ABSTRACT
SOME REFLECTIONS ON GENDER RELATIONS

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During the 1990s, gender studies have been strongly influenced by post-structuralist theory. As a consequence, the notion of gender is described as “historical” and “constructed” in opposition to a (theoretically) assumed concept of women or gender as ”essentialist ” or “a-historical”. Many studies, published during the last decade, scrutinize different constructions of gender in various historical, cultural or societal contexts. The studies are often descriptive, without theoretical discussion, not analysing what causes a certain form of construction of gender. Often, the presumption of “construction” is rhetorical and turns to a new form of “essentialism”. In my paper, I will challenge this position.

The aim is to discuss the notion of gender, by demonstrating how gender relations are shaped by, and only by, other societal relations. I will claim that the gender relations have no internal dynamics.

As a starting point, I will return to the debate in academic feminism around 1980, the so called “Unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism”-debate. The main issue for the debate was the relation between suppression of women (i.e. gender relations) and the capitalist economic system and its oppression of the working class (external to gender relations). The solution was the dual-system theory: The suppression of women on the one hand and the oppression of the working class on the other could only be theoretically understood by two different, unrelated theories. The theoretical debate since then has focused on other problems and elaborated the concept of gender. I will focus on the old debate with the new theoretical achievements, suggesting a deeper understanding of the process that constructs gender relations.