

Introduction

Although globalization as a journal theme may seem to be well worn, having been extensively written about in the last decade or so, it is not a dead horse. Globalization is alive and kicking, bruising bodies, shattering fragile economies, driving millions out of their jobs and their home countries into an uncertain diaspora. Globalization sets into motion “a race to the bottom,” seeking out cheap, vulnerable, and contingent labor to maximize profit at the top. It unleashes the power of new technology to control knowledge and homogenize culture, reinforcing consumerism while heralding a shift to political and religious fundamentalism.

Globalization at the same time, creates its own contradictions and produces spaces for changes at both the micro and macro levels. It provides new forms of employment whereby women could challenge more traditional forms of male control in the household. New technology associated with globalization also has its liberating potential, as it allows women’s and other social movements to touch base with each other and widen the networks for social transformation and the full realization of human rights, especially women’s rights in the economic, political, social, cultural, reproductive, and sexual spheres.

The *Review of Women’s Studies* lines up nine articles and four documents in this issue, which provide an all-sided view of the role of Filipino women in specific sectors and areas of the economy, their integration and reaction to globalization processes, the impact of these processes on their awareness and on their relations with men, and the organizational and other forms by which they articulate their positions and express their resistances.

Jeanne Frances I. Illo, a prominent feminist economist, outlines in her article entitled “Prospects of People Living in Poverty to Participate in Growth Oriented Enterprises,” the situation of women in the Philippine economy, their opportunities for scaling up their economic initiatives, and issues and challenges attendant to this process. Aptly, she begins with

notions and experiences of poverty; she then locates the poor and the women in the "local economy" which she divides into three systems: the private or market system; the public system which provides infrastructure and social services; and a third system consisting of the informal economy, and the social economy exemplified by cooperatives. She contests the usual export-oriented, market-based growth model associated with globalization and proposes a "local-economy" model where "production is carried out by small (not large) enterprises with capital that is rooted in local ownerships"; where government or the public system is strong, accountable, and sets the goals and regulatory framework; and where there is a "politically active civil society."

From the national, the *RWS* takes readers to rural settings in Negros and in Laguna where women's groups are active in both traditional and new production arrangements. Nanette Dungo, a senior sociology professor, links class and gender questions in her article entitled "Negotiating Patriarchy Amidst Globalization: Dynamics of Women's Work in an Agricultural Economy." She explores "the emerging control women are beginning to experience as subcontracted workers caught in the intersection between a patriarchal home and the equally patriarchal demands of capitalism as globalizing forces penetrate the traditional organization of the sugar farm." She shows that women can create a compendium of adjustment as well as resistance strategies as they juggle the competing demands of productive and reproductive work in the context of new forms of home-based production. On the other hand, agricultural economist Helen Dayo leads readers into viewing traditional handicraft work with a gender lens in her article "Conceptualizing Women's Work: The Cultural Economy of Weaving." Here, she gives importance to the meanings that women invest in their weaving activity in the context of their social and cultural environment. In her discussion, weaving ceases just to be a source of livelihood; it also becomes an instrument for deepening kinship and community ties. The entrenchment of the weaving tradition illustrates "the continuing pervasiveness of small, home-based economic activities in the Philippine rural upland" as well as their integration into the market system. This strong community tradition, however, is not impervious to global-

izing forces, as when weaving families also dependent on coconut farming are battered by low and unstable prices of coconut products.

From weavers and other homebased workers, the RWS moves to the issues and concerns of migrant women workers in Japan and in Australia. In my article entitled “Globalization, Migration, and Social Policy: Comparing the Japanese and Philippine Experiences,” the movement of Filipino women to Japan is analyzed in terms of developments in the Philippine and Japanese economies which affect employment patterns as well as the role of the state in both the sending and receiving country. The problems such women face and the struggles they undergo are framed in the context of increasing cross-border solidarity between Philippine and Japanese NGOs engaged in the overall advocacy of recognizing, protecting, and fulfilling migrant women’s rights in Japan. Australian anthropologist Nicki Saroca, on the other hand, takes a micro approach in her article “Violence Against Migrant Filipino Women in Australia: Making Men’s Behavior Visible.” Using in-depth interviews with Filipino Australian couples, she demolishes the popular view that Filipino women are necessarily “potential victims of violence while their male partners are often described as hopeless losers and abusers.” Her data show that a lot depends on how men “construct” and treat their female partners in the first place, and it does not matter much if they meet their partners through the Internet matching services or not.

Are the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) so associated with globalization good or bad for women? Media specialist Mavic Cabrera Balleza explores this question in her article entitled “Gendered, Wired and Globalized—Gender and Globalization Issues in the New Information and Communication Technologies.” She explains the nature of these technologies and who really benefit from them. She also shows the impact on women, highlighting the following topics in the ensuing discussion: access; education, training, and capacity building; employment; content; sexual exploitation and harassment; and ICT policies.

Closer to home is the article contributed by communications professor Georgina R. Encanto entitled “Women’s Magazines as Instruments of Neocolonial Domination.” Here she analyzes a number of currently popular

women's magazines and shows how their contents and their advertising have led women to consume beauty and other products which enrich their foreign makers while at the same time propagating Northern lifestyles and standards. Simultaneously, women readers are lured into the patriarchal trap of trying to shape themselves, often at great cost, into desirable sex objects for men.

The realm of consciousness and consumerism is just one area where globalization takes an obvious toll on women's lives. In the light of recent developments focusing on instruments related to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the article "GATS and Privatization: Surfacing the Gender Dimension" by Jubilee South activist and feminist scholar Mae Buenaventura assumes great importance. She writes on the assumption that policy instruments like the General Agreement on Trades in Services and entities like the WTO operate "over a gendered terrain where women are disadvantaged by their particular economic, social and political position in society." She zeroes in on basic services like water, to which 80 percent of women's activities are tied. If water is privatized and is left to giant corporations to make huge profits from, the negative effect will be felt more by "women in many poor communities and households who are both time-poor and income-poor."

The documents section of the RWS follows this thread of linking the global to the local and vice versa. The article on the WTO by Josefa "Gigi" Francisco of the Miriam College Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) and the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) summarizes in a few pages how women worldwide are deeply affected by policies of a seemingly benign institution based in Geneva. In the light of the recent ministerial meeting of the WTO held December 2005 in Hongkong, which left a lot of unfinished business still to be settled in 2006, the briefing paper of Homenet Southeast Asia focusing on why women workers in the informal economy should continue advocating for fair trade, instead of free trade, acquires urgency and relevance.

The other documents featured by the RWS focus on women's movements, their dynamism, resistance, endurance, and transcendence. Medical doctor, reproductive health advocate, and women and development

studies associate professor Sylvia Estrada Claudio boldly takes on religious and political fundamentalisms by foregrounding controversial issues raised by the women's health movement in her keynote speech during the 2005 General Assembly of Amnesty International in London. The *RWS* aptly ends with an assessment by Philippine women NGOs of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action within a ten-year period, teasing out gains, gaps, and losses, and dwelling on recurrent as well as new themes, including globalization, the role of the women's movement in making change happen, ICT and new vulnerabilities, fundamentalisms, rights and economic entitlements of the marginalized. The "future directions" it tentatively outlines end with a restatement of women's hopes everywhere—that "Oppressive structures created by history and built on hierarchies based on resource status, gender identity, ethnicity, age, and other differentiating factors can thereby be transformed by human agency—by the force of women coming together to build a future they can call their own."

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