

Gender equality: Why it matters for knowledge-based & innovation-driven societies?

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Introduction: discussing concepts

Gender: A useful category

- ✓ **Distinguishing what is biologically determined from what is socially constructed**

The analytical distinction between sex and gender was theoretically articulated from the late 1960s onwards.

First coined in behavioural psychology (1968), later used in anthropology and sociology (Oakley, 1972). It enabled distinguishing biologically determined characteristics of men and women, from their socially constructed attitudes and positions in all areas of social life.

It can be argued that this social construction of femininity and masculinity is not fully arbitrary, but often rooted in biologically determined properties such as reproductive functions

Yet, it remains that it largely varies in time and space and that chromosomal complement only marginally determine what men and women are expected to be.

- ✓ **A useful category to challenge the unequal balance of power between the sexes**

From their understanding of biological and functional complementarity, ***human societies have built different conceptions of gender roles*** which affect peoples' choices, educational or behavioral patterns, with a ***strong impact on the free development by individuals of both sexes of their personal abilities***.

For this reason, ***the concept of gender has emerged as a useful category of analysis*** (Scott, 1986) ***to challenge the secondary position of women in society*** and unraveling the unequal balance of power between men and women.

Its contribution, in particular, is now widely recognized in history, socio-economic sciences and humanities, where it helped to change the lens through which human societies are analyzed.

Initially rooted in anthropology and feminist critical theory (Elshtain 1981; Gilligan 1982), ***the use of gender has been widely adopted since by forefront social scientists in all disciplines of social sciences***.


✓ Mainstreaming gender in knowledge production

Economics does not make an exception: from the mid-1970s onwards, feminist scholars have criticized an allegedly positivist discipline, in which value judgement grounded into deeply rooted prejudices and ideological beliefs are providing the raw material upon which some theories are constructed.

Among the main bias of economics, these authors have emphasized:

- The exclusion of **unpaid** work from the scope of the discipline
- The neglect for power relations (social class, but also gender, ethnicity)
- The male-centred definition of rationality and preferences

In the field of economics, development studies have been among the first to adopt a gender agenda, as ***it was empirically demonstrated that poverty is an heavily gendered phenomenon, and that development policies had more positive impact when also addressing women's needs and positions in society.***



Gender also opened its path through natural sciences, where its use has been popularized to address a wide range of phenomena which cannot be properly analyzed or taken into account through the sex variable as such, due to their strong connection to social behaviors.

- life expectancy
- the prevalence of certain diseases
- the differential exposure of men and women to some risks
- the management of natural resources

As men's and women's occupational structures, social behaviors and preferences still strongly differ and due to the fact that gender differences are deeply entrenched into a division of productive and reproductive work between the sexes, ***gender has gained relevance in research and policy areas that have long been perceived as gender neutral***, such as:

- Urban planning
- The use of ICTs
- Transportation (product & service design, safety...)

✓ **Unravelling gender inequality: still a contentious issue**

As a concept or category, gender remains subject to controversies:

Ultra-positivist standpoints within genetics and neurosciences, and traditionalist conceptions of the “natural order,” converge to deny individual behaviours their socially constructed dimension.

The claim persists, that gender, as a concept, tends to soften power relations between the sexes, and the role of patriarchy.

At the empirical level, it is often argued that gendered behaviour result from individual (rational) choices, rather from discrimination.

Gender encounters specific resistances in the French context, where it challenges an holistic conception of citizenship, irrespective of individual differences or personal circumstances.

✓ Is there any “master” Gender Theory?

In the course of recent public controversies in France, gender studies were presented as a single, unified, theory.

While in its common sense in French, theory is mainly understood as a speculative effort, gender studies have provided enough empirical evidences to demonstrate that gender *is* socially constructed and that most of the characteristics ascribed to men and women, do not result from their “nature”.

By contrast, it can be referred as theories, to the different interpretations of the relationship between physiological, psychological, emotional, social or cultural factors through which sexual *identities* (and orientations) are constructed.

Among those theories, queer theories (as in Judith Butler’s work), have been popularized as they criticize the dichotomy between genders as far too static and “hetero-normative”, while arguing that gender & sexual identities can largely be performed, instead of being granted by nature or nurture.

What is Gender Equality (and how do you get there)?

Gender Equality is not so much about challenging differences between men and women as such, but the asymmetric, hierarchal way they are valued.

This evaluation draws upon two categories, femininity and masculinity, which are socially constructed, vary over time and across space and cultures, with masculinity tending to constitute a benchmark, whereas behaviours treated as predominantly feminine tend to be associated with rather negative or secondary values.

This situation results in unequal treatment, segregation and discrimination.

By contrast, gender equality refers to a situation where individuals of both sexes are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations imposed by strict gender roles. The different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

✓ **Correlated (operational) concepts**

As a desirable feature to be attained by developed human societies and a principle rooted in the rationale of universalist human rights, gender equality has generated plenty of related, operational concepts:

Affirmative action intends to tackle discrimination with proportionate, temporary positive measures (including gender quotas) aiming at correcting a concrete situation, possibly to the expense of formal equality

Equal treatment intends to abolish with appropriate measures, the differentiated treatment of men and women on the ground of gender prejudice and gender stereotypes

Gender mainstreaming consists in adopting a gender lens for any domain of public action (including public management), in order to prevent unequal treatment and discrimination

Parity, mostly theorized in France to circumvent a universalist conception of formal equality, considers gender inequalities in access to decision making as a matter of democracy, thus ascribing an objective of parity between the sexes, to be attained by non-discriminatory measures



The sexual division of work

Gender stereotypes vs. social reality

✓ The fuel of gender-based inequality

Gender stereotypes are the fuel of inequalities between men and women, but also a raw material structuring human communities.

The social construction of the sexes largely co-determined the social distribution of labour, both horizontally and vertically, also consolidating the division between paid and unpaid - often care, work.

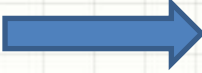
This is also to be linked to the universalistic dimension of the asymmetry between the sexes, which transcends - only with relatively minor variations, the organization of human groups across time and space.

Gender stereotypes do convey some sort of stability and security

They are being increasingly challenged as the traditional gendered division of roles clash with the major transformations undergone by our societies, and often lead to a differential treatment between individuals, when not to (un)direct discriminations.

✓ Women's access to paid work

Paid work and money-based economy are two relatively recent standards (late 17th century). Until then, work was mainly dedicated to subsistence, and included both men *and* women.

While women had a major role in reproduction, they also did participate in productive work in roughly similar proportions as men, and the household (Oikos) was the main economical unit  Oikonomia (the science of household management).

At the industrial age, large number of men entered paid work and in growing market economies, and subsistence work lost its relevance. Yet, ***women kept assuming almost exclusively (unpaid) reproductive and care work.***

Women entered paid productive work with a relatively narrow array of and their work was systematically under-valued as ***their income was considered complementary to the one of the male bread-winner.***

✓ The feminization of paid work

Between the 1960s and the 2010s, activity rates among women aged of 25-59 rises from 50 up to 78% in France. Similar trends are to be reported in Europe and other western economies, although gender regimes and the typologies of welfare states explain significant differences among countries.

These variable are also relevant to explain the much differentiated role played by part-time jobs (from less than 10% in CEE countries up to nearly 80% in the Netherlands in 2013 – about 32% in France).

Women's access to paid work – mostly as employees, thus constitutes the major revolution in the field of employment since WWII, with major consequences on the social positions of women, demography, work-life balance and of course, relations between the sexes.

Unchallenged divisions

Despite these evolutions, two phenomena remain fully valid: **the sexual division of labour, and the gender pay gap.**

These phenomena are deeply rooted into gender stereotypes and reveal their resilience towards the tremendous changes in women's access to paid work and to higher education.

The Sexual division of labour thus refers both to the unequal division of care/reproductive and productive work between men and women, and to the occupational segregation of the sexes.

✓ The Politics of care

Caring activities have not only been always framed as predominantly female, but also as the free supply of basic services necessary to household maintenance and reproduction. Care not only concerns the attention provided to the children, but also to the elderly and to physically or intellectually dependent people within and outside the family unit.

It is defined as “the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something” (Oxford Dictionary).

It is the main gender bias of economics, to exclude most of the provision of these very basic services from the scope of money-based economy, implicitly assuming that the traditional balance of power between the sexes and the dedication of women to care activities, make it an universally available good.

- ✓ It denies the fact that women engaged in paid work, disproportionately assume a double burden of paid and unpaid work, that severely constraints their choices.
- ✓ It tends to take for granted the free provision of basic public goods, predominantly by women, thus under-estimating the cost of the maintenance of human communities.
- ✓ It basically dismiss the major evolutions in women's employment and demography (low fertility rates, high divorce rates) maintaining the premise that women's work is complementary to that of men and assuming that care activities are mostly located in the private sphere, and carried out by women

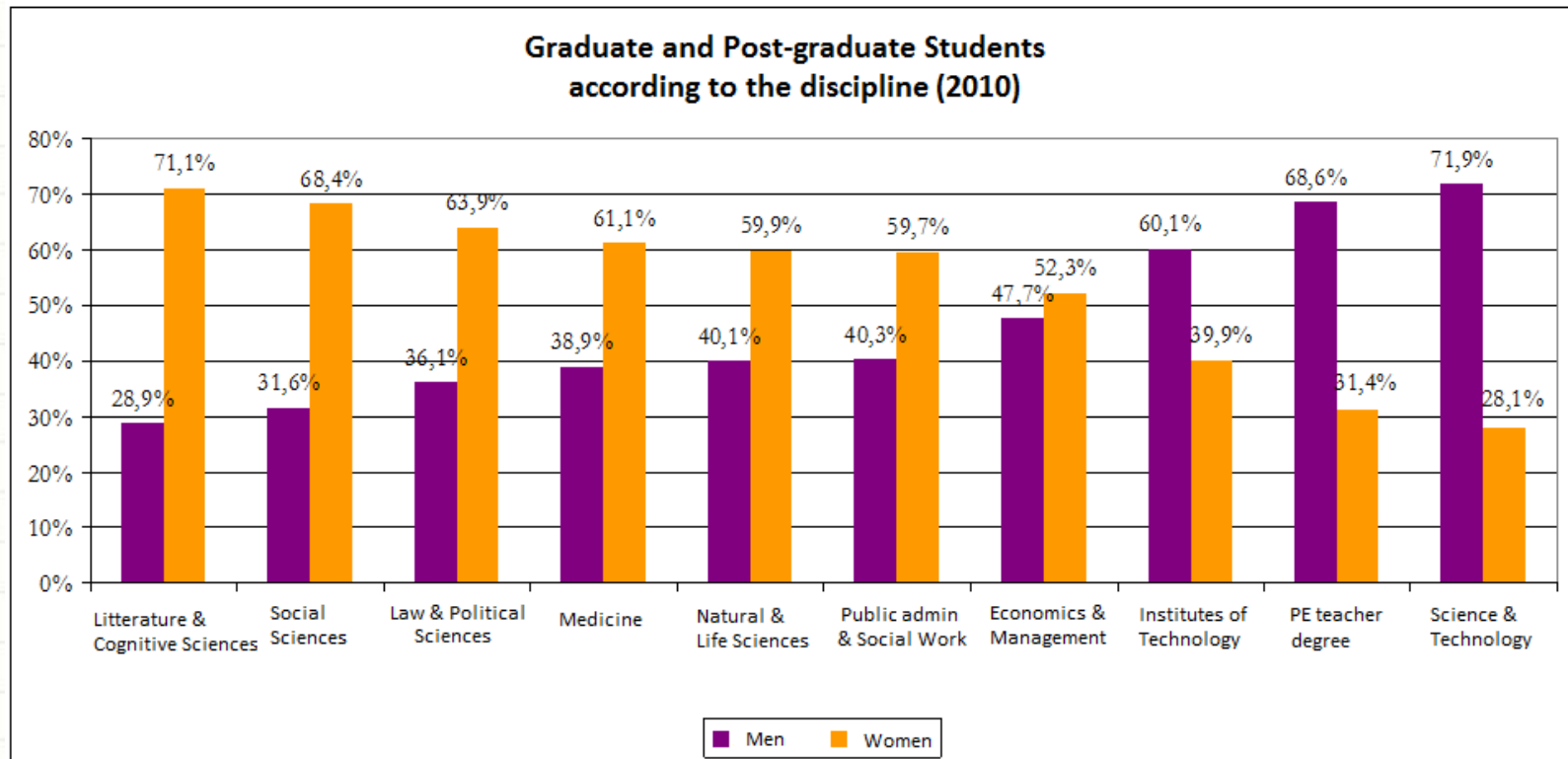
✓ Occupational Segregation

Occupational segregation by sex is one of the most important and enduring aspects of labour markets around the world. It not only undermines women's position in society, but also constitutes a tremendous talents loss and therefore limits the capacity of market economies to adapt to global changes.

Neo-classical economists had a rather simple recipe to explain the concentration of women in a narrow set of occupations: women represent a lower level of human capital, in terms both of what they bring to the labour market (less education and less relevant fields of study) as well as what they acquire after joining the labour market (less experience due to household/childcare facilities) Anker, 2001: 130.

The first argument (lower educational level) is no longer valid in Western societies: ***women do enter in large numbers in higher education and outnumber men in many fields.***

The second one remains true, to a certain extent: **women are more concentrated in some fields considered to be less relevant** (see: tab.1)



The third argument is grounded in the strongly gendered assumption that care and reproductive work are to be assumed by women, with a strong impact on their career paths, commitment, mobility readiness... while neither the personal status nor the fact to have children would affect men's preferences.

In 2009, 50,6% of work positions held by women in France, were concentrated in 12 out of 87 professional areas identified by the INSEE. This concentration is also by employment categories, as women account for 77% of employees, 50,6% of intermediary professions, but only 39,6% of managers and intellectual professions, and 17,6% of factory workers.

Beyond this concentration, some professions are feminized over 90%, while other are strongly masculine. Yet, men are better distributed throughout the occupational array.

✓ The gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is the outcome of the horizontal and vertical occupational segregation of women, and is strongly connected to gender prejudices at play.

The principle of equal pay for equal work is considered unproblematic, while it considers equally things which are *not* equal. Women's concentration on a narrow array of occupations, care work, and the large proportion of women working part-time, largely affects their position as employees.

Women's access to decision-making

The gendered division of work between men and women is also reflected in the lower access of women to decision-making positions.

Women only account for 21,6% of MPs worldwide (26,9% in the EU), and less than 8% of chiefs of governments and heads of State are women in 2014.

Similarly, women only account for 18% of boards in the EU (23% in France).

Both political and economic governance cultures and structures thus remain heavily gendered, while the public space, as defined by Jürgen Habermas (1962, 1990) is grounded into patriarchy: the masculinization of power is thus a fundamental feature of liberal democracy.

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Achieving gender equality
through effective policies

Legislating gender equality: the EU case

✓ First developments at the European level:

Article 119, Rome Treaty (1957): *“Each Member State shall during the first stage ensure and subsequently maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work”*.

Yet, it constituted a first breach into domestic legislations – often dead letters, and was later used to support the effective implementation of equal pay.

In 1971, a former Belgian cabin crew member, Gabrielle Defrenne, sued her former employer on the ground that she had been paid less than any other male crew member, arguing of the validity of Art. 119. Her claim was dismissed by a first ruling of the ECJ, stating that it was unclear whether art. 119 had a positive, directly enforceable meaning.

In reaction to the ruling, the European Commission introduced a new directive (75/117/ECC) in February, 1975, enjoining member states:

“ to introduce into their national legal systems such measures as are necessary to enable all employees who consider themselves wronged by failure to apply the principle of equal pay to pursue their claims by judicial process after possible recourse to other competent authorities (art 2)”

“to abolish all discrimination between men and women arising from laws, regulations or administrative provisions which is contrary to the principle of equal pay” (art 3).

“ to take the necessary measures to ensure that provisions appearing in collective agreements, wage scales, wage agreements or individual contracts of employment which are contrary to the principle of equal pay shall be, or may be declared, null and void or may be amended” (art. 4).

In 1976, the European Commission pushed forward a new directive, 76/207/ECC, broadening the scope of Equality provisions from equal pay to equal treatment in the work place (including access to vocational training, working conditions and social security rights)

In 1978, a third directive was passed, to implement equal treatment in the field of social security and other elements of social protection, including schemes providing protection against risks attached to: sickness, invalidity, old age, accidents at work and occupational diseases, unemployment, as well as social assistance.

By that time, the European Community had become, in barely 3 years, a major actor in the field of equal treatment and equal pay, consolidating the European case law with pioneering ruling, and the European legislation with far-reaching, increasingly comprehensive provisions.


✓ Broadening the scope of anti-discrimination

A new opportunity structure was also shaped by new developments at the EU level in the late 1990s. ***In 1997, the Amsterdam Treaty introduces the notion of equal pay for a work of equal value, and establishes gender equality as an objective of the European Union.*** Following this new impulse new directives were adopted.

Directive 2000/78/EC or “Equal treatment directive” extends the principle of equal treatment, to the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds “of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation as regards employment and occupation” (art 1).

This directive also introduces the definition of indirect discrimination :

“indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons (concerned in art. 1) at a particular disadvantage (...) unless (it) is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary”



Directive 2002/73/EC on the implementation of the principle of Equal treatment applies these two definitions to the realm of gender equality, modifying directive 1976/207/EEC.

It also provides a clear definition of sexual harassment, to be understood “*as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment*”, and to be considered a discrimination.

Directive 2006/54/EC (recast), updates and summarizes EU legislation on gender equality in the realm of work and employment.

It prohibits direct or indirect discrimination between men and women concerning the conditions of recruitment, access to employment and self-employment; dismissals; vocational training and promotion; membership of workers’ or employers’ organizations. It also states that women and men are treated equally under occupational social security schemes, particularly concerning conditions of access; contributions; the calculation of benefits; and retention of entitlement.

Mainstreaming gender

✓ **Going too soft? Towards a cross-cutting approach to gender in policy-making**

Gender mainstreaming was first introduced in 1996 at the EU-level, following the UN Beijing Conference (1995).

Monitoring instruments and regulating established, notably for the management of EU funds, leading to policy transfers in EU member states

✓ **Mainstreaming gender in research & innovation policies**

Helsinki Group of Women in Science

Gender Unit in DG research

Gender equality + gender perspective as an evaluation criteria for FP6 and FP7

Supporting structural changes in research & the academia

Gender equality as one of the principles of Responsible Research & Innovation

Horizon 2020



QUESTIONS?