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Localising the State:

Gender Policies at Interfaces of Different Knowledge and Social Spaces in West Africa

Gudrun Lachenmann University of Bielefeld

The paper aims at engendering development policies with regard to agency and knowledge arenas in the everyday practice of state – civil society – citizens relations (based mainly on examples from West Africa). The focus lies on interaction and dynamic interfaces between different sectors and spheres including state agencies, markets, subsistence systems and social movements in supposedly participatory arenas. The analytical argument refers to the broadly acknowledged lack of social cohesion by showing how informalisation processes of predominantly female institutions take place, even and precisely during formalisation of crosscutting issues like social security, livelihoods, and even decentralisation and democratisation. Thereby the prevailing dualistic concepts are overcome which lead to ignore these relations constituted through embeddedness of the economy and translocal relations, or the social spaces constituted by female (and peasant) groups thereby delegitimising forms of mutual help. The engendering of the pubic sphere, on the contrary, takes place through negotiating gender policies.

Keywords West Africa, engendering development policies, informalisation of institutions, social security, livelihoods, embeddedness of economy, social spaces, knowledge arenas

In general, it is assumed that women have been less involved in relations with the colonial and postcolonial, neo-patrimonial, "failing" state, regarding economic opportunities but also political class and public sphere. Under one-party rule, there were women-wings controlled from above, where there has been no autonomous women's movement. However, state legitimacy depends very much on women's constituency. Recent new concepts in development have not been gendered, such as social policy, good governance and decentralisation. The latter is used as an example to show how earlier achievements by women and peasant groups (e.g. Senegal) are not fitted in the blueprint logic of development plans to be elaborated by local government/decentralisation programmes. The question is whether a transformation of the public sphere takes place in the sense of multiple and overlapping social spaces, critical knowledge negotiation, with direct feedback to local governance, authorities and state services. Special attention is paid to conceptualisation of a dynamic, agency and structuration based on the sociology of knowledge approach. Gender analyses have shown that not only is diversity important as a methodological outlook against cultural relativism, but so is the gendered structure of knowledge distribution and production. Women are knowledgeable actors and not only to be described as natural bearers of traditional knowledge in the fields of healing, biodiversity, and similar fields while at the same time complaining about their marginalisation.

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Processes of gendered structuration and informalisation

On the one hand, African institutions tend to be conceptualised in quite formalistic and modernistic terms[1] that differentiate between formal and informal institutions and sectors as well as social security, public and private spheres, traditional and modern forms of governance, and civil society and the state. This entails the demarcation of strict frontiers, without taking into account the interfaces generated by crosscutting knowledge and resource transfers, the social embeddedness of institutions, the permanent renegotiation of social identities, and the enormous flexibility of structures and agency in general. On the other hand, mainstream development institutions perceive the lacking social cohesion of society and bad governance, including corruption, as the main obstacles in Africa to development – phenomena which are seen as indicative of the blurring of boundaries and lack of autonomy between state, economic, familial, public, and other spheres.

This paper will investigate the spheres and sectors which offer cases of empirical interest involving interfaces and crosscutting issues, ongoing institutionalisation processes unnoticed by development policies and research (see for example the institutions intended to "coordinate human behaviour in "Institutions for Sustainable Development", World Bank 2003). Since the publication of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO 1972) and Keith Hart's noteworthy articles in the 1970s on the informal sector based on the examples of Kenya and Ghana, the concept of the informal sector has become a "black box" that is used without further analysis, usually with the (often implicit) understanding that modernisation and development would eventually cause this sector to disappear. Sometimes it is believed that formalisation of policies and measures risks destroying the informal sector's basic functioning, by making it subject to taxation and state control, for example, thereby abolishing its inherent dynamics. Sometimes this sector is still considered backward and avoidable, yet on the other hand many poverty studies recognise that more and more livelihoods are secured by this informal sector. It is also noted that women are its main actors, which implies that economic efficiency is much lower and promotion policies are hardly able to take hold.

Neither the constitutive character of this field for the general economy, nor the special interaction between formal and informal sector, which I suggest to address here, are the subjects of serious examination. Furthermore, the processes of informalisation are not viewed as a part of ongoing transformations. To a large extent, these aspects have also been neglected in the recent debates surrounding "informal institutions" that basically refer to normal everyday social institutions existing in all societies that do not lead to processes of exclusion when not formalised.[2] Hart (2008, p. 4, 7) highlights the "dialectic of formal and informal economy in the context of 'development' discourse over the last four decades" and refers to the effects of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) as having an "informalising" effect on the economy. Meagher (2007) states an apparent decrease in knowledge about their present day reality yet growing interest and "expansion of informality". Bierschenk (2004) analyses "informalisation" together with privatisation of conflict regulation in the judiciary system in Benin.[3]

Yet we cannot speak only of informal institutions, as they are indeed societal institutions, but have to examine their marginalising status as will be shown in the case of social spaces constituted through social movements as against decentralisation, for example. Meagher (2007, p. 408) omits the sociological interpretative and agency-oriented approaches such as those that appear in this essay, but correctly recognises the innovative vs. disruptive political forces of institutional development. However, her general classification of "modern informal institutions", among which she includes women's organisations, as well as the disruption of formal or informal institutions – by patrimonial networks, for example – that takes place during decentralisation may be analytically convincing. The terms "institutional pluralism" and "blurring of boundaries" are certainly useful tools for analysis (idem, p. 412 ff.), as they refer to an intertwining of the formal and informal which in reality leads to the

irrelevance of the distinction.

A further approach will possibly provide useful insights for social analysis, namely James Ferguson's work (2007) "Global shadows: Africa and the world" which takes up the classical conceptualisation of what are referred to as unofficial, non-recognised and informal spheres characterised by "shadows".[4] Shadows refer to doubling (Ferguson 2007:15) as well as, parallel, and Western version of modernity, corresponding to what I conceive as the shifting of boundaries between imagined modern institutions and the informal, traditional, or non-modern world. A strict demarcation leads to unrealistic concepts irrelevant of agency that therefore cannot guide policies.

These debates can be connected with our approach of looking at concepts of development that are negotiated locally. Development is conceived in a very broad sense as social change and transformation brought about by political action, civil society, and purposeful policy intervention. Concrete areas to be studied are issues of how to organise local development within decentralisation processes (see Roesel, von Trotha eds. 1999), while taking into account the typical female fields of responsibility such as social and health security (in Senegal) and economic and environmental strategies (in Cameroon).

Gendered structuration might serve as interfaces between formal and informal institutions of social security (or finance) that crosscut boundaries of formal institutions, formally employed persons, and distances that create innovative forms of linking; social networks, livelihoods, the cooperation between genders regarding the exchange of resources and labour, and the crossing of boundaries between different logics of economic agency – such as in the areas of reproduction and production that are not taken into account when conceiving and combating poverty. I am talking about business women interacting with men who work in formal institutions and vice versa; borders are drawn as a result of recent development policies between local governance institutions and civil society organisations that can be analysed by studying social spaces of negotiating public issues or conceiving formal institutions – such as social forestry (without taking into account the diverse concepts of boundaries), or informal institutions such as the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes (which are structured according to gender), etc., as well as religious, male, and female groups and organisations that constitute crosscutting spaces.

We (Lachenmann 2004a, c: Nageeb 2004) have become increasingly aware of female social spaces in many African societies whose boundaries are very diverse and which very often shrink over the course of socio-economic changes. These spaces are defined by the division of labour, cooperation, responsibilities, productive activities, and by social institutions. They are linked to the overall system, where difference is maintained, but women nevertheless can and do claim equity and equality in society and the political system. For instance, decentralisation (Lachenmann 2006a) at first glance seems as if it would offer advantages to women. However, it is possible that more informal spaces in which gender relations are negotiated will further discriminate against women and bring the unequal gender constructs applied by the state down to the base level over the course of formalisation.

In most African countries, gender is still handled according to the classical "Women in Development" (WID) approach that looks at the "roles of women" and views them as housewives instead of producers. Households (representing the domestic economy) are considered to represent the private, reproductive, and consuming sector as "closed shops" or "black boxes" that function as a single unit (even if bargaining and decision-making approaches exist in microeconomics). The complex system of internal cooperation among genders, social embeddedness, and different translocal relations are not considered. The same is true of the gendered structure of the economy (Elson 1995).

This means that many opportunities and efficient economic policies are lost, and here I do not only mean the typical "access to xyz" approaches that ignore the link between the reproductive and productive sectors. This refers to "income generating activities" which seek to assist all women by means of microcredit schemes – the proponents of these projects cynically assume that women are supposedly better when it comes to repayment. It can be assumed

that one of the main economic problems in Africa is the issue of how to overcome the disruption of the embedded economy caused by "modern" approaches.

Attention should be paid to interaction between different fields, groups, institutions, co-operation (e.g. in the field of technology), brokers, flexible organisation of work, and analysis of the concrete risks of market integration. Of further interest are the social organisation of resource management and the allocation of resources in different sectors – e.g. in programmes and projects in the agricultural sphere, whereby women are often excluded but create hidden strategies which then enable them to edge their way in after all and obtain access to new economic opportunities, collective forms of land tenure, and collateral for borrowing, for example.

The problem of poverty analysis (World Bank 2000) is the fact that women are labelled as "vulnerable groups". No link is made to approaches that are orientated towards analysing women as actors, including their room for manoeuvre and empowerment within societal and institutional structures and relations such as good governance, decentralisation, nor is there a move towards a gender analysis of structural adjustment and the links between the reproductive and productive sectors. It soon becomes clear how short-sighted analytical approaches to poverty actually are as a result of their failure to analyse the aspects of social embeddedness and contextualisation.

Social and food security, social embeddedness of the economy

The issues of food security as a global field of governance and of livelihoods/entitlements (A. Sen) as concepts of the social economy are very relevant in Africa and can be considered crosscutting areas (as are gender and environment). Livelihoods are very often constructed not only by means of the private and public, but also of translocal systems of social and gender relations. Social security is made up of permanently changing systems of gifts and distribution – to a large extent upheld by women – in a manner that links formal and informal institutions (Lachenmann 1997; Steinwachs 2006 on Tanzania; Elageed 2008 on Sudan). New and gendered translocal livelihood systems are created by migrants. In the past, only remittances were mentioned, but interesting research is now being conducted on the empirical construction of these systems. Typically, money from young male migrants is sent to their mothers – the older women – instead of the fathers (as I observed in Senegal). However, in some cases migrants enter into agreements with local traders in order to avoid conflict within the family. In many cases, there are groups and associations that assist at the sending end in Paris or New York, for example.

A typical case in point is the shared responsibility for education and health services between different family and social networks with links to family members working in the formal sector. Here I am thinking of the case of translocal gendered relations between two (ex) co-wives in Senegal. One takes care of all her children as a reproductive housewife with the support of a formally employed husband with corresponding connections to state institutions such as schools and hospitals. The other wife works in a semi-formal job in the peasant movement where she takes care of matters in the nation's capital such as accommodation and university access. She performs a variety of so called "self-help jobs" whose compensations and per-diems amount to a salary of sorts. She establishes connections to formal state-authority structures and policies by means of her former work in the community development sector (she lost this job as a result of structural adjustment).

A very important dimension of embeddedness or formal/informal connectivity is therefore "gendered social security" or social security in the widest sense of the term – alternatively, problems of "insecurity" and sustainable livelihoods (Risseeuw, Ganesh, eds. 1998). Women should be regarded as active providers/producers instead of passive recipients of social security who suffer the "impact" of crisis. It is important to analyse strategies such as survival strategies which different groups of women use in their quest for security within their respective social systems and systems of production. Furthermore, it is important to examine changing social institutions and their meaning in terms of social security, the institutional-

isation of patterns, modes, and strategies, the reinterpretation of social institutions, and the interaction between subsistence-market, urban-rural spaces, networks, social relations, and alliances that provide both social security and shifting solidarities.

During the process of decentralisation in Senegal, we have seen (Lachenmann et al. 2006, see below) that all the institutions introduced by the peasant movement (basically informal, or formalised in the sense of their own new organisational structures), including women groups (mostly informal be it the *Groupement de Promotion Feminine* [GPF] or *Groupement à Intéret Économique* [GIE]), are now facing stagnation as a result of their modes generally not being accepted by the formal sphere as they do not correspond to newly introduced structures that do not cover the same broad based needs. For quite some time, these movements (Lachenmann 1994) have taken care of "community management" (a World Bank term with no theoretical basis) or the collective care economy since the breakdown of the development state that started with a series of droughts, and introduced cereal banks, water supplies, grain mills, collective fields, resource protection, and other projects. Their logic does not correspond (Lachenmann 2006a) with either the formal development plans of the new communities or their completely privatised schemes for water, education, health. Since the start of structural adjustment programmes (SAP, Lachenmann 1998) 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 (see DeAllegri, Sanon, Sauerborn 2006; Lachenmann 2003), 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, it has been 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 local midwives.

The local economy is characterised by a "subsistence logic", with women taking as a priority and perspective livelihoods including household energy, water and following 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 there is a certain blockade, as the shifting from the social to the public level takes place (see Ngo Youmba-Batana 2007).

In order to "engender" development policy and overcome its dualistic approaches, one of the most important benchmarks is the transformation of gender relations; also in the field of the economy. In ongoing transformation processes, the risk of excluding women grows as a result of de facto formalisation and privatisation. That is why I posit an informalisation process regarding women's established social institutions. Women's security considerations, their mistrust of recommendations that they should integrate into the formal economy, and the necessary follow-up regarding autonomous fields of activities must be taken into account.

The gendered embeddedness of the economy within society (Lachenmann 2001 following Granovetter) includes economic relations beyond the level of households such as structures of cooperation, alliances (e.g. with rural communities and families of origin), social and collective access to resources, as well as the social organisation of markets and trading. Women have often concentrated either on the parallel economy far outside of the state or the "endogenous" economy – it is very important to examine what is happening to these female "alternative modes of accumulation" (Geschiere, Konings 1993; Schneider 1999) with the onset of liberalisation, deregulation, and re-regulation. This very typical interface and cooperation between "informal" and "formal" sector often represented by women 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 obtain business loans from banks. Of course, according to classical standards the efficiency of modern work is thereby lowered.

It appears that there are no new opportunities, as old channels are being used on a large scale by new speculative male ventures. Those which were previously offered by the Social Dimension of Adjustment Programmes, and which are now offered by current employment programmes (poverty programmes for "vulnerable" women, see e.g. on Ghana Rodenberg 2001), are generally directed towards "dynamic" and young urban men. As a result, women are crowded out of their "traditional" economic fields. Examples include vegetable gardens maintained by young men instead of women, cereal trade run by male co-operatives instead of women, etc., or the marketing of women-grown products by men and their training through development cooperation. The same effects can result from the dissolution of parastatals and marketing boards as well as from the breakdown of cash-crops produced for world markets (such as coffee and cocoa) which is accompanied by the entry of men into food crop market production (on Cameroon, see Batana 2007) following the introduction of new technologies. There is no real upgrading of women's self-employment structures. A link to regional economics, management of natural resources, and other fields is not being created. Poverty reduction programmes do not explicitly address the link to the mainstream economy. This means the informalisation of economic and social institutions has to be acknowledged – as opposed to defining the "local economy" as informal.

Nevertheless, economic informalisation is often recognised as the typical participation of women in a low-earning and precarious informal sector while balancing both domestic and external economic activities (see Tripp 1997). However, in terms of the World Bank's approach in highlighting women's economic potential (contrary to empowerment goals pursued at the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing), some have rightly pointed out that women "play a major role in both food production and marketing" but they have failed to mention the risk of women losing this important economic role when men start to enter food crop production and marketing, or in general, upscaling business. These observers do not seem to draw the methodological consequences and fail to seriously extend their data collection to the inter-household and inter-community level. On the other hand, for example, women can be shown to negotiate their entry into markets even though the public sphere is marked by strict segregation such as in Sudan (Nageeb 2001).

It is mainly a matter of deconstructing analytical concepts with regard to operational conclusions such as the concept of household (see the classical debate on the concept of household in Joekes, Kabeer eds. 1991). We know that in practically all African countries, men and women maintain separate budgets, although women cannot always control their own monetary income and are required to use it more often for general family needs. As there is no uniform household welfare, women rely on extra-household cooperation and transfers (Schneider 1999; Wanzala 2000). It is important to look at special arrangements of how production and consumption units overlap and transcend the domestic unit, as is the case in polygynous families, for example, in which the economic relationships, as mentioned above, can be rather diverse.

In general, the analysis of multiple economic fields of activity illustrates their complex character in the areas located between reproduction and transnational trade. There are hybrid forms of trade networks that move agricultural products to the capital or even abroad. There are also new and multiple forms of gendered and ethnic trading arrangements. Women are normally less conspicuous as they can marry and move from the rural areas into urban settings and other ethnic communities, and are thus often much less likely to be distrusted as strangers; on the other side they often complain that they feel like strangers in patriarchal settings with regard to (formal) rights. Here we are aware of the special patterns resulting from long-established transnational trade such as the long distance transcontinental trade carried out by Ghanaian female traders (Amponsem 1995). The trading networks in this ("informal" or "ethnic") trade

are clearly structured on a gender basis – often based on women's networks (on South Africa, see Schneider 1999) – but often with special arrangements where women cooperate with men, as is the case with the migrant nephew of a Ghanaian woman trader I met in Kumasi, who is formally employed in Germany and who also arranges the purchase of German second-hand spare parts for his aunt, for example. Contact between suppliers and clients is often negotiated by women. Trade is organised through different phases and points of attachment, and modes of accumulation between the formal and informal sectors often pass through relationships between the genders (e.g. Nairobi, Laaser 2001, 2006).

Generally speaking, personal mobility is astonishingly high and trade is marked by the personal character of the accompanying of economic transactions. In many countries women have always been very much involved, and this is particularly true in the areas of smuggling and other aspects of the "shadow economy" in general (in former Zaire for example, see MacGaffey 1990; Cameroon van Santen 1993). It is clear that during the course of formalisation – such as during the introduction of formal cooperatives after the dissolution of marketing boards and the liberalisation of formal food trade mentioned above – women are pushed out from their positions as a result of the consequent downgrading of the local economy. Achieng (2005) has shown how the new and old economic activities of displaced women are entangled in the example of the trade in used clothes and foodstuffs in Kenya. Also, Batana (2007) describes the very interesting case of the "buyem-sellem" women in Cameroon and their complex relations and mobility between "informal" and "formal" sectors.

The interface of state and civil society, decentralisation and local governance

Ferguson (2006) and others elaborate on how in many constellations in Africa the assumed separate and autonomous sphere of the state is closely intermingled with the so-called "non governmental sector" - which can be differentiated with regard to a so-called "third" or "non-profit" sector and social movement(s) organisations but also includes typically blurred social spheres. An interesting case in point is that of strong women – including "first ladies" (the wives of heads of state) – who are founding "their own" NGO in West Africa. For some time, and not only in the socialist era, they have represented the informal/private economy (often there is or used to be no distinction) as well as societal connections existing outside of official state-controlled organisations. This is regardless of the channels of the flow of resources, modes of enrichment, personal appropriation of public goods, and, respectively, access to economic resources through political connections that is typical of these states.

With regard to civil society in the sense that it seeks to make the state accountable, assures creative practice, and ascertains social embeddedness of the market, etc., it has been suggested that women are much less involved in the entangled sphere state and economy, i.e., in the predatory state, the patrimonial state that distributes mechanisms of enrichment within the state, and the constitution of patron-client relations that is also the current form of distribution of development resources (Chazan 1989; Parpat, Stauth 1989). However, as I observed in Senegal, women's projects, in some cases, are used as the last strategic resource of the former development state which wanted to distribute at least some money. The call for good governance does not take these structuring mechanisms into account.

One very relevant case that I encountered illustrates the formal/informal dilemma and ongoing informalisation processes, such as formal/informal education and access to the "modern" labour market. Bambi, a young (unmarried) woman who made a career in the Senegalese peasant movement and who now seems to have reached her limits as she is unable to enter the formal sector of the development institutions (2004 meeting in Sine Saloum; a further encounter was reported by Nadine Sieveking). However, there are cases where people from the social movements with more formal education are able to enter the formal "NGO sector" and become presidents of formally and state-controlled women's organisations as well as transnational actors in the global "NGO

world". Ndaye's (the above mentioned "urban wife" and "self-help professional") sister became one of the first (quota) women councillors in a municipality by means of (her husband's) political connections before moving on to become the president of the official Senegalese women's umbrella organisation.

In general, all community and village workers in development cooperation projects have assumed rather marginal roles, but now there is a trend towards making them private entrepreneurs that carry out studies as a part of the development plans for decentralised communities. Thus, the associative sector becomes privatised, if not informalised, with regard to mainstream society and the economy, with women presenting much less often the necessary credentials.

However, the associative sector has proven itself to be the most relevant actor that can achieve social cohesion by utilising the institutionalising concepts of self-help, food security, social security (as mentioned above), and other approaches within a deterritorialised, translocal space that is structured through gender relations. Social and gender differences become increasingly evident with the onset of some women acting as development brokers (Bierschenk, Olivier de Sardan 2000). Oftentimes, women are very innovative in finding new forms of interaction with the local authorities and administration (as in the case of various self-help forms of waste management in Mali), but the problem is generally exacerbated by decentralisation, as voluntary work and self-help, or professionalisation, as well as access to knowledge mostly concerns men.

It has become clear that food and social security in general 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 at 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.

Empirical research (Lachenmann 2006a, Lachenmann et al. 2006) provides us with a rather ambivalent picture in which newly-established female modes of organisation and "traditional" forms of political/societal representation are hampered by the ongoing formalisation of local power structures. The limited democratisation efforts[5] involving multiparty systems, formal decentralisation, and local administration tend to exclude women and former members of self-help groups.

Democratisation processes on the one hand, and decentralisation on the other, do not share information, or make procedures transparent. Rather, they further mystify and complicate regulations. For instance, in rural communities in Senegal, although councillors 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. By the same token, the successes, although certainly not always sustainable, of several decades of activities of the peasant movement, including women's groups, are not built on and their experiences and knowledge tend to be marginalised instead of being developed.

There are very few women who are elected. In the communities studied in 2004, the female councillors were extremely bitter when they said that men were not passing on "information" to women, which was 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 they consider not to be represented in "the texts". Decentralisation is mainly seen as passing authoritarian knowledge to the "grassroots" who are often constructed as ignorant.

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 marginalised. Their forms of association are always less formal and they contribute a lot with 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 increasingly dwindle, 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, seem to disappear.

Gender relations are always crosscutting. Access to land and natural resources often passes through marriages and alliances that are translocal in nature and extend beyond territorialities. Women are not members of the reconstructed or "invented" "traditional community". New state-introduced forms of participation enacted with the support of or pressure from the international donor community often do not take into account the old parallel power-structure of representation and ignore mechanisms which link female worlds and spaces with general power structures. Furthermore, many other translocal relations are ignored, such as those created by migration processes and social movements constituted in a translocal space that can influence local policies, as well as those linking "big men" to their economic privileges.

Knowledge arenas and gender knowledge in organisations

Where environmental and socio-economic changes are concerned, women tend to be marginalised when it comes to political organisation and new regulations (Lachenmann 2006b, 2009b). It is important to look at the gendered dimensions of control of natural resources, property rights, and environmental knowledge. Institutional networks and arrangements include links to resource access and usage among different levels such as household or women's community of origin, as well as social institutions such as the translocal access to resources and reciprocity. Modern institutions lead to these links and entitlements becoming invisible. They lose their validity and do not account for new opportunities. Gendered labour is of utmost importance when examining resource conservation and the control of new or protected resources.

Women are recognised as "community managers" but as soon as local services (water supply, grain mills etc.) are formalised 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. In the case of Senegal, it is evident that the logic of activities and organisational forms developed in times of the promotion of self-help projects by village workers from different sectors entered into contradiction with the new formal political regime. Contrary to all praise of "civil society", local initiatives were delegitimised. This was typical of the health committees which had been established on a voluntary basis (sometimes with small remuneration, as in the case of trained local midwives). Also, the management of collective economic resources carried out by women, such as rice fields in Senegal, did not appear to be included in development planning within the local administration. Additionally, these women's groups are not politically represented in the local council where they could participate in agreeing on new regulations. There is no arena where women's movements and groups can enter into a serious debate concerning transformation within the framework of decentralisation.

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 cooperatives primarily made up of male members tend to be formal(ised), whereas women's groups tend to be informal(ised)(see Rosander 1997). Men are generally members of economic groups and women are members of women's social and development groups. The latter are caught up by the old experiences and culture of community development and home economics coming from the established channels. These channels are dependent on ministries of social affairs (and not of agriculture) and lost their support after democratic change of government.

A female president was responsible in the case of a rehabilitation programme for rice fields funded by external cooperation. However there were at least two "competing" women representing "the women" in the village or district town. These kinds of (very important) efforts were not included in the village develop-

ment plan at all. The plan also did not include such features as grain mills and cereal banks – the explanation given was that private economic endeavours were not accounted for.

Many local NGOs are very patronising in their "participatory" approaches through which great sums of external money pass. The fatal outcome is that there are local credit systems everywhere, usually aimed at small-scale trade, which are considered ideal possibilities for women to earn additional income. Some forms of formalisation only slowly seem to take place as a result of the strengthening of the local arena. At the same time women are excluded or not encouraged by extension services to participate in activities dealing with new modes of access and the management of natural resources, increased agricultural productivity, and new economic opportunities in the local economy (such as upgrading of transformation of agricultural products), although there is a new state entity at the national level which promotes (formal) women entrepreneurs. This is even true in the spheres of activities in which women are normally active, usually within a complex structure of gender cooperation and exchange. This is also the case when it comes to women's social and political activities.

"Growth of ignorance" (Hobart 1993) occurs through the ousting of local by expert knowledge, and neglecting 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. Everyday knowledge is often represented by women as against expert and specialised perspectives applied by men and by male defined organisations. Also, it is evident that practical knowledge loses its validity through informalisation, illegality and popularisation, which very much affect women. Their typical fields of knowledge are clearly distinct, where they are very important actors in traditional learning channels especially through their translocal networking and organisations. This is often not taken into account as serious or ignored in organisations, including their policies and services. There is a top down transfer of knowledge from organisations to clients, making their knowledge, perspectives, ways of reasoning etc. invalid or marginalised. On the other hand, in the developmentalist community, local knowledge, and especially that of women (who risk thereby to be marginalised) has been mystified to a certain extent. Efforts to save and upgrade "traditional" technology mostly fail given there is no serious effort to develop generalised knowledge in this area, and economic competition is high. Women's projects, undertaken to introduce technology in food processing or upgrade quality of traditional art and craft, have very often failed. There are no forms of professionalisation, quality control, systematic organisation and specialisation. 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.

Women's organisations have very little access to new knowledge. Also, little gender specialised knowledge, which has been accumulated in many spheres and organisations, is applied by state organisations and bureaucracies (see Goetz 1995) in policies, such as agricultural policies and new forms of resource management schemes (social forestry, irrigation etc.). I am not necessarily referring to the official policy of mainstreaming which often might lead to not taking into account gendered differences. One main problem 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 not considered.

This can be illustrated very clearly in the area of innovations. As was explained in two studies in Northern Ghana (Padmanabhan 2002; Becher 2001), an absolute gender-blindness prevails. For instance, this means that it is not known as to what kind of innovations are actually adopted, as women sometimes have to work for men in cases in which innovations to develop cash crops are introduced by formal agricultural extension services. In certain circumstances, however, women introduce innovations into their own fields, and in doing so they are able to enlarge their room for manoeuvre and sometimes enter market production. It is clearly shown that there is a fe-

male path of learning, such as in the transmission of information and knowledge, thereby creating possibilities of practice (such as the introduction of new seeds).

The institutionalisation of informal or traditional rotating credit systems, of land rights, social entitlements and social security in general does not take into account the gendered differences and knowledge which have been accumulated through experience. For example, in the above mentioned programme 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 by the authorities, thus affecting its ability to apply for funds and to obtain 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, where women often get low quality land only as a group without formal recognition and institutionalisation of their property rights.

Another example is the recent trend towards cooperating with "traditional" or local "communities" without looking at the processes of construction taking place, including even support by development cooperation, such as in the case of the reintroduction of "traditional rulers" (see Lang 2004 on the topic of South Africa). Tradition and culture (knowledge) are permanently reinterpreted and they must be inserted into their structural and situational context. For example, women and their supposedly traditional knowledge and position are instrumentalised in identity construction processes.

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 (see Neubert 2000), 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, "women's" 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. Often information is addressed to or knowledge is requested from people who are not the legitimate actors or "knowers" (Diawara 1985). This phenomenon influences the outcome of all participatory methods and is often overlooked, such as in cases in which men are interviewed on subjects only women know about, or when women do not speak out but instead refer to authorised knowledge.

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). The question is how to take into consideration the situatedness of knowledge. This is even more so with the gendered structure of knowledge that has been rendered invisible and neglected.

With regard to 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. In addition, "stakeholders" are named but not analysed in their power-based 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 categorised women as "being landless", said, that in "our tradition men give land". Gendered access to land is interesting as an institu-

tion, 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.

Translocality of gender discourses in the public sphere: from "vulnerability" to "rights"

Global concepts on women's rights and gender policies are developed in translocal spaces and through translocal networking relations.[6] Through different forms of interaction and discourses women are constituting translocal gendered spaces and entering and restructuring the public sphere. While negotiating development concepts women's organisations are for example engaged in a process of differentiating the local discourses on Islam. By doing so (Nageeb 2008: 224ff) women create room for manoeuvre and introduce global development concepts in increasingly Islamised contexts, giving them new meaning. They are seeking alternative approaches to women and gender issues based on agency instead of victimisation, and instead on vulnerability, on rights. Thereby global concepts of rights become increasingly differentiated according to the multiple experiences coming from the local level.

In two societies studied (Senegal, Sudan, apart from Malaysia), as in others (Elson 2002; Grosz-Ngaté and Kolole 1997; Molyneux and Razavi eds. 2002) changes of discourse and policy concepts show the social transformation going on through active involvement of women's organisations in development policies and thereby the gender order of society. An important point of reference for debating local issues based on translocality is CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women) which has been referred to as valid argumentation by women's groups since its very existence, and more so in combination with the «Beijing process» widely followed in Africa in the form of regional debates, leading to the Platform of Action of the Beijing Conference for Women in 1995, as well as its (less well) established "post-Beijing" process (Taylor 2000; Molyneux, Razavi 2005).

The most explicitly glocal form of localisation studied at the interface between women civil society organisations and the state, has been clearly seen in Sudan. The hitherto hardly challenged Islamist Government, in order to negotiate and implement the peace process regarding the North-South war, to which is added the economic exploitation of (oil) resources with foreign cooperation, is opening up; women's organisations have immediately enlarged their spaces to bring in global development concepts and integrate themselves into the peace process (Nageeb 2006), carrying with them the still very much challenged concept of Violence Against Women (VAW). This position is still equated to a fundamental opposition to the Islamisation project and the construction of the Ummah (Nageeb 2008: 193ff) by the regime. However, localisation takes clearly place within a supportive environment for civil organisations, particularly women's NGOs working in the area of human and women's rights, through international development agencies and donors who are involved in supporting the peace building stage through civil organisations. We were able to follow the spaces and processes where this concept was changing into the local and global one of 'rights', passing through publicly raising the gender question through globalised campaigns against VAW.

In contrast, in Senegal the rights discourse is the most easily acceptable with regard to local milieus and concepts of tradition. There, the vulnerability discourse underlies all development debates, including those influenced by women's NGOs (see SNEEG; Sieveking 2008, p. 152 ff.)[7]. Neither gender analysis nor policies but classical WID approaches are applied which on the one side state the vulnerability with consequent construction of women not being able to take credit or to go into certain sectors etc., but on the other side follow the instrumentalisation discourse of highlighting the important role of women to feed their families, to conceive of all kinds of survival strategies as well as stressing their economic potential which however is only put into practice in very mod-

ernist ways. Therefore, the rights debate is a clear step to overcome this subdued position of needing to be helped. From the NGO perspective, including the state-affiliated institutions, it is not the government but local socio-cultural patterns that constitute the major constraint for women to claim their rights. There is here, also a contradiction with regard to local cultural institutions and rhetoric which strengthen the autonomy of women in the frame of "traditional" female spaces.

This is probably due to a large extent to the economic crisis, after which women through informal economic activities ("petit commerce") tend to contribute significantly more to the family income and adopt more and more the position of the head of the household. Also, the experiences during and after the droughts within the peasant movement and even the forms of official organisation in women's groups made a lot of difference. However, the afore mentioned informalisation of these institutions and the dwindling of "traditional" female spaces including in decentralisation processes endangers their livelihood capacity as well as capacity to enter the public debate e.g. on land tenure etc..

The global concept of gender equality is at the centre of confrontational negotiation at the local level. It is strongly associated with Western feminism within the public political field as an argument against certain female actors, whereas in all development policies this debate has no relevance. The process of "translating" the official development concepts into local discourses is mainly left to the NGOs as the classical women's extension services have widely failed. A telling example is the ongoing discussion concerning the reform of the Family Law (Sieveking 2008: 150ff; Mali Schulz 2003; Togo Kipfer-Didavi 2005; Sudan Schultz 2007), which however, is not mentioned in the SNEEG. A network organisation studied (Réseau Siggil Jigeen RSJ, Sieveking 2008: 42, 152f), who had cooperated in this strategy paper on gender, started the campaign on the reform. It is more and more being criticised by the Islamic circles which oppose global human rights positions to Islamist countermodels that are also global, of adapting family law more to Sharia e.g. by the Islamic association "Comité islamique pour la réforme du code de la famille du Sénégal" (CIRCOFS). Whereas the government pronounced itself clearly against this initiative, the Sufi brotherhoods kept silent.

In practice, the formal umbrella organisation FNGPF (Fédération Nationale des Groupements de Promotion Féminine) supports respect of women's rights and the efforts of civil society actors. Therefore another position would be that characterised by "progressive Islam" which in Senegal refers rather to interfaces with everyday life as women organisations challenge the law mainly regarding parental (instead of paternal) custody as well as financial rights and duties, which continue to be unequal for women and men. Sieveking (2007, 2008: 154ff; Ghana Tsikata 1999) gathered a very symbolic statement by one woman NGO activist at the event of session of a regional women's organisation (Association pour la Promotion de la Femme Sénégalaise APROFES) regarding women's rights: "We don't want equality, we want to be given our rights". This can be interpreted as very typical distancing from concepts of equality (of men and women) in favour of rights which are in principle provided by Islam, but implying a concept of social change in a localised way. In these meetings two different systems of knowledge are clearly interfacing.

The translocality is brought about in Senegal apart from the critical (urban based) women's movement by exchange by activists of rural and less formally educated groups partly in the context of peasant organisations, partly of post-Beijing networkings such as Women in Law and Development in Africa (Wildaf, see Mueller 2005). The strife for authority of knowledge clearly shows how important it is for women to participate in translocal interaction be it at the national or the transnational level. In Sudan, the translocal activity is especially used to achieve more room for manoeuvre and legitimacy of activities and authority of knowledge on the national level.

Within the various debates on Muslim or Islamic feminism I could observe on the occasion of international workshops (e.g. at the University of Sokoto, Nigeria, in 2007, see main speaker Ezello 2006; Schultz 2008), in the emerging concept of "African

feminism", othering is more cultural than religious and refers more to gender concepts with regard to development, while it is often still linked to the colonial past and being defined from the outside. However, here too some women activists and scholars claim to have reached the very important stage of being able to discuss Muslim interpretations with (male) Islamic authorities. The label of "feminist" seems to be subjected to more contestation there. The epistemic community focusing on debates about African and Islamic feminism is, however, very pluralistic as to approach and strategy (see Tripp 2000). Other scholars represent the necessity, together with clear openness to translocal feminist issues, but when using the marker "African feminism", distance themselves from global Islamist homogenisation. Some pleaded clearly for dropping the concept altogether, or to qualify it, proposing as an alternative "Afro-central gender movements" which was then criticised by its particularity. Also, global political factors were mentioned, such as African feminism being a "sexy" theme that attracts donors (sic!)

Notes

[1] In part this article refers to a paper held at the conference of the German African Studies Association in Freiburg and Basel in 2008 (Lachenmann 2009a).
[2] See special issue edited by Kate Meagher in: Afrika Spectrum 42, 3, 2007; Meagher 2007.
[3] Hyden (1990) looked at the changing context of institutional development. See Helmke, Levitsky (2004) regarding informal institutions and politics.
[4] See Evers (1987) on « Schattenwirtschaft, Subsistenzproduktion und informeller Sektor » ; Chabal, Daloz 1999.
[5] Bierschenk (2009) talks about "democratisation without development". See Gukelberger (2010) on gender and new political ethnicity in local democratisation efforts; Nzomo 1995.
[6] Cf. Research project (financed by VolkswagenStiftung) on „Negotiating development in translocal gendered spaces", including field work in Senegal, Sudan (and Malaysia) (Lachenmann, Dannecker eds. 2008, Lachenmann 2010).
[7] National Strategy for Equity and Gender Equality in Senegal (Sénégal, Rép. du, 2005), is hardly analytical, as it does not really explore gender relations and concrete policy issues and institutions. An earlier official publication coordinated by critical Senegalese social scientists: Sow, Diouf coord. 1993. For "engendering African social sciences" see Imam, Mama, Sow eds. 1999

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Gudrun Lachenmann studied sociology, political science, and economics. She is a former research fellow at the German Development Institute, Berlin, Africa Division. Since 1992, she has been Professor at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bielefeld, Sociology of Development (now: Transnationalisation and Development) Research Centre (officially retired in March 2006). Her empirical research was primarily in Francophone West Africa. Her current research interests include global and local networking for engendering development policy, civil society, transformation processes, women's and peasant movements, qualitative methodology of multi-level translocal field research for grounded theory building, gendered restructuring of public sphere, and spaces of migration. gudrun.lachenmann@uni-bielefeld.de