

FÉMINISME MATÉRIALISTE ET QUEER EN FRANCE :
POLITIQUES CONTRE-HÉGÉMONIQUES

Materialist and queer feminism in France: Politics of Counter-Hegemony

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Abstract

This article questions the relationship between materialist feminism and queer movement in France. It addresses the pluralization of feminist emancipation in France since the mid-1990s in light of the conflict between materialist and queer feminisms, which started as the queer theory was developed in France in the nineties. The starting point is the hypothesis that the link between these two political theoretic discourses is possible since it actually

Résumé

Cet article interroge le rapport entre le féminisme matérialiste et le mouvement queer en France. Il envisage la pluralisation des formes d'émancipation féministe en France depuis le milieu des années 1990 à la lumière de la controverse entre les féminismes matérialiste et queer, qui a commencé quand la théorie queer s'est développée en France dans les années 1990. Mon hypothèse initiale postule que le rapprochement entre ces deux visions

takes places in the current “queer-feminist” movement’s activist practices. The article argues that this combination is meaningful and deserves to be better theorized because it carries with it a radical message of inclusiveness. The alliance of the two approaches questions the definition of the feminist subject, and especially the formulation of a political unity that is not essentialist. The article analyses the extent to which the counter-hegemonic approach provides with tools to answer this issue.

Keywords

Materialist feminism, queer movement, feminist subject, Politics of Counter-Hegemony

théorico-politiques est possible car il se pratique concrètement dans les mouvements queer-féministes actuels. Cet article affirme que cette articulation est pertinente et mérite ainsi d’être théorisée davantage car elle propose une forme d’inclusivité radicale. L’alliance entre ces deux courants questionne en effet la définition du sujet féministe, et, en particulier, une unité politique qui soit non essentialiste. Cet article analyse dans quelle mesure la stratégie contre-hégémonique donne des outils intéressants pour répondre à cet enjeu.

Mots-clés

Féminisme matérialiste, mouvement queer, sujet féministe, contre-hégémonie

Introduction

I would like to present some thought-provoking considerations drawn from my PhD research, which deals with the relationship between materialist feminism and queer feminism in France¹.

My research started as I realized there was a contradiction between these two political trends, which I had become familiar with through my experience as a feminist activist in the 2010s. I was surprised to witness this divide. I considered it excessive, because I thought some combinations between these two approaches could exist. Indeed, some feminists claimed to be inspired by the two trends. Besides, some «queer feminists» groups seemed to bring them together in their activist practices.

While the controversy and the possibilities of its criticisms illustrate some important characteristics of contemporary feminism in France, there is no research that has addressed the issue yet. I wanted to explore this issue and to explore my hypothesis about the possibility and the necessity to articulate materialist feminism and queer feminism for radical feminism and the radical left. My research questions the possibility to articulate the two trends and its political consequences. In order to do this, I chose to focus on the issue of the political feminist subject, which represents one of the main problems in nowadays feminism. The «we, women» of the seventies seems to be challenged in many ways. My argument runs as follow: the union between materialist and *queer* feminisms should develop a counter-hegemonic strategy regarding the conception of the political subject for two reasons. First, this strategy

1. This article is a version of the presentation given at the Conference “Materialist and queer feminism: Politics of Counter-Hegemony”, Congreso Internacional *Cien años de la revolución rusa: Mujeres, utopía y prácticas sociopolíticas*, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, 27th October 2017.

takes into account the plurality of the contingency of the social realm. Second, it aims at unifying and stabilizing the political subject «Us» in order to reverse the various manifestations that material domination takes.

Firstly, I will explain the controversy between the two schools, which started as the queer theory was developed in France in the nineties. I will analyse the main theoretical and political issues of disagreement between the two trends. Lastly, I will advocate for the necessity and possibilities of their articulation in regard to their theoretical basis (in a second time) and to their combination within the feminist movement (in a third time). Similar oppositions between «poststructuralist or postmodern feminism» and «Marxist or materialist feminism» exist in various national contexts. This article only deals with the French context, where the materialist movement is specific.

1. Materialist and Queer Feminisms in France: controversy and complementarity

Firstly, I will present the two trends. And secondly, I will explain their main points of disagreement.

French materialist feminism grew within the Women Liberation Movement in the seventies. The main feminists who wrote and were activists during these years were: Christine Delphy, Colette Guillaumin, Nicole Claude Mathieu, Paola Tabet, Monique Wittig, Danièle Kergoat². They spread their ideas in several reviews, the most important ones being *Questions Féministes* and then *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* (directed by Simone de Beauvoir). However, their ideas weren't unified and did not belong to a specific school of thought. It's only retrospectively and especially in opposition to queer approaches that a feminist materialist school claimed to be a unified movement. Indeed, 2005 appears as the year when this school was formalized³. Nowadays, this mode of thinking is one of the most important and influential in France (in universities, publications and social movements). In particular, Christine Delphy is one of its main representatives. Alongside theorists and activists of the seventies, there are new feminists who claim to be materialist feminists. The most famous ones are Jules Falquet and Sylvie Tissot⁴.

2. C. Delphy, *L'ennemi principal, 1. Economie politique du patriarcat*, Paris, 1998; *L'ennemi principal, 2. Penser le genre*, Paris, 2001; C. Guillaumin, *Sexe, Race et Pratique du pouvoir. L'idée de Nature*, Paris, 1992; D. Kergoat, *Se battre, disent-elles...*, Paris, 2012; X. Dunezat, J. Heinen, H. Hirita and R. Pfefferkorn (coord.), *Travail et rapports sociaux de sexe, Rencontre autour de Danièle Kergoat*, Paris, 2010; N-C. Mathieu, *L'Anatomie politique 1. Catégorisations et idéologies du sexe*, Paris, 2013; N-C. Mathieu, *L'Anatomie politique 2. Usage, déréliction et résilience des femmes*, Paris, 2014; M. Wittig, *La pensée straight*, Paris, 2007.

3. M. Abreu, "De quelle histoire le 'féminisme matérialiste' (français) est-il le nom?", in *Comment s'en sortir?*, 4, 2017, 55-79.

4. O. Curiel and J. Falquet (dir.), *El patriarcado al desnudo. Tres feministas materialistas*, Colette Guillaumin, Paola Tabet, Nicole Claude Mathieu, Buenos Aires, 2005; J. Falquet, *Pax neoliberalia. Perspectives fémi-*

This trend is called «materialist» because it claims a Marxist heritage. Indeed, it shows how social classes, organized according to exploitation relations, structure society. Furthermore, it develops a critic of idealism, that think ideas and discourses are fundamental to perceive the real. On the contrary, materialist thought stresses that it is the material conditions of existence that characterize the real, and not representations. «This (materialist) premise explains and/or is explained by the idea that the way in which life is materially produced and reproduced is the basis of the organization of any society, therefore fundamental at both the individual and collective levels»⁵. However, French materialist feminism distanced itself from the Marxist analysis. It highlights the specificity of the domestic mode of production compared to the capitalist mode of production, that is to say the fact that the appropriation of women's work in the family structure is not the responsibility of capitalism but of patriarchy.

As a method of analysis, the queer theory is in a Foucauldian filiation. It shows how the categories of «men», «women», but also «heterosexual» and «homosexual» are in no way natural but result from power-knowledge relationships. Identity categories are built on binary discursive oppositions, one pole of which is considered inferior to the other, particularly because of its deviant and abnormal nature. By highlighting the multiplicity and diffuse character of power relations, queer policies emphasize the capacity for resistance within power relations, that is to say the possibility of defeating the reproduction of norms of gender and sexuality, in particular by so-called «performance» practices.

The queer movement grew in France in activist places from the ninety's onward through the introduction and translation of American queer theories: Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gayle Rubin, Teresa De Lauretis, and so on⁶. At the beginning of the 2000's, several English queer books were translated into French and a French queer literature developed. Sociologist Sam Bourcier wrote various famous books entitled *Queer Zones* (in several volumes)⁷. He translated Paul Preciado's writings. The development of queer theory depended on the creation of an activist queer network⁸. Despite an important breakthrough of queer

nistes sur (la réorganisation de) la violence, 2016; F. Tissot and S. Tissot, DVD *Je ne suis pas féministe, mais...*, Paris, 2015; F. Tissot and S. Tissot, DVD *L'Abécédaire de Christine Delphy*, Paris, 2015.

5. Christine Delphy, *L'ennemi principal. Tome 2. Penser le genre*, op. cit., 123.

6. Most famous books cited in France are for example: J. Butler, *Trouble dans le genre. Le féminisme et la subversion de l'identité*, Paris, 2005; T. de Lauretis, *Théorie queer et cultures populaires. De Foucault à Cronenberg*, Paris, 2007; E. Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Épistémologie du placard*, Paris, 2008; G. Rubin, *Surveiller et jouir. Anthropologie politique du sexe*, 2010.

7. S. Bourcier, *Queer Zones 1 – Politique des identités sexuelles, des représentations et des savoirs*, Paris, 2001; S. Bourcier, *Queer Zones 2 – Sexopolitiques*, Paris, 2005; S. Bourcier, *Queer Zones 3 – Identités et cultures politiques*, Paris, 2011.

8. One of the first queer association, created in 1996, is named “Le ZOO” in S. Bourcier (dir), *Q comme queer, Les séminaires Q du ZOO (1996-1997)*, Lille, Les cahiers Gai Kitsch Camp, 1998. Various queer associations have been created during the 2000's as “le groupe d'action Gloss” (G.roupement de L.opettes O.rganiquement S.exuelles et S.ubversives) in 2001, “le collectif d'artistes contemporains queer”, “Queer Factory” in 2002, “le groupe Panik Culture” in 2001, etc.

approaches, which contributed to a renewal of feminist thoughts and practices, they remain a minority in France⁹.

In fact, the development of queer approaches does not lead to a modification of paradigm because materialist approaches remain hegemonic. We are in a situation where both trends coexist and each of them, in front of the other, conceals its own differences and dis-sents in order to build a stronger block fighting for hegemony, organized around two central figures: Delphy versus Butler. Nevertheless, this conflict cannot be explained only with competing position's issues, because theoretical and political disagreements are deep and important. The controversy is mostly fuelled by materialist feminism, this sometimes in an offensive way, often caricaturing the opposite camp¹⁰. As for many controversies, this conflict manifests itself not only in writings, but also verbally, as for instance during conferences¹¹ or demonstrations. This controversy structures the feminist field in France to a great extent.

We can observe that materialist feminism and queer feminism disagree on three points: the explanation of gender oppression, the feminist subject, and political strategies.

Materialist Feminists, in a Marxist tradition, describes the social gender relations (the exact French expression, which is «rapports sociaux de sexe», cannot be properly translated), which dominate, exploit and oppress women. Especially the sexual division of work explains male domination. This refers to the specific mode of production, named domestic mode of production or patriarchy, which exploits women's labour for the benefit of men. It consists of the appropriation, not only of the work, but also of the body, the sexuality and the time of women by men. Oppression is understood as a domination, which separates two classes: the dominant one (men) and the dominated one (women). This is the reason why, for materialist feminism, the feminist subject is the «women class»: because women share a common domination and fight a common struggle. Political strategy consists in rising consciousness by politicizing personal issues, this in non-mixed groups. The aim is the abolition of gender relations through the modification of gendered work relationships.

Queer feminists, in a Foucauldian tradition, are interested in norms of gender and sexuality. They consider gender oppression as the result of a normalization and categorization process, related to diffused and discursive mechanisms of power. They focus on the mechanisms, which exclude gender and sexual minorities. The category «women» is not claimed as the political feminist subject. On the contrary, they highlight the necessity to make its

9. R. Revenin, "A Preliminary Assessment of the First Four decades of LGBTQ Studies in France (1970-2010)", in O. Davis, H. Kollias (dir.), *Queer's Theory Return to France*, Edinburgh, 2012, 168.

10. N-C. Mathieu, "Dérive du genre/ stabilité des sexes", in N. Chetcuti, C. Michard (dir.), *Lesbianisme et féminisme, Histoires politiques*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2003, 291-311; C. Delphy, "L'invention du 'French Feminism': une démarche essentielle", *L'ennemi principal, Tome 2, Penser le genre*, Paris, 2009, 306- 310. Agone, "Comment le genre trouble la classe", in *Agone*, Marseille, n. 43, 2010. In particular in this review: Rédaction, "Ce que le tournant postmoderne a fait au féminisme", *op. cit.*, 7-2 and B. Epstein, "Pourquoi le poststructuralisme est une impasse pour le féminisme", *op. cit.*, 85-107.

11. C. Delphy, "Genre et race: des systèmes sociaux comparables", Intervention at the 6th International Congress of Francophone Feminist Researches, from August 29 to September 2, 2012, at the University of Lausanne.

genealogy, which means analysing how it is the result of a categorization process inside power-knowledge relations, rather than claiming it as the substrate of feminism. Furthermore, the interest for the process of exclusion leads them to pay attention to sexual and gender minorities and to include trans and non-straight people within the feminist subject. So, the political subject is not «women class» but «queer multitudes»¹², at the intersection of various identities and undetermined. Finally, rather than aiming at the «liberation» as an abolition of domination, the objective is to promote resistances within power relations, and to underline empowerment and subversive abilities, understood as the ones able to defeat the reproduction of normative assignations.

Materialist feminists consider queer theory as a postmodern and poststructuralist methodology. In that sense, they claim that it's totally contradictory with a Marxist and materialist approach. Insofar as queer practices and ideas are mostly inspired by Foucauldian thought, they can't take into account systemic and hierarchical dominations nor the sexual division of work. Materialist feminists blame queer feminists for being unable to promote collective strategies of resistance and to give up the goal of overthrowing the gender system. To summarize these oppositions, we can say that materialist feminism is against the discursive queer approach. According to this position, queer theory would affirm that «everything is only discourse». Saying so would leave aside the materiality of gender relations. As explained by Nicole-Claude Mathieu «Symbolic, discursive and parodic aspects of gender are privileged at the expense of the material and historical reality of women's oppression»¹³. Materialist feminism criticizes the idealism of queer theory, because it puts representations above material reality. On the other side, queer feminism criticizes the way materialism develops a binary and reductive analysis in opposing women class and men class¹⁴. This approach does not take into account non-binary genders. Queer movement condemns the essentialism of materialism, which forgets the fact that categories are always the results of power and are therefore excluding.

Finally, the association between materialist and queer feminisms unveils a political and theoretical discussion, which has broader consequences. Concept of «class» is apprehended in a Marxist way, not as a sociological but rather as a strategic concept to think about revolutionary unity. Concept of «multitude» can be considered in the sense Toni Negri and Michael Hardt have developed, namely by stressing the plurality of social subjects who are fighting for social justice¹⁵. The encounter between materialist feminism and queer feminism questions

12. B. Preciado, «Multitudes queer». Notes pour une politique des 'anormaux', *Multitudes*, vol. 2, n.12, 2003, 17- 25. R. Brindi, «Les sujets nomades féministes comme figure des multitudes», *Multitudes*, vol. 2, n. 12, 2003, 27-38.

13. N.C. Mathieu, «Sexe et genre», H. Hirata, F. Laborie, H. Le Doare, D. Senotier, *Dictionnaire critique du féminisme*, Paris, PUF, 2004, 209.

14. S. Bourcier «La fin de la domination masculine. Pouvoir des genres, féminismes et post- féminisme queer», *Multitudes*, vol. 2, n.12, 2003, 69-80.

15. M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Multitude: guerre et démocratie à l'époque de l'Empire*, Paris, 2004.

the possibilities of thinking a subject that is both unitary and plural. To say it differently: to construct a political unity in a non-essentialist way.

2. A possible and relevant articulation between materialist and queer feminisms

In a second part, I will argue that articulation between materialist feminism and queer feminism is possible and relevant despite their disagreements. I will demonstrate that despite their theoretical, political and strategic disagreements, they share a constructivist method, which is an important basis to construct alliances.

Constructivism aims at showing how things result of a social construct and not of some essential nature¹⁶. It affirms that there is no pre-social or pre-discursive existence. Materialist and queer feminisms share the idea that male dominance is not the consequence of a natural or biological difference between men and women, which should involve specific social roles for each of them. On the contrary, they show how gendered as well as sexual categories are entirely socially produced: they are the effects and not the ground of exploitation and exclusion's relations, which take place in particular social and historical contexts. They affirm that reality do not exist independently of social representations. As Delphy says: «Everything that we know, everything which exists in our world, flowers, birds, mammals, not to mention furniture, clothes, etc. Everything is a social construct. There is nothing else than a social construct, there is nothing natural: even the natural world is a world built by us as *we* created categories to apprehend it»¹⁷. Queer and materialist perspectives consider that nature, biology or body can't be perceived apart from the social filter.

This thinking leads to the strong affirmation that gender creates sexes. Indeed, unlike feminists for whom gender refers to different social roles equivalent to biological sexes (seen as natural facts), materialist and queer theories show that gender, as a system of domination, creates categories of sex. We heard that Judith Butler's Queer Theory is revolutionary because it affirms that: «Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established»¹⁸. But materialist feminists, as Delphy, formulated this idea earlier. In the preface of *The main enemy, conceiving gender*, Delphy entitled a chapter «A reversal of perspective: gender creates sex». She says clearly that «it's hierarchy which induces division of labour; it is this division of labour in a wide sense that we name 'gender'. If gender does not exist, what we call 'sex' wouldn't have a signification, and would not be perceived as important: it would be a simple physical distinc-

16. R. Keucheyan, *Le constructivisme, des origines à nos jours*, Paris, 2007.

17. C. Delphy, "58 Minutes avec Christine Delphy". On line: <http://www.radiogrenouille.com/actualites-2/sujets/58-minutes-avec-christine-delphy/> [Accessed 17 April 2019].

18. J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York, 1999, 11.

tion among others»¹⁹. She affirms that «gender precedes sex: in this hypothesis, it is a simple marker of social division: it serves to recognize and to identify who dominates and who is dominated»²⁰.

This constructivist approach leads to similar politics: against identity politics and for radical politics. The aim is not to give more power to women or LGBT people, or to wish equality in difference, but to interrogate how identity categories have been constructed into power relations and to overthrow social structures that create them. Therefore, materialist and queer feminisms denounce identity politics, because they don't put into question creation of categories inside relations of power. In this sense, both trends disagree with liberal feminism and LGBT mainstream movement who claim rights for categories without questioning them. This constructivist approach incarnates itself in a radical vision of political struggle, which aims at a transformation of the structural roots of society. Constructivist process, showing the constructed character of oppression, contemplates a deep social change. Only a radical transformation appears relevant because only these roots create domination. Both of those currents of thought refuse to settle for formal and legal demands, because, rather than wanting a change through and inside the State, they defend practices of self-organization, self-defence, subversion, consciousness rising and direct action. They search to encourage emancipation and empowerment of people, as well as spaces and practices of freedom.

If there are many points of convergence between these two approaches, which set a basis to articulate them, there are significant differences we could not ignore. Indeed, they present two versions of constructivism: on one hand, materialist feminism stresses the social reproduction of domination as a permanent feature, a constant, and underlines the systematic reproduction of gender hierarchy; on the other hand, queer feminism seeks to deconstruct any form of abusive systematization and highlights variability and plurality into power relations. Materialist thought considers that social construction is a process characterized by reproduction of structures. As Danièle Kergoat says, the materialist perspective seeks to «determine invariants in the principles of functioning of social relations»²¹. Queer approach looks at social construction as the contrary of systematicity and as a contingent process. Performative acts lead to repetition of norms but these ones can be always unsettled. Behind these differences of constructivist method, we found two approaches of the concept of power. Queer theory emphasizes possibilities of resistance despite social construction whereas materialist feminism points out the «strong» character of male dominance and thus its permanence. In that respect, materialist feminism sees hierarchy of sexes as principal and determinant in the analysis of male domination system. Queer feminism underlines troubles of hierarchy of genders instead.

Yet, I emphasize the complementarity of these two perspectives. I argue that their union leads to a form of radical constructivism, manifested by a dual requirement of anti-ide-

19. C. Delphy, Tome 2, *L'ennemi principal... op. cit.*, 26.

20. C. Delphy, Tome 2, *L'ennemi principal... op. cit.*, 230.

21. D. Kergoat, «Dynamique et consubstantialité des rapports sociaux» in E. Dorlin (dir.), *Sexe, race, classe, pour une épistémologie de la domination*, Paris, 2009, 119.

alism and anti-essentialism. Materialist perspective points how discourses could not change material social relations and queer approach stresses on the problem of negating the historical and political and thus contingent conditions of gender power. These two analyses could be considered as complementary visions of gender. One identifies gender (in the singular) to observe male dominance on women as a hierarchical system of partition between men and women. The other deals with the production of genders (in the plural) to underline possibilities of resistance into that partition system. Considering both allows to analyze how social structures are both material and discursive and how social construction sets up via systematic reproduction and contingency. It questions thereby the possibility to imagine a feminist subject as women, trans, non-binary, genderqueer and non-straight people.

3. A materialist and queer feminist activism

In my last point, I will present several observations about the articulation of materialist and queer approaches in some queer feminist groups. By «queer feminism» I understand two kinds of activism. The first way claims to be «trans-bi-pédé-gouine» (which signifies «trans-bisexual- faggot-dyke», the French translation of «queer», which affirms the political character of LGBT's identities) and to be also in a feminist heritage. The second way claims to be feminist but to bear too some queer fights and reflection.

Nowadays, many feminists declare to be influenced by these two traditions, materialist and queer²². Besides, some groups, born in the years 2000 and 2010, seem to practice this dual kinship, without spelling it out. I studied some queer feminist organizations in France, which develop in my opinion this dual reference in their activist movement: Les Panthères roses, la Barbe, les Furieuses Faloppes, les Tumultueuses, le Trou De Balle (TDB), Etudions Gayment, le collectif Tirésias, Collective féministe de Paris 8, G.A.R.Ç.E.S, Action Radicale Féministe. Some are gathered into collective as «Collectif 8 Mars Pour TouTEs» (which gathers different organizations as Act Up, Les Tumultueuses, Femmes en lutte 93 or le Strass) or «les Dures à queer». These groups form Pink Bloc during demonstrations. Some activist places as «la Mutinerie», a queer feminist bar in Paris, or festive events, as «la Marche des Tordues», «la TEUFF», or «Ladyfests» express this approach as some magazines or journals (*Hysteria*, *Comment S'en Sortir* and *PolitiQueer*).

22. L. Bereni, «Une nouvelle génération de chercheuses sur le genre. Réflexions à partir d'une expérience située», in *Contretemps*, 2012. On line: <https://www.contretemps.eu/une-nouvelle-generation-de-chercheuses-sur-le-genre-reflexions-a-partir-dune-experience-situee/> [Accessed 17 April 2019].

Queer feminism could be qualified as an «underground feminist network»²³ and as a «minority feminism»²⁴ by contrast with the French dominant feminism²⁵ and the mainstream LGBT movement²⁶, which are visible on the media scene and participate on state institutions. On the contrary, activist queer feminism is more radical and autonomous compare to media and State²⁷.

This queer feminist militancy is characterized by a strong hybridization of ideas and practices. Manon Labry says it's a «moving and multifaceted movement, whose one of the only true feature is the circulatory aspect of ideas and practices developed»²⁸. Activists articulate various feminist traditions and draw a feminism «on demand»²⁹. Beyond a clear affiliation to queer approaches, this queer feminism claim to belong to a tradition of radical feminist politics of the seventies more than others groups, especially the dominant ones³⁰. In my view, the use of the Women Liberation Movement's symbol together with the one of transfeminism describes well this dual belonging (fig. 1 and fig. 2).



Fig. 1³¹

23. M. Labry, “Riot Grrrls américaines et réseaux féministes ‘underground’ français”, *Multitudes*, 2010, vol. 3, n. 42, 60-66.

24. F. Boggio Ewanjé-Épée and S. Magliani-Belkacem, *Les féministes blanches et l’empire*, Paris, 2012, 99-101.

25. For instance: Collectif National pour le droit des Femmes, *Osez le Féminisme, Ni Putes Ni Soumises*.

26. The LGBT mainstream movement is made of “Inter-LGBT” (which gathers sixty associations). The symbol of the contestation of its politics is the organization of an alternative gay pride, named “Night pride” by queer associations for the first time in 2015. The message of this “Night Pride” was “To dance is not enough, our fights are inclusive, our prides are political”.

27. The difference with the mainstream feminism is not only about the question of representation in the State but also about the issues of veil, prostitution and queer people in a complex way. S. Noyé, “Troisième vague”, in C. Bard and S. Chaperon (dir.), *Dictionnaire des féministes. France – XVIII^e-XXI^e siècle*, Paris, 2017, 1456-1458.

28. M. Labry, “Riot Grrrls américaines...”, *Multitudes*, 2010, vol. 3, n. 42, 64.

29. A. Baril, *Judith Butler et le Féminisme postmoderne: analyse théorique et conceptuelle d’un courant controversé*, mémoire de maîtrise de philosophie de l’Université de Sherbrooke, 2005, 194.

30. C. Möser, *Féminismes en traduction. Théories voyageuses et traductions culturelles*, Paris, 2013, 152 and 126.

31. “Collective Tiresias of Paris IV University”. On line: <http://collectiftiresias.blogspot.com> [Accessed 17 April 2019].



Fig. 2³²

Political demands and modes of organization show how materialist and queer's approaches coexist in practice.

We found in these groups an extended vision of gender domination: simultaneously understood as men class's domination on women class and gender and sexual minorities' oppression. In this perspective, domestic mode of production and normative subjection function together. The concepts of patriarchy on the one hand and the concept of sexual and gender normativity on the other hand are considered as intertwined. Patriarchy stresses economic and social organization of male dominance and underlines sexual division of labour, and gender normativity is related to pathologization, subordination and marginalization of queer people. Eventually, the call to subversive resistance unfolds both individual practices of «the self» and denunciation of patriarchy. We can see on the website of a queer squat in Toulouse, named Le Trou de Balle, a representation of these two aims of the fight in the queer feminist groups: «smash patriarchy» and «create your own gender»³³.

Regarding political claims, those movements draw attention to material issues, in particular the one of labour, not only about «women class» but queer people too. For example, the *8 mars pour toutes*'s banner for the 8th march demonstration in 2014 was entitled «Invisible labours, invisible violences, let's go out of the shadows»³⁴. With this slogan, activists wish to denounce the sexual division of labour specific to domestic mode of production. They stand against the fact that the care and domestic work done by «women, trans people, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual people» is unpaid, invisibilised and precarious. They

32. «Study Gayly». On line: <http://etudionsgayment.blogspot.com> [Accessed 17 April 2019].

33. On the website of the queer feminist squat in Toulouse. On line: <https://tidibi.wordpress.com> [Accessed 17 April 2019].

34. See the «8 Mars pour toutes» website. On line: <http://8marspourtoutes.quickup.org/actions/journee-internationale-pour-le-droit-des-femmes/index.html> [Accessed 17 April 2019].

are moreover victims of sexist violence at home or at their work place. These groups criticize patriarchal and capitalist economic violence and exploitation. But the material domination they denounce concerns not only women class but queer multitudes too.

Nowadays, the feminist subject in many queer feminist groups is «women, lesbian and trans people». A lot of these groups develop a non-mixed form of organization. In particular, they create consciousness rising groups, underlining the necessity to encourage public speaking and self-defence. This non-mixed organization is not reserved for women, but often concerns «women, lesbian and trans people». In that way, common feminist definition as a fight for women's equality becomes³⁵, as expressed by «A Statement of Trans-Inclusive Feminism and Womanism», «a mission to advocate for women *and other people* oppressed, exploited, and otherwise marginalized by patriarchal and misogynistic systems and people»³⁶. Queer feminist movements bring to existence a new feminist subject: simultaneously belonging to women class and queer multitudes, it recognizes the specificity of women's exploitation and oppression and queer people's domination, which is not only about identity but also economic violence.

This subject is plural, temporary and evolutionary. Often is «women, lesbian and trans people», sometimes is «women, lesbian, trans, non-straight people», or sometimes «black women», «queer of colours», «disables women», etc. It's a specific subject whose definition changes according to political context.

We could then wonder: how can we build unity from such an internal diversity? I think it's interesting to explore feminist subject in a strategic way and to consider it as the result of an hegemonic process, temporary and subjective. My suggestion is to observe this feminist subject through the concept of «counter-hegemony» formulated by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, in a Gramscian tradition³⁷. Hegemony is considered as «a kind of political relation»³⁸ which allows to unify various claims in a context of antagonism. By claiming that «composition stems from division»³⁹, it allows to understand how unity is built from differences. Indeed, the hegemonic process identifies an antagonistic situation by distinguishing who is in a hegemonic position and who is in a subaltern position. Then, the aim is to create a federative equivalence between various subjects without affirming these ones share the same oppression. The equivalence is found designating a similar political (and not objective)

35. Feminism is the “political perspective based on conviction that women suffer a specific and systematic injustice as women and that is possible and necessary to redress this injustice by individual and collective struggles”. L. Bereni, S. Chauvin, A. Jaunait and al., *Introduction aux Gender Studies. Manuel des études sur le genre*, Bruxelles, 2012, 17.

36. “A Statement of Trans-Inclusive Feminism and Womanism”. On line: <https://feministsfightingtransphobia.wordpress.com> [Accessed 17 April 2019].

37. E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hégémonie et stratégie socialiste. Expériences philosophiques. Vers une politique démocratique radicale*, Besançon, Les solitaires intempestifs, 2009; C. Mouffe, *Le politique et ses enjeux. Pour une démocratie plurielle*, Paris, 1994.

38. E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hégémonie et stratégie socialiste... op. cit.*, 254.

39. Expression of Étienne Balibar during the conference “Hégémonie, populisme, émancipation. Perspectives sur la philosophie d’Ernesto Laclau (1935-2014)”, Paris, 26th and 27th May 2015.

opponent. Otherwise, a counter-hegemonic strategy constructs an articulation, and not an addition, of social struggles. These ones are not conceived as entities in themselves, which is possible to add up, but, on the contrary, they found their signification according to the others they are articulated with. Finally, counter-hegemony is not a punctual coalition. Because it aims to create another hegemony, its goal is to develop a long-term strategy.

To examine the constitution of the feminist subject through Hegemony Theory allows us to understand how differences could be unified in a non-essentialist way. Thus, it also invites us to understand how the queer feminist subject, while highlighting its internal plurality, does not give up its unity project. This feminist subject has to be read as the result of a temporary aggregation of various subjects who unite linking up a chain of equivalences. That means they bring forward a similar but non-identical experience of gender oppression. Then they name an antagonist relation, they point out a frontier between «us» and «them». For example, «us, women, lesbian, trans people» against «cisgender-heteropatriarchy». This way of building a political subject complies with two goals: firstly, to affirm plurality and subjectivity of feminists, secondly, to restrict a possibly infinite enumeration of subjects. It gives a relevant meaning for their gathering. Hegemonic strategy affirms the necessity to express an «us» in the political action, despite all the differences we want to recognize in the feminist field. The «us» is not the result of an objective antagonism but the result of a collective and political will.

The concept of «counter-hegemony» offers a successful articulation between a comprehension of the reproduction of inequalities and oppressions on a global scale and in a systemic way, and an attention to the contingency of the plurality of social phenomenon. As such, it seeks to draw a political subject which includes the concepts of class and multitudes: women as a class and queer multitudes, as well as the concept of «class» as an affirmation of unity and the one of «multiplicity» as the expression of the plurality of subjectivities. The political subject «us» is then understood not as the result of an objective antagonism but rather as the outcome of a hegemonic construction, which creates a collective will by stressing the importance of subjective diversity. We clarify the fact that the inclusive and radical feminism that has been drawn by materialist and queer feminism could develop a counter-hegemony both to dominant feminism and to neoliberal politics.

Conclusion

To conclude, I think that the articulation between materialist feminism and queer feminism is relevant and deserves to be better theorized because it carries along with it a radical message of inclusiveness.

This alliance questions political unity in a non-essentialist way. Indeed, to summarize, the queer approach defends that the feminist subject does not pre-exist to political action. In this view, the categories through which we perceive people's struggles are always discursively constructed. This queer reflection differs from a materialist conception about political unity considered as the consequence of an objective domination. This materialist reflection goes along with the danger of essentialization, negating internal differences and excluding other

subjects. However, the concept of «women class» is pertinent to think the specific women's exploitation and to think about political unity.

Between women class and queer multitudes, strategic thinking can address interesting issues. Indeed, it matters no more to wonder who is the feminist subject, because this «us» has become plural and complex. On the contrary, the question becomes: how can we build together an « us » aware of all our internal differences? In order to achieve this project, counter-hegemonic strategy might be relevant. We can develop for example a counter-hegemony to liberal feminism and neoliberal capitalism. Nowadays in France, it seems that the most active groups mobilized against neoliberal reforms inside the feminist field are the queer feminist groups. In the current social movement against labour reforms, Pink Blocs are fully committed. As an activist of *Le Collectif des féministes révolutionnaires* puts it «attacks against workers' protection are intrinsically sexist, homophobic, lesbophobic, biphobic and transphobic; as we are the most vulnerable, we are the first to get the sack»⁴⁰.

40. "Pink bloc: Ces LGBT qui se mobilisent et défilent contre la politique Macron", 10/12/2017. On line: <http://tetu.com/2017/10/12/pink-bloc-lgbt-defilent-contre-politique-demmanuel-macron/> [Accessed 17 April 2019].