



Universität Bielefeld

Fakultät für Soziologie

Forschungsschwerpunkt
Entwicklungssoziologie

Sociology of Development
Research Centre

Universität Bielefeld - Postfach 100131 - 33501 Bielefeld, Germany / Telefon (0521) 106-4650/4221, Fax (0521) 106-2980
<http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/sdrc>, E-Mail: sdrc@uni-bielefeld.de

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Gender and Translocal Networking through Information Technology

**Report on Workshop 8-9 February 2002
Organised by the Gender Working Group of the SDRC,
Prof. Gudrun Lachenmann,
together with
Gillian Youngs, PhD,
Senior Lecturer at University of Leicester, GB,
Centre for Mass Communication
as resource person**

Rapporteurs: Anna Spiegel, Nadine Harig

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Gender and translocal networking through information technology

This report presents papers and discussions from the workshop „Gender and translocal networking through information technology“, which took place on February 8th and 9th 2002 at the University of Bielefeld. The workshop was organised by the University’s Gender Division of the Sociology of Development Research Centre and was realised in co-operation with the British political scientist Dr. Gillian Youngs, senior lecturer at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University Leicester, who was invited as special guest and resource person. The workshop was attended by approximately 30 participants. The presentations given by staff members, doctoral students, and diploma students of the research centre were based on empirical fieldwork and raised questions about the fundamental role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the process of globalisation. As one of many possible ways of networking ICTs enable local actors to connect to global cultural and informational flows. The participants focused especially on the active part women play in the new media, given their translocal networking experiences, and the resulting challenges for an engendered analysis of technology and globalisation.

Translocal gender relations and constitution of spaces - introduction to Bielefeld research areas

The workshop was opened by **Gudrun Lachenmann**¹ giving a general introduction to the Bielefeld research areas, in order to explain our understanding of a gender approach and attempts to ‘engendering’ development theory, as well as its relation to the workshop.

The title of the workshop, “Gender and translocal networking through information technology” was chosen in order to bring various fields of interest together and to specially take up the chance of communicating with Gillian Youngs as a resource person who represents very innovative issues within a (mainly anglophone) international arena of researchers, activists, and development agencies.² While Gillian Youngs’ work looks especially at the Internet from a feminist point of view and the new chances offered by the

¹ Gudrun Lachenmann is professor of Sociology of Development: Women and Gender in Developing Countries at the Sociology of Development Research Centre at Bielefeld University (SDRC).

horizontal structures of exchange in this arena, the Bielefeld research interests are directed towards engendering concepts such as embeddedness of the economy and the constitution of social spaces through all kinds of local and translocal gender relations and activities, such as created through women's movements for example.

Lachenmann discussed the restricted character of the gender discourses in development policies – such as mainstreaming and empowerment, participation and gender equity, often still conceiving women as a specific group. An analytical gender approach goes far beyond, however, it does not only provide the means to examine gender relations beyond the household, but also offers a framework to analyse transformation processes, such as socio-economic changes, negotiating power relations, state-society dynamics, and processes of globalisation in general. Furthermore, it intends to take up theoretical and methodological issues related to development concepts as well as to economic sociology, institutional economics, and debates on poverty. The gender approach should overcome the marginalised position of gender research by establishing a dialogue with general social research and by linking gender research to local development concepts. Accordingly, debates, discourses, and theories, the entire research field is engendered.

In this approach, the concept of gendered structure of different fields, as introduced by Elson (1999) regarding the economy, is considered as the key to explain the present transformations going on in various spheres. At the same time, structuring and agency go hand in hand, overcoming bottom down participatory and 'target group' approaches. As with the relational gender approach, local development concepts are not understood as traditional ones but as negotiated in local and national arenas within the context of social and economic change. Thereby, theories on civil society become engendered.

An important proposition is to view the concept of space from a gender perspective as an alternative to the classical, dualistic idea of attributing public spaces to men and private spaces to women. It was suggested that emphasis should be given to the interfaces and linkages between male and female spaces. With regard to the issues of space and the Internet, Lachenmann's second proposition was to identify the Internet as a new form of public space, which has to be investigated with regard to its gendered structure. There are quite a number of

² Gillian Youngs and Gudrun Lachenmann had met at a UNICEF-workshop in Hamburg in 2001 on issues of "lifelong learning" (see Youngs et al. ed., 2001).

spaces as well as interfaces between different levels, institutions, arena, movements etc. that offer themselves to future analysis.

We should refer e.g. to women who can participate in knowledge exchange and generation platforms in the Internet without maintaining customary gender differences and thereby creating a new gender order. From a gender perspective it can be studied how the various arenas, fields, and spaces in the Internet are structured. The formation of translocal gender relations and women's networks via Internet are an important research area, conceiving the constitution of new arenas through actors and their meaningful agency.

Apart from striving to overcome shortcomings of the dominant mainstreaming and participatory approach, this Bielefeld approach also tries to contribute to methodological issues linked to the recent introduction of social science aspects in development policy. This is often done in a rather naive, socio-technocratic way, especially in the gender field but also regarding concepts of civil society, good governance, and poverty. This can even be the case with discourses by international gender politicians, feminist movements, and activists. There is a risk of homogenisation through these technocratic approaches, including monitoring, which is contradictory to concepts of diversity and tends to essentialise women's voices.

The request of "full participation" for women e.g. leads to tendencies of conceiving it, as against ideas of empowerment, according to old ideas of gender equity ("Gleichstellung", different from gender justice). Lachenmann pleaded to overcome the fashionable criticisms of essentialist positions, and to sharpen methodological reflections on what agency and subjectivity mean. Case studies of women in 'boxes' or accounts of 'women's voices' have to be based on reflections how to use transcripts and analyse citations, following methodological rules how to contextualise the empirical findings and elaborate on typical cases. Not only should one look at individual gender relations at the 'household' level, but focus at the societal order and social changes from a gender point of view. But it is very difficult to make a case against this powerful discourse within the international agencies on 'women's voices'. On the other side, regarding the idea of subjectivity is put forward by activists, methodological reflections on agency, construction of gender, negotiation of meanings in institutions and discourses are necessary. We have to overcome quasi automatic ideas of gender combined with class and 'race', without looking at concrete gendered aspects of ethnicity and racialisation, when introducing difference as an analytical term, and taking concepts of diversity serious. Of course it is clear that 'the women' do not exist, but especially

in development issues either women are labelled as poor and victimised as vulnerable, or they are to be instrumentalised as potential for economic growth.

Feminist economists who are what could be called a strategic global group of women activists and researchers – an epistemic community which might become virtual -, make the argument very strong that economic reforms are not working because of gender inequality, assuming a direct causal relationship. Of course, we have to look at discriminatory structures and mechanisms, but also analyse gendered differences such as interfaces between productive and reproductive sector and everyday fields of activities. When conceiving economy as a gendered structure, we include the ‘middle level’, looking at the gendered nature of markets. We should not always complain that women are only in small business, that they are only in the informal sector, or that they don’t have the same incomes, and that they are unjustly treated, but study how the market is organised and do research on forms of economic organisation and economic fields according to gender. Otherwise it would be an extremely narrow mainstreaming approach, making women enter in the same type of economy as men, with the same type of activities, to do the same thing in order to have overall growth. The old discussions about transforming economies through transforming gender relations should not be forgotten.

We need to theorise on diversity and difference and use these concepts in a different way. This should be the case when thinking about knowledge society or information technology. We can use these translocal relations, where everybody sees now that neither economy nor women’s movements nor NGOs are bound to one place. We can use this to introduce the new theoretical approach to structure and agency, to combine social action and structure or even, micro and macro. In the scientific community to which the Bielefeld approach is linked, post-structuralist or post-modern issues have been integrated very early and we can bring in interpretative sociology into the new debates about knowledge society, applying it especially to the Internet.

When taking up debates on civil society and public sphere, Lachenmann mentioned the experiences trying to overcome debates on public and private divide, bringing together concepts of social movements, self-help groups and women’s organisations with theorising social spaces and, in particular, female spaces. The argument is, that it is not a matter of ‘either or’, private or public, male or female, but that there are female public spheres and interfaces between private and public, new forms of neighbourhoods, doing politics and

networking. In this way, we can take up again Habermas, regarding the transformation of the public sphere, and we can genderise structural changes and look at its structuration and multiple arenas. We can claim and analyse that there are female spaces, female public spheres, and that's where diversity or difference comes in, negotiating these differences. In many societies, and this has often been neglected, there are interfaces between the male spaces, or public spaces, which mostly are male, and different female spaces. There are linkages and interfaces, where, for example, knowledge can be passed and is negotiated, and where the power structure and new gender relations are negotiated. So, that is a structural transformation, so to speak, of public and other spaces.

Then, regarding the theme of the workshop, one could ask whether the Internet, or information technology per se, is a new form of public sphere. One can look at this space with regard to its gendered structure. Here, for example, one should not only ask whether women as a group are marginalised, but look where different spaces are, how they are constructed in a translocal relational approach, and where the interfaces are situated between different levels, between different institutions and between different genders. So, that would be, a structural approach as well. In addition, it is a matter of structure of knowledge, when applying sociology of knowledge, which means combining agency and knowledge, to these new debates on knowledge management in development agencies. At the same time, we should take up the above mentioned challenge regarding power structures changing their meaning, through horizontal ways of exchanging knowledge and information. Everybody, especially women have access, they can participate in these knowledge exchange platforms and sites, and this might in principle more or less automatically eliminate all social differences and especially the gendered ones. Of course, already from a sociology of knowledge point of view, this is certainly doubtful and we have to look at the social reality of the Internet. From a gender point of view we can see how these arenas, spheres, spaces, are structured with regard to gender, and look, e.g., at concepts of local knowledge, like traditional knowledge, in a different way than it is being done at the moment.

Here again, Lachenmann stressed that it is not a dualism when talking about 'women in the Internet' in this way. And it is not essentialising when we say that women have a special knowledge, and when we look at distribution, production, and transfer of knowledge in a dynamic way, having different sites of knowledge, creating knowledge systems, creating systems of ignorance. Then, it is really worthwhile to look at it in a gendered way, looking at

women as knowledgeable actors, not just claiming them to be natural holders of traditional knowledge, such as on healing, biodiversity, and similar fields, and complain about their marginalisation.

In doing so, we should critically take up the concept of local knowledge used in development theory, instead of dropping it altogether. Of course it is methodologically clear that we should not mystify local knowledge or women's knowledge, which is there and could be taken away or researched by development experts and then be used for some kind of 'better development'. All knowledge is local in different ways, and, of course, we know that everyday knowledge in development theory and politics is mostly forgotten and not looked at. Or, there are now socio-technocratic substitutes used in participatory approaches, based on very simplistic assumptions of knowledge collection and transfer. Participatory workshops are idealised as to capture the voices of the villagers regarding the structure of their society, who is poor and who is rich etc., without validating and contextualising this form of knowledge production. Also, this dualistic way to look at local knowledge has to be overcome, there are always knowledge interfaces with different influences and exchanges. It has never been only local.

But of course knowledge is situated; expert knowledge must even be situated. In development debates, a distinction is often made only between local knowledge and scientific knowledge, without referring to a category of technical or specific knowledge. Also it is generally believed that Western knowledge, which is supposed to be transferred through development co-operation, is scientifically based. Of course, science also has to be de-constructed, and technical knowledge is based on experience and practice and has to be situated to be applied. The thesis is that the gendered structure of knowledge has been especially rendered invisible and neglected. In development policies for women now the main issue is, how can one take these concepts up without labelling women as representing the local and the indigenous and having some mystical knowledge, but on the other side analyse what kind of situatedness of knowledge exists. Here, the virtual localities and platforms of the Internet can provide useful insights of these processes of interaction. Questions of validity of knowledge – regarding which social reality and which structures of relevance – will have to be dealt with in a completely new way.

In general, the translocal gender relations approach seems to be very relevant to our subject. It is fascinating to see more and more studies on women's groups, women's networks, women's

relations within regions, but not only relations among women, but gender relations through which we can really follow the constitution of new social spaces. It is a kind of paradigm or perspective how to enter the field and to understand these spaces. But of course, it is also a subject in its own right, to see how women are networking and what kind of knowledge they are connecting with their agency, where they get their knowledge from, how they produce it, how they exchange and transform it.

‘Doing’ IT in the Philippines: a gender perspective

In her presentation, **Czarina Saloma**³ talked about the information technology (IT) industry in the Philippines. Using a gender perspective, she analysed the ‘doing’ of IT within the context of global-local interactions.

Saloma began her talk by suggesting that changes are happening within the “new international division of labour”. She called attention to the results of international surveys which show the Philippines, a so-called developing country, joining the company of so-called developed countries in a periodised and fragmented fashion. According to her, this phenomenon necessarily takes on a special meaning when we remind ourselves that one, and perhaps the most serious, would-be failure of globalisation is exclusion.

Using Foucault’s (1986) concept of a “heterotopia”, Saloma referred to such rankings as indicators of the coexistence in “an impossible space” of a “large number of fragmentary possible worlds”. The “possible worlds” she was referring to are the existence of “female spaces” and non-assembly activities in the information technology industry in the Philippines that are always thought “impossible” given the structural inequities and hierarchies of the “new international division of labour”, where technology is a masculine arena and where developing countries are merely a source of cheap, low skilled labour. In exploring these “possible worlds”, Saloma identified a group of Filipino information technology professionals who consume and reprocess the standard technological products for the consuming majority. In the production and consumption chain of IT-products in the Philippines, this group mediates between the elite hegemonic group that produces seminal information, knowledge

³ Czarina Saloma is PhD student at the SDRC.

and technology and the group that consumes the end-product. Saloma referred to it as the “middle group”.

In examining the female spaces within information technology arena, Saloma took into account that technology started out as an arena which puts much value on physical strength and hence is an arena that even up to today in certain fields, practices gender segregation. The social fields inhabited by the “middle group” are gendered in the sense that there is a clear pattern of who is doing what and where: there is an almost equal number of men and women in software development, content processing, and technical support services, whereas hardware development and web design continue to be male-dominated.

Saloma wanted to show why women are likely to be in certain fields of information technology and why their presence is not accompanied by the feminisation of these fields. First, these fields are characterised by interdisciplinarity, or the amalgamation of disciplines such as computer science, business and industrial management, communication arts, etc. Thus, while there is a gender tracking at the tertiary level of education in the Philippines, the emergence of fields in information technology which require a business background, a “feminine” track in tertiary education, and fields which do not specify “masculine” backgrounds (e.g., engineering track) prevents the reproduction of the gender tracking in education and in occupational fields. Second, the dynamics involved in the social construction of technological work provide another reason as to why the creation of female spaces in some fields of IT is not accompanied by the feminisation of labour.

The creation of female spaces is made possible by the fact that in some fields of IT, gender differences are seen as advantageous. While societal perceptions of feminine qualities are usually in utilitarian terms, a perception in terms “epistemic privilege” on so-called feminine tastes and preferences is also invoked. More than anyone else, however, it is the women who are the creators of these “female spaces”. Thus, while the presence of women is facilitated by the miniaturisation of technologies and the shifts in the paradigm norms of technology work from heavy, physical work to knowledge work, this presence is likewise actively being created by women who venture into the information technology arena, with strategies for maximising their own projects and talents.

Thus, the one starting point in the examination of the creation of “female spaces” is the occupational trajectories of female members of the “middle group”. Trajectories refer to processes through which women entered some fields of the new economy. Saloma looked at the paths of development of women’s spaces in technology as far as they reflect the changes in the technological arena and in the corresponding social constructions of such arenas. Saloma’s examination of trajectories showed that women’s economic activities entail a wide range of social actors and fields of activity. These trajectories demonstrate that women’s strategies for changing the gendered relations of technology do not only include making use of equal opportunity structures that focus on ‘getting women in’, but also working into the symbolic aspects of technology.

The discussion that followed came back to the concept of “impossible spaces”. Saloma explained that rankings and claims celebrating the Philippine information technology industry might be expressions of misplaced national *chutzpah* but their true value lies in their being the expressions of multiple, often contradictory, social realities. Another point that was discussed was the research method. Saloma reported that she collected her data using methods of laboratory studies, in particular direct observation of workplaces which she identified through theoretical sampling and snowballing. To further contextualise the activities in the workplaces, she complemented her direct observation with the collection of professional biographies and interviews with experts. Furthermore, she continued her research after leaving the Philippines by regular Internet recherche.

Finally, a question was raised as to whether Saloma had done a multi-level-industry-survey, which focused more on the micro than on the macro-level. Saloma explained that her aim was to examine global-local interactions as they occur within various fields of the Philippine IT-industry. Thus, one might consider the microlevel (e.g., IT companies, the “middle group”) as the object of the study but the microlevel can only be understood within the context of the macrolevel (e.g., cross-country comparisons).

Gender in information societies: creative challenges and testing opportunities

Developing her ideas out of her ample experiences as journalist, independent communication consultant and feminist activist **Gillian Youngs**⁴ discussed the challenges and opportunities for gender and media research under the conditions of globalisation.⁵

According to her research, technology has to be seen as a social site in which political and economic, collective and individual manifestations of power, empowerment and disempowerment are expressed. Consequently technology has to be considered as a site through which social change is articulated. This expanded approach to technology converts technology into a new context for the analysis of gender inequalities.

Talking about ICTs today makes it necessary to look at the gendered history of technology. This history is embedded in the binary public/private structure traditionally focused on by feminist scholars. But positioning women on the private, emotional, embodied side of the patriarchal dualisms does not mean that women are totally excluded from technology. Rather it is important to analyse how women are integrated and what kind of power and influence they have. While men traditionally are associated with 'higher' technologies and their invention, development and design, women are usually associated with 'lower' technologies and their consumption. This structure is reflected in the sexual division of labour in production and distribution forming gendered circuits of technology. If technology is part of the social fabric and has this deeply gendered history, then the fact that social processes are increasingly - directly or indirectly - affected by processes taking place on the Internet, signals the importance of thinking about future forms of agency and subjectivity from a feminist standpoint.

Youngs emphasised two aspects of feminist writing about the new media. Firstly, the Internet can be considered as a medium with an extreme textual character. The communications and mediations taking place on the Internet and in emails are oriented to textual expression and reveal the extremely discursive texture of the media. Secondly, because of the qualitative new forms of connectivity, traditional notions of space, body and subjectivity are questioned by

⁴ Dr. Gillian Youngs is senior lecturer at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University Leicester

⁵ The lecture was based on Youngs 2001, but broadened many concepts.

the Internet. The virtual space is embedded in other forms of social space and its transcendent geographical nature problematises the ways of thinking about space per se. The Internet provides a huge transformative potential especially for women to site themselves as women within the ongoing processes and to transform their subjectivity. New types of relationships between machine and human body arise, as Haraway (1991) suggests with her analysis about “cyborgs”. Nevertheless one has to consider the highly gendered culture and structure of the Internet. Typical forms of web culture – such as certain kinds of web rings, problem solving discussion groups and learning online - are highly male dominated fields, characterised through mutuality and interactivity and based on a relationship to technology, women predominantly have been outside of. These amateur expert communities on the Internet have been structurally changing and challenging the nature of what is to be an expert collectively and over a long period of time.

In her lecture Youngs developed her concept of ‘mediation’ as a central category to analyse the complex processes occurring on the Internet. The multiple processes of mediation, characterising communication processes on the Internet, disrupt some of the old traditional capitalist modes of mediation. Mediations happen within the virtual space itself, but as well between the virtual space and other social spaces, and between those two processes of mediations. The Internet as a new media that integrates all other media influences, modulates and interacts with all other social spaces. This has especially methodological implications, since it will be necessary to take into account the communications ongoing on the Internet, even if not explicitly doing research on it. The *International Feminist Journal of Politics* edited by Youngs, which is managed as a virtual project, can be taken as an example for illustrating these multiple mediations between different spaces. The journal has three co-editors - one based in the USA, one in Australia and one in UK - and weaves a translocal communication network. The material journal is produced by virtual connections. It comes out of an intrinsically virtual and highly interactive working practice.

The focus in the discussion that followed the lecture was on Youngs’ concepts of mediation, subjectivity and agency. Youngs stated that her concepts of mediation, subjectivity and agency are closely related to the work of McLuhan and to the work of feminist analysts of the Internet like Stone, Haraway and Plant. The term ‘mediation’ tries to catch the phenomena of interconnectedness between virtual spaces and real spaces and hence the relationship between technology, human communication and subjectivity. Approaching subjectivity from a

perspective of mass communications, that is from a perspective that genuinely combines the analysis of production and consumption processes, means that subjectivity has to be seen in close relation to agency. Relating to the research conducted on the consumption of soap operas, Youngs explained that subjectivity has to be conceptualised as a mobile and strategic domain open to interactive and reflexive changes and to heterogeneous processes of construction. Though not denying the importance of macro structures in the construction of subjectivity, the focus lies clearly on the individual processes of reception, appropriation and location. Processes of media consumption are closely related to the way people perceive their own individuality and social location, how they perceive others and how they perceive the relationships to them. Mediation processes are going on between the engagement with the technology and the outgoing communication processes, because specific technologies produce specific forms of communication. Media consumption is about being engaged in certain activities, about consuming information, and about being dependent on the media to do certain things. This would bring three basic concepts into relationship: subjectivity in the sense of agency, the relationship to technology, and the relationship to the specific kind of communication one is engaged in.

In her comment Inez Kipfer⁶ highlighted the contradictory dynamics of technology, allowing on the one hand the creation of new spaces, the creation of new ways of expression especially for women, but on the other hand reproducing gender inequality and exclusion. Youngs supported this ambivalent view, stressing the very hegemonic structure of the mathematical logic (i.e., if this..., than that...) that dominates the digital world of programming. In this field men have a significant head start, and women are necessarily catching up. But the cultural and social construction that in continuity to traditional gender constructions positions women merely as consumers on the Internet, requires more than technocratic solutions, like giving women access to technology and teaching them how to use it. Kipfer added that in order to go beyond this static view of women as being merely consumers it is necessary and fascinating to look at the dynamics of negotiation processes on-going on the Internet, that means to look how women use the Internet, how they create their own spaces, how they change their position within society through the Internet.

⁶ Inez Kipfer is PhD student at the SDRC

Andrea Lang⁷ called attention to the dangers of selective social memory, wherein information and computer technology are represented as exclusively male dominated fields. In doing so the fundamental role women (such as Grace Hopper and Ada Lovelace) historically played in the invention and development of computer and programming is ignored. Overemphasising the excluding tendencies of the last twenty years feminists as well are tending to naturalise socially constructed gendered aspects of technology and to take over sexist assumptions about women and technology.

Ruth Ayass⁸ pointed out that there is a relatively new branch of computer science in the USA conducting research about computer supported co-operative work (CSCW) that is about people working in front of the screen but also in virtual communities in co-operative work. This CSCW research is based on qualitative research methods like participant observation and conversation analysis.

Furthermore Lachenmann suggested more serious reflections about the situatedness of solutions and knowledge produced in virtual discussion groups.

Development as communication: preliminary remarks

Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka⁹ started her lecture with an empirical example about Nepalese villagers, who - knowing that misery attracts international attention - mimic poverty confronting international development institutions. Grounded in these observations of the camouflage strategies she raised questions about the complex interplay of local self-representations and global images transported and offered by development institutions that act on a global level.

Collective representations in the sense of social facts and strategic action that creates meanings which become socially effective, for a long time have been central to anthropological inquiries, and are so even more in an increasingly globalised world. The field of development co-operation seems to be the key to current processes of reshaping, redefining and rethinking cultural identities and self-representations in the global-local field of power

⁷ Andrea Lang is PhD student at the SDRC

⁸ Dr. Ruth Ayass is Lecturer in qualitative research methods, Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld.

relations: Development institutions acting in a global arena and being linked to institutionally mediated global think tanks and global narratives enforce the global spread of concepts like “community”, “participation”, or “development”. At the local level development interventions compel the members of a given society to have another look at itself, to rethink its self-representations, to learn to interpret alien representations of themselves and in consequence to reformulate their strategies.

Development interventions connect a multitude of actors situated at very disparate organisational and societal levels such as international aid organisations, transnational NGO-networks, politicians and civil servants, local elites as well as other interest groups from among the local society. By linking together such extremely disparate entities as global players - like development agencies - and a Himalayan village, development arenas form an important part in the current global flow of ideas and knowledge. The relationship between the own and the other, the local and the global is being re-negotiated.

Pfaff-Czarnecka underlined that the process of global cultural production does not - of course - take place in an equilibrium of power. It is rather embedded in highly unequal global structures and discourses and tends to cement old inequalities and to bring new ones about. This is where technology comes in, because the power of definition coincides with unequally distributed technologies. Concepts are developed in the centres of knowledge production and then transferred to the development agencies, disregarding their embeddedness in their own local, European, western context.

Pfaff-Czarnecka emphasised the importance of analysing the media through which the global cultural flow occurs. It is necessary to discern between the cultural contents on one hand, and the technologies of their transmission on the other. For a local society lacking the access to media like the Internet, Pfaff-Czarnecka suggested, development configurations and the networks provided by them can serve as a medium to connect to the global cultural flow. A central question will be how at the interfaces between external institutions and the local societies the clash of opposed concepts as well as rhetoric congruities generates social dynamics - not only within the local societies but also within the intervening institutions.

⁹ Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka is professor for Social Anthropology at the SDRC.

In the following discussion Lachenmann highlighted the fertility of the concept of mediation as Gillian Youngs suggested it, in the sense of interrelatedness between the „social world“ and the „virtual community“ through new media and drew attentions to the parallels to Pfaff-Czarnecka's findings. In Pfaff-Czarnecka's case, the processes of mediation goes on between the local world and the global cultural flow through information channels provided by development institutions (participatory workshops etc). It is necessary to analyse the parallels of these different modes of mediation.

Through these channels, Pfaff-Czarnecka argued, the local community is related to global discourses about civil society and communitarian movements. In addition to Gillian Youngs' statement that the new media also affect actors who don't participate directly in these networks, Pfaff-Czarnecka pointed out that humanitarian actions indeed are staged and performed for a global audience, who will scrutinise these actions.

Furthermore the problem whether the institutional and legal structure of development co-operation inevitably creates equivalent legal entities as partners at the local level, was discussed. This process of putting the other in one's own categories continuously produces systems of ignorance, as Lachenmann highlighted.

Gendered spaces in Muslim societies

Salma Nageeb¹⁰ talked about her research on women's construction of social space in Sudan. Her concern was to get an understanding of how a translocal force like Islamism is restructuring the society. Analysing social gendered spaces provides a pragmatic view of the society and of how change and restructuration take place.

Given the nature of the Islamisation project Nageeb was surely aware of the dichotomising and segregating ideologies of such movements. Gender and space segregations are to be seen as corner stones for the restructuration project of the Islamist state and movement. However, Nageeb tried to move beyond this. Her concern was to look at the relation between segregated spaces and social categories. So, the focus was on engendered social relations and processes

¹⁰ After her research and her doctoral dissertation in Bielefeld, she is now a guest of the Humboldt Foundation at the SDRC.

through which social actors try to negotiate various cultural forces at stake and reposition themselves, or create a space for the (newly) repositioned self.

Nageeb focused on different social positions, which led her to different sources at both the individual and the societal level. Women from different age groups, marital background and relation to Islamism as a new cultural force were studied. Furthermore, she looked carefully at particular spaces, like the market and the mosque as well as women's private and traditional spaces.

Moreover, Nageeb paid attention to translocality, which is treated as social capital that is either brought to the field of social interaction to make one's stand valid or from the field to exclude a social disposition. While constructing social space the local/translocal dimensions were at the core of the game as modes of inclusion/exclusion practices, as cultural capital and as spacial dimension. Islamism, Nageeb explained, has an ambivalent relation to it: the local is to be divorced from the historic or the tradition and belongs to a translocal vision of Islam. But the translocal agents, visions, and practices are to be controlled in order to fit into the vision of Islam as advocated by Islamism.

Then Nageeb pointed out that the subject of space itself is profound, but she initially used space as a methodological approach. Being a Sudanese woman herself, this method made it possible to have a reflexive look at their own society. When she started her fieldwork in Sudan, however, she faced a lot of difficulties. For example, she took the veil as taken for granted without questioning its purpose. At this stage she used the concept of space to contest the cultural hegemony, which she, as a Sudanese women, had acquired. The application of space as a methodological approach opened Nageeb a disjointed look at different spaces, like the house, the market, the mosque, etc. Besides these spaces, she also paid attention to non-physical spaces such as ambitions and dreams. She called these spaces the "aspired spaces".

As mentioned before, this is only one side of the concept of space. Moreover, Nageeb analysed space in the context of Khartoum. After ten years of an Islamist regime, which has discursively and practically separated spaces according to gender, segregation and dichotomisation of spaces and gender are fundamental in Khartoum. After becoming aware of the different notions of space, Nageeb was able to jump into another stand, in a kind of relational and processing dimension of space. From this perspective she had a closer look at

gendered spaces and came across the phenomenon of moving beyond the dichotomising and the segregative practices of ideologies of Islamist movements. In this context Nageeb gave the example of women exchanging new ideas about the Qu'ran in the Internet. Actually, a repositioning of gendered social relations and processes takes place, furthered by the new media.

As one result of her study Nageeb developed the concept of “neo-Harem”, which explains the gender specific way through which women experience the process of social restructuration according to Islamism. Furthermore, she looked at neo-Harem as a concept that gives insights into the relation of women and Islamisation at the societal level. Nageeb defined neo-Harem as a concept of the practise of intensifying the confinement of women to an ideologically defined space. This confinement is based on enforcing a gender specific socialisation of women's body, movement, and conduct, and this socialisation is increasingly instrumental to both the state and male authorities. But at the same time neo-Harem is the restraining of women's incrementally deterritorialised or translocal vision of the world from entering the field of social restructuration as a cultural force. Neo-Harem should give an overall picture of the restructuration process and what it does to the gender order.

But neo-Harem should not be understood as a frame or a structure that limits women's ability to act as social agents, or that pushes them to the margin as a group which is mostly affected by Islamisation. Rather neo-Harem represents a frame for understanding the nature of the social gendered order as informed by Islamism. And it is within this frame that the women's social agency is constituted. In order to follow this agency and the way it contributes to the restructuration of the society, Nageeb examined the everyday life of women, their symbolic and religious practices as well as the discursive representation of the self and of the social disposition. In this way it was possible for Nageeb to understand their agency.

What Nageeb found out is that women are less affected by the control of their social action than by the control of their aspirations. The aspired spaces are usually based on translocal visions.

For her post-doc work Nageeb aims to have a closer look at the issues of gender, translocality and spaces, public spaces in particular, and Islamism. She would like to focus on women groups working on gender and human rights issues, or, more generally, those advocating

liberal discourses within two or more Muslim countries. Her idea is to focus on processes through which public space is claimed or constructed. Nageeb wants to look at strategies of negotiating public spaces and the way these strategies shape and reshape the discourse and practices of different conflicting but also interdependent groups.

The following discussion came back to the subject of women exchanging new ideas about the Qu'ran in the Internet. Nageeb gave the example of her younger sister, who likes to surf in the Internet. Some time ago, she got a chain letter with Islamic contents for commercial purposes. The religious contents were pretty unfounded. It became obvious that the attention of the Internet users should be attracted to visit the web-site in the first line.

Besides Nageeb explained why she wouldn't use the notion of invisibility of women anymore. She acknowledged the impact of the term invisibility, but she made clear that it doesn't show the complete picture of society. She came back to the example of the veil. From a western point of view it is commonly argued that the veil hides women from the eyes of men. In that sense they are made invisible, but this is only one perspective. The veil is consciously used by Sudanese women to have control over what is seen and how they are perceived by others.

Gillian Youngs added that the usage of the Internet is an immense opportunity for women world-wide, which has already been taken up. She highlighted the fact that it is the first time, that there is a media which contains every single sphere of human activities (e.g. the interpersonal, politics, economy, etc.).

Gender, knowledge and translocal networking in Ghana

The topic of **Christine Müller's**¹¹ lecture was on "Gender, knowledge and translocal networking in Ghana". Her findings about women's organisations were the product of fieldwork she conducted between 1998 and 1999.

Müller started with the representation of the results of her survey. She found out that women have organised themselves in various forms on the local, regional, and national level and beyond through networking within the "World Wide Women's Web". Within these glocalised

relations they have established their own “epistemic culture”, which is connected to the critical discourse on gender relations in social institutions and their aim for social change. This framework goes along with the interface of local and global relations. Müller described the circulation of knowledge along and between the different levels and the locations of knowledge production. As an introduction to her discussion of women networks, Müller pointed out that there are three dimensions of knowledge: a social (gender), a temporal (generation) and a space dimension. For her further presentation she concentrated on the social and the space dimensions of knowledge. At the local level of networking - a small village in rural Ghana -, Müller presented the networking between Subqueenmothers (who are the elected female heads of their families). Subqueenmothers frequently gather on Sunday afternoons. In these kind of informal meetings, social problems, education, unemployment, etc. are discussed. The main topic of the local discourse is how Subqueenmothers can gain access to the Chief’s palace where they have been kept outside and up to now only Chief, Subchiefs and Queenmother are ‘allowed’ to go to. Müller quoted a Subqueenmother:

“ [...] We want to go to the meetings, to get information, to listen what has been said and to influence the decisions. We send the information back to the people in town. We can suggest things, we can help the men, especially when it comes to the women’s side [...]”.

As a common identity the Subqueenmothers refer to the ‘*aberewa nyansafo*’, which in the past had been the knowledge and wisdom of the old women. They use the common identity to legitimate their agency of entering the Chief’s Palace, which in the process of decentralisation has become the most important financial, political, juridical and representational space. To enter the Chief’s palace also means to open a space for further agencies. In redefining old spaces, which have been marginalised in the past, they add new elements of knowledge. This is meant to address and solve ongoing social issues.

Moreover, the discourse does not take place in a vacuum on the local level. On the regional level, the Queenmothers’ Association, which exists as a formal organisation in almost all parts of Ghana since 1994, holds personal contacts and regular meetings in the district town. The discussions are about problems, like Aids, environmental aspects, health, etc., which are seen as a kind of counterdiscourse to western development discourse. They primarily strive for the collaboration with regional women’s organisations.

¹¹ Christine Müller is PhD student and research assistant at the SDRC.

Since the 1990s women have been struggling for getting the admission in the regional and national Houses of Chief, but they have not succeeded up to now. Currently, a symbolic discourse on tradition is in the centre of attention. While men are referring to traditions as to something which has always been there, women say it is something which must be changed. Gendered spaces and time are contested in this way.

Then, Müller talked about the national level. The Women's Forum in Sunyani, which is organised by the NCWD (first established in 1974 as a "national machinery" for women and development), has been a new space for all women's organisations in the region since November 1998. The organiser is a member of WILDAF (Women in Law and Development in Africa), Ghana, a pan-African organisation in 28 countries dealing with the broad issues of women and development. About 60-100 women from the regional towns participate in the meetings and discuss on health, violence against women, education, and women's rights. "Learning through sharing" is the motto. The Forum does not result in a common agenda, but it is open towards a plurality of possibilities for action. Furthermore, it is a centre for sharing, analysing, conceptualising and a common process of discovery.

The WEDNET-Initiative (Women, Environment and Development Network) is mentioned as an example for new research networks on a personal level and how research can transform realities. A female professor at Legon (University of Ghana) conducted a study in Northern Ghana on gender and forestry, theorised the knowledge and translated it into practical knowledge. Furthermore, it is politicised by establishing contacts to women's organisations.

Other pan-African organisations are WILDAF, AAWORD (African Women's Association for research on Development), WEDNET and REFAD (Reseau Sous-Regional Femmes Africaines et Droits Humaines).

Finally the World Wide Women's Web, which has been established in the process of the World Women's Conferences, has become the subject of the discussion. It covers almost every continent of the world. Part of this global network are DAWN, WEDO, WLD, WILDAF, CALDEM (Comite de America Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer) and APWIP (Asian Pacific Women in Politics; Korea, Thailand and the Philippines) for example. These glocal organisations have built up their own research

capacities and/or are connected to universities and research units, and have their own agendas and programmes for development as well.

Networking has become much easier for women by using new media, such as the Internet. It is used as a communication platform and for emergency letters. Moreover, substituting personal meetings can take place without spending a high amount of money on travelling costs. As an example, women in South-America have created their own virtual platform. Hence, the women's movement has already taken advantage of the virtual space.

Finally, Müller defined networking as a form of organising social relations along the interfaces of women's organisations, which has three features:

1. It is a form of social relations.
2. It is a medium for the circulation and distribution of knowledge, but also for the hybridising of local and global discourses.
3. It is a practice which shapes social spaces across local and national distances.

In the discussion, parallel structures of power, space and debate between men and women in Ghana were highlighted. Müller pointed out that these structures do not exclusively exist in Ghana, but are also found in other African countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, and Senegal. Moreover, it became clear that information is considered to be a resource for which women still have to fight. Müller's findings reveal that local practices can no longer be seen as essentially local. There is a lively exchange between local and global knowledge. Consequently, local practices are glocalised these days. Müller added that it would be challenging to do comparative studies in different African countries.

In this context Gillian Youngs referred to Norman Long (1992) and his reflections about the positioning of the researcher. You have to locate yourself, whether you are studying the local or the global. This locatedness looks differently depending where you study it from and what your intentions are. Therefore, Youngs reminded the audience of the importance of precise intentions considering the positioning of the self.

Apart from that, attention was paid to Müller's map which shows networking structures of different women's organisations world-wide (see appendix). From an analytical point of view this model, despite its simplification of reality, is very informative.

Finally, the question was raised as to whether there are different women's organisations in the villages and how they interact with each other. Müller clarified that there was not even a single women's organisation in the village she had chosen for her research and that only informal gatherings of women took place. This led her to come across another interesting phenomenon. Once a week women met at a special corner in the village and listened to a broadcasting by a women's organisation on the radio. This turned out to be an important source of information at the village level.

Presentation of the Research Project on “Globalisation of Knowledge: Development experts in world society”¹²

In his presentation **Markus Kaiser**¹³ concentrated on the processes of knowledge production and knowledge management in the global development community and on recent changes by the introduction of ICT. He illustrated these transformations describing the case of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its newly introduced Sub-Regional Resource Facilities (SURF), an IT based knowledge management system administered at headquarters in New York City and nine regional hubs.¹⁴

Traditionally, processes of knowledge production and knowledge management in development co-operation were organised on three clearly distinguishable levels: the global, the national and the regional. Furthermore, knowledge was divided on the one hand into spatially defined expertise being institutionalised in special regional or national divisions, like country desks, and on the other hand into specific sectoral and disciplinary expertise being institutionalised in sectoral divisions, such as divisions on water or health being brought into the development organisation by experts like engineers, economists, sociologists etc. All different levels of specialised expertise had to interact in a particular project and exchange knowledge through the hierarchical echelons of the development organisation.

¹² Funded by the German Research Council (DFG), Ev 13/10 1

¹³ Dr. Markus Kaiser is Lecturer of Development Studies at the SDRC

¹⁴ The presentation is based on field work in New York City (USA), Harare (Zimbabwe) and Manila (Philippines) in the years 2000 and 2001.

The chain of knowledge production begins with knowledge creation on the project level: experience. The knowledge outcome is being diffused among the expert community demonstrating it on conferences, workshops etc. Gained experience is communicated from individual expert to individual expert through letters, personal contacts and all other kinds of media. After being discussed in these expert networks, it is established as standard knowledge and then used throughout the development community. This kind of knowledge diffusion follows the established rules of face-to-face communication, validation through peers and organisational practice such as reporting and evaluations. One can say that knowledge is validated by communities of practice. Kaiser pointed out that it is highly problematic to transform experiences from particular projects into the general design of strategies, concepts, and instruments, assuming that it is possible to isolate the “lessons learned” of a particular project and best practices from their specific context of knowledge production and convert them in overall valid conclusions which can be used in other projects.

Against the background of a changing development landscape, where the traditional key instrument of doing development - a project with a clear focus, a specific setting, a target group and identifiable outcomes - is more and more substituted by a new focus on country programs and sector wide approaches (SWAPs), this process of learning becomes increasingly essential to development agencies as UNDP. Since results obtained in SWAPs cannot be as easily localised and attributed to one special agency as the results of a project, there is an increasing necessity to reduce acquired knowledge to concepts, in order to make it usable, learnable and to disseminate it through workshops. IT can facilitate in establishing such an inter-organisational learning and knowledge production landscape.

One example for the use of ICTs in the context of development co-operation are Internet platforms as the Development Gateway (<http://www.developmentgateway.org/>) or the UNDP SURF system (<http://www.undp.org/surf/>), where worlds of knowledge meet. Those sites offer data; information and evaluation reports are published electronically, too. Besides being an important instrument to produce and disseminate legitimate knowledge in the development world, evaluations enable the organisations to learn by comparing knowledge acquired in different projects and to legitimise their work in front of public audiences and the governments.

The main goal of knowledge management, which is to bring sector knowledge and regional knowledge closer together, is expected to be achieved by using IT. The Internet is seen to be the perfect tool to connect people who know, with those who need to know and to connect spatially distant regions. It is a technology through which knowledge can be more easily disseminated and shared. Development organisations have created communities of practice, which are extended to virtual communities of experts working in the same sector. Using the Internet, it is possible to establish permanent communication networks and stable channels through which information can flow and thus create an epistemic community of development experts.

To illustrate how the implementation of ICT works in practice, Kaiser presented some of his preliminary findings about the new IT knowledge management system SURF (Sub-Regional Research Facilities). SURF has been established by UNDP in 1999 in order to provide timely high quality and substantive support to all UNDP country offices. There are nine different regional hubs administrating the exchange of information in various sectors. One of them - here Kaiser conducted parts of his research - is responsible for environment in the headquarter, New York. In this case the Internet is used to build up a demand-driven network of experts, that is to connect people and decentralise knowledge instead of collecting and centralising it. This network structure ought to break down the 'silo culture' of projects, building up professional competences, promoting organisational learning and fostering a stronger group identity among the sector specialists of UNDP.

The use of the Internet confronts the experts with several problems. Firstly, the Internet's imperative to report immediately and to deal frankly with the problems, makes the usual way of reflecting and clearing the reports impossible. Secondly, the question at what stage one should release results becomes crucial because of the experts' knowledge hiding practices. Thirdly, the experts have to decide how many people they should ask and reduce the number in order to keep it manageable. Fourthly, they have to deal with the problem of knowledge devolution, as in a decentralised network there is no control over the quality of the exchanged contents.

The following discussion was based on some transcript extracts of Kaiser's empirical data consisting of responses of experts having evaluated the advice given to them by the sector-hub-manager. Analysing the communication generated in this network the participants of the

workshop highlighted that the Internet platform had rather delivered delocalised information and data - as names of experts – than profoundly embedded and contextualised knowledge and expertise. Though all people involved in the network were really enthusiastic about it, the piece of knowledge gained in these communication networks seems to be rather poor. Kaiser related this problem to the actual working practice of answering immediately to very diverse and complex questions without looking up any literature. Also the exclusive use of the English language keeps local context and culture, written into native languages, out of the communication, creating a very western style culture of communication.

Referring to the question whether delocalisation of knowledge is intrinsic to the Internet, Lachenmann stated that this tendency it is not obligatory and that also a different use of the Internet could be possible focusing more on reliability, validity and contextuality of knowledge. On the other hand, Lang stressed the necessity to reduce context and intensity of communication, in order to keep the networks manageable. The task of such Internet based networks is to create and give access to a knowledge pool existing within the organisation, and not to the individual knowledge of the person in charge with the network.

Youngs emphasised the very typical character of the empirical material presented by Kaiser for forms of communication on the Internet and highlighted its positive aspects. As communication structures are always shaped by the particular media used, the Internet communication is also shaped by the Internet's specific horizontal structure of supply and demand, which is dominated by the imperative to respond immediately. The space existing in any communication system between demand and supply gives possibilities of manifold misunderstandings, since demand and supply are embedded in a complex system of reciprocal expectations about the nature and the content of the possible information. Especially in Internet communication these spaces-in-between turn out to be very productive, fostering an extremely interactive, direct and honest communication style.

The aspect of language was especially discussed. Saloma stressed the ideological notion of the statement that the use of a foreign language creates a different way of expressing. She also pointed out that concerning different stages of knowledge production and diffusion of scholarly language, SURF is not the stage where scholarly language is used. Discussing the problem of general and specific language, Lachenmann underlined the necessity to develop a specific disciplinary vocabulary, that would facilitate the communication within a specific

knowledge community. This is important, because a general, globally and universally valid knowledge does not exist.

Internet in Tunisia

Slim-Florian Bacha¹⁵ presented special aspects of his diploma thesis (Bacha 2002) about the Internet in Tunisia focussing on the gendered dimensions of Internet use and the transformative potentials of ICTs vis-à-vis to gender relations in a Muslim country. Approaching the Internet as a glocal field of economic action, it serves as a site to analyse processes of fundamental social change in the Tunisian society that reshape value systems and gender relations.

Although women are legally equal to men, everyday life is based on a more or less strict gendered division of spaces, the public sphere being male and the private sphere being female. Female mobility in the public sphere is rather restricted with certain important exceptions: Schools and libraries are accepted spaces for girls to move autonomously and without the company of other family members.

For analytical reasons, to illustrate the interrelatedness of local and global phenomena, Bacha identified three fields of interest. Firstly, the field of the Internet cafés, to explore private and individual use, secondly the field of companies producing and trading pottery to illustrate the implementation of computer technology, and thirdly the field of agencies offering software solutions as an example of the so called New Economy.

Like schools and libraries, the Internet cafés were conceived as places providing the possibility to gain knowledge and thus represent an acceptable neutral space, where young girls and women can go on their own. This conception nevertheless did not fit with the actual use girls and young women made of the Internet. The media was rather used to participate in international, especially French chatrooms to communicate with boys. Especially for females, the chatrooms provided a virtual space that seemed to be disjunct from the value system and sanctions of society. Through this training of communication skills with the other sex, local

¹⁵ Slim-Florian Bacha is graduate student at the SDRC.

gender relations are transformed and local actors are encouraged to make a translocal comparison of possible communication forms between the sexes.

In the second field, the field of pottery producing and trading companies, especially traditional notions of a gendered division of labour had been questioned. Young women working as secretaries were the only members of the staff capable of handling computers and Internet technology, having acquired the necessary skills by attending private computer courses. But although the content of women's work had changed, the validation had not changed and the crucial role the secretaries' work played was neglected by the patriarchal male management, referring to it as 'playing around'. The female experts were discouraged to further contribute useful ICT knowledge into internal processes.

The accessibility to the field of the so-called new economy turned out to be very restrictive for female computer experts. The visited agencies for software solutions were organised in a network structure, forming working groups, where different experts occasionally worked together on special projects. Consisting only of male ICT experts who often were study mates, these working groups were structured in a rather non-hierarchical way with a very informal atmosphere and informal relationships among the experts. This special character of staff organisation made it very difficult for newcomers, especially for women, to integrate themselves, as they would have to intrude into and move in an exclusively male space.

In the discussion that followed questions of methodology were raised. Lachenmann underlined the importance of qualitative research as conducted by Bacha and stressed the validity of his findings, as they show in a very accentuated way typical processes of social change ongoing in the entire country, according to theoretical sampling of typical fields, albeit not being representative in a strict statistical sense.

Furthermore the question of the connectedness of the three fields and the local embeddedness of the Internet were discussed. The fields were less connected than expected and the Internet was nearly exclusively used for translocal communication. In spite of this global orientation, the Internet was not used by Tunisian migrant communities to build up translocal communication networks with their relatives, because other media, such as the telephone, were favoured.

Local networks in the sense of a diversified ‘Tunisian Internet’ were rare and most connections were directed to the translocal and global and not to the local level. On the private level, the Internet was mostly used by youngsters to communicate with French counterparts or to team up with the latest youth- or popcultural trends. On the producer level the already export orientated companies used the Internet for a ‘modern’ representation of their business - though a functioning web-based e-commerce remained maldeveloped - and to adapt the ornaments of the produced tiles to European taste. In the ‘*économie immatérielle*’ as well, the web-designer adapted their work quickly to global standards by copying images found in the Internet to meet the preferences of their mostly European clients. The Internet was identified as a medium providing a virtual space for the blending of the local and global, creating hybrid entities.

In her final remarks **Gillian Youngs** focused on the concept of globalisation and on how to conceptualise the relationship between the local and the global. Her training as a political economist, she pointed out, makes her view the dynamics of globalisation and the relationships of the local and the global as very much market driven. The global, in the sense of the global market, is deeply rooted in the local economic structures, where “it is in here, not out there”. Especially the global financial markets and the global stock exchanges, being extremely dependent on ICTs, are the major source and motive for dynamics of globalisation. Financial markets had been the first ones which had a fully integrated market, and ICTs allowed them to link even more, so that exchange and decision-making are taking place simultaneously.

Relating to the findings of Bacha and Saloma, Youngs emphasised the importance of further empirical research about ICTs in order to challenge the traditional way of thinking about the relationship between the local and the global. As Bacha’s work showed, the Internet is used to deepen the consumption of global culture. Users and consumers are integrated into the global market and their consumption choices and strategies therefore are shaped by the hegemonies of the global economy. These new strategies in relationship to media especially developed by young people react upon the local culture. Considering the Internet as an interface between the global and the local, Youngs underlined the necessity of conducting further research about the Internet’s hybridising effects.

Furthermore Youngs emphasised the complex, contradictory and multidirectional nature of globalisation. There were early examples of Lithuanian and South Korean Universities with high technological standards relating to ICTs beyond those common to universities in Britain or Germany. Such facilities allowed for some women in South Korea, for instance, to interact differently with their own local culture and to re-negotiate gender issues, while the gender relations in the traditional sector of the economy remain as hierarchical and as discriminatory as before, as Lachenmann added. In Zanzibar, ICTs have become an integral tool of community movements, including those related to development, the environment, youth and women. As these examples of the global disjuncture given by Youngs show, globalisation and the spread of ICTs help to create “possible worlds”. As a result some locations perceived as less developed are more connected to the global digital economy than those generally designated the most developed.

Summary - Gender and translocal networking through information technology

By approaching globalisation as an intensification of social relations, as a process that brings together extremely distant regions, social actors, and ideas, networking, making possible these translocal connections, can be identified as one core notion of this process. Networking, however, did neither arrive with globalisation nor with ICTs, it is intrinsic to the lives of people throughout history, as Youngs put it, but it gained a new quality under these new conditions. In this workshop the participants approached in a very heterogeneous way and from manifold perspectives different processes of networking, especially networking through ICTs, and their implications for gender relations.

Gillian Youngs discussed the challenges and opportunities for gender and media research under conditions of globalisation, stressing the importance of analysing the processes of mediation connecting virtual and ‘real’ social dynamics. She pleaded for an expanded approach to technology conceptualising, it as a social site through which social change is articulated intimately embedded in history, social structure and culture.

All participants emphasised the highly ambivalent and contradictory character of technology. On the one hand it reproduces gender inequity and exclusion, on the other hand it allows for

the creation of new ways of expression especially for women, the creation of new “impossible spaces”, as Saloma denominated this phenomenon.

Questions of interconnectedness between the local and the global became very important throughout the workshop. Pfaff-Czarnecka showed how the connectedness to the global cultural flow via communication networks provided by globally acting development institutions affects local strategies of self-representation. As illustrated by Bacha for the Tunisian case, especially networking processes via the Internet have great implications for local gender relations, being reshaped and re-defined against the background of a translocal comparison.

Kaiser focused on processes of knowledge production and knowledge management in the global development community. In his example the ICT, the Internet in particular, is used to build up a demand-based network of experts. The Internet as new form of public space is also an important aspect in Nageeb’s study. She examined the negotiation of gendered spaces in Muslim societies and developed the concept of “neo Harem”. For the Ghanaian context Müller found out that women have organised themselves in various forms on the local, regional and national level and beyond through networking with the World Wide Women’s Web.

What has become obvious in this workshop is that ICTs and the Internet do not only provide new spaces for women bound in persisting gender orders, but they also mean a chance for negotiating power structures by building up new translocal gender relations and glocal women’s networks.

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