



Informationsbrief

Weltwirtschaft & Entwicklung

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Ten years after the World Conference on Women in Beijing, this second Special Issue "Femme Globale" updates further central themes in the international feminist debate. It is introduced by Ewa Charkiewicz, who critically questions the common global feminist canon. Mirjam van Reisen and Maxi Ussar review the recent poverty eradication strategies and ask what significance they give to gender justice. Taking the example of Pakistan, Marion R. Mueller looks at the challenges of Islamic fundamentalism for feminist movements. Ingrid Spiller asks what specific women's interests are crucial in the discussion on public goods. The difficult balancing act between autonomy and new forms of dependence in using new reproductive technologies are examined by Andreas Poltermann. Finally Heike Jensen takes the preparatory process for the second part of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to be held in Tunis in November to shed light on women's opportunities in the information society.

Interrogating Global Feminist Canon:

The Case for a New Feminist Social Critique

Feminism as social critique and social movement espoused political and personal freedom and economic justice, linked subjugation of women to the organisation of institutions such as the family, the market or the state, and argued for transformation of power gender relations. In the last decade or so a global feminist canon of gender mainstreaming emerged, which located feminist debates within the state and market reorganised in a neoliberal form. Women were gaining political visibility and entered labour markets, while income differentiation among women and number of women losing livelihoods and living in poverty have increased. In the same period feminism as social movement and social critique has been marginalized.

What has changed?

To make my case I would like to compare the changes that have taken place in the feminist discourses from early 1990s to early 2000s. In the Women's Action Agenda for a Healthy Planet prepared in the wake of the Earth Summit in Rio feminists and women activists have critiqued social injustice, dirty production, corporate interests, and military controls. Today the UN centred global feminist environmental discourse is about woman and climate change, women and transportation. Similar changes have taken place in the discourse on poverty. In the late 1980s early 1990s the feminists addressed poverty as the systemic problem. An example

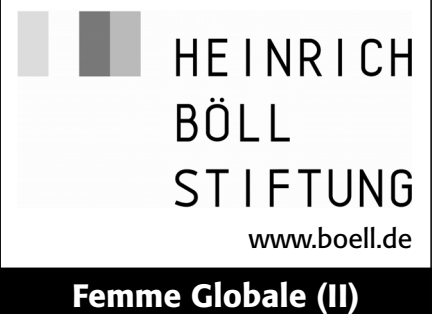
is the collaborative report on systemic crises and alternative visions (DAWN: Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, 1987), which addressed the subordination of women, loss of water, land, and livelihoods as the interlocked effects of crises related to forms of capital accumulation. In the 1970s and 1980s, the World Bank, too, talked on poverty in a different manner: as the question of basic needs. Today global feminist and World Bank conversations on poverty are contained within the framework of MDGs. The talk on MDGS is neither about social justice nor about removing the causes of poverty. It attempts, so far without any tangible results, to ameliorate the symptoms of poverty, such as the declining access of girls to education. It seems at stake is to engage NGOs in never-ending conversations about poverty which allow to pretend the problems are addressed.

Mainstreaming into what?

A new development in the early 1990s was to open access for social movement organizations to the UN and the World Bank. The terms of participation in the UN formatted women's NGO as a major interest group competing for attention and resources with other stakeholders. As the shifts in the UN discourse show the opening of access did not go hand in hand with political influence. Policy frameworks were not for negotiation. The role of NGOs was limited to damage control or adding women to formulations in official docu-

ments. Providing voice without influence locked feminists and other activists in an agonizing position. In the same period social movements have been transformed into NGOs which gave them a corporate organisational form (board, directors and staff). To ensure their organizational survival NGOs turned into service providers or interest groups, which helped to privatise to the NGOs the social responsibility of the state.

Feminists who moved to governments and intergovernmental organisations attempted to transform institutions by developing a language that the system could understand. The approach was successfully framed as gender mainstreaming. The frame promised the integration of women into overall prosperity. The gender mainstreaming toolkit combined normative and calculative approaches, gave priority to visibility, individual rights and empowerment, numerical quotas, monetary calculations. Rights based arguments for the integration of women supported cost-benefit calculations to demonstrate the efficiencies to be gained by the integration of women with the state and market. This business case for gender equity was highly valorized by donors and global governance networks. The mobilization of donor funding created a gender mainstreaming expertise and a market for courses, textbooks, toolkits, workshops, which normalized gender mainstreaming and women's rights' as the feminist global canon.



The deployment of gender mainstreaming tools, such as triple gender roles framework, human development gender indices, the gender and empowerment framework, the rapid gender analysis neatly calculated inequalities in the language that for instance the World Bank could understand. While it is important, that such reform strategies are pursued, the analysis of the systemic problems was left behind.

Calculative, numerical tools of gender mainstreaming inadvertently contribute to depoliticize global feminism. Notwithstanding the strategic importance of human rights, it has to be recognized that human rights discourse is normative and provides a static picture of social problems. It shows how women are excluded and gives visibility to violations of rights. The global system of production and consumption depends on unequal integration of women, as cheap workers, consumers, providers or unpaid caring services. By the late 20th century all human and non human life has been included in this system. Without power analysis the systemic problems and the terms of integration of women are invisible and feminism loses its transformative potential.

The good and detrimental effects of women's rights, gender mainstreaming and NGO'isation are crocheted with each other. The discussion of systemic problems is disruptive, and everybody avoids it for their own reason. UN NGOs are caught between two agonizing trends: to resist and to conform. When policy tools are discussed without interrogating the causes of problems, this allows for smooth maintenance of multi-stakeholder dialogues as a political technology for the permanent integration of critiques with powers they oppose, and for systemic reproduction.

Feminist politics and the neoliberal reorganisation of power

The allure of the gender mainstreaming strategy rests on the assumption that it will change global governance from within. Mainstreaming assumes that the problem is the exclusion of women from the overall prosperity and from the enjoyment of rights. The growth in prosperity for all is one of the founding neoliberal myths. The feasibility of prosperity for all, the social costs and ecological limits of prosperity are not problematized. The focus is on the exclusion of women and hence political energy is invested in integrating women. This disallows to see the terms of integration of women with the state and market as part of the problem.

Since the 1970s a new set of arguments about governing state, markets, and populations emerged, which put the market and the economic man as the superior model for the reorganisation of state, society and human subjects. In the 2000 DAWN report these processes were framed as the marketization of governance. As French political philosopher, Michel Foucault argued, neoliberal economists reconstructed the concept of the market with the intrinsic attributes such as efficiency, optimal allocation of resources, self-organisation, and freedom. The implementation of this model of the market required the market to function as a permanent economic tribunal. Women and men strive to adjust to become empowered, entrepreneurial, fit for intensified work, responsible for investing in themselves, their health and education as a form of human capital. The strategic question to

ask is to what extent the gender mainstreaming project is optimising women to produce this kind of society.

An example of the problems with gender mainstreaming is feminist budget analysis. It's both desirable and politically feasible. What this tool does is to more efficiently divide the available pie. This fits neatly with the priority of neoliberal state on efficient allocation of resources. At the same time, the revenue, the other side of the equation in public finance is not addressed and questions - such as 'Where do the budgetary resources come from?', 'Aren't profits made by exploiting women, too?', 'What are the costs of the multiplication of financial capital to women?' - are not asked. The end result is what Bella Abzug and Gita Sen warned against: women are made to strive for a fair piece of a dirty pie.

Power analysis and alternative strategies

The driving role of financial capital, profit maximising by cost cutting, and new technologies produce redundant people, who are not useful any more as soldiers, mothers, workers. As some women benefit from integration with market and state, other women's lives are redundant (hence the growing popularity and investment in abstinence strategies and growth in controls over movement of people).

Feminism as a new social critique depends on bringing power analysis back into the feminist discourse. For too long the popular activists belief was that power is located with governments, corporations or the military, while resistance actors maintain privilege position outside of power. The globally integrated economic system of production and consumption that we live with is a runaway machine, out of control. Power relations which sustain this system are dynamic and historically constituted. Power operates through

colliding and colluding discourses, which co-produce social contexts and processes, and subjectivities. Feminist networks and activists are not outside of power. As the above analysis of the gender mainstreaming project shows, the feminist project has been restructured together with the market and the state. Making sense of how we are produced creates possibilities for interrogating our strategies.

One of the strategies to revisit is the feminist founding gesture: the action on the exclusion of women, and placement of women as the point of departure for all feminist analysis. This inadvertently isolates women and creates a binary opposition between women and society, in which real women live their every day lives. To make sense of the differentiation among women and to account for power relations new feminist social critiques has to reframe its analysis and strategies from women centred focus to the standpoint of "women and society". It's how societies or local communities are organised that accounts for insecurity and injustices in of women's, men's and children's lives.

Last but not least, the gender mainstreaming project, MDGS or discourses of neoliberal global governance captured activists attention at the expense of discussing and forging alternative livelihood strategies. If the system, this runaway machine out of control cannot provide the security of livelihoods for all and creates the categories of the excluded, than forging alternative markets and exchange networks to provide for basic needs is what the feminism as social critique and social movement should be about.

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The New Architecture of Aid:

Gender Equality in Poverty Eradication?

Recently the nature of development co-operation has been changing and new aid modalities have been established which intend to promote ownership of policies by developing countries and are based on supporting overall policy directions of recipient countries. It is hoped that this will achieve greater efficiency in the use of development funding, and hence will yield better results.

This raises the question whether a gender architecture is included within these new aid modalities, and hence, whether these new aid modalities will promote gender equality. In a publication entitled *Accountability Upside Down: Gender equality in a partnership for poverty eradication* (see reference), the Brussels-based organisation Eurostep, and Social Watch, based in Montevideo, examine whether the new

aid modalities do include architecture for promoting gender equality. The publication results from a research project involving a sample of nine bilateral donors (Canada, the European Community, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States).

Operationalisation of gender commitments?

The report firstly examines whether the donors operationalised their commitments to promoting gender equality in their development policies over the last five years. The analysis showed that across the board, the overall legal and policy framework indicates a clear commitment to mainstreaming gender, even though gender mainstreaming is sometimes mistaken as an objective rather than as a strategy

to achieve the objective of gender equality. When it comes to budgetary allocations and programming of development assistance, these policies seem to disappear or evaporate; a process which is often referred to as "policy evaporation". Notably in 2003, only an average of 0.3 % of total ODA of all donors analysed, was recorded by the OECD/DAC Creditor Reporting System as having been spent on "Women in Development" (WID). Also evaluations of development programmes undertaken by donor countries themselves, continued the "evaporation" trend. The analysis showed that gender issues are only sporadically included in the evaluations and no coherent pattern is detectable for any donor. While there is a clear lack of translation of political commitments and legal obligations to gender equality in the context of development assistance into actions on the ground, it is important to see what scope there is for improvement. This requires a comprehensive understanding of the current trends towards new aid modalities.

The new architecture

To date, project support has been the principle mechanism through which aid donors provide development assistance. Project support has a number of deficiencies such as the lack of harmonization between donors and the lack of ownership. In response to these problems, new mechanisms for the allocation of aid, such as Sector Wide Approaches and Budget Support are becoming ever more popular. Both mechanisms are increasingly administered through country-level planning with Country Strategy Papers and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

The principle of ownership is the most crucial concept in the new aid architecture. It leads to a transfer of responsibility to partner countries. This concept begs the question of "who owns development?" Genuine ownership can surely only be achieved if those in power in a recipient country are adequately accountable to their people; to women and men equally. Therefore the concept of "internal accountability", which refers to the potential of national parliaments and civil society organisations to scrutinise and impact on government actions, gains considerable importance.

Ownership from a gender perspective

Both the concept of ownership and of internal accountability take on new complexities if seen from a gender perspective. Mere inclusion of recipient governments and some representatives of civil society are not enough to ensure the adequate representation of women's concerns. The "partner country" does not consider gender equality a priority, we are told. So under the disguise of "ownership" all responsibility of donor countries is abandoned in one stroke."

It is therefore important that actions are supported to ensure women's full participation in the new aid modalities.

Women and women's representatives need to be included in the PRSPs, and the PRSPs need to include specific objectives and targets set to promote gender equality. A gender audit of national budgets should be part of the planning processes, and the involvement of women as decision-makers at all levels is a key component to ensure that a gender architecture supports the new aid modalities. Real ownership cannot be obtained unless there is clear formal accountability of national governments to national parliaments. Equal participation of women in parliament is crucial in this context to ensure genuine and inclusive formal accountability. In addition, it is important that civil society organisations are sustained independently from government pressure and that there are specific instruments directly aimed at strengthening women's organisations and the participation of women.

The importance of measuring progress

Sector Wide Approaches and Budget Support limit donor's ability to influence the way in which recipient countries allocate money, including the resources given to the promotion of gender equality. Therefore, traditional mechanisms for evaluations focusing mainly on programmes themselves and the extent to which they support activities intended to advance gender equality are becoming increasingly

ineffective. The recent strategic changes in the allocation of development aid and the promotion of gender equality require more result-based evaluations, which can clearly determine their effectiveness. This is not only necessary for assuring that objectives are being achieved, but also to give greater public confidence in the new mechanisms and crucially allow for adequate accountability. The Gender Equality Index developed by Social Watch is a mechanism through which the effectiveness in promoting gender equality can be measured. Poverty eradication requires gender equality. Strategies to achieve gender equality must be clearly integrated in the design of the new aid architecture in order to make these new modalities effective and efficient tools.

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Reference:

* Mirjam van Reisen, 2005: *Accountability Upside Down: Gender Equality in a Partnership for Poverty Eradication*, Eurostep and Social Watch: Brussels, online at: www.eepa.be and www.eurostep.org/ and www.socwatch.org.uy/en/informelmpreso/otrasPublicaciones.htm

* An extended version of this article has been posted at www.world-economy-and-development.org

Who Asks the „Woman Question“?

Women and the Politics of the Religious Right in Pakistan

Because of their potential ability to appropriate gender rhetoric and the role of women within their political agenda, parties of the religious right, like the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) in Pakistan, pose a challenge for feminist theorising and practise. Perceiving women's empowerment as independence from patriarchal structures, feminists and advocates of gender equality and women's right on the other hand have difficulties finding effective ways of appealing to women in a culturally accepted way.

Islamic fundamentalist revivalism identified

Although the political process in South Asia has been influenced by movements and parties of the religious right for centuries, it is in the aftermath of September 11 and the so-called war against terrorism that such movements, and especially Islamic fundamentalist movements, are perceived as greater political threat and cultural mystery than ever before. The discussion about the confrontation between traditional norms and values and modernity focuses on religious, ethnic, political, social and economic factors. There is serious concern over the lack of

social and political freedoms available to women living under conditions of fundamentalisms and about the capacity of the religion Islam to respond to changing realities. Analysing the impact of fundamentalisms on women and on their resistance and oppositional movements to fundamentalist activities, feminist research has tried to find an answer for this "woman question". Yet, little attention is brought towards women's involvement in the politics of fundamentalist right wing parties.

The politics of the Jamaat-i-Islami

Ultimate goal of Islamist right wing movements is the subjugation of all aspects of life under the control of 'God'. This is not necessarily seen as a step back or a return to the past but rather as a *reviving of Islam* according to ancient principles.

Since its inception in 1941 the JI has become a prime representative of Islamic fundamentalist revivalism. Observers state that through its active and forward looking way of mobilising supporters, as well as through its highly controlled organisational structure, the JI has developed into one of the best organised modern cadre type political parties of the Indian Sub-Continent. Striving towards a synthesis between mo-

ernity and traditional values and giving great importance to political struggle the JI distinguishes itself from other ideological movements. Civil society has a central place in this idea and is taken as foundation of a revolutionary reform strategy. Education of the masses is seen as process of purification and as key to development of a truly Islamic personality. This is perceived as consequent restructuring of society, its institutions, political leadership and social and economic basis.

The JI has always been an elitist party addressing educated lower middle, middle and working class people. Most of the party's elite has been educated according to Western principles. Not surprisingly one of the major recruiting grounds for the movement are universities where the movements' student wings (female and male) have great influence. Their role is to translate religious ideals into political power. Besides this, the movement addresses newly urbanised classes settling in locations where, through industrialisation and development of new markets, rapid social and economic changes take place. There, within an otherwise unknown and quickly changing environment, involvement in the movement provides a new source of self-identity for the people. The proportion of educated women among the party members is mentioned higher than that of men. Many women party members belong to JI supporting families. The party women's wing has an own operational headquarter and theological college. Here women are trained as preachers and religious teachers. Accessible statistics show that women membership is increasing and some resources suggest it to be around 50 percent.

Women supporters? What politics?

What is it that enables the religious right to put women's role in the society as a key question for negotiating political power? In general, the question why women decide to follow the politics of the religious right and why such involvement might be empowering for them can be seen as a set of factors linked to women's personal, cultural/religious, socio-economic and political interests:

The religious right acknowledges women's roles as mothers and house makers and provides women supporters the possibility for identification with the collectivity of a socially accepted group. This brings achievement of personal recognition within patriarchal society structures. Through advocating on those lines the religious right also is able to turn political activities into religiously based activities that likewise become appropriate for women. Membership in movements of the religious right often entitles women to apply for educational grants, medical allowances or other benefits related to improvement of their livelihoods. Women maintaining *pardah*, the segregation of sexes, are perceived as culturally and religiously appropriate role models for the society: *pardah* gets a matter of increased mobility and improvement of educational and vocatio-

nal skills. Parties of the religious right are often the first and sometimes the only to specifically address women's issues within their policies. They, be it according to feminist approaches or not, acknowledge women as a politically important force. Support of a secular party or joining a feminist movement does not offer the same possibilities. On the contrary is the support of such organisational structures often marked as being culturally inappropriate. Referring to the basic principles of Islam women might prefer to advocate for their rights within a set of parameters rather than follow the formal legal discourses. By taking issues of importance to women and women's practical and strategic interests on their agenda, religious right wing movements like the JI create the means for transforming the political arena into a protected space for women: Women acting within such arena do not have to question or justify their choice of identity but are able to expand the space to act out their choice of decision. Campaigning along religious lines, the religious right manages to intrude into the private sphere and demand a proper conduct of life according to its self-defined set of 'Islamic' principles. Through addressing women's issues as public issues, it focuses on women's identity as a solemn part of national identity and likewise seems to be able to vigilantly shift the divide between the public and the private. Women who fit into the offered set of principles do get the opportunity to relate to the movement's power and legitimately become equal and valued participants in public and political life. Thus supporting the religious right can expand women's operational space and can, to a certain extent enhance women's voice and agency.

Activism and pro-activism

In a way, most responses of feminists and advocates of gender, be they a strict opposition to Islamist politics or the attempt to interpret the Islamic framework for reform, are challenged to be reactive to the self-defined and manifested principles of the religious right. The religious right forces Muslim feminists to position themselves in their identity either as *We Muslim Women*, or as acting against the tradition and culture of the society, or moreover in relation to the external enemy: *the West*. The above account of factors which women might find positive in supporting the JI or other religious movements should therefore not in any case obscure the fact that overall, the consequences of religious fundamentalism have been disadvantageous, harmful and at times life threatening for many women. Despite enhancing voice and agency and to a certain extent providing empowerment to some women, other women are, extremely constrained in their ability to define their own space, roles and activities. And, ultimately, the patriarchal structures limiting women's agency within larger socio-cultural structures of the society, or even within the structures of the religious organisations themselves, are not at all challenged. Those women who walk

in the first rows of demonstrations of religious movements and who decorate the title pages of daily newspapers, demanding justice according to the principles of Islam, are rarely found in leading positions within their parties. And, promises on improvements of the situation of women during election campaigns are rarely found to be implemented afterwards.

Identifying agents of change

Elections held in 2000 and 2001 have ensured the place of the religious right in national politics. Since then the movement had time to get involved in finding a policy solution for accommodating the question about women's role in society. Such endeavours however can not come forward without communication and negotiation with other representatives of women's interests, such as feminist organisations. The question that should be discussed is if there is a way of establishing such exchange between feminists, organisations advocating for women's rights and the religious right to negotiate both positions. The challenge for the religious right in Pakistan is to substantially agree to a negotiation of provisions of personal laws affecting women and to remove institutional barriers that hinder effective participation of elected women in decision-making processes. The challenge for feminists and advocates of gender equality is to identify possible 'agents of change' among the religious right and to involve them in joint efforts to define policies that effectively represent women's interests. For feminists this too would mean the difficult act of accepting women's support of and strategies for joining the religious right as a form of 'resistance from within' towards patriarchal structures while, however, avoiding the destructive implications this could have to the struggle for gender equity, women's rights and democracy.

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Re-negotiating Public Goods

The provision of public goods is under growing privatisation pressure worldwide. Public institutions and social security systems are being transferred to private enterprises or provided according to the "rules of the market". That applies not only to services of general interest (SIGs) such as educational and healthcare facilities, water and electric utilities, telecommunications and old-age pensions. In some countries even areas of public safety like prisons and military tasks have been privatised. The impact, especially in the provision of SIGs, is neither socially balanced nor gender neutral: the poor are more affected than the rich; women are more burdened than men. This leads ultimately to circumvention of the Plan of Action adopted in Beijing at the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995. In order to attain the goals anchored there, e.g. in the fields of women and poverty, health, economy as well as education and training, more public support would be required and less market orientation.

Resentment and resistance

Visible resentment and resistance have emerged worldwide to increasing market-oriented deregulation of the public sphere. At local and nation-state level, people are protesting against the real deterioration of their quality of life, e.g. drinking water: In Cochabamba/Bolivia and Dar es Salaam/Tanzania, resistance forced a reversal of the privatisation and in Uruguay the population voted by referendum to anchor the right to water in the constitution and to prevent privatisation.

Even at the international level, civil society alliances from Attac through the labour unions to environmental and women's groups are protesting against a policy which suppresses and displaces the public sector. International finance and trade policy offensively supports liberalisation and hence the removal of the state from public responsibilities both in the North and the South.

World Trade Organization (WTO) rules have become primarily responsible for determining the boundaries of public monopolies. The most prominent example of these is the General Agreement on the Trade in Services (GATS). This has provided the framework even for the struggle over drinking water, education and financial services. The liberalisation of services means these are to be subjected to the laws of free trade. That means subsidies are reduced and regulation according to social, ecological or other criteria becomes virtually impossible.

Result of a social contract

The public character of a good or service is not a fixed attribute but the result of social contracts and political decisions.

It varies depending on the culture, historical epoch or economic relationships and reflects the gender relations within a society. In the modern welfare state, the supply of many public goods and services is based on a societal and family image favouring men as the principle breadwinners as opposed to women who are supplementary earners otherwise responsible for the *care work*. This occurs when services provided by the state are delivered in the form of transfer payments instead of the creation and maintenance of care and childcare facilities. Feminists have long criticised this form of state provision of services of general interest.

We are currently in a transition phase where it is being renegotiated which goods and services are to be public and which are to be private. This debate is taking place in the context of economic globalisation raising the challenge of new questions to be answered for all the countries in the world. However, there are grave differences between the point of departure and framework conditions for a country's economic development and the leeway for its public budget.

● **In the industrialised countries:** In the industrialised nations, the location competition leads to a tax policy which in turn leads to public poverty in the worst case. Here the reorganisation of the social system and labour markets are discussed and pursued with different speeds. In Germany, for example, the entire social security system is being called into question. State and public services of general interest such as old-age pensions, childcare, university education and many others are being dismantled since it would appear they can no longer be financed under the new conditions. Increasingly, people are

"Households headed by women are especially affected. Women predominate in the low wage sector, often earning less than their male colleagues despite having the same qualifications and job description. Women have less access to secure title to land and loans, educational or other facilities. Therefore they are even more affected by the policy of privatisation of public services of general interest than men. In other words, they are second class citizens."

being forced to pay for these on their own. Services which had been provided by the state have are being privatised and offered at full cost i.e. that is usually more expensive for the consumer.

● **In the developing countries:** In the emerging economies and developing countries, the adjustments to the international trade regime compound the impact of the structural adjustment measures imposed in the 1980s and 1990s which aim for dismantling state services and subsidies to foster privatisation. The principles of this policy are exclusively market economy criteria, whereas other standards e.g. social or gender justice play no role at all. Political scientist Elmar Altwater has criticised the privatisation of public tasks for dividing society into those who can "buy" these services of general interest in the market with money and may even be offered better services after a privatisation, and those whose monetary purchase power is limited and therefore are compelled to prefer the inferior services of the social system (see W&E-SD 3-4/2005). For many poor countries this has long been bitter reality. However, in countries where all citizens are accustomed to and have been guaranteed high quality public services, a paradigm change is taking place: The political right of the citizen to provision of high quality services increasingly gives way to the right of the market citizen – a right which is derived from the latter's purchasing power.

Second class citizens

This division of society not only has a social component but also a gender component. That is because worldwide poverty is predominantly female. The United Nations estimate that 70% of the 1.3 billion people worldwide comprising the lower income spectrum are women. Households headed by women are especially affected. Women predominate in the low wage sector, often earning less than their male colleagues despite having the same qualifications and job description. Women have less access to secure title to land and loans, educational or other facilities. Therefore they are even more affected by the policy of privatisation of public services of general interest than men. In other words, they are second class citizens (see reference).

However this policy burdens women more heavily than men because of women's reliance on affordable public services. This applies both in the North and the South, even if to different degrees. Due to the fact that women continue to bear the greater part or even exclusive responsibility for reproductive tasks, girls and women are the ones who must compensate drastically contrasting state services with unpaid reproductive labour. If public kindergartens are closed, if school instruction is cancelled for lack of teachers, then it is women who have to take care of the children. Savings in the area of public health and old-age care have to be compensated by familial nursing with the subsequent additional burden on women.

Rising prices for drinking water and electricity mean women have to try to compensate—even if this means long walks to obtain free drinking water from and firewood from another source or through savings in the household budget.

If the prices for services of general interest increase while income decreases in relation to the expense necessary to obtain them, it is women who normally compensate for this fact in a variety of ways. Wherever possible they try to contribute their own work to replace these services in order to relieve the burden on the family income. If savings have to be made in the household budget, women usually curtail their own needs first. They frequently save first on their own expenses whether these are hobbies and small pleasures or clothing and other necessities, even including their own food. A further step is often withdrawal, also keeping their daughters away, from education and training and even health-care services in order to save money, while using the time gained to earn money.

Broad debate needed

The examples illustrate that a broad social debate about public goods is urgently

needed. We not only need to discuss seriously what is worthy of protection and what residue of state dominance and overbureaucratization must be urgently abolished. We also must reappraise public goods and redefine the public sphere so that patriarchal social models can be overcome and living conditions can be created that promote for gender justice. Therefore we should not see the renaissance of societal debate on the subject of public goods as only a defensive struggle against progressive privatisation in which democratically legitimated decision-makers are replaced by shareholders. Rather it is also an opportunity to cut-off the old braids and design the public sphere in lines with social and gender justice.

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* Bündnis Peking+10, 2005: *Schon abgehakt? Zehn Jahre 4. Weltfrauenkonferenz – Zehn Jahre Pekinger Aktionsplattform*, Berlin

motherhood after they have succeeded in their careers. Hence the desire for children arises in the period when the “biological window” for pregnancy already begins to close and “risk pregnancies” become more likely. Therefore, it seems advisable to use the technical aids in the form of tests, IVF, and PID. It may be social reasons such as poverty and dependence which lead women to sell their ova. Fertility clinics and research centres have a constant demand for this sought-after “raw material” for which they offer discounts for fertility treatments or—as has recently become known in Rumania—just *cash*.

Between consumer freedom and human dignity

The liberal sense of freedom of choice includes the freedom to choose certain qualities in the resulting child. In the USA and England PID is not only used to avoid certain genetically-determined illnesses but, also for selection of positive qualities. In US newspapers “family balancing” and “social sexing” are advertised. This could soon be allowed in England too. If so, there will be no holding back. Not only selection criteria such as gender but very quickly other attributes like eye colour, body size or sexual orientation will follow.

Such “social criteria” will open the door to a new kind of consumer eugenics. Even if the selection criteria vary they are in any case gender coded. In China, Korea, and India, the preference for boys – rooted in economic and socio-cultural conditions – leads to massive abortion of female foetuses. Although this is not to be expected in the Western societies, gender-coded fashions and preferences for existing and new gender hierarchies could prevail.

Critics of the liberal position object to the equation of freedom of choice and autonomy. It is more reasonable and strategically sound to conceive of autonomy as a defence and not a right to be claimed (Braun 2000). Women decide autonomously whether or not to bear a pregnancy to term. Their bodies may not be instrumentalised for other purposes against their will. Hence it is a right of defence. However, the entitlement should be restricted. This is because the women’s desire for her own child – possibly definable by positive attributes – is seen as the key by which reproductive technology invades the female body. This, the critics say, constitutes the threat of a “new social appropriation of the female body” – from which women have emancipated themselves since recognition of their right to abortion. Embryo protection is supposed to fend off this threat. It is based on the principle of human dignity. In the case of a conflict with the pregnant woman, the rights and interests of the woman override the objective of embryo protection. Outside of the body, however, the embryo must be more stringently protected. The aim is to prevent or at least to impede the abortion of foetuses that show indications of a later handicap, but even more important to preclude any selection according to positive attributes using PND or PID. Accord-

New Reproductive Technologies:

Bio-politics between Autonomy and Marketisation

The reproductive technologies introduced since the 1980s have been the subject of extremely controversial discussions among women. Whereas some see unobstructed access to ultrasound examination, in vitro fertilisation (IVF), pre-implantation diagnostics (PID) and numerous genetic tests as a gain in freedom and control, others fear that the introduction of these new technologies will have the opposite effect – namely weaken women’s autonomy.

Freedom of choice vs. imputation of responsibility

In Western societies the right to freedom of decision, planability and greatest possible control over a pregnancy has been derived from the right to reproductive health acknowledged ever since the Beijing World Conference on Women. The new reproductive technologies promise help. The possibility of displacing ova or embryos from the woman’s body creates options that might have emancipatory potential. Many women see women’s self-cultivation through surrogate maternity or ova sale as a step towards overcoming traditional gender hierarchies which have assigned men the business and women altruism. But above all, the new technologies are supposed to help reduce the uncertainty: Can I prevent my child from being sick or handicapped?

With the technical control and intervention options, the range of responsibilities assigned to women increases—hence also

the paradoxes of responsibility. Women assume responsibility voluntarily for reasons of care and perspicacity but they do this in the context of a social and health system that – in the course of a “geneticisation of health and sickness” – has defined the criteria for the well-being of woman and child based on efficiency and technical efficacy. It has become one’s personal responsibility to appropriate the available technology and to adopt the ideas of medical risk assessment regarding possible health damage or handicaps: in short, to decide for an “optimal” child according to social and medical norms or even for an “optimised” child.

In contrast, the critics of the new technologies point out the very poor success rate of IVF: it lies at 15%–20% per embryo transfer. Other objections are the health risk and the decision traps created by tests for incurable illnesses. The treatment of childless women with IVF brings women in a *no-win* position. Although they learn on their own bodies how little certainty and success these methods bring, they try repeatedly and so become dependent on technology—since reproductive medicine will offer them ever newer methods (Kollek 2000).

Fixation on technology also obscures alternatives (adoption) and the social conditions in which reproductive technologies are embedded. Lack of childcare and all-day schools and as well as discrimination against women with children at the workplace prompts many women to postpone

dingly embryo and stem cell research is to be prohibited to the extent that it produces "surplus" embryos through IVF or cloning.

Defence against consumer eugenics

Liberal feminism contends that the woman's right to determine for herself the continuation or termination of an undesired pregnancy could be called into question if such protection measures were considered. Above all, it is argued, that pitting the embryo against the woman—so to speak—means depriving women of their rights and marginalising them. Protection of life based on an ethics of the relationship between the embryo and the pregnant person only permits consideration of an embryo if a woman also intends a fertilised ovum to become a child. If she no longer has this intent, she could supply the "excess" embryos for research purposes. Legally, according to this liberal feminist position, the postulate of a separate embryo protection circumscribes the entitlement and self-determination right of women. This restriction is imposed strategically as a protection from reproductive technology and its inherent imputation of responsibility.

But is it true that women cannot deal with this imputation? Studies show the opposite. In German and British studies, about 50% of women in a risk group approved of conducting a prenatal or genetic test for Huntington disease. However, only 5-10% actually had such a test performed. Similar observations were reported on the use of PID. Many women welcome the increase in options. Yet where these are allowed they seldom use them. The gap between the "responsible" speech from the medical perspective and the action seems to affirm rather than refute the responsible handling of pregnancy abortion, IVF or PID.

Responsible family planning—this is the position of most women who fought for the right to abortion in the 70s—includes considerations regarding the welfare of the future child, the wellbeing of the existing family and one's own progress. Advocates of a separate and absolute right to life for the embryo based on human dignity distrust women who, conscious of the different obligations, make a decision that is best for all concerned—and not just the embryo. The fear that women will be overwhelmed by reproductive technology and consumer eugenics seems too great. The principle of human dignity is used as bulwark against the universal marketisation and instrumentalisation.

Instead of launching "embryocentric" human dignity against the real and lived ethics of women, it seems like a more successful strategy to draw on the real perspectives of women and their capacity for autonomous action. After all—at least in the liberal states—it has been possible to reach a consensus about the autonomy postulate in the context of abortion. Why should it not be possible to include de-

fence against consumer eugenics within this consensus? It seems both plausible and reasonable in real life that those who want to live in self determination should not produce children in such a manner that denies these very same children the same degree of control over their lives. As the objects of the decisions of their parents, they are only in a limited position to be the "authors" of their own lives and enter into a free relationship to their biographies (Habermas 2001).

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From Beijing to Tunis and Beyond:

Women's Winding Road into the Information Society

Media issues have always been an item on the feminist agenda. But this item has shifted up and down the agenda according to the urgency it was assigned at any given point in time. By highlighting three scenarios of feminist engagement at the level of the United Nations, I am going to argue that it is high time that media issues, and most centrally those involving the new information and communication technologies (ICTs), are again accorded high priority by gender equality advocates.

Media@Beijing+10

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 marked a high point of global feminist collaboration. While the negotiations were underway, the Women's Networking Support Program of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC WNSP) ran an on-site computer lab for thousands of civil society delegates. Linking back with their constituencies at home, delegates experienced first-hand, and sometimes for the first time ever, the power and utility of the new ICTs for feminist networking. Concurrently, in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, "Women and the Media" is named as one of the twelve critical areas of concern, on a par with issues ranging from poverty to armed conflict. Two strategic objectives are codified with regard to women and the media, one to "increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication," and the other to "promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media".

Ten years later, the Beijing review undertaken by all world regions has made it abundantly clear that women's empowerment and equality have not been reached in any of the areas of concern. The findings with respect to media and ICTs are at least as ambivalent and disquieting as those in the other areas. Most centrally, control over the media and ICT lands-

cape, from infrastructure to technology design to the vast majority of the content, continues to elude women. At the same time, many women rely on media and ICTs to a growing degree, noticeably in order to network and to constitute themselves as a political force. Thus the dependence of women on media and ICTs is growing while women's influence on media and ICTs is not. This finding, however, has not been debated prominently among the majority of women's rights advocates involved in the review process.

The Information Society and its summit

Paradoxically and dangerously, at the same time that many feminists and women's movements throughout the world have de-prioritized media and ICT issues, the global influence of the new digital and networked media on all aspects of life, from the economy to politics to culture to the creation of knowledge, has reached unprecedented proportions and has been captured in terms such as "information society" and "digital divide." These terms allude to the capacity of the new ICTs to shape and homogenize the world on the one hand and to the unequal distribution of power to harness and guide that capacity of ICTs on the other. A whole UN summit process has been dedicated to these issues, which for the first time in history combines two summit events. The first part of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2003, and the second one is scheduled for November 2005 in Tunis, Tunisia.

WSIS, just as many other events of this kind, attests to the longevity of male predominance in international negotiations. It also testifies to the durability of a universalizing male world view that sees concerns for women's human rights, empowerment and equality as unrelated to the "business at hand." Yet this view has been forcefully challenged from within WSIS.

Unbeknownst to large parts of the women's movements, the WSIS process has constituted a much-needed focal point and catalyst for knowledge about women and media and ICTs, as well as for political lobbying and advocacy in this area. Feminists from all regions, working in grass-roots initiatives, academic institutions, governments and the UN system itself, have come together and have pooled their energies to challenge the male dominance over the WSIS process. They have contested the definition and demarcation of the political issues and have staked a claim to the concept of the Information Society.

Feminist achievements in WSIS

The political result so far, while limited, has its value. Most notably, a strong commitment to women was codified in paragraph 12 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles. It states, "We affirm that development of ICTs provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors, in the Information Society. We are committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis on (sic) equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. To this end, we should mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICTs as a tool to that end." Apart from a number of special measures targeting women and girls particularly in the areas of education, training, employment and careers that are cited in the Geneva Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action, another crucial achievement is that the Plan of Action acknowledges the need to supervise the developments and to establish "gender-sensitive indicators on ICT use and needs" (para. E.28.d).

Contextualizing and applying these results

These fundamental provisions can and should be used as tools to shape future developments. Immediately upcoming on the level of the UN is the Millennium+5 Summit (14-16 September 2005), which will review the progress made towards the goals of the Millennium Declaration to eradicate poverty, as well as the WSIS Tunis summit (16-18 November 2005), which will largely focus on internet governance and on financial modalities to bridge the digital divide. Consistent interventions are needed in processes like these to stress that poverty eradication, including the bridging of the digital divide, is very much a women's issue, given that the majority of the world's poor are women.

This issue requires further explanation in the context of ICTs: With respect to the digital divide, it has become glaringly apparent that multiple and compounding forms of arbitrary discrimination are at its root. This means that the world over, those girls and women are most consistently affected by the digital divide who

also suffer intersecting, systemic human rights violations tied to the ones based on gender, for instance poor women, Black women, older women, rural women, displaced women, and women without much formal education. ICTs have thus clearly functioned as hegemonic tools, entrenching existing forms of discrimination. And it is important to realize that they have not only done so in their role as media, by obliterating, marginalizing or distorting the voices and representations of those who are dominated. Furthermore, ICTs have primarily done so in their role as the driving force of economic restructuring, by perpetuating and enhancing the power of ruling economic groups to reshape the worldwide division of labor, the financial markets and the global knowledge exchange. While fewer and fewer men gain from these developments, women lose out disproportionately, so that the feminization of poverty that was already addressed in Beijing in effect is augmented by ICT-based global restructuring.

The goal of the Information Society

For this reason, as well as in order to protect and strengthen feminist networks, women have a particular, vital stake in impacting the further developments of

ICTs and the Information Society. A positive impetus is provided by numerous pilot projects that prove that media and ICTs hold the potential to counter discrimination and to newly empower people, if ICTs are designed, applied, utilized and monitored accordingly. This is true for all aspects of society, from economic development to the provision of education and health services and political interaction. Therefore, a cross-sector political approach is required to shape the evolution and impact of media and ICTs. Concurrently, to direct the development of the Information Society towards gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development, all political levels need to be worked on comprehensively, from the local to the global. And of course, not only the WSIS political provisions need to be brought to life in these contexts, even though these are critical. We have a whole range of tools at our disposal, including other vital international ones such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the global normative consensus achieved in Beijing and reaffirmed at the Beijing+10 meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, but also including national constitutions and anti-discrimination legislation.

The goals are to work towards enabling all people to access and use media and ICTs to express themselves and to get heard when they raise legitimate concerns, to benefit from existing knowledge and contribute to its continuing creation, and to network for positive change. Further aims are to devise media and ICTs that best answer the needs of individuals and their communities. Concurrently, the overall objective is to empower all people to mould the cultural, economic and political landscapes in which ICTs are embedded and which ICTs impact in their turn so that all people can live in dignity. Media and ICTs less than ever can be understood as one area of feminist concern among many, because they more than ever fashion all spheres of society and all areas of concern. Hence an engagement with the development of the global and local media and ICT landscapes needs to be at the top of the feminist agenda now, and not at its bottom. The political ground has been prepared, so let's get on that road and let's get ahead.

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Further information online at:

- * www.worldsummit2005.de (from a civil society perspective)
- * www.genderwsis.org (WSIS Gender Caucus)

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This Special Issue was preceded by

* **Special Issue Femme Globale I (W&E-SD 5-6/2005)** with contributions by *Barbara Unmüßig, Charlotte Bunch, Christa Wichterich, and Gitti Hentschel*.

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