organisations often try out is the sense of pressure to opt for an identity and thus suppress any sense of difference that could be treated as potential threat to being together.

At any rate, what seems to be a special problem is also the fact that within most models of understanding community concept, the category of identity is implied and not questioned, on the contrary, it is assumed that identity is an unequivocal category taken as founded either on natural or cultural premises.

One of the ways that post-feminism (third wave of feminism) tries to deal with problems emerging around the modern notion of subjectivity and politics based on the problematic identity concept, irrespective of whether identity is taken as a natural or socially constructed property, is the accent on the opportunities of political alliances and actions based on non-identity and non-identical alliances.

Contemporary feminist theories of post-structuralist orientation criticising the concept of identity policies as such consider these based on a wrong viewpoint that assumes the idea of self-identical subject able to (politically) identify and reaffirmed in the dominant and oppressive order (of self-identicality) which constituted it.

Every attempt to define an identity of community or any other as single necessarily implies exclusions which appear contradictory to the desired totality. Those are precisely the cases when the clean separates from the unclean; the unclean is placed on the side of the other, the external. Naturally, if a single identity of community is or a subject is supposed to remain untouched, then the boundaries

between the self and the other, the inside and outside, are not to be crossed: the identity logic is precisely such as relying firmly on clearly on distinct boundaries.

The main post-structuralist thesis can be expressed simply as identity not being able to precede community, and that the latter is always a larger aspect of self, so that absolute distinction is not logically possible: separate entities do not and may not exist. Community is nothing else but a continued process of challenging every identity, every sameness and identicality, every subjectivity.

Research of international and local policies must take into account the ways various political communities rely on the policies of difference, because the difference between male and female community members, as well as between certain social groups within a political community, is not to be articulated at an abstract level – it appears through determined and contextualized practices and implies real places and real people. In the era of globalization when the versatility of existence of humanity is extremely conspicuous, it is necessary to explore and understand identity as carefully as to be *context*-sensitive, because they seem to be complex, fragmented and hybrid more than ever. Constant migration, mobility, contemporary technologies, etc. demand that we redefine our ideas of community and boundaries. Transnational, transgender, transcultural and, in general, *trans*-communities, are becoming the subject of studies at least as much as specific, contextualised, individual communities and individual beings.