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The Gendered Implications of Globalization: Vulnerability and Interdependence

What most approaches to globalization have in common – from notions of a 'world system' to 'time-space compression' to notions of '-scapes' – is that the issue of gender is absent.² Seeing globalization as an uneven and complex process of motion and interconnections with gendered implications, feminist scholars have addressed these 'grand theories' and shown the gendered outcome of capitalist and patriar-chal processes. They question globalization as a gender-neutral concept and demonstrate how experiences of globalization differ across time, countries and different groups of people.³ Taking gender seriously does not merely mean adding the concept to the analysis at hand; it produces an entirely different analysis. Traditional 'macro' approaches have been occupied with global issues linked to the 'pub-

lic', such as global finances, economy, and production. Feminist analyses attempt not only to address under-theorized issues related to the 'private' sphere, but to transcend the binary distinction between local/global, public/private, production/consumption, and tradition/modernity. As Anna Tsing points out, globalization does not simply involve 'global' forces and 'local' places, for cultural processes are always both local and global.4 In order to tease out the gendered implications of globalization, I will provide three scenarios here. The first one is the political economy of the new international division of labour; the second is the trafficking in women, and the third is what have been called the global care chains. All three are important issues of the feminist approach to globalization for at least two reasons. First, they all touch upon matters of vital importance for feminist theorizing in recent decades. Hence, the first scenario relates to the involvement of women in employment and the conditions for their inclusion into paid work, which has long been a concern for feminist invéstigation. The second scenario addresses the issue of sexuality and male power in sexual relations, which has been a core subject in feminist theory as well. The same applies for the third scenario, carework and family responsibilities, which are a women's issue all over the world. Reproduction of the work force should, in fact, be seen a basic condition for local labour markets and the global economy alike. However, care concerns are systematically neglected in theoretical terms as well as in practical policies.

Secondly, all three scenarios provide a framework for understanding how globalization processes make visible – and in fact increase – the vulnerability and insecurity of certain groups of women in the global economy. The questions raised here are of theoretical and practical significance, such as responsibility, freedom and security. The discussion aims to illuminate how globalization processes may deepen class and race inequalities in the absence of binding rules and collective social responsibility. A final section, therefore, will address how to respond to these issues and try to link that discussion to the opportunities for enhancing counteractive forces.

The First Scenario: The Political Economy of the New Global Division of Labour

In recent decades, trade liberalization has led to a new international division of labour. A shift has taken place from manufacturing to services in the industrialized countries, and from agriculture to manufacturing and services in many developing countries. Many women in the developing countries have been offered low-pay employment opportunities, while women in rich countries in the North are being polarized as unskilled women, who have lost their jobs, and highly skilled women, who benefit from the globalization.5 Transnational corporations (TNCs) have relocated their labour-intensive production, such as textile, electronics and toy industries, to developing countries. This has been stimulated by national policies and deregulation of labour markets (for example, reduced minimum wage levels, uncontrolled working hours, reduced social rights of workers and low pay).6 The current system for international trade is based on the view that expanding global trade is beneficial to all countries, and accordingly, women have been presented as the job-winners of the game. But is this really only a win-win game? Is there a price women have to pay for integrating into the world market?

Indeed, women constitute an increasing proportion of the global labour force, and their formal and informal wage-producing work has increased dramatically in the Southern Hemisphere. In the countries with the highest increase in exports, such as in Southeast Asia, female employment has increased from 25–44% between 1970 and 1990.8 In East Asia, the average annual rate of per capita GNP growth in the period from 1965 to 1991 was 6.5% – way above other regions – a process stimulated by the availability of a cheap female labour force.9 The long-term effects of women's integration and low pay is debated. Some researchers claim that once multinational assembly plants have become predominant, they improve the local labour market for women by increasing demand and by providing better-paid alternatives than were traditionally available.¹⁰

Other researchers, however, stress the opposite, and claim that neoliberal globalization has deepened the marginalization of women.¹¹

Stephanie Seguino argues that the economic growth in Asia cannot be fully understood unless we account for the impact of gender. Her evidence reveals that those Asian economies with the widest wage gaps between men and women grew most rapidly between 1965 and 1991, and she states, furthermore, that investment is positively linked to gendered wage inequality. Hence, according to Seguino, women in these countries have served as the accelerator of economic growth. Women's wages may improve their bargaining positions within the household, but, being insufficient, do not enable them to support themselves or their dependents. Drawing upon data from export factories in Mexico, Fussel has demonstrated that the people recruited are, to a large extent, vulnerable women with low education and little hope of advancement. The development thus reflects a race to the bottom in terms of wages as a result of the globalization of production. 13

The relocation of manufacturing companies in Asia follows a certain path, from South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong to the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia to China and Vietnam. ¹⁴ But these processes are subjected to rapid changes. The female share of employment appears to have stagnated or even been reversed in countries moving beyond the labour-intensive phase. Rising capital intensity and technological upgrading tends to diminish the women's share of employment, as the new 'technical' jobs become 'men's' jobs, resulting in a defeminization of manufacturing employment. ¹⁵ The most recent trend is the greater informalization of work: the increase of the informal sector, with unprotected, insecure jobs lacking regular wages or benefits. ¹⁶ One of the consequences of this development is a considerable increase in poverty and misery in big cities, as discussed in detail by Elmar Altvater in this volume. Altvater further stresses that women are especially affected by poverty and informalization.

Gender relations are also at the heart of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, which have been a condition for loans to the developing countries from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Structural Adjustments Programmes imply cuts in public expenditures and withdrawal of the state from social services. Women are disproportionately affected by these measures. Fees for health care and education and increased prices for food and medicine also affect

women more than men, as women are to a greater extent responsible for maintaining consumption levels.¹⁷ The TNCs have been subjected to counteracting forces, campaigns and critique, to which they have certainly reacted. In 1992, under pressure from public opinion, Nike issued a code of conduct to improve working conditions in the Asian sports-shoe industry. But its efficiency was circumscribed by the fact that Nike does not produce any shoes; it only designs and markets the product. Many of the TNCs do not have factories of their own; subcontracting and outsourcing relieves them of everything except marketing.¹⁸

The Second Scenario: The Trafficking in Women

Trafficking of women and children is not a recent phenomenon. The 'comfort women' of the Japanese military during World War II – when 200,000 mostly foreign women were forced into prostitution – are a case in point. However, what is new is that trafficking has gained international attention. There was, in fact, no internationally agreed upon definition of trafficking until the UN Palermo Protocol was signed in December 2000. The Palermo Protocol covers any recruitment, transportation or receipt of persons by means of threat, force or deception, or abduction for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes both prostitution and forced sexual labour and services. The spirit of the Protocol is that trafficking is always non-consensual. The

The lack of quantitative data makes it difficult to estimate the scope of trafficking, and all estimates are preliminary. US reports estimate that from 700,000 to 2 million women and children are trafficked internationally each year into the sex industry and for labour;²² the corresponding UN figures, however, are far higher, or up to 4 million people.²³ These are mostly women and children, who are transported, sold and purchased by individual buyers as well as organized crime networks. Trafficking in women is extraordinarily profitable. The expansion of the sex industry – and lenient punishment – has made trafficking a low-risk and high-profit activity. The United Nations estimates that trafficking is a \$5–7 billion operation annually,²⁴ which

makes trafficking in people the third-largest source of profit after drug and arms sales.²⁵

Trafficking routes have traditionally been from South to North. The original focus was on the routes from Asia to Western Europe, and Thailand has long been seen as a central country of origin. Increased attention has been given to traffic from Russia and Eastern Europe to Western Europe and the United States.²⁶ Other parts of the world are also under scrutiny. In India, where the New Economic Policy has resulted in increased poverty for women, around 200 women and girls go into prostitution each day.27 Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, trafficking from Eastern Europe has increased heavily. In a similar manner, the Balkan wars in the 1990s contributed to an increase in trafficking in Southeastern Europe. There is also a growing concern about the growth in trafficking within and from Asia and Africa. Trafficking reveals inequalities at many levels, not only in terms of gendered relationships but also relations of racial and ethnic domination. Most of those subjected to trafficking are socially and economically marginalized women from poor countries.²⁸ In the past decade, the international opinion against trafficking has resulted in national and transnational efforts and cooperation. Still, the effort of the international community and NGOs to fight trafficking is counteracted by neo-liberal discourse on free speech and free choice. In that vein, a distinction is made between 'free' and 'forced' prostitution.²⁹ This split is also reflected in the international women's organizations and networks created to fight trafficking. The two most widely known organizations are The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) and The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW).30 The GAATW adopts a distinction between forced and free prostitution, which the CATW does not. However, the dominant opinion is that trafficking includes sex work that is, to a large extent, forced, and that it is violence against women.31

The notion of trafficking is at the core of the debated issue of whether or not prostitution should be legalized. The Netherlands and Germany have equated prostitution with other enterprises, while Sweden has criminalized the customer in sex trade. Swedish professor Sven Axel Månsson, an advocate for the Swedish law, argues that legal-

ization only leads to more serious exploitation, as it is likely to increase the competition with more brutal offers. Another absurd consequence of legalization could be that unemployed people might be directed to this 'profession' as to any other job.³²

The Third Scenario: Migrant Domestic Careworkers

Economic statistics take into account only paid work, even if only a part of the work performed by women in the world is paid; a large part of it is unpaid and left out of the statistics. To account for the gendered international division of labour, reproductive labour and carework must be included as well. Research on carework spans micro and macro social contexts, public and private boundaries, and class, ethnic and race divisions.33 As a by-product of global capitalism, reproduction activities are becoming more and more commodified, and the links between inequality and carework have become visible.34 The term migrant domestic workers has been used to refer to women from the developing countries who migrate to the United States and to many European countries to earn their living. Research on migrant domestic workers in Northern and Southern Europe has revealed the racial and class aspects of paid domestic work.35 Some of these women leave their own families behind to do the mothering and care-taking work of the global economy in other countries. In particular, migrant Filipina domestic workers have gained attention in recent research. The Philippines has approximately 7 million people working abroad, 60% of them women.³⁶ Rhacel Parrenas has investigated Filipina domestic workers who experience exclusion from their host society, and downward mobility from their professional jobs in the Philippines.37 Parrenas tells the story of Vicky Diaz, a 34-year-old mother of five children, who works as a housekeeper for a wealthy Beverly Hills family and as a nanny for their two-year-old son. Even if the wages are low, she has enough to send more money home each month than she used to earn in the Philippines. Vicky is part of what Arlie Hochschild has called a global care chain: a series of invisible personal links between people across the globe.³⁸ A typical global care chain consists of women

from the developing countries who are looking after children in Europe and North America while employing carers to tend to their own families, and these in turn have other women to care for their dependents. Even if these care chains are most typical of women from the poor countries coming to Europe and North America, Pei Chia Lan has explored Filipina domestic workers in Taiwan, showing how they transit across the boundary of maid and madam, selling their own labour in the market while at the same time shouldering the gendered responsibilities of their own families.³⁹

Hochschild provides an explanation for the causes of the global care chain.40 Just as global capitalism helps to create a supply of mothering in the developing countries, she says, it creates a demand for it in the first world. The increasing number of women in paid work in the United States and European countries has not been followed by the expansion of day-care provision, or the participation of men in the care-taking of children. In her influential book, The Time Bind, Hochschild has shed light on the first-world end of the chain.⁴¹ Women have become part of the professional and highly skilled labour force, but the labour market is still organized for men who are free of family responsibilities. Women are more and more torn between the demands of two demanding worlds, that of family and that of work. The global care chains reveal how globalization has created a polarization between women on both sides of the chain. There are clearly hidden costs here, costs that tend to get passed down along the chain. Hochshild argues that the ultimate beneficiaries of these various care chains are the large transnational companies that pass the cost of reproduction on to individual women - the same companies that benefit from cheap women's labour in the developing countries. 42 One of the reasons for the emergence of the global care chains has to do with the interplay between state policies, the market and civil societies. The problem professional women in the United States are confronted with, according to Hochschild, can primarily be accounted for by the lack of a true welfare system, resulting in migration and global economic interdependence between women from different parts of the world. Gendered inequalities embedded in structural relationships in the labour market in developed countries are translated into racial and

ethnic inequalities between different groups of women. Private, individualistic solutions emerge because of the lack of societal responsibility for the collective needs of women and children. One very conspicuous part of this problem has been examined here. But the issue is of a more fundamental nature, with both theoretical and practical implications. In her contribution in this volume, Lilja Mósesdóttir sheds light on the European counterpart of this issue, in her discussions of the European Employment Strategy (EES), created in 1997 as a political instrument to push the EU member states towards policy convergence around the dual-breadwinner model involving greater participation of women in the formal workforce. While the European Union in general has women-friendly aims, as revealed by the EES and measures to promote the dual-earner model, the dual-care issue has been neglected. One of the main drawbacks of the EES, according to Mósesdóttir, is that it fails to address the public/private division of rights and obligations within the area of carework and family responsibilities. If women's employment rates continue to rise in the developed countries without the development of much stronger concern for the issue of carework, the pressure on the global care chains is likely to increase, resulting in increased exploitation and race and class inequalities among women. This emphasizes the need for further research and policy measures within this area, locally and globally.

Conclusion

Let us now point to some similarities between the three scenarios and relate the discussion to the question posed at the outset about vulnerability, responsibility and interdependence. All three scenarios depict gendered configurations of globalization, underpinning the conclusion that globalization is not a gender-neutral concept. They also show different forms of exploitation embedded in global interrelationships between men and women, racial and ethnic inequalities and polarization between rich and poor countries, as well as inequalities between women in different parts of the world. The consequences of globalization have so far proven to be neither freedom nor security for large

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parts of the world, and less so for women than men. All three scenarios reveal people who are interlinked through financial relations, locally and globally, in deeply unequal power relationships, where 'no rules of conduct bind the strong and the weak alike', as Bauman puts it in this volume. It is important to respond to these global chains. The call for a 'humanization' of globalization needs to start with asking what the rights and dignity of each and every human being are, and what obligations those who are privileged have towards the fulfilment of these rights.

How can the gendered political economy be transformed into a more human and equal enterprise? Global justice is an economic issue, a social issue, and not least, a moral issue. It is a moral and democratic task to carve out a space for poorer countries to influence the present global system. In the global market economy, labour standards and human rights cannot be left to any single institution. International unions have called for action regarding increased insecurity in the labour market and a widening global inequality.⁴³ Transnational corporations can adopt codes of conduct, but these tend to be merely a means to wash their hands and absolve themselves of responsibility, if there are no credible enforcement mechanisms. Consumer boycotts and ethical trade initiatives can raise awareness, but they alone will not change the structure. And governments alone are incapable of securing human rights and security in times of disintegration of the nation state, or what Bauman calls the 'divorce of power and politics'. One possible solution is a linkage between market access and labour standards through trade agreements. Many Northern governments support such strategy, while Southern governments have criticized it as a disguised form of protectionism for industrialized countries.44 One problem is that there is no consensus as to what would be the appropriate institution to deal with labour standards, the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In the absence of binding international rules, it is important to press governments to implement existing international rules and conventions to increase corporate social responsibility. One is the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, adopted in 1976 and last revised in 2000;⁴⁵ another is the ILO conventions, such as the 1998

Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.⁴⁶ These represent existing tools, and it is important to press governments to apply them as long as more forceful mechanisms are lacking. Awareness, social responsibility and effort are required on micro as well as macro levels. Global efforts are needed along with local actions. Since globalization has deepened the economic impoverishment of many women in the world, gendered efforts are needed as well. One step in this direction is to create the conditions for opening a more egalitarian debate on the larger philosophical and gendered issues at stake in neo-liberal globalization.⁴⁷ Smaller steps also need to be taken. It is significant to increase the awareness of the people on each side of the chains of the fate of those at the other end, and to address their feelings of responsibility. Feminist NGOs have a role to fill here, for example, by creating mobilizing networks,48 putting pressure on governments to implement existing conventions and declarations such as Article 11 of CEDAW, the UN's Convention on The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women, adopted in 1979, and the Beijing Declaration.49

As regards the second scenario, trafficking, counteracting forces are already in place on national, transnational and international bases, such as within the realm of the European Union and the United Nations. These are, together with feminist NGO's, making important contributions. Even if no tools or instruments have thus far proved to be efficient enough to fight the powerful driving forces behind trafficking, strong policy measures on behalf of national governments are developing, along with international cooperation. Trafficking is at the heart of the issues of freedom and security and reveals the importance of further conceptualizations and theorizing. It is important to conceptualize trafficking in the appropriate context by recognizing its links with prostitution. Those who distinguish between the two are ignoring causal relationships of fundamental importance for fighting trafficking. In the same manner, one should be sceptical about the neoliberal distinction between 'forced' and 'free' prostitution. If the issue of freedom and free choice is to be raised, Swedish professor Månsson claims, it must be done in the context of the men who buy the sex of prostitution.50 That is one way of addressing the role and responsibili-

ties of those at the more advantaged end of the chain. By adopting a law that criminalizes the customer in the sex trade, the Swedish government has taken an important step to relocate the responsibility in prostitution. The law recognizes prostitution as an institution of power relations; it aims at protecting the more vulnerable party and acknowledges the responsibility of the more powerful party in the trade. Of the three scenarios, the global care chains – where women in different parts of the world are tied to each other by a series of personal dependencies of paid and unpaid service – is the one least developed theoretically. To come to grips with the vulnerability and interdependence at stake here, the whole issue of the interplay between government policies, the market and civil society has to be addressed and redefined.

Global feminism requires concern for women in other communities and nations and the raising of questions about the moral justification and responsibility of unequal relationships and exploitation, as in the global care chains. Future research will hopefully shed more light on that complex interplay and on how we can redefine global caring responsibilities against the background of all women's freedom and security. In this chapter, it is argued that the global care chains are linked to employment strategies in the developed countries, where they reflect the neglect of carework and family responsibilities. The emergence of migrant careworkers from the poor countries is linked to women's employment rates in the rich countries. If women's participation in paid work continues to rise in the developed countries without a strong concern for the issue of carework, the exploitation, and the race and class inequalities among women, are likely to increase. This final example shows clearly how the three scenarios are interconnected. One main conclusion is that they need to be conceptualized and understood in relation to each other and put on the political agenda in a broad context. That is a global as well as a local issue.

Notes

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- ⁸ Christa Wichterich, The Globalized Woman. Reports from a Future of Inequality (London: Zed Books, 2000), p. 2.
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- ¹⁴ Christa Wichterich, The Globalized Woman. Reports from a Future of Inequality, p. 14.
- ¹⁵ Günseli Berik, 'Mature Export-Led Growth and Gender Wage Inequality in Taiwan', Feminist Economics 6, 3 (2000), 1–26; see further Lilja Mósesdóttir and Þorgerður Einarsdóttir (forthcoming), 'Globalization and Gender'.
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- ²² Janice G. Raymond, 'How Do We Support Women and Children to Escape Trafficking? The Use of International Instruments', Second Joint Seminar of the Nordic and Baltic Countries against Trafficking in Women: Protection and Support of Victims of Trafficking in Women. Vilnius, 20–22 October 2002. [http://www.nordicbalticcampaign.org/upcoming_events/vilnius-Janice-Raymond.html].
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- ³³ Jacquelyn S. Litt and Mary K. Zimmerman, 'Global Perspectives on Gender and Carework: An Introduction', *Gender & Society* 17, 2 (2003), 156–165.
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- 50 See 'Why do men buy sex? The Interview: Professor Sven-Axel Månsson, Sweden'.