

Conceptualizing Women's Work: The Cultural Economy of Weaving*

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Abstract

Three themes are discussed in this paper, which is based on fieldwork conducted from 1998 to 2000 as part of the author's dissertation: 1) the importance and meanings that women placed on hat weaving; 2) the cultural worldview that shaped and informed the women's perception of weaving, and 3) the integration of women into the market through weaving.

Women's stories of Luisiana, Laguna present weaving as an economic interest embedded in their social and cultural environment, making weaving both an economic and socio-cultural activity. For the *Luisianahin* women, weaving is both a source of livelihood and leisure that allows them to deepen both their kinship and community ties. Likewise, this activity is permanently woven in the tapestry of their own lives.

Polanyi's economic model of economic processes re-assert its relevance with the continuing pervasiveness of small, home-based economic activities in the Philippine rural upland. However, the model is gender-blind; the paper shows through the example of the women weavers how the gender perspective can be concretely incorporated in the analysis of economic systems as well as demonstrate the functioning of environment as an important resource linking women in an ecological-economic relationship.

Introduction

The traditional concerns of economics are focused on the type and amount of resources extracted and exchanged. Such an orientation considers everyone as a producer for the market in order to earn profit (Saith 1991; Lipton 1991), and situates all rural economies within the map of capitalist development in the countryside (Breman & Mundle 1991). More-

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over, rural households are perceived to rely on income from farming for their livelihood, ignoring income from non-farm work such as crafts that have taken a secondary position to agriculture.

Majority of rural communities actually have an economy built on the interaction of farm and home-based systems, which both consider raw materials and household labor not only as economic units, but also as important elements in the social reproduction of community relations. There is a need to underscore the importance of crafts as livelihood of the rural uplands and as women's work which enable them to integrate themselves into the market. This paper therefore shows the connection between the changing environments and the social and economic relations of people within these environments, especially in areas where women play significant economic roles.

Conceptualizing Women's Work within the Interplay of Culture, Economy and Environment

This paper also attempts to take a second look at some old but nonetheless basic concepts that allow a deeper understanding of cultural economy. Economic anthropology, for instance, utilizes a comparative and cross cultural study of economics wherein concepts and terms like mode of production, relations and forces of production, reciprocity, redistribution, and markets are used extensively as analytical tools or descriptions in a particular cultural context.

On the other hand, ecological anthropology tries to explain the interplay between the environment and culture through "reciprocal causality" as a method of cultural ecology (Hardesty 1977). On a different front, there is an enhanced interest among ecological and economic anthropologists in the ways of coping with the problems of methodology. For example, the need to disaggregate data on local groups has been impressed on ecological researchers; that is, they should be mindful of the differences between women and men in terms of their participation in economic activities or what they produce in differently constituted households. In

more recent years, changes in the productive work and economic life of women have become more diversified, and a move towards greater environmental sustainability has emphasized the multiplicity of women's economic roles.

Livelihood strategies among dwellers in many rural upland communities in the Philippines combine agricultural and non-agricultural sources and straddle both rural and urban sectors. These sources of livelihood provide income opportunities (e.g., self-employment) especially for women. In much of the WED (Women, Environment and Development) literature, women are portrayed as closely dependent on the natural resources that they use in their daily lives to provide for the survival of their families and communities (Hart 1997).

Women as Weavers: Linking Economy and Culture

The women weavers from Luisiana, Laguna use a non-timber forest resource, which they transform into economic units, creating a livelihood that influences their environment as well as their relations with men.

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram presenting the link between economics, gender and environment. In this diagram, the environment supports an economic system represented by *pandan* which is transformed into consumer products by economic processes. These consumer products (hats), in turn, are distributed through markets. In both systems, the women are responsible for the environment and economic link or the locational-transformation link. The framework makes visible non-economic goods, such as social relations, aside from the economic processes that are operating within the system effectively linking economics, gender and environment. It also shows the movements of resources demonstrating the transformation of nature into commodities, creating values within an economic system. Moreover, it illustrates the economic and environmental arrangement within their specific spheres.

The economic-environment arrangement as schematically presented leads the discussion to a more difficult concern. The diagram presents the interaction of the system, which defines factors like economics, gender

and environment. **Environment** here is taken to mean as the natural environment that provides a resource for a livelihood system of the household members composed of women and men. The use value and the non-use value can be assessed with regard to the economic value of the environment where *pandan* thrives. The use value refers to the direct valuation of the services by those who use it while the non-use value refers to the cultural or social value which connects the *pandan* weavers with the others (inside and outside communities), giving them a sense of identity and a sense of connection to their past and to the generations of women weavers within their kinship ties who came before them.

While these non-use values are not observable in market transactions, these are still distinguishable from the use values in terms of goods and services (for example, labor) needed to produce hats. The flow of goods and services produced by the environment is more connected to the women who provide the labor for weaving. The natural resources that come from the environment and the cultural capital (weaving) which arises from the creative activities of women, provide the basis of maintaining and sustaining the cultural life of rural upland dwellers.

The Study Site

Pandanaceae spp. (*Pandanus*) abounds in Luisiana, Laguna. According to the village elders, *pandan* palms were found in the forest or near the slopes of Mt. Banahaw. It was once called "*pandang gubat*" and was still described as "*tubong kalikasan*" (a wild tree; a natural growth). It used to be a forest species until its cultivation in the 1930s when some parts of Mt. Banahaw were considered protected areas. Since that time, and until more recently, *pandan* was a free resource for the villagers to use. Because the villagers are practically all genealogically related, tracing their roots from seven pioneering families, the gathering of *pandan* was counted as one social activity whereby members could keep abreast of each other's lives in the course of working on *pandan* leaves.

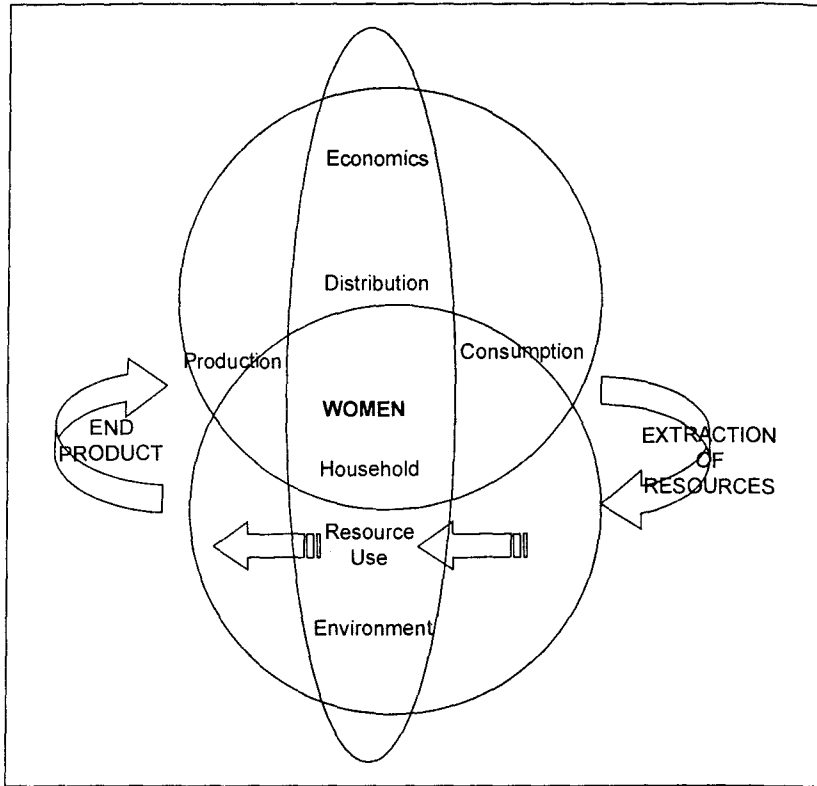


FIGURE 1. Schematic Diagram of Economics-Gender and Environment Link

Since a large part of the study site is agricultural, majority of the residents depend on farming for their livelihood. Rice and other crops, particularly coconut, comprise the major source of income. But among women, *pandan* weaving is the major source of income.

The Women Weavers

The weavers of Luisiana demonstrate distinct characteristics linked with the social relations of production. Their nature of work varies in terms of the extent of their involvement in agricultural work and household work, including weaving and other enterprises.

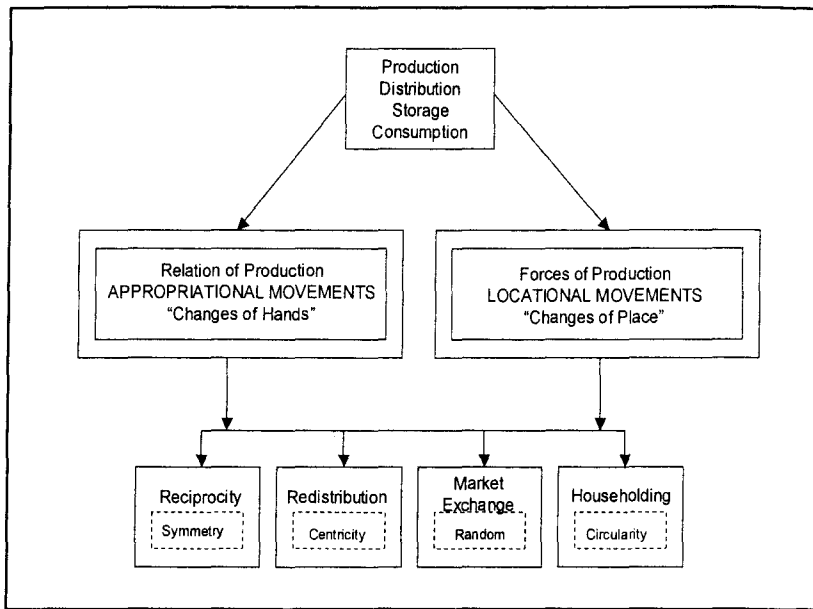


FIGURE 2. Economic Processes and the Generic Model of the Economy by Karl Polanyi (Halperin 1994)

Polanyi's concept of locational (ecological and technological) and appropriational (institutional) movements, which he described as "changes of place" vs. "changes of hands," are the two most important processes in the model above (Figure 2). This illustrates how movements of *pandan* are transformed to become an economic unit, or transferred from the forest to household dwellings, all in the context of weaving.

"Changes of place" or locational movements can mean (1) *transfers from one physical space to another*, which involve physical transfers of goods or of people from one place to another, or a physical transfer of productive resources such as tools; (2) *physical changes* in the material stuff of livelihood; or (3) *energy transfers*, such as the relocation of resources and storage facilities from one place to another or the relocation of a village vis-à-vis ecological zones.

On the other hand, "changes of hands" or appropriational movements may consist of: (1) *organizational changes* or (2) *transfers of rights*. These

involve changes in the principles allocating resources or goods like a shift from communal land tenure to private property. Appropriational movements imply changes in control over resources (for production) and over production (for distribution).

For clarity, further explanation of key terms used in the model is provided by Halperin (1994: 51-2):

Reciprocity, redistribution, market exchange, and householding are comprised of (1) movements not just of goods in the process of distribution, but the entire material-means provisioning process, from production to consumption; and (2) The character of the movements is determined by the structure(s) within which they occur.

Weaving as Women's Craft

To illustrate the model from the viewpoint of women (see Figure 3 on p. 74), *pandan*, the raw material used for hats is readily available in each household in Louisiana as all the families own a lot planted with *pandan* trees. Because smallholders grow *pandan* locally, women are usually the ones who harvest the *pandan* leaves and carry these to their respective houses. The entire weaving process does not require supervision, and anyone can engage in the craft as a household producer. However, it is mostly women, especially the married ones, who engage in weaving because they can do the work at home at their own pace without disrupting their other everyday activities like child care and domestic chores. In addition, they can still work in the fields at dawn or early morning. This accommodation probably explains why the women themselves do not value their weaving for it is done along with their everyday routine activities. Hence, weaving does not give them a sense of doing "serious work" as do other jobs such as farming that require them to focus for hours. Consequently, the women themselves perceive weaving to be merely secondary to male-dominated farming activities in terms of household income.

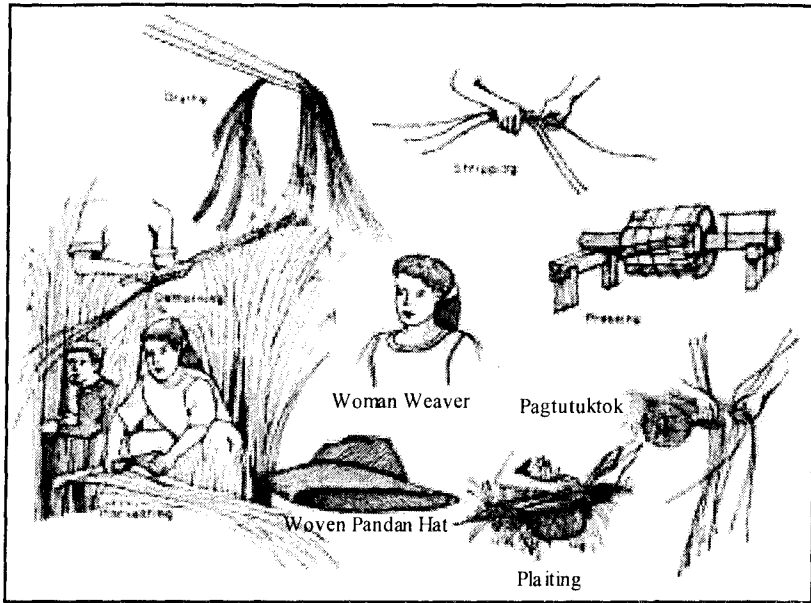


FIGURE 3. Operationalizing Polanyi's Economic Model in the Context of Weaving (Transforming *Pandan* leaves into *Pandan* hats)

Market Integration of Women Weavers as Traders

Marketing is usually seen as a system comprising several normally stable interrelated structures that, along with production, distribution, and consumption, strengthen economic processes (Mendoza 1991). In an area like Luisiana, women are prominent in craft production as exemplified by hat weaving. The commercialization of this craft has made possible the women's improvement of their income and the social position of their families.

The women study participants maintain that the trading of their craft provides them security with the income they earn, no matter how small this is. Even if their income's contribution to the household coffers is very small, still this provides the daily cash to purchase basic household necessities, including the school allowance of the children.

Yolanda narrates why she had to become a weaver:

Noong nawalan ng trabaho ang asawa ko, hirap na hirap ang buhay naming mag-anak... Iniisip ko paano na lang ang mga anak ko? Paano kami mabubuhay? Kaya kahit na maliit lang ang kita ng paglalala, pinasok ko, ika nga pinagtiyagaan ko na lang para may pantawid gutom kami. (When my husband became jobless, life became very hard for our family. I wondered how we will survive; how to raise my children. Although there is little money in weaving, I had to enter the trade in order to at least feed my family).

Similarly, Dorina affirms that her hat weaving contributes considerably to the household budget:

Di mo maaasahan ang kita sa kopra. Kasi pag mababa ang bilihan ng kopra, mababa din ang kita mo. Noong una, medyo maganda ang takbo ng buhay namin dahil nga mataas ang benta ng kopra. Pero sa ngayon pababa ng pababa ang bilihan, kaya wala kang magagawa kundi umisip ng paraan para may pagkakitaan ng konti. Kaya nga laking pasasalamat ko dito sa paglalala. Napakalaking tulong din ito sa amin. (We can no longer rely on our income from copra unlike in the past because its price keeps spiraling down. When copra was still priced higher, our life was a bit better. Now, I have to think of ways to earn money. This is why I am grateful for the income brought in by my weaving since it has been a great help to my family).

Early awareness of her family's economic difficulties led Glecy to become a weaver at an early age:

Parang tulong ng anak sa ina. Araw-araw nakikita ko ang nanay ko na naglalala. Yung bang pagmulat ko pa lang sa umaga at hanggang sa pagtulog ko sa gabi, nakikita ko pa rin si Inay na naglalala. Kaya naisip ko, kailangang tumulong din ako. Kaya nung elementary pa lang ako hanggang high school, katulong na ako ng nanay ko sa paglalala. Pakiramdam ko nga nakuha ko na ang galing ng nanay ko sa paglalala. Nakakataba ng puso ... (My weaving is actually an attempt to help my mother. When I was still young, I already observed my mother weaving from the moment I woke up to the moment I slept at night, so I thought of helping her. I was already weaving while in elementary and in high school to help my mother. I now feel that I have inherited my mother's talent.

Other people have observed that I have copied my mother's style in weaving. I feel very proud knowing this...)

Reciprocity and Redistribution

Luisiana women weavers/craft traders can be regarded as entrepreneurs engaged in commercial activities. A well-defined market exchange happens when weavers bring their hats to the local assemblers located in the *poblacion*. Generally, their involvement in the market is kept within the kinship ties to make them less vulnerable to market forces. For instance, transacting with local buyers like neighborhood *sari-sari* or variety stores or relatives is done by either the women weavers themselves or their young children, depending on who between them have the more urgent need.

The continuing market arrangement among women weavers is an important consideration in a peasant economy. It has become dependent on the traditional institutions of household and family. An example of this—when a weaver requests a friend or a neighbor to start weaving a hat by positioning *pandan* leaves—can be considered as a form of reciprocity. This activity known as *pagtututok* or *pagbubutas* is considered a specialized work requiring precision. Weavers claim that this is a special skill since not all of them can do this well. Those who are experts in this are thus quite popular among weavers. Payment of labor is not within the experience of the women weavers because labor is done collectively by the family without expecting payment in return. It is also a form of inter-household exchange of labor.

Movements of Pandan hats

As illustrated in Figure 4, there are agents who collect all the hats from other agents and distribute the hats to other provinces. These agents are also called *viajeros*.

Estella, a weaver elaborates on this informal arrangement:

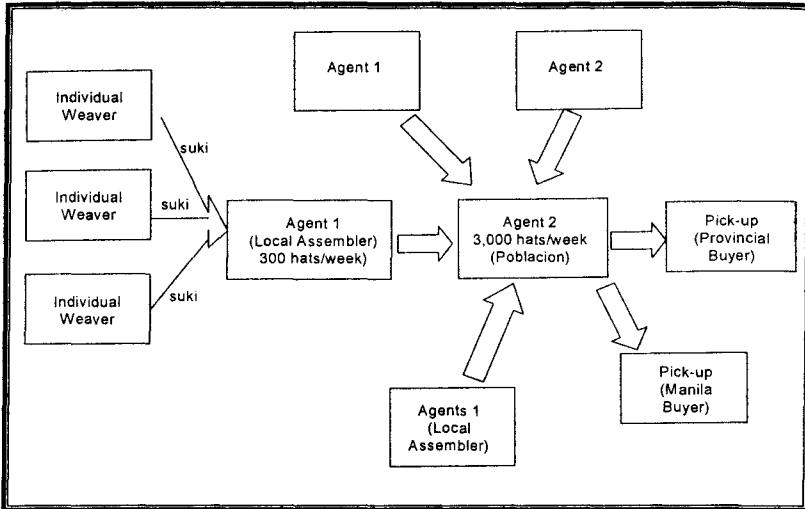


FIGURE 4. Economic Relations of Individual Weaver to Agents and to Traders

Suki-suki¹ kasi eh. Yung mga batang eskwela malimit dinadala nila sa akin yung paisa-isang sombrero, ginagawa nila para baon at ito ay iniipon ko. Meron dyan na sa akin din nila dinadala ang mga naiipong sombrero. At pag marami na akong naipon, mga 20 o higit pa, minsan nakaka-isandaan ako wala pang isang linggo, dinadala ko na rin ito kay Ida, siya ang suki ko. Dahil matagal-tagal na rin kaming magkaibigan nakakautang ako sa kanya o kaya nakakakuha ako ng advance payment. Kukunin ng mga viajero kay Ida ang mga sombrero. (We (weavers) have regular agents; in my case, my regular agent is Ida. I used to get the hats brought to me by school children in exchange for their food allowance in school. Sometimes, I do get from other weavers, and when I have enough—20 or sometimes even a hundred—I bring the hats to Ida. I can get credit or advance payment because she and I have been friends for a long time now. The viajeros will get the hats from Ida).

This arrangement, however, is not without problems. Ida, as agent, is faced with the possibility of non-payment by the viajeros from time to time. In such an eventuality, she has to wait for the next pick up by these

¹ A business relationship wherein concessions are given based on trust.

viajeros. In the meantime, she has to advance payments to her individual weavers or to her other agents who normally demand cash upon delivery of their products. She, however, cannot get a cash advance from her provincial or Manila buyers so oftentimes she is forced to use her personal money to meet her obligations to her weavers and traders.

Weaving as a Social and Community Undertaking

Aside from not being pressured to see a return on their investment since there is practically no money involved in their hat production, the women primarily regard their weaving as a means of social networking whereby they get the opportunity to be in touch with their relatives and friends on a regular basis. This way, they get to know about each other's lives.

In a related sense, weaving has become a form of both leisure and entertainment since stories—both happy and sad, important and trivial—get to be told and heard during weaving sessions. Such telling of stories is known in the community as *ustingan*. This narrative weaving of lives is then also a means by which the women can unwind from the daily grind of mundane life.

Mang Andres, an elder, explained why hat weaving is considered a “woman's domain” in the community. He said that when the men go to the Sierra Madre forest to gather wood and rattan, they would usually be away for a week at a time. In contrast, women just stayed home where it was relatively safe.

The social benefit derived from weaving often lets the women overlook the fact that there is gender stereotyping in the practice of weaving. Such gender stereotyping for the craft has been handed down from generation to generation through socialization. The important criteria used in defining the craft as fit for women are the degree of physical strength required and the relative delicateness of the work, which in turn generally underlie the gender division of labor. Ka Miring traced this gender division of labor to the fact that:

Noong panahong dako ang pandan ay nasa looban lang ng malalaking puno. Mamamandan ang aking ama bago umuwi at pagdating niya sa bahay nakagawian na naming mga kabataang babae na naglalala. Ang mga kabataang lalaki ay isinasama sa pagpapastol o paglalalawis. (In the past, pandan trees grew well under big trees in the forest. My father used to gather pandan after his day's work in the fields. We girls were made to weave those pandan leaves that were brought home while the boys were made to accompany the adult males to look after the carabaos/ cows or to harvest coconuts.)

The Luisianahin confidently assert that *pandan* will never disappear in the area because the plant is very much a part of their life; in fact, *kilala ang Luisiana dahil sa pandan* (Luisiana is famous for its *pandan*).

The social significance of *pandan* weaving (e.g., provides opportunity for community contact as well as for relaxation) is so well understood by the Luisianahin that they have even come up with a project designed to enhance the social value of this craft. Ate Ising talks about the "Bahay Purok" that was put up in each of the barangay. Each "Bahay Purok" is actually a gazebo meant to accommodate *purok* members during their community weaving. This community weaving in turn becomes the venue for planning and discussing community projects, special occasions such as fiestas, baptisms and weddings. It also provides an opportunity for women to talk about their everyday experiences as mothers, including their worries about their children's performance in school.

Other social activities associated with weaving are shown in Table 1 on p. 80.

Weaving as Work

It is a truism that many women's activities are often considered as non-work or at best, as negligible work because these are often counted as or interspersed with the women's household chores. Examples of such activities are raising chicken or pigs, growing vegetables, and cooking or processing food. The products of such activities may or may not be sold, but these can be produced on a small scale to still qualify as an economic enterprise.

TABLE 1. Weaving as a Social Function: Types of Social Activities Performed

	Type of Social Activity
A.	<p><i>Dayuhan</i> at the <i>Bahay Purok</i> (Community or <i>Barkadahan</i> Weaving)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ustingan</i> or telling stories • drinking <i>lambanog</i> (coconut vodka) • planning community projects and special occasions such as fiestas and baptisms • discussing important events such as wedding and deaths • talking of day-to-day concerns, such as children's assignments in schools • laughing together
B.	<p><i>Ilohan</i> (groups of two or three weavers pressing their respective <i>pandan</i> leaves)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ustingan</i> or telling stories • shared baby sitting (mothers often bring their children to take care of in cooperation with others while they take turns at the <i>ilohan</i>) • strengthening of kinship ties (Often weavers go to <i>ilohan</i> of relatives to get apprised of each other's lives) • talking of day-to-day concerns
C.	<p>Sharing of <i>pandan</i> leaves (<i>Pandan</i> owner with a kin or a community member)</p> <p>Owners of <i>pandan</i> leaves share their <i>pandan</i> with kin and other community members who run out of materials to weave without expecting anything in return but the strengthening of kinship and community units</p>

Weaving is also regarded by the women themselves as negligible work because it does not bring in as big an income as some other jobs. Aling Fely comments:

Kung may tatahiin akong rush, ititigil ko ang paglalalala. Kasi ang tahiin, malakas ang kita kaysa paglalalala. Sa akin nga, kung may ibang pagkakakitaan, ipapahinga ko ang paglalalala. (If I have a rush sewing job, I stop my weaving because I earn more from my sewing jobs than from my weaving hats. Actually, if I can find work that brings in more income, I will willingly stop my weaving.)

Aling Fely's attitude towards weaving as negligible work is also echoed by Aling Buena who again emphasizes the meager income but in addition, mentions the dimension of compatibility with domestic chores. She says:

Paglalala, konting kita pero regular. Nagagawa lahat ang gawaing bahay; naglalala na, nakakapagluto pa. (There is small income in weaving but at least it represents regular income. Moreover, this income allows one to perform all other household chores like cooking while weaving.)

There is indeed a bias against women not only in the way the concept of work has been developed and has been accepted, but also in the way the labor market operates. Those who seek work in the labor market strive to get the best price for their labor. This price is partly based on their skills and training (human capital) and partly on the amount of labor available for the job. In the Philippines, women generally enter the work force with better or more education than men. Unfortunately, their training tends to be largely oriented to feminine courses or career tracks that do not pay as much as the men's (Illo 1977). It also rarely serves them in securing a better wage in the rice sector. Wage differentials among workers in rice farms cannot be explained in terms of human capital differences.

Women's involvement in small-scale market production like weaving represents a significant contribution to household income, both indirectly in terms of their unpaid household labor and directly through the income they earn in market trading and petty commodity production.

The application of Polanyi's economic model, which centers on the locational and appropriational movements, at best provides a variation in empirical practices and locates women in a social structure where their nature of work may vary from culture to culture. This may be in the form of agricultural work, small-scale enterprise, household work, and wage labor. Unfortunately, the extent of their work is oftentimes underestimated (Beneria and Sen 1981). This is so since understanding the social value given to work, or to particular kinds of work, is linked with the notion of work that is paid.

The extent and range of economic activities of weaving households straddle both non-weaving and weaving production. The women are engaged in a broad range of activities including farming, sewing, and selling various food items. From the experiences of the women respondents, it is obvious that hat weaving is their regular occupation. Yet, they consider their hat weaving as merely a secondary economic activity, discounting the fact that all female household members are commonly engaged in weaving.

The entire *pandan* weaving activity traditionally provides a very important socio-cultural function for those involved, specifically to the *Luisianahin* women. Under this set up, the weavers, mostly older women and out of school children, are engaged in weaving which becomes a kind of social arrangement since several weavers gather around in the *Bahay Purok* or under the roof of one of the weavers to do their weaving. They usually weave in the afternoon when they all have finished their household chores. If not, they intersperse their weaving with their other household chores. Many believe that weaving is a socializing activity and at the same time a means by which they can have additional earnings, as can be gleaned in the following comments:

Ang paglalala ay trabaho, may kita na habang naglibang. Ang paglalala ay gawain din dahil ito ay gawaing bahay. (Weaving is work that allows one to earn while having fun as well. Weaving is also work since it is a part of housework.) —Aling Buena

Ang kaigihan ng lalabin ay pera agad. (One thing good with weaving is that you can have instant money.) —Aling Marilyn

Ang paglalala sa akin ay gawain dahil ito ay gawaing bahay, tulad din ng pagtuluto, sa bahay din ito ginagawa pero ito ay isang trabaho din dahil may kita na," may libangan pa. (For me weaving is a domestic activity just like cooking, however, this is also work because I earn while I amuse myself.) —Aling Eusebia

These comments show that, on one hand, weaving is seen as a domestic chore that is often described in economic analysis as largely unpaid family labor. On the other hand, weaving is also a form of leisure for

women since they derive both a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment in performing the work.

Clearly then, given the belief that weaving is a socializing activity (leisure/*libangan*) as well as a profitable one (livelihood) which contributes considerably to the household income, it should rightfully be regarded as gainful activity.

Weaving in Selected Households

Weaving is a major income-earning activity in Luisiana, as indicated in table 2 (see next page) summarizing data gathered from four households of varying circumstances.

The role of women in the abovementioned households is clearly very significant. In the first case discussed below, weaving is the primary source of income; in the second, it becomes an important factor in family survival in the context of the downward trend in copra prices.

Rosario's Household. Rosario and her family own the lot on which their house is built, the husband having inherited it from his forebears. The couple has two young daughter—ages 4 and 2. For their livelihood, the husband and wife depend not only on their agricultural produce and weaving products but also on the income from their passenger jeepney, which plies the Sta. Cruz–Luisiana route in Laguna.

At the time of the fieldwork, Rosario's weaving was the family's main source of income. Her earnings for the year 2000 accounted for 72 percent of the total household income. The rest represented her husband's earnings from the sale of vegetables (radish) raised in their own land, as well as the rent of their jeepney. Although her earnings from her hat weaving were clearly the household's main source of income, Rosario still asserted that her sale from hats was only supplementary to her husband's income (*pantulong lang sa asawa*); just so they have *gastusin sa araw-araw* (day-to-day budget). In fact, Rosario can be considered the household's major breadwinner considering that part of her weaving income went to the maintenance of their jeepney and that she also regularly helped in farming activities that earned them money.

TABLE 2. Economic Profile of Selected Weaving Households in Patahan, Luisiana

Household and Gainful Activities	Age	Civil Status	Land Tenure	HH size	HH Income (Jan-Dec 2000)	Income from hat weaving as % of HH
Rosario Weaving Jeepney Farming (vegetable)	36	M	Owner	4	16,000 12,000 3,600 1,000	72.29
Dorina Weaving, Farming Wage labor Labor (copra)	50	M	Owner	6	36,700 13,000 20,000 1,700 2,000	35.42
Yolanda Weaving, Carpentry	43	M	Owner	7	56,000 16,000 40,000	28.57
Isabelita Weaving, Farming, Copra Wage labor Citrus Banana	57	M	Owner	11	55,000 12,000 2,000 2,000 32,500 6,500	21.82
Arsing Weaving	75	W	Owner	1	10,000	100

Dorina's Household. Aling Dorina and her husband have four children, all grown up. Their eldest already finished his civil engineering course. They own their home lot. Aling Dorina's husband's regular work is farming; specifically, planting coconut trees and cash crops like vegetables in their small piece of land. She explained that for the last three years, the price of coconut did not provide them enough, forcing her husband to work as a wage laborer in a coconut farm owned by another person, getting PhP150 per day.

When the price of coconut dropped very low, Dorina's income from weaving was used to sustain the daily needs of the household. She saw to

it, however, that part of her earnings were earmarked for purchasing *pandan* leaves from an agent to supplement her raw materials for weaving. The price of 100 *pandan* leaves was PhP50.00

When her children were still young, they helped earn their tuition fees by assisting her in weaving hats. During the interview, Dorina realized that her household income amounted only to PhP36,700 so she wondered: "*Paano ko napapa-aral ang aking mga anak sa kinikita naming dagdag pa ang araw-araw na gastusin?*" (How have I been able to send my children to school as well as take care of (my family's) everyday needs with just our income?). Her earnings from weaving represented 35 percent of the total household income for the year 2000

Some Concluding Observations

This paper shows that contemporary issues, specifically on rural upland economy and women, could best be understood by a re-reading of economic anthropology as reflected in Polanyi's economic model. In this study, the emphasis was on the complementarity of weaving and trading as subsystems despite their differing goals by examining a seldom considered aspect of economics: cultural meanings.

The Luisianahin weavers, in particular, have demonstrated an economic arrangement embedded in social relations that do not necessarily bear economic gains. Unfortunately, Polanyi's model failed to elaborate on the dominant actors in this particular set-up—the women, in this case. Nevertheless, this study amply demonstrates that weaving is a women-dominated activity whereby the women intimately interact with their particular environment and, at the same time, link themselves to the market. As weavers, the women indeed manifest economic motives but their context in pursuing such economic interests is embedded in their social and cultural environment. Thus, weaving becomes not just a purely economic activity but a socio-cultural one as well. This arrangement has strengthened ties among community members.

The cultural economic analysis in feminist research is a particularly powerful framework for establishing not only the valuation of

time and labor, but also enhancing production relations entrenched in a weaving culture as illustrated by the experiences of the Luisianahin women. They have direct access and control of the raw materials fundamental to their livelihood.

The household is a site where all the members: husband, wife, and children form the production unit. As the separate profiles of Luisianahin weavers illustrate, the weaving households not only aspire to maintain and improve their family's subsistence but also work to strengthen kinship and community ties.

Hat weaving, which is the women's main source of income, provides a steady cash source the whole year round even if the price of the hat products is steadily low. This is not the case in farming, which is traditionally regarded as men's domain since farm commodities like vegetables or coconuts are subject to price fluctuations in the market. In the case of Luisiana, the price of a woman-woven *pandan* hat, which has long been pegged at P4.00 to P5.00 per piece, is a direct equivalent of the price of their labor in conventional economics. One weaver can finish 40-50 hats per week, which means that from weaving, each woman is assured an income of P160.00/per week. This is quite low, causing the women to enter other kinds of work and get involved in other farming activities. Interestingly, however, they always returned to weaving at the end of the day. This implies that weaving is not regarded by women solely for its economic contribution to the household but embraced for its cultural and social values as well.

Hat weaving in particular is part of a historical continuum that is valued in Luisiana. Social hierarchies that place people along different levels in society are not applicable in this upland Luisiana community. Community members are not stratified by income and personal possession. They maintain that there are no "poor," "rich," "inferior" or "superior" families in the community; instead they are "all weavers" and hence they cannot be socially differentiated from the rest of the community.

As pointed out earlier, women's skills in weaving and trading were developed as a result of their integration in a market economy. This fact

however does not stop them from continuing to observe the custom of a *suki* relationship and of redistributing their raw materials on the basis of *pakikisama* to preserve their harmonious relationship with the other market actors. In this regard, Luisiana hat weaving supports and even elaborates on the discussion of culture and the new anthropology, which surfaced the women's roles in the development discourse.

As this paper shows, Polanyi's model of economic processes as a tool of analysis does make sense with the continuing pervasiveness of small, home-based economic activities in the Philippine rural uplands. Nonetheless, it proposes the incorporation of gender and environment into the model as important variables in the evaluation of cultural economy.

Using the model to trace the movement of *pandan* as a forest crop gathered by women, brought home for transformation into usable forms such as hats through weaving, which are then sold in an informal market, one can see the illustration of a process that can be much more deeply understood if considered from the vantage point of culture.

Polanyi's model of economic processes, however, starkly manifested the traditional disregard for women's economic activities by non-representation of such activities. Not surprisingly, women's work and economic contributions were invisible or absent in the scheme of economic processes like production, distribution, and consumption.

Much has been said over the past ten years about the position of women in society, especially in rural upland communities where women's work is considered merely secondary and therefore less valued than that performed by men. This has resulted in the serious marginalization of women, creating unequal access to resources, with the women obviously the disadvantaged group. As farmers are usually males and weavers are females, their respective links to the market are thus already differentiated by their traditional notions of what is an economic activity and what is not.

The economic activities—production, distribution and even consumption—in this set up have often been ignored by the state's national ac-

counting system, making women's work and economic contribution indeed "invisible." The women weavers of Luisiana amply demonstrate this invisibility. Even though weaving is an economic and productive activity, it is still considered as simply a part of the women's housework. Under the capitalist mode of production, only marketable goods and services are attributed value so understandably, housework is marginalized and considered valueless. Hence, the misconception that these women do not work or what they do at home is non-work despite the fact that they get paid regularly for some of these activities, particularly weaving.

The concept of the system of redistribution in the cultural economy framework takes gender relations as a primary economic process and thus offers a means of integrating the analysis of power and ideology with patterns of production, consumption, and distribution. It also permits an analysis of the links between the different levels of social life (household, lineage, region, state) in a way that can demonstrate those linkages, which are themselves gendered. The underlying premise of the notion of a system of redistribution is that it is the mechanism of redistribution in a society—rather than merely processes of production and reproduction—that is crucial to understanding the relationship between households and larger scale economic and social processes and institutions. Another assumption is that social identities are integral to the system of redistribution and that they structure the nature and direction of resource flows within the household and beyond.

The concepts of "locational" and "appropriational" movements have been used to explain the whole processes of hat weaving. The activities of women in the field in the process of transformation of *pandan* into hats are interspersed with household work. As a consequence, weaving is seen not basically as a woman's craft but mainly just as a part of the women's domestic activities. Corollary to this, although the women earn from this craft (as well as derived social pleasure from it), they themselves still do not consider such an activity as "proper or formal work."

The movement of the raw materials from the farm is not only in terms of its physical movement but also in terms of their transformation to another product that can be valued. Other factors associated with the

entire system, such as the labor invested in the performance of the task, is not valued in terms of wages. This absence of wage rate for a home based but gainful activity obviously obscures the economics of weaving and other related home-based activities.

Women straddle the economic processes of production, distribution and consumption and the environment where they extract and transform resources to maintain and continue their livelihood. In this scheme, it is the women weavers and traders who are at the center of all activities in the maintenance and sustainability of resource generation/extraction; thus they are the major actors in the promotion of an economy that integrates the social and cultural dimensions into the economic analysis. The lived realities of the women weavers demonstrate the circularity and span of women's roles, clearly emphasizing women's location in rural upland economies.

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