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Varieties of Gender Regimes

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What are the varieties of gender regimes? The focus is the theory of varieties of gender regimes—domestic and public regimes; and, within the public, both neo-liberal and social democratic varieties—and pathways to alternative forms. Is this model sufficient to encompass the turn to less progressive forms and multiple global regions or are further varieties needed? At stake here is the distinction between modern and premodern, public and domestic, the meaning of conservative, the concept of the family, and the theorization of violence. The article offers engagement with critics and further development of the theory.

Introduction

What is the future? There are alternative gendered futures—varieties of gender regimes—that are more or less progressive and unequal. The distinction between premodern and modern matters; but it does not capture the full range of alternatives. That the trajectory of change is not universal and unilinear is well established, but the identification of the most important trajectories through combined and uneven development is less clear. What are the alternatives? What are the trajectories to get there? What are the implications of different political projects for the future?

This article provides a critical discussion of the distinctions that have been made between varieties of gender regimes. The focus is on the development of the theory of varieties of gender regimes in response to critical engagements. The purpose is to gender the debates on societal transformation that currently underestimate the theoretical significance of gender and to deepen the feminist debates to better engage with macro-level transformations. The intended outcome is an improved map of the terrain on which the key arguments are conducted to facilitate the debate on strategy and alliances to build a better world.

The article focuses on those critically developing and deploying the concept of gender regime as developed in my work (Walby 2009), and in Shire and Nemoto (2020), Lombardo and Alonso (2020); Lombardo (2017, 2018),

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Moghadam (2020), Hearn et al. (2020), and Kocabiçak (2020). It draws on feminist debates on the theorization of the macro and meso levels of gender relations, including Mies (1986), Acker (2006), Dunaway (2014), Elomäki and Kantola (2018), Von Wahl (2005), Estévez-Abe (2005), Boatcă (2015), Macé (2018), Ugur-Cinar (2017), Berkovitch and Moghadam (1999), Connell (2002), Bose (2015), Rai (2008), Tepe, Gottschall and Kittel (2010), Pearson and Elson (2015), Mahon (2006), Elson (2002), Choo and Ferree (2010), Guerrina, Chappell and Wright (2018), Roth and Saunders (2019), Verloo (2006, 2018), and Weldon and Htun (2012).

I distinguish between domestic and public gender regimes, and within the public, between neoliberal and social democratic forms of regimes. Is this sufficient to encompass the turn to less progressive forms of gender relations and multiple global regions, or is there a need to distinguish further varieties?

The issue of which varieties of gender regimes should be distinguished is bound up with the issue of the trajectories of societal transformation. These trajectories depend upon the depth of democracy and the strength of feminism and its allies. Hence, the identification of varieties has implications for feminist politics.

The article proceeds with an exposition of my thinking on gender regimes. Then the main lines of critical engagement are identified. This involves both specific suggestions for additional varieties of gender regimes and the underlying theoretical tensions and issues. Potential additional varieties of the public gender regime include various forms of conservative gender regime (Moghadam 2020; Shire and Nemoto 2020) and within the domestic gender regime between premodern and modern (Kocabiçak 2020). Theoretical issues concern the relationship of the distinction between premodern and modern with the distinction between domestic and public; the concept of family and gender regime; scale (Lombardo and Alonso 2020); and violence (Hearn et al. 2020). The article offers development of my theory in response to my critics.

The Theory of Varieties of Gender Regimes

Introduction

The theorization of varieties of gender regimes has been advanced by the work of multiple scholars. The focus here is on debates with my interventions in these debates. The starting point is the significance of varieties of gender regimes for theories of societal transformation and their implications. Then the development of the concept is described, followed by an identification of the issues most relevant for current debates.

Gendering Macro Theories of Societal Transformation: The Context

I developed the analysis of varieties of gender regimes to theorize the significance of gender for modernization and the development of capitalism. While

gender is crucial for societal transformation, much macro social science theorizing makes this hard to see. As a consequence, the significance of feminist projects and their role in counter-hegemonic alliances has been underestimated. The under-theorization of gender in macro accounts of societal transformation is linked, I have argued, to the reduction of gender to either family or culture. The theory of gender regimes was developed as an alternative to the reduction of gender to family or culture.

Many theories of modernization and the development of capitalism reject the notion that these processes are universal and unidirectional. Instead, there are multiple (Eisenstein) and entangled (Therborn) modernities, processes of combined and uneven development (Frank), varied trajectories through modernization (Moore 1966), multiple regimes of capital accumulation (Aglietta), and successive (Chase-Dunn) and competing hegemony (Arrighi). These theories of varieties of modernity and capitalism are, however, insufficiently gendered to accurately analyze the trajectories of change and the significance of feminism as a counter-hegemonic force when it acts in alliance with other progressive forces. They try to explain general societal trends but underestimate the significance of gender in shaping the outcome.

Some feminist theory responded by rejecting macro-level theorization. There was a turn toward agency and performativity (Butler) and also the theorization at the meso level, including feminist institutionalism (Waylen). There is a substantial body of work on changes in the household and family and the welfare state and employment (Gottfried 2000; Lewis 2001; Mathieu 2016; Shire 2015; Tepe, Gottschall, and Kittel 2010). I have argued for the importance of the macro level and avoiding the centering of gender on the family.

Gender regime theory addresses the alternative forms of gender relations at a macro level and the transformation of patriarchy/gender regime from a private, domestic, premodern form to a public, modern form. The public, modern form itself takes more than one form, with a distinction between neoliberal and social democratic being the most important. They have different levels of gender economic and political inequality, quality of intimacy, and levels of violence. These alternative public forms of gender regime intersect with the multiple forms of modernity and capitalism but are not fully aligned. The analysis of the trajectories to these alternative gendered futures focuses on the depth of democracy and the capacity to forge alliances between feminism and other progressive political projects, including the labor movement.

The Development of a Theory of Varieties of Gender Regimes

The distinction between domestic and public forms of patriarchy (gender regime) is articulated in *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Walby 1990). This text analyzes the modernization of the gender regime from domestic to public patriarchy as a consequence of both capitalist expansion and feminism. Modernization does not necessarily mean reduced gender inequality, since the

form of gender regime is analytically distinguished from the degree of inequality. The patriarchal strategy of the exclusion of women under private patriarchy was transformed to one of segregation and subordination of women in the public sphere. This transformation includes the socialization of domestic labor; the increased representation of women in the polity; the individualization of intimacy; and state regulation of domestic violence.

The significance of temporal and spatial variations in gender relations is addressed in *Patriarchy at Work* (Walby 1986), which analyzes the contested modernization of gender relations during British industrialization. This compared the development of different patterns of gender segregation in cotton textiles, engineering, and clerical work, linking the outcome of different proportions of women in these industries to the different balance of patriarchal, feminist, and capitalist political forces in these locations. This is developed in further contributions to the Lancaster Regionalism Group (Bagguley et al. 1990) *Restructuring Place Class and Gender*, which analyzes the rounds of economic restructuring in Lancaster, in the context of globalization and the deindustrialization of northern Britain, and the spatial and temporal components of uneven changes in gender and class relations.

The distinction between neoliberal and social democratic forms of public gender regime is made in *Globalization and Inequalities* (Walby 2009). This analyzes the trajectories of gendered modernization to neoliberal and social democratic forms of public gender regime. The difference is due to differences in the gendered depth of democracy and differences in the strength and alliance of feminist and labor political projects, in the context of economic growth. This work rebuilds the concepts of economy, polity, civil society, and violence to encompass gender relations. The analysis of the trajectories through modernization compares the United States (more neoliberal), Sweden (more social democratic), with the United Kingdom and Ireland (in between). The analysis of quantitative European and global data sets shows the lack of alignment of gender and class relations and the need to theorize combined and uneven development. Complex systems analysis is deployed and developed to address the challenges of theorizing the intersection of multiple relations of inequality. Two kinds of systems are distinguished: domains (economy, polity, civil society, violence) and regimes of inequality (gender, class, ethnicity). Each regime of inequality includes all four domains; while each domain is shaped by multiple regimes of inequality. The terminological shift from “patriarchy” to “gender regime” took place in *Gender Transformations* (Walby 1997), while the meaning remains the same.

Different kinds of polity and feminism are analyzed in *The Future of Feminism* (Walby 2011), which develops the analysis of feminist projects, intersectionality, gender mainstreaming, and the nature of the gendered depth of democracy. The depth of democracy and the strength of the alliances between feminism and labor are central to the differences in gender regimes.

Violence is a fourth institutional domain alongside economy, polity, and civil society in the gender regime, being considered too important to be ignored or subsumed to the state (Walby 1990, 2009). *The Concept and Measurement of Violence against Women and Men* (Walby et al. 2017) develops the definition of violence to theorize variations in violence over time and place.

The implications of the turn to the right for gender regime theory is addressed in *Crisis* (Walby 2015), which deploys complexity theory to analyze the cascade of the crisis from de-democratization of controls over capital, to financial crisis, to economic crisis, to fiscal challenges, to political crisis. This includes a reflection on whether a third variety of public gender regime is needed to address contemporary regress (Walby 2018b). While noting the need to historically benchmark fascism, it is considered that contemporary authoritarian and neoliberal forms are too close to be worth distinguishing. The neoliberal form is marked by the reduction in the depth of democracy and by the development of security capacity.

Key Issues

Some innovations in the theory of varieties of gender regimes are given special attention because of their significance for current debates. They include the use of the concept of “gender regime” rather than “family”; theorizing “violence” as an institutional domain; the gendering of the premodern and modern; the distinction between “neoliberal” and “social democratic”; the concept of “conservative”; and scaling and the spatial.

Gender Regime, Not the Family

I explicitly use the concept gender regime, not family. By constituting the gender regime through four institutional domains (economy, polity, civil society, violence), I challenge the tendency to reduce or conflate the multiple aspects of gender into the concept of the family. The practices traditionally associated with a concept of the family are not ignored but rather dispersed across four domains for analysis: care-work in the economy, sexuality in civil society, the governance of reproduction in the polity, and domestic violence in violence. This permits the theorization of these practices as variably in the domestic or public rather than conflating them.

Violence

Violence is included as a fourth institutional domain alongside those of economy, polity, and civil society (Walby 2009). It is defined narrowly, with a focus on physical actions and harms, in order to facilitate analysis of its inter-connections with other forms of power. This allows for the analysis of the

relationship between gendered violence and gendered economic inequality rather than their conflation.

Gendering the Premodern and Modern

I identify the modern with the public and the premodern with the domestic and specify this dualism in detail for each of four institutional domains. While the term “modern” is often applied to a whole society or epoch, I apply the term at the lower level of abstraction of institutional domains and regimes (Walby 2009). Each institutional domain can be identified as domestic or public. This allows for an analysis of combined and uneven development rather than over-general accounts of modernization. Nowhere is the transformation of gender relations from premodern domestic to modern public fully complete. Some aspects of premodern domestic relations can be found in all contemporary societies.

Neoliberal and Social Democratic

I identify multiple forms of modernity, multiple varieties of public gender regime, distinguishing, between neoliberal and social democratic. This division between varieties of public gender regime allows for forms of modernization that either increase gender inequality (neoliberal) or reduce it (social democratic), rather assuming a universal trajectory. The greater the depth of gendered democracy, the more likely the outcome is social democratic than neoliberal. A complex systems analysis allows for more than one form of modernity: multiple modernities and multiple equilibrium points. There is more than one route to and through modernity, involving path dependency in which sequencing matters.

Conservative and Regress

The transformation of the gender regime from domestic to public form is not equated with progress (Walby 1986, 1990, 2009). Progress depends on the form of the public gender regime. Following the financial crisis in the United Kingdom, the public gender regime changed in a neoliberal direction (Walby 2015). The concept of conservative is not used; the social relations that are sometimes called conservative are conceptualized as either domestic or neoliberal. I reject the concept of authoritarian neoliberalism on the grounds that neoliberalism increases inequality, diminishes the depth of democracy, and generates violence and a security state; thus, there is no need to distinguish a different kind of neoliberalism as authoritarian (Walby 2018b).

Scaling and the Spatial: Combined and Uneven Development

Gender regimes are shaped by and shape processes at different spatial levels, from global to local, and many entanglements generate combined and uneven development rather than a universal and unidirectional change. The

different spatial and temporal reach of systems of economy, polity, civil society, and violence are addressed using complex systems theory. Concepts of “rounds of restructuring” and “waves” capture the economic and political aspects of scaling and the spatial. The micro and meso are not rejected despite the insistence on the importance of the macro.

Varieties of Gender Regimes in Institutional Domains

The differentiation of the varieties of gender regimes (domestic or public; neoliberal or social democratic public) varies by institutional domain (economy, polity, civil society, and violence). These are described further and summarized in [Table 1](#).

The economy is defined in relation to tasks, relations, and sites. In contemporary society, the economy is constituted by both capital (a form of property) and labor. Care work is part of the economy, being labor. The modern/public form of labor is free wage labor; it contrasts with the premodern form of gendered labor, which is of domestic labor. Within the public gender regime, the neoliberal form is little regulated for equality and is unequal, while the social democratic form is regulated for equality and a balanced life (equal pay and conditions, working time regulation).

The polity includes not only states but also other entities that govern, including organized religions (important for the governance of sexuality and reproduction). There are multiple polities that do not saturate any given territorial space but coexist and overlap, sometimes competing and sometimes cooperating. The modern polity is democratic. But there are significant variations in the depth of democracy, identified as ten points: no hereditary or unelected positions; no colonies; no governance powers held by an additional nondemocratic polity, for example, religion; universal suffrage; elections and free association; low cost of electioneering; proportional representation; quotas for underrepresented groups; proportionate representation in parliament; and a wide range of institutions governed by the democratic polity. These ten points are grouped into types of democracy of increasing depth: thin, shallow, or suffrage democracy; presence democracy; and broad democracy. A modern polity has some level of democratic participation; a polity that has no democratic participation of women is premodern. Neoliberal is thin democracy. Social democratic is deeper democracy involving presence and some breadth. The depth of democracy varies by regime of inequality, so can be different for gender, class, and ethnicity.

Civil society includes the associations and projects creating and transforming meaning, including political projects, intimacy and sexuality, and education and knowledge. A neoliberal civil society is commercialized and unequal. A social democratic civil society is mutual and less unequal. In relation to intimacy and sexuality, for example, this means neoliberal is associated with the

commercialization of sexuality in pornography and the sex trade, while social democratic is mutualist and does not involve monetary exchange.

Violence involves institutions that generate, deploy, and regulate physical contact that causes harm. The relations and practices of violence that may be interpersonal, interstate, or intergroup are interconnected and form a single institutionalized domain of violence; for example, the finding that there is a correlation between countries with high levels of interpersonal homicide and high levels of militarization (Walby 2009). Following Weber, a modern state is the one that has a monopoly of legitimate violence in its territory. States are not yet modern if the criminalization of domestic violence and rape in marriage is incomplete. In neoliberal forms of the public gender regime, the focus of interventions against gender-based violence is more often through criminal justice against the offender; while in social democratic forms of the gender regime, the focus is more often on the provision of welfare and specialist support to the victim and aiding their resilience to repeat victimization. Neoliberal states often develop into security states deploying high levels of coercion and violence to address the high levels of violence their policies have generated (Walby 2009; Walby et al. 2015; Walby et al. 2017).

Developments and Challenges

Several writers have called for additional varieties of gender regimes, including: “conservative” to straddle domestic and public; new divisions of the public variety; and an additional division of the domestic gender regime.

Shire and Nemoto (2020) argue for the addition of conservative modernization, which challenges the way the distinction between the domestic and public gender regimes is drawn and reconsiders the location of the family. Moghadam (2020) proposes the addition of categories of neopatriarchal and conservative corporatist in order to extend the model of the public gender regime developing in the MENA region, with special attention to the concept of family. Kocabiçak (2020) proposes making a distinction within domestic patriarchy between premodern and modern forms, linked to the greater salience of property, using the example of Turkey. Further, Lombardo and Alonso (2020) argue for the greater significance of the local and of multiple levels of politics, using the example of Spain. Hearn et al. (2020) argue for the greater importance of violence.

Substantively, these proposals are linked to examples from beyond Western Europe and North America; slow or stalled transformations from domestic to public; and the turn to the right. Theoretically, these distinctions are linked to different ways of conceptualizing: modernity; the conservative; family; property; and violence.

Modernity

Debate on the theoretical distinction between premodern and modern underlies several of the proposals for further varieties of gender regimes.

The distinction between premodern and modern is aligned with the distinction between domestic and public gender regimes in the contributions by Moghadam (2020) and Lombardo and Alonso (2020), while others, including Shire and Nemoto (2020) and Kocabiçak (2020), deviate. The contributions by Moghadam, and Lombardo and Alonso agree that the domestic is premodern and the public is modern. Shire and Nemoto (2020) offer an additional variety of modern gender regime, the conservative gender regime, which appears to straddle the distinction between domestic and public, thereby suggesting that the modern may include the domestic. Kocabiçak (2020) offers a distinction within the domestic gender regime/patriarchy, between premodern and modern varieties, thereby also suggesting that the modern and domestic may be in the same category. Hence, Shire and Nemoto (2020) and Kocabiçak (2020) find varieties of gender regimes that are both domestic and modern.

Underlying this debate is the conceptualization of the economy, in particular, care work, and the family. The alignment of the domestic with the premodern and the public with the modern conceptualizes care work organized within domestic relations and conducted in the household as both domestic and premodern. Where there is nonalignment, the occurrence of domestic relations in care can be considered modern.

At stake is not only the definition of the social relations of the “modern” but also its scale. Does the term “modern” apply to the whole of a social formation, or can modern and premodern social relations coexist within the same social formation? By defining domestic relations in the economy as premodern, and free wage labor as modern, I argue that premodern and modern relations can coexist at the same time in the same place. The modern refers to specific sets of social relations, not to a society or an epoch. In Shire and Nemoto, domestic relations in the economy are considered modern if the surrounding society or epoch is modern.

Conservative

Is “conservative” a third type of public gender regime, or does “neoliberal” sufficiently capture all public forms involving high levels of inequality and thin democracy?

Shire and Nemoto (2020) argue for the addition of “conservative.” This variety of gender regime straddles the distinction between domestic and public. In the domain of the economy, care work is largely domestic, while paid work is public. The polity is public, with thin, suffrage democracy. In civil society, sexuality/intimacy/reproduction is domestic, but education is public. Support for this model is drawn from empirical analysis of Japan and Germany. Shire and Nemoto (2020) argue that adding “conservative” as a further variety of

the gender regime is necessary if the typology is to address areas of the world beyond Europe and North America.

The addition of “conservative” as a further variety of gender regime is possible without changing the underlying theory of gender regimes but changing its application. The conservative variety would be a distinctive combination of domestic and public forms of gender regime across different institutional domains.

The model I propose (Walby 2009) allows for the transformation from domestic to public varieties of gender regimes to take place unevenly between the institutional domains of economy, polity, civil society, and violence. Such unevenness and lack of congruence between institutional domains is unstable and the form of gender regime would tend to change to one form or another over time.

There are alternative theoretical interpretations of the empirical patterns found by Shire and Nemoto. It could be interpreted as domestic: economy (domestic); polity (no democracy for women); civil society (intimacy domesticated); and violence (domestically practiced with little state intervention). It could be interpreted as a neoliberal form of public gender regime: economy (marketized wage labor and care work); polity (thin suffrage-only democracy); civil society (commercialized intimacy); and violence (both coercively regulated by the state and widespread).

The inclusion of Germany within the conservative category can be further debated, since it less obviously fits “conservative” than do Japan and the MENA region. Germany has been on a transition from domestic gender regime to a public gender regime of a social democratic form, though this is under pressure from the rise of neoliberalism. Care work is being performed increasingly by the state and is less in domestic relations than it was previously; paid work is as regulated for gender equality as anywhere even though less than it was; in the polity, the depth of gendered democracy is significant and is increasing; the institutions concerning sexuality/intimacy/reproduction (civil society) show a mix of domestic/mutual/commercial forms and polity/state/religious regulation; and education (civil society) is public (state funding), so social democratic. Whether Germany is better seen as “conservative” or “public social democratic” may be treated as an empirical question that can be addressed using the categories in the theoretical framework. The interim conclusion here is that Germany is better understood as a largely social democratic public gender regime, albeit where the transition away from a domestic gender regime is not complete.

Thus, there is a question as to whether the empirical pattern identified by Shire and Nemoto for Germany is a stable and distinctive variety of gender regime or merely indicative of a slow and uneven transition from domestic to public forms. Shire and Nemoto (and also Moghadam) argue that there is sufficient evidence of stability to merit a distinct category.

Whether there is a “conservative” variety of gender regime is both an empirical and a theoretical issue. The judgment here is that these patterns of gender relations are in a process of combined and uneven transformation from domestic to public neoliberal forms of gender regime. There is thus no need for an additional category of conservative public gender regime.

Neopatriarchal and Conservative Corporatist

Moghadam (2020) accepts the distinction between domestic and public gender regimes but makes different distinctions within the public gender regime for utilization in the MENA region. She argues that distinctions between neopatriarchal and conservative-corporatist are more appropriate than the distinction between social democratic and neoliberal. The neopatriarchal form of public gender regime is marked by conservative family law, limited female economic participation, restraints on feminist organizing in civil society, and inadequate or nonexistent legislation on violence against women. The conservative-corporatist form is marked by reformed family law, visible participation of women in the professions (including the judiciary), and strong feminist movements. Moghadam argues for the greater salience of the concept of family, including in law, policy, and discourse, as constituting a locus of control over women, including of sexuality and reproduction, in both types of public gender regime in the MENA region. This is an empirically informed argument for the extension of the categories of varieties of public gender regimes in order to encompass the specificity of countries beyond Europe and North America. It further makes a conceptual claim as to the significance of the family as a concept in gender regime analysis. The treatment of the family is one of the sources of difference (explored further).

Family and Domestic

What is the family and what is its location in a theory of gender? I reject the traditional focus on the family in the shaping of gender relations. This rejection is debated in several papers.

Traditionally, gender has been analyzed as if it were critically shaped by the family and household, as if the family is the foundation of gender (Esping-Andersen 1990; Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Wallerstein and Smith 1992). I explicitly reject this on the grounds that it underestimates the significance of social practices wider than the family in shaping gender relations. In the theorization of gender as shaped by economy, polity, violence, and civil society, the family is present in my model but dispersed across these institutional domains.

What should be the location of the concept of family and domestic in analyses of gender regime? Moghadam argues for an institutional domain of the family; Shire and Nemoto argue for the greater significance of the cohesion of the family as an organizational entity but stop short of positioning it as an

institutional domain. It is the greater analytical autonomy awarded to the family by Moghadam and by Shire and Nemoto that underpins their proposals for additional forms of gender regime (conservative, neopatriarchal, conservative-corporatist).

In gender regime theory, the many practices that might be organized in family forms are analyzed as dispersed across the four institutional domains. Domestic labor is analyzed as part of the economy; intimacy and sexuality as part of civil society; the governance of reproduction and intimacy as part of the polity (which includes organized religions as well as states); and domestic violence as part of violence. All the practices identified by others as significant are included in the analysis but differently located in the theoretical framework. The implication of this dispersal is that the family is not the foundation of gender relations.

Premodern and Modern Domestic Gender Regimes: Property

[Kocabiçak \(2020\)](#) accepts the distinction between domestic and public gender regimes but makes additional distinctions within the domestic gender regime. She argues there are both premodern and modern forms of domestic gender regime. The difference between them lies in the different nature of the productive capacity from which women are excluded: in the premodern, this is property, which is important in agricultural economies; in the modern, it is wage labor, which is important in industrialized economies. Kocabiçak argues that this distinctive treatment of property is the basis of a further distinction in varieties of gender regimes.

Kocabiçak is right that property relations are important in structuring society. However, property is not absent in gender regime theory but found in the analyses of finance and industrial capital ([Walby 2009, 2015](#)). Property is important in structuring advanced as well as agricultural economies.

The judgment here is that there are different patterns of gender relations within the domestic variety of gender regime.

Spatiality

[Lombardo and Alonso \(2020\)](#) accept the distinctions between domestic and public gender regimes and between neoliberal and social democratic forms of public gender regimes. They argue further for the greater significance of multiple levels of political activities in shaping these forms. This is partly an argument for the significance of the local level of politics; but it is more than this; it is an argument for the significance of the interaction of multiple levels of governance. They offer sophisticated and empirically documented accounts of changes in the varieties of gender regimes in Spain to support their theoretical argument.

This develops the theoretical framework of gender regimes in regard to the spatial. It is not incompatible. The analysis of the variation in the impact of

global feminist waves on gendered social formations at different levels of economic development already allows for the significance of both spatiality and temporality and hence sequencing in trajectories of development (Walby 2009). Hence, Lombardo and Alonso's analysis of the significance of the local as well as national, regional, and global is a further development consistent with the gender regime framework.

Violence

The theorization of violence is an issue in gender analysis. The significance of violence is often noted empirically but not as often theorized. Its theorization depends on the definition.

Moghadam (2020) rejects the inclusion of violence as an institutional domain even though recognizing it empirically. Rejecting the conceptualization of violence as an institution renders it difficult to theorize its place in social change. Hearn et al. 2020 argue not only for the theoretical significance of violence in the shaping of social and gender relations but, additionally, that violence should be analyzed as a regime in its own right rather than as a fourth institutional domain. However, extending the concept of violence (Galtung 1996; Hearn et al. 2020) reduces the analytic purchase of the concept for theorizing gender relations—if everything harmful is violence, all forms of power blur into each other.

My recent analyses show the significance of violence and retain a tight boundary around the concept in order to be able to analyze the relationship between violence and other forms of social and gender inequality (Walby 2018b; Walby et al. 2017). The judgment here is that violence is a fourth institutional domain.

Conclusions

Are further varieties of gender regimes needed within gender regime theory to address locations beyond Europe and North America, and right-wing social formations? This question involves: the tension between concepts of family and gender regime; the range of institutional domains, including violence; the relationship of the distinction between concepts of premodern and modern with those between domestic and public; whether practices understood as conservative can be addressed by concepts of domestic and neoliberal; and the nature of the spatial within combined and uneven development.

On the place of the family in gender regime theory, there are three positions: treating it as an institutional domain; increasing the focus on the family but not as an institutional domain; and dispersing the relevant practices across the four institutional domains. Changing the focus to gender rather than family has been one of the important contributions of gender regime theory to social theory. The family should not be treated as an institutional domain.

While violence is widely recognized empirically, there is discussion on its place in theory. On one hand, there is an argument for extending the institution of violence into a broadly defined regime and, on the other, to diminishing its theoretical status. The conclusion is that it is best to include violence as a distinct institutional domain because this enables both a recognition of its practical significance and an analysis of its relations with other forms of power.

There is debate on the place of property in gender regime theory. It is important to include analysis of property as part of the institutional domain of the economy. The argument further was that the gendering of property means that a distinction can be made between forms of premodern gender regimes.

There is debate on the location of the boundary between domestic and public, the boundary between the premodern and modern, and the extent to which these align. The substantive issue that most often underlies these debates concerns the coexistence of domestic gender relations in care work in the economy and in intimacy/civil society alongside more public gender relations in other parts of the economy (employment) and in the polity. Is this domesticity better theorized as combined and uneven development or as a further type of gender regime (e.g. conservative gender regime)? If the former, the assumption is of a continued if slow transition from domestic to public form. If the latter, the assumption is of a stable form that straddles the boundary of domestic and public gender regimes. The conclusion is that this pattern of gender relations is in transition from domestic to public gender regime. This gender regime is not yet fully modern. However, there is no inevitable trajectory that it will ever become fully modern.

There is discussion as to the nature of the spatial to recognize the interconnectedness of multiple spatial levels of governance in gender regime theory. This is important and adds to the analysis.

In conclusion, the typology of varieties of gender regimes remains. There is a major division between domestic and public gender regimes and between neoliberal and social democratic public forms. Some further differentiation of the domestic gender regime based on the forms of exclusion of women from assets and power are introduced. Rather than develop a new variety of conservative gender regime, it is better to theorize such empirical formations as in uneven transition from domestic to public gender regimes, in which domestic forms of exclusion and power continue to be practiced in care work in the economy and in intimacy in civil society. Increasing the depth of gendered democracy drives this form toward a more public form; decreasing the depth of gendered democracy drives it toward a more domestic form.

The neoliberal and social democratic are still the most important forms of public gender regime. The transition is not smooth, tenacity of domestic in care work and intimacy/reproduction, even when women in employment and education. The depth of gendered democracy and the strength of feminism and its alliances are key to the outcome of the trajectory of change in modernity and capitalism.

Notes

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