

A Gender Perspective on Neoliberal Globalization: 'Global Women' in the Shadow of Military-Industrial Systems*

Jules Falquet¹

Summary :

This article examines neoliberal globalization, especially labour market transformations, from a strong gender perspective —a perspective that means both a dialectic study of women and men's occupations, and developing an intersectional approach which weaves together sex, race and class relations. Firstly, the article presents the now classical analysis of global women (nannies, maids and sex workers) in the neoliberal world, suggesting that the growing numbers of global women, who are mainly migrant and unprivileged women of the world, can be characterized as "service women". Secondly, it studies the parallel growth of what I call "armed men", as a complementary trend of the labour market for men. The article suggests that men in arms are both creating and depending on service women, individually and collectively, as part of the military-industrial complex —and that this should be studied more thoroughly. Finally, I suggest that service women and armed men should be studied together, dialectically and historically, and constitute a new paradigm to study the transformation of the labour market caused by neoliberal globalization.

Too many analyses of globalization are flawed by a deeply androcentric bias; that is, they are centred around male human beings, their areas of interest, and the relationships they establish amongst themselves (Mathieu, 1991). Fortunately, since the 90's, diverse works of feminist literature emerging from sociology, sociology of labour, political science, and economics, often with close ties to social movements, have offered alternative perspectives. I will present some of these analyses² here, focusing on the question of transformations in economic activities.

At first, some scholars tried to correct the androcentric bias by 'adding women' to their analyses, mainly by highlighting the neoliberal trend to draw women into the labour market. Presenting these important works, we will examine the deep ambivalence neoliberalism holds for women by drawing attention to the type of activities globalization reserves for most non-privileged women in the world – that is, mainly 'service' sector activities. Then, because a true gender perspective means thinking together and dialectically the two terms of the structural social relations of sex³, I will next present analyses which

* Originally published as "Ce que le genre fait à l'analyse de la mondialisation néolibérale", *Regards croisés sur l'économie*, "Peut-on faire l'économie du genre?", 2014, n°15, pp 341-355.

1 Lecturer in Sociology at University of Paris Diderot, CEDREF-LCSP.

2 For reasons of length and coherence, this article will focus on analyses produced in OECD countries, specifically France.

3 In English, *social relations* can be used to translate two French concepts: *rapports sociaux* and *relations sociales*. "Structural social relation" is used here to translate "rapports sociaux"; that is, a structural social relation which organizes the whole social system and *creates* two sexes as two opposed social groups or classes

might seem somewhat disconnected, but are on the contrary key to understanding globalization: those looking at war, militarism, and different incarnations of 'armed men'.

The New 'Global Women' are 'Serving Women'

Since the end of the 80s, feminist theorists have deepened their critique of the arbitrary separation between so-called 'productive' and 'reproductive' activities, seriously challenging the discipline of economics and the 'master narrative' dominating the history of capitalism. Maria Mies suggested a rethinking of the impact of patriarchal social relations on accumulation on a world scale (1986). Marilyn Waring, for her part, challenged the very logics of international accounting and the way GDP and growth are measured (1988). In 1991, Saskia Sassen was one of the first to analyse the new phenomenon of 'globalization'; studying Global Cities, where (heterosexual) couples engaged full-time in the new globalized activities, such as high finance - and therefore couples 'without a (female) spouse' - structurally need to 'externalize' numerous 'reproductive' tasks, therefore relying on cheap labour; mainly of women, and often migrant.

Neoliberal Globalization: Deleterious Impact on Women?

At the end of the 90s, numerous studies looking at the impact of structural adjustment programmes showed that the economic crisis, rise of unemployment, and worsening of inequalities particularly affected and impoverished women, both absolutely and in relation to men (among the first in French⁴ were Hirata and Le Doaré, 1998; Wichterich, 1999; ATTAC, 2002; and Bisilliat, 2003). After showing how the Welfare State partially liberated women from "private patriarchy" (only to make them dependent on a "public patriarchy", admittedly), Silvia Walby (1990) pointed out that structural adjustment led to a re-familialization of many tasks and placed women in a position of dependency in a new "private patriarchy"; straightforwardly using them as shock absorbers of the crisis (1997).

From a similar perspective, Eleonore Kofmann and others (2001) brought to light how the transformation of social policies in Europe was accompanied by more or less official policies to import a feminine labour force from the global South to take on tasks abandoned by the State — the gross majority of local men still obstinately refusing to do these tasks and many local women can no longer managing to 'reconcile' them with the rest of their activities (the Lisbon Agreement (2000) requiring at the time that at least 60% of OECD women enter the labour market).

Is Neoliberal Capitalism Good for Women?

One finding emerges from all research: in both South and North, globalization has drawn many women into the labour market (Hirata & Le Doaré, 1998) – often through the destruction of their previous modes of existence. Some applaud this trend, believing that

defined by their position in the sexual division of labour: the sex class of women and the sex class of men (as opposed to "relations sociales", which refers to daily, micro-social relations (interactions) between individual women and men).

4 The original text was written for a French review.

access to paid work has increased the economic autonomy of women, which is key to greater equality between women and men. Nancy Fraser (2013) recently suggested that there could be a certain convergence of interests between part of the feminist project (autonomy for women through entering the paid labour force) and capitalism: either because the market's need for labour actually makes it blind to gender prejudice, or because it preferentially recruits women simply because their labour is cheaper.

Yet the incorporation of women into the labour market is far from turning out to be always positive. In fact, the systematic dismantlement of labour regulations has particularly affected women; especially because the majority of women were already concentrated in undervalued and poorly protected sectors. Neoliberal reforms have pushed them into even greater precarity and flexibility (Talahite, 2010). Furthermore, the new labour modalities demand 'typical feminine qualities' (acceptance of both part-time jobs and infinitely extendable hours, versatility and 'total' commitment (notably emotional) to the job), which shape new, normalized and generalized forms of subservience. Globally, only a fraction of women attain 'good' jobs approaching masculine standards and there is a growing dualization of women's employment (Sassen, 2010; Kergoat, 2012).

This is why a gender-based analysis cannot proceed without a simultaneous analysis in terms of class and 'race'⁵, as the Black feminists of the Combahee River Collective were the first to point out in 1979. I have tried to show in other works (Falquet, 2014), using the concept of "communicating vessels", that benefits 'for women' are of no interest if they involve setbacks for proletarians and racialized people (half of them being women). This nevertheless seems to be the OECD's strategy: legitimizing globalization as a way of improving equality between women and men.

'New' Jobs for Women and Migration

At the turn of the new millenium, Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russel Hochschild revealed three figures of the new 'global woman': nanny, maid and sex worker (2003). While in the past migrants from the countryside already filled these roles, today many are international, often 'post-colonial', migrants (Moujoud and Falquet, 2010). Nannies and maids, as well as home-care aids for the sick and elderly (the latter becoming every day more numerous and less looked after by public structures), are now essential in what has emerged as a significant process of internationalization of social reproduction. In the face of what some have dubbed a "crisis of care", a broad area of research developed around the idea that 'we are all vulnerable' (Tronto, 2009 [1993]), proposing as a new social utopia that caregiving activities be accorded more social and economic value.

However, the work of Nakano Glenn (2009 [1992]), exposing how certain social sectors in the United States have historically been forced to dispense care (enslaved people in general, women in general, enslaved women especially, and, later, racialized and migrant women), offers a strong parallel to the pressures now developing to force certain social groups to take care of others, at the lowest possible cost. Among these pressures and

⁵ 'Race' as I use it here is a social phenomenon created by structural social relations of 'race', organized especially around nationality, religion, skin colour, and immigration status.

constraints, the most striking are the extremely restrictive legislative reforms in the areas of labour on one side, and migration on the other side. For most non-privileged women, migration and 'career' options are limited to rapidly following-joining-finding a husband in the destination region; enrolling in an official 'service' labour import programme; or entering 'sex work' to deal with the exorbitant costs of illegalized migration. I have suggested conceptualizing this horizon as the "hetero-circulation of women" (Falquet, 2012), extending Paola Tabet's (2004) concept of the "continuum of the economico-sexual exchange" which — revealing the continuum existing between the activities of spouses and sex-workers — helps (re-)establish the link between 'noble' caregiving activities and 'nefarious' sex-work activities. This, because nowadays most studies of these activities tend to be completely disconnected, although it is (in part) the same women who do both by turns (Moujoud, 2008). In order to re-connect these areas of analyses, I proposed grouping these women together in the category of 'serving women'. I then showed how the increase of 'serving women' goes hand-in-hand with the multiplication of 'armed men'⁶, and suggested that this dialectic development constitutes one of the paradigms of neoliberal globalization (Falquet, 2006).

'Armed Men', War and Neoliberal Growth

Let's now turn to these 'armed men' - soldiers, mercenaries, guerrillas or terrorists, police, members of gangs or criminal organizations, prison guards and security, among others - acting in the public, semi-public, private or illegal sectors.

Generalized State of War and Surveillance

As in the era of the first globalization, leading up to the first world war (so lucidly analysed by Rosa Luxemburg in 1915), we are currently witnessing a ferocious and militarized competition over the allocation of resources, markets, and control of productive forces. Starting on 11 September 2001, the new general framework for this competition became the 'war on terrorism', led by the main neoliberal powers against various countries of the global South. Broadly characterized, it is carried out as open warfare in various Middle Eastern countries; as military humanitarian interventions in the African continent (Federici, 2001) and elsewhere; as a war against 'illegal' migration in the OECD countries; and as the 'war on drugs' in Latin America and the Caribbean. Everywhere, security discourses and practices are expanding along with a generalized surveillance of the population; as recent revelations about the National Security Agency (NSA) showed.

We are currently witnessing the growth of a control society, of militarization and generalized warfare; analysing this phenomenon from a gender perspective is especially revealing. 'Women's rights' are increasingly often invoked to justify political or even military interventions (Delphy, 2002; Eisenstein, 2010). But in reality, in almost all cases, these interventions cause considerable violence against women: sexual violence; forced exodus (often following mass sexual violence); and a more general destruction of the economic and social system, drastically impoverishing women. At the same time, they allow some men to

⁶ Obviously some women act as 'armed men', just as some men are to be found among 'serving women' (due to interlocking structural power relations).

accumulate wealth through pillage and various kinds of trafficking, thus consolidating a new politico-military power. The strengthening of the prison-industrial complex, which employs and imprisons millions of people (Davis, 2014), and of internment camps to control migration, is another important area worth examining.

Military-Industrial Complexes and Militarization, Central to the Neoliberal Economy

As early as the 80s, two lines of feminist analysis of global militarism emerged. Examining the militarization of societies, Cynthia Enloe (1989, 2000) drew attention to the links between the establishment of US military bases and the development of prostitution and then sexual tourism in Asia. This helps to recover an historical perspective on the growth of 'sex work', too quickly presented by some as a simple, 'natural' and highly paid alternative for poor women. Many States of the global South, encouraged to develop tourism and heavily reliant on remittances from migrants, are advised to close their eyes and even profit from such activities by taxing them. Enloe also highlights the economic importance of cultural industries which legitimize colonialist militarization; Hollywood super-productions like the recent *Avatar* being a good example.

Adopting the US concept of a military-industrial complex, the French sociologist Andrée Michel (2013 [1985]) proposed a global economic and political analysis. First she showed that the organization of work in the arms industry strengthened the taylorization of labour and exacerbated its sexual (as well as 'racial' and social) division: while young proletarian women from the South get precarious assembly-line factory jobs, particularly in electronics; middle class men hold stable and well-paid engineering jobs or work as software developers in Silicon Valley. Second, a considerable portion of public funding for research is directed to military-industrial systems, to the detriment of other sectors such as health and education. More generally, public contracts (which provide vital support to the military industry) and salaries for soldiers and police mean millions less for public services and the Welfare State, with the consequences outlined above.

Michel also highlighted the extent to which the five permanent members of the UN Security Council profit from selling weapons, while the purchase of these same weapons has entrenched the debt of many countries of the South. Notably, Greece's current debt is largely a result of its arms race with Turkey. This system contributes to the rise of all kinds of would-be dictators propagating nationalist or ethnicist militaristic rhetoric, of which women are often the first to pay the price. Finally, military-industrial systems build legitimacy through increased control of media and new information and communication technologies. This point demands a thorough economic and political investigation: what of, for example, the extremely concentrated ownership of the media in France, home to one of the most powerful military-industrial systems in the world; Google's recent investments in military high-tech industries; or Amazon's in drones?

The Strengthening and Evolution of Non-State and Illegal Armed Groups

Finally, a gendered analysis of the new actors produced by this neoliberal militarization and their economic and political impact remains for the most part a work to be accomplished.

First, we need to study the legal companies of all sizes that have mushroomed in the mercenary and security sectors to support or protect regular armies and their civil sub-contractors in countries openly at war as well as economic actors in countries officially at peace. This inquiry should include a more thorough examination of the trend towards increasing vertical integration in this sector; some of them engaging in activities extending from mining exploitation to arms sales and militias (Deneault et al, 2008). The best known example is Blackwater; renamed Academi after its scandals in Iraq, it owns its own military bases and a flotilla of twenty planes.

Illegal groups involved in the underground economy also seem to have greatly increased in strength. The Mexican case is revealing: the modest drug cartels of the 80s have become un-avoidable military, economic and political actors whose activities extend to Central America and West Africa. Mexico also illustrates the shift of these drug cartels (merchants selling a product) towards more classic mafia activities such as the sale of 'protection' (of people, goods, and land) (Devineau, 2013). Simultaneously, some have diversified into trafficking arms and people, smuggling migrants, and exploiting prostitution. These actors are increasingly heavily involved in local, national and international economies. It would be extremely important to analyse, in the context of the growth of 'money laundering' activities, the economic impact of their import-export of capital and investments; productive, luxury and ... military. In fact, to elude authorities they buy state-of-the-art weapons as well as sophisticated and costly means of communication and transportation (planes, submarines and communication systems). They thus constitute a sizeable market for military-industrial systems; another part of whose production is directed towards military 'aid' imposed by various governments of the North on the Southern countries they push into the war on drugs.

*

As we have seen, numerous works written from a gender perspective, and especially from a perspective of interlocking structural social relations, allow a more complete understanding of globalization. They insistently question the dominant economy and its arbitrary, ideological separation between so-called productive and reproductive labour. They point out that one of the central dynamics of neoliberal globalization is the reorganization of both social reproduction and military-industrial systems. Taking a long view of history, one might conclude that we are currently undergoing a new phase of primitive accumulation (Federici, 2014 [2004]), due to the simultaneous tightening of the structural social relations of sex, 'race' and class.

Revised by the author and translated from French by Mary Foster

Bibliography

- Attac (2003), *Quand les femmes se heurtent à la mondialisation*, Mille et une nuits, Paris.
- Bisilliat J. (ed.) (2003), *Regards de femmes sur la globalisation. Approches critiques*, Karthala, Paris.
- Combahee River Collective (1979), "Black Feminist Statement", in: Eisenstein, Z. (Ed.), *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press.
- Davis A. (2014), *La prison est-elle obsolète?*, Le Diable Vauvert, Paris.
- Delphy C. (2002), "Une guerre pour les femmes afghanes ?", *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, Vol. 21, n°1.
- Deneault A., Abadie D., Sacher W. (2008), *Noir Canada. Pillage, corruption et criminalité en Afrique*, Ecosociété, Montréal.
- Devineau J., Vasquez, P., Bataillon G. (2013), *Rapport final du projet Vivemex : Gestion politique des violences au Venezuela et au Mexique*, Report for the Conseil Supérieur de la Formation et de la Recherche stratégique 12 November 2013.
- Eisenstein Z. (2010), "W pour Women? Réflexions sur le féminisme et 'la guerre de/contre la terreur'", in: Falquet and al., *Le sexe de la mondialisation. Genre, classe, race et nouvelle division du travail*, pp 185-198, Les Presses de Sciences Po, Paris.
- Ehrenreich B., Hochschild A. (Eds.) (2003), *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, New York, Metropolitan Books.
- Enloe C. (1989), *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Sense of International Politics*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Enloe C. (2000) *Maneuvers: the International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*, University of California Press, Berkeley and London.
- Falquet J., Hirata H., Kergoat D., Labari B., Lefeuvre N., Sow F. (coords.) (2010), *Le sexe de la mondialisation. Genre, classe, race et nouvelle division du travail*, Les Presses de Sciences Po, Paris.
- Falquet J. (2014), "Le capitalisme néolibéral, allié des femmes? Perspectives féministes matérialistes et imbricationnistes", in Verschuur C., Guétat H. et Guérin I. (coords.), *Sous le développement, le genre/ Under Development, Gender* (published in French and English), IRD, Paris, Palgrave, London.
- Falquet J. (2012), "Lesbiennes migrantes, entre hétéro-circulation et recompositions néolibérales du nationalisme", in: Cossée C. and al. *Le genre au cœur des migrations*, Editions Petra, Paris.
- Falquet J. (2008), *De gré ou de force. Les femmes dans la mondialisation*, La Dispute, Paris.
- Falquet J. (2006), "Hommes en armes et femmes "de service" : tendances néolibérales dans l'évolution de la division sexuelle et internationale du travail", *Cahiers du Genre*, Travail et mondialisation. Confrontations Nord/Sud, n° 40, pp. 15-38.
- Federici S. (2001), "War, globalization and reproduction", in: Bennholdt-Thomsen V., Faraclas N. and von Werlhof C. (eds). *There is an Alternative: Subsistence and Worldwide Resistance to Corporate Globalization*, Spinifex Press, Victoria.
- Federici S. (2004), *Caliban and the Witch. Women, The Body And Primitive Accumulation*, AK Press, Oakland CA.
- Nakano Glenn E. (2009 [1992]), "De la servitude au travail de service : les continuités historiques de la division raciale du travail reproductif payé", in: Dorlin E. (ed.), *Sexe, race, classe. Pour une épistémologie de la domination*, PUF, Paris.

- Hirata H., Le Doare H. (Coord.) (1998), *Les Cahiers du GEDISST*, n°21. Les paradoxes de la mondialisation, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- Kergoat D. (2012), *Se battre, disent-elles...*, La Dispute, Paris.
- Kofman E., Phizucklea A., Raghuran P., Sales R. (2001), *Gender and International Migration in Europe: Employment, Welfare and Politics*, Routledge, London.
- Luxemburg R. (1915), *The Crisis in the German Social-Democracy (the "Junius" pamphlet)*.
- Mathieu N. C. (1991), *L'anatomie politique. Catégorisations et idéologies du sexe*, Côté-femmes, Paris.
- Michel A. (2013 [1985]), *Féminisme et antimilitarisme*, iXe, Paris.
- Mies M. (1986), *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, Zed Books, London.
- Moujoud N. (2008), "Effets de la migration sur les femmes et les rapports sociaux de sexe: au-delà des visions binaires", in Falquet J. et Al., *Cahiers du CEDREF*, "Femmes, genre, migrations et mondialisation : un état des problématiques", Université Denis Diderot, Paris, p 57-80.
- Moujoud N., Falquet J. (2010), "Cent ans de sollicitude en France. Domesticité, reproduction sociale, migration et histoire coloniale", *Agone*, n°43, "Comment le genre trouble la classe", pp. 169-195.
- Sassen S. (1991), *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.
- Sassen S. (2010), "Mondialisation et géographie globale du travail", in Falquet and al., *Le sexe de la mondialisation. Genre, classe, race et nouvelle division du travail*, pp 27-41, Les Presses de Sciences Po, Paris.
- Tabet P. (2004), *La grande arnaque. Sexualité des femmes et échange économique-sexuel*, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- Talahite F. (2010), "Genre, marché du travail et mondialisation", pp 43-56, in Falquet and al., *Le sexe de la mondialisation. Genre, classe, race et nouvelle division du travail*, pp 27-41, Les Presses de Sciences Po, Paris.
- Tronto J. (2009 [1993]), *Un monde vulnérable. Pour une politique du care*, La Découverte, Paris.
- Walby S. (1990), *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Blackwell, Oxford, Cambridge.
- Walby S. (1997), *Gender Transformations*, Routledge, London.
- Wichterich C. (1999), *La femme mondialisée*, Solin, Actes Sud, Paris.