

ON THE BRIDGE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND POLICY MAKING

I cannot invent anything or adopt anything at the policy-level without a better understanding of it... the main idea of gender mainstreaming is that we would like to see the world to change, because the whole world is constructed around and is based upon gender inequality.

MIEKE VERLOO

ORGANISING ACROSS DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES

Gender, race and class, all of them are absolutely integral in helping students both understand the social world in which they will be going to work, but also enabling them to go out and practice in a way that combats sexism and racism and homophobia

CAROL KEDWARD

WOMEN'S STUDIES AS A POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

The Dutch state institutionalises the radicals, and, in this way, it makes them less radical ... but the institutionalisation of Women's Studies is not a smooth process of integration of women's perspective into the academic structure.

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E.M.V. Let me introduce you as one of the most prominent and productive feminist theoreticians in Europe, having a huge

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amount of work done in the domain of Women's Studies both as an individual scholar, and as a leader of many Dutch and European networks and institutions.

I would like to start our discussion with mentioning that The Netherlands is a country where feminism has a high level of institutionalisation, and as I could learn from your article on Women's Studies and politics of difference, the institutionalisation of feminism is a political and epistemological issue. Please do comment on this a little bit, especially on how these two dimensions are interconnected?

R.B. Difficult question, of course ... As you know, I am not Dutch, I am very much of a guest in this country, which is a very privileged one. I am not complaining, but it does make a difference. I do not come from the Dutch political history and I was never a militant feminist of this movement, I have known other European movements, most of the French, and the Italian directly, more than I have ever heard the Dutch. So that is a very important thing because I would have a different reading even of the situation of Dutch women. On the one hand you have a very high degree of institutionalisation of all the emancipation practices and courses like Women's Studies, but, on the other hand, in the Dutch society women have a relatively traditional role in so far as they are both emancipated and basically not very present on the labour market, in the public sphere, in the decision making processes. This is the famous socio-democratic model of emancipation without much real power in society. And insufficient power is a situation without power ... Is a paradoxical situation. And this paradox enfranchises the process of institutionalisation and the shapes that it has taken here.

This is a country of well-fare from way back, with a very benevolent social-democratic state, that has always worked in a sense from the bottom up, so as to listen very carefully to what the streets said, to what the request of the people were and then try to

comply. It is also an exceptionally small, homogenous and extremely wealthy, very well-organised society and that makes this type of democratic participation really possible, in a way that larger, culturally more heterogeneous and economically less developed countries even within Europe simply could not compare with.

The institutionalisation process carries the mark of the structuralist type of state organisation, where listening to the city squares, to the streets, to the citizens is part of what they do, and where the political representation is also a way of building consensus. This is a culture of consensus, where social peace is purchased through a very equitable distribution of income through taxation, is the country where taxation is really the basis of citizenship. One may observe that the legalization of prostitution, of drugs, and so on, both rest and build on tax equality, because this kind of equality is the basis for solving the problems.

So there is a civil society approach towards building consensus, this is a way of taking the aggressive edge out of politics, which is been at the centre of this institutionalisation processes. The Dutch state institutionalises the radicals, and, in this way, it makes them less radical, because by going into the institutions, you end up working for the institutions, renewing them, changing them. I do think that the Dutch university system is incredibly up to date and very aware of its role in today's world. It is fighting very hard to prevent the collapse of the university system and the coming of commercial education, at the same time it shakes up the inertia and some of the protectionism that university professors, academics, have always benefited from, forcing us to be a little bit more socially relevant and more economically competitive. It is a very good system, which tries to strike a balance; it is the famous Dutch compromise.

With these premises in mind, the institutionalisation of Women's Studies takes the form of bringing into government the knowledge produced at the universities (and for that matter every

aspect of the socio-political life); but it also expresses a demand for radical transformations that go with it, the demand of social justice imposed by feminism.

This is a practice located somewhere between standpoint feminism, if you wish, and a postmodernist awareness according to which the rules of the games have to change if you want the women to really make a contribution. You cannot just let the women in; this is a starting point, but you need a lot more to really make a change. You need to elaborate ways to systematize or canonize our knowledge and also communicate or transmit it to different actors, including governments. This strategy would make possible that social policies would go in our way, so to speak.

In our domain there is a lot of bridge making between the academic world, where knowledge is systematized, produced, evaluated, and the world of policy-making. People like Joyce Outshoorn, my colleague in Leiden, has been adviser to governmental institutions for most of her life, giving suggestions of how to make policies better. That is a part of consultative democracy in the northern European socio-democratic model. My impression is that the high level of institutionalisation, of course, means a transformation or a reduction of the level of extremism and radicalism of our youth, so we might be much more realistic and pragmatic then we were when we started our fights in the 1970s.

That is how I could link the production of knowledge to the presence in the institutions. In a sense this kind of knowledge produced within institutions is never the most radical, it is the knowledge that could be heard and on which some consensus could be built for the community. That is always something in the middle of the road, in some ways.

E.M.V. You were also mentioning that Women's Studies is a politics of difference. Let me ask you to comment on what is this politics about, which are its main aims and features?

R.B. I would use very much my own definition. This will not be consensual out of my colleagues in Women's Studies. I do think that this field is about making a difference; I think it is about changing the rules of the game, about questioning the vested interests that make the production of knowledge connected to power games and to power relations. I think it is related to a number of challenges and questioning of the *status quo*. I do not think it is a smooth process of integration of women's perspectives into the academic structure.

The academic structure has been male dominated in the universities from classical Greek times until yesterday, and I mean the presence of women at the high levels of education is still minimal. Moreover, even if empirical women are present, the worldview that we give, the reading of cultural history and the development of sciences we produce, is completely resting on male assumptions as if women had been peripheral to the whole exercise. At best we think in masculine ways, although sometimes we may be physical women. Thinking through our mothers, as Virginia Woolf said, it is still a long way away...

Thinking through your experience as a woman, thinking through the women writers, the women scholars and through the experience of simple nameless women, gives you altogether a different picture about reality. One should ask what happens if he/she starts to think about any people, about social structure, about the contemporary global economy, or about fascism in Europe, or about 1989, and about the unification of Europe, while putting a woman at the centre. That is exactly what we do deliberately do in Women's Studies: we want to look at the world putting a woman at the centre. Why? Because that never happened: she was always on the margins. The Production of Knowledge creates our understanding of the human subject. It is unjust if through the production of knowledge the "human" is implicitly conceptualised as white, male, heterosexual, and European. It is clear that this is

how the traditional knowledge defines „the human“, and everything else is reduced to difference.

So we start from difference, we start from the other... We want to see what reality looks like, if you put a woman as the starting point. Of course, as you know, this is very controversial, because people say „Aha, what do you mean by that... it is so particular, so specific, so relativistic to put your own little point of view at the centre, when the human being is universal...“. Due to the universalistic pretensions, „the human being“ is an inflation of the male ego. People far more important than myself, like Freud, and Nietzsche, have declared this, over a century ago. They said, in a much more eloquent way than I ever could, that feminism joins with modernity in criticizing this fake universalism and saying that there are particular realities, which need to be voiced.

The tragedy of the European university system as a whole, and that includes both East and West, is exactly its attachment to this fake universalism, which comes from the nineteenth century: the Van Humboldt university model, the Germanic model, which upholds the view of the Hegelian global universal intellectual, who is supposed to have the answers for all questions. That is the kind of historical angle, which we absolutely need to cast away in order to move on with a very different definition of what the function of a teacher, of a university professor should be today. A radical reform is needed, in order to shake up these vested interests, which have always constructed the university structure. They defend hidden identities, whether it is masculinity or national identity, national treasure, or national specificity. This is not the scholarship we need in the third millennium. Instead of it we need an open, internationally reoriented, accountable and competitive, dialogical confrontation between different perspectives.

I think that for this reason university needs the impact of feminism, but you can put any other social movement into the scheme, the youth culture, the new technologies, the ecological

movements, the peace movements... If one decides that he/ she wants to take them in, should have to redesign the structures of the university up to a point. The interesting thing about working in the European Union today is that everybody is aware that you need to restructure the university. So we are not longer the radicals, we are in fact the social planners and we are the people with a vision to offer at a time when we know that the university is not functioning. It is the case, in fact, that too many of our graduates are unemployed, we are not competitive enough, most of the research is done in the private sector, from cancer research to the new technologies, and the university cannot compete, we have lost fundamental research, so we are left with the human and social sciences, defending some hypothetical idea of national identity. In this context, we critical thinkers really have a wealth of resources to bring in, but bringing them in requires questioning to a certain extent the structures. I think that the smart institutions of the states, and I am thinking of the social democracies of Northern Europe, use our energy to redefine the university. But what is at stake? It is a different model altogether, and not just integrating a few points of view from a few women.

E.M.V. In your work you define yourself as a sexual difference theorist, what does this mean?

R.B. I want very much to develop the European traditions in feminist research, in feminist studies and they are very and many and very diverse. But there is a tradition throughout Europe of thinking through the body, of taking sexuality seriously, of assuming that emotions and affectivity are part of what is a human being. You may call it a humanism, if you want it, even in the Marxist variation of it, because there is a Marxist humanism as well... that tradition, I think, is incredibly important.

What happened in Europe, because of fascism and of the Second World War, is that there has been a real interruption on this continent in the development of our own traditions. We really were,

quite-rightly, de-nazified after the war, by having fast dosages of American social sciences brought in. Social psychologists and sociologists were brought in as a way of re-training a great deal of our population which have been raised in Fascist salute, "white man's burden", and the role of Europe in the world. There was a real process of complete re-training of our population. If you look at the history of European social sciences in the Cold War period (there are some stories that can be told), gender comes in on that wave. I consider that Europe in the Second World War committed a suicide, in the moral and the scientific sense of the term.

The great critical traditions that we developed in the 18th century came to an abrupt end and it costs us, as well as the victims of fascism, an enormous amount. This is not talked about very often in the West, excepting some few people, like Gunter Grass. In academia it was forbidden to talk about this because of the Cold War, and that is why I salute 1989 as the moment when the Cold War was over and we may go back to a more balanced, critical, historically informed reappraisal. We may think now where we come from as European feminists, because we are having very different roots than the Americans have. And we have to face critically phenomenon like anti-Semitism, fascism and colonialism. But not only these. There are also some very rich resources to think about embodiment, about affectivity, about sexuality, which are not there in the Anglo-American culture.

As a sexual difference theorist, I want to simply say: look, we need to ground these theories in our own traditions. I am not a nationalist, I am absolutely nomadic, but I do believe that we are also part and responsible for silencing the European traditions. It is easy to talk about gender, nobody would question that or they will pretend that they understand what you are doing. If you try, however, to talk about, for example, the construction of Romanian masculinity in a post-communist era and about male sexual violence,

you will see. Just call things by their names and you will see what happens.

I think we need to follow a number of operations, some strategic, some historical, for making the production of feminist knowledge relevant here and now, and we look for the traditions that were interrupted first by fascism, then by the Cold War. We need to re-connect ourselves to our European traditions as sources of the renewal of our own way of establishing social justice between the sexes. There is not only one-way to do it. The Anglo-American model of sex relations is often inadequate for us. We Europeans cannot be assimilated to an American model: we do not work like that, we do not love like that, we do not have families like that, we do not eat like that, our bodies are not like that. This is not essentialism, but the effect of culture.

So there is a dose of resistance to the American model that is absolutely part of what I would consider my way of being like a leftist Western European. My generation was raised neither with Russians, nor with Americans, but in a third way. And that remains a way to do it.

I want to add to this discussion that the dialogue and confrontation with the women of Eastern Europe is fundamental. A dialogue between "West" and "East", a division that proved to be a historical product not a natural divide, is absolutely crucial and I would think it would be a disaster if the Anglo-American paradigms of feminist thinking would be absorbed in the East uncritically as being "The Feminism." There is no such a thing as feminism, there are powerful alternative traditions from the South of Europe to the North, from the very countries that generated Fascism, i.e. Germany, Italy, Spain, along the countries that fought against Fascism, England and so on, and all the East in its own way. So I think that is a need for an enormous amount of collective work to reconstruct a space, which will be neither nor... and it would allow us to be socially relevant and to name the issues for what they are. We need to talk

about masculine power and masculinity, and about the related issues, like national identity and nationalism. So we are on the right track, so to speak, in order to construct alliances that would allow us to break out of this hegemonic talk about sex and gender, which I found very problematic.

E.M.V. Is this effort also about linking the struggle for equality to the affirmation of diversity?

R.B. Yes, this is absolutely crucial and I think that we may definitely borrow a great deal from the American thought, but diversity within Europe is a very complicated issue. I do not have to tell you, with the work you are doing on ethnicities and minorities, is a very complicated issue, because Europe is not a land of migration in the sense that America is, but is a continent of enormous internal migrations. There never has been a moment when such a thing like a pure European existed...

I think that looking at the diversity within this continent and our historical inability to deal with it, except by causing civil wars, which then became world wars, looking to the inability to treat difference, the discomfort of living with difference within the European continent, is the very thing that we should do. Why is it so? There has been really interesting work being done on this epidemic reaction of Europeans against differences, on this myth of sameness that we all carry together in our soul far more than the new cultures do, like the Americans and the Australians, who know perfectly well that they are based on diversity.

I think it is the role of sameness and the dialectics with difference that is crucial to the way in which our continent structured itself. If you think that putting together an Eastern European with a Southern European is hard work, try putting together a Northern Italian with a Southern Italian. This is the nightmare of Europe, and this has been our history.

But now we need to take advantage of the historical situation we are in with, when the Cold War is over and the European Union

can provide, hopefully, some sort of new frame. Now we will see if we can for a moment live together with difference, or there will be, as usual, a return to the worst aspects of our history, a repetition of the regional breakdown and nationalism. I hope we can move home hopefully, to a more trans-national definition of what it means to be European today. I consider the European Union as a post-nationalistic framework and I defend the post-nationalistic definition of Europe. I am convinced that is beyond being Italian, British, Romanian, Belgian, is about being of this continent, with the dramatic history that we have. It is not a glorification, it should be the opportunity to take stock over our positions, to take a serious look at ourselves, a cold, sober look at ourselves and say: Ok, where do we go from here? And that means confronting some pretty dramatic history, some of which have been repeated, both in the East and in the West because it is how history goes, it goes through repetitions.

And because of this I would like to link the concept of diversity to nomadism, and to see how it always has been there, and how women have paid the price for it for time to time again in our history. I am trying to verbalize some of that, to make it the object of our study and try to do it in a spirit that looks for connections, and not connections in the sameness, but connections in the awareness of how deep the differences are.

E.M.V. May we talk at this moment about your feminist nomadic project? It seems to me very important how, in that framework, you rebuild the feminist subject in a very theoretical, rigorous but at the same time in a very passionate way. At a certain point in your argument you mention the relation between *like* woman, the real existent woman, and the feminist subject while defining the feminist as the post-women... Would you like to elaborate that idea?

R.B. This argument was a way to make a critique of identity politics... It was a way of saying that what was at stake in feminist

production of knowledge was really a paradoxical relationship to the female, to the woman that is the agent of it. And that was again a reaction to the whole standpoint feminism, according to which a woman knows better, a woman per definition, per socialization, historically, knows better. You know, as a reaction to this, postmodernists said: „what do you mean by a woman, how do you know which woman, where and when?“

In my argument I was trying to devise a scheme that both keeps an attachment to the female experience, but also inserts, as a new step in knowledge and consciousness, another subject position, which would be the feminist subject. That would then allow for this kind of production of knowledge to include a critique of femininity, while not being disconnected from it.

This idea was a reaction to a number of things that were happening during the late 1980s and early '90s in the European feminist theory, the main one being the rejection of sexual difference, the rejection of femininity altogether, considering that femininity is the essentialist trap and if you fall into this essentialist trap, you are going to be lost. Where did this latter idea come from? In the United States, the debate came from a rejection of the heterosexism that is implicit in the assessment of femininity. As I have said time and time again, a lot of the same issues can be dealt with without rejecting femininity; and I was sort of finding myself puzzled by the attacks against the institution of woman that were coming mostly from Anglo-American postmodernism, I am thinking of the early Butler, I am thinking of Denise Riley. They all said that the problem of the standpoint feminism is that it essentializes woman, so we get rid of it and we have a different type of subject, whether she is the lesbian or the cyborg; if you work with that variable, she is the post-colonial, if you work on ethnicity level, she is the native or black. In any case, there seems to be an erasure of sexual difference that puzzles me and worries me for the reasons that I have mentioned before, because I firmly believe in the deep embodied roots of subjectivity.

As far as I am concerned, I wanted to keep the connection to femininity, but not in a genetic deterministic, or psychic deterministic way, that is why I needed to introduce the feminist subject, and the issue that the difference is about feminist consciousness. In my reading, feminist consciousness includes a certain critique of femininity but it is a critique from within, because I do not think we can cast that away from us, as if it was not our skin. You say after that you can easily change: you can be critical, you can dis-identify as much as you can, but it is still a connection even if you deny it. I mean I would be a de-constructivist to the extent to which I would see a negative connection still a connection.

I think a feminist is somebody who consumes and redefines femininity. You see, for many people lesbianism would be opposed to femininity, lesbians being supposed to be, per definition, males. This is exactly the 19th century imaginary of *à la garçonnie*, or of the woman in the wrong body, so to speak. But why would that not be part of being a woman? Why would it be cast out as something that is opposed to femininity, which is exactly what patriarchal culture says? So this is my way to say that, if we see feminists as the women who are intended to repossess femininity and to redefine it, then one may expect that femininity may become a container of all sorts of other things, allowing to redefine female sexuality, heterosexuality, homosexuality, or anything else in-between.

I am particularly concerned to keep the issue of heterosexuality on the board, because it forces men to join us in this struggle, and to make them feel that masculinity is also a feminist issue. I mean there are many feminist men who consider they should help women to change their position, or change child care, or get abortion: it is all very well, but a fundamental issue remains the redefinition of masculinity. A redefinition that would take violence out of it, it takes the sense of arrogance out of it, it takes this idea that the world is there for him out of it. A redefinition that would bring about a massive de-fallicization of masculinity, which we can only

do if men join in. It cannot be „us against them“, that was the 1970s, and a lot of men are convinced that it is very tiring to be a macho all day long, and a lot of them would prefer to be new fathers. These are the guys that we need, and sexual difference means also that they work on themselves, and that they join to struggle with women from their own angle which is critiquing this return of hegemonic, violent, bigoted masculinity under the cover of either the new liberalism or whatever „quick fix“ solution happens to be going on at the moment. That is a crucial issue. I think with sexual difference you can look upon this both ways.

And that would be a way to keep the balance, a sort of going hopefully for a peaceful resolution of the problems. So it is more this kind of thing that I have in mind and that type of politics.

E.M.V. Let me formulate my last question, about the way in which you understand the relation between consciousness and desire within feminism. You are arguing that feminist practice should link the wilful choice and the unconscious desire in order to generate change and you are talking even about a politics of desire and about the desire for feminism ...

R.B. This is what I call my European roots. I think that Rousseau's question is still on the agenda. Man is born free, but everywhere she/ he is in chains: so why do people not cast away these chains, what makes people to accept that situation. Of course, it all depends on one's location, you have to be very situated, you have to position this question very carefully in space and time, and look at the historical context in which you ask this question. There are situations in which people have no choice and they are bulldozed in totalitarian extremist regimes, into no margins of choice of whatsoever. And then it is no question of desire.

It is a question that speaks of a context, the one I was raised in, which was relatively free and democratic. Where nonetheless we were brought up through the 1960s into really actively wanting consumerism as the statement of our citizenship. Citizenship as

consumerism, that has been the ethos in which I was brought up, which means that a great deal of the West was very de-politicised through this saturation of commodities and this next car, next gadget, next Armani suit.

That happened to very large extent within Western Europe as a whole, where the critical culture and the resistance had to struggle. You can look, for instance, at the years of terrorism in Western Europe and see them as a counter-culture that was cornered by the state into producing horrific results. It was really a death's dance between the state and the radical wing that produced the bloodiest results, typical of a culture of political despair. There were no margins for critical theory, no margins for critical resistance. This changed later, in the 1980s, it changed with the punk revolution, it changed in a sense with the technological revolution that opened new horizons, but the social climate of the 1960s and the '70s has been really saturated with the failure of the left and the sense of nowhere to go. There was just no space for resistance in Western Europe. In that context the question became how can we make people who have everything, freedom, democracy etc. with limitations, how can we make them want something else than the next gadget, the next commodity, how can we make them desire different ways of living, better ways of living. Usually the minorities or the marginal groups have the impetus to change, which is why, in that context feminism had a great role in imagining the world differently, not according to the consumerist patterns and norms.

I also think that a lot of psychoanalysts were important to Western Europe because they politicised that question. The new psychoanalysis of the 1970s really politicised desire as a non-profit way of wanting a better society, and that is the attitude of desire. Even if it costs you a salary or maybe a career, you are a pariah... I think that the question of „what makes you to want to run the race“, was the very question for Western Europe at that time, as, I am tempted to say, it is for Eastern Europe after 1989. I mean confusing

citizenship with consumerism is a risk that you are undergoing now, much as we did in the 1960s. What do you want, is free markets... a great free market, you can see how free the free market is and what are its results: in terms of pornography, prostitution, the trading of women, the brutality, the disregard of who people are...the free market is an enemy of humanity.

I think that imagination is absolutely crucial in a phase like this, in the culture of a post-industrial era, when all we are selling are dreams... we are calling ourselves information societies, but actually we are dream-merchants, we are selling people, fantasies and mailing-lists and credit-cards lists, so we are selling information that counts but a lot of it is a very much abstract, up here. We live in a culture, which functions so much through media and representation, through the imaginary. From Althusser on, we know that the imaginary is intensely political. Now if we could catch people's imaginary one way or the other, I think we might go a long way into inserting something of an antidote to this saturation of commodities, which is what they call citizenship in post-industrial society. It is in fact a form of apathy, a form of lack of concern, a retreat into molecular individualism that is absolutely distressing.

That is why I think that artists have a very important role to play in our society. At least in Western Europe you have to look at the artist community to see a resistance. And more so, than in the academic community. Artists who write songs, who make movies, who create counter-images, who dress differently, who force the average citizen to realise „hey, but maybe s/he is not like me, what's up“? It is great to see how music, circulated on the Internet, manages to really break some monopolies, to break all the copyright laws and the market laws. The image, on the other hand, is saturated with commercial meaning, while the sound is still able to carry some radical meanings. You can look at the Western European political culture by studying the alternative media... I remember the free radio stations of the 1970s, the crucial importance of radio, and the

police busting to free radios in Italy and France, throughout the '70s and blocking them. Those people from the free radios are the people who invented the Internet, an alternative way of distributing knowledge, of connecting, of reaching people. This is a new, nomadic way of reaching for each other outside of the established channels, which are state television, state newspaper etc.

So this is a way to try to reach out and transform the forms of representation. But you can also do this with feminism. Look at the politics of the self, sexuality, consciousness raising, look how feminism is changing everyday life, is changing the love relations, the family, the way desire is connected to lack, to violence, to domination. It is changing those very difficult things, which we can only do with a big effort in the personal sphere, in the private, even intimate sphere. When we said: „the personal is the political“, we really meant all of that and more.

But I think that today feminism can go much further into the politicisation of the imaginary in an era that is starved for representations, for ideas, for everything. It is always the same images, whether it is Madonna, or Lady Diana, or Marilyn Monroe: they repeat even the same bodily positions. There is a kind of a tiredness of the realm, of the register of the image that is absolutely saturated by commercialisation and by repetition. There is a shortage of adequate representations, of strong representations. Maybe some people argue that visual representation is really saturated to death, I mean for example Baudrillard, and there is nothing new that can come from it and then, of course, I would then plead for sounds and music and acoustics as ways of maybe spurting the imagination to dream up a better world.

Unless we can dream up possible futures and better worlds we are not going to be able to realise them. I think that our desires have to go that way or it will not happen. And keeping desires alive in a society that is going towards consumerism, or try to turn you simply into a consumer and try to make you believe that is what you

really want, keeping those desires alive is what education should be doing. In a very Socratic manner, I mean it is really back to the origins of what an education used to be, asking questions, questioning, questioning, questioning.

As a feminist I found myself defending almost classical models of pedagogy and it is a kind of amusing that I am saying education, for example, makes people think, makes them more aware, makes them eager to produce critical, non-profit knowledge... that would be my definition of an education for the third millennium. And I believe that our culture needs it, for the jobs, for the designing industry, for all of that, but also to keep some sense of desire to make it work, almost desire in the sense of social participation if you want to talk a more reasonable language. I think that is crucial. People do not go to the elections, people do not care, this kind of emptying out of civil society is not only happening in your world, is probably happening a lot more here, this kind of taking so much for granted, this kind of apathy are very dangerous. With the extreme right running at 25% in Belgium, 18% in Norway, and so on, and you are saying that politics does not matter... it is a very dangerous moment, when one may feel that the critical awareness is asleep, stupefied, saturated with food and drinks, and commodities. Is that kind of thing, awareness, such as consciousness-raising on a global scale, which is very important in our days. And I am convinced that feminists have a huge role to play in this process, in our societies, because we have to stay alert, we cannot afford to go to sleep.

FOCUSING ON GENDER EQUALITY WORLDWIDE

Feminism is about recognising difference, acknowledging and respecting difference, even celebrating difference, but also about trying, beyond that, to work together, not eliminating, but transcending differences in order to work towards the creation of societies – and indeed a world – characterised by gender equality.

BARBARA EINHORN*

E.M.V. I would like to ask you to talk both about your research on women's condition in Eastern Europe and your organisational work on Women's Studies at the University of Sussex.

* Dr. Barbara Einhorn is professor at the University of Sussex, Great Britain, and director of the Research Centre in Women's Studies at the same university. Her main research topics are gender and citizenship, women in the global market economy, gender and identity in German-Jewish women's life histories. She is the author of the book *Cinderella Goes to Market: Gender, Citizenship and Women's Movements in East Central Europe* (1993); second edition 2003), guest edited the volume *Women and Market Societies: Crisis and Opportunity* (1995), guest edited the Special Issue of *Women's Studies International Forum on Gender, Ethnicity and Nationalism* (19, 1-2, 1996), and co-edited the Special Issue of *The European Journal of Women's Studies entitled "The Idea of Europe"* (5, 3-4, 1998).