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DEBATE
FEMINISTA

Debate Feminista 51 (2016) 3–17



PROGRAMA UNIVERSITARIO DE ESTUDIOS DE GÉNERO

www.debatefeminista.pueg.unam.mx

100 Million Kalashnikovs: Gendered Power on a World Scale

Cien millones de Kalashnikovs: poder generizado a escala mundial

Cem milhões de Kalashnikovs: o poder de gênero no mundo

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Received 8 February 2015; accepted 28 March 2016

Available online 31 May 2016

Abstract

We need to understand gendered power on a world scale. Research on gender and globalization, and recent thought about coloniality and Southern theory, provide starting points, but the task of mapping gender relations in global power centres remains to be done. Four masculinized groups are especially important in global power relations: the managers of transnational corporations; the oligarchs, possessors of extreme wealth; the dictators who control authoritarian states; and the state elites of the global metropole. Some research on gender relations in these milieus is available, showing different patterns of masculinity. Masculinities are embedded in neoliberal globalization. Gender relations on a world scale are affected by the movement of metropolitan power into offshore spaces, the conflicts among globally powerful patriarchies, and the new forms of resistance and social turbulence that arise from triumphant neoliberalism.

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Keywords: Patriarchy; Masculinities; Globalization; Power; Corporations; State

Resumen

Este artículo considera cómo entender el poder generizado a escala mundial. Tanto la investigación sobre género y globalización como el pensamiento reciente sobre colonialismo y teoría desde el Sur aportan puntos

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Peer review under the responsibility of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.df.2016.03.001>

0188-9478/All Rights Reserved © 2016 Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género. This is an open access item distributed under the Creative Commons CC License BY-NC-ND 4.0.

de partida, pero todavía nadie se ha puesto a la tarea de hacer una cartografía de las relaciones de género que operan en y a través de los centros de poder global. Se identifican cuatro grupos masculinizados importantes para las relaciones de poder global: los administradores de las corporaciones transnacionales; los oligarcas, poseedores de inmensas riquezas; los dictadores que controlan los estados autoritarios, y las elites estatales de la metrópoli global. Se considera la investigación disponible sobre relaciones de género en estos medios, incluyendo diferencias en los patrones de masculinidad. Se reflexiona sobre la relación entre masculinidades y globalización neoliberal, el movimiento del poder metropolitano hacia espacios más allá de sus fronteras, los conflictos entre patriarcas globalmente poderosos y las nuevas formas de resistencia y turbulencia social que surgen del neoliberalismo consolidado.

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Palabras clave: Patriarcado; Masculinidades; Globalización; Poder; Corporaciones; Estado

Resumo

Este artigo coloca a questão de como entender o poder de gênero no mundo. Tanto a pesquisa sobre gênero e globalização quanto o pensamento recente sobre o colonialismo e a teoria desde o Sul oferecem pontos de partida. Porém, a tarefa de mapeamento das relações de gênero, operantes dentro e através dos centros de poder mundial, ainda não foi realizada. Identificam-se quatro grandes grupos para as relações globais de poder masculinizadas: os gestores de empresas transnacionais; os oligarcas, possuidores de uma grande riqueza; os ditadores que controlam estados autoritários, e as elites estaduais da metrópole global. Considera-se também a pesquisa disponível sobre as relações de gênero nos meios de comunicação, incluindo as diferenças nos padrões de masculinidade. Outras reflexões do artigo incluem: a relação entre masculinidades e globalização neoliberal, o movimento do poder metropolitano para espaços além das fronteiras, os conflitos entre patriarcas poderosos ao nível global e as novas formas de resistência e turbulência social decorrentes do neoliberalismo consolidado.

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Palavras-chave: Patriarcado; Masculinidade; Globalização; Domínio; Corporações; Estado

Introduction

In everyday language, we talk about gender on the small scale: intimate relationships, personal identities, husbands and wives, mothers and daughters. But some issues oblige us to think on a larger scale. The multiple femicides in Cd. Juárez, for instance, make little sense if we think only about intimate relationships. The events become more meaningful, though no less horrifying, when we expand the picture to the under-resourced and insecure communities of the Frontera Norte, the neoliberal maquila economy, the local violence because of the drug traffic, the complicity of the state, and the wider context of violence and militarization across the regions and the continents connected with these events (Cruz, 2013).

In grappling with such issues, we need to think about gender on a larger scale than interpersonal relations or local cultures. Indeed we need to move beyond the national level - the level at which most statistics of gender inequality are collected and most gender-equity policy is formulated.

Environmental feminism has already made the move. We need to think systematically on a world scale.

Thinking gender globally

There is valuable research literature already available about ‘gender and globalization’, and ‘gender and neoliberalism’ (e.g. [Bose & Kim, 2009](#); [Naples & Desai, 2002](#)). But in these debates, and in the discourse of international liberal feminism found in documents from UN Women, there is a strong tendency to see globalization or neoliberalism as one thing, and gender or patriarchy as another, in a quite separate manner.

This is an old problem in feminist theory. Classics such as Heleith Saffioti’s *A mulher na sociedade de classes* (1969) offered a powerful analysis of the interplay between class and gender since the colonial period, but presupposed a capitalist class system that was logically prior to the gender effects. Feminists in the United States formulated dual systems theory, resting on what [Zillah Eisenstein \(1979, p. 5\)](#) called ‘the mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structuring’, or more plainly, the ‘interdependence of capitalism and patriarchy’.

In the more recent enthusiasm for the idea of ‘intersectionality’, the idea of a dialectical relationship has been abandoned. Gender, race, class, nationality, etc. are *separate* ways of categorizing people, which have no logical interconnection. They simply ‘intersect’ or cross-classify with each other. The cross-classifying adds to some people’s disadvantage and other people’s privilege. (That was the original purpose of the concept of intersectionality, to seek redress in US court cases.)

To think about the global dimension of gender, we certainly have to think about the capitalist world order, and try to understand race, class, and nation. But we do not have to be limited by such a weak form of theory. A better approach will be to consider how gender itself is global, and how neoliberal capitalism and its class and race configurations are organized *through* gender as well as interacting with gender relations.

Postcolonial knowledge

One of the basic problems in understanding gender and power on a world scale is that gender theory mainly comes from one world region – the most powerful. Even when the discussion is about femicide in México, sexuality in India, or human rights in Africa, the discussants are usually deep in the conceptual world of Marx, Foucault, de Beauvoir, and Butler. The bulk of feminist thought addressing globalization, and circulating globally, is based on theory and methodology that comes from the global North. Ultimately, it is based on the social experience of the metropole (as the French called it, in contrast with the colony) – the old imperial centre that is still dominant in the global economy.

There is a widespread, though usually unstated, assumption that the global South does not produce theory – especially not theory that can be applied broadly. Thinkers like Nawal el Saadawi in Egypt or Heleith Saffioti in Brazil may be respected as activists, or as providing local data, but are not imagined as a source of generalizable ideas.

In this, feminist thought follows the usual pattern in social science, humanities, and indeed, all fields of organized knowledge. The Beninese philosopher [Paulin Hountondji \(1997\)](#) identifies a global division of labour and a pattern of exchange in knowledge. The colonized world served historically as a rich source of *data* that were exported to the metropole, while the metropole became

the site of the *theoretical* moment in knowledge production. This global economy of knowledge has continued in the postcolonial world. It shapes the careers and labour of all intellectual workers in the periphery.

In recent decades, there has been growing contestation of global-North dominance in feminist thought (Bulbeck, 1998; Connell, 2014). It is not my purpose in this paper to explore the issues about knowledge, but it is relevant to notice the issues about gender that postcolonial and global-South writers have been raising. In a powerful argument, Amina Mama (1997, p. 48) shows that to understand violence against women in postcolonial Africa, we must understand the violence of colonialism. Ashis Nandy (1983), in a brilliant study of masculinity in colonialism, showed how the violence of colonialism shaped the construction of masculinity not only among the colonized, but also among the colonizers. More recently, Diego Santos Vieira de Jesus (2011) has offered an impressive general interpretation of the changing patterns of masculinity produced by empire and by changing global capitalism.

Indigenous writers, such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000) in Australia, and decolonial writers, such as Maria Lugones (2007), thinking about Latin America, emphasize the formative, not just intersecting, role of racial division for gender relations in colonial and postcolonial societies. The great feminist economist Bina Agarwal (1994) in India has emphasized the importance of land ownership for women's situation in agricultural society. Indigenous movements in many regions connect gender with dispossession and land rights. The process of dispossession, central to colonization itself, was a crucial condition for the formation of the gendered workforces of colonial society – in households, plantations, and mines – that were mapped by scholars like Saffioti.

Postcolonial, decolonial, and Southern feminists have thus made an important intervention in our collective understanding of gender and its politics, triggering shifts that reverberate in the global North as well as the global periphery (Harding, 2008; Mohanty, 2003). What this movement has not yet done, though it is an important task for worldwide feminist strategy, is to develop an understanding of the new global forms of gendered power.

Since these forms are closely connected with the societies of the global North (later I will discuss how they are moving offshore), we need to use Northern research to illuminate them. This is not because Northern gender research gives us a universal understanding of gender, as assumed in the mainstream economy of knowledge. Rather, we need the specificity of this research, its capacity to document the forms that gender relations and practices take in centres of global power.

In this paper, I will invert the knowledge-making process described by Hountondji (still normal in global studies of gender), where data from the global South goes into the theory-making machine of the North. Here, I will use data from the North, in a Southern theoretical perspective on global power. I agree with Marta Lamas (2011) about the importance, indeed the necessity, of theory for the feminist movement. But I emphasize that theoretical perspectives of importance have already emerged from the colonial and postcolonial world (Connell, 2015).

The world of Davos

How do we now understand the commanding heights (to use an old metaphor) of the global economic and political order, in terms of gender? When we look at the World Economic Forum in Davos, what do we see – in gender terms? When we look at global military operations, resistance, terrorism, and peace negotiations, what do we see – in gender terms? When we look at the so-often-invoked global market forces, what do we see – in gender terms?

In the global economy, the dominant form of organization is the transnational corporation (TNC). This is a good place to start thinking about gender, and not just about women. In October 2014, the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, gave an address to the World Investment Forum, where she explained that TNCs could do much for the empowerment of women (UN Women, 2014). Her speech did not consider the nature of power within TNCs, and that may be just as well. Almost all of their top managers are men.

There is long-established evidence of the deeply gendered character of corporations in the global North (Cheng, 1996; Cockburn, 1991). To this, we can add studies of managers and elites in other parts of the world (Olavarría, 2009). Transnational corporations have gendered divisions of labour. They employ large numbers of women as light-industrial factory hands, and as clerical, sales, and service workers. They employ large numbers of men as fuel and transport workers, guards and private police, technicians, and tradesmen. But there are complexities introduced by scale and global operations.

These complexities are illuminated by Juanita Elias' (2008) discussion of the garment sector in Malaysia with its low-wage, gender-divided workforce. Factory management is in the hands of local men who deploy family networks and political connections, and sustain an ideology of docile, productive femininity for their workers. At the level of production in the factory, the firms are still Taylorist and authoritarian. Overall investment and international trade is in the hands of elite managers, whose working world is very different. Here, there is an ideology of 'teamwork'. In other industries too the TNC functions through an alliance between different patterns of masculinity: those sustained by globally mobile elite managers, usually from rich capital-exporting countries, and local patriarchies in the global periphery.

Transnational corporations, however, are not the only powerful institutions that operate globally. Worldwide markets, including capital markets and commodity markets, are capable of putting tremendous pressure on local political systems via currency, credit, and investment strategies. These markets are institutionalized systems, now strongly technologized, with definite gender regimes of their own (e.g. Levin, 2001). They are linked via transnational communication systems, which include telephone and computer systems underlying the Internet, and the globalized mass media. International economic links are made through the bulk transport systems involved in international trade, that allow states to pursue the neoliberal 'comparative advantage' strategy, and employ mobile workforces overwhelmingly of men.

The state, long a concern of feminist political strategy (Eisenstein, 1996), does not exist only at the national or local level. There is a conflict-ridden but increasingly important international state. This includes the linked military and intelligence systems of major powers (many of them currently connected in the US-managed 'war on terror'); the strongly gendered character of the military is familiar. There is also an international civilian state, which includes the United Nations system, and agencies like the OECD that provide coordination for the neoliberal policy regime.

In the neoliberal global economy, then, different forms of gendered power come into contact. As Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) showed long ago, we are not dealing with a homogeneous patriarchy on a global scale.

Power holders: four groups

Acknowledging that the emerging global gender order is lumpy and variegated, we cannot approach the question of the top levels of power expecting to find one master centre. In this section, I will consider some research about patterns of gender among four key social groups, who on almost any reckoning are major players in global power relations, though they have different

bases in the institutional terrain just sketched. In making this analysis, I share the view of [José Maurício Domingues \(2009\)](#) that we can treat modernity as a single, though highly differentiated, global civilization, which can be understood sociologically.

To give them summary labels, the groups to be considered are as follows: (1) the corporate managers, who run the TNCs and major financial institutions, such as the World Bank; (2) the oligarchs, possessors of extreme wealth, whether family or personal; (3) the dictators, i.e. the political and military controllers of authoritarian states; and (4) the state elites of the global metropole, the officials (elected and non-elected) of the neoliberal governments of western Europe and north America. With each, I will ask how we might understand the gender dynamics they contribute to an emerging global gender order.

The corporate managers

In considering gender patterns at the top level of business management, we have to start with the simple fact that the overwhelming majority of elite managers are men. In 2014, the US business magazine *Fortune* celebrated a ‘historic high’ in the percentage of women among the top managers of the top 500 transnational corporations. That ‘historic high’ was 4.8%. It fell the following year. The elite level of transnational corporate management is practically a gender monopoly for men.

This is not the crux of the matter, however. The vital thing is the kind of masculinity, i.e. configuration of gender practices, embedded in the management milieu ([Kerfoot, 1999](#)). In my research with finance industry managers in Australia ([Connell, 2010a](#)), a work-oriented, controlling pattern of masculinity was clearly present, strongest among those closest to the top levels of corporate power. A supportive wife, sometimes with a minor career of her own, was presumed. A penumbra of other patterns existed, but did not form a clear alternative.

A study of an international merger of finance companies in Scandinavia shows very clearly the impact of globalization processes. [Tienari, Söderberg, Holgersson, and Vaara \(2005\)](#) conducted interviews with the top executives of the merged firm, ‘Scanbank’. The senior managers were almost all men, and took no interest in gender equality. They assumed management was naturally men’s business, ‘constructed according to the core family and male-breadwinner model’. The researchers conclude that the conditions of transnational business intensify the discourse of managerial masculinity as competitive, mobile, and work-driven – overriding the Scandinavian political discourse of gender equality.

Perhaps the most dramatic indication of a strongly masculinized social milieu is [Judy Wajcman’s \(1999\)](#) study of women managers in globally oriented high-technology firms in Britain. She found that women managers were under heavy pressure to act just like the men: to work long hours, fight in the office wars, put pressure on their subordinates, and focus on profit. In order to survive in this world, the women managers had to re-structure their domestic lives so they, like the men, could shed responsibilities for childcare, cooking, and housework.

Those are the patterns that emerge at the descriptive level. In understanding how elite managerial masculinity works as a process, two points are crucial. First, the managerial elite is self-selected; those who rise into it are chosen by those already there. The selection is extreme, there is an ‘up or out’ pattern, and there is little compassion for those regarded as underperforming. The rewards, in money and prestige, are very high. Towards the top, annual salaries are in tens of millions of dollars – equivalent to the interest earnings on fortunes of hundreds of millions of dollars.

So the pressures for conformity, for acceptance of an institutionally defined hegemonic masculinity, are very strong. It is interesting that the imagery of management created in neoliberal

media, such as the business newspaper *The Economist*, emphasizes ‘teamwork’ (Hooper, 2000). Nevertheless, the crucial performance tests concern the corporate organization’s core business, which is to accumulate profit. The modern transnational corporation, when running well with its patriarchal alliances and gender-divided workforce, is a formidable engine for grasping a growing share of the social product. When harnessed to a monopoly position in a new and growing market – as IBM, Microsoft and Google in turn have been – the accumulation of collective wealth and power is spectacular.

That, in turn, requires a technical conformity, which is not very visible on the outside. This is the second key point. Modern transnational managers are the real cyborgs of our era. They work within computer-based intranets that provide prescriptive templates for what they do, and record their work for review and auditing (Connell, 2010b). They work and travel in an artificial environment of corporate skyscrapers, jet aircraft, luxury hotels, and limousines, constantly meeting and dealing with others of their kind. It is not surprising that *The Economist*’s representation of managers also uses technocratic, new-frontier imagery.

There is an almost comical mismatch between the actual labour process in corporate management and the neoliberal rhetoric of heroic individualism, innovation, and freedom. But there is nothing comical about the service industries that support this masculine life-world. Here, one finds the feminized labour of maids, receptionists, secretaries, Personal Assistants, bar hostesses, high-end sex workers, and in the gated communities they call home, the wives.

The oligarchs

An old debate, going back as far as James Burnham’s *The Managerial Revolution* (1943), concerns the managers as a class and their relation to the owners of capital. The managerial revolution did not quite happen. Though the growing scale of corporations made a managerial workforce essential to contemporary capitalism, its elite level did not divide socially or politically from the owners of large capital (Zeitlin, 1974). Nor has this happened under neoliberal globalization, despite the advent of funds and the offshoring of corporate operations. Immensely rich families still count for a great deal at the top level of business (Haseler, 2000).

Ownership of large capital through inheritance of family wealth is a significantly different pathway to elite power from rising through a corporate bureaucracy, and involves different gender mechanisms. The large family fortunes have usually combined corporate organization of production with patriarchal family forms. Inheritance is normally in the male line, women being recruited as breeders of the next generation of men. (In the absence of male heirs a woman may inherit, but this is thought anomalous.) The family generally owns a controlling interest, i.e. enough shares in the group’s holding corporations to control appointments and major decisions.

The sons who inherit the business need two things. One is basic competence in business management. Without this, family disaster can follow. This happened in Australia to the historic Fairfax media fortune in 1990. A young inheritor, Warwick Fairfax, took over the company, tried to privatize it, and drove it to collapse in three years.

The other thing needed is defence against the many predators who circle large fortunes. Research by Mike Donaldson and Scott Poynting, in their unique book *Ruling Class Men* (2007), showed very rich families surrounding their children with protections, both physical and social (a major function of elite schools). They trained the children in a sense of social superiority, above all trying to toughen the boys to produce a formidable, dominating masculinity. This is not quite the same as the cyborg masculinity of the managers – it does not require much technical skill or integration with corporate intranets. The very rich can hire people to do that for them.

The group for whom the term ‘oligarchs’ came back into use is the new rich of post-communist Russia. The neoliberal economy is turbulent and does create chances for rapid accumulation in one lifetime, usually by establishing a lucrative near-monopoly or inserting oneself into a financing or delivery chokepoint in a major industry. The Walton, Zuckerberg, and Koch fortunes, as well as the oil, gas, and media fortunes of Russia, are examples. The famous Enron collapse of 2001, destroying one of the banner companies of the ‘new economy’ in the USA, came from an attempt to establish such control in energy supply and financing (Fox, 2003).

The new-rich groups who have arisen in authoritarian regimes are among the most visible of the oligarchs. They reveal a close relationship between great wealth and state power. The control of industries such as Russian gas or Chinese media requires constant massaging of political connections in a homosocial milieu, resulting in pervasive, everyday exchange of favours, bribes, appointments, rights, and permissions. But this makes even the wealthiest vulnerable to ruthless political action. This was dramatically shown by Vladimir Putin’s destruction of the oil billionaire Khodorkovsky, the most prominent of the Russian oligarchs. It is emphasized by the current anti-corruption campaign in China launched by Xi Jinping. Such moves do not eliminate corruption – which is a structural feature of the system – but shift the balance of factional power in the ruling group.

Almost none of the major personal fortunes were established by women. This is not because of the organizational squeezing-out that happens to women in the corporate bureaucracy. There is actually a greater diversity of masculinities in the oligarchical world, from Steve Jobs to Silvio Berlusconi. But there is gendered exclusion all the same. Rapid building of large fortunes depends crucially on a mixture of political support, financial credit, and deal making in masculinized social milieux, to which few women have access – except as hostesses.

The dictators

The violent regimes that came to power in Uruguay and Chile in 1973 became known as ‘civil-military dictatorship’ (*dictadura civico-militar*), and this phrase is a useful clue to the character of authoritarian regimes in the neoliberal era. They combine militarized police power over their own populations, with civilian involvement in management of the state, and corporate organization of an export-oriented economy integrated with global markets. The combination was sufficiently original to make the Pinochet regime a historic pioneer of neoliberalism.

A similar path has been pursued, from different starting points, by post-communist regimes in much more powerful states, China since Deng, and Russia under Putin. The political controllers of these regimes are exclusively men – the monopoly is even stronger than among transnational corporations. The last woman to have major political power in China, Jiang Qing (one of the so-called ‘Gang of Four’), has been vilified relentlessly by the post-Mao regime.

Around the postcolonial world is a penumbra of dictatorships on a smaller scale, which produce concentrations of wealth sometimes comparable to oligarchs’ fortunes in the global metropole. This involves ‘crony capitalism’ where groups close to the regime, profiting from subsidies and monopolies, do deals with transnational corporations to extract and market their resources (e.g. Indonesia under the military dictator Suharto; Hadiz & Robison, 2003).

The family dictatorship set up by Ibn Saud in central Arabia a hundred years ago is the most remarkable. It has amazing wealth, it has leveraged British and US support into a heavily armed, violent and tightly controlled regime, and it has an ideological agenda. The Saudis have financed the export, around the Muslim world, of the strikingly misogynistic Wahhabi version of Islam, and have themselves maintained an absolute exclusion of women from power. There was laughter

around the world when Saudi Arabia recently tried to become chair of the UN Human Rights Council. The laughter became sour when its ambassador actually was made chair of a panel of human rights experts (Brooks-Pollock, 2015).

Most postcolonial dictatorships do not have that kind of stability. Some reasons are indicated by Achille Mbembe's brilliant study *On the Postcolony* (2001), focussed on central Africa. Ruling groups formed from late-colonial male elites built systems of domination based on patronage relationships. These allowed economic and sexual privilege to the rulers while giving a degree of social stability. But these regimes were undermined by weakening terms of trade and 'structural adjustment programmes' from the World Bank and IMF. Predatory elites, increasing social turbulence, and multiplication of armed groups became the new normal, with development concentrated in enclave economies based on deals between transnational business and warlords.

To the extent these conditions hold, no stable gender order will be produced. The gendered power, to quote an old Maoist phrase, grows out of the barrel of a gun. The arms trade, especially the supply of light automatic weapons, becomes a factor in the gender order. But that brings us back to the armed forces, part of the ruling alliance in all authoritarian regimes.

There is a considerable body of research on military forces and gender (e.g. Sinclair-Webb, 2000). Armies have long used collective masculinity as a way to hold their forces together under the terrible stresses of war. Military training is, in large measure, an emphatic regime for forming a certain kind of masculinity – emphasizing obedience to orders, solidarity with comrades, fear of weakness and signs of femininity, willingness to inflict wounds and death, and contempt for outsiders. It is not surprising that armies and paramilitary forces are rape machines, and produce death squads for social cleansing. The officers get a modified training because armies need more than one kind of masculinity, but the same themes run through.

It is not surprising that military dictatorships have usually been patriarchal, homophobic, and unpopular. The gender regimes of some military forces are now changing, with new technologies of surveillance, combat and social control, and the recruitment of women in countries with equal opportunity policies. There is, currently, an interesting re-negotiation of masculinities going on at management levels in armed forces and the private 'security' industry (Connell, 2013). This has not yet happened in the military wing of civil-military dictatorships.

The neoliberal state elites

Though neoliberal ideology purports to shrink the public sector, the actual shrinking is highly selective, and mainly concerns services to working-class people. States, especially the states of the metropole, remain major centres of power. They have, however, been re-shaped internally, and this has included a re-making of state elites. Bureaucratic forms of rule-bound hierarchy, accompanied by an ideology of public service, have been replaced by a highly paid contract-based elite, with an ideology of efficiency and performance. The new elites are oriented to market principles as much as public service. This is called 'the new public management' (Ricucci, 2001).

The most illuminating study of this process came quite early in the neoliberal era, and was made not in the global North but in settler-colonial Australia. The sociologist Michael Pusey (1991) showed how public acceptance of neoliberal policy was preceded by an ideological and professional transformation of the upper levels of the civil service, installing a market ideology even when a notionally socialist government was in office. Later research in the same country showed a transformation of the labour process of public sector managers, closer and closer to the model of corporate management (Connell, 2010b). An older form of bureaucratic paternalism was thus changed into a more fluid but also more arbitrary and irresponsible patriarchy.

There are many variants of this story. Alison Woodward's (1996) study of the European Union showed how the attempt to create a multinational bureaucracy installed male domination and masculinized culture in the new organization, as constituent national patriarchies represented themselves in Brussels.

The rise of Japan to economic power in the 1960s and 1970s saw a close cooperation of state elites and business elites, orchestrated by the famous MITI, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. This was a classic state bureaucracy, created in the 1940s. Japanese corporations at the time had a rule-bound bureaucratic character associated with the 'salaryman' model of managerial masculinity, and a stark gender division of labour between male managers and female secretaries. It was only near the end of the century, after a period of economic stagnation, that neoliberal deregulation and organizational change gained strength in Japan. Simultaneously, the salaryman model of masculinity was criticized and began to change (Roberson & Suzuki, 2003; Taga, Higashino, Sasaki, & Murata, 2011).

State managers control the public sector organizations and do a lot to determine policies, but do little to win legitimacy for policies or institutions. That is the role of another elite group, the politicians, who in metropolitan countries are usually party leaders. Occasionally, they are oligarchs who try to form a new party or take over an old one. Berlusconi was the most successful, creating a right-wing party that was essentially an outgrowth of his media and real estate companies (Ginsborg, 2004). In 2016, Trump has been trying to perform the same feat in the USA.

Because of the electoral/party mechanism, crucial to legitimacy in the metropole, the politicians are a more diverse group than the corporate managers, the generals, or the inheritors of wealth. They include leaders of labour or socialist parties (Blair, Hollande), and they include a proportion of women (Thatcher, Merkel) who are careful to distance themselves from feminism.

Needing to win elections, where, as a result of past feminist struggles, women have the vote, has usually restrained mainstream politicians from expressing gross misogyny. But nothing compels them to redistribute resources towards women. Neoliberalism generally redistributes towards the rich, and (through privatization) shifts resources into market mechanisms where men have stronger control. Not surprisingly, the historic movement towards wage equality between women and men has now stalled. An individualized 'equal opportunity' regime, without structural change, is the main result of liberal feminist politics in the metropole.

Reflections

After generations of feminist struggle, men with varying forms of privilege still greatly predominate in positions of global power, in some sectors holding a complete monopoly. Hegemonic forms of masculinity are still integrated with organizational authority, though in new configurations. Neoliberalism produces, in the managerial and oligarchical sectors, a specific association of the hegemonic form with the drive for profit, and a ruthless disregard of the consequences for other people and for the natural environment. This trend is now given symbolic expression in the United States in the hard-neoliberal ideology of the Tea Party, the climate deniers, and their billionaire funders such as the Koch brothers.

It is not the case that masculinity as such is logically connected either with profit making or with the ethical deep freeze and institutionalized cruelty of neoliberalism. As Raúl Prebisch (1982) argued to the end of his life, ethics is fundamental in thinking about the global economy. There have been, indeed there still are, paternalistic versions of elite masculinity. However, these versions now find expression in corporate 'philanthropy' – with managerial prerogative to pick and choose causes, strikingly evident in the Gates Foundation. Such funds do not involve a commitment to an

institutionalized welfare state, job security for workers, or any redistribution of wealth and power towards women.

The practical connection between elite masculinities and neoliberalism has a lot to do with the collective character of profit making in the neoliberal era. In stark contradiction with the ideology of individualism, the actual labour process in industries like oil (foundation of the Koch fortune) or information technology (foundation of the Gates fortune) involves the tightly coordinated operation of a large workforce.

A generation ago, the German sociologist [Claus Offe \(1976\)](#) proved the falsity of the doctrine that income reflects individual contributions to profit. In the collective labour of the large modern corporation, there is no *rational* way to measure individual contributions. The pseudo-measurements that are made reflect partly occupational custom, partly organizational power, and as feminist research has added, partly the gendered construction of ‘merit’ ([Burton, 1987](#)). In the neoliberal era, with a higher level of technological mediation of production, this argument is even stronger. Its force is revealed in the cyborg-like, collectivized labour process of corporate managers – though it is precisely the corporate managers who most directly benefit from the myth of individual achievement in justifying their huge incomes.

But the character of elite masculinities also has to do with the heterogeneity of profit streams in global neoliberalism. Unlike the systems models of Marxism and neoclassical economics, the contemporary global economy does not have one central mechanism of exploitation, income determination, or accumulation. Contrary to the most influential explanations produced by Northern scholars (e.g. [Duménil & Lévy, 2004](#)), we cannot understand neoliberalism as arising from system crisis in the global North. Even in the limited terrain of the four elite groups described above, there are different logics producing major accumulations of wealth. These logics include extractive industry sustained by violence, exploitation of a mass factory workforce, commodification of public assets formerly held by the state, monopoly position in a newly created market, and control of choke points in communication and transport.

The immediate consequence is a great need for transnational integration and coordination of heterogeneous flows of profit and forms of wealth. Hence the expansion of banking, credit, insurance, hedging, currency trading and securitization. The much-discussed ‘financialization’ of capitalism centrally concerns the transformations of one form of profit into another. Hence also the expansion of the international state: agencies like the IMF and OECD, and the linked security and surveillance apparatuses.

If we think of these mechanisms and agencies as defining a gendered social milieu, the continued preoccupation of elite masculinities with power becomes understandable. Elite power does not work by simple vertical command, but combines command and technical knowledge with capacity for lateral negotiation, deal making, and the building of alliances. That is the combination we see in the more impressive transnational CEOs.

Here, we come back to the issue with which this paper began: the global dimension of gender. The deepening of the global economy which has been accomplished by neoliberalism (a matter of the massive increase of long-distance material trade, as much as financial integration) together with the elaborating of transnational institutions (corporate, state, communication, market), has created an increasing capacity for power to move offshore. This is not a matter of moving from one national base to another, but moving into another kind of geometry where there is not exactly a national base at all.

Perhaps the first manifestation of this capacity was the appearance of the Eurodollar market in the 1950s–60s. Dollar-denominated deposits held in banks outside the USA, therefore outside

the control of the US financial authorities, became the de facto international currency for global trade and finance.

But the process takes many other forms. Transnational corporations, originating as the overseas operations of nationally based companies, manipulate transfer prices and relocate their profits to escape taxation. Some relocate their places of registration to escape other kinds of regulation, and most now finance their operations by loans and capital raisings from many countries at once. Their senior managers travel continuously. Their corporate intranets have moved into a de-nationalized cyberspace, which, courtesy of communications satellites, can be accessed from most parts of the globe. If you look them up on the Web you may not even be told where the corporation is, you will just get telephone numbers or Internet addresses. In a sense, Head Office does not exist any more.

Of course, this is not absolute. Even CEOs need places to lay their heads, and homes and schools to put their wives and children in. [Saskia Sassen \(2000\)](#) notes the de-territorialization of power but also recognizes central places where transnational management is concentrated. There is a gradient from strongly localized power to notably offshored power.

Whatever the gradient, it is important to think about the implications that the process of offshoring has for gender relations. Just as it takes corporate profits out of the control of national tax and fiscal authorities, offshoring takes the daily lives of powerful people increasingly out of the influence of local gender regimes, cultures, and politics. We saw a striking example of that with the Scanbank corporate executives. Feminism is strong in the Scandinavian countries, but there is no feminist movement in international banking.

Offshoring to escape taxation points to another important feature of global gendered power. There are endemic conflicts between different groups in the global elite. Among them are taxation; territory (Crimea, Senkaku Islands); cyber-espionage; human rights agendas; climate policy. There have been attempts to coordinate these groups, going back to the 1970s when the Rockefellers funded the 'Trilateral Commission' to link business, government, and intellectual elites in the USA, Japan, and western Europe ([Sklar, 1980](#)). More recently, the OECD has researched and coordinated policy among the rich neoliberal states. The Davos meetings of the World Economic Forum have provided a discussion venue for corporate and state elites.

None of these have produced a strong mechanism for practical collaboration on a world scale. In no sense should speaking of a global elite imply consensus and cultural agreement. Tension and contestation is normal. At this level, we cannot assume a stable gender order or an established hegemony. At best, there is a convergence of groups embodying different forms of patriarchy, who in the neoliberal global economy are compelled to negotiate with each other. There is no single hegemonic masculinity here.

But there are shared interests. Above all, there is a shared interest in the preservation of the institutional order that makes the concentration of profit and the preservation of fortunes possible. That is to say, all these groups of power holders seek to preserve the apparatus of private property, the state system of enforcement, the corporate mechanism of production, and the international system of circulation and finance.

The defence of this institutional apparatus against the resistances and oppositions that the neoliberal order generates is not a pretty business ([Gutiérrez Sanín & Schönwälder, 2010](#)). It involves a militarized policing of geographical and social boundaries, with punitive expeditions and occupations that suspend any rule of law. The shock treatment that establishes neoliberal regimes creates liminal zones in which the criminality of the powerful flourishes, as seen in the aftermath of one of these punitive expeditions to the colonial world, the US invasion of Iraq ([Whyte, 2007](#)).

The legitimacy of this institutional order has never been complete. In earlier generations, it was challenged by metropolitan labour movements and colonial insurgencies, imagining alternative social worlds. These movements have largely been defeated or incorporated by the combination of brutality, bribery, and fragmentation that is a large part of humanity's recent history. The electoral politics of the metropole is now fought out within a neoliberal elite, offering at most alternative emphases within the corporate economy; no other social group has a chance of coming to power legitimately.

But the anger that drove socialist and anti-colonial movements remains alive in the neoliberal era. The conditions of mass poverty, growing inequality, and blocked development have created great cultural disturbances around masculinity (Ghousoub, 2000). And with the death of the egalitarian hopes historically expressed in the *Pantjasila* in Indonesia, in Ambedkar's constitution of India, in China's peasant revolution, in CEPAL, in Arab socialism, in the triumph of the ANC—other forms of opposition have developed which are emphatically not egalitarian.

Which is where Kalashnikovs come in. Created by a state design team including the Red Army sergeant who was officially credited, the AK-47 was a simple, tough and extremely reliable automatic rifle, an infantry weapon that has never been bettered. Mass produced to re-equip the biggest army in the world, then for the USSR's satellites and allies, and then flooding the international arms market and becoming the symbol of insurgencies, after seventy years, there are estimated to be 100 million AK-47s, or variants, in the world. Meanwhile, the US arms industry was producing its own flood of personal weaponry, supplying military forces, private gun owners, and the drug trade.

Between the two flows, supplemented from other places, it has become easy for insurgencies and private armies to become well armed. The social turbulence, mass poverty, and despair that has generated the international drug trade, fundamentalist militancy, and separatist and nationalist movements have become, increasingly, lethal. It is not entirely by chance that the US state progressed, over a generation, from a War on Poverty, to a War on Drugs, to a War on Terror.

The dynamics of neoliberal globalization have generated oppositions and conflicts that, in gender terms, take the shape of masculinity challenges. This is familiar in studies of interpersonal violence (Tomsen, 1997). Here, they are projected on a larger scale, and in contexts where military weapons turned on civilian targets often suit the strategies of the protagonists. That is to say, the global elites are increasingly confronted with dispersed oppositional masculinities that work in novel ways and have few inhibitions about violence, from Islamic State to Los Zetas.

Not just a power-oriented masculinity but also a cultivated callousness is involved in organizing abductions of girls, suicide bombings, femicide, beheadings, and mass addiction. It seems close to the callousness involved in drone strikes, mass sackings, structural adjustment programmes, nuclear armaments, and the relentless destruction of our common environment. Mahatma Gandhi was once asked for his opinion of Western civilization. He replied, 'It would be a good idea'.

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