

# Globalization and Shifting Gender Governance Order(s)

## Contents

1. Gender and Globalization: A Contested Terrain
2. Shifting Gender Governance Orders
3. Old versus New Gender Governance Orders
  - 3.1. Decline of the Family Wage Model
  - 3.2. The Reconfiguration of the Public and the Private
  - 3.3. Increasing Polarization among Women
  - 3.4. Reprivatization of Social Reproduction
4. Future Research on Shifting Gender Governance Orders in Developing Countries

## References

## Brigitte Young

### 1. Gender and Globalization: A Contested Terrain

Globalization has become the *lingua franca* of the last decade, yet its use in mainstream published works offers only master narratives focusing on the hypermobility of capital, the global communication and technology revolution, and the construction of a new geography of space and time under global capitalism. These mainstream accounts largely ignore the wide-spread localization of global processes, thus making invisible the different ways globalization affects women (Sowi-online Journal 2002). The almost exclusively male global elite managing the transnational corporations and the designers of the global financial architecture have not only welcomed the new global order, they also have benefited the most from the increased flexibility and informality of labor, money and politics. If women, ethnic minorities, and marginalized groups do appear in any of these elite accounts, it is only in terms of their deficiencies: they lack human capital; they have failed to adapt to the speed of technological change; and they are burdened with the time-consuming task of rearing children and caring for the elderly. These deficiencies have made them the “losers of globalization”.

Globalization has been a powerful source of change affecting many aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural life at the local, national, regional, and global

levels. Largely hidden from the mainstream accounts are the complex ways in which globalization is materialized at these various levels, and how the increasing integration of women into the labor force has had very complex and contradictory effects on women and other marginalized groups in these spatial localities. The effects on women are multiple and contradictory. They range from empowerment to conservative backlash, to integration in the global economy and even to violence; resulting in both an intensification and erosion of gender differences.

Despite important differences between the industrial countries, the East European transitional countries, and many parts of the developing countries, globalization has invariably produced cheap-wage zones. These enclaves of the informal economy have become a permanent feature of the formal economy. The informalization of the economy is thus no longer a marginal or transitional phenomenon. It is an immanent part of economic globalization. In the North, increasingly we see conditions of the "South" and in the Southern countries enclaves emerge that have much in common with the "North" (Die Gruppe von Lissabon 1997). New hierarchies of class, gender, and race emerge in this system of flexible accumulation.

The current transformation at the global level comes close to what Braudel (1982) has called a *longue durée*, a bourgeois revolutionary change replacing an existing social system that can last several decades. In the Western industrialized countries, we witness a shift away from the social welfare state and corporatist arrangements between the state, labor and capital toward a "competition state" (Hirsch 1995) underpinned by a system of market-based globalization. This rewriting of modern history includes the transformation of states, markets, and regional entities, and is highly gendered. The fundamental restructuring toward a system of "maximal markets" and "minimal states" has weakened the male breadwinner model and the entire gender governance order that has been associated with the model of industrialization.

The difficulty in analyzing globalization and gender has been the lack of theoretical framework(s). This situation has much to do with the concept of globalization itself. It remains one of the most overused, but undertheorized concepts. In addition, feminists themselves disagree on how to analyze globalization. Some defenders of globalization suggest that the shift to a tertiary sector, the rise of a network economy, and the breakdown of a rigid social system provide economic and political opportunities for the most disadvantaged (Shlaes 2002). Globalization in this view creates new political and economic spaces for relative improvements on how women and minorities have done before. Others warn about a new trend toward increasing gender inequalities around the globe (Bakker 2003; Rai 2002; Benería 2003; Grown, Elson, Cagatay 2000). In contrast, many scholars from developing countries argue that globalization is nothing new. Economic exploitation for many developing countries is not the result of globalization, but is an immanent part of capitalism and (neo)-colonialism.

This essay cannot offer a new or better theory of globalization and gender. Instead, an attempt will be made to offer a feminist political economy approach that links systems of capitalism (agricultural, industrial, informational, service-centered) to specific gender governance orders. The advantage of such an approach is its possibility for a systematic analysis of globalization that differentiates between different systems of capitalism in both time and space and the gender relations upon which these categories have rested. Since we do not know enough about gender

governance orders in developing countries, the following will of necessity emphasize the changes in the gender governance orders in industrial countries. However, the final section will make some suggestions on how we can construct non-Eurocentric models of gender governance orders using Asia as an example.

## 2. Shifting Gender Governance Orders

Methodologically, the argument presented here rests on the assumption that the transformation of specific historic systems of capitalism goes hand in hand with the reconfiguration of gender governance orders. With the concept of *gender*, the social construction of masculinities and feminities is emphasized rather than the biological definition of the sexes. Gender thus refers to societal networks of hierarchically-regulated social relations, which are ordered along a socially dividing line that places women on one side and men on the other (Gordon 1993).

The concept of *gender order* is used here to refer to institutionalized practices and forms of gendered systems of domination that are constituted as social ordering principles in all societies. Social norms, rules, regulations, and principles are not gender neutral entities, but are inscribed with specific norms for the roles men and women are designed to play in the polity. The networks of overlapping social and cultural mores then become embedded in the institutional structures of the polity. These institutionalized gender practices are far from being static entities, but are continually reproduced through the organization or structure of practice that persists in its effects on subsequent practices. The process of institutionalization means, as Connell (1987) points out, to create conditions that make cyclical practice probable. *Gender governance orders* are the aggregate of these gender regimes at the level of macro-politics. The interaction between state powers that bear on gender relations, cultural definitions of gender and the historical possibilities in gender relations make up these orders. They are stabilized through the various micro- and meso-practices that ensure the reproduction of these macro-political orders. Stabilized means that gender governance orders become sufficiently institutionalized as a result of specific historic systems of capital accumulation. Women and men continuously renegotiate the meaning of gender identity, struggling over the formation and dissolution of accepted categories, and the reconfiguration of institutional relations (Connell 1987).

## 3. Old versus New Gender Governance Orders

The gender governance orders of the welfare state model can be summarized as consisting of three central elements (Young 1998):

1. The role of women, despite their integration into the labor markets, was tied to the reproductive and private sphere.
2. The role of women identified with the private arena corresponded with the male's role as the "breadwinner".
3. A gender-specific separation between the private and the public characterized the welfare state system.

In the geometry between class and gender, men were subordinated directly to the market. Women, on the other hand, were subordinated directly to men and only indirectly to market forces. The present restructuring of the global economy and the increasing internationalization of capitalism has undermined this system of gender governance orders. We can identify at least four central new aspects of the gender governance order that are the result of economic global restructuring. First, the model of the male breadwinner is a phenomenon of the past. Second, the stark gender-specific separation between the public and the private and the associated assignment to the reproductive and productive economy no longer reflect the reality of the situation. Third, while equality has increased among men and women of the middle class, we witness an increasing rise of inequality and differentiation among women depending on their race, class and nationality (Young 2001). Finally, a new gender-specific social division is emerging between those (mostly male) who frequent the hypermobile “money society”, and those (mostly female and unskilled) that remain bound to the national “work territory”. These changes do not imply negative consequences only for women. They also have the potential of weakening and dissolving local, patriarchal cultures and systems of male domination.

### **3.1. Decline of the Family Wage Model**

Globalization has eroded the material conditions for the male breadwinner and his dependent wife and family. The increasing rise of double wage-earners since the 70s is a byproduct of this development. Double wage-earner families can be divided into two groups. On the one side are the relatively well-off professionals who are part of the formal economy. A much larger group can be found in the medium and lower levels of the economy, who rely on the additional wage of women to maintain or improve their living standards. There is also the group of single parents (mostly female), whose numbers have increased dramatically in all Western industrial countries. The increasing “feminization of the labor process” has undermined the family wage system. Most wages in the informal economy are no longer adequate to support a family; nor do they any longer provide economic security. The increasing integration of women in the labor market has promoted new definitions of gender roles and has led to changes in the social value structure. The norms of social welfare states where women are dependent on the male breadwinner are being replaced by the increasing individualization of women (Brodie 2003; Elson 1994; Bakker 2003).

### **3.2. The Reconfiguration of the Public and the Private**

The informalization of the labor market has greatly undermined the separation between the productive and reproductive economy. This separation was once the hallmark of the social welfare state model. Increasingly the processes of production and reproduction (also of social reproduction) are played out in a wide spectrum ranging from the informal, formal, and household economies. The conceptual separation between the private and the public does not take into account that the daily work of many women is done in a “triple shift” between formal, informal, and family or subsistence activities (Hossfeld 1990). Whether this work is done by women in the Caribbean, in Asia or in Silicon Valley, its common feature is that women’s work is a combination of activities in formal transnational production, in informal sectors, and in the subsistence economy. The borders of this “triple shift” are quite fluid for women, but relatively rigid for men. Males are rarely found in the household

economy and work either as subcontractors in the informal economy, or in the formal economy.

To the degree that the male breadwinner role is pushed more and more into the background, women are forced to earn their livings in a combination of the private and the public spheres. Increasingly large numbers work on call in paid tele- and home-based activities in their homes (private sphere), are found in sweatshops (neither private nor public), or with their babies on their backs in the “global factories” (mixture of production and reproduction). Among other things, this means that the concept of a regular, statistically defined work-time utilized in the formal economy is no longer adequate to define the new forms of the “feminization of work”.

### **3.3. Increasing Polarization among Women**

The rising integration of women into the labor force has also meant a greater disparity among women belonging to a different class, race and nationality. Although the new members of the new “club society” are mostly the “new boys”, as Wendy Larner (1996) calls the new global players of the neoliberal New Zealand model, professional white middle-class women in the knowledge and information industries are no longer a rarity. Linda McDowell (1997) has shown in her study of the male finance stronghold of the City of London that a slight crack did open for a new class of female professionals. As a result of the expanding international service economy, young, well-educated females succeeded in entering the middle and upper echelons of the finance and business world in the “global cities”, although with the caveat, as Saskia Sassen has pointed out, “... that notwithstanding the growing number of top level women professionals in global economic activities and in international relations, both these worlds can be specified as male-gendered insofar as each in its distinct way has the cultural properties and power dynamics that we have historically associated with men of power, or least some power” (1996, 10).

Labor market segmentation into a high-paid “informational economy” and the expanding informal sector of the “laboring poor” has increased the disparity among women. Low-skilled service jobs are not just an important part of the infrastructure of the formal economy. They also permit socially privileged women in Europe, North America and in other countries access to a professional career. As long as women, independent of their social class, remain responsible for reproductive work, the conditions upon which women enter “male” structures are gender-specific. Socially privileged females have the advantage of falling back upon mostly cheap, often illegal immigrants, to perform household tasks and child-rearing. Without adequate public child-care services, and without the fallback position of women from developing and transitional countries, women would not be able to climb the professional ranks that demand great personal mobility and flexibility. Whether these activities are performed by mostly overqualified Polish women in Germany, or African-American and Latin American immigrants in the United States, they lead to a new international division of labor at the household level. On the one side is the “Mistress” and on the other stands the “Maid”, separated by different racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds (Young 2001). A professional woman’s career of the European or American middle or upper class is thus possible only in the narrow confines of ethnicity, class, and gender.

### 3.4. Reprivatization of Social Reproduction

Globalization has led to a social division between those who remain tied to a territorially bounded “work society” and the “money society” that is no longer constrained by national boundaries. This opposition between the global money society and a national “work society” resulted from the “disembedding” of the monetary sphere from the productive economy (Altvater, Mahnkopf 1996). Huge profits are now made in the sphere of financial circulation and not in material production. As a result, finance capital has become dominant in the global economy.

The separation between finance capital and place-bound capital also explains the present crisis of the welfare state. Despite a “borderless” global economy, the majority of women and men continue to depend on the solidarity and the “community of fate” of national societies. It was after all the nation-state that extended political rights to the working class and integrated them as *citoyens*. The territory of the nation-state thus became the “political and social home” of the working class. Within the boundaries of the national territory, the Keynesian full-employment guarantees provided the economic stability criteria for the social welfare state model. The nation-state was also the vehicle for creating a national identity. These political rights went hand in hand with a specific modern form of patriarchal welfare state (Gordon 1993).

In their triple dependence on the welfare state (as social workers, clients and consumers), women are particularly hard hit by the social welfare crisis. As a result of the reduction of public services, they are “punished” in various ways. First, reducing social services means that these services once again become part of the non-monetarized private sphere. Cutting costs for the care of the elderly, in the health sector, and for education places these care burdens again on the shoulders of women. Second, the present privatization of these social services destroys the very conditions that have made the integration of women in the labor market possible. Particularly for women in the lower skilled professions, publicly provided child-care services often make the difference between seeking employment and staying home. Finally, social service jobs generated by the Keynesian welfare state disappear with the dismantling of public services. Under the conditions of global competition and the push for the lowest “single price”, the logic of the global economy and the logic of the social welfare state are on a collision course.

Globalization has thus fundamentally challenged the very notion of what is public and what is private. In the process, it has worsened gender-specific social divisions. The neoliberal “reprivatization discourse” seeks to repatriate the economic and social to the former domestic enclave. Reprivatization of the domestic, as Janine Brodie (2003) argues, has elevated and revitalized the patriarchal family. It rests on the dubious assumptions that the family is responsible for social reproduction, and that a family still consists of the male “breadwinner” and his dependents. Aside from the conservative and ideological premise of these assumptions, they neglect to take into account the changing reality of the family. The social welfare gender order no longer exists. Today’s reality is that women – even if they wanted to – no longer have the “luxury” to remain as caretakers in the home. In ever greater numbers, women have joined the labor market, while labor market participation rates for males has stabilized or even declined. How the reproductive issues will be resolved in this “borderless” global economy is the million dollar question for the next generation.

Finding a gender-conscious resolution of the tasks connected with social reproduction is made all the more difficult by the changes in the social structure and the reorganization of existing power relations. The state no longer is guided by a Keynesian logic, but is driven by the logic of competition. These changes have also produced fundamental reorganizations within the state apparatus itself. State ministries associated with the Keynesian welfare states, such as labor and social and human services, have all been devalorized at the expense of the valorization of economic and finance ministries. The reorganization has not weakened, hollowed out, or marginalized the authority of the state as is suggested by a majority of the globalization literature. True, the singular focus on the decline of public services may support such a view. However, this one-sided focus on the welfare state has failed to take into account new power centers that have arisen in the state and are closely tied to the global financial and economic interests (Sassen 2000).

#### **4. Future Research on Shifting Gender Governance Orders in Developing Countries**

In respect to worldwide development which affect rich and poor countries in different ways, Truong (2000) has recently warned that a Eurocentric perspective does not sufficiently come to grips with how gender governance orders have been reconfigured during the development process of the “Asian miracle” and its subsequent decline in the 1990s (Truong 2000). She argues that neither the Asian miracle nor the Asian crisis of 1997/98 and its aftermath can be understood without focusing on the gender norms and values that have guided much of Asian growth. Only through a systematic understanding of how gender orders were transformed during the process of the Asian miracle, can we understand the reconfiguration of gender governance orders in the process of neo-liberal restructuring after the Asian financial crisis in 1997/98.

Truong (2000) identifies a four-tier gender order for Asian countries:

- The wage earner, constructed along male norms with a formal wage system and protection.
- Casual workers constructed along female norms and confined to temporary, part-time contracts, piece rates and irregular work. Such norms can be allied irrespective of the gender.
- The dependent housewife – responsible for the maintenance of the workforce and care work – which may or may not combine unpaid care work with paid work.
- Paid “reproductive workers” who take up either different forms of sexualized services in prostitution and entertainment, or domestic services (Truong 2000, 161).

The particular gender ideology and gender governance orders Truong refers to are based on the glorification of subservience and sacrifice as female virtues that are manifested in the particular gender-orders of East Asia. Indeed, the World Bank East Asia Environment and Social Development Unit also cautions about the use of aggregate statistics which do not reflect the cultural, legal and institutional differences

faced by men and women in different political and economic settings. Analyzing men's and women's labor force participation in Korea, one analyst cites Confucian traditions and patriarchal family systems as the institutional basis for gender discrimination that pervades all social, and political and economic structures.

East Asian gender governance orders of female subservience are crucial in understanding how women were integrated into the labor force during the period of the "Asian miracle". The shift from import-substitution to export-oriented strategies in Asian economies led to a vast increase of women in the labor force. In Korea, women's rate of employment increased from 36.3% in 1963 to 48.7% in 1996 (Yoon 1998). However, as feminist economists have recently demonstrated, the integration of women was based on a form of gendered wage inequality. In a fascinating study, Seguino argues that such gender inequality helped to stimulate growth in the East Asian economies. Low female wages have spurred investment and exports by lowering unit labor costs, providing the foreign exchange to purchase capital and intermediate goods that raise productivity and growth rates. These discriminatory practices were made possible by gender norms forcing women to accept their low status and low pay (Seguino 2000, 27).

It is not surprising, then, that when the Asian financial crisis unfolded in 1997/98, women were more disadvantaged by the cyclical instability and economic depression than men. This in turn had devastating repercussions on the sustainability of social reproduction affecting women, children, families, and also entire communities and regions. Despite the much higher unemployment rate of Korean women as a result of the financial crisis, the state appealed to women to provide a psychological cushion for males who lost employment. With the slogan "Get Your Husband Energized", the state invoked the traditional norm of the men as family provider and women as caregivers (Singh, Zammit 2000; Yoon 1998).

One has to be careful not to make normative judgments about the disruption of traditional gender governance orders that are often highly discriminatory and abusive to women. However, the change in gender orders has, on the whole, not resulted in more empowerment and greater emancipatory power for women to demand equal justice and equality, largely because it is the result of greater economic immiseration that leaves many marginalized, low skilled women worse off in the process. Having been robbed of the social safety net and the traditional protection of families and men, women and children seem to bear the major brunt in industrial and developing countries of intensified globalization (Young 2003).

## References

- Altvater, Elmar; Mahnkopf, Birgit. 1996. *Grenzen der Globalisierung – Ökonomie, Ökologie und Politik in der Weltgesellschaft*. Münster.
- Bakker, Isabella. 2003. *Neo-Liberal Governance and the Reprivatization of Social Reproduction – Social Provisioning and Shifting Gender Orders*. In: Bakker, Isabella; Gill, Stephen, eds. *Power, Production and Social Reproduction – Human In/Security in the Global Political Economy*. Basingstoke, 66-82.
- Benería, Lourdes. 2003. *Gender, Development, and Globalization – Economics as if all people mattered*. New York, London.

- Braudel, Ferdinand. 1982. *Civilizations and Capitalism – 15th-18th Century*. New York.
- Brodie, Janine. 2003. Globalization, In/Security, and the Paradoxes of the Social, In: Bakker, Isabella; Gill, Stephen, eds. *Power, Production and Social Reproduction – Social Provisioning and Shifting Gender Orders*. Basingstoke, 47-65.
- Connell, Robert W. 1987. *Gender and Power – Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Stanford.
- Die Gruppe von Lissabon. 1997. *Grenzen des Wettbewerbs – Die Globalisierung der Wirtschaft und die Zukunft der Menschheit*. München.
- Elson, Diane. 1994. Micro, Meso, Macro – Gender and Economic Analysis in the Context of Policy Reform. In: Bakker, Isabella, ed. *The Strategic Silence Gender and Economic Policy – Gender and Economic Policy*. London, 33-45.
- Gill, Stephen. 2003. *Power and Resistance in the New World Order*. Basingstoke.
- Gordon, Linda. 1993. Gender, State and Society – A Debate with Theda Skocpol. In: *Contention*, Vol. 2 (3), 139-156.
- Grown, Caren; Elson, Diane; Cagatay, Nilufer. 2000. Introduction, In: *World Development*, Vol. 28 (7), 1145-1156.
- Hirsch, Joachim. 1995. *Der nationale Wettbewerbsstaat – Staat, Demokratie und Politik im globalen Kapitalismus*. Berlin.
- Hossfeld, Karen J. 1990. “Their Logic against Them” – Contradictions in Sex, Race and Class in Silicon Valley. In: Ward, Kathryn B., ed. *Women Workers and Global Restructuring*. Ithaca/NY, 149–178.
- Larner, Wendy. 1996. The “New Boys” – Restructuring in New Zealand, 1984-94. In: *Social Politics*, Vol. 3 (1), 32-56.
- McDowell, Linda. 1997. *Capital Culture – Gender at Work in the City*. Oxford.
- Rai, Shirin M. 2002. *Gender and the Political Economy of Development – From Nationalism to Globalisation*. Cambridge.
- Sassen, Saskia. 1996. Toward a Feminist Analytics of the Global Economy. In: *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 4 (1), 7-41.
- Sassen, Saskia. 2000. Women’s Burden – Counter-Geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival. In: *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 53 (2), 503-524.
- Seguino, Stephanie. 2000. Accounting for Gender in Asian Economic Growth. In: *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 6 (3), 27-58.
- Singh, Ajit; Zammit, Ann. 2000. International Capital Flows – Identifying the Gender Dimensions. In: *World Development*, Vol. 28 (7), 1249-1268.

Shlaes, Amity. 2002. Is inequality good for you? In: Financial Times, December 7/8, 11.

Sowi-online Journal. 2002. Onlinejournal für Sozialwissenschaften und ihre Didaktik, Vol. 3 (1). (<http://www.sowi-onlinejournal.de/2002-1/index.en.html>) publiziert 01.08.2003.

Truong, Thanh-Dam. 2000. A Feminist Perspective on the Asian Miracle and Crisis – Enlarging the Conceptual Map of Human Development. In: Journal of Human Development, Vol. 1 (1), 159-164.

Yoon, Bang-Soon. 1998. Koreanische Frauen in der globalen Ökonomie – Industrialisierung und Geschlechterpolitik in Südkorea. In: PROKLA, Vol. 111, 217-234.

Young, Brigitte. 1998. Genderregime und Staat in der globalen Netzwerkökonomie. In: PROKLA, Vol. 111, 175-198.

Young, Brigitte. 2001. The "Mistress" and the "Maid" in the Globalized Economy. In: Socialist Register, Vol. 38, 315-327.

Young, Brigitte. 2003. Financial Crises and Social Reproduction – Asia, Argentina and Brazil. In: Bakker, Isabella; Gill, Stephen, eds. Power, Production and Social Reproduction – Human In/Security in the Global Political Economy. Basingstoke, 103-123.