

# CREATING FEMINIST IDENTITIES TO CHANGE EUSKAL HERRIA

## Table of contents

### 0- CREATING FEMINIST IDENTITIES TO CHANGE EUSKAL HERRIA

- Introduction
- Why this debate
- Goals of the debate

### 1 – IDENTITIES WITHIN THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

- How the debate has been held
- Woman identity/Sexual identity. The history of a fracture. Theory and practice.
- Transfeminism as an “alternative” today.

### 2- FEMINIST SUBJECTS

- Dealing with the identity debate
- Current political, social and economic context in Euskal Herria. Situation of the feminist movement.

### 3- SEX, CLASS, AND NATION, KEY COMPONENTS OF THE FEMINIST IDENTITY/SUBJECT

- Class
- Nation

### 4- FEMINIST PRACTICE

## 0 - CREATING FEMINIST IDENTITIES TO CHANGE EUSKAL HERRIA

### Introduction

This document includes the major issues we dealt with in the debate on identities we held at the “Biluztuz jantzi” conference. There were four different panels working on the issue. We have summarized the issues each speaker discussed and brought them all here, so it can lead the way for future reflections on issues that have aroused after the conference or that were not tackled at the conference.

We want to draw our attention to those issues that have an impact on our feminist practice, to change and fight against the social relationships between the sexes that are based on subordination, exploitation and oppression. We want to draw our attention to those issues that will help us create the feminist subject of Euskal Herria, those issues that will help us continue with the necessary struggle that unites both the national and the social liberation of Euskal Herria.

We need to unite theoretical approaches and feminist practice in a non-theorist reflection, given that we are feminist subjects, we need to clarify certain aspects that have a direct impact over our political practice.

The identities debate has been a crucial one and it has determined the development of feminist theory and the feminist movement from the eighties on<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, it was at that period when the issue of differences between women aroused (mostly dealing with race and sexual choice, since class differences have divided feminism from its very beginning: liberal feminism vs. socialist feminism). Having said that, we can argue that there have always been discussions inside feminism, all in all, these questions have always been there: what is a woman?, what does it mean to be a woman?, what makes us women?. Greek sophists rescued from philosophy history asked those questions and teenagers also ask them today.

### Why this debate?

- First of all, nowadays, when we speak of the feminist subjects debate we speak of individual and collective identities. Pointing that out, we want to make clear that, from our viewpoint, the most interesting thing is to consider this identity debate in political terms, for it seems that, at this moment, there is a need within

<sup>1</sup> When we make a difference between “feminist theory” and the “feminist movement”, we do it because we want to mark that in the flourishing and development of “feminisms” and of the “feminist movement”, theoretical contributions and political feminist practice have influenced each other a great deal. That is, the women who started making theoretical contributions in the fields of science and academia were also feminist activists, they had some sort of awareness or felt attracted by feminist vindications, they somehow respond to a political practice and they nurture it. That strong link between theory and practice which has been thought characteristic of feminism can also provide us with food for thought. That link has weakened, as some feminist vindications and demands have grown “institutionalized”.

feminist debates to substitute the term “political subject”. If we understand identity as the subjective feeling created when feeling part of a collectivity, special attention will be drawn to the experience of the self (especially concerning sexuality) and to the differences respecting the others (differences between men and women, as well as between women). So, consequently, it is inevitable that we locate the identities debate in terms of political subjects and inequalities<sup>2</sup>.

- This debate has created a new feminist trend, known as postfeminism or transfeminism. These are groups based on theoretical approaches and practices that criticize the established sexual discourse (heteronormativity). They propose destroying the norm discourse in favor of a developing identity. These feminist groups also question the feminist movement, since they reject the political subjects that other feminist trends propose for women. The vital importance of sexuality in feminist practice has to make us reflect on the political dimension of sexuality and on the feminist subjects and practices that it creates.
- It will help us updating, polishing, strengthening and studying in depth our feminist proposal from a theoretical-practical viewpoint. This discussion springs from a practical need: to create feminist subjects in Euskal Herria, adapted to the current economic, politic and ideological context, for it is in that context where feminist struggle is located, if understood as the struggle in favor of shared social relationships between the sexes. The social relationships of power between the sexes that the patriarchal society establishes cannot be separated from the rest of social relationships of power that the capitalist system establishes in its neoliberal phase, that is, class and nation relationships.

### Goals of the debate

- Get to know the feminist contributions, theories, analyses and proposals that have stirred the feminist movement. Emphasize on those who have considered identity to be an essential component of the feminist subject, which is a political subject. See what fractures they have opened up in the patriarchal discourse of gender/sex identities, see how they have questioned the foundations of the patriarchal ideology, updating feminist political critique. Observe the fractures that the identities debate has opened up within the feminist movement, when defining the political subject: starting from the idea of an universal category of

<sup>2</sup> We can add a certain abuse and confusion that the political use of the term “identity” brings: “cultural identity”, “national identity”, “political identity”, “sexual identity”, “gender identity”, and currently in Euskal Herria, “multiculturality”, “nationalist/non-nationalist”.



“woman”, to the idea of differences between women, concerning class, race, ethnicity, culture, nation or sexual choice.

- To locate the political debate over the feminist subject in our current context in Euskal Herria, that is, the political dimension of the sex/gender identities, intertwined with the rest of social identities (class, nation, sexual choice).
- To locate the construction of the feminist subject within the political, economic and ideological situation of Euskal Herria, that is, to put the feminist struggle into context. To update the political strategy of the Bilgune Feminista.

## 1-IDENTITIES WITHIN THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT <sup>3</sup>

### *How the debate has been tackled*

The identity debate has had direct consequences upon the feminist thought and practice, starting from the sixties and seventies when second wave feminism flourished. The identity issue appears linked to the discussion on the subject “woman” and the feminist subject, regarding which of the two is the subject for women’s liberation. The goal is to define what is that makes women secondary citizens in comparison to men, to define precisely what is that this difference is based upon.

One of the main contributions made in the seventies was the questioning of the naturalized “man” and “woman” categories, and, also, the questioning of the values and roles assigned to each sex. Following Simone de Beauvoir’s famous quote “one is *not born*, but rather becomes, a woman” feminists brought to light the social construction process of sexual difference and identities<sup>4</sup>.

If we do not consider “woman” to be a natural happening, but, on the contrary, a social one, the universality of being a “woman” is really a secondary social position which is universally accepted. What defines women’s identity is how the woman being is created socially, because, each sex is assigned hierarchically organized roles and conditions, based on the biological difference between the sexes (male/female). The basis of that feminist subject imagined in the sixties and seventies is the consciousness of that secondary social position shared universally by women (and that consciousness unites women as a liberation subject).

<sup>3</sup> Talk by Alicia Reigada Olaizola.

<sup>4</sup> About this point, we would like to add that feminist critique, for example in anthropology, is located in these same aspects which also form the political critique of the patriarchal ideology: the naturalization of sex categories, as Alicia claims; the asymmetry of that category (male/female), the set of categories between the sexes (with other sex categories in between), anathomic, fisiological and even sociocultural variability; finally, the power-relationships brought about those differences, that is, in the social relationships between the sexes, complementarity is established in terms of power.

Another big contribution of that period to the construction of the feminist subject was the leitmotiv “the personal is political”, the political dimension of the personal and daily life became central to awareness and struggle.

The question so as to the secondary position of women is universal or not, had an impact in the feminist theory and practice of the eighties. Attention is drawn to the differences between women concerning class, race and sexual choice, that attention had its consequences upon the way feminist political subjects and identities are understood. The social situation of women is not identical if they belong to an oppressing nation or race, or, on the contrary, to an oppressed one, if they belong to a colonized or an imperialist culture, if they are lesbian or heterosexual.

Categories such as male/female, masculine/feminine were no longer natural essences, homogeneous and unique entities, but socially created ones, consequently it was necessary to analyze how those categories had been made historically and culturally, to construct oppression relationships between men and women. The notion of gender asked how gender relationships created differences between men and women, instead of drawing attention to those differences or taking them for granted<sup>5</sup>. “Black and non-white” feminists stated clearly that there is not just one kind of oppression, and that is why gender-identity could not be considered the only reference of the feminist struggle. Also, the criticism made by feminists from colonized countries showed that the colonial-imperialist powers intervene in the gender-identity of many women; these feminists proved that in several contexts, women’s experiences, goals and interests are marked by ethnic and national struggles, and that gender-identity cannot be formulated in terms of the experiences, expectations and lives of middle class white women.

In the nineties, neoliberalism (any thing can be a product as long as there is a market for it, a market ruled by the “free competition”), globalization (global capitalism), institutionalization and individualism have relocated the debate over the construction of the feminist subject as a liberation subject. Apart from the social and collective key points that explain women’s situation and the reasons behind it, we will have to consider the importance of the own experience and subjectivity. The individual identity, the social construction of that identity will become the axes of feminist theory and practice. Within that construction, sex-identity will be understood as the subjective construction of the body.

In this historical path we are walking, we would like to stress a basic approach, that is, the approach that states that “woman” is a social construction and that makes us rethink identity and gender-difference towards men in the following terms:

<sup>5</sup> Lourdes Méndez points out in her book *Antropología Feminista* (2007) this fact about the western European women social-scientists in the eighties: “they did not internalize the notion of gender, and rather spoke about social sex (instead of speaking about gender) and about the social relationships between the sexes (instead of speaking about gender relationships). As one of the paradoxes of the development of feminist theory’s history, the gender notion started being criticized [“for being politically amorphous and imprecise and because the famous distinction between sex and gender did not apply... in many European contexts” (Braidotti, 2004)], and it was then that anglophone scholars started trying to define it. (pp. 191).



1. *In historical terms.* It proposes that the perception of sexual difference and sex/gender identities varies from a society to another and that it changes in time. The type of society established by social relationships (be them power-relationships or not) and the social context of that society determine what biological sexes will be recognized in that society and how the differences will be dealt with. Even though the endurance of patriarchy (social power-relationships between the sexes) can lead us to think that the sex/gender system which establishes the differences and hierarchy between men and women is a permanent one and does not change, it must be taken into account that the economic, political and ideological arrangements that permit the sex/gender oppression have changed from one society to another, and also depending on the historic epoch (initial communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism). The importance of sex as a social mark changes, and also the recognition the sex/gender categories (male/female), the assignments of different roles and statuses, the social division of labor, the power and authority assigned to the feminine and the masculine.
2. *In terms of relationships.* That is, in our society, “being a woman” and “feminine identity” are constructed in relation and opposition to “being a man” and the “masculine identity”. But, apart from the social relationship between the sexes, sex needs to be put in relation to other social variables such as sexuality, race, ethnicity and social class, for those too shape identity. We will draw our attention to that matter later.
3. *In terms of power.* The patriarchal society establishes that model of relationships in terms of power, hierarchy and subordination, in a sex/gender system that creates women’s subordination to men (both individual and collectively). It makes the sex/gender (men/women) hierarchy, as a social difference, the structure upon which each society constructs its social subordination-relationships. In the capitalist society the social power-relationships between the sexes are structural and they are intertwined with the rest of the power-relationships, such as class and nation.

In order to ensure that these social subordination-relationships are reproduced, the patriarchal ideology will claim and spread that the difference between the sexes is natural and that its social consequences are inevitable. We will observe that this discourse deems us useful merely for reproduction-functions (biological and social reproduction) and that the subordination-relationship is ideologically presented as one of complementarity.

4. *In political terms.* Because social power-relationships create contradictory interests between oppressor men and oppressed women. Oppressed women take consciousness of this oppression and thus become liberation subjects, feminist subjects that, in turn, create political practice.
5. *In terms of collectivity.* Rather than considering identities as the result of an individual process, we want to see how they are collectively

constructed and interiorized by a particular social system, and also, how our reactions and responses towards referential identity-types are also collective.

### ***Women identity/Sex identities. The history of a fracture. Theory and practice.***

Since feminism said that identities are social constructions, which create power, and that it is necessary to undo and fight them, we started discussing about the alternatives we want to propose. And it was then that we started looking at the feminist movement, at its inside.

The classic debate between egalitarian feminists and difference feminists is quite significant. Difference feminism would comprehend the proposals of some ecofeminist and feminist economy trends, which state that the world needs to be “feminized”. Thanks to the criticism made by marginal feminist movements to western feminism (white, middle class and heterosexual), and specially from the eighties on, we have get to know different ways to rethink and experiment identity, difference and the subject of feminism. Black, postcolonial, lesbian, indigenous and working class feminism have denounced that it is not enough to just pay attention to differences between men and women, and that the differences between women are also significant. Together with sex, sexuality, social class, “race”, nation and ethnicity will gain importance.

Talking about the importance that “the lived experience” has upon the construction of the identity, and talking about that “lived experience” makes us recognize the following:

- Many times, those differences between women lead to discrimination among women;
- There is not just one way to exercise transcultural oppression;
- It is not just an accumulation of differences (the idea of triple discrimination: woman + worker + immigrant), but how those differences are intertwined and how they shape both identity and subordination-relationships.

Thus, the feminist subject constructed in the seventies and part of the eighties was thought to be homogeneous and universal (The Woman), and its starting point was a quite essentialist and immovable viewpoint of identity. Since it was aimed at providing the movement with a strong political identity, similarities between women, rather than differences, were stressed. The essentialized conception of women and the homogeneous idea of the political subject gave way, at that time, to the consolidation and organization of the feminist movement, and provided it with strong political and identity references.

From the middle of the eighties on, a new period of the movement started, which moved away from the essentialism of the previous one and which was based on a feminist subject that recognized its internal multiplicity and heterogeneous nature. One of the characteristics of that period will be the

meeting points and dissonant areas between the western feminist movement and the marginal feminisms.

Even though, nowadays, the issue of differences among women and the critique to western feminism are presented as if they were new debates, it must be said that those discussions have been going on, in one way or another, from the very beginning of the movement (in the times of the Russian Revolution there was the confrontation between bourgeois suffragette feminists and working class feminists). In the eighties, the consciousness about this issue grew. This issue being a current and important one, it does not mean it is new, and, linked to that, it is important not to forget the history of feminism.

### ***Transfeminism as an “alternative” today.***

“Postfeminist” proposals and the current “transfeminist” ones appeared in the nineties, as an answer to the traditional feminist demand for “free sexuality”. The issue of sexual choice was then met by other matters, such as abortion and contraception, as an axis for the struggle and organization of lesbian collectives. Thus, in the eighties, it was first said that lesbianism put into question the foundations of patriarchy. It was demanded not only that sexuality of those women who were not linked to maternity, did not have any legal binding, and, in the end, were not under the subordination of reproduction and masculine use had to be recognized, but also that it was necessary to accept lesbianism as a sexual choice inside the feminist movement and to recognize the historical discrimination against homosexuality (it will be harder to recognize lesbianism that male homosexuality), (June 28, the international day for lesbian and gay vindications).

As a consequence of the feminist reflections on heterosexuality and the recognition of gay and lesbian rights struggle as a feminist vindication, the naturalness of being straight was questioned and, on the contrary, heterosexuality was understood as a complex process. Sexuality and the identities that it creates were considered to be the results of complex social processes that produce them.

The following should be taken into account:

- Sexual choice, understood as a political choice, is different from a particular sexual behavior or sexual practice; it creates the “sex-identity” based on the individual experience of sex, a subjective construction, where the body plays a fundamental role, the “sexed” body, socially marked and constructed.
- Sexual practices, behaviors and choices are socially constructed; sexuality is central to the social relationships system of capitalism (patriarchy), and consequently, the control over sexuality is located at a political dimension that cannot be moved aside: the management and politics of sexuality (institutional establishment of norms for social and biological reproduction)



- Patriarchy establishes heterosexuality as a model, and it “regulates” sexual practices, choices and identities in terms of subordination (the use of the product and the masculine/feminine social power-relationships), by institutionalizing them (for example: family, large family, single-parent family, broken home, marriage, common-law marriage, couple, bride and groom, lovers, companions, single...; biological child, acknowledged child, extramarital child, stepchild, adopted child, child in process of being adopted, tutored child...); and by punishing and discriminating in various ways those that do not obey the norm.
- The social consequences of choosing a sexuality or belonging to an identity that does not fit heteronormativity and the sexual oppression that patriarchy has historically inflicted upon men and women have created a collective consciousness; the vindications of gays and lesbians are united to the feminist struggle in that feminism confronts patriarchy because it regulates and imposes a particular type of sexuality; a sexual identity that does not fit the norm does not imply a feminist identity, the lesbian movement marked that difference at its own time (lesbian collectives and lesbian feminist collectives).

Summing up, those are the ideas that have guided the feminist reflection on the role sexuality has played in the construction of feminist subjects. The international development of postmodern and queer theories has had a great impact upon theory, philosophy and academia. These theories have brought a quite cryptic language and a perspective that has been, for the moment, quite difficult to introduce in the political feminist practice.

These are some of the characteristics of that proposal: identity is on the individual, how it lives and experiences its sexed body in relation to the heterosexual imposition, that is, heteronormativity; the imposed sexual roles are no more that discourse, the representation of the heterosexual categories that need to be broken; gender identities do not pre-exist in a fundamental manner; sexual identity is “a performance narrator, and it is constantly making an unstable and multiple subjectivity”; sexual categories are questioned, broken, and other unnamed categories are brought to the forefront (transsexuality, pornography and prostitution will be priority areas of that breaking).

This kind of postmodern proposals criticize some aspects such as the crisis of the feminist subject as thought by the traditional feminist movement, since it is thought in heterosexual terms (man/woman and gender means accepting the identities “named” by patriarchy) and since it establishes woman as a referential category (if “women” no longer works, what is the point of fighting for women’s rights?; what is the main subject of feminist struggle and according to what is it constructed?).

We will tackle those issues in the next chapter, nevertheless, for now, we will state that when talking about the subjects of feminist struggle we take into account those subjects constructed upon the basis of the consciousness of the oppressed and the liberation utopia. They are women, the social sex established by patriarchy, oppressed, and they are oppressed in every way, as women, as workers and as citizens.

## 2-FEMINIST SUBJECTS

In this chapter we will summarize the main ideas of our reflection. It is not a theoretical reflection, our aim is to clearly state our attitude, asking the questions and clarifying the points that need to be taken into account to develop our feminist practice. In that sense, it is absolutely necessary to construct feminist a political subject in Euskal Herria.

The questions behind the identities debate are political ones: what do we women have in common to be a feminist subject in Euskal Herria? On what can we base the feminist identity of those subjects in order to create a type of politics that is not focused in oppression relationships but in co-work social relationships between the sexes (feminist Euskal Herria)? How do we locate the feminist struggle and subjects in today's economic, political and ideological situation?

### *Dealing with the identities debate*

Now that we come to the political dimension of identities, we must take into account how identity is understood: as a way of being socially, as a particular mindset, as a lifestyle, individual, subjective, optional. We would like to point out the political consequences of some of the proposals that have aroused in the controversy about women's identities, for they erase the problematic nature of individual identities, they depoliticize them and put them out of context.

We move away from this type of viewpoints:

- We move away from those viewpoints that focus their attention on differences, be them social, cultural, economic, regarding sexual choice etc., and that, intentionally or not, despise the discriminations, hierarchies and oppression relationships we are subjected to; or those who understand that those discriminations are the result of the differences. We must repeat that these are social hierarchies, that they are imposed on us, and that those are, exactly the ones that mark the differences. The social need of hierarchies (the sexual division of labor in capitalism, exploitation) brings difference about (capitalism establishes race's biological mark and sex as the basis for economic exploitation).
- We move away from the viewpoints that only take into account the ideological, symbolic and cultural dimensions of identities. They forget that ideology cannot be analyzed separately from the economic and the political. The economic and political dimensions of the symbolic must be considered.
- We move away from those viewpoints that consider the symbolic processes to be previous to the practice, to the social activity, according to the mentalist and subjectivist viewpoints. The key point is not what we think and how we position ourselves subjectively and individually, but the social position that results from what we do, from the way we relate to

each other. Moreover, the behavior of the individual and personal identities does not derive from taking a position, but from the reaction towards the main ideology.

- We move away from the viewpoints that carry the idea that identities are socially and culturally created, for they forget that that happens in a particular context, that is in the oppression terms of the capitalist society, in the social power-relationships. That way we can observe the social contradictions, conflicts and oppositions that create the society we live in. We cannot separate individual identities from the relationship models and normative models that sustain them. If we talk about “feminine” identities, we must also talk about “masculine” identities, in terms of power.
- We move away from the viewpoint that separates gender-identity (in whatever way that is defined) from class, cultural and national identities. Belonging to a particular sex, social class, culture and nation create us as women.

What do we, women of Euskal Herria, have in common, what do we share to unite our forces in a political and feminist struggle, today, in the 21st century, in the century of positive action and so on for gender, equality, recognition, empowerment, mixing and participation?

- We do not share a common nature, essence, physiology, mindset or way of feeling as a direct consequence of being a man or a woman (male or female). Neither do we just for being a woman and Basque. We cannot base women’s interests upon some supposed masculine or feminine essences.
- We do not share a common class-position; women do not form a common social class that puts us all in the same economic position.
- We do not have the same amount of power; neither are we in the same power-position, with the same power of decision or political power.
- We do not share the same feminist viewpoint in terms of politics (some think that political means taking part in the institutions, whereas others think that it means the confrontation area for women’s rights).
- We do not share a common political reference in terms of citizenship, cultural identity and national identity. Neither do we have a common point of view regarding the recognition of Euskal Herria as a nation, and towards the political conflict derived from it.

If we do not share a common identity in those terms, what does it make us a political feminist subject, what do we share so that we want to give voice to the interests of the women of Euskal Herria and fight for them?

### **Current political, social and economic context in Euskal Herria. Situation of the feminist movement.**

- We share, without a doubt, the social context, the social construction, Euskal Herria, where patriarchy has historically brought us economic exploitation, political oppression and ideological domination.
- Structural discrimination, the whole system that still discriminates women.
- Constant political conflict, which shows social contradictions. The citizens' demands take a political dimension when the various society projects for Euskal Herria are put face to face.
- We share the economic, political and ideological situation in which we locate our struggle for women's liberation, as a struggle for a new social relationships model for Euskal Herria, where sex/gender will not create domination.
- We can share particular feminist strategies, to improve our life conditions and bring a new society project for Euskal Herria.

In the end, that which we can have in common, that which we can share as women, is, specially, feminist consciousness, the recognition and political interpretation of women's structural discrimination-situation, and, specially, the political will to change that reality.

Those would be the foundations upon which we would construct feminist subjects, even if we are aware of the difficulty of such project in this crisis situation, facing radical individualism, general lack of consciousness, institutionalization, control, repression; in a context where the economic and political model is showing its very worst social consequences; in a context where contradictions create the need for change, that is, social, political and economic change, and all the denouncing, vindication and alternatives that it brings as a political struggle.

As we, according to the current situation, develop feminist subjects who will locate feminist practice in the current context (the current context of the feminist movement, of the national struggle, of the leftist struggle), the feminist struggle will move forward and it will take control of its historical responsibility (and demand it to the current feminist subjects), in the way to create a feminist Euskal Herria.

### **3- SEX, CLASS, NATION: KEY COMPONENTS OF THE FEMINIST IDENTITY/SUBJECT**

Feminist subjects are constructed according to the identity of oppressed women. Thus, the feminist subjects would be the political dimension of the identity of the oppressed women, which is shown in the political practice derived



from the consciousness of oppression, and which is inevitably collective. Feminist subjects, understood as political subjects, are constructed according to the development of awareness and political practice.

Sex/gender, as a component of feminist identity/subjects, must be understood through the recognition and attitude it has when facing patriarchy, that is the system that dominates and oppresses women. For this system establishes social, economic and political differences according to sex. In the social relationships system, it establishes sex as the primary biological mark and it establishes only two options: male and female. It subordinates females to males, and different power-relationships are inflicted upon them in the economy, in politics and in ideology.

Sexuality takes a special role in the sex mark, for it causes discrimination. An heteronormative model is historically imposed (heterosexuality, genitalia-centered, reproduction), beyond particular sexual behaviors. It establishes only two sexual options, the obligation to pick one sex or the other, and these options are connected to reproduction. We must remember that the heteronorm not only has an impact on sexuality, but it also influences economy, politics and ideology.

According to feminist consciousness, we can understand patriarchy this way: a system to dominate women, provided with several organizations and mechanisms (economic, political and ideological) that are socially established, imposed so that we internalize sexuality's products, sexuality, sexed bodies and all of their activities. Concerning that, and in order to achieve that objective, "woman" and "man" sex/gender identities are "constructed" and institutionalized, in terms of power.

We claim that identities are socially imposed, and, at the same time, imposing the power-relationships that exist in our society makes them. From our viewpoint, in our current capitalist system power-relationships are established in terms of class, sex and nation-culture. Patriarchy, understood as the system of social power-relationships between the sexes, cannot be analyzed if separated from the rest of power-relationships. Moreover, we must admit that patriarchy is a way of applying economic exploitation, political repression and ideological domination.

Thus, women's and men's identity is the result of what we have called the "crossing of identities", the articulation of the class, sex-gender and nation-culture identity. It is not a mere addition of those three aspects, but the intertwining or articulation of the three. If we look at identity as if it were a triple faced prism (or as if they were three lenses one on top of the other), we will understand the intertwining between them: if we look at it from sex/gender system perspective, we will realize that it is crossed by the social power-relationship of class and nation/culture; if we look at it from the class perspective, we will see the sex/gender system and nation/culture domination; and the same will happen if we look at it from the nation and culture perspective, the power-relationships of class and sex will arise.



This viewpoint on patriarchy and the sex/gender system is not a new one, neither in feminist theory (this debate sprang in the seventies), nor in the feminist movement of Euskal Herria.

This viewpoint made theoretic contributions, claiming that gender as a social construct is not about women, about what women do; instead, it really means how social relationships between the sexes are organized, in terms of power. "The social relationships between the sexes are located within other power-relationships that organize the social and, that, at the same time, construct the sex/gender identity. The contribution of the feminist research made in those two decades (the seventies and the eighties, that is, race and ethnicity (nation, in our case), class and sexual practice, is not just added or superimposed to the sex/gender identities, but that it structurally organizes them in a significant way" (Méndez, L., 2009: *Antropología del campo artístico*. p. 107).

In terms of political practice, this debate has brought the definition of the feminist liberation project and of the subject of feminist struggle. As a consequence, different proposals flourished which still prevail in several feminist organizations in Euskal Herria. These are the proposals, in broad terms:

- If we understand that patriarchy, meaning the sex/gender system, is located outside the rest of social power-relationships, and that patriarchy is the only domination-system which oppresses women, then, feminist struggle will be understood as the liberation of women, it will not be in touch with other struggles, and its society project will not necessarily question the society model that creates patriarchy; they will be feminist subjects just by accepting the reform of the neoliberal system (they can share common demands with men that also want to improve the model), up to the point of trying to design a new social order based on the supposedly feminine values (difference feminism)
- If we understand the basis of patriarchy, that is the basis of the sex/gender system that dominates women, is economic exploitation, for its products, productions and social ownership of bodies have an economic value and capitalist society considers them mere goods that obey the law of supply and demand; for those goods are produced for free, with no pay, not recognizing the labor that is behind them; if we understand all that, then feminist struggle becomes a struggle in favor of a new production model, and feminist subjects will be the women who are aware of that reality and the men that consider it necessary to build a society with no exploitation and no private ownership of the resources.
- Furthermore, if we take into account that economic exploitation takes place in a particular political/legal system (different ways of establishing norms, making decisions and carrying them out, oppressing those who do not fit the norm, establishing citizens, a particular nationality, which has an impact upon the individuals who have a legal status in a country), and, if we also consider that the territories of the estates are not necessarily the same as a those of nation's, understanding nation as a society that makes free decisions

according to culture, history, social relationships among them; then, feminist struggle is located in the context of Euskal Herria, creating social relationships that will free men and women from a power-relationships system that merges sex, class and nation. As a consequence, feminist subjects will have the awareness that springs from the “crossing of identities”, as dominated women; those are the feminist subjects we want to create, sexual identities and other type of identities are intertwined, quite no-problematically, in the construction of those feminist subjects.

It is problematic to propose feminist subjects as subjects that are aware of sex, class and nation oppression, because even today, the idea that women are oppressed specifically because they are women is a broadly accepted one (specificity is not linked to the fact that we are women, but to the way the specificity of women’s oppression is articulated in a domination system). We want to focus on the articulation that considers class and nation necessary in order to construct those feminist subjects. For that aim, we will present a couple of reflections and key points.

## Class

We are women and workers (waged or not) in a capitalist system. The class component (concerning our identity as feminist subjects) is related to the economic position the current exploitation system places us in (individually and collectively). This system imposes a social division of labor, it establishes a hierarchies system dividing the tasks that are socially necessary, both for the production of goods and services, and for biological and social reproduction. The division of labor according to sex is inherent to the capitalist domination system; it is necessary for it. The division of labor according to sex organizes the production and reproduction model, the work market, consumption, the distribution of ownership and wealth, being provided with services because of labor, recognition... Also, this division adapts itself to the fluctuations of that market and to the demands of corporations and finances (fusion and distribution of house labor) or to the economic crisis situations of capitalism that relocate domination-mechanisms.

Biological and social reproduction is still imposed upon women, as well as all the labor linked to that reproduction, which is not considered productive. We are considered the main consumers of the market; we are even more subdued to products and to models and images of how we ought to be women. Instead of breaking the traditional stereotypes, it shows the mere necessity of reorganizing and readjusting to the market’s new needs.

In the current Euskal Herria, due to the needs of the capitalist market, women continue to be used as free labor, they enter the work market in a secondary position, they do not receive anything as a compensation for the social services provided (furthermore, the capitalist system consider itself to be the “democratic” system which treats its women best, and which has governmental organizations ready to vindicate formal gender equality). The most recent crisis has showed that this is also a crisis of the domination model; this is the system that wants to maintain that model.



If we consider class as one of the components of the feminist subjects we want to create, we mean that we become aware that capitalism considers women of less economic value than men, but that we also become aware of the differences it creates between women. So, the struggle for a new socio-economic model is located within the feminist practice.

## Nation

We are Basque women. The meaning we assign to that “nation/culture” component mentioned previously when talking about the construction of feminist identities/subjects comes from one of the basic feminist debates, for, from the eighties on, feminism has focused on the differences that arise between women due to the fact that they belong to a particular race, ethnicity or culture. Multiculturality, interculturality, globalization and immigration have their impact upon women, and all that forms one of the axes of the current feminist movement in Euskal Herria, uniting the struggle of immigrants and the feminist struggle.

Race, as a biological mark, and ethnicity, meaning being part of a culture, shaped this debate. Nowadays, the importance of cultural identity as a characteristic of Basque identity is broadly accepted, and it is important not only because of the difference that Basque culture may possess, but because Basque culture is, all in all, a minorized, dominated and oppressed culture, and because it has been presented as mere folklore or as a good. So, when we propose this nation/culture pair, it must be understood that we want the point out the political dimension that cultural identity takes.

National identities, apart from being cultural, encompass another notion that is located between culture and politics, that is the notion of the “people”, as a part of the collective identity it shows us how that identity has formed in Euskal Herria, through the recognition that Euskal Herria is a oppressed nation and through the will to exercise its sovereignty. We have chosen the term nation taking into account those considerations, in order to point out that Euskal Herria is a nation with no estate, and that we do not have our political legal area. The current political situation conveys a particular set of power-relationships, which mean that the distribution of power is not equal when making collective decisions (and that has an impact, specially on the production and distribution of resources and on the public management of wealth). In those occasions, the estate is the one who makes the decisions and those are decisions concerning the normative system that regulates citizenship and civil rights, the system that executes, controls and represses.

If the nation/culture component is taken into account when constructing feminist subjects, it means that patriarchy and the sex/gender system it imposes are embodied in a particular socioeconomic and political model (the class component). The estates condition the situation of the women of Euskal Herria as citizens, because they make decisions refusing the national sovereignty we possess as Basque people. Recognizing that imposition gives us way to think and demand a different particular decision-area, an area that will guarantee equality and cooperation in the social relationships between the Basque



citizens, a feminist Euskal Herria that will work in favor of the interests and rights of women economically, politically and ideologically.

#### 4- FEMINIST PRACTICE

Euskal Herria needs social and political change. That changed must guarantee the improvement of women's living conditions, and must recognize and articulate the necessary measures to accomplish real rights for women. We must create the necessary conditions to construct a feminist Euskal Herria. For that purpose, it is a priority that feminist women take part actively, we need to appear as feminist subjects. We, feminist subjects, must create the necessary tools to guarantee that change.

All in all:

- Complete and construct feminist subjects to make that change happen
- The social, economic and political change must be carried out from a feminist perspective.
- New social relationships for Euskal Herria. Feminist Euskal Herria.

Within the political feminist practice we point out these:

- We have to work in order to spread awareness. Ideological struggle.
- We need to be in touch with the feminist movement.
- We must identify the needs so that we can improve the living conditions of the women of Euskal Herria.
- We must respond to discriminatory situations.

This is the feminist practice we have to support and invigorate. The creation of feminist subjects for social and political change must be a priority for us, as well as the creation of the necessary conditions for that change to happen. In the upcoming years, our feminist practice must strengthen its forming of feminist subjects, and for that purpose we need to answer these two questions:

How are we going to make women aware?

Why do we, women in Euskal Herria, need that change?

Euskal Herria, April 2010.

