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Lachenmann, Gudrun

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Gudrun Lachenmann

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Gudrun Lachenmann

Summary

The paper looks at sites of production and negotiation of development knowledge which constitute translocal spaces and interfaces within organisations and their environment. Taking a gender approach, it assumes that there is a gendered structure of knowledge and that organisations are gendered with regard to conceptualisations and policies. Other dimensions of analysis are that of 'women in organisations' (as actors and members), as well as typical interfaces between different levels of organisations and their environment, i.e. clients and social reality of everyday life.

The (global) knowledge society is discussed with regard to its gendered organisation and the issue of legitimate carriers and vertical coherence of social knowledge is addressed, looking at NGOs as knowledge producers which are supposed to contribute valid gender knowledge. The bureaucratic management of knowledge in organisations is studied as leading to technocratic, authoritarian modes, excluding gender knowledge and rendering accumulation of experience and learning impossible.

The analysis is based on the study of the 'development world' especially in and regarding (West) Africa.In particular, development of local communities and decentralisation (especially referring to the case of Senegal) shows how female spaces are dwindling. No interfaces exist where women's livelihood-oriented and crosscutting knowledge and experience could be brought into the new formal political structures. There is a process of increasing informalisation of organisations of women, providing room to manoeuvre on the one hand, but also exclusion and marginalisation on the other. Men mainly organise themselves in formal groups, women usually in informal ones, thus diminishing their access to formal institutions and also the production of knowledge from their side – such as alternative modes of accumulation between men in the formal and women in the informal sectors. This hinders the upgrading and (resulting) lack of promotion of gendered forms of social cohesion and security.

However, global networking and knowledge production are taking place not only in women's organisations and movements, but also in migration and other translocal spaces, with the internet possibly contributing to more horizontal exchange and enabling diversity.

Sites of production and negotiation of development knowledge constitute spaces and interfaces between the global and the local within organisations and their environment in the sense of localising knowledge. These glocalised arenas give rise to new conceptualisations and empirical research, especially regarding their gendered structure. On the one hand, these

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new arenas (including the so-called participatory approaches, internet and knowledge management) seem to validate knowledge production with regard to social reality and therefore make it relevant to practice. Very often 'the civil society', NGOs, be it in the framework of participation or consultancy, are considered as scientifically (and socially) legitimised carriers of this social science knowledge. On the other hand, an inflation of consultancy work is taking place whose methodological validity is not sufficiently challenged in public arenas. These would constitute the necessary public sphere of critical knowledge about society. Although it is typical for spheres of (critical) social science, activism in social movements, and certain policy conceptualisation to overlap, this especially seems to weaken the scientific independence and quality of knowledge production and at the same time to devaluate social knowledge as being of lower status than other expert knowledge.

We should therefore analyse the forms of knowledge production, the channels and forms of validation, social organisation, personal trajectories between these communities, along with forms of finance, publicness vs. private ownership and autonomy of organisation. Which concepts are developed and where, how is knowledge being linked to practice, how are different disciplines, policy sectors as well as cross-cutting issues involved (e.g. natural resource management, poverty, gender …) are questions we must ask. Questions that we also need to pose are (Acker 1900, Britton 2000; Goetz 1995; Macdonald, Sprenger, Dubel 1997; Mueller 2006, Witz/Savage 1992):

- How are organisations gendered in terms of knowledge production, management and application?

- What are the gender constructs underlying organisational structure, culture, and policies?

- How are female gender spaces established in organisations?

- What are the knowledge interfaces between organisations and their (active) clients as regards access, participation, and accountability?

- What are gender implications of knowledge underlying sector policies when providing services and counselling?

- What are the knowledge differences regarding the informal(ising) and formal(ising) of organisations, professionalisation, institutionalisation, upgrading, and transformation?

- What knowledge is needed to engendering organisations?

- What are the knowledge interfaces between female social spaces and (male defined) organisations, local governance, markets, etc.?

1. The gendered organisation of knowledge society

As the sociology of knowledge shows (Berger and Luckmann 1966), knowledge and agency are intimately linked, thereby leading to the social construction of reality through practice. It is important to note that agency needs knowledgeable actors, whose everyday as well as special knowledge has to be examined from the actors' life-world perspective. Knowledge is produced in different areas and spaces and is differentially distributed in society. There are carriers of specialised knowledge and socially organised and institutionalised ways of distributing and transferring knowledge which is always situated. Interfaces (Long 1992) of

different knowledge systems can be studied through analysis of different logics of agency, social worlds, codes, and negotiations.

Mark Hobart (1993) has shown that although we are living in a knowledge society, there is a "growth of ignorance". This occurs through the ousting of local by expert knowledge, as well as when not looking at gendered structures. One can assume that this leads to a blockade of both knowledge genres and hinders learning processes within organisations and with regard to their social environment.

New types of arenas, technologies and modes of knowledge transaction are often supported by international agencies, and the boundaries of these spaces can become very fluid (Lachenmann 2004). Whether they provide chances for horizontal networking to overcome knowledge and organisational hierarchies, bad governance and lack of accountability, and whether they bring forth valid and legitimate knowledge for gender justice will have to be critically analysed. There are places for exchanging information and negotiating knowledge and ideas; these are socially organised and institutionalised, very gender specific and socially stratified (Lachenmann 2002). Knowledge and practice go together. In all instances, knowledge has to be conceptualised as 'de-localised', but in different degrees. In all societies knowledge is unequally distributed and furthermore, there exists specialised knowledge. Practical as well as everyday knowledge is necessary to act in a world and not to be restricted to certain sectors; it therefore has to be holistic. Everyday knowledge, of course, is different in different societies and social worlds and often represented by women as against expert and specialised perspectives applied by men and by male defined organisations. In all contemporary societies we have areas of popular knowledge and everyday theories. Also, it is evident that pre-scientific knowledge loses its validity through informalisation, illegality and popularisation, which very much affects women. Their typical fields of knowledge are clearly distinct and often not taken into account as serious or ignored in organisations, including in their policies and services. There is a top down transfer of knowledge from organisations to clients, making their knowledge, perspectives, and ways of reasoning invalid or marginalized.

Local societies have very specialised channels of knowledge communication, there are people who are socially legitimised to treat certain subjects. There is a whole culture in Sahelian countries of 'foreigners' bringing information and knowledge and there are regular trajectories of knowledge acquisition which is always translocal. This type of innovative knowledge exchange has only recently been re-discovered in development co-operation, for example regarding agriculture. Special and technical knowledge comes from experience and practice. A profession will be organised and its stock of knowledge controlled according to its own criteria as well as overall political and societal demands. It becomes delegitimised if there is no right to control and to develop (e.g. healing knowledge). I regard women as very important actors in this learning process especially through their translocal networking and organisations.

In the developmentalist community, local knowledge, and especially that of women (who risk thereby to be marginalized) has been mystified to a certain extent. A world wide exchange of experience is supposed to be promoted which takes place mainly in the field of appropriate technology through NGOs. Here the issues of frame of reference and possibility as well as sites of experimentation are crucial but missing to a large extent. Efforts to save and upgrade 'traditional' technology mostly fail given there is no serious effort to develop generalized knowledge in this area, and economic competition is so high. The gendered structure is very

relevant; women's projects, undertaken to introduce technology in food processing or upgrade quality of traditional art and craft, have very often failed. Professionalisation, quality control, systematic organisation and specialisation hardly exist. It is clear that the typically female perspective of bringing private and public spheres, informal and formal organisational forms together are not taken into account.

An important, yet ambivalent aspect is the typical process of informalisation of female organisations. The so-called communal outlook and common knowledge avoiding specialisation leads to more and more differentiation in gendered social spaces, institutions and organisations. Women's groups and organisations are considered to be social or informal groups (not as economically active ones, contrary to men's organisations, e.g. in Senegal), and their aims are supposed to be mainly directed to the reproductive sphere. As a consequence these organisations do have very little access to new knowledge. At the same time it is unfortunate how little gender-specialised knowledge, which has been accumulated in many spheres and organisations, is applied in policies, such as agricultural policies and new forms of resource management schemes (social forestry, irrigation, etc.). I am not necessarily referring to mainstreaming which often might lead to not taking into account gendered differences. One main problem which is mostly not taken into account in mainstreaming approaches is how to go about recording the collective memory of experiences made with regard to certain issues and through certain communities, for the purpose of knowledge management in organisations. Often it has been said that "development has no memory", meaning that past experiences are ignored.

The institutionalisation of informal or traditional rotating credit systems, of land rights, social entitlements and social security in general does not consider the gendered differences and knowledge which have been accumulated through experience. For example in Senegal anti-salinification and rehabilitation measures for rice fields have taken into account that these are generally under female authority, labour and knowledge. But the organisational approach of the women's group does not receive official recognition with regard to local development plans and authorities thus affecting its ability to apply for funds and get advice and services. Local government constructs women as 'being helped by men', always working collectively, automatically providing land to their sons (or husbands). The changes in land tenure and its gendered structure are never officially addressed women often get land only as a group without formal recognition and institutionalisation of their property rights.

As for local communities, women are recognized as 'community managers' but as soon as local services (water supply, grain mills etc.) are formalized or monetarised (such as wood, gathering products) no one takes into account where the finance should come from (e.g. for labour saving devices, health services) as husbands see it purely as a women's affair. It is completely neglected that a significant amount of money has been already raised especially by women for (informal) social institutions such as neighbourhood, health services, food and care for sick family members.

The knowledge channels between (informal) social (female) spaces and formal politics are dwindling, rendering women and their perspectives less influential in (local) politics. As for participatory planning methods, monitoring and evaluation, community building, and revival of traditional institutions, the community is always conceived implicitly as male, and women are specially added as a group. Female knowledge is mostly considered to be particularist as against general knowledge, and women in organisations (including local governance,

committees, NGOs etc.) are supposed only to be able to contribute (and entitled to speak), if at all at this formal organisational and political level, to specific issues such as health, food processing etc. They are never asked to speak on economic issues or infrastructure although their outlook is always very much oriented to livelihood in general.

The strategic question put by Anne Marie Goetz from IDS in the title of an edited volume (1995) is how to "get institutions right for women in development" starting from the assertion that there are "persistent difficulties in institutionalizing incentive and accountability systems responsive to women's needs and interests in development organizations". Her approach to studying "gendered structures and practices" is concerned with looking at "gendered expressions of power and authority" and "gendered patterns of organizing space and time". She locates this issue within the governance debates concerning "the relationship between patterns of development management, and development outcomes" (1995 summary p. ii).

The relevant organizational structures and procedures concern the ways in which "incentive systems may militate against the pursuit of women's gender interests … and the ways certain organizational cultures and cognitive orientations may undervalue women's perspectives" (Goetz 1995 p.1). Goetz (1995 p. 2) looks at institutionalization of gender difference, what could be analysed as the construction of gender in institutions in the sense of knowledge produced for action – in the way that I would assert we need to do. She explains how bureaucracies are "insulated from the social and political relations in which they are embedded" although constructs from the 'private sphere' are permanently leaking into the formal sphere. This includes the construction of "women's identity for public policy as being conditioned by their social relationship as dependants of men".

She also suggests that one important dimension of analysis is to "understand the gendered dynamics of decision making and organizational functioning", looking at the "formal and informal rules which ... act as patterns of social constraint", "practice, as well as agents. This concerns hierarchies, centralization, bureaucratization, disciplinary foundations and rules shaping practice (idem p. 3). She also proposes that we look at "gendered institutional histories" in order to understand the "gendered sub-texts of apparently neutral organizing structures, practices and ideologies" (I would call these knowledge and constructs), and stresses the experience of "pursuing gender-sensitive policy change in the state" at special moments which open "opportunity spaces" (idem p. 4).

"Men's ... monopoly of public organizational space" is the cause of why work patterns always correspond to male social worlds. Male dominance can be shown in types of rationality, top-down command and communication, specialization and goal-oriented management. Agricultural organizations tend to be very male oriented, whereas social and human development organizations are more open to inclusion of gender issues (idem p. 5). This of course is quite natural given the knowledge base. I think it is interesting to see how different, female styles of management have been penalized, but these styles may also be becoming common knowledge. The pertinent question is how far they are put into practice. As for expression of power and authority, the question is decisive whether "women's perspectives (are treated) as valid and legitimate", concerning "value systems, gendering of skills, permitted behaviours, and symbols of success and failure". What we call the interface between organizations and their clients - how to assume family relations when granting loans, studied on the basis of the women's knowledge about conditions - is subsumed under "inter- and intra-organizational issues" in a "cross-institutional context" (Goetz 1995, p. 6).

Inner organizational change and the possibility to lobby for policies by NGOs is studied based on the degree of (foreign) financing of organisations, rendering it more centralized. It is said that ensuring possibilities of choice within organizations will lead to enhanced accountability for women. Goetz (1995 p. 7) makes the distinction between women having access to institutions and to establish a "controlling or strategic presence". She also does this regarding representation in the state, in order to avoid cooptation (which I also observed happening in Senegal at Women's Fortnight). On the other hand, the interface with the feminist movement remains a crucial factor and creates an important knowledge space. Also, networking and mutual support between women within organizations are important, although there is often the construct of women competing and quarrelling with each other. Goetz (1995 p. 9) also treats the question of institutionalization of social movements as weak organizations within the political arena, implying concerted efforts to introduce processes of articulating and aggregating women's interests in public institutions". Referring to Schaffer (1984) she considers "feminist political activism" as essential within and across organizations as "composed of knowledges and social relationships".

2. Interfaces of knowledge systems

Interfaces of social spaces and of knowledge systems are useful concepts for guiding empirical analysis (Long 1992) and they can be studied by observing "encounters at the interface" and "battlefields of knowledge" between different levels of organisation in society. This method implies an "actor-oriented approach to the analysis of social change and development intervention", to expose "the socially constructed and continuously negotiated nature of intervention processes", and "provide accounts of the life-worlds, strategies, and rationalities of actors in different social arenas" (Long 1992, p. ix, i, 4).

Apart from spaces and arenas where knowledge is negotiated, this approach also allows us to look at the vertical coherence of policies and programmes and the contextualisation of local development by means of interfaces as well as of flows. For example, with local development and decentralisation there is a big problem of coordination of knowledge and rules between different levels of organisation and governance. The knowledge for extension, advice etc. by state services is very top down and inflexible when applied to the local situation – given the bureaucratic, technocratic and authoritarian form of organisations and agencies - but the question is whether NGOs are different?

One of the main problems in the application of development knowledge is that expert assessments in general do not refer to the stock of knowledge accumulated on and in Africa. Neither do they look at the evolution of a certain field or sector, nor at the societal context in which knowledge is to be applied. Therefore there is a big gap at the interface between general social research on the one hand and expert studies on the other hand. The latter are meant to be baseline studies of social structure and to highlight the problems which the respective development intervention is supposed to address. Mkandawire, the director of UNRISD United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (1998), talks about an "erosion of knowledge".

Very often the lack of access to data and research means is stated, but on the other side documents are not fed into a general platform. The question is whether development knowledge, results of evaluations, concepts and methods are becoming public knowledge

making negotiation of meaning possible. It used to be bureaucratic, with the state having privileged knowledge. It is now becoming more and more privatised. Also, the question is how especially gender researchers and activists, who might often been asked only to produce general short papers e.g. on "Islam and women", could do consultancy work which would go together and draw on their independent research and teaching. This might not be easy because standardised methodological frameworks are prescribed that hinders feedback to teaching and the stock of knowledge of national organisations and the scientific epistemic community.

Knowledge about one's own society and economy for instance is not necessary easily available. It is easier to draw on internationally provided mainstream expert knowledge, than to ground the findings and policy recommendations on the local knowledge, i.e. social reality itself. Social institutions in society, including gendered ones, are considered to represent 'traditions' and are therefore marginalised in the process of development knowledge production. The participation offered, for instance by donors, for elaborating certain policies (e.g. agenda 21, poverty alleviation) is top down, so that the dominant discourse is adhered to, often through consultants, and no learning from real world experience is possible. Only certain arenas are provided where an equal exchange is possible, especially through women's NGOs and social movements, but again here the question of social science validity and social and political legitimacy needs to be raised.

In consultancy, but also in studies done by NGOs which are supposed to contribute on behalf of civil society, results are not contextualised and validated. Stakeholder analysis often just includes the enumeration of different actors, without analysing the local power structures of patron-client systems, or the historicity of concepts of resource management. Sometimes knowledge about societal structures seems to be considered as secret. On the other hand, common knowledge is often not explicated and therefore not made use of in development cooperation. The regime of knowledge produced through consultancy prevents learning and the application of knowledge in order to challenge practices. This concerns all levels of knowledge and expertise. The global developmental jargon is so dominant that there is serious doubt that the knowledge cultures propagated recently by agencies such as the World Bank (1999), UNDP and others will really enable processes of interactive knowledge production and practical learning processes.

3. Legitimate carriers of societal knowledge - NGOs as knowledge producers

Knowledge is socially distributed and not all categories of people are entitled to know. This influences the outcome of all participatory methods and is often overlooked, e.g. when men are interviewed on subjects only women know about, or women do not speak out and say what they think but instead refer to authorised knowledge. Often information is addressed to or knowledge is requested from people who are not the legitimate actors or knowers. This can be the case with extension service in agriculture which is aimed at men, although the relevant tasks, according to gendered division of labour, fall outside their sphere of responsibility. In this way, it is not possible to negotiate changes in this division of labour which would promote with learning.

The deligitimisation of local knowledge such as healing methods leads to erosion of specialised knowledge and hinders the creative development based on exchange with other types of knowledge. Also, it prevents knowledge from being transmitted in society and

institutionalised. It could happen that informal spaces of negotiating local knowledge, in becoming more formalised, will discriminate against local carriers of knowledge and bring bureaucratic constructs down to the basis.

The way that the production of gender knowledge and analysis is done, looking at isolated roles and activities of women and considering them to form one block, constitutes a system of ignorance (Lachenmann 2004). However, local knowledge is necessarily intersectoral, cross-cutting and relational. Women often do not consider themselves as socially 'authorised' carriers of knowledge when talking to authorities, development agencies or researchers. Often, there is supposedly one official opinion or truth. People think developers want and should know only certain 'modern' things; or they refute 'Western' knowledge in general.

The gendered structure of knowledge distribution and production including the division of knowledge in organisations and the explicit constitution of female social spaces in organisations with certain degree of autonomy is very important. On the other hand, it can lead to exclusion from 'general' issues as well as personal careers, because of the gendered construction of qualification, capacity and of female 'needs', as not being mobile for extension work or able to do night shifts in medical education requirements (Dannecker 2000; Mirza 2001 regarding factories in Bangladesh and offices in Pakistan respectively).

We are not essentialising when we say women have a special knowledge. One should look at distribution, production and transfer of knowledge in a dynamic way, taking place at different sites of knowledge, creating knowledge systems and possibly also systems of ignorance. It is really worthwhile to look at women as knowledgeable actors, not just claiming them to be natural holders of traditional knowledge, such as in the fields of healing, biodiversity etc., thereby assuming it is just there and could be taken away or researched by development experts and then be used for some kind of 'better development'.

Participatory workshops are idealised as a way to capture the "voices" of the villagers regarding the structure of their society, for example who is poor and who is rich, without validating and contextualising or politically legitimating this form of knowledge production. "The views of the poor were incorporated through open consultations in public village meetings" (World Bank 1999: 13). There are always knowledge interfaces and exchanges; it has never been only local. The question is how to take into account knowledge production, especially in participatory approaches, in order to take into consideration its situatedness. This is even more so with the gendered structure of knowledge that has been rendered invisible and neglected, including translocal 'informal' social relations.

Regarding the concepts of development knowledge used in organisations there is a danger of labelling, as the poverty reports do, poor women-headed households, grassroots, and "indigenous" women (even when these concepts are applied by the people themselves) by developing standard methodologies. Also stakeholders are named but not analysed in their interactions. On the other hand, Interpretation would claim to be based on "tradition", "culture", supposed to be known by the insider and be taken for granted: for example, a Kenyan male researcher criticising a foreign female researcher who had categorized women as "being landless", said, in "our tradition men give land". Gendered access to land is interesting as an institution, but with modernisation of property rights and projects changes have to be looked at closely. There is a trend to co-operate with "traditional" or local "communities", without taking into account that tradition and culture are constantly re-interpreted, re-invented and their meaning is negotiated in their structural and situational

contexts. Women and their supposedly traditional knowledge are often instrumentalised in identity-processes, often they are not implied in the concept of 'community' but only added as an afterthought. We have to look for emic concepts, how people structure, interpret and deal with their own world and cope with problems as defined and perceived by themselves.

It is important to look at how civil society as a force can make the state accountable and ascertain the social embeddedness of the market. It is generally recognized that women are much less involved in the entanglement between state and economy (Parpat, Stauth eds. 1988; Kandiyoti ed. 1991). That means female spaces are to a less extent linked to the predatory, patrimonial and authoritative state through distributing mechanisms of enrichment and patron-client relations. These are current forms of articulation also concerning development resources. On the other hand, it seems important to pursue an institutional approach, engendering e.g. the social organisation of regimes such as use of natural resources, social networks and looking at the construction of gender in institutions. This means introducing an intermediate level of analysis between micro and macro which is necessary for better understanding problems of decentralisation and democratisation regarding devolution of competence and resources,. The same applies to problems of development and development co-operation within a framework which reassesses concepts of state functions, citizenship etc..

Gender relations crosscut these relations. Often, access to land and to natural resources passes through relations of marriage and alliance which are translocal and going beyond territorialities. Women are not members of the re-constructed or 'invented' "traditional community". New forms of participation introduced by the state with the support or pressure of the international donor community often do not take into account their old parallel power structure of representation, ignoring mechanisms which link female worlds and spaces with general power structures. Also, many other translocal relations are not taken into account, e.g. those constituted through migration processes and social movements in a translocal space and influencing local policies, or those linking big men to their economic privileges.

4. Bureaucratic management of knowledge, learning organisations, (gendered) translocal social spaces

Institutions in developing societies obviously do not make possible 'lifelong learning' - a concept used by UNESCO and adopted in global governance discourse - or interaction between local and expert knowledge (Lachenmann 2001). This requires social spaces and institutional arrangements in society and in the political system, securing access and flexibility, including institutional learning. The problem is that in many organisations, learning processes arising from their own activities are not possible. No feed back or critique is allowed. It is not just a matter of management and diffusion. There is no reflexivity and flexibility and authoritarian modes of bureaucratic functioning still prevail; organisational structures discourage and hinder creativity.

There is an unproductive interdependency between bureaucracy as providing formal knowledge and the national consultancy (Mkandawire 1998). It is always a question of power of definition. Concepts of economy, formal and informal sector, and household do not correspond to social reality. An example is polygynous gender relations and households, which are not taken account of in social security and social benefits, agricultural extension

and credit schemes. Regarding the use of knowledge on women and by women it has been pointed out (Goetz 1994) that, on the one hand, it is always maintained that nothing or not enough is known about the situation of women, effects or impact of globalisation etc.. On the other hand the introduction of gendered information and monitoring systems or accounts keeps statisticians busy (Molineux, Razavi 2005), with the so-called gender approach pretending that women are always 'included', but without applying gender as a societal, structural concept (Sen 2000).

In agricultural research it has been shown that systems of local knowledge and practice are very creative (Richards 1993). Also it has been shown that diffusion of innovations very often does not follow a top down approach. But agricultural research and extension, as well as development policy in general, have failed to take into account local knowledge and practice, as well as the everyday world which largely influences processes of learning and appropriating knowledge and adapting it to circumstances. For example international agricultural research institutions, through their non-interactive structures of knowledge production, have been very often unable to produce knowledge which is appropriate for learning processes, i.e. useful for social and economic change. This is because they do not look at the social and cultural embeddedness of activities. The field of translocal knowledge transfer and structuration is neglected (Mueller 2005) and only individual 'households' or 'farming systems' are looked at as carriers. In Northern Ghana e.g. (Padmanabhan 2004), an absolute gender-blindness prevails. It is not known what kinds of innovations are adopted in reality, as women have to work partly for men when innovations for cash crops are being introduced. In certain circumstances, however, they introduce innovations on their own fields, and are thereby able to enlarge their room to manoeuvre and sometimes enter market production. There is a female line of learning which transmits information and knowledge and creates possibilities of practice (about new seeds for example).

5. Development in local communities and decentralisation

Democratisation processes on the one hand, and decentralisation on the other, do not share information, or make procedures transparent. Rather, they mystify and complicate regulations more and more. For instance in rural communities in Senegal, although counsellors have been elected, members feel increasingly helpless and dependent on information and interpretation of rules from above. Processes involving state bureaucracy and the ruling party take precedence over local autonomy and initiatives, preventing creative learning processes (Lachenmann 2006a). By the same token, the successes, although certainly not always sustainable, of several decades of activities of the peasant movement are not built on. This includes women's groups, whose experiences and knowledge tend to be marginalised instead of being developed.

The training programmes for elected counsellors and peasant leaders concentrating on supposedly culturally adequate organisational development (held in the local language and based on African proverbs) showed the devaluation of these experiences and knowledge, as well as the inadequate contents of training which are hardly contextualised. Many of these leaders had been trained in self-organised workshops with NGO support many years ago; what they would have needed to know was how to deal with authorities in the framework of decentralisation regulation. Also, the year-long literacy efforts of the peasant organisation were forgotten in new programmes sponsored by UNESCO. Mainly men are trained as there

are very few women who are elected. In the communities studied in 2004, the female counsellors (not more than four out of more than 30) were extremely bitter when they said that men were not passing on 'information' to women, a very important resource for them. None of them was a member of a 'hard core' commission, such as finance, land or environment. Furthermore peasant leaders who become members see themselves as representing development knowledge which is not supposed to be represented in 'the texts'. Decentralisation is mainly seen as passing authoritarian knowledge to the 'grassroots' who are often constructed as ignorant.

Decentralisation at first glance looks as if it is favourable for women, but the number of women who are knowledgeable about decentralisation and regionalisation modalities seems indeed very low. Therefore one can fear that women, who are so active in local groups, can not continue to maintain their influence in present transformations as soon as the local regime is institutionalised. There are no interfaces foreseen between formal institutions and their social spaces which are also losing relevance. It may be that informal spaces for negotiating gender relations, when they become more formalised, will further discriminate against women and bring the unequal gender constructs of the state down to the basis (Scott 1998).

Often women and their activities represent the local (knowledge) and rural (grassroots) which therefore has been conceived in a very narrow sense. As soon as it gains attention in the process of decentralisation, there is the risk that knowledge and practice of social movements and the associative sector, in particular of women, become marginalized. Their forms of association are always less formal and they contribute a lot to the local infrastructure and communal care economy through self help and voluntary work as well as by collecting monetary and material resources on the local level. It may be that with decentralisation their power to influence the way in which these local resources are employed will dwindle more and more, given the fact that local tax and fee collection is becoming formalised. Also knowledge and practices of female actors, who have in recent years to some extent established new arena and spaces for expression and transformation, might disappear.

Experience shows that while it might be interesting for women not to be forced into a straightjacket of male, communal and state control, it is a fact that groups or co-operatives with mainly male members tend to be formal(ised), whereas women's groups tend to be informal(ised). In Senegal e.g. men are mainly members in economic groups – GIE (groupements à intérêt économique); women in Women in Development groups – GPF (groupement de promotion feminine). The latter are trapped by old experiences and the culture of community development and home economics through established channels dependant on Social Ministries. At present they are subject to losing support after a change of government. Also many local NGOs are very patronising in their "participatory" approach through which quite a lot of external finance passes. The fatal outcome is that everywhere we have local credit systems, mostly to foster small trade, considered ideal for women who need to earn some additional income. Only slowly are some forms of formalisation taking place through the strengthening of the local arena. At the same time they are excluded or not encouraged to participate in activities which refer to new modes of access and management of natural resources and increase of agricultural productivity as well as new economic opportunities (such as upgrading of transformation of agricultural products) in the local economy. This is even the case in fields of activity where women are normally active, often within a complex structure of gender co-operation and exchange. And this is also the case for their social and political activities.

In addition, the very typical interface and co-operation between 'informal' and 'formal' sector often represented by women in what might be called "alternative modes of accumulation" (Geschiere, Konings 1993, Schneider 1999) are not taken into account in order to upgrade economic activities. This involves numerous exchanges between the genders regarding activities and resources (such as credit) e.g. between men working as state employees and their wives trading with their colleagues, or men using credit from the informal sources of their wives in order to get business loans from banks. Of course, according to classical standards the efficiency of modern work is lowered by this kind of economy as a gendered structure (Diane Elson).

A case in point is the example of three 'women presidents' studied (by our student group in Senegal in 2004) in a rural community in Senegal. With support of development cooperation rehabilitation and expansion of rice schemes took place which, according to the gender order, are being worked on by women (and now also young men), thereby enhancing food security by lowering pressure on rainfed cereal production by men. Each of them considered herself to legitimately represent 'the women'. One was co-operating with her group in the programme of bilateral technical co-operation, the other worked with a NGO and the third one with state services promoting women. In this context the management of these collective economic resources seemed not to be included in the local administration and development planning. This example also shows that these women groups are not politically represented in the local council and therefore the regulations agreed upon for the management of the rice schemes are not recognized. In general, the rural communities never distribute land for cultivation to individual women, but only to groups of women and mostly do not formalize the transaction. The same problem arises when women form groups to work on fields including irrigation for certain tasks without forming formal co-operatives which would give them sustainable rights.

6. Constituting social cohesion and security

Since the start of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) we have observed that community and especially women's resources, which are invested in embedding economic activities, are siphoned off by the formalisation of social security, cost recovery etc.. A lot of fund raising has already taken place on the local level, in traditional or 'neo-traditional' forms. Yet it has been mostly women who collect this money and who do the so-called voluntary or self-help work involved in providing basic services. Therefore the cost recovery as well as formalisation of basic services provision through local government becomes problematic. Questions of subsidisation between levels of service provision seem not to be discussed. On the contrary, in Senegal I observed in 2004 that a rural community was taught how to make a health centre viable by increasing fees without even discussing problems of access, nor how to formalise the employment of female local midwives.

Livelihoods are constructed through systems of social, including gender relations (Lachenmann 1997). Social security is constituted through systems of gifts and distribution, in permanent change (often uphold with a lot of effort by women). The local economy is characterised by a 'subsistence logic', with women taking as a priority and perspective livelihoods including household energy, water and including a special orientation towards natural resources, such as collecting wood and gathering other products. These resources are now subject to new regulations at the decentralised level, and a certain blockade, as the shifting of them from the social to the public level takes place. The associative sector has

proven itself to be the most relevant actor achieving social cohesion through institutionalising concepts of self help, food security and social security (Steinwachs 2002) within a de-territorialised, translocal space which is also structured through gender relations. Social and gender differences are becoming more and more evident with certain women acting as development brokers. Often women are very innovative in finding new forms of interaction, with the local authorities and administration (e.g. various types of self-help methods of waste management in Mali), but the general problem exacerbated by decentralisation, of voluntary work and self help or professionalisation as well as access to knowledge, concerns mostly men. It has become clear that food security constitutes an important link between the political and economic field, which necessitates the institutionalisation of social entitlements. At the same time it is necessary to look how modes of socio-economic transformation can be enhanced within these spaces through civil society actors as soon as a meaningful co-operation takes place within decentralisation. Care economy or community management and services as a gendered structure very often are organised through social movements and groups and at present come into conflict with new bureaucratic forms of resource mobilisation and budgeting in the frame of decentralisation.

7. The gendered globalised knowledge arena

With global knowledge society, restrictive organizational knowledge management may lose importance. Not only the Internet, but also migration and networking are much more influential than is normally recognised and are very important for transfer of knowledge and learning processes. This does not mean that there is homogenisation. Transnational debates such as in women's movements and networks, take place, creating new forms of localisation of knowledge and learning, including forms of organisation between local and diaspora groups. We have been able to study (Nageeb, Sieveking, Spiegel 2005) how social spaces are constituted, how knowledge production takes place and which development concepts are used through local and glocal networking. This was somehow invented by the international feminist and other movements. An important feature of knowledge developed by activists is supposed to be its crosscutting spheres of scientific research, political action and everyday life.

New information technologies have created a knowledge revolution which implies re-orientation of participatory development and the establishment of new horizontal structures. There are already feminist debates on the chances and possibilities of access and interactive fora of the internet (Harcourt 1999; Saloma 2001; Spiegel, Harig rapp. 2002; Youngs 1999). Do Internet cafés represent new economic opportunities for local people? In some African countries, women seem to have "conquered" the new opportunity of running Internet cafés, as they did before with telephone booths. Of course we would have to study more closely whether this is an entry point to the IT arena in a more sophisticated technological sense, even in a parallel or specifically gendered way, or whether it concerns just the service side which has classically been criticised with regard to, for example data processing. One could ask whether the Internet, or information technology, is a new form of public sphere crosscutting and linking organisations and social spaces.

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Gudrun Lachenmann, Professor Dr., studied sociology, political science and economics. Former research fellow at German Development Institute, Berlin, Africa Division, doing policy research, advice and training; since 1992 Professor at the Faculty of Sociology, Sociology of Development Research Centre (offic. retired 3/2006). Current research interests global and local networking for engendering development policy, civil society, transformation processes, women's and peasant movements in Africa, engendering embeddedness of economy, methodology of multi-level and translocal field research. Empirical research mainly in francophone West Africa.