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# Multicultural Tensions and Integrative Reflections

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# Multicultural tensions and integrative reflections

## The purpose of the report

*This draft report is written against the backdrop of multiculturalism's declining reputation and the (at least rhetorical) rejection of the accommodation of group rights in many EU countries. It aims to provide a brief introduction for FEMCIT scholars to different strands of theories on multiculturalism and particularly focuses on the tensions between multiculturalism and feminism. The second aim is to enhance strategies and tools for the methodological integration of EU cultural diversity into FEMCIT research projects that will contribute to a gender fair citizenship model. Finally, this is an opportunity to reflect on FEMCIT's potential to contribute to the resolution of the persistent tensions of the multiculturalism versus feminism debate and to go beyond the multicultural conundrum by means of its inclusive approach.*

All over Europe, the question of the effects of the regulation of diversity on social cohesion is high on the political agenda.<sup>1</sup> Multicultural politics has been seen as an inevitable and essential response to increasing de-facto diversification and diasporization of societies during the 1990s. Yet, the effects of a new global world order with Islam as the favourite enemy and increasing fear of disintegration brought the multicultural project to a halt in many EU member states just when it was identified as the most convincing social policy and theory (Kymlicka 1995; Glazer 1997). Enthusiasm for multiculturalism has always been fundamentally questioned by egalitarian liberals, who

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<sup>1</sup> First, I would like to thank Elisabeth Holzleithner, Christa Markom and Ines Rössl for discussion of crucial issues of this report in our research project on "Contesting Multiculturalism. Cultural Diversity, Gender Equality and Sexual Autonomy" (sponsored by node.research-austria, Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research). Furthermore, two international conferences on "Gender Equality, Cultural Diversity: European Comparisons and Lessons" at the LSE in 2004 and the University of Amsterdam in 2006 initiated by Anne Phillips and Sawitri Saharso invited comparative discussions of legal regulations of violence against women in minoritized contexts and had an important impact on the framing of this paper. A first version of this report was presented at the FEMCIT conference at Cumberland Lodge in September 2007 and I thank Beatrice Halsaa for comments and suggestions on the draft version. I am particularly indebted to Julene Knox for close proofreading.

have insisted on citizenship<sup>2</sup> as an instrument for equal rights for all individuals and the normative standards they must share in order to guarantee autonomy, freedom and equality. The accommodation of special rights, and exemptions from specific regulations and obligations for cultural (ethnic, religious or sexual) or ascriptive minorities might, in their opinion, cause social fragmentation and thus threaten equality rather than contribute to it. However, these egalitarian arguments are in danger of being deployed ethnocentrically when they are interwoven with the anti-Muslim and anti-immigration rhetoric (Fekete 2004) that has emerged since the end of the Cold War and in the aftermath of September 11. In Europe, anxieties about increasing cultural differences (Grillo 2003) publicly debated since the mid 1990s have, in particular, dislocated the politics of multiculturalism after the murders of Fadime Şahindal in Sweden 2002 and Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands 2004 as well as the bombings in Madrid 2004 and London 2005. Hence, critics and advocates of multicultural perspectives alike have become concerned about the question of how the accommodation of group rights would support the dominant structures of different ethnic and religious “cultures”, discourage dissent (feminist, gay, lesbian, religious), weaken the voices of vulnerable members (women, youth, children) of minoritized groups and prevent minorities from integrating into society at large.

Two fields of theory and politics that obviously both aim to enhance equality models for citizens, namely multiculturalism and feminism, have, in the course of these contestations, become locked in awkward mutual rejection. Since, when in 1997, Susan Okin posed the puzzling question of “Is multiculturalism bad for women?”,<sup>3</sup> the negative

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<sup>2</sup> Citizenship became the “buzz word” of political thinkers in the 1990s when, for example, the increasing diversification of populations in Western Europe raised questions relating to justice and membership as well as to the need for renewed account of the relationship of individuals with particular communities (Kymlicka/Norman 1994).

<sup>3</sup> The paper was first published in the October/November 1997 issue of *Boston Review* and reprinted in the anthology with the same name by Princeton University Press, 1999. That was

effects of multicultural politics on feminist aims to combat violence against women among ethnic and religious minorities (referred to as tradition-based violence or violence in the name of honour) have been continuously and contradictorily discussed. The difficult relationship between ethnic and religious rights, on the one hand, and gender equality and sexual autonomy, on the other, has become one of the main reasons for multiculturalism's declining reputation. This "paradox of multicultural vulnerability" (Shachar 2000)<sup>4</sup> hence includes all forms of violence conducted in order to strengthen men's control over women and their sexuality in the name of a group's particular culture. The way violence against women within minorities has been conceptualized as an "imported problem" of "other cultures" (Narayan 1997; Holzleithner/Strasser 2006) has furthermore provided arguments for the harsh critique of and retreat from multiculturalism (Scheffer 2001; Joppke 2003; Ateş 2007). Many EU member states have again turned to the notion of "integration" (calling for adaptation to normative values of European liberal democracies regarding equality) as an adequate solution for these problems.

Feminists have developed different or, rather, contradictory positions. They either criticize liberal democracies for their inactivity and naivety concerning the culturally legitimized control of sexuality and violence against women within minorities and for their desire to integrate politics and legal intervention (Okin 1999; Wikan 2002; Kelek 2005;

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the same year in which Nathan Glazer stated with great reluctance that "we are all multiculturalists now" (Glazer 1997).

<sup>4</sup> "Multiculturalism presents a problem, however, when state accommodation policies intended to mitigate the power differential between groups end up reinforcing power hierarchies within them. This phenomenon points to the troubling fact that some categories of at-risk group members are being asked to shoulder a disproportionate share of the costs of multiculturalism. Under such conditions, well-meaning accommodations by the state may leave certain group members vulnerable to maltreatment within the group, and may, in effect, work to reinforce some of the most hierarchical elements of a culture. I call this phenomenon the paradox of multicultural vulnerability" (Shachar 2000: 65).

Ateş 2007), or they warn about the stigmatizing effect of the whole debate with its often homogenizing attacks on ethnic and religious minorities and the probably unintended, but nevertheless implied shift from political multiculturalism to “integration” or, rather, assimilation (Narayan 1997; Razack 2004; Phillips 2007; Ongan 2008).

In this report I will contribute to four issues relevant for FEMCIT:

1. I will offer a brief introduction to different or even contradictory theoretical positions on the regulations of cultural diversity within shared social and political spaces.
2. I will then present some of the tensions of this debate at the intersection of feminisms and multiculturalisms, including the contribution of these debates to the retreat from multiculturalism; and I will sum up with some theoretical suggestions for how to reconcile feminisms and multiculturalisms.
3. I will focus on the way culture has been used and misused in multicultural accommodation theories and politics, and I will suggest possible theoretical and empirical tools for overcoming the problem of cultural essentialisms or fundamentalisms by means of a focus on culture as a problem to investigate rather than as a concept explaining social tensions and conflicts. In addition, I will reconsider conventional relativism, often seen as a “tool for making other”, as an opportunity to contribute to a sensitive and informed evaluation of assumed cultural differences.
4. I will further evaluate the potential of FEMCIT and its overall aims to contribute to the resolution of tensions in the multiculturalisms versus feminisms debate. Rather than adopting the exclusive and sometimes even pejorative focus on the investigation of the essentialized and victimized other, I will instead consider the way ethnic and religious diversity is incorporated into all layers of citizenship as a matter of belonging and participating politically, socially, ethnically and religiously,

economically, bodily and intimately, and this will provide an opportunity to draw society at large into the multicultural debate and thus offer insight into “majority-minority power structures” (Gullestad 2004: 179) in FEMCIT projects.<sup>5</sup>

## ***1 Regulating cultural diversity***

Political systems offer rather divergent solutions to the question of if and how to accommodate group rights to ethnic, religious and often transnational minorities.<sup>6</sup> Yet, all these political units share a rather long-standing aversion to group identities or social movements that claim recognition for differences. Theoretical contributions include a wide range of rather contradictory positions concerning the question of how to regulate social and cultural diversity and citizenship; these nevertheless fall into three broad groupings: 1) globalization theories that investigate the effects of global flows of people, capital and technologies on national membership and social equality; 2) theories on liberal democracy that aim to ensure the equality of all citizens irrespective of their ethnic, religious or social background versus theories of multiculturalism that suggest the accommodation of rights as a means to combat historically developed differences, offer exemptions and facilitate cultural identity processes.

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<sup>5</sup> Marianne Gullestad suggests studying racism “at home” and argues: “It is no longer enough just to study marginalized groups. Such studies now have to be framed within majority-minority power relations and the global history of colonial and neo-colonial relations” (2004: 179).

<sup>6</sup> The notion of “transnational minorities” refers to migrant workers and their families as well as to post-colonial subjects who have entered the EU since the early 1960s and who, instead of entirely assimilating to the dominant cultural structures and practices, have maintained their relations with their countries or regions of origin and thus have developed nested, transnational, recombinant (Bauböck 1994, 2007), multicultural (Kymlicka 1995) or multilayered (Yuval-Davis 2002) citizenships. For a feminist perspective see Lister 1997. I will comment on these questions in working paper 2009/2 on intersectionalities and citizenship (planned for January 2009).

## **Globalization and fragmentation**

Following the highly visible effects of processes of globalization, some theorists anticipate the decline of nation-states and they welcome transnational flows and new diasporic neighbourhoods as subversive and innovative anti-nationalist movements (Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1993). Critics of this "transnational romanticism", on the other hand, stress the disadvantages of horizontal (cultural indigenization) and vertical (culturally supported social stratification) fragmentation of societies through processes of globalization and they accuse representatives of transnational theories of overestimating these processes and of supporting cosmopolitan upper classes for their own benefits and dividends (Žižek 2000; Friedman 2003). Criticizing multiculturalism, leftists such as Friedman highlight the danger of emphasizing differences at the expense of social integration and thus the redistribution of welfare and power. "The dialectic of integration and differentiation accounts for the volatility of the contemporary world arena where violence has become increasingly intrastate and fragmentary. The other form of violence is that produced by vertical polarization in the state units of the world system. It is based on the destruction of larger identities. Within the national states it consists in the separation of the elites from the people, in the cosmopolitanization of the former and the indigenization of the latter. [...] This situation drives former nationals to seek roots, to become increasingly indigenous." (Friedman 2003: 25) Former nationalist elites today identify as hybrid and multicultural whereas they view the former "motley foreign mixed" people as "dangerous purists". (Friedman 2003: 13)

## **Equal versus differentiated citizenship**

Liberal egalitarians, in contrast to leftist critique on dangers of multiculturalism, demand neutrality of the state and legal equality of all citizens in the social and political systems of liberal democracies (Barry 2001). According to them, multiculturalism has supported cultural relativism, which conflates right and wrong behaviour. Some liberal positions even actively promote cultural assimilation in order to protect individuals from group

prescriptions or the hierarchical normative values of “minority groups” (Tibi 1998; Okin 1999). Despite the fact that social cohesion is a very convincing argument, the advocates of this position are faced with a rather difficult question: why is cultural recognition and not class distinction responsible for fragmentation and disintegration?

Within the theoretical approach to diversity, which aims at various forms of differentiated citizenship in multicultural societies, there are again two controversial positions: that is, liberal culturalism (Kymlicka 1998) and critical or political multiculturalism (Parekh 2000; Modood 2008). Whereas liberal culturalism links questions of equality with the right to differences and legal accommodation, the multiculturalists criticize these liberal democratic positions and see them as part of the problem instead of as a contribution to its solution. The political multiculturalists reject the liberal democrats’ assumption of their own perception as superior, and they open the floor to intensified consultations or *deliberation* (Deveaux 2000; Parekh 2000) instead of suggesting group rights for ethnic and religious “minorities”<sup>7</sup>.

Whereas both, liberal and critical multiculturalists advocate differentiated citizenship focusing on ethnic and religious differences, communitarian approaches are concerned with rights of social movements. They not only focus on ethnic and religious groups, but also include the promotion of rights for women, sexual minorities, children, the elderly and people with disabilities, etc. The simultaneous focus on different identity groups leads, on the one hand, to the question of different “faces of oppression” (Young 1990), and, on the other hand, to the question of hierarchies between different subject positions or “differences within” (Moore 1994; Klinger 2003) or the problem of an adverse effect of the accommodation of rights to one group for another group (Okin 1999). The most prominent example of this debate is the feminist challenge to the accommodation of

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<sup>7</sup> It is this focus on “minorities” that creates the difficulties of cultural essentialism on the one hand and the fixing of differentiations between minoritized and majoritized groups as will be discussed below.

group rights to ethnic and religious minorities that do not aim at gender equality. The debates around hierarchy of identity groups and mutual effects of recognition and rights of simultaneous but different belonging have been discussed under the label of “minorities within minorities” (see section 2)

To summarize these positions on the regulation of diversity, we find two major strands: those who opt for equal citizenship for all members of a society and find no convincing argument for multiplying membership rights and duties, yet warn against social fragmentation on cultural grounds. The critics of this position opt for various versions of differentiated citizenship as a precondition for satisfactory identity building processes of all members of society and in order to react to historically established inequalities. Weak and strong versions of these positions lead to a range of different approaches between the extremes of “let’s leave them alone” and “let’s make them extinct”. Since Glazer, in 1997, expressed the fear that multiculturalism had won, the multicultural riddle has, on the contrary, been even further complicated, not least by feminist intervention in the debate.

## ***2 Multicultural tensions and feminist responses***

The starting point in this section are questions concerning the core problem at the intersection of multicultural and feminist claims for equality: What if the groups claiming cultural acknowledgement and group rights do not promote gender equality but consider different forms of hierarchy (e.g. age, gender and ethnicity) as intrinsic to their group identity or their “culture”? How to accommodate group rights without simultaneously strengthening existing hierarchical cultural regimes, thus contributing to the disadvantage of such vulnerable persons as women, youth, gay men, lesbians and children within these minorities? Since much of what is perceived as “culture” also revolves around gender and practices of sexuality, marriage and divorce, different effects

on men and women seem inevitable. This problem is familiar to feminists, who have for a long time been criticizing the consequences of male-dominated cultural regimes for gender relations in their own societies in receiving and sending countries. Since immigrated minorities' claims for group rights include or even are particularly focused on rights concerning "private life" (family law, marriage, sexuality, control of virginity, gender segregation, dressing, child education), many of their requests, according to critics of multicultural gender blindness, impinge upon women's human rights. When states, through group rights, unintentionally support or even amplify male domination or normative pressure among minorities, feminists find themselves challenged to combat grievances and gender inequality among those minorities, yet they are simultaneously trapped in the role of the "Western know-it-alls", who, in fact, know little about the details of variations in cultural practice across the many different ethnic and religious groups in their environment.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, much of feminist critique on multiculturalism has focused on "minorities within minorities" (Eisenberg/Spinner-Halev 2005), which refers to groups that have been minoritized by virtue of their race, ethnicity, religion, language or culture, and sub-groups within these, minoritized by virtue of age, sexuality, gender or class (Phillips 2005: 113). Feminist scholars and activists have been foregrounding troublesome issues such as genital cutting, honour crimes and honour killings, forced suicide, trafficking women, and veiling as a sign of female subordination for some time, but they were heard only when the tension increased and young women represented themselves as victims of their "culture" or "traditions". As already mentioned, Susan Okin (1997) triggered the debate with her paper on the problematic effects of multiculturalism on women. Ayalet Shachar (2001) and Susan Okin (in her later contribution from 2005) both argue that

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<sup>8</sup> Effects of possible misrepresentations and misguided cultural translations across national borders are exemplified by Uma Narayan's contribution on US-American perspectives on "dowry murder" (Narayan 1997).

women do benefit from multicultural accommodations but nevertheless have to pay a disproportionate share of the psychological, social and material costs of the accommodation of group rights. Since feminists can hardly ignore the fact that there are differences between ethnic and religious groups and it seems uncontroversial that some of these groups are less supportive towards equality for women than others, Susan Okin has not primarily been criticized for her conclusions that group rights are not “part of the solution”, but can on the contrary increase the problem. Rather, she has been criticized for the ethnocentrism in her argument that minorities are usually more patriarchal than their surrounding (Western liberal democratic) environment and in particular for her offensive suggestion, or at least unfortunate wording, concerning the consequences of cultural differences for gender relations:

Indeed, they [women] *may* be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women—at least to the degree to which this is upheld in the majority culture. (Okin 1997)

She has drawn her explanations almost entirely from examples of court cases dealing with murder and suicide.<sup>9</sup> Her statement on the “extinction of cultures” (although weakened by the option of encouraging them to alter themselves) provoked post-colonial, transnational and multicultural feminists (Volpp 2001; Razack 2004) to accuse Okin of a liberal ethnocentrism that makes a division between patriarchal minorities and less sexist majorities. She aimed to combat perpetrators’ explanations of *violence against women as cultural* and was herself accused of homogenizing and devaluing other *cultures as violent*. Nonetheless, not only mainstream politics and mass media but also some liberal feminists in the EU agreed with Okin and called a halt to multicultural projects that did not consider the gendered effects of their undertaking.

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<sup>9</sup> See Uma Narayan (1997) on the Indian example of “dowry murder” for the problem of “dislocating culture” and violence against women.

Concerned with Scandinavian cases of violence in the name of honor, Unni Wikan identifies violence within minorities as an entirely European problem that needs European protection and legislation. Equal treatment of women and girls according to citizenship rights independent of their ethnic, religious or immigrant background is the only way to protect them from group violence. Differences in treatment by officials "in the name of culture" (in order to avoid accusations of racism) are considered a betrayal of girls' and women's EU citizenship rights (Wikan 2002). Although Unni Wikan's position presents the struggle against violence and subordination of women as a European duty, the practices of oppression have not lost their (imported) troublesome cultural foundation. Wikan identifies the "respect" of other cultures as a part of the problem and consequently blames Western states and their officials for a dual betrayal: first, of migrants by reducing them to the status of welfare receivers and hence contributing to increased segregation and marginalization; and, second, of young migrant women whose autonomy is sacrificed in the name of culture. Wikan is rightly rejecting essential versions of culture as an instrument of "making other" in official treatments. Yet, she focuses on misdirected "respect" and not on a second possible explanation for non-action: the officials' ignorance could also be based on a racist assumption that violence and coercion is normal among the respective groups (Razack 2004).<sup>10</sup> By scandalizing violence, she has been unintentionally increasing the division between "us" who make rational decisions and "them" who have (violent) cultures which they cannot escape by agency. The way she convincingly discusses grievances in social policies and official treatments is in sharp contrast to her detailed representation of the other women as victims of their cultures. Her arguments can easily be turned into an "anti-immigrant" discourse that aims to prevent tradition-based violence in Europe by reducing transnational as well as early marriage and supporting integration as an assimilative project to Western liberal

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<sup>10</sup> As was the case in Germany 2007, when a judge legitimized domestic violence by the Koran and rejected a divorce suit (Retrieved from [www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,472849,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,472849,00.html), May 25, 2008).

codes (presented as gender equality).<sup>11</sup> The interest of right-wing populists in women's protection as a means of promoting anxieties about immigration and the project of multiculturalism has become significant all over Europe.<sup>12</sup>

Both, Okin and Wikan represent versions of liberal feminist perspectives on violence in the name of honor. Yet, Okin on the one hand claims intervention in order to adapt essentialised "minority cultures" to (in her view less male dominated or patriarchal) Western liberal societies, Wikan on the other hand blames the use or rather the abuse of "culture" as an excuse for the betrayal of minoritized girls' rights by the Welfare state. Okin was criticized because of her contribution to binary opposition, whereas Wikan was seen as contributing to the conflation of racism, violence and social security and thus to the dismantling of the Welfare state.

Similarly, women "reporting from within" minoritized groups criticize EU member states for acting naively and accommodating rights with "generous tolerance" to minorities which not only establish "parallel societies" and "Islamist segregation" but also enforce male dominance and violence against women and children (Kelek 2003). Necla Kelek, a German-Turkish sociologist who received the prestigious Geschwister-Scholl-Award in Germany for her book *Die Fremde Braut* (The Foreign Bride), Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the former Dutch-Somalian parliament member in the Netherlands, and Seyran Ateş with her book on the *Multikulti-Irrtum* (The Multicultural Fallacy 2007) are some examples of authors challenging patriarchal family systems in Muslim societies while falling into the trap of "anti-immigrant" and "anti-Muslim" discourses. Yet, when multicultural or post-colonial feminists have rightly rejected Western feminists' patronizing support, they have often

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<sup>11</sup> The applicability of her claims arguing for assimilation might explain why Wikan, and not other feminists such as Marianne Gullestad (2004) or Anja Bredal (2005), was exploited by Norwegian right-wing parties.

<sup>12</sup> There are many examples such as Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, the DVP (Danish People's Party) in Denmark, and the FPÖ (Freedom Party) in Austria.

found themselves unable to articulate criticism of violence against women in minoritized groups.

In order to clarify the multicultural riddle from a feminist perspective we obviously have to include further questions in the ongoing debate: First, what is the feminist answer, if the groups claiming cultural acknowledgement and group rights do not promote gender equality? Second how to avoid contributing to the devaluation of ethnic and cultural groups when challenging gender relations or family systems among minorities? Sherene Razack focuses precisely on this dilemma when she states:

How is it possible to acknowledge and confront patriarchal violence within Muslim migrant communities without descending into cultural deficit explanations (they are overly patriarchal and inherently uncivilised) and without inviting extraordinary measures of stigmatisation, surveillance and control? (2004: 131)

How can feminists successfully negotiate gender inequality and combat violence across cultural borders, yet avoid contributing to essentialized notions of culture as expressed in "death by culture" (Narayan 1997: 86) or "violence by honour" (Strasser 2008)?

It is worth mentioning that feminist activists have begun to advert to issues of violence against women in the name of culture, such as FGM/C, honor killing and polygamy in the early 1980s, simultaneously stressing the danger of Western feminists patronizing "third world women" and challenging the assumption of the "universal woman" and "global sisterhood" (al Saadawi 1980, Mohanty 1986, Toubia 1995). Yet, the critical feminist contribution to the troublesome issues of multicultural politics became relevant again when Europe was faced with serious problems in the form of violent outbursts that were probably related to ethnic and religious as much as social differences, regardless of the local immigration regimes in the respective areas: burning suburbs all over Republican France, young "home-grown" Muslims protesting in multicultural Britain<sup>13</sup> and in

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<sup>13</sup> The four British citizens who killed themselves and 52 people in London in the name of Islam on 5 July 2005 all were born and raised in the UK.

Germany, with its integration model, houses of families of Turkish background set on fire. Anxieties explained by vanishing social cohesion and the lack of security in EU societies undoubtedly contribute to new policy measures which not only promote "integration" but also control or prevent immigration. Mandatory language courses for newcomers and tests assessing language skills and knowledge of democratic values have become a prerequisite of citizenship in many EU countries. The regulations and the effects of particular legal measures to protect women and vulnerable persons (e.g. regulation on forced and early marriage, female genital mutilation, regulation on dress codes) differ in various EU member states (Dustin 2006).

In theory there are three feminist strands to dealing with the multicultural tensions: 1) post-colonial and anti-racist critique deconstructing liberal feminist assumptions about the victimization of the "Third World Women" (e.g. Narayan 1997; Volpp 2001; Razack 2004); 2) judicial recommendations for hierarchically organized legislation in order to protect individual freedom and to balance inequalities (e.g. Shachar 2001); and 3) deliberative processes based on democratic consultation with as many people from as many different backgrounds as possible (Deveaux 2005). This debate has so far identified three viable political approaches to this dilemma: legal regulations, deliberation, and exit as a minimal right of group members (Phillips/Dustin 2004). Of course, to juxtapose approaches as, on the one hand, liberal and judicial and, on the other, as democratic and deliberative ignores the fact that these fields of possible action against injustice in diverse society are interwoven and mutually constitutive principles. Democracies are liberal rather than totalitarian, and democratic processes include liberal principles of equality, representation and the inclusion of underrepresented voices. Yet, liberal legal advocates are convinced of being able to represent "the other" on the basis of shared principles, whereas deliberative processes stress the de-facto participation of representatives, stakeholders and ordinary people by way of consultation in order to integrate different experiences and contexts.

The problem with post-colonial criticism is its weaknesses in tackling the troublesome issues that are a real social problem “out there”. Despite the necessary critique of transpositions of cultural differences across borders, vulnerable individuals need analysis of and measures against violence. The fear of acting according to one’s own cultural experiences has obviously led to inactivity on the part of social workers and officials so as not to act in an unjust or racist manner. Hence, sensitivity to cultural difference might lead to a “paralyzed relativism” (Phillips 2005: 115) that prioritizes such caution over necessary interventions and the needs of women. The problem of legislation is exactly that which has been criticized by post-colonial approaches: its lack of sensitivity to cultural differences. Since law is a cultural effect, its assumed neutrality is itself an expression of this very weakness. Law is furthermore interwoven with a concept of autonomy<sup>14</sup> that is itself part of a liberal world-view and thus should not be perceived as an uncontested precondition of self-determination but as part of the negotiations of difference. Exit from a group, on the other hand, puts all responsibility for agency on the shoulders of the potential victims without seriously discussing the distribution of the emotional, social and material costs of the freedom to exit. Deliberation seems to be able simultaneously to accept the group members’ serious concerns about their own norms and practices as well as historic and political contexts and their continuous contestations within their own groups. Deliberation can deal with both minority groups’ cultural difference and associated concerns about the norms and practices of wider society, as well as with debates within those groups, e.g. about gender, sexuality, age. Intercultural dialogue or other forms of deliberative democracy, however, have to answer the difficult question of who is going to be involved in the consultation processes, who represents whom, and who is selected by whom. Can the people involved make informed decisions

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<sup>14</sup> Preconditions of autonomy include: 1) reasonable options or alternatives, 2) an environment that provides the possibility to reflect on these alternatives and 3) the (relative) absence of pressure or manipulation so that individuals are able to act according to their own decisions (see Friedman 2003).

about the problems, and do they understand the consequences, are they under pressure not to act as they wish or can they exercise free will, and does the consulting process offer equal access to the subsequent decision-making processes for those concerned (Deveaux 2000; Okin 2005)?<sup>15</sup> Despite these obvious difficulties in solving the conundrum, feminists can make important contributions at least to certain if, of course, not all circumstances, precisely because one of the major arguments of feminist discourse is that there are no general solutions (as law might assume).

### **Equal treatment, legal regulations and joined government**

Political interventions by means of the form of legislation have often ignored the fact that national law is itself a result of cultural negotiations within a society (Shachar 2001; Volpp 2001). Thus, the regulation of certain practices is often shaped by expectations of right and wrong and forgets the cultural enmeshment of legal mores. Whereas genital mutilation causes utmost disgust among national majorities within the EU, and they understand hymen repair as the expression of patriarchal suppression, the same might not be the case when it comes to genital cosmetic surgery, which may be perceived as necessary in order to prevent mental distress. Phillips (2007: 159) argues for equal treatment of cosmetic and customary operations and for both to be banned for minors but permitted for adults. Her argument is that unequal treatment and reification of others' cultures produce a gap between Western women as active decision makers and "minority women" as culturally programmed creatures that have to be protected. Saharso (2003, 2008) and Phillips (2005, 2007) show, through many examples, the weaknesses of legal interventions and the difficulties produced by criminal law as long as culture is reified. The example of forced marriage reveals that specialized legal regulation does not necessarily improve the situation for the women concerned, in particular when

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<sup>15</sup> In FEMCIT these difficulties can be discussed in comparison with the experiences gained from gender and diversity mainstreaming as examples of one top-down and one bottom-up measurement.

the application of the law includes punishment of close relatives, exposes vulnerable persons to the public, or forces them to leave their families.

Ayelet Shachar's notion of the "paradox of multicultural vulnerability" (2000, 2001) refers to the question of how to accommodate groups and simultaneously assure freedom and equality of individuals. Her suggestion of a "joined government" aims to outline an innovative way of dividing and sharing jurisdictional authority. The idea is based on concepts of differentiated citizenship, and focuses on the potential of legal institutions to distribute rights, authority and social costs in multicultural states. Women and vulnerable persons are often forced to choose between their "culture" and their "rights". The members of a *nomos*-group<sup>16</sup> share a comprehensive world-view that enables them to create a law for the community including

a unique history and collective memory, a distinct culture, a set of social norms, customs and traditions or perhaps an experience of maltreatment by mainstream society or oppression by the state, all will give rise to a set of group-specific rules or practices. (Shachar 2001: 2)

Against this backdrop, individuals should thus be offered an opportunity to claim their rights beyond their *nomos*-group without being forced to opt out of their group. By offering vulnerable persons a second choice, Shachar simultaneously introduces a transformative instrument, since *nomos*-groups may come under pressure if too many individuals do not feel sufficiently represented by their own group and choose the law of the state. Although *nomos*-groups are presented as rather strict entities that demand loyalty, it is possible for individuals to be members of different groups at the same time.

This approach of transformative accommodation simultaneously addresses the recognition of groups and the acknowledgement of their possibly injurious effects on some of their members; it also brings state, individuals and groups together in a legal dialogue. Local religious and universal secularist advocates alike tend to avoid this kind of

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<sup>16</sup> The *nomos* of minority groups is "the normative universe in which law and cultural narrative are inseparably related" (Shachar 2001: 2).

challenge. Shachar's contribution can be seen as defining legal interventions with deliberative effects.

### **Third ways: contexts and deliberation**

Some suggest "third ways" (Deckha 2004; Reitman 2005) between liberal claims for state regulation and post-colonial rejection of the whole debate as ethnocentric and stigmatizing, which nevertheless does not offer solutions to the social problem: namely the protection of women from culturally legitimized violence. Sawitri Saharso recognizes the potential tensions between feminism and multiculturalism from her Dutch perspective but provides extensive contextualization instead of simply opposing the two positions. The weaknesses of general judicial arguments and the dispute over feminism and multiculturalism cannot, according to Saharso, be settled theoretically but have to be investigated in the context of empirical "cases". Results of her contextual approach towards different controversial examples such as veiling, hymen repair (2003) and sex selective abortion (2005) suggest that the practices investigated can be justified from a feminist perspective and are consonant with feminist concerns in the Dutch context. She thus shows the overstatement of the incompatibility of or contradictions between feminism and multiculturalism by stressing different positions *within* feminism itself, namely equal rights and self-determination. Saharso successfully mediates between the extreme versions of positions within the feminist versus multicultural debate and calls for sensitive accommodation of self-determined practices.

In her paper on the "Dilemmas of gender and culture", Anne Phillips (2005) contrasts the liberal-judicial (with a stress on gender equality by feminists) and democratic-deliberative (with a feminist stress on deliberation not only between but also within minoritized groups) approaches. She suggests a third position that is able to understand the "multicultural paradox" or the "minorities within minorities" conundrum as specifically political and contextual, and she rejects that cultures are entities with equal moral worth. Similar to Saharso, the political contexts become crucial for Phillips.

From the perspective of the political activist, the question of what is ethically just cannot be so easily detached from judgements about the effects of one's actions, and when there is reason to think that these will be at odds with the original intentions, it can be an abdication of political responsibility not to take this into account. In my view, it is in this, rather than "deep disagreement," that many of the dilemmas of multiculturalism lie. (2005: 118)

Phillips refers to the example of a feminist organization that had to call for a certain man to be banned from the EU in order to protect a woman from forced marriage. These political activists' decisions were controversial and caused a dilemma between either criticizing immigration policy or protecting women's rights. Some organizations tackling violence against women decided to give up their former claim for free access to the EU as a result of their decision to protect women against violence. In light of this example and its consequences, the point needs to be made that the simultaneous questions of equality of gender and of equality of cultures are not mutually exclusive but instead are totally intertwined. There is no culture independent from its gender system, and no culture can be separated discretely from other cultures (see below on cultural remedies). Problems arise from the requirement that measures be found that do not devalue and discriminate against minoritized groups and thus harm women among these minorities. "The key problems, to put it in another way, may be those that arise from the perspective of the political activist rather than that of the constitutional lawyer, or even the deliberative democrat" (Phillips 2005: 134). The political activist's decisions represent the real dilemmas of multicultural societies rather than the challenges described as "deep disagreements" between cultural values. The problem is less with "clash of cultures" per se and more with the decisions made and actions taken to deal with cultural differences. Monique Deveaux and Bhikhu Parekh recommend the engagement in public debates between diverse dominant and minoritized groups. The deliberation process is meant to increase mutual knowledge and by way of this understanding to facilitate transformation within ethnic or religious groups. However, the need to select spokespeople for negotiations shapes the representation of groups, their claims and their cultures.

Spokespeople potentially have their own agendas as representatives of groups<sup>17</sup> and support rather essentialized versions of culture instead of encouraging cultural transformation for the benefit of dissidents or marginal members of their group. Deliberation, like autonomy and exit, requires awareness and recognition of different (meaningful) options, the ability and freedom to communicate them in consultations, and thus it places much responsibility for change on the victims' shoulders. Deveau's (2005) suggestion of deliberation is nonetheless a useful starting point in that it facilitates some initial, acceptable compromises that go some way to preventing harm and cultural devaluation and it makes space for ethnic, religious and feminist viewpoints as well as positions of dissent.

### **The right to "exit" and obstacles to it in practice**

Being able to choose to leave a group (associations or minoritized ascriptive groups alike) if that group does not meet its members' expectations or is restricting some members' freedom in inadmissible ways seems to be a very convincing and necessary option for dissenters and weak members of society. Exit can thus protect against injustice within the group by making leaving the unjust environment possible (Reitman 2005: 192). In other words, those members of a group who are not able to transform disturbing, dominant structures will benefit from having the option "to go". Some radical multiculturalists see the right to exit as the single most, necessary intervention of the state into ethnic, religious or other minoritized groups (Kukathas 2002). Exit could, from their point of view, even be perceived as a possible contributing factor in transformation, in cases where many people leave a group (as in the option of a different jurisdiction as suggested by Shachar). The right to exit in this way could even increase opportunities to influence dominant structures. Yet, there are some obstacles: for various reasons, giving

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<sup>17</sup> Phillips' account of group representation stresses the fact that representatives are not linked with a certain group and thus not obliged to focus on that group's interests (Phillips 2007).

a platform to dissenting or marginal voices does not necessarily change the situation for those who stay in the minoritized group, and exit imposes all the social and material costs on the drop-out. Furthermore, those who remain may not be consenting, since the decision to stay may show the will to bring transformation 'from within'.

One of the difficulties of exit is its liberal misrepresentation as an isolated and individual decision of an autonomous member of a religious or ethnic group at a certain point in his or her life; whereas in reality it involves often dependant minors, with few skills and material resources, often embroiled in the process of leaving not an anonymous group but a beloved family or neighbourhood (Shachar 2001; Okin 2005; Markom/Rössl 2008). Without any doubt, minoritized groups should grant the right to exit to their members, but it is obviously more difficult for weak, poor or dependant members of a society to make use of this option.

Nonetheless, the relation between minoritized groups and the dominant surrounding society, expected reactions to the exit as well as potential allies within the own group will heavily influence whether exit is either facilitated or prevented. Women, often seen as the symbol of dignity and difference, will have to deal individually with the burden as well as the (material, intrinsic and associated) costs (Barry 2001: 150) of the neglect towards the vulnerable individual caused by unequal opportunity structures. The lack of protection afforded by his or her own family or group in a discriminatory environment can worsen living and working conditions for the exiter. The debate on exit thus has to evaluate all kinds of psychological, social and material costs, find solutions and take into account actual obstacles instead of hypothetical options. The ongoing retreat from multiculturalism and the increasing pressure on Muslims to integrate, I suspect, diminish options for vulnerable individuals (in particular of Muslim background) instead of offering a "realistic right to exit" (Okin 2005).

We conclude that exit is necessary but by no means sufficient. Emotional, social and material costs have to be compensated by the state, and thus exit needs legal regulation

as well as social and material support, and responsibility for it cannot be left solely to individuals. Exit needs all the same prerequisites as autonomy as defined by Friedman (2003): material resources such as accommodation and provisions, and opportunities for individuals to reflect on the consequences of certain decisions and to choose between them relatively free from coercion.

Yet, there is another problem caused by “the right to exit”, which could be considered as that of cultural permeability. If “cultures” are not strictly separated and individuals cannot be tagged as members of them, and if people leave situations and families rather than cultures, why is it still “culture” that is puzzling us so much in the debates on multicultural accommodation?

### ***3 Cultural anxieties***

Anne Phillips (2007) has called her latest book *Multiculturalism without Culture* in order to stress the fact that there is a problem in the way culture is again and again reified in multicultural negotiations. Of course, she does not deny cultural differences and the fact that states can harm their citizens by ignoring the need for cultural recognition and identity. Yet, as noted above “spokespersons” chosen to represent group rights often act in their own interests and by favouring dominant interpretations of cultural practices, other members of their group, in particular women, youth and dissidents, might be disadvantaged. Simultaneously, she is worried about the discourse that, increasingly, defines multiculturalism as an expression of “misguided” practices or “catastrophic pursuit”:

Multiculturalism became the scapegoat for an extraordinary array of political and social evils, a supposedly misguided approach to cultural diversity that encouraged men to beat their wives, parents to abuse their children, and communities to erupt in racial violence.

(Phillips 2007:3)

The reification of culture in the politics of multiculturalism is widely debated and is seen as crucial by political philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists alike. Despite the fact that cultural essentialism is widely debated, "the paradox of multicultural vulnerability", as Shachar (2000) so brilliantly put it in order to focus on the problematic, possibly negative effects of the promotion of group rights by states for individuals, was later renamed as the "minorities within minorities" debate; this categorization is an expression of how the complex relationship between the individual, the group and the state was reduced to the dual oppositions of minorities and minorities or minorities and majorities. Similar to the problem of the first generation of multicultural theory, which also focused on a dual relation between majorities and minorities, dichotomies were reproduced in the name of diversity within. Another interesting example is "exit", which is rightly presented by Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev in "Minorities within Minorities" (2005) as necessary in order to provide vulnerable individuals with the support to leave an unbearable situation. Yet, the difficult challenge of how to leave one's own social environment or family was sometimes phrased as if there were a wall around cultures and a door tagged as "exit" through which one could go and leave the cultural space behind. But where is "behind" if culture is permeable and people have different, simultaneous identities? On the other hand, if culture is permeable and fluid does the idea of multiculturalism still have currency? Is transnational cosmopolitanism a political solution for vanishing cultures or should we again reduce questions of difference to social policy so as to avoid cultural essentialism? In order not to repeat familiar mistakes and unintended misuse we have to reconsider the dominant-minoritized relationship. Taking into account the intersectionality of gender, age, sexuality, religion, ethnicity and class of all persons involved includes minoritized and dominant groups and necessitates a multilayered and differentiated approach to members of the established parts of society and citizenship as well. To exclude the established groups' powerful interventions in and perceptions of minority issues neglects

exaggerations that contribute to a representation of the other culture as a threat to EU values of equality.

With these difficulties and pitfalls in mind I will consider recent anthropological contributions to the debate on culture. This will prepare the ground for combining intersectionality and conventional cultural relativism and thus for a debate on continuously contested cultural differences without stepping back from the call for political, legal and social regulation, accommodation and funding by the social welfare state.

Since the anthropologist Terence Turner (1993) posed the question of "What is anthropology that multiculturalists should be mindful of it?" and Ulf Hannerz (1993) simultaneously drew attention to the fact that "culture is everywhere", the strengths and weaknesses of concepts of "culture" in anthropology have been reconsidered and efforts to contribute to multicultural concerns at theoretical as well as at political levels have become manifold in the field of anthropology (Eriksen 1992, 2006; Baumann 1996, 1999; Modood/Werbner 1997; Hannerz 1999; Vertovec 1999; Wikan 1999, 2002; Strasser 2003; Gullestad 2004; Werbner 2007; to name just a few).

Turner (1993) has defined multiculturalism as political activism trying to transform devaluation into appreciation. Since multiculturalism, in his view, represents identity politics, its tools and policies inherently risk essentializing culture. For Turner, multiculturalism is a response to the declining legitimacy of nation-states and the erosion of cultural hegemonies. Ethnic and cultural mobilization have simultaneously been the answer to increasing uncertainty in a globalizing world. In Turner's perception, multiculturalism shares the dominant essentialized concept of culture in order to be able to represent minority culture/s as different in fields like music, education and arts. The reconciliation of different ways of living in a shared space or nation by strengthening "cultures" in fact contributes to the fragmentation of the respective spaces and nations. Turner is also pessimistic in regard to the impact of anthropology on multiculturalism. He

assumes that multiculturalists will not consult anthropological concepts, as anthropology's claim to study the complexity of culture did not convince representatives of multiculturalism, in particular because complexity itself has not been theoretically explored.

Thomas H. Eriksen has iterated Turner's concerns about the viability of anthropological concepts in public and political debates on cultural differences. In his view, the public is reluctant to recognize anthropologists' contributions because anthropologists insist on the primacy of particularity, complexity and ambiguity in the representation of the lived experience of "ordinary people" (Eriksen 2006: 41). He additionally refers to the fact that anthropologists are remarkably hesitant when political and public interventions are the issue. He assumes that an old version of cultural relativism has provoked an attitude of non-intervention among anthropologists and that the misuse of the concept of culture in nationalist and ethnic conflicts "has given us cold feet" (Eriksen 2006: 23).

Yet, scholars in social anthropology over recent decades have shifted their focus from versions of cultural relativism or "mappings of cultures" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992) to questions of the maintenance of boundaries interconnectedness in processes of globalization, transnationality and nationalism (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992; Appadurai 1996; Al-Ali and Koser 2002), self-other relations and multiplicity of belonging (Lovell 1998; Strasser 2003), or to a focus on the political application of cultural essentialism and fundamentalism (Stolcke 1995, 2003; Grillo 2003). In the course of analyzing these issues, they have become increasingly sceptical about their own notion of culture. Embracing a post-colonial, deterritorialized and translocal approach, a prominent strand has even rejected the notion of culture itself as a problematic expression of holism, distinctiveness and reification (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1991; Appadurai 1996; Wikan 1999, 2002).

Meanwhile, recent social and political theory agrees upon an assumption of "culture" as a historically created system of meaning and significance, and of "cultural identity" as

never settled, static and free of ambiguities. The concept of cultural identity as an ongoing process and practice is shared by scholars from such different strands as universalist, post-colonial, instrumentalist or differentiated (e.g. Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Baumann 1999; Okin 1999; Parekh 2000; Deckha 2004). Nonetheless, the question of whether culture is still a normative universe that assists in understanding and evaluating the world and provides us with a secure sense of belonging (Kymlicka 1995; Shachar 2000) or is instead a tool for mobilizing group identity in order to reproduce, increase or create group boundaries (Appadurai 1996; Abu-Lughod 1991) remains contested. Suggestions from a multicultural perspective aim at recognition and accommodation of rights to minorities on cultural, ethnic or religious grounds, but often ignore the differences within identity groups, in particular the unequal distribution of power among members. Critical cultural anthropologists rejected "cultural maps", but have not made use of their experience and knowledge of the problem with "culture" in the 1990s. They have preferred to embark on a post-colonial, deterritorialized and translocal endeavour that has rarely contributed to local politics and the problems of anxieties and contested places within the nation-state. Yet, just when anthropologists became suspicious of or even withdrew from their main concept, "culture went astray" (Wikan 1999) and ran loose in the streets. Cultural identity, a product of social, historical, economic and institutional factors, and an active process creating meaning and offering a sense of rootedness according to theory, has been increasingly applied "out there" by ordinary people in rather essentialist ways.

Against this background I suggest a focus on "cultural anxieties" (Grillo 2003) in order to conceptualize both minoritized and dominant groups' cultural claims for justice as a strategic version of "culturespeak" (Hannerz 1999). The intensive use of culture as a fixed notion may become attractive to minoritized groups when concessions are made to them on cultural grounds and to dominant groups who want to protect their "local identity". Cultural essentialism is widespread "out there on the streets" and it supports

an idea of human beings as cultural subjects, as bearers of a culture, located in a bounded world, which defines them and differentiates them from others (Grillo 2003). Cultural fundamentalism, however, represents a political response to mixo-phobia by territorial segregation. Since different cultures are seen as incommensurable, incommunicable and incomparable, human nature is ethnocentric, and to keep different cultures apart is the solution suggested by, for example, the "New Right" in the EU (Stolcke 1995).

People make use of cultural essentialism, for instance, in the education of their children in order to allow them to identify with "us" Austrians, Kurds, Muslims, or to claim cultural rights and recognition. Yet, all essentialist assumptions intersect with mutually constituting differences and cleavages in practice. Culture is, as Gerd Baumann (1999) puts it, not only essences but simultaneously processes and thus a "dual discursive competence", sometimes essentialized and dominant, but for others or in other contexts demotic and in the process of being made itself. However, I agree with Phillips (2007) that similar criticism and diversification have also occurred for notions of race, ethnicity and woman. But why were these concepts not dismissed? Even when concepts have become slippery they still matter and we need them in order to understand power structures or the embedded stratification, exclusion and differentiation that are at work in the redistribution of wealth.

Since it is obvious that "culture" has been let "loose on the streets" (Wikan 2002: 79), anthropologists largely agree that "culture" itself has to be investigated empirically in its respective contexts, which means the everyday meaning and making of culture including threats, excuses and anxieties. "Culture" in many ways is contributing to the making of "others" or is even "racism in disguise" that supports the nostalgia of mono-culturalism and is a tool for mobilization in multicultural contexts. "Culture" sometimes pretends to be uniform, incommensurable and unchangeable in the context of different nations,

religions and ethnicities. Yet, in fact it is continuously contested and challenged by gender, class, age, sexual orientation and other cross-cutting cleavages.

In order to understand these practices we have to identify empirical methods for FEMCIT research that allow us to acknowledge the slipperiness of theoretical concepts as well as to get a grip on the populist versions of “cultures” that are at work “out there” as an excuse for violence, as a politically mobilized fear of losing one’s identity or an adequate and necessary means of self-determination and identity building.

Anthropology’s contribution to the political debate on cultural differences in a contested territorial field is threefold: 1) Even if “cultural essentialism” is a dividing force it cannot be easily discarded since it provides collectivity and belonging, and additionally we have to recognize that people insist on essentialism in dominant and minoritized contexts. 2) “Cultural anxieties” are often produced in situations of non-recognition and social discrimination and then are easily transformed into cultural fundamentalism (the idea that cultures are incommensurably different and cannot be reconciled and thus should be kept separate) and cultural threats that have to be combated. In order to understand these processes of mutual exclusion and the power structures involved, dominant and minoritized groups have to be integrated into studies of multicultural societies. 3) Studies have to consider contextualized practices of cultures instead of assumptions (conveyed from reports on different contexts) or the representations of “spokespersons” and thus have to understand these practices and their ongoing contestation from within. I suggest “critical relativism”<sup>18</sup> in order to include anthropological experience (the effort to

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<sup>18</sup> “Cultural relativism” goes back to the formation of cultural anthropology as opposed to biological explanations of social and cultural differences. The concept itself was later blamed for the mapping of cultures and for representing them as isolated, territorially fixed, ethnically pure and rather stable. Because anthropologists represented ethnography or field research as entering the space of the distinctive other, it has of course contributed to a perception of the discipline as a colonial endeavour and has installed a dichotomy of “West” and the “rest”. Relativism thus smacks of an outdated project of “othering” asking its followers to respect different ethics and evaluate them according to local cultural standards or particularities instead of applying universal morals and human rights measurements.

understand from within) but remind ourselves to focus on contestation and of the necessity to evaluate these contestations for political applicability.

#### ***4 Beyond “minorities within minorities”: tracing the potential of FEMCIT***

At a time when many public commentators are turning against multiculturalism in response to fears about militant Islam, immigration or social cohesion, many post-colonial, liberal and multicultural feminists are trying to find ways to reconcile minorities' (ethnic, religious, sexual) and women's shared or similar concerns about equality, self-determination and protection from discrimination, exclusion and violence. The necessity of a combined awareness of the needs of vulnerable individuals and minoritized groups in an increasingly culturally and socially anxious environment has been stressed again and again by feminists in their comparison of migration policies and legal regulations of violence against women across the EU.

It is also useful to ask whose agendas are served by the new focus on violence against minority women. In some cases there are legitimate concerns that women's rights are being exploited by an anti-immigration or Islamophobic agenda. This puts minority women's organisations in a difficult position in combining criticism of restrictive immigration policies with support for the commitment to protect women from violence. (Dustin 2006: 33)

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However, there are different versions of studying differences and one major concept is the *conventional* or *weak* version of relativism. I suggest reformulating conventional relativism as a methodological tool to better understand our multicultural reality from different “within” but to include the necessity to evaluate basic assumptions that are shared by many of the members within minorities. I once more refer to the fact that many of the difficult cases in multicultural debates are seen as deviant or not in line with the “real culture” from the perspective of other members of the same ethnic or religious group rather than being culturally uncontested within the respective groups.

Tariq Modood, one of the world's leading authorities on multiculturalism, has recently provided a distinctive contribution to these debates. He contends that the rise of Islamic terrorism has neither discredited multiculturalism nor heralded a clash of civilizations. Instead, it has highlighted a central challenge for the twenty-first century: "the urgent need to include Muslims in contemporary conceptions of democratic citizenship" (Modood 2008). Both multicultural accommodation and gender equality thus cannot be the task of the state alone but must be shared across different sectors of civil society.

A major aim of FEMCIT's studies on the potential and the limits of feminist and women's movements in different European countries is to provide alternatives for a gender fair citizenship. Avoiding cultural resentments in its strategies to combat the inequality of women is a crucial challenge to which I have tried to respond theoretically and methodologically in this contribution. FEMCIT is based on the very idea of contributing to a gendered citizenship including the range of ethnic, religious, bodily, political, social, economic and intimate experiences in the historical and recent contexts of its studies against the backdrop of processes of diversification in the society at large. FEMCIT is thus competent to contribute not only to the debate on citizenship but also to the dismantling of the tensions between feminism and multiculturalism. Because its contribution does not reduce its concerns to troublesome issues "within minorities" but, rather, addresses different important gendered fields in the society at large, it throws open the question of a regulation of diversity that is less threatened by cultural reifications. Women's rights encompass the accommodation of group rights and the accommodation of group rights has to consider the effects on women. FEMCIT's success has to be evaluated against its capacity to include the perspective of diversity in all its feminist efforts, questions, results and political recommendations. Feminist concerns such as economic exclusion, social inclusion, bodily self-determination and the viability of new technology, political representation and transnational relations as well as questions of secularization and the contemporary meaning of religion have to be considered against a background of

diversifying needs and interests. The slippery concepts of class, race, gender, ethnicity or religion and the different and sometimes contradictory assumptions of needs have to be discussed in the studies and in political practice. "Transversal politics" is a suggestion by Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) which offers an opportunity to reflect simultaneously and from an inclusive perspective intersecting and mutually constitutive differences and to consider the ranking of needs addressed by different groups in reaction to differentiated positionalities. Complexity, particularity and multiply intersecting differences shape social experience in an increasingly diversifying world and thus have to contribute to the requirements of a transnational, interrelated and culturally diverse backdrop of citizenship. It is high time to further expound the problems of culture and citizenship and to make ourselves aware that the threat facing European societies is not "multiculturalism without (reified) culture" (Phillips 2007) but "(reified) cultures without multiculturalism" and without political solutions to the upcoming challenges detailed above.

I suggest the combined application of a *conventional cultural relativism* (close observation of differences) and *transversal politics* (dynamic politics of intersectionality) in order to provide "critical relativism" as an empirical and theoretical tool for the difficult task of simultaneously combating violence against women and parochial claims for integration that often result in cultural anxieties, cultural fundamentalism and cultural incompatibility.

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