

**“Power and resistance”
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Structure of my presentation

- Presentation of my study "Silent Scream"
- Unofficial multiculturalism – excludes minority women from full and equal citizenship
- Examples from my empirical material: The Jacob centre, a Christian institution working for marginalized people both from the majority and the minorities
- How can we achieve a full and equal citizenship for minority women?

A wrong premise: Unofficial Multiculturalism

- Norwegian politics toward minorities are founded in nationalism and the idea of “the Other”. This is what I call an *unofficial multiculturalism*
- A post-colonial way of thinking about the non-Western «Other»
- Culture, religion and ethnicity are regarded as objective “things” found in each immigrant.
- Minorities are seen as “others” with different problems and needs than “us”. Separate institutions are created for «them»

Multiculturalism vs. Recognition

- Class as unequal “access to and control over the basic material and non-material resources that sustain and promote life at a high level of satisfaction” (Baer et al 1986)
- Axel Honneth (1996): the needs for love, right and solidarity are fundamental for every human being. The ignorance of these needs is a source for interpersonal and social conflicts

Multiculturalism as a source of silent discrimination

- Putting human beings in to categories based on culture, religion and/or ethnicity is a ignorance of their rights as equal citizens. It hides their real problems related to poverty, isolation, exclusion and stigmatized identities.
- Multiculturalism is a myth, a social construction of reality. It is not based in the real reality.
- The current focus on these artificial categories is a source of various kinds of discrimination in today's society.

Institutional discrimination?

- The Jacob-center claims to work on minority women's premises, for example by organizing the Koran study group aimed at Muslim women
- The stated purpose: teaching Muslim women their own religion and culture, so that they later on become capable of integrating into Norwegian society
- Arezo came to Norway to become her husband's second wife. For 21 years she has worked hard in his shop, but her work is ignored by her husband (private sphere) and the welfare system (public sphere).
- The Koran study group: Peace and quiet or silent repression?

Arezo's reaction

"I came to the Koran group to find peace and quiet, but the teacher preached like my mother-in-law talking about Islam."

The Dynamics of the Institutions for "the Others"

- The Norwegian state finances a wide spectre of "ethnic" and religious organisations like the Jacob Centre and Mosques
- A strategy for integrating immigrants and refugees into the Norwegian society
- This creates a dynamic of polarization and repression. Religious authorities are getting an influence they could only dream of in their previous home countries. They become mediators between immigrants and the state. A heritage from English colonial politics
- This is legitimized by the Jacob Centre, an organisation interested in promoting religion because of their Christian principles

Multiculturalism as a mental ghetto in the global world

- Multiculturalism gives privileges and power to imams and other authorities using the us-them premise (from the minorities and the majority) (Bauman 2004)
- The consequence is an unconscious institutional discrimination and experience of everyday racism among minorities
- Multiculturalism is hiding minorities' difficult total life situation
- Many minority women are living in poverty, isolation, and exclusion from society. They are therefore not equal citizens.
- Multiculturalism strengthens the existing problems that the minorities are facing: isolation, unemployment, poverty, housing, bad health.

A global conscience – the solution that gives access to a full citizenship

- The problems related to immigration must not be individualized
- These problems are structural and therefore institutional changes are necessary
- Recognition means seeing the human being behind culture, religion and ethnicity
- The work for integration and to guarantee minorities' rights must not be mixed with religion, culture and ethnicity
- Modern institutions must base their work on universal pluralistic values and not culture relativism (multiculturalism). The needs of minority women must be central – and not their culture, religion and ethnicity in a static way
- A normative and regulative global system of human rights is necessary to gain a full and equal citizenship for all