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The Ursula Hirschmann Annual Lecture on Gender and Europe

Laura Balbo

Making a European Quilt. 'Doing Gender' in the European Social Sciences



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'Doing Gender' in the European Social Sciences

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The **Ursula Hirshmann Annual Lecture Series on Gender and Europe** is the annual lecture of the Gender Studies Programme of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. The series seeks to stimulate research and thinking which link ideas about Europe and the study of gender.

Named after Ursula Hirschmann, who created the group *Femmes pour l'Europe* in Brussels in 1975 as a space to reflect on, critique and contribute to the contemporary debate on the construction of Europe, the series is a reminder of this engagement. Ursula Hirschmann was born in Berlin in 1913, to a Jewish family, and when the Nazis seized power in Germany, she migrated first to France and then to Italy. In 1941 she played an important role in the creation and diffusion of Spinelli's *Ventotene Manifesto*. She married two anti-Fascists and Europeanists, Eugenio Colorni and Altiero Spinelli. Some of her autobiographical writings have been published as *Noi senza patria* (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993).

The Gender Studies Programme was established at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute in October 2000, and builds on over a decade's work in this field at the EUI. The Programme's general objectives are to support and develop the scholarly work of research students, fellows, academic staff and visitors to the EUI in the study of gender, and to stimulate interdisciplinary work across the EUI's four teaching departments. In addition to the Annual Lecture, the Programme holds regular seminars and workshops organized around various themes, often in collaboration with the departments.

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LECTURE

by

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Introduction

For several reasons I am deeply grateful for this occasion. Working at this presentation has given me great pleasure; it fact it turned out to be an opportunity to revisit past experiences and to remember friends, all having in common the perspectives suggested in the title: Europe, the social sciences, gender. I have gone back to books and journals, activities in research centres and networks, a great many meetings and conferences and projects. Things I had forgotten have come back to mind.

The use of the 'quilting' language also gives me pleasure. Of course I ought to explain why I consider the metaphor of patchwork quilts and quilting appropriate in discussing the issues I shall deal with. Moreover I find it adds something to the concept of a *knowledge-based society* as it is widely used in European debates today. In fact it comes closer to my own approach: our present context is a *learning society* and social actors in modernity, adult women in particular, are *lifelong learners*. Let me just say here that there is something in women's everyday life practices and strategies, in their continuous learning and un-learning, which makes me immediately think of quilt-making: quilters make decisions as to what to choose and cut and put together. Colourful, intricate pieces are composed; objects of value are created. Perhaps I need to add that I love old patchwork covers. I have been a collector for many years now. Finally: referring to quilts (an 'American Art', as it is suggested by Patricia Mainardi, 1978) is a way for me, in these difficult times, to feel in touch with friends and places in the United States.

For all these reasons I wish to thank the Robert Schumann Centre for inviting me to present the Ursula Hirschmann Lecture 2004. It is a great honour and I am deeply grateful. It has been moreover, as I have said already, a most pleasurable occasion.

At this point I'd like to focus on what I take to be the main reason in addressing the issues I am going to present. And I hope you will find it acceptable, in a presentation where most of the voices and thoughts are women's, that I should start with a quote from Pierre Bourdieu:

On ne peut pas se contenter d'attendre que les questions émergent sous une forme claire [...] c'est une des responsabilités des sciences sociales, mais peut-être plus largement, d'être attentif à tous ces problèmes qui n'accèdent pas à la formulation.²

I consider this statement to be extremely relevant to what we are going to address: how to draw attention to questions which are not (or, not yet) brought to full awareness in the public discourse and in policy-making; and how to deal with the responsibility of engaging in intellectual work. This is what I would like to convey in presenting my three 'quilting stories' or, in more traditional words, a picture/review of some areas of theoretical contributions and empirical research throughout the past thirty years or so, which in my opinion have been relevant and actually still are, in *doing gender* and in the development of *the European social sciences*.

While I was organizing this presentation it has been striking to see how in all areas of research and thinking which have been of interest to me so many others—who shared a women's perspective in *analyzing society in a process of change*—constantly 'quilted' their ideas and studies within a common frame. (As Rosi Braidotti (2001) notes, there are 'advantages in networking'.) In fact what I mostly hope to be able to share with you is precisely the idea of *quilting* as a way of doing research and theory (not quite the same as the more obvious practices in scientific work, i.e. reading and elaborating on and referring to relevant contributions within the scholarly community).

Three 'Quilting Stories'

Scraps and threads and a variety of patterns were stitched into the first quilt—which focuses on women and work, women and the state, women and the family—by scholars from all parts of Europe. A process of analysis and re-definition (may I say 'change of paradigm'?) has in fact taken place in the social sciences as well as in political discourse in many European contexts.

The main concern in my second quilt is with the 'democratic deficit' in our political systems. The focus is on boundaries, or rather barriers, between the 'inner circle' of those who hold the power of admittance and exclusion (concerning public discourse and the political agenda) and those 'outside' (among them social scientists, men as well as women; feminist scholars; women in general). These boundaries are rigidly controlled. *Imposer une vision du monde* (these are Bourdieu's words again) against alternative visions is what is at stake. A more courageous public discourse is needed on increasingly visible social problems at a global level: extreme inequalities in the distribution of resources and in access to health and education; a deteriorating environment; violence, hate, fundamentalism. The gender dimension to these is obviously relevant.

In these same fields—public discourse and the European political agenda—I bring my third quilt into our reasoning. The issues here are Eurocentrism; processes of racialization and the future of Europe; and gender issues in a racialized/ethnicized Europe.

The Quilting Metaphor in the European Social Sciences

Choosing the *quilting* metaphor in addressing 'doing gender in the European social sciences' hence refers to how things developed from the seventies onwards: a process in time, open to additions and changes; a variety of possible uses (in the social sciences as well as in policy-making); an opportunity to communicate ideas and words; and a final product, or artefact.

After the end of the war, in the sixties and seventies when it all began, things were changing all around us. One most interesting element is that so many of us engaged in building concepts and words, metaphors and analytical tools, in fact finding what we thought were more appropriate ways to approach the social phenomena we analyzed. Not simply different from those in the mainstream social sciences; to some extent, innovative and anticipatory. Common ways of thinking, a shared agenda for research and commitment were such a product, not entirely planned, nor rigidly organized. Different patterns in the ways connections are established and research practices are carried out seem to prevail now: 3 increasingly specialized 'sub-areas' have emerged, whereas what I describe are truly 'European' overlapping and actively interacting practices.

We thought it was a crucial task to describe, compare, anticipate. We aimed at developing a perspective on *European society in a process of change* partly alternative and certainly innovative with respect to what was available in the predominant/mainstream (mostly gender-blind) literature. As in the quilt-making process much of this went 'unseen and unsung' though, let me quote once more from Mainardi: 'The women who made quilts knew and valued what they were doing'.

A few preliminary remarks are needed here. When saying the 'social sciences' I refer to disciplinary contributions and interdisciplinary practices primarily in the fields of sociology, social anthropology, some sectors of history, economics and political science, and more recently, cultural studies. I have chosen fields I have been involved in and am particularly familiar with: other issues which are equally relevant I have left out. Focusing on developments in Europe, moreover, of course does not mean overlooking connections with thinkers in the international scholarly community. For sure, and luckily, there is more than Europe in the experience of the decades and scholars I am going to revisit, and I shall point to some such connections. Neither does the reference to gender and women's studies ignore that in these same years extremely insightful contributions to the analysis of contemporary society have come from 'mainstream' scholarship in the fields I shall consider.

And finally, the 'thread' in the quilting process I describe in this essay is my personal experience, 'doing gender' within the wider frame of the social sciences in Europe, in the past thirty/thirty five years or so. At some point, in preparing for this occasion, I came to the conclusion that I could not possibly give adequate attention to all the elements in the picture. So I decided to put myself at the centre: there was no other way to tell the story. I trust you'll catch the irony in my way of putting it.

I. A 'Friendship Quilt': Women and Work, Women and the State, Women and the Family

I wish to start by giving a detailed account of what was going on in research and public discourse in the seventies and eighties throughout Europe on women and work, women and the state, women and the family. This turns out to be a large quilt. An intricate pattern of partly overlapping blocks results out of this process. Actually quilters pieced together blocks with different designs, and often a variety of patterns were combined in the same quilt, a practice which develops in time, with multiple 'authors' contributing to the final product. And quilters used to exchange scraps of fabric and patterns, which was also an opportunity to communicate, to stay in touch, to build a dialogue of sorts. To quote from Patricia Mainardi's description of *crazy quilts*: 'Women sewed odd-shaped scraps of fabric together [...] though there is no order or design to the pieces, there seems to have been from the beginning a natural tendency to introduce some elements of order' (1978: 17) She also says: 'quilting was women's work'. This resulted in an extraordinary variety of patterns, and different uses: bed coverings, comforters, fancy quilts, appliqués. There were Friendship quilts, Soldier's quilts, Bible quilts, Freedom quilts, Memory or mourning quilts, Bridal quilts, and countless others.

In 1974 two very important books by Ann Oakley (*The Sociology of Housework* and *Housewife*) set the stage for empirical evidence on emerging trends but also for a shift to new words: women's dual-work, or *doppia presenza*; resources and strategies; caring work; a needs-oriented, woman-friendly society. (In fact, it all started in the seventies. The 1980s were a particularly rich decade, and it went on into the 1990s.) It soon became clear that what was being put forward was a comprehensive, problematic, innovative perspective on overall processes taking place in Europe at the time, in particular the growing numbers of women in the labour market and the model of the welfare state facing a 'crisis': hence the changing relationships between state and market, public welfare and informal or voluntary, community services. The women's movement of course and feminist thinking were crucial components in this process.

A controversial concept was put forward by Ulrike Prokop in 1974: 'The potential and ability for expressive, non instrumental behaviour [...] is structurally rooted in the female mode of experience [...] a mode of production peculiar to women [...] a mode of production directed toward the satisfaction of needs'. Care, and the importance of satisfying individual needs, were seen as women's primary concern as well as skill. This meant a change of paradigm in the way welfare provisions and values had been approached in the mainstream literature. In a paper first presented in 1983, Kari Waerness suggested that the 'rationality of caring' had to be taken into full consideration.

While rationality has been a central issue in the social sciences since the time of the founding fathers, caring is a concept which until the latest years scarcely has received any attention in the sociological literature [...] What it means to care for others and how care-giving services are to be carried out in the welfare states of the western world today is now attracting the interest of social scientists [...] Both in the face of today's economic recession (or stagnation) and in the face of the legitimization of many of the welfare state services being challenged for other reasons than economic, there is obviously a great need to find better models for organizing caregiving work. [...] It first of all seems necessary to give more theoretical attention to the concept of 'caring'. A new image of the social actor and a

reconceptualization of 'rationality', emerging from a lot of women's studies, seem to be a promising starting point.⁶

In what was put forward women were part of the ongoing processes of transformation, they were indeed primary agents of change (in many directions, at many different levels, we analyzed women's roles in society, women's past history, women's identity and self-understanding). What adult women do in their daily lives—hard work, of course (as in the title Ilona Kickbusch chose for her 1979 analysis)—but also their competences, skills, and strategies were described, and elements of continuous learning and creativity emerged. The focus hence shifts from addressing issues of rights and entitlements to how needs are met in daily life: our centre-piece was now a needs-oriented society. These changes in wording and conceptualization were brought about by our gendered perspective. I want to insist that this was a generation of women positioned, in many European countries, in circumstances that made them aware of and witness to transformations in their own roles and ways of living as well as in society. We contributed to the understanding of processes of transformation; and understood that we, the women, fully contributed to such processes.

Women were in the labour market but one could not overlook that adult women were still in charge of housekeeping and home-making roles. In saying 'family work, caring work' as suggested in the language developed in the sociological literature of the Nordic countries, much was included that was not made explicit in mainstream concepts. In emphasizing that it was work (unpaid, of course, but to be fully valued in economic terms) this literature made a difference. In addressing la doppia presenza as a specific identity women constructed and in fact as an emerging trait of modernity, we pointed to new circumstances both in the economic and in the social functioning of our societies (and in everyday life as well). The patchwork nature of women's tasks—patterns of organization in daily life, the pooling and packaging of various kinds of resources, shortterm and longer term strategies, what the unpaid, caring work contributed to the wellbeing of family members, the emotional components as well as the rational—all this was brought into light. 'Time of one's own' that women needed, and somehow managed to make possible for themselves and for their intellectual work, was also a new concept. And I believe it is relevant to add that, again as a result of sociological research, we insisted on the circumstances of a specific stage in the life-course: it was adult women and their lives and coping strategies.8 Much of this came later to be included into a new branch of sociology, the 'sociology of everyday life'.

Another 'block' in this ongoing quilting process had at its centre the transformations in the dominant (at that time, and in our part of the world) model of the welfare state: the political debate shifted to issues of crisis and to what came to be defined as a 'crisis society'; or a welfare-service society. And as far back as 1984 the category of the 'patriarchal welfare state' had been introduced by Harriet Holter. The image of a welfare-service society hints at circumstances in Western countries which had made it acceptable to expect material well-being for all and to give such expectations the status of rights. Furthermore the quality of well-being had come to be defined in terms of personal services. Political as well as conceptual redefinitions of the welfare state model came to be central to the research and policy agenda of western societies in those years. In the studies I have been considering a different perspective emerged from what the generally gender-blind contributions suggested. Much theoretical and indeed political emphasis was

put on women's caring work in its various forms as a vital resource in the years (and analyses) of the 'welfare state in crisis'. As I have noted elsewhere [...]' (Balbo, 1987):

Day after day real people act on the basis of their concrete needs, experiences, collective identities; they experiment, resist, create cultural ways and indeed structural conditions of major political relevance [...] experiences and expectations and institutions geared to welfare and servicing have come to be a component in contemporary society which cannot be easily done away with.

I believe it is relevant to insist on how theories and communication, in a very short span of time, came to build a common 'European' platform. Here is a very partial list of contributions (books and countless papers were made available in all languages). In 1984 Die armen Frauen. Frauen und Sozialpolitik (edited by Barbara Riedmuller and Ilona Kickbusch) presented a number of essays by scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds and different countries. In a most timely book, Women and the State, Ann Showstack Sassoon collected essays addressing 'the personal and the intellectual, fragments and order, international trends and national specificities'. The issues, to mention a few, were 'Patriarchy in a Welfare Society' (Helga M. Hernes, introducing her theme, 'a woman-friendly society'); 'Confusing Concepts—Confusing Reality: A Theoretical Discussion of the Patriarchal State' (Drude Dahlerup); 'Women's New Social Role: Contradictions of the Welfare State' (Anne Showstack Sassoon); 'The Advanced Welfare State and Women: A New Kind of Patriarchal Power?' (Anette Borchorst And Birte Siim). My chapter suggested 'Rethinking the Welfare State Debate from a Woman's Point of View', In 1987, Welfare State and Woman Power, Essays on State Feminism was edited by Helga Maria Hernes and published by Norwegian University Press. Time to Care in Tomorrow's Welfare Systems (Vienna, 1986) and Time to Care. Politiche del tempo e diritti quotidiani (Milano, 1987) combined issues of social policy and the time dimension that I shall turn to in the next paragraph.

And to underline a more 'international' dimension in what was going on in those years, I thought I would draw on a text I was invited to present at the University of Sydney.

Traditionally, in much of the social sciences, women have been invisible. In particular the specific issue of women's work, their peculiar (as I shall try to show) ways of contributing to the overall resources in our society, their distinct patterns of work and life, need to be investigated, not just to make up for past and present neglect, nor indeed to bring 'equal rights' in social research. I contend that if women are brought into the picture social processes of the past and the story of the welfare state in particular appear in a perspective which is different from what we conventionally accept as 'the story'; and that we may possibly come up with a better understanding of present and future developments.

I shall refer to two 'sociological' categories that have been used for some time now in women's studies in Italy. We refer to women as presently going through adulthood, as dual-life women, hinting at the fact that the majority perform productive as well as reproductive activities. This pattern of 'dual life'..has become the prevailing model [...] the interconnection between the two—professional and family work—gives both of them very special traits [...] interference and interconnections between the two make adult women's work and life a historically new phenomenon, both objectively and subjectively. Women's professional work is different from men's (in terms of wages, hours and conditions of work, careers) and their family work differs from what housework/homemaking used to be. ¹⁰

I shall now move to the third and last block in this patchwork, which added a most important element to the quilt-making process. In the late seventies a project was started in Sweden by the Secretariat for Futures Studies, addressing issues of 'Care in Society'; a book was made available in English in 1984, *Time to Care* (Pergamon Press): it greatly contributed to public discourse debating 'new' societal models. The focus on time as a resource (and on adult women's uses of time in particular) opened the way to ground-breaking lines of research and innovative policy proposals.

Sociological research on patterns of time organization and time-budgets had been carried on for some time already. Two elements of major relevance were introduced at this point and very rapidly became a shared perspective: the challenge to design an innovative scenario of public and private (mutual-help and self-help) services and arrangements; and how time is organized in everyday life as a crucial resource in the 'package' to be put to use in the overall system of formal and informal care. The worth of women's time and its value for a quality of life dimension came to be seen within the comprehensive frame described above. The economy, the state, the family were all in the picture: women's caring work was the centrepiece.

As mentioned above, the pioneering contributions came from Sweden; two conferences were held in Helsinki in 1987 and in 1989. These issues were addressed within activities at the Vienna European Center for Social Welfare, in particular in Helga Nowotny's contributions to a sociological perspective on time (1993). Steps in Italy were a seminar at the Rockefeller Center in Bellagio in 1983, a conference in Rome in 1985, as well as a number of publications, among which: Chiara Saraceno, *Il lavoro mal diviso*, 1980; Maria Carmen Belloni, *Il tempo della città*, 1984; L.Balbo, *Tempi di vita. Studi e proposte per cambiarli*, 1988. In all these contributions the aim was to influence public discourse and the policy agenda (Nowotny, 1993).

What followed this? Projects aimed at re-organizing time patterns were carried out in some Italian cities by local governments. In 1990 art 39 of *Legge 142* made city-mayors responsible for coordinating time schedules of public services and public transportation; regional laws were passed between 1992 and 1995 in nine regions. In subsequent years similar projects developed in France and Germany. This perspective later gained attention within the framework of European social policies. From 1994 onwards, the network 'Families and Work' (funded by the DGV of the European Commission) has made possible the exchange of projects, experiments, best practices. The Dublin-based European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions has also been very active these last years in promoting research and in developing policy proposals. Parental leave provisions have entered the policy agenda in several countries. In the context of an international network on 'social sustainability' (the European Commission again) the gender dimension and issues of time are seen as 'strategic'. And I find it of the greatest interest that what is defined as *oko-sozialer Zeitpolitik* has been in the agenda of the Green Party in Germany.¹¹

One remark that I would like to introduce here concerns the total blindness to the role of women's transnational migrations, in most western countries, in prevailing patterns of service provision. This blindness—that I now see as a major drawback in the approach we developed—we shared with colleagues in the social sciences and policy-makers as well (until very recently in fact); and it tells us something about our own 'eurocentric' bias, a point which I'll come back to later.

Box 1: NAMES AND PLACES: Studies on Women and Work, Women and the Family, Women and the State

I will list some of the NAMES and PLACES (institutions, meetings and publications in various European contexts; many others, in the U.S. in particular in those years, we were constantly in touch with). I have chosen however to stick to the 'quilting' method and to European 'quilters' and made the decision to just name those who were actually 'in touch' at some points in the process, though many more made relevant contributions. I do regret not to be able to do justice to them all.

Scholars in this area were particularly active in Britain (Jean Lewis, Joanne Vanek, Ann Oakley, Elisabeth Wilson, Ann Showstack Sassoon, Hilary Land, Mary McIntosh), in the Nordic countries (Elina Haavio-Manila, Harriet Holter, Kari Waerness, Rita Liljestrom, Anette Borchorst, Birte Siim, Arnaug Leira, Helga Maria Hernes, Drude Dahlerup); in Germany (Barbara Riedmuller, Ilona Kickbusch, Ilona Ostner, Ulrike Prokop) and Austria (Helga Nowotny). In Italy I choose to refer mainly to friends and collegues active in a research group—Griff—which developed the field of women's studies at the University of Milan from the early seventies onwards. Most of them are included as authors in the list in Box 2.

An international seminar on 'The transformation of the welfare state: dangers and potentialities for women' was held at the Bellagio Rockefeller Study and Conference Center in 1983. Subsequent encounters were a conference in Rome, October 1985, jointly organized by Centro di Torre Argentina and the European Center for Social Welfare Training and Research, Vienna (Culture dei servizi e diritti quotidiani/ The Culture of Caring and Daily Rights); Amsterdam, 1986. In Maastricht a seminar was organized on these issues in 1982 by the European Institute for Work and Society. In Helsinki, August 1987, participants from 14 countries discussed 'The Changing Role of Citizens in Social Services'; in March 1990, the 'First All-European Dialogue on Social Policies' was meant as a link between western experiences and 'hopes and fears in the East' (as Zsuzsa Ferge put it in presenting the book which was to appear a few years later).

What follows is a short list of publications that appeared in those years, meant to suggest the 'European' dimension in terms of authors, places, languages. Much more would have to be included should we consider national and local initiatives (and languages, again). This is true of the Nordic countries in particular.

As early as 1974 a special issue of *Sociologie et Societés* (Les Presses de l' Université de Montréal) included a number of papers on these issues, in French. In 1984 Ilona Kickbusch und Barbara Riedmuller edited *Die armen Frauen and in* 1987 Ann Showstack Sassoon the collection of essays, *Women and the State*, which greatly contributed to give visibility to this perspective. In 1981, *Ricomposizioni. Il lavoro di servizio nella società della crisi* (Angeli) including contributions from Germany and the U.S., was the first of a series, *Quaderni Griff*, published in Italian with a financial contribution from the Ford Foundation. In 1989 Renate Siebert and myself co-edited *Interferenze*. *Lo stato, la vita familiare, la vita privata* (chapters on the 'Two Germanies', Britain, the Soviet Union, and China were meant to develop a wider perspective on transformations and open problems). *Social Policy in a Changing Europe*, edited by Z. Ferge and J. Eivind Kolberg, presenting the contributions to the 1990 Helsinki 'east-west dialogue', was published in 1992. Many relevant essays were included in yet another book, *Las mujeres y el Trabajo. Rupturas Conceptuales* (Barcelona, Icaria, 1994), edited by Cristina Borderias, Cristina Carrasco and Carme Alemany. The concepts and debate developed in the previous decade were hence available to the Spanish-speaking public.

II. The 'Radical Rose' Quilt

The focus of this quilt is on issues of 'women's rights' in European democracies, but I start with a quote from a quilts book:

Radical Rose, according to quilt legend, was a name given to a traditional rose pattern by a quilter [...] To express her rage in a society that denied her a vote, she stitched a black circle into the center of the rose [...]¹²

Gendered descriptions of our 'unfinished democracy' (Haavio-Mannila, 1985; Hernes, 1987) and, more recently, of the prevailing systems of 'stratified rights' (Morris, 2002) have been central to the European agenda for many years now. Feminist scholars and political activists have pointed to contradictions, dilemmas, and ambivalence in national systems and at the international level. Notwithstanding repeated commitments to universal rights and equality in constitutions, charters and countless documents, gendered statistics show a 'democratic deficit' in most European countries. Within Eastern European societies, with their distinctive histories, there is a focus on specific lines of research and analysis, the fact that in 2002 an East/West Network for European Women's Rights was launched by the European Union, is in fact revealing of common problems.¹³

I shall briefly consider two areas, one addressing patterns of exclusion in political institutions (and good practices aiming at a more balanced representation) and the second, on 'gendered' and 'gendering' processes in organizations. The two, as I shall try to show, are of course related.

Research and debate developed early in the Nordic countries where a political agenda addressing these issues became established. There have been remarkably positive developments in subsequent years: in Sweden in particular equal representation of the two genders has been reached both in parliament and in government. Of the great many contributions by political scientists and sociologists I wish to focus on the line of thinking developed by Drude Dahlerup at the beginning of the 1980s, made available in English in her widely-read essay 'From a small to a large minority' (1988). 'Numbers count', she said, and pointed to the necessity for any minority, women in this particular case, to reach a 'critical mass'. How to move 'from a small to a large minority' was the issue at the centre of her reasoning. In a later paper, 'Women's Views of the Political World of Men' she discussed strategies to 'overcome the barriers' which keep women's issues from the political agenda. Problems that women—as members of a minority—encounter in maledominated organizations were listed, among them: high visibility; becoming a token; lack of allies in the organization; exclusion from informal networks; lack of knowledge of the informal power structure and the recruitment process; lack of personal power; higher dropout rate; lower rate of promotion; lack of legitimate authority; stereotyping; no consideration for family obligations by the organization.¹⁴

A considerable amount of research on large corporations and the business world was carried out following the path-breaking work by Rosabeth Moss Kanter in 1977, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, making us aware of how (male-dominated) organizations and professions are structured and function; and in fact shifting the focus from women's studies to gender and men's studies. In mainstream organisational literature the sociological category of 'heterosexuality' was mostly ignored (Ward and Winstanley, 2002). Innovative concepts and approaches have been put forward in recent years. We

have learnt about 'the construction and deconstruction of public men' (Hearn, 1992), 'performing gender', 'gendering practices', and 'gender dynamics' (Yancey Martin, 2003).

Political institutions are gendered organizations and gendered work places, and their functioning is no different from prevailing practices in most business contexts and professions. Research in organizational studies and in the sociology of gender describe structural conditions as well as the prevailing culture, the functioning of formal and informal relationships, and partnerships, experiences and exclusive (men-only) events. Language (and stereotyping of course) is of the greatest importance in 'masculine cultures'. How career patterns are planned and rules and criteria set, and of course the details in the organization of daily life, discriminate against women in many ways; or it might be better to say, keep them out.

Contexts which are 'sex-segregated' and relevant patterns of organization have been described by Silvia Gherardi, Barbara Poggio, Attila Bruni, who are active in organization studies (in Trento and internationally). For some years now I have turned to their contributions. An unanticipated quilt-making process has been set into motion. Different disciplinary perspectives, generational backgrounds, concerns and curiosities have proved fruitful. Here are Silvia Gherardi's comments on academia:

As a woman professional, I have learnt how to hide and how to be forgiven for my femaleness: a competence rule in academia is that gender, body and sexuality must not intrude into the profession if reputation is at stake. And more reputation can be gained by colluding also to save the invisible masculinity—the gender honour—of a discipline claiming to be gender-neutral. [...] in organization studies 'the discipline has no gender' [...] and its neutrality is the artful cultural product of a community of scholars, many of whom—even when they study gender—equate gender with 'women' and women's issues and in so doing contribute to render masculinity invisible. 15

'Resistance, subversion, transgression, perversion, playfulness, creativity': these, they suggest, we should aim at. In my experience and thinking on the political world, learning about untold rules of admittance and exclusion and becoming fully aware of border-keeping mechanisms have become my central concerns. More generally speaking of how to analyze this closed and self-reproducing system is obviously of crucial interest to social scientists. Pierre Bourdieu (again) puts it in apparently simple terms, asking how one might 'think politics sociologically, not just politically': 'comment penser la politique autrement que politiquement, comment la penser sociologiquement?' (Bourdieu, 2000: 74).

One main theme in Bourdieu's analysis is stated as follows: 'Les frontières du champs politique sont [...] un enjeu de lutte'. The primary concern (and activity) insiders have is to keep control of the borders. Keeping all others out is a vital objective. Social scientists in particular, he says, are excluded. Obviously women have long been outsiders (one should of course discuss the dimensions of social class and ethnicity); so-called women's issues have long been kept out. By pointing to what he defines as a coupure between the champs politique and the outside world, Bourdieu clarifies issues that are indeed central to our reasoning about the social sciences and gender, and the future agenda of Europe. Let me add that it is not only the women/men divide that should be the focus: how the mechanism as such is kept functioning is I believe of the greatest importance. What is at stake is to retain power, and to use power, the aim being, to repeat: 'imposer une vision du monde.'

All this I came to realize more forcefully than is usually possible (to outsiders in general; to social scientists; to women) while being in Parliament for nine years and in government for two. As a social scientist, and as a woman, I experienced (obvious) disadvantages. But also extraordinary advantages. I found myself in a position to get a better understanding of the (mostly invisible) 'world apart' of politics, all the time keeping my eyes and ears open and adjusting conceptual and methodological tools (participant observation, shadowing, ethnographic narratives). Or should I rather say, being a spy, as I often like to put it. I could be a 'participant' on very special occasions: hence observe the rituals as well as the informal games which are held behind closed doors. I could listen to the shared language and occasionally overhear revealing gossip and conversations. I found myself in a position to get a better understanding of the complex border-keeping mechanisms. Les frontières, 'un enjeux de lutte', indeed.

Just briefly a few (possibly 'minor') details. As a member of Parliament I was part of the minority of women admitted, in the early 1980s, because of pressures for a more balanced representation in Italian politics. We were the 'small minority' Drude Dahlerup so aptly described: a clearly labelled, to some extent legitimized, sub-group of newcomers into a world of long-established male presence. Women were accepted as long as they did women's things (welfare, health, education: not higher education however); they were not given a voice, neither of course expected to have a say on 'general' issues. Segregated and largely irrelevant. No woman was a member of the small sub-group in top positions (reference to organizational studies is very appropriate here).

Allow me now to say something about my subsequent step, being in government. Governments are entirely men's worlds (with exceptions, fortunately: the Nordic countries and now Spain). But it is very useful indeed to refer to a study which looks into the criteria of cabinet appointments under different political circumstances. There are two alternatives for women: they are admitted, provided they perform as totally loyal party members; or they are excluded. I was not a member of any party, nor was I a professional in politics, and though I had been around for several years I was 'a female newcomer in a male-dominated community', as Silvia Gherardi describes her experience in a partially different situation. Bound to disappear soon (in fact this is what happened). Nothing to gain from wasting time with me. However, I was not an *outsider*. I was located in the *in-between* and I was border crossing all the time. That was my greatest advantage. Let me add that curiosity and a sense of humour are useful components of such a personal 'kit' of instruments.

It is significant that all this I more clearly noticed when as a consequence of a sudden, and to some extent unanticipated, change of government, this experience was brought to an end. Previous connections, common agendas, ongoing commitments were immediately cancelled. The process was expected to be one of quick disappearance from the inner circle and the public scene. The media system: irrelevance. Physical distance: in no occasion was I now to share *their* spaces. No access to *them*. The time dimension: trying to get in touch meant waiting; most often no answers or signals of attention.

To return to the quilting metaphor and point to how it helps to 'think politics sociologically', we must be aware of the fact that really important 'quilting' practices are not generally made visible. Many layers and stitches are kept hidden, while there are a great many 'public' artefacts. Multicoloured designs are preferred, different shades are

combined. Fabrics and threads, those to be seen from the outside for sure, are of the highest quality. Notable events are commemorated. Learning to read the underlying design and uncovering the intricate patterns is what we must work at. And use what we learn so that the prevailing arrangements are disrupted, and modified; that new practices are developed that multiple skills and competences are put to use, by women as well as by men. Which is of course not the case at present.

Box 2: I Quaderni del Griff

To make it possible to locate contributions from the area of gender studies I am part of in Italy, within the European 'Friendship quilt' that has been put forward, I thought it might be useful to list the first 25 volumes published in *Quaderni del Griff* (Milano, Franco Angeli) between 1980 and 1995.

Giuliana Chiaretti, 1981. Doppia presenza: lavoro intellettuale e lavoro per sé.

Franca Pizzini, (a cura di), 1981. Sulla scena del parto: luoghi, figure, pratiche.

Laura Balbo, Marina Bianchi, 1981. Ricomposizioni. Il lavoro di servizio nella società della crisi.

Renate Siebert, 1984. Le ali di un elefante. Sul rapporto adulti/bambini in un paese della Calabria.

Sarah Blaffer Hardy, 1985. La donna che non si è evoluta. Ipotesi di sociolobiologia.

Franca Bimbi, Flavia Pristinger, (a cura di), 1985. *Profili Sovrapposti. La doppia presenza delle donne nelle aree ad economia diffusa*.

Yasmine Ergas, 1986. Fra le maglie della politica. Femminismo, istituzioni e politiche sociali nell'Italia degli anni '70.

Rita Caccamo, 1987. Il filo di Arianna. Una ricerca sulle professionalità creative.

Laura Balbo, (a cura di), 1987. Time to care. Politiche del tempo e diritti quotidiani.

Chiara Saraceno, 1987. Pluralità e Mutamento. Riflessioni sull'identità femminile.

Gruppo Onda, Foemina Faber, 1989. Immagini e strategie del lavoro delle donne.

Laura Balbo, Pia May, Giuseppe Micheli, Vincoli e Strategie nella vita quotidiana, 1990

Franca Bimbi, Grazia Castellano, (a cura di), 1990. Madri e padri. Transizioni del patriarcato e cultura dei servizi.

Franca Pizzini, (a cura di), 1990. Asimmetrie comunicative. Differenze di genere nell'interazione medico-paziente.

Patrizia Romito, 1990. Lavoro e salute in gravidanza. Come la società di prende cura delle donne incinte.

Gruppo Onda, 1991. Lavori di donne. Vincoli e flessibilità nel mercato del lavoro femminile.

Laura Corradi, 1991. Il tempo rovesciato. Quotidianità femminile e lavoro notturno alla Barilla.

Marina Bianchi, (a cura di), 1992. Sguardi di scrittrici sulle società contemporanee.

Marina Piazza, (a cura di), 1992. Donne in transizione. Un percorso formativo di orientamento al lavoro.

Simonetta Piccone Stella, 1993. La prima generazione. Ragazze e ragazzi nel miracolo economico italiano.

Patrizia David, Giovanna Vicarelli, (a cura di), 1993. Donne nelle professioni degli uomini.

Nella Ginatempo, 1994. Donne al Confine Identità e corsi di vita femminili nella città del sud.

Grazia Colombo, (a cura di), 1994. Donne nella politica.

Franca Pizzini, 1994. Madre provetta.

Giancarla Codrignani, 1995. Molestie sessuali e in/certezza del diritto.

Alisa Del Re, Jacqueline Heinen, 1995. Quale cittadinanza per le donne?

III. Another 'Friendship Quilt' In-the-Making

This quilt has not yet been sewed. The issues here are processes of racialization/ethnicization and the future of Europe. We need such a quilt. It has to be put together with great care and creativity. Important 'patches' are available to us: European social thinkers, in cultural studies, post-colonial studies, black and whiteness studies. Some of the quilters are at work and I have had the opportunity to look at the way they collect and put together their threads and materials. With words that a quilter might have chosen, let me say that I try to retrieve and collect as many 'scraps' as possible from a variety of authors, and just keep them for the time being: in other words, as a European, I propose to listen and learn and just keep quiet, for the moment at least.

Being a close friend of bell hooks, this extraordinary witness and interpreter of black and white America and a most inspiring lecturer and writer on these issues, ¹⁹ I long ago began to view myself as 'different': very different from someone who had grown up in the segregated South of the US; very far indeed is my experience from that of a black woman among white feminists in the context of a University of California campus. I still have a copy of the 'open letter' written by Ruth Frankenberg to bell hooks in 1981 and that she read at the closing session of the Donna Haraway seminar the three of us had attended. I wonder whether it was that experience—going back to how she courageously discusses it in her letter—that led Ruth in subsequent years to play a leading role in the development of 'whiteness studies' in the U.S. As for me, I learnt to see myself as white and European (not entirely a positive identity). The focus on *un-learning racism*, as bell has put it, has been a crucial challenge in my personal and political life.

Meeting Philomena Essed (first in Amsterdam, then on several other occasions, both of us being in the group which promoted the International Association for the Study of Racism in the early nineties), I had much to learn from a woman who developed her teaching and writing from a post-colonial and a feminist perspective; and being an 'immigrant' in the Netherlands, a context she was perfectly at ease in, professionally, linguistically, symbolically. In a number of very important writings she tells us about 'the dominant white group' in European societies: the issues she focuses on are how to 'dismantle monoculturalism' and build 'non-eurocentric norms and values'.

Underlying and inherent to monoculturalism are constructions of 'we' and 'they' in which the human ability to identify with others is artificially confined to fit the parameters of only one cultural dimension or the quasi fixed combination of a number of specific parameters to represent the 'us' group as inherently different from 'them' in terms of nation, region, religion, language, or ethnicity. It is too bold to suggest that any form of group identity is fictitious, even when real in its consequences? Would it be too audacious to perceive group identity as the strategic highlighting of only some among many other parameters of inter-human identity? [...] People engage in and experience social life through multiple attachments. The very notion of multi-layered identities highlights the problematic nature of first identities when, increasingly, translocal groups negotiate between potentially different interests arising from their multiple and multi-local attachments and commitments.²⁰

Finally, one most important contributor to the quilt-making project I hope to be part of in the years ahead, *and a voice I want to be heard in Italy*, is that of Geneviève Makaping, who is a social anthropologist living and working in Calabria. She is the

author of an extremely perceptive account on the experience of being, as an Italian, un 'soggetto eccentrico'.

Da straniera—sono originaria del Camerun—avrei sperimentato che ero, rispetto agli autoctoni e a chi dunque si colloca dalla parte della 'normalità', distante dal centro, bizzarra e stravagante [...] Oggi quel luogo è il punto strategico nel quale consapevolmente mi trovo per riflettere e congetturare sui fatti che accadono, a me (noi) e agli altri (voi) [...] E le domande sono: fino a che punto sono consapevoli del loro sguardo su di me? Hanno mai pensato che io potessi a mia volta guardarli?²¹

There are of course many other voices, other quilters at work, who can help us build less eurocentric, less gender-blind ways of thinking about our European future. To name a few, Assia Djebar writing about the plurality of voices and languages, Ruth Frankenberg and her role in developing whiteness studies, and of course Rosi Braidotti and her 'nomadic subjects' and 'diasporic subjects' belong here. I just wish to conclude by saying that it's up to each of us to learn from what they are contributing. And that we ought to be grateful to all of them.

Box 3: Names And Places

In Political Science and Political Sociology:

In France: Genevieve Fraisse, Janine Mossuz-Lavau, Mariette Sineau; in Britain: Hilary Rose, Ann Philips, Chantal Mouffe, Margaret Stacey; in the Nordic countries: Anette Borchorst, Elina Haavio-Manilla, Helga Maria Hernes, Drude Dahlerup, Birte Siim, Hege Skjeie; in Italy: Bianca Beccalli, Franca Bimbi, Maria Luisa Boccia, Alisa Del Re, Lorenza Carlassare, Yasmine Ergas, Marina Piazza, Chiara Saraceno, Paola Villa, Giovanna Zincone.

In Organizational Studies:

Attila Bruni, Silvia Gherardi, Adriana Luciano, Paola Piva, Barbara Poggio, Lorenza Zanuso.

Notes

- 1. My metaphors of 'quilts' and 'patchwork' appeared as early as 1981 in Italian sociology. I know for sure that they came as a surprise to most colleagues. On the occasion of a very formal academic conference of the Italian Sociological Association in Rome I presented a paper 'Crazy Quilts: la riproduzione sociale e il lavoro di servizio' (which was included in the subsequent official publication). In the same year reference to the 'patchwork' image was in the title of my essay 'Patchwork: una prospettiva sulla società di capitalismo maturo' in the book I co-edited with Marina Bianchi, *Ricomposizioni. Il lavoro di servizio nella società della crisi.* In English: 'The Servicing Work of Women and the Capitalist State', in M. Zeitlin (ed), *Political Power and Social Theory, J.A.I. Press, 1982; 'Family, Women, and the State: notes toward a typology of family roles and public intervention', in C. S. Meier (ed.), <i>Changing Boundaries of the Political, Cambridge University Press, 1987.* As to my focus on the 'learning-based society' it has appeared in a variety of forms in practically all of my more recent writing.
- 2. Pierre Bourdieu, *Les usages sociaux de la Science*, Paris, INRA Editions, 1997, p.74. This is also a way for me to pay homage to many relevant contributions in the Francophone world of the social sciences. For reasons that I'll come back to later, what I am going to present turns out to be strongly biased towards the Anglophone world.
- 3. An extensive review of activities and publications is to be found in Luisa Passerini, Dawn Lyon and Liana Borghi (eds), 2002.
- 4. There are obviously crucial areas of analysis and debate that are not considered in this paper. I wish at least to point to two, which are at present of major interest and concern (and that were addressed in the discussion following the oral presentation of this essay): issues concerning religion and religion-related practices, in particular Islam (and spreading Islamophobia in the western world, and how women in particular are involved); and the role of social movements both at the local and at the global level (here again considering women's participation and roles in these processes).
- 5. Ulrike Prokop, 'Production and the Context of Women's Daily Life', *New German Critique*, 13, 1978, p.21.
- 6. 'On the rationality of caring', in A. Showstack Sassoon, Women and the State, pp. 206 & 217.
- 7. I shall just add that the concept of 'time *of one's own'* was at some point introduced into this line of reasoning: a dimension which is of primary importance in the experience of adult women and a specific component of living in modernity. Issues of women's time and circumstances of adult women's lives are central to the scenario of our knowledge-based society and to the experience of *lifelong learning*. These themes—that are at present my primary concern—I cannot however deal with here.
- 8. I want to mention a particular 'Italian' experience which has been relevant for the development of women's studies in the social sciences: le '150 ore' (a project sponsored by the unions to support adult education programs in the early seventies, which turned out to be highly innovative and very successful). In this context a group of women academics at the University of Milan organized the first ever women's studies courses and research programs. We got to know (and interact with) adult women workers who managed to find time to attend university classes focusing on their gendered experiences and life strategies. Our interest in and development of the concept of doppia presenza no doubt came out of this early experience. See L.Balbo, 'Women's Access to Intellectual Work', Signs, Summer 1981; also Capecchi (1982); Chiaretti (1981), Bimbi e Pristinger (1985), Zanuso (1987). In those years a variety of approaches and debates developed within Italian feminism. I regret I cannot include these contributions in my discussion here.
- 9. Laura Balbo, 'Women's Work in Contemporary Society. Notes toward a definition of a Service-Oriented Culture', *Praxis International*, Basil Blackwell, July 1987, p.196.
- 10. 'Women's studies, a hypothesis', paper presented at the University of Sydney, August 1981.
- 11. Sabine Hofmeister, Meike Spitzner, Perspektiven oko-soziale Zeitpolitik, Stuttgart, Hirzel Verlag, 1999.
- Cecilia Macheski, Quilt Stories. A Collection of Short Stories, Poems and Plays, The University Press of Kentucky, 1994, p.4.
- 13. Reference to recent changes and initiatives in this area in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe is unfortunately missing in this presentation. In all countries and under very different circumstances women are active in gender studies as well as in a great number of grass-roots associations and lobbies. I regret I

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was not able to include these newly developing networks, common projects, and debates and I wish to at least refer to the very comprehensive contribution (including an extensive and most useful bibliography), by Bozena Choluj and Claudia Neusuess 'EU Enlargement in 2004: East-West Priorities and Perspectives from Women Inside and Outside the EU' (May 2004).

- 14. Drude Dahlerup, 1988, p.279.
- 15. Attila Bruni and Silvia Gherardi, 2002, p.30.
- 16. Pierre Bourdieu, 2000, p. 52.
- 17. I refer here to the study by Rebecca Howard Davis on criteria and procedures in cabinet appointments in Western European countries.
- 18. I have analyzed this experience in Laura Balbo, *Memorie in-attuali di una ex ministro, Pensare la politica anche sociologicamente,* Rubbettino, 2002. And to point to the fact that the quilting metaphor is appropriate to describe patterns and practices in Italian politics in particular I would add that a variety of patterns are to be found: many 'Lone Stars', possibly also 'Crazy Quilts'; for sure, a certain number of 'Tumbling Blocks'.
- 19. Because her work is so widely known both in the U.S. and in Europe, I shall only refer to her most recent contributions.
- 20. Philomena Essed, 2000, p.61.
- 21. Genevieve Makaping, 2001, p. 4.

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The following criteria have been adopted in order to make this list of references relatively complete but not overwhelming for readers:

- Only publications referring to the period of time described in the three 'quilt stories' have been included;
- With few exceptions only books are included. Taking into considerations essays and articles would have made this list far too long;
- Most references are to publications which have appeared in English; publications in Italian included in Box 3, *I Quaderni del Griff*, or mentioned in the text, do not appear in the list of references;
- As to my own writings, no references except for those in the text or in the footnotes.
- With the same aim, keeping this list of references reasonably short, only few of the 'mainstream' (i.e., in most cases, gender-blind, though otherwise relevant of course) authors have been included.
- Reference to many more colleagues and friends, and to the work done by them, would have been useful, and I apologize to those who may disagree with my choices.
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