



THEME: Gendering globalization

The contradictory impact of globalization and migration on gender equality

Chinese migrant women workers in a dormitory labour system

From Thailand to Svalbard: migration on the margins

International NGO projects and women's development in Yunnan

Sino-Icelandic relations in times of intense globalization

Foreign companies and local workers in China

Gendered globalisation and social change

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Asia and the Nordic dimension

Asia looms prominently in our present world, and therefore an increasing number of academics in all fields relate in one way or another to what is happening on the vast Asian continent and the relations between them and us, or, to use a phrase from the present issue of *Asia Insight*: the intra-action between us.

At present one does not have to fight as hard as before for a space within Asian studies, although funding still doesn't come easy. In the past, when NIAS was established, the idea behind a Nordic institute of Asian studies was to create critical mass. In each of the Nordic countries the Asian studies environment was negligible, so in order to combine the existing forces and reach a certain size, a Scandinavian Institute of Asian Affairs was established in 1967, and renamed NIAS in 1988. It was envisioned that NIAS should become the central node for Nordic Asian studies, the region's window to Asia, a common platform for Nordic researchers dealing with Asia, and when needed, a midwife for the establishment of links to relevant people and institutions in Asian countries. All this and more happened. In later years, however, the number of places in the Nordic region involved in Asian studies has grown continuously, and the expansion of the field has included growth of a great number of direct links between Nordic and Asian institutions and researchers. Has NIAS then become obsolete, or is there still a space for NIAS in the future? And if so, what can we add to the Nordic Asian studies environment?

We are definitely not *the* window to Asia anymore, although we are still *a* window. What is important to bear in mind in this era of globalization, however, is that while the Nordic Asian studies environment has been growing, the same has happened in most other parts of the world. In the Nordic region we have become bigger than we were, but in a comparative perspective we are still small. And now, due to increased global scholarly interaction, we are measured against leading institutions and research networks all over the world with huge resource bases and generous funding. Moreover, despite the growing number of people in the Nordic region involved with Asian affairs, the academic environment is still scattered over a great number of institutions. Therefore, an important task now and in the years to come is the same as it was in 1967: Nordic cooperation and coordination. Activities within the combined field of gender studies and Asian studies illustrate how important such collaboration is.

The theme of this issue of *Asia Insights* is Gendering Globalization. In recent years NIAS has, through Senior Researcher Cecilia Milwertz, been involved in a number of activities within the field of Asia and gender: research projects, workshops, conferences, networks, book projects, academic training and PhD courses, to mention some important activities with positive lasting consequences. These activities have taken place in close cooperation with scholars from the Nordic countries and Asia. Through this collaboration an active research environment within comparative Asian and gender studies has been established. The activities mentioned above are initiated, improved and strengthened because of the Nordic cooperation. NIAS offers support for network building and web-based communication, in particular through the library. Another relevant asset provided by NIAS is the Press, which offers a possibility for international publishing via two distinct gender-focused book series and has a support programme for guiding prospective authors from idea to product.

While each Nordic institution and often even each single researcher today can manage as a solo player in Asian studies, it is our experience that cooperation and coordination vastly strengthen the work and improve the outcome. The point, however, is that, from an Asian point of view, the Nordic region increasingly stands out as interesting, as a possible different road of development where the human dimension and quality of life are still more than mere political slogans. The potential gain of engaging in comparative studies, including the intra-action between Asia and the Nordic countries, calls for more and closer cooperation within the Nordic Asian studies environment. We at NIAS welcome this and are already engaged to present new initiatives on this to you in the near future.

Geir Helgesen
Director

Gendering globalization

Cecilia Milwertz, Birte Siim and Zhao Jie

The current global financial situation bluntly and brutally brings home the fact that the global and local are closely connected in times of opportunity as well as crisis. The articles in this issue of Asia Insights are about intra-action between Asia, particularly China, and the Nordic countries. Intra-action is the word used by the feminist theorist Karen Barad about phenomena that mutually integrate to affect each other, as opposed to interaction between separate entities. The articles emphasize that we can no longer only study Asia as a far-away entity. On the contrary, Asia and the Nordic countries are mutually present within each other in the form of flows of people, capital, production, products and ideas.

The articles are mainly drawn from the conference 'Gender at the Interface of the Global and the Local – Perspectives from China and the Nordic Countries', hosted by the Gender and Participation Research Centre and Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences and held in November 2008 in China. It was the third conference in a series of Sino-Nordic Women and Gender Studies Conferences.

In the introductory article *Birte Siim* addresses the 'local–global' dialectic focusing on contradictory aspects of globalization for women as well as for gender equality. She identifies key debates and competing approaches to understanding the gendered implications of migration, which is a prominent aspect of globalization processes. Two articles address migration issues in China and Norway. *Pun Ngai* discusses what she calls the 'dormitory labour system'. The system is a gendered form of labour based on domestic rural to urban migration and underlies the booming years of China's export-oriented industrial production. *An-Magritt Jensen* looks at the Norwegian island of Svalbard, which is a strange exception to the increased securitization of European borders and is open to migration from Asia. Three articles are concerned with flows of knowledge, trade and capital into Asia. *Shen Haimei* writes about the flow of international development aid to China and the problems encountered by projects in Yunnan province. *Lilja Hjartardóttir* analyses how Sino–Icelandic trade relations reflect and perpetuate gendered hierarchies of

power, resources and labour in the two countries. *Merete Lie* and *Ragnhild Lund* have since the 1980s followed the transfer of Norwegian companies to Singapore and Malaysia, and more recently to China. Their article focuses on the meeting between a Norwegian company and its Chinese employees. Finally, *Nira Yuval-Davis* elaborates on the paradoxical effects of globalization on gender relations, in the sense that women bear the brunt of the global political and economic crises. On this basis she claims that it is a crucial time for solidarity based on transversal politics and dialogues between different groups of women and men about political visions.

Asia is definitely no longer only something to be studied within the confines of the political or imagined demarcations. Asia is global and has spilled over various borders. Not only should future understandings of gendered globalization increase the focus on men and masculinities to achieve a fuller picture of how globalization is gendered, but research should also explore how these processes affect Asian women who have migrated to the Nordic welfare states as workers or through family unification. One important question is whether the strong emphasis on gender equality could create potentials for Asian women's struggle for equal social, political and civil rights. The articles in this special issue demonstrate that Asian studies can benefit from increased collaboration with gender studies in the localities that Asia has migrated to and intra-acts with.



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Sino-Nordic Women and Gender Studies Conferences

The Sino-Nordic Women & Gender Studies conferences are convened by Chinese and Nordic universities in collaboration with the Nordic Centre, Fudan University and NIAS, and have been held every three years since the first conference was convened at Fudan University in Shanghai in 2002.

The aim of the conferences is to develop transnational, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary perspectives on gender in and across the Chinese and Nordic contexts based on theoretical and policy relevant research.

The Second Conference was held in August 2005 on the theme of 'Gender and Human Rights in China and the Nordic Countries' at Malmö University in Sweden. An edited volume of a selection of conference papers is being published by Routledge – Pauline Stoltz, Marina Svensson, Qi Wang and Cindy Sun (eds) *Gender Equality, Citizenship and Human Rights – Challenges and Controversies in China and the Nordic Countries*.

In November 2008 the Third Conference 'Gender at the Interface of the Global and the Local – Perspectives from China and the Nordic Countries' was hosted by the Gender and Participation Research Centre, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences in China. Illustrated reports of the conference are available in English http://nias.ku.dk/GenderingAsia/Visual_report_GPRC_English.ppt and Chinese. http://nias.ku.dk/GenderingAsia/report_GPRC_Chinese.ppt

Future events:

- In October 2009 the PhD course 'Gender at the Interface of the Global and the Local – Perspectives from China and the Nordic Countries' will be held at the Nordic Centre Fudan. For information on the course see www.nordiccentre.org
- The Fourth Sino-Nordic Women and Gender Studies Conference will be held at Aalborg University, Denmark in 2011.

The contradictory impact of globalization and migration on gender equality

Birte Siim

Globalization and migration have increased diversities and inequalities within and between nation-states and have created new problems regarding public policies intended to regulate political and socio-economic problems on national and global levels. Globalization and increased migration thus represent a theoretical, normative and political challenge to understanding how gender and diversity at the national level are linked to processes of globalization. This article identifies some of the many issues involved in the gendered Asia-Nordic 'local-global dialectic.'

Globalization is contested, and the meanings of globalization need to be discussed within different contexts. Transnationalism challenges established research paradigms connected to the nation-states. One of the challenges of gender research is arguably to focus on diversities among women within and between nation-states. As illustrated by the articles in this issue of *Asia Insights*, migration is a transnational phenomenon where people, capital, and civil society organisations increasingly move across borders. Research has emphasised the important linkage between the external and internal dimensions of migration. Migration thus illustrates the growing interconnection between the global, national and local arenas, and migration processes can illuminate the linkages between classical social science concepts such as social rights, political practices and belongings. Migration is gendered in a number of ways. One obvious example is that push-and-pull factors related to migration are different for men and women. Women from the South often come to the North through family unification, marriage or as (sex) workers. Immigrant women are often the victims of globalisation and tend to constitute the most vulnerable groups as undocumented and legal immigrants and refugees.

'The local-global dialectic'

The German sociologist Ulrich Beck has discussed the implications of the 'local-global

dialectic' (2002). He defines *globalization* as '[a] non-linear dialectical process in which the global and the local do not exist as cultural polarities but as combined and mutually integrating principles. These processes involve not only interconnections across boundaries but transform the quality of the social and political inside nation-states' (Beck 2002: 17). Beck has convincingly argued that instead of investigating the global on an entirely abstract general level, we should organize a 'historically sensitive empiricism' to study the ambivalent consequences of globalization in cross-cultural and multi-local research networks.

The local-global dialectic represents one of the crucial dilemmas of cosmopolitan societies due to the diaspora question: how will being at home far away – being at home without being at home – be possible? This is a complex issue which affects people differently and needs to be addressed from the perspectives of male and female migrants, of organizations, networks and companies. The 'multicultural dilemma' represents another crucial dilemma, in that multiculturalism fosters an individual who remains dependent on his/her original cultural space. Beck's notion of internal globalization is one way to integrate the two dilemmas that need to be explored in greater detail with a view to understanding the gendered implications of globalization.

Gendering globalization

Feminist scholarship has analysed the gendered effects of globalization, European integration and migration (see Sassen 2001). One approach has addressed the implications of globalization on women's position in the labour market, and has often emphasised convergent trends and negative effects of neo-liberal policies leading to the marginalization of migrant women workers and the feminization of poverty. Another approach has addressed political globalization and the barriers and potentials of global processes for gender equality, women's empowerment and transnational struggles. This approach often focuses on the new transnational sites intended to strengthen gender equality and expand women's rights across nation-states, for example through the EU gender regime and human rights regime. The new global political reality raises many challenging issues for gender research. One way to address these issues has been through diversity and intersectionality frames.

The political theorist Judith Squires has recently analysed the contradictory logic of globalisation from a perspective of gender equality. Her book *The New Politics of Gender Equality* (2007) gives an overview of the global gender equality breakthrough by national governments, international organizations like the UN, and transnational structures like the EU. The main argument presented in the book is that there is a new global gender equality agenda, which is spread by three key strategies: *gender quotas*, *women's policy agencies* and *gender mainstreaming*. The book gives an excellent illustration of the contradictory logic of globalization: it makes visible the paradox that gender equality can on the one hand be threatened by diversity, for example when immigrant groups in Denmark do not have the same rights as ethnic Danish groups. On the other hand, globalization also presents new possibilities for gender equality, and has become part of a new transnational diversity agenda. These new possibilities can for instance present themselves when

Western NGOs move to Asia. There is a tension between the diversity approach that focuses on inequalities along multiple axes of inequality, and the approach that focuses on women viewing gender (in)equality as the main problem. This tension has raised new questions and debates about how to create new forms of solidarity between women while acknowledging different experiences and positions, for example according to race/ethnicity, nationality and religion.

The multicultural dilemma

One way to deal with the diversity of religious and cultural groups is through the multicultural paradigm. Will Kymlicka's work *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) presents a defence of ethno-cultural group rights for indigenous peoples, such as Aboriginals in Australia and Indians in North America, and the poly-ethnic rights of new immigrant groups. The multicultural paradigm was criticised by Susan Moller Okin in the provocative article 'Is multiculturalism bad for women?' (1999). She claimed that there is a contradiction between multiculturalism, defined as protection of the cultural rights of minorities, and women's rights. This provoked an intense debate in the US, which spread to Europe.

In his response to Okin, Kymlicka (1999) argued that feminism and multiculturalism are potential allies in a struggle for a more inclusive concept of justice, based upon a combination of individual and collective rights, which takes account of both gender-based and ethnic diversity. Okin was heavily criticised by different scholars, including many feminists, who argued that her approach was based upon an essentialist perception of 'culture' and that her analysis forced minority women to choose between 'my rights and my culture'. Okin has later modified and contextualised her position emphasising that she is not against collective rights per se and that one of her main points was that women should have a voice in negotiations between the majority and minority cultures about group rights (2005: 88–89).

There has recently been a growing concern in political and gender theory framed as ‘the paradox of multicultural vulnerability’, i.e. that vulnerable social groups’ needs and interests can be undermined by group rights. The concern has especially been about ensuring that women and other vulnerable groups have a voice and influence in both minority cultures and in society. Feminist scholarship agrees that women in minority cultures need to be respected both as culturally different from the national majority and also need to be treated as equals by both the majority and minority cultures. For example, immigrant women from Asia living in the Nordic countries as students, workers or spouses either by marriage or family unification must have their equal and cultural rights respected.

Rethinking gender justice in times of globalization

To overcome the tensions in gender justice between equality and diversity it is important to rethink gender justice in times of globalization. All social and cultural groups must be included in negotiations about social justice. One solution to overcoming the tensions is to extend the emphasis on gender inequality to multiple inequalities. Intersectionality has become an influential theoretical approach that has contributed to conceptualizing the intersections of gender with other differences and inequalities such as ethnicity/race, sexuality and religion. Nira Yuval-Davis has conceptualized intersectionality from a transnational perspective in her analysis of gender and nationality, citizenship and ‘politics of belonging’ (2006) focusing on the intersections of gender, ethnicity and nationality. This approach points to a multilayered framework of citizenship, which is democratic, feminist and able to link the national and transnational levels in what she defines as ‘a politics of belonging’. This vision needs to be explored further through practical research, for example by looking at migration from Asia to the Nordic countries, focusing on how gender intersects with ethno-national and cultural belongings for

women of Asian backgrounds living in different Nordic localities.

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‘Tracks, intersections and dead ends. State feminism and multicultural retreats in Denmark and Norway’, *Ethnicities*, No. 3, 2008 (with Hege Skjeie). *Gendering Citizenship in Western Europe. New Challenges for Citizenship Research in a cross-national Context*, Policy Press, 2007 (co-authored). ‘Women-friendly policies and state feminism: Theorizing Scandinavian gender equality’. *Feminist Theory*, No. 4, 2008 (with Anette Borchorst).

Chinese migrant women workers in a dormitory labour system*

Pun Ngai

Under the Chinese dormitory labour regime the lives of women migrant workers are shaped by the international division of labour. The dormitory labour system is a gendered form of labour use to fuel global production in new industrialized regions, especially in South China. The system also forms the basis for the development of class consciousness and alternative struggles for labour rights.

China is well known as a 'world factory', attracting transnational corporations from all over the world, especially from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, the USA, and Western Europe. Rapid expansion of export-oriented production has led to a sharp rise in jobs in private, foreign-owned, and joint-venture enterprises that dot the coastal cities of China. The formation of a new working class of internal rural migrant labourers, in contrast to the Maoist working-class, has been taking shape in contemporary China. The Fifth National Population Census of China in 2000, estimated that there were over 120 million internal migrant workers in cities, and today the estimates range from 130 to 200 million persons.

Situating women in the world's factory

Since the early 1990s the development of special economic zones and technology development zones across China, similar to the development in most other developing economies, was based on a massive harnessing of young workers, in particular of unmarried women, who are often the cheapest and most compliant labour (Lee 1998). These migrant women workers – *dagongmei* – constitute a new gendered labour identity, produced at the particular moment when private and transnational capital emerged in post-socialist China. As a

newly coined term, *dagongmei* embraces multi-layered meanings and denotes a new kind of labour relationship fundamentally different from those of Mao's period. *Dagong* means 'working for the boss' or 'selling labour', which connotes commodification and a capitalist exchange of labour for wages (Pun 2005). It is a new concept that stands in contradiction to Chinese socialist history. Labour, especially alienated (wage) labour, supposedly emancipated with the Chinese revolution, is again sold to the capitalists, and this time under the auspices of the state. In contrast to the term *gongren*, worker, which carried the highest status in the socialist rhetoric of Mao's day, the new word *dagong* signifies a lesser identity – that of a hired hand – in a new context shaped by the rise of market factors in labour relations and hierarchy. *Mei* means younger sister. It denotes not merely gender, but also marital status – *mei* is unmarried and young, and thus often of a lower status.

These rural migrants are identified as temporary residents who work in a city and who lack a formal urban household registration (*hukou*). The *hukou* system, which is still mostly in place, now helps to create exploitative mechanisms of labour appropriation in the cities. The maintenance of the distinction between permanent and temporary residents by the *hukou* system facilitates the state's shirking of its obligation to provide housing, job security, and welfare to rural migrant workers. China's overall economy, while it needs the labour of the rural population, does not need the city-based survival of that

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population once demand for rural-to-urban migrants' labour power shifts in either location or emphasis. This newly forming working class is permitted to form no permanent roots and legal identities in the city. Still worse, the *hukou* system, with its labour controls, constructs the ambiguous identity of rural migrant labour and simultaneously deepens and obscures the economy's exploitation of this huge population. Hence, this subtle and multi-faceted marginalization of a vast swath of the rural labour supply has created a contested, if not a deformed, citizenship that has disadvantaged Chinese migrant workers attempting to transform themselves into urban workers. The Chinese term *mingong* ('peasant-workers' or temporary workers) blurs the lines of identity between peasant and worker.

Gender and the dormitory labour regime

Since the set-up of four economic special zones in South China in the early 1980s, the new export-oriented industrialized regions dominated by foreign-invested companies have witnessed a systemic use of the dormitory labour system. The foreign-invested companies, irrespective of their industrial sectors, all have to provide accommodation to their workers in order to keep their labourers. Combining work and residence under the dormitory labour system, production and daily reproduction are hence reconfigured for the sake of global capital use, with daily reproduction of labour entirely controlled by foreign-invested or privately owned companies.

This dormitory labour system regime in China is not a new arrangement under capitalism. The dormitory use for labour has a long history both in a western or eastern context of industrialization (Pun and Smith 2007). However the Chinese dormitory labour system is unique in the way that dormitories are available to all workers and industries regardless of factory conditions. The widespread availability of industrial dormitories not only constrain the mobility of labour, it also facilitates it. The distinctive nature of the Chinese *dormitory la-*

bour system is also for short-tenure migrant labour within the factory compound or close to it. In China, the state still plays a very substantial role in shaping labour markets, regulating labour mobility from rural to urban industrial areas and providing housing accommodation to migrant workers. In most of the new industrial towns, the Chinese state initially provides the dormitories for the factory owners to rent. As housing provision is not for families, there is no interest from capital in the reproduction of the next generation of labourers. The focus is on maximizing the utilization of labour of the temporary, migrant, and contract labourer by controlling the daily reproduction of their labour power.

Since the migrant working class is deprived of citizenship rights to stay in the city, the state through residency controls allows labour mobility, but workers must have employment to support temporary residence. Dormitories facilitate the temporary attachment or capture of labour by the companies, but also the massive circulation of labour, and hence the holding down of wages and the extensive lengthening of the working day, as working space and living space are integrated by the employer and state. A hybrid, transient workforce is created, circulating between factory and countryside, dominated by employers' control over housing needs and state controls over residency permits.

One characteristic of China's foreign-invested manufacturing plants is the housing of migrant workers in dormitories attached to or close to a factory's enclosed compound. On finishing their labour contracts on average after one to two years, the workers must return to the place of birth or find another temporary employment contract (Solinger 1999), again to be confined in the dormitory labour regime. Factory dormitories thus attach migrant workers for short-term capture, and accommodation does not function for the long-term or protracted relationship between the individual firm and the individual worker, which is the rationale for accommodation in

other paternalistic factory forms such as Japan which can be life-long.

Management within the foreign-invested or privately owned companies would appear to have exceptional controls over the workforce under the system. With no access to a home space independent of the enterprise, working days are extended to suit production needs. Compared to the 'normal' separation between work and home that usual factory arrangements entail, the dormitory labour regime exerts greater breadth of control into the working and non-working day of the workers.

Gender is central to this specific embodiment of Chinese dormitory labour system and the formation of the transient working class. For the past two decades, young women have been among the first to be picked up by the new export-oriented industries among the exodus of internal migrant workers into the industrial cities. They constitute a high proportion of the factory workers, above 70 per cent of the total workforce in the garment, toy and electronics industries (Lee 1998; Pun 2005). Their gender, in addition to their youth and rural migrant status, is an integral part of China's export-led industrialism facilitating global production for the world market.

As sites of control and resistance, the dormitory labour system simultaneously provides workers the opportunities to resist management practices and achieve some victories in improving working conditions. Ultimately, the ability of workers to fundamentally challenge the conditions of work and dormitory living is limited by the temporary nature of the employment contracts and their disempowered status as temporary urban residents.

A new working class consciousness

I have argued that employers' use of dormitory labour, which has linked itself to both labour migration and daily labour reproduction, serves global production by generating hidden and therefore largely invisible costs borne by the migrant women workers. The situation has deteriorated further now that

local governments within China compete for foreign investment and thus openly neglect the labour regulations and the social provisions implemented by China's local, provincial, and national governments. The costs of daily labour reproduction are largely undertaken by the dormitory regime, which subsidizes the living cost of labour in terms of wages, accommodation, and consumption. The labour reproduction of the dormitory regime has sustained cheap labour in China over the past two decades.

Hence, the systemic provision of dormitories for internal migrant labour facilitates the continuous access to fresh labour reserves from the countryside. The dormitory labour regime concentrates labour, nurturing workers' consciousness in face of acute exploitation by capital; but as high circulation of labour power of a transitory semi-proletarianized class, it also inhibits the workers to stay stable enough within one place or space, to form a continuous working-class community. No doubt the dormitory labour regime in concentrating and yet circulating labour between capitals creates a powerful production regime to spatially contain the formation of a new working class, but dialectically also becomes a bedrock for nurturing acute class consciousness and facilitating class actions in the future.

The battle for this new working class requires both struggles against capital and state. Against state, the migrant workers have to launch an urban citizenship rights struggle in order to gain the right to settle down in the industrial cities and towns and create their own working-class community. Against capital, the workers need to look for alternative ways of organizing since traditional trade union struggle is not effective, if not allowed, in a dormitory labour regime in China. Dormitory-based organizing along the line of generating sisterhood solidarity among workers hopefully will be one of the alternative struggles.

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From Thailand to Svalbard: migration on the margins

An-Magritt Jensen

Halfway between the European mainland and the North Pole, a group of islands, Svalbard, has become the site of a Thai diaspora in miniature. Longyearbyen, the only place with permanent settlement, is a tiny town with only 2,000 inhabitants. Norwegians are in the majority and make up 85 per cent of the population. But among the 30 other nationalities present, the Thai population is the largest group, numbering about 70 individuals. While migration from Thailand to other Western countries is dominated by single women, both genders migrate to Svalbard and arrive in all family statuses. They come for work. Gender is not decisive for the migration flow but important for life conditions in Svalbard.

Svalbard was a 'no-man's land' for hunting and fishing for centuries until the beginning of the 20th century when coal mining began. The Svalbard Treaty of 1920 established the area as Norwegian territory. The Treaty came into force on 14 August 1925 when Norway assumed sovereignty by introducing the Svalbard Law and the Mining Code. The rights to entrance and economic activities are open. Anyone can come to Svalbard.

This is the background for the stream of migration from Thailand. In addition, Svalbard is a place where salaries are high and taxes are low. Possibilities for economic gains are extraordinary. However, risks of failure are large and social rights are linked to the migrants' homeland. This article is based on the research project 'Svalbard families' (with Kari Moxnes) primarily focused on Norwegian families. Thais were involved as the largest minority group. Data were collected in 2006 and included 14 Thai interviews.

The first entrances: marriage migration

To understand the Thai migration to Svalbard we need to go back to 1975, when an all-year airport was opened and isolation from the

outside world was broken. Svalbard used to be a society for single men working in the coal mines. The airport, together with family housing and services, attracted families with women and children to the place. Today, 40 per cent of the adult population is female. However, the society is still dominated by men of legal working age. The airport also gave miners the possibility to travel to distant places, such as Thailand. Some miners who travelled there brought wives back. Until the mid-1990s, only a few Thai women, married to Norwegian men, had settled in Svalbard. Over the last decade, these pioneers have become recruiters of fellow countrywomen in a flow of migration.

Recent entrances: labour migration

During hard economic times in Thailand in the late 1990s, migration became a solution for many poor people in the rural areas. During visits to their home areas in Thailand, pioneer migrants from Svalbard were living examples of the gains of migration and they recruited new migrants, as described by Ratana (2006): 'They begin their transnational migration through following one of their family members, relatives or friends who have already settled overseas. Those people would provide newcomers with initial logistical support including orientations of how to live

← Longyearbyen, main – and only – street.
Photo: An-Magritt Jensen

in a foreign land, visa, air tickets, temporary jobs and housing for the first three months ...' (p. 11). However, migration to Svalbard differs from descriptions of migration to other Western countries, where marriage plays a major role. In contrast to other Western countries, also Norway, where migrants are primarily unmarried women entering through transnational marriage, migrants to Svalbard come for work. At Svalbard labour migration prevails. This has consequences for the gender composition of migration and the marital status of migrants.

While migration from Asia is heavily dominated by women, about one third of migrants to Svalbard are men. Furthermore, the migrants arrive in all family types. Among the informants interviewed, eight were married to a Thai while six, all women, were single. All but two were parents. Some had children in Svalbard, while others had left them behind in Thailand. The ages of the informants ranged from the early 20s to the mid 50s.

Gender composition and family status may illustrate how global policies impact the ways in which migration is accomplished. If marriage is the key to residence, migrants will be women only. If residence is independent of marriage, both genders can migrate. This distinction has implications for life conditions. In marriage migration women will depend on the Western husband. In contrast to this general trend, Svalbard migrants depend on their Thai network, and latecomers rely upon recruiters' ability and willingness to provide work and a place to live.

Recruiters help fellow villagers to migrate at the same time, and as Suksomboon (2007) states, such assistance has become '... a lucrative business for the pioneer migrants'. Migrants are often indebted to the recruiters, and latecomers have an obligation to work for the recruiters for a certain period of time. They spend a long time paying back debts and depend on their network for housing and a social life. At the same time the work conditions can be very difficult with low payment, little control

over working hours and strained relationships to the recruiters.

Thai migrants in Svalbard have no residence or work permits. Their status is legal but undocumented. They enter the labour market where their recruiters, women who married Norwegian men, initially had found work: in the cleaning industry. Latecomers, men and women alike, work as cleaners which in mainland Norway is a heavily female occupation. Unlike domestic aides in Europe, Thai migrants in Svalbard do not live with the resident family. They do the cleaning and laundry of private homes, hotels, public buildings and companies on an hourly basis. Thai recruiters are in command of the quantity of work, working conditions and salaries of latecomers. As more Thais enter the labour market, competition for work increases. If latecomers run into problems with the established power structures of the Thai network they have nowhere to turn. The undocumented status submits immigrants to uncertainty even if residence is legal. As noted by Anderson (2000: 179), '...being undocumented never serves the workers' interests.' Partnering with a Norwegian man is one way of escaping dependence on the recruiters.

Improving life conditions: partnering with a Norwegian

Success and failure of immigrants to Svalbard intersect with the particular legal status of the area. No registers document living conditions and social security is linked to the homeland. Language barriers are profound. Working and living conditions are invisible to society at large. The relationship between Thais and the majority population is similar to what Anderson describes, in that: '... their social worlds do not touch' (2000: 145). Svalbard is a place for people who are able to manage by their own means only.

Partnering with a Norwegian man is a way for women to lessen their dependence on the Thai network. The fieldwork displayed considerable differences in life conditions among Thais

living in a transnational partnership, and those who did not. Women who had lived with a Norwegian had improved housing standards and better working conditions. Importantly, for single mothers who had left children in Thailand, a Norwegian man could provide economic guarantees for bringing them to Svalbard. Visits to mainland Norway became an option. All women interviewed who had entered Svalbard as single, had partnered a Norwegian man, or were hoping to. Thus, a Western man remained important for well-being, although not for residence.

Migration on the margins

Svalbard is on the border of human existence, a tiny opening into a Western world. Migration can be lucrative but is not without costs. While borders are open and salaries are high, social security is minimal. Furthermore, without a visa no one can leave for any visa-demanding country. Life is confined to Longyearbyen with only a 50 km long road system, long and very cold winters, polar nights, permafrost, and polar bears restricting outdoors movement. The axis of mobility is between Longyearbyen and Thailand by air.

Recent migration flow from Thailand signifies how a locality at the margins has become a target for a group of people with no other places to go. The visa-less border makes migration possible but migrants are trapped between the undocumented and the legal. Both men and women enter Svalbard and they come for work. But the single women who had married a Norwegian man later on obtained advantages unavailable to Thai couples or single Thai men. Thus, gender remains important to life conditions after migration even if the migration itself is gender neutral.

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International NGO projects and women's development in Yunnan

Shen Haimei

Since the UN Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing in 1995, the Chinese government has been endeavoring to carry out the commitments agreed upon by the international community and stipulated in the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration. Many Western Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become involved in supporting this work in China. Yunnan Province, which is located in the border area of southwest China, and where many ethnic groups live, was one of the first places where NGOs from Europe and North America initiated development projects in the 1980s. These NGOs have played an important role in developing civil society and mainstreaming gender in development, but have also encountered a range of problems in working with Chinese institutions.

The international NGOs that work in Yunnan Province include organizations such as Save the Children, WINROCK International, Oxfam, International AIDS Alliance, the Ford Foundation and many others. They have played a major role in introducing new understandings and practices of civil society to China by supporting the establishment of Chinese NGOs to engage in their development projects. Mainstreaming gender into development projects has been a main aim of international NGOs. In general, the projects executed by international NGOs are abundant in content, and include such areas as rural women's micro-credit loan schemes, women's reproductive health, medical relief and AIDS/HIV control and rural development among others. They have thus covered several of the main aspects of the government *Program for Work Concerning Women and Children in China for the years 2001–2010*.

Advocating gender equality and promoting the mainstreaming of gender

The era of western NGOs stepping into China has seen a new wave of Chinese feminism influenced by the ideas introduced by these organizations. International NGOs have introduced methods of gender analysis through their assistance and cooperative projects, and they have required a gender perspective in the

practice of internationally funded projects. In fact, gender analysis methods have been adopted from other parts of the world in response to satisfying the requirements of donors, rather than having been developed locally. However, this is a good beginning, and the significance is far-reaching.

As part of international NGO projects, the requirement to learn about feminism has been promoted as an element of gender mainstreaming. Books on feminism have been introduced to China by Li Xiaojiang, Wang Zheng and others, and many books on gender and development issues have been published by Chinese scholars and practitioners. In Yunnan, as well as elsewhere, local institutions and organizations of women/gender studies have been established. Some local NGOs already appeared in Yunnan before the United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995. These included organizations such as the Yunnan Reproductive Health Research Association, and the Yunnan Participatory Rural Appraisal Network. Following the Women's Conference other new organizations, such as the Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge and the Yunnan Gender and Development Group were set up. These organizations have become main collaborative partners for international NGOs. Moreover, the knowledge and perspectives introduced by foreign NGOs has

been further disseminated as scholars began to offer courses on feminist anthropology and gender and culture at universities in order to strive to transform understandings of gender analysis into public knowledge. Yunnan has become a foreland district in promoting the mainstreaming of gender in China as local NGOs and scholars interested in gender issues have worked together with various levels of government, research institutions, colleges, and social groups. The Yunnan Women's Federation has been actively involved and has played the role of advocator of gender mainstreaming and organizer of projects to strengthen self-motivated activity of various target groups.

Challenges and difficulties

Nevertheless, when international NGO projects entered China and Yunnan in the globalization era, the theories and working methods they applied were confronted with many challenges and difficulties. International NGOs entered China about twenty years ago. However, an efficient system to manage their activities has not yet been constructed. The Chinese government has never provided a precise definition of their legal status, function and relationship with government. This situation is obviously problematic for NGOs that have entered China, and as pointed out in a report on the activities of Save the Children by Zhou Hao (2001), it potentially opens up for corruption by institutions and individuals. Moreover, some international employees have limited knowledge of how Chinese society works, and have communication problems when they work with local employees and local cooperative partners. These problems make it relatively difficult for international NGOs to function in Chinese society. It especially makes some international NGOs unsure of how to adapt to and collaborate with Chinese governmental institutions. For example, based on a field study of a micro-loan project site in Tiechang village, Malipo prefecture of Wenshan district, American

scholar Sarah Tsien (2003) concluded that a United Nations Development Program project had operated well until the local government became involved in a similar project in the same community. Then, all project related regulations were adjusted in terms of loan amount, return terms and women's privilege. As a result, the scope of the International NGO project shrank, and loan and repay rates decreased. According to Tsien, the micro-loan system builds on the practice of the Bangladesh Grameen Bank. However, the micro-loan project at Tiechang village changed the meaning and practice of the Grameen Bank system. Although the two projects have similar philosophical foundations, the contexts were significantly different, and the Grameen Bank practice in Bangladesh may not be suitable for Chinese society, as China has a more powerful government and more complicated social conditions than that of the Bangladesh.

Another problem faced by the International NGOs is the Chinese traditional gender institution and its impact on women's development issues. Historically, Chinese society has had a social structure based on a patriarchal family, clan and state system and has maintained unequal gender relationships. This gender institution is firmly rooted in rural China and has implications for contemporary land rights. Land is the main economic resource in rural China, and women seem to have equal rights of land ownership following the 1978 economic reform and land contract policy in rural areas. However, since it has ignored the characteristics of the patriarchal system, the land contract is based on the unit of the household. This means that some women have had to abandon their land ownership after having married out of their villages. Thus, in practice rural women's land rights are not ensured by national legislation. Women's status of dependence and affiliation will not change as long as land distribution is manipulated by a patriarchal system in rural China. International NGOs have to face the challenges of this system in connection with implementing de-

velopment projects. For example, in the Lesha poverty alleviation project in Dali, micro-loan projects targeted at women were shifted to men by the village head and male villagers as men manage all productive matters and loans are therefore assumed to be 'naturally' relevant for men rather than for women (Deng 2005). In sum, the gender system is a huge issue. It is extremely difficult to remove obstacles to gender equality and maintain the achievements gained by previous projects if there are only relatively few projects and there are not continuous follow-up projects.

Furthermore, although gender mainstreaming has always been a prominent theme for international NGOs, this aspect of development work seems to be weak within new topics such as environmental protection and the conservancy of ecological diversity, that have become the main focus of international NGO projects within recent years. We need to pay close attention to this unfortunate tendency. The issues confronting international NGOs threaten to reduce the validity of international NGO projects in China, and weaken the attention to the initial target of gender empowerment and gender equality.

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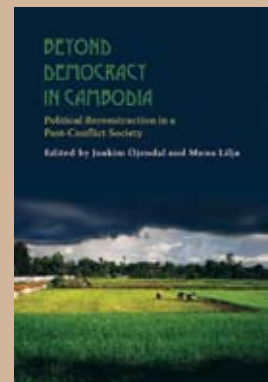
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[I]t appears as if globalization enhances the political status of women in at least three different ways. First of all, in the globalized era new knowledge is introduced that may be monopolized by women in order to make its status reflect upon the female gender. Secondly, Western-funded NGOs spread new images of possible female political identities in the rural areas of Cambodia. Thirdly, in a globalized world order with plural identities and varieties of discourses, prospects are greater for renegotiating relations of power, while 'old' and 'new' discourses interweave, each influencing the other, thus creating new 'truths'. In this regard, Cambodian women seem to lean upon more Western discourses in order to make legitimate their political power.

– *Mona Lilja, on globalization, women's political participation and the politics of legitimacy and reconstruction in Cambodia*



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Sino-Icelandic relations in times of intense globalization

Mutual respect and benefits for all?

Lilja Hjartardóttir

Sino-Icelandic relations are a recent and undertheorised phenomenon compared with Sino-Nordic relations that were already established in the early 20th century. Once business relations took hold in the 1990s Icelanders moved quickly into the immense Chinese market. While trade relations have maintained their priority status in the execution of foreign policy, participation in the international human rights regime has taken a backseat. Icelandic authorities have pledged to promote and protect human rights and gender equality in their foreign policy and foreign trade policy. In spite of public support to find and develop new markets, neither private nor public enterprises are part of the policy to enforce international human rights, including workers' and women's rights, and they are not legally bound by international human rights treaties.

Iceland has been an active, albeit small, member of the international trade regime. From the early 1990s ministers of governments, members of the Reykjavik city council, business leaders and business enthusiasts all travelled to China to experience a new and promising market. As a new member of the European Economic Community in 1994, Iceland worked on deregulation and privatization of its economy with the now well known catastrophic consequences. New legislation and regulations were meant to ensure that the business environment would enhance foreign investment in Iceland. The Icelandic President, who has participated in promoting and supporting the Icelandic business community abroad, led a large delegation to China in 2005. The trip was successful in preparing for many new business contracts between the two states. During the same period Chinese dignitaries visited Iceland. In spite of the great contrast between the two states, current relations have been grounded in mutual trust and admiration for the economic advancement reached by both countries before the economic crisis. China appreciates that Iceland was among the first West European countries that recognized China's status as a complete market economy while neither the United States nor the European Union has done so. Iceland was

moreover the first European country to work with China on the feasibility of establishing a free-trade zone. Iceland and China are making good progress on their comprehensive bilateral free-trade agreement.

Forces of globalization shape our daily lives and the functions of the international trade system benefit us even while betraying us. There is no lack of rules on behaviour and guidelines on how international companies should respect workers rights and be responsible actors in the international market. The rules are, however, voluntary and a system of implementation and enforcement has yet to be developed. Examples are the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Corporations and the Global Compact initiative by the United Nations. What is needed is an international legal framework to deal with a new reality where over 2,400 bilateral free trade agreements exist and the transfer of trade and finance is almost unlimited (Ruggie 2008).

Globalized forces affect the life of women and men at global and local levels. A close look at local communities, e.g. coastal villages around Iceland, shows that their existence has been threatened by lack of job opportunities. Since the early 1990s jobs in fish processing have declined by more than 60 per cent. The reasons are not simple but the privatization

of the fish industry in the early 1980s and the relatively high price of fresh fish do matter as does the fact that in spite of low salaries in fish processing the workers cannot compete with cheap labour or labour made cheap elsewhere (Enloe 1990, Pun 1999). While China is by far the greatest fishing nation and a competitor on the market, Iceland is on the list of the world's 15 main fishing countries. More than being the land of ice and fire, Iceland is the land of fish and fisheries.

Gender division of power, resources and labour

Women have protested the ancient divide between the powerful public sphere of active men, the political citizens, where resources are distributed and decisions made, and the powerless private sphere of excluded women. This tradition in liberal Western democracies has proven a major hindrance for women. It transferred into the dominance of international institutions in the 20th century – the international finance and trade institutions *inter alia* (Pateman 1989, Tickner 2001). The gender division of power, resources and labour is clear in the Icelandic fish industry (Karlsdóttir 2006, Skaptadóttir 2000). The political decision to privatize the fish industry in Iceland was accepted in the early 1980s when men dominated national and local politics. The control of marine resources and the majority of business enterprises continue in the hands of men. In addition, they are the skippers and owners of the fishing vessels.

Do gender relations matter in international trade relations? Are ideas about femininity and masculinity traded along with goods and services? Are the same gendered forces of our global market economy at play in the small village plant in the capitalist, democratic far North and a huge factory in communist China? Is the gendered division of labour in the Icelandic freezing plants exported and perhaps reinforced to the Icelandic owned freezing plants in China? Known as the most valuable resource for global business (Peterson and Runyan 1999) and the ideal workforce (e.g.

Caraway 2007) women in production are said to be cheap, as well as 'docile and willing to work long hours in dead-end jobs' (Caraway 2007). These attributes have been ascribed to women in labour intensive production especially in export processing zones in Asia. The research done by Pun Ngai (e.g., 1999, 2004) shows how 'despotic labour regimes' are created by global, national and not least local factors in China to the detriment of the well-being of the young migrant working women. While labour legislation is enforced in Iceland and freedom of movement is secured, could similar forces be at play in the (then) wealthy Nordic state known for its gender equality and welfare policies?

According to a study on Icelandic women, who have worked in fish processing most or all of their working lives (Karlsdóttir, 2006), there are some similarities. The women are hard workers and serious about their jobs. Nevertheless, they receive low salaries and little respect and the public image of their jobs is poor. Most of them have never been offered promotion and they are hard to find in management or quality control positions. Commencements are exceptional, complaints are not. The gendered division of work in the high-tech fish processing and freezing plants of Iceland is clear. It seems that women can and will do all the tough tasks while most of the male workers will neither pack nor debone. This work requires 'nimble fingers' and men are not understood to have such skills. Packing and deboning seem to be the task most related to femininity and it is one of the most repetitive and strenuous types of work. One factor explaining why women keep their dead-end jobs in the plants is that it is easy to control the number of days they work. The way women organise their paid work ensures responsibility for their families and thus for most of the caring in the community. Should they be labelled a 'docile workforce'?

Concluding remarks

Despite different working and life conditions between women in Iceland and China there

are similarities. The gender division of labour is a factor that has to be reckoned with in order to promote and protect human rights in foreign trade policy. To what extent are the economic and trade ties between Iceland and China based on mutual respect and benefit, also for women in both countries? Women in the fish industry in small communities in Iceland seem to lack status to pursue power to influence local and national politics of the industry. Are they glued to the 'sticky floor' in the plants and stuck in their local communities, while their Chinese co-workers are at least temporarily mobile and even experiencing personal and financial freedom for the first time? Will ongoing trade relations and the free trade agreement between Iceland and China reinforce the gendered hierarchies in these two societies or is it possible for both trade relations and human rights to thrive? This is a major challenge in a globalized world.

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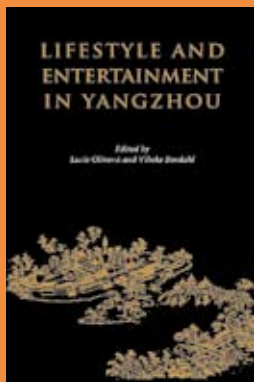
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In this song one finds a rather positive and even cheerful outlook on the profession and duties of young women working in a teahouse-type of brothel. They are described as charming, witty and seductive, while also slightly exploitative. All in all it is the picture of carefree young girls, not worrying too much about the future. Only towards the end of the song, in the fifth hour, does one of the girls speak more openly. Up to that point she seems ready enough to accept the rather intimate propositions of the client, but she then remarks in a melancholic and bitter voice that she secretly hopes that he will marry her. Maybe she is so desperate that she proposes this to every client.

– Stefan Kuzay, on life in the green lofts of the lower Yangzi region, a study of traditional teahouses, pleasure districts and bordellos, which played a significant part in the everyday life and popular culture of the lower Yangzi region in the declining years of the Qing period.

Foreign companies and local workers in China*

Merete Lie and Ragnhild Lund

Over the past twenty years the authors have studied how Norwegian companies have transferred production to Asia. Their focus is on the micro-level of globalization processes and their ambition is to bring ordinary people into studies of globalization by showing how Norwegian companies in Asia function as meeting places for global and local actors.

During the early 1980s, we studied the relocation of Norwegian production to the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) such as Singapore and Malaysia and what impact this development had on local female workers. Another shift of global production took place during the early 1990s, when the increasing flows of information, knowledge, and services became more prominent. We studied how these changes affected production as well as workers in the increasingly more consumer and market-oriented societies in Southeast Asia. This development coincided with the new economic policies in China, which facilitated a shift towards China becoming the main target of foreign investments.

The story of one Norwegian company's transfer to China, as described in the box (opposite), may serve as a good example of the development referred to above. It is useful as a backdrop to understanding different dimensions of social and economic change, and how this changes the lives of those who are recruited to work in the foreign-owned companies.

Our study in China is based on interviews in seven Norwegian companies in the Shanghai area, where we have interviewed employees from the top to the shop floor level. Here, we shall focus on the blue-collar workers.

In this work, we have understood globalization as interface situations, in which the foreign companies are meeting places of local

and global actors. Too often, globalization is presented as a one-way process where multinational corporations (MNCs) are seen as the vital actors and driving forces, whereas local populations are presented as passive recipients of social change. Based on our previous studies in Southeast Asia, however, we hold that globalization is not just a one-way process. The strategies of local actors are important to the global actors, though this is not to say that they have equal influence on the processes of change.

Questions raised in relation to globalization are usually of a general character and concern macro-level issues. For example, will globalization result in increasing or decreasing social difference, and will people and places become homogenized throughout the world? Too seldom do we hear about what actually takes place when global actors such as multinational companies meet the local population. The ambition in our research is to bring ordinary people, who live their lives locally, into studies of globalization. How do people at the local level experience and adapt to the changes brought about by the processes of industrial restructuring, and how do they try to benefit from a new situation?

Company motives

Asking why the companies have chosen to move production to China, the motives can be summed up as a combination of costs, skills, infrastructure and market.

Production costs are an important reason for most companies to locate themselves in China. The low costs are mostly related to wages but also to cheaper raw materials. The

* The research is presented in Lie, M., R. Lund and G.H. Hansen (eds): *Making it in China*. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget/Norwegian Academic Press 2008.

The company in question is a 100-per-cent family-owned Norwegian enterprise. At present, it has subsidiaries all over the world, but the major part of the production takes place in Asia.

The company became 'international', by setting up a factory in Singapore in 1972. The main purpose was to gain admittance for its products on the market in Asia and Oceania. At the same time, production of some of the more labour-intensive products was transferred from Norway. The Singapore factory was made as technologically advanced as the one in Norway, and the products were mainly of the same type.

After some years in Singapore, the simpler manual tasks were set out to home workers, often wives or relatives of employees, and eventually transferred to a subcontracting company which established itself in a residential area and employed former housewives. Wages were rising quickly in Singapore during the 1970s, which resulted in a scarcity of this type of labour. The Singaporean authorities encouraged companies to transfer labour intensive production elsewhere, because they wanted to attract high-tech enterprises. Accordingly, in 1979, the company established a subsidiary across the border in Southern Malaysia.

In the beginning, the Malaysian company was set up on rented premises. It was owned and managed by the company in Singapore, supplemented by a small share by a local owner. The production in Malaysia was almost entirely manual, and the great majority of the workers were young women. After 10–15 years a subcontractor was established in the Philippines to take care of the most labour-intensive tasks. Some of the manual tasks were also gradually transferred to a subcontractor in Mauritius. The factory in Malaysia was reorganized with machinery transferred from the enterprise in Singapore and became a production unit technically in-between the advanced one in Singapore and the low-tech one in the Philippines.

In 2001, the company established itself in China. Machinery was transferred from the other production sites. In China, production has expanded fast, whereas activities have been scaled down in Norway, Singapore and Malaysia.

estimates given suggest that labour costs are about 10 per cent of the costs of running a similar factory in Norway, whereas in Malaysia 20 years earlier, the same estimate was 20 per cent of running costs in Norway. The low wage-level relates to China's great surplus of labour, providing a never-ending stream of applicants for unskilled work.

However, it is not only cheap labour that is available in China but also highly skilled personnel. This concerns technical staff from operators to engineers, as well as management personnel for sales, marketing, human relations, etc. A well-qualified staff, including human relations officers, accountants, commercial managers, and technical managers, is usually recruited locally. Thus companies are not only attracted to China because of an inexhaustible pool of labour for industrial work, but also because they can recruit well qualified staff. Companies are dependent upon

a staff with local knowledge of how to deal with workers, customers and authorities. In addition to their professional work, they play important roles as mediators between foreign managers, boards and owners on the one hand, and the local employees on the other. This large and growing number of ambitious young people for high-level positions has not received the same media attention as the large number of industrial workers.

Workers in the 'New China'

Most workers in the companies we studied were below the age of 35. In the job market, companies generally specify their preferred gender and age (for instance 18–22) when they advertise for new production workers. Accordingly, to be over 30 is considered 'old', and workers who fall into this category have more difficulties in finding new jobs. Still, there was a sharp distinction between workers

who grew up in the 1970s and those who have grown up since China opened up its economy. Workers in their thirties represent 'old China': many have work experience from local, state-owned companies (SOEs) and are generally married, some coming from formerly rural areas. The young ones, who grew up during the 1980s, represent 'new China.' They have limited experience of working under the old communist regime, many have grown up in the city or in towns, and they are generally unmarried. We found these two groups to be different in their ways of approaching industrial work and in terms of ambitions, dreams, and future plans.

The majority of the young unmarried workers we met live with their parents. Some workers share a flat with friends from their home town, or they live in dormitories or flats provided by the company they work for. We also found that after marriage, young people prefer to live by themselves, leaving the parents on their own. The husband–wife relationship is becoming the stronger tie in the family relationships, not the tie between parents and children.

All the young workers emphasised that a convenient age for marriage is around 25 years. This is the time when they consider themselves mature and to have managed to consolidate their education or work ambitions. However, the interviews show that women now increasingly get married in their early thirties, which is regarded as late by most Chinese. As to the question why, they claimed that times have changed; they have more pressure at their present work-places, they have ambitions of getting more education and work experience before they settle down, and some even consider it to be difficult to raise a child in today's China because of the high costs of living, long working hours, time spent commuting, and lack of child care.

The elderly are increasingly left to look after themselves in their old age because of the preference for nuclear family households. However, our data shows a different type of dependency, namely that of the young

depending on the old because of the lack of a proper child care system.

The two-income family is the common pattern in urban China today. Young couples tend to set up households separate from their parents, and increasingly so because of labour migration. The changes in family patterns and family support relating to child-care facilities and how people solve these new challenges will have a marked influence on the direction of China's future development.

Global enterprises – are they all the same?

Studying foreign companies as meeting places of global and local actors in China, we understand that the foreign companies position themselves so that they can benefit from the new situation, but so does the local population. To a certain extent, their aims are compatible, in the sense that the foreign companies bring job opportunities and economic growth. Among the older generation of workers, job security is of foremost concern. The young generation is, however, eager to succeed in the new economy. They are highly career-oriented and expect promotion, that is, a rising salary over time. If it is not achieved within one company, their strategy will be to change jobs as they see fit.

We find that among workers, Norwegian companies are not considered particularly attractive work places. Even though their work conditions and work ethics are appreciated compared to those of other foreign companies, Norwegian companies are not generally held to be better than others. Their salaries are considered to be in the low range, while the working conditions are considered better than in large multinational companies, especially Japanese and other Asian ones. In one significant respect, however, they are found to be much better: they are said to be 'women friendly'. Unlike other companies, both among workers and among highly qualified staff, women feel they are given opportunities for advancement and that skills are recognized and valued.



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Further information

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- Professor Wang Jufen, School of Social Development and Public Policy, Fudan University, China, jfwn@hotmail.com

Gendered globalisation and social change

Nira Yuval-Davis

The social change affecting gender relations in society as a result of globalisation is paradoxical. On the one hand, as a result of globalisation, women are allowed entry to roles and arenas of society in which they were not allowed in many societies before and thus the distance between the ways masculinity and femininity are constructed in the society lessens. On the other hand, however, the effects of globalisation on contemporary politics of belonging have been such that in many places we see new kinds of conservatism and tribalism which, under the claims of going back to 'authentic' culture and tradition, radically enlarge the differential ways manhood and womanhood are constructed, as well as overall power relations between men and women in the society.

Like Saskia Sassen, I see globalisation as an 'epochal change' which is just in its beginning (Sassen 2006) and following Scholte I consider the time/space compression, the 'respatialization with the spread of transplanetary social connections' (Scholte 2000:3), as the most specific aspects of globalization, of which the conference 'Gender at the interface of the global and the local' is just one small example.

In addition to mass movement of people across the globe, the development of the virtual space via the internet as well as other means of communication and transportation, have made dialogues across different positionings and locations, across borders and boundaries, much easier, cheaper and more frequent. This, in addition to mass movement of people across the globe, made Castels and Miller (1993) talk about 'the age of migration' as typifying contemporary society. Women have played major roles in these processes. One of the characteristics of 'the age of migration' is 'the feminization of migration'. The 2004 world survey on the role of women in development states that 49 per cent of all migrants are women. This includes women who migrated as family dependents – either with their husbands or following them, as well as the growing number of women who migrated on their own, leaving or not behind them families of their own in their countries of origin. However, the dichotomy between women workers and family dependents

which exists in official statistics is fictitious as so many of the women who migrate as family dependents both want and need to work. The situation is similar concerning women asylum seekers and refugees. Often both husband and wife are politically active but only the husband receives the status of refugee. As a result there have been many cases in Britain, for instance, when the husband dies and the legal protection of the refugee status is taken away from the family whose immigration status becomes precarious (Bhaba & Shutter 1994).

The gendered character of women's migration can be detected in several major ways, although it is important to remember that gendered analysis needs to be part of an intersectional one, as the situations of professional and unskilled women, single and married, young and old, who migrated from the South or from other European countries, are vastly different. However, it is usually only women who are dependent for their immigration status on that of their husbands' and it is usually women who are super-exploited by family and other men from their diasporic community who mediate between them and the outside economic and social world. In many branches of the economy the labour market is gender specific. Women's only migrations focus around traditional roles of women – as domestic workers (from cleaners to nannies) on the one hand and as sex and entertainment workers on the other hand. In the phenomenon of 'mail brides', in

which women are selected, often not met beforehand, as brides for lonely Western men, these two roles merge together.

As Spike Peterson (2003) has argued, when discussing labour in general, but especially women's work under globalisation, we need to differentiate as well as relate to its reproductive, productive and virtual aspects. In the latter two, like when women work in manufacturing in free trade zones or in call centres, women have entered sections of the labour market to which they have not had access before, either because they used to work outside the money economy, in their households or – in rural sectors – in the fields, and/or because these kinds of work did not exist before the micro-chip revolution. In the reproductive arena, women usually continue to work in what is considered traditionally to be 'women's work', such as domestic work, child care and care of the old and the infirm, but often in new sites, either in national metropolitan areas or internationally, to replace care work of other women who have entered the formal labour market.

Women's roles, belonging and the politics of belonging

It is important to differentiate between belonging and the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006). Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home' and – as Michael Ignatieff (2001) points out – about feeling 'safe'. In the aftermath of 9/11 and 7/7 in London, such a definition gets a new, if problematic, poignancy. Belonging tends to be naturalized and becomes articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way. Belonging also assumes boundaries of belonging and the 'natural' division of the world into 'us' and 'them'.

The politics of belonging are comprised of specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivity/ies which are, at the same time, being constructed themselves by these projects in very specific ways. Central to these projects

is the construction and reproduction of the boundaries of belonging according to some specific principles which can be of many different kinds, from the phenotypical to the social.

The analytical differentiation between belonging and the politics of belonging is, therefore, crucial for any critical political discourse of nationalism, racism and other contemporary politics of belonging. It is also crucial for any analysis of gender relations and the constructions of femininity and masculinity.

It is crucial in two different ways. Firstly, in the same ways that they naturalize boundaries of collectivities, political projects of belonging also tend to naturalize gender roles and relationships. The feminist political struggles aimed at women's emancipation depend on the denaturalization and debiologisation of women's roles and thus the possibility of change. This is one of the reasons why so often feminists find themselves in oppositionary roles to hegemonic political projects of belonging which construct women's roles as wives and mothers as part of women's biological destiny and equate between hearth, home and women's domestic roles in their constructions of safe belonging.

Secondly, this is important because so often political projects of belonging tend to construct differences between 'us' and 'them', civilised or moral 'us' vs barbarian or immoral 'them' in cultural terms in the heart of which are different constructions of gender relations in general and womanhood in particular.

Globalisation, social change and feminist 'transversal politics'

Feminist activism related to situations of ethnic and national conflicts and wars has been another major front for the development of the international women's movement (Cockburn 1998, Zajovic 1994). Meetings among women who came from different sides of the conflict often took place in neutral zones and with the support of other international

women's groups, as well as in NGO/UN forums. Identity politics could not survive in their previous feminist format during these activities. The women who took part in the meetings were conscious all too often that they could not be seen as representing all women, let alone all members of their ethnic and national collectivities, as most of the latter often supported the continuing confrontation and conflict. While the membership of these women in the conflicting collectivities was crucial to their participation in the encounter, their common aspirations to find common emancipatory solutions to the conflict have been just as important.

A new kind of feminist politics has been born, called 'transversal politics' by the Italian feminists who sponsored many of the initial meetings of feminists from Israel/Palestine and the different components of Former Yugoslavia (Yuval-Davis 1994; Cockburn & Hunter 1999). Based on common feminist emancipatory values, dialogical in nature and with transnational participants of feminist advocates across borders and boundaries, it made important contributions to general human rights and feminist struggles across the globe and has presented an important front for local and global progressive social change. This has been recognized by other global networks of conservatives and fundamentalists, and in forums like the Beijing +10 and other UN +10 forums, the close relationships between the participation of women and the participation of feminists have been problematised. In many cases feminists have had to work very hard in order to be able to keep the achievements of the 1990s conferences, let alone improved on them. The co-optation of 'the women's question' to discourses such as the so-called 'humanitarian militarism' and the wars in Afghanistan and, to a lesser degree, in Iraq, have also been reflected in the recent election campaign in the USA, for instance.

This brought many feminists active in these global networks to question whether the NGO

Forum of the UN is the best arena in which to continue to carry out feminist struggles for emancipatory social change, and to some extent global feminist organizations such as AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development) have taken their place. Currently for instance, AWID is carrying out a comparative action-research in 140 countries in which it examines the effects of and struggles against religious and ethnic fundamentalisms in these countries. The stakeholders are all those who work in various feminist, human rights and development organizations in these countries.

A concluding remark

This is a time of global economic and political crisis. Women bear the brunt of this crisis both as members of their societies and as participants in the labour market, as well as symbolic and embodied targets for the fears and frustrations of the men in their societies, mobilized by various defensive political projects of belonging. This is a crucial time for global women's and feminist solidarity. However, it is also crucial that such solidarity will be transversal in that it will recognize the intersectional differences in women's situated positionings and power, carry out the dialogue within the boundaries of emancipatory value systems, encompass discourse of difference with discourse of equality and conviviality and will not confuse the notion of 'women' with that of 'feminists'. This is not the time to go back to identity politics.

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Gendered Inequalities in Asia

Configuring, Contesting and Recognizing Women and Men

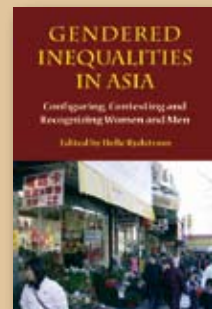
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Global processes with flows in money, commodities and people have made increasingly varied and blurred what it means to be a female or male in Asia today. Socio-economic and cultural patterns in Asia intersect with one another and, in doing, so they translate into power relations that create both possibilities and constraints for women and men. By focusing on unequal access to political and religious power, occupation and health facilities, as well as different options when it comes to family life and sexuality, the recognition of women and men are explored in this volume as manifestations of ideas about femininity and masculinity. Readers will find insightful and enriching contributions that consider how gender relations in Asia – and indeed the very meaning of gender itself – are affected by modernization; neo-liberalism, globalization and economic growth; security in all of its meanings; multiculturalism, race and class; family life/expectations and intergenerational support; religious discourses and activism; and by male norms in politics and how masculinity is constructed.

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