The Effects of the Globalization Process on Gender Orders

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Globalization is a process with economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions, which entails the restructuring and reordering of the social order, including existing gender orders. The globalization process is driven by the neo-liberal concept of the economic and political order, at the core of which lies the creed that the private sector is to function as the prime engine of growth. The neo-liberal perspective on economy, society, and government assumes that only a free and uninhibited market is able to allocate resources efficiently and to the well-being of everybody. In this perspective, the political system is assigned the function of removing limitations to the free flow of capital and trade on a worldwide scale (deregulation) and assisting with the relocation of the ownership of the means of production into private hands (privatization). Furthermore, national territories are forced to redesign themselves in such fashion as to offer attractive investment opportunities and to compete successfully on a global scale for private capital in search of profitable investment opportunities. National governments strive to set up the necessary legal framework (liberalization). Clearly, in many ways globalization is a highly political project, but it unfolds while such political structures as national, regional, and local governments and parliaments find their leverage on existing circumstances increasingly curtailed.

Following the demise of the (allegedly) socialist systems, the hypermobility of capital on increasingly liberalized and integrated financial markets has submitted ever new regions of the globe to the logic of the capitalist market economy. This process was tremendously accelerated by the condensation of space and time resulting from technological innovations in the information and communication sector. In nearly all countries of the Global South and, after 1989, in the former “Eastern bloc,” multinational agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank have actively supported the unrestricted integration of these countries into global markets. In fact, credits and other forms of assistance by multilateral agencies as well as by individual OECD countries are only made available on the condition that these countries uninhibitedly open their national
economies to international markets. Without upsetting the neo-liberal creed, the growing space given to private actors driven by profit-oriented shareholder values has created an ever growing gap between rich and poor countries and between (the few) globalization winners and (the many) globalization losers among nation-states. The continuous reduction of governments’ resources has seriously dismantled the capacity of governments to secure living conditions for their citizens that would enable them to live satisfactory lives and develop their potential to the fullest.

At the core of the neo-liberal globalization project lies the shifting of the boundaries between the private and the public space. Actually, what we are seeing is a dual privatization. First, governments hand over to the private sector the provision of goods, hitherto considered public and delivered through public agencies. Thus, the logic of profitability and purchasing power replaces that of citizen entitlement and public service. Presently we are witnessing the vigorous privatization of many basic amenities such as water, health care, education, social and public security. Second, in the process of becoming “lean, functional and economic,” governments are relocating an ever-increasing number of care activities to private households, thereby trimming the public purse while shifting the burden, rendered as it were invisible, to private households.

Since neither sphere—markets or households—are gender-neutral institutions, the process has gender-differentiated impacts. There is a broad range of topical areas and issues which could well be considered when looking at the gender impact of privatization: job creation as well as retrenchment of the workforce, labor flexibilization and job quality, informalization, migration, violent conflict and war, to name but a few. Even a cursory glance, and even more so a closer look, reveals distinct, and more often than not, asymmetric gender patterns. The focus here, however, lies with the effects of privatization on gender orders, coping strategies, and forms of resistance.

It is not by accident that I use the plural term of gender orders here. From the perspective of my professional fields—development sociology and development politics—I am bound to be aware of the very different gender orders people live in. These orders are much too diverse to be dealt with here with any degree of differentiation. By using the term gender orders, I wish to indicate that I am aware of that diversity, even while I am not doing justice to it.

It would be absolutely impossible to outline, much less analyze in any systematic way, the changes in gender orders that can be attributed to the globalization process. This paper will limit itself to a few aspects, which, however, have vast ramifications. As to the first form of privatization—the shifting of public amenities to the realm of private business—I will focus on the privatization of water, more specifically water for household and for agricultural purposes. Furthermore, I will focus on the situation in developing countries.

Regarding the second form—the dismantling of public care facilities and, by implication, the relocation of care into private households—I will give particular attention to health care issues. In both instances, the interplay of neo-liberal restructuring and gender orders will be under scrutiny.

Privatization of public goods: water

The concrete processes of privatization and its implementation differ greatly between countries in the northern, eastern, and southern parts of the world, depending on just how much of a fully developed government machinery has come into existence and on the extent to which concepts of a welfare state have materialized. While in industrialized countries the provision of water has typically been considered a public service and therefore has been managed by public authorities, in developing countries comparable structures have evolved only to a very limited degree or not at all. In most developing countries the first step toward subjecting the provision of water to revenue considerations came with cost-sharing schemes, which became mandatory under World Bank lending operations aimed at structural adjustment. These schemes basically concern the poorer strata of society, where piped water does not reach private housing and cannot be easily metered and billed. Wherever state-run water companies provided for public standpipes, or development agencies installed water points, water was free. This was done to provide basic amenities for the poor just as much as to reduce water-borne health diseases and health risks. Cost-sharing made standpipe water payable. In a second step, governments in developing countries were asked to privatize the whole system of water provision irrespective of whether water delivery reaches private households or is accessible only in public places. With privatization, water came at a price.

Access to safe drinking water for at least half of the world’s poor is one of the Millennium Goals, which all United Nations member states in the year 2000 committed themselves to achieve by the year 2015. United Nations agencies, NGOs, and most bilateral aid agencies regard access to safe drinking water as a fundamental social human right. Clearly, access to fresh water is of primary importance with regard to personal livelihood and health and the production of food. Seventy-five percent of fresh water resources are used in agriculture. In Africa nearly 70 percent of the production of food crops is in the hands of women.

The project of the commodification and privatization of water begins with the redefining of water as an economic rather than a social good. This process started at the International Conference on Water and the Environment held in Dublin in 1992. The Dublin Principles of Water do acknowledge the natural limitations the resource of water is subject to and also the value of water. “Fresh water is a finite and valuable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.” Yet, the document continues: “Water has
an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good." This understanding of water is at stake in the current debate. Is it acceptable that the concept of scarcity prevalent in national economics be applied to a limited natural resource and a basic good vital to life? Can water be rightly subsumed under the category of goods tradable at prices governed by market considerations and by the capitalist logic of maximization of private profits?

In the neo-liberal perspective the concept of water being accessible without payment to anybody, even the most poor, is deeply objectionable. As World Bank officials put it, "Work is still needed with political leaders in some national governments to move away from the concept of free water for all." The "work needed" applies, for instance, to the poor sub-Saharan state of Mali where the World Bank is withholding agreed-upon funding in the area of basic education unless the government agrees to privatize water as well as its primary income and revenue earner, the cotton industry. Prices for water as for anything else are to attain full cost recovery, including operation, maintenance, and capital costs. A year later the World Bank notes with disapproval: "A large external constituency of stakeholders still wants to maintain social water prices" (Grusky).

Just how are gender orders affected by the privatization of water? In many countries with a large segment of people living in poor housing conditions, water reaches private households via public standpipes. Cost-sharing makes water payable by the bucket. More often than not it is the water provider and the immediate water user, basically women and children acting as their proxy, who have to fork out the money. Payment hinges on the handling of water, which usually falls under the responsibility of women, rather than considering for whom or what the water is used for. Frequently, therefore, increases in water rates, following on the heels of privatization, immediately result in increased income pressure on women, thereby forcing them into additional income-generating activities, in other words, submitting them to an increased workload. There are very few instances where community deliberations induce men to contribute to water charges. Usually privatization and profitability logic encounters a rigid gender order, which leaves the burden on women. The irony is that although in many societies the fetching of water as well as most income-generating activities is visible to the physical eye, this is not so to the conceptual eye, as it were. The fetching, and by extension the paying, of water is regarded as a part of women's reproductive chores, two-thirds of which is performed by women worldwide, unpaid for, but, as in the case of water, increasingly costly in money, time, and energy.

Where piped water reaches households directly, chances that water prices are considered a household matter rather than a woman's affair are higher. Thus, when the communal water system of the Bolivian city Cochabamba was privatized three years ago and subsequent water charges rose nearly 300 percent, heavy communal protests forced the company to withdraw the price hike. In other instances, however, inability to pay increased user charges results in water lock-offs. Again, women will have to bear the consequences of having to resort to unsafe water sources, such as family members falling ill.

In rural settings, water consumption beyond household needs is very much related to agriculture. Here again we have distinct gender patterns with women responsible for many of the crops immediately used for family consumption, while men tend to be engaged in cash-crop agriculture. Women engage in small-scale vegetable gardening, millet growing, rearing of small livestock and the like, activities vital for household consumption and for women's income-earning needs, although they are rarely backed by reliable rights and resources. Men own larger plots of land, and irrigation systems are geared toward these plots, which are tied to credit systems, with much of the crop designed for export.

Export-oriented agriculture in combination with paying back credit puts enormous pressure on land-use patterns and by implication has an impact on local food security. By the same token, women lose their status as food providers and often have to relinquish their plots altogether, since their traditional land-use rights are not backed by land ownership based on legal titles. A growing number of women offer their labor power to agro-industry or migrate. While this ties in with features of globalization such as the liberalization of trade, the restructuring of local production to export, the dismantling of agricultural services and marketing mechanisms formerly provided by the government, the shifting of the provision of water from communal services to private enterprises often tips the scale and shatters an already strained gender balance.

While we have alarming data of decline on the larger level of food security, on the level of African and Asian villages you can hear countless stories of family strife and breakdown due to land-use patterns, which are directly tied to gender orders. Women already too burdened with tending to their own small poorly irrigated parcels of land refuse to labor on their husband's farm and seek to keep whatever little income they derive from their plot from going to their husband's credit obligations. Here we have a striking example of how globalization and privatization act themselves out in gender orders, with men being pulled into a market rationale and acting as its agent on family level, while women are left to struggle to provide for the most immediate family needs. This is why women fight for land titles in their own right and why women's organizations play a very active role in farmers' movements. As part of their human rights, they demand food sovereignty and farmers' rights: that is, control over the production and marketing of food as well as over necessary inputs such as seeds, know-how and—most crucial of all—water. In other
words, they demand that livelihood concerns acquire undisputed primacy over
and above the profit concerns that come hand in hand with global free trade
and privatization.

Privatization of care activities

Ever since the advent of neo-liberal policies—be it in the form of structural
adjustment in the debt-ridden countries of the Global South, Thatcherism and
Reaganomics, or "reform politics" in the North—governments have sought to
dismantle the public welfare system. Health and education budgets have been
especially targeted in fiscal reforms, and these budgetary allocations are specif-
ically important for women. Austerity programs have forced women to act as
shock absorbers and welfare providers of last resort in the context of declining
public support. In recent years we have seen a continuous rollback of such
welfare provisions as had been achieved in previous years. Rather than dealing
with the gendered structure of the care economy in a way designed to lighten
women's numerous care-giving chores and to enable them to pursue their own
preferences in participating in society and in public life, we are currently wit-
nessing a shifting of costs from the public household into the invisibility of the
private household, which inevitably increases the care workload of women.

This is most obvious in the health sector. Where institutional support in
the form of daycare centers, homes for the elderly, accessible and affordable
health care, and the like is dismantled, more often than not it is women who
fill the void. Whatever health services developing countries have established
has also been subjected to the mechanisms of cost-sharing. This puts a strain
on the income of poorer households and endangers the health of the popula-
tion. It is by no means accidental that in the wake of structural adjustment and
rigid marketization policies, health threats that had apparently been eradicated
are resurfacing in alarming proportions. The obvious gender bias inherent in
the process of shifting public responsibility for the welfare of the population
to private households has been dubbed the "feminization of responsibility." At
the same time, efforts are being made to re-domesticate women by promoting
images of family life, fulfilling femininity, responsible womanhood, and the
joys of giving irrespective of cash rewards. The purpose is rather obvious: such
rediscovered, hype-up gender asymmetry is to sweeten the additional unpaid-
for care work as well as the drastically curtailed job opportunities women en-
counter by re-framing gender orders in a seemingly less materialist perspective.

Effects and responses

It is impossible to describe comprehensively, much less analyze, the numerous
and contradictory effects these—selected—features of globalization have on

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Women's rights are human rights

Whether by opening new options for women—or at least for some women—or
by subjecting them to increased pressure. In either case the gender orders that
men and women live in are being challenged and consequently subjected to a
certain amount of strain. The term "gender anxiety" has been coined to capture
the feelings of ill-ease, uncertainty, and the apprehension that accompany the
challenges to given sets of identity and gender arrangements.

There are strong indications that men find it more difficult to cope with and
make constructive use of the dislocation of familiar gender arrangements than
women do. To date, the objective of empowerment, which projects a new and
promising vision for women, has encountered little in terms of an equivalent
for men. More often than not, rebalancing domestic arrangements of income
generation and care and redistributing the workload accordingly is not consid-
ered a valid option by men, but rather an offensive proposition. On the other
hand, in many countries the "feminization of responsibility" profoundly affects
the male gender ideal of the head of household as breadwinner. Poverty and all
too flexible and loose survival arrangements rarely, if ever, permit men to live
up to that very ideal. But it tends to survive in vital segments of male identity,
and it certainly is reinforced by religious fundamentalisms of various sorts and
origins.

Thus we have reports from countries around the globe that the experience
of what is called "pressure drop" in the Caribbean easily translates into the use
of physical violence. According to statistical evidence, the rate of domestic
violence has sharply increased in developing countries undergoing neo-liberal
structural adjustment. Of course this period also witnesses a rise in the strength,
articulation, and manifestation of women's movements. Thus it is conceivable
that part of the recorded increase in violence may express a response to the
gender struggle prompted by women, or be due to increased reporting of acts
of violence.

In the eighties and nineties of the last century women all over the globe
came to recognize the use and abuse of the female body, especially the use
of physical violence, as a common condition féminine and a unifying experi-
ence. The discourse on resisting violence was transported by and through ma-
jor United Nations conferences and facilitated by donor-funded networking.
Although we have recently become more aware of diversity among women,
the issue of violence against women has been recognized as a common de-
nominator that cuts through any existing differences. Violence against women
has been recognized as a violation of the human right to physical and mental integrity. Women's rights have been reframed as human rights.

In many ways this is a rather amazing development. One could easily have assumed that, from the perspective of international women's movements, universal human rights would be a rather unfortunate frame of reference and point of departure for the struggle for women's personal dignity and integrity. Over the last fifty years, the increasingly challenging critical dialogue that women's movements have engaged in has revealed and criticized the Eurocentric and androcentric hegemonic content of universal human rights. Yet, at the same time, these movements did not relinquish them, but instead offered, indeed demanded, a different reading of those rights to fully ensure women's inclusion.

A controversy of similar nature was re-enacted between the women's movements of the Global South and feminists from industrialized countries. Drawing on the poststructuralist and postcolonial critical thrust and its repertoire of arguments, feminists from the South insisted on diversity and difference and adamantly refused to accept generalizations concerning the situation of women. In the process, basic definitions of women's and human rights were redesigned into more open concepts to accommodate various perspectives, yet remain pertinent to differing contexts and divergent practices of daily life. This served to broaden the meaning and dimensions of human dignity while simultaneously reinforcing the global validity and universality of human rights. By the same token, human rights have become the central frame of reference for the struggles of women in the South.

Thus, the transnational feminist discourse redefines the traditional catalog of human rights to include gender justice. In doing so, it builds on the tradition of the critique of subordination and power with which the concept of human rights has evolved and developed, and remobilizes it in the struggle against global injustice. Women's organizations claim accountability from their governments as well as from powerful international agencies such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO, by appealing to human rights as a framework promoting social and gender justice and the rights of minority groups. At the same time, by claiming uncompromising entitlement to full human rights, women are contesting local structures and acts of gender suppression that present themselves in the guise of sacred cultural and religious values and often invented or remobilized "tradition." The transnational feminist human rights discourse confronts locally prevalent religious creeds and traditions by revealing the utterly worldly patriarchic claim to power and subordination inherent in legal interpretations and practices that seek recourse to transcendence and venerable traditions. Fatima Mernissi, a sociologist from Morocco, repeatedly bemoaned the fate of the feminist sociologist having to acquire the expertise of a Islamic scholar. Women's organizations and networks in the Asian region vehemently refute the construction of "Asian values." In both instances,
and strengthening the courage to resist humiliations and threats in public as well as in private spheres, by claiming the pertinence of these rights in everyday situations. Much depends, however, on the existence and activities of committed intermediate organizations.

In Ethiopia, the Women’s Lawyer Association, very shortly after having been formed, found itself showered with requests and applications for legal assistance by poor women. Partly these women lived in Addis Ababa and had suffered physical abuse or had been deserted by their husbands, leaving them without any means of their own. But there were also requests from rural women’s groups asking for help to identify legal means to resist the growing tendency of their male folk to take recourse to—often invented—traditional oppressive to women. The Women’s Lawyer Association has since been banned by an increasingly authoritarian government. In Bangladesh, women’s and human rights organizations successfully network with university staff and the media. They choose particularly offensive cases in order to force the government’s hand, by producing meticulously evidence of the abuse of “traditions” to the detriment of women. In many instances they could clearly demonstrate the interplay between an erosion of male power due to economic pressure and the competitive search for new sources of power. Here “tradition” is deprived of its original social content and spiritual meaning and turned into an instrument of domination and power over the body and mind of women.

In the case of India, Uma Narayanan researched and documented how allegedly traditional “dowry murders” in recent years have burgeoned far beyond the rate of incidence in the years the “tradition” allegedly goes back to. Present-day dowry murders form part and parcel of a desire for modern consumption goods and a consumerist lifestyle associated with being modern. This desire may be shared by men and women alike. But—with a little help from “tradition”—gender orders play into the hands of men to satisfy it.

Immediately related to the reframing of women’s rights as human rights is the vibrant feminist debate on the meaning of citizenship in transnational, translocal, and transcultural spaces. Ongoing renegotiations of the concept of citizenship within local, national, and regional contexts that are demanding more just gender orders occur within a human rights framework. Incidentally, in these struggles and debates a disquieting picture is emerging with growing clarity: a picture contradicting many of the facile analyses offered these days about the defining features of global conflicts. The central axis of conflict is not situated along the lines of tradition, culture, and religion on one side and whatever shape modernity has taken on the other. Rather, in times where globalization is having a ubiquitous impact, the crucial conflict lies in the patriarchal selectivity of modernity acting itself out in different class, ethnic, cultural, and religious forms and shapes and based on asymmetric gender orders.

**Feminist discourses on globalization**

Much of the feminist critique of globalization blends a critique of patriarchy with the insights of feminist economics, which has developed over the years ever since neo-liberal structural adjustment programs began to be forced upon developing countries. Yet, on the level of the globalization debate and even of globalization critique, feminist critique, to some extent, starts all over again with the job of making women visible in globalization processes. This effort implies producing evidence of how men and women are affected differently by macro-economic phenomena as seemingly far removed from gender as, say, the movements of finance capital. It also entails an analysis of how and to what extent globalization processes use gender orders as their conduit and articulate themselves in gender orders while simultaneously changing the forms and concepts of masculinity and femininity. While analyzing the interlocking of neo-liberal and patriarchal structures the old feminist slogan “the private is political” remains altogether valid.

For many women’s organizations and feminist scholars it is the human rights concept that serves as a framework of analysis and strategy in the struggle to rebalance unjust gender orders. In recent years, with a variety of security issues gaining great prominence the concept of human security has been placed on the forefront of the agenda within the United Nations and has attracted much attention with the international women’s movements. While the concept captures much of the predominant concerns of past and present decades and the debate is still ongoing, it seems safe to say that the human security frame does not consider itself as an alternative to the human rights frame but rather as a strategic complement to it.

In closing, I shall mention two strategic instruments that are being applied with some vigor on an international and a global scale. First, in many countries women’s organizations are using “gender budgets” as a tool to analyze national and local governmental budgets with a view to making structural gender imbalances in public management visible, to hold governments accountable, to demand more gender-just results, and to monitor globalization effects under these auspices. Second, ever since the Fourth United Nations International Women’s Conference in Beijing in 1995 Gender Mainstreaming has been adopted as the strategy of choice. With UN Security Council Resolution 1325 demanding the participation of women in international and national actions of conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and post-conflict rehabilitation, one could indeed say that Gender Mainstreaming has since traveled to very high places. Attaining this has required a substantial amount of struggling and lobbying on the part of women’s organizations and networks. Yet, due to the recurrent experience of gender “evaporating in the patriarchal cooking pot,” Gender Mainstreaming remains a somewhat controversial strategy in some feminist circles (Longwe). At
the same time, the recognition that any policy of change has to pass through institutional mechanisms at some point does make subjecting institutions to Gender Mainstreaming mandates appear to be a valid option.

Works Cited


Violence against Women: The Analogy of Occupation and Rape—“The Case of the Palestinian People”

Rana Nashashibi

Introduction

Cynthia Enloe first introduced the concept of “the personal is international” in her well-known book Bananas, Beaches and Bases. Although feminists had already arrived at the conclusion that the personal is political, Enloe takes us one step further by stating that the political encompasses not only the national but also the international spectrum. Politics, in turn, is the term used to describe how the world is governed, and therefore actually means the exercise of power in the public realm. Power, or actually unequal power, thus rules all our relationships, from the very private to the national and the international. Feminism as a political practice necessitates a critical engagement between struggles for liberation and pedagogical practice. The centrality of violence in the experience of the Palestinians has not entered the writings of feminists; no real connection has been made between Israeli colonization, gender, and violence.

I will address the impact of political violence and domestic violence on the whole population and its specific impact on women from a sociopolitical and psychological perspective. In this paper I will attempt to draw analogies between rape and the Israeli occupation as a colonizing power. It is my effort to free Palestinian discourse from compliance to imposed terminology in order to use our own narrative to describe our experience.

I would first like to define colonialism as the rule of one country by another, usually based on conquest. It is the sense of being colonized that affects most aspects of one’s life and personality.

not only thinking, but passions and conduct. This relationship destroys and recreates the two partners of colonization into colonizer and colonized: One is disfigured into an oppressor, a partial being, uncivil, cheating, uniquely preoccupied with his privileges and the defense of them at any cost; the other into an oppressed, broken in his colonization denies (the colonized) any part in war and in peace, in any decision that contributes to the destiny of the world or his own, any historic and social responsibility. (Enloe 56)