Transnationalisation, Translocal Spaces, Gender and Development – Methodological Challenges

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Transcultural Research: Transnationalism and Development

In the approach presented in this article, we want to empirically ground globalisation theories and consider migration research as one very important methodological perspective. The other perspective important for our analysis is gender and agency.

This approach reflects the process of connecting development research (especially at the Department of Sociology in Bielefeld, see Schrader and Kaiser 2001) to a new concept of bridging migration and transnationalism. Migration is now seen as constituting a transnational space for negotiating development through translocal interactions which form an everyday life activity of 'transmigrants'. Their concepts of development, of societal well-being and of social transformation in general are probably quite different from the mainstream development ideas into which they are supposed to be integrated by 'developers'. These may be very modernistic, or traditionalistic in other concerns, not really democratic but with a high degree of ownership.

In order to investigate these processes, questions of methodology and design have to be asked in quite a different way than has been the case in development research, sociology and social anthropology up to now. Many are sceptical of regarding the adequacy of doing comparative research across different societies, first world and third world, between different cultures or civilisations, given the very heterogeneous and context specific developments. After the long tradition of regional studies, case studies in social anthropology and fear of transfer of Eurocentric concepts in development research, there is a necessity for a fundamental reconsidering of methodological approaches within a process of globalising social science. Concepts connected to specific cases and regions enter more and

more into generalising debates, following a methodology of transcultural 'comparative global' social research.

Therefore, there is an increased interest in strengthening qualitative methodology and in empirically grounding certain theoretical fields such as the sociology of Islam, gender, social movements (Lachenmann 1993, 1998b) which can be made fruitful for migration and development studies and can be considered to be basic features of globalisation 'in the making'. There are three different approaches: qualitative analysis of concepts and phenomena considered to be constitutive of globalisation, such as social movements, networks, civil society within a framework of transcultural sociology, thereby avoiding dualisms of blocks, cultures etc.; globalisation studied through its constitutional element of interlinking, global flows, translocal social spaces, networks and movements; and globalisation looked at as it is generated from below, making use of knowledge accumulated by means of regional studies and looking at glocalisation and localisation. The paradigm of translocality refers to the interactive construction of social reality whereby boundaries of multiple social worlds, identities, and communities are renegotiated.

The article is mainly based on the research project "Negotiating Development in Translocal Gendered Spaces in Muslim Societies".[1] The women's movements which we studied in their own societies, referring to global concepts such as CEDAW, family law and with regard to translocality ascribed to their local and regional activities, were, together with migrants, among the early transnational actors of globalisation. In this article, I shall try to explain the theoretical concepts and methodology developed in this context to study the constitution of translocal spaces. We aim at bringing different recent venues together, such as engendering social fields and interface of knowledge systems on the one hand and approaches to new forms of field research on the other, linking up to internationally debated concepts of multi-sited respectively global ethnography. An important aspect of further developing the study of translocal spaces will be bringing together concepts of (translocal) agency, institutionalisation and structuration. It will be shown how these considerations can be applied to three case studies of Muslim societies. The theoretical outcome of empirically grounding globalisation theory will be based on contrasting concepts of 'othering' vs. glocalisation, transfer vs. interconnectedness and analysing the restructuring and overlapping of public spheres. Finally concrete methods of field research, as applied in the research project mentioned above will be explained.

In this project we argued that globalisation is being constituted through new social forms of organisation and epistemic communities, with the development of the world as a global knowledge framework. Within a framework of theory of agency, relationality and dynamics, we analyse the constitution of social spaces,

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which are structured through gender, and look at othering and fundamentalisms as globalising forces negotiated locally at different interfaces. We want to contribute to deepening globalisation theory by looking at how spaces, knowledge, structuring through agency and networking of women in the development field are constituting flows and landscapes in a translocal way. We do this in the sense of empirically grounding approaches of Appadurai (1998, 2000), Robertson (1995) or Hannerz (2000) etc.. In our view the structuration of social fields is gendered, and the female negotiation of development and constitution of translocal and transnational spaces present very pertinent cases for consideration. Migration is a second important dimension of structuration and agency.

We can consider migration theory and transnationalism as one field of globalisation processes in which migrants are actors and carriers of ideas and concepts being localised and also globalised in the sense of feeding back to the North. Of course, the structuration of power of these translocal spaces, interfaces and interactions, is one of the main challenges to be analysed. Our approach intends to be transnational, overcoming methodological nationalism (although the interface between the state and i.a. its development policy can be focused upon as well) and methodological ethnicity (Glick-Schiller/Basch/Szanton Blanc 1992) by looking at diversity and intersectionality in the social and cultural construction of reality in a transcultural approach.

In general it is astonishing how little explicit debate and writing exists on how to do empirical research which captures translocality (Appadurai 1998; Freitag/von Oppen 2005) and transnationalism (Hannerz 2000; Faist 1998; Faist 2007; Pries 2001). It is clear that we cannot separate an interactive and translocal approach from a comparative approach when studying processes, relations, or flows. Comparison, respectively interface-analysis, does not imply one logic, but rather the construction of meaning from situatedness and contextualisation. Therefore, it seems very fruitful to make comparisons by deconstructing concepts regarding certain phenomena, such as citizenship and participation. The adequacy of the methods has to be discussed by looking at the newly observed processes and problems which are constitutive of globalisation. These include local/national confrontations and questions of autonomy, political ethnicity, identity etc., the constitution of the public sphere and social spaces, knowledge production and transfer.

It is also very important to see that, although there is a global regime in development with very dominant conceptualisations, interactions and transfers, as in migration, are not mainly North – South any longer. However the South – South relations are often invisible. Such is the case with traders' networks[2] for example, which transform into transnational South – South firms, transnational

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2   See Evers/Schrader (1994). They elaborated on the so called "traders' dilemma", showing that trade is mainly organised by non-locals who can avoid social obligations.

women's and other social movements and civil society, constituting new translocal public spheres.

Engendering Methodology, Researching Constitution of Translocal Spaces

We are aspiring to empirically ground globalisation theories in the sense of "grounded theory" (Strauss 1987; Strauss/Corbin 1998) and are doing transcultural comparison and research in the sense of "global ethnography" (Burawoy et al. 2000), and "multi-sited ethnography" (Marcus 1998). Therefore we study the social spaces constituted in different arenas, platforms for public debate, considering different flows and fields, such as development, through the agency and perspective of actors such as migrants and members of women organisations. The constitution of interactive social spaces through networks, especially through IT in a virtual space, is a very interesting concomitant feature of migration which transcends the division of everyday life and lifeworld, mid-level organisations and national boundaries (Harcourt 1999; Saloma-Akpedonu 2006).

From our point of view it is important to widen the epistemological and theoretical approach to embrace translocal social spaces in general by using the concept of overlapping knowledge systems and their interfaces (Long 1992). This implies broadening migration approaches and generalising development studies, but in very clear cut fields. This position should not be equated with the assumption that the nation state should or does lose certain functions. The difference in methodology lies in referring to certain dimensions of analysis such as interfaces with state authorities, politics, and institutions, instead of focusing on them as units of analysis.

We take recourse to phenomenological social theory and interpretative methodology and share the assumption that methodological deficits should be overcome by focusing on renegotiating and overcoming frontiers, constituting crosscutting and overlapping social spaces and institutions. This brings into focus the negotiation of meaning and constitution of social spaces. According to our view, this necessitates a methodological approach of structuration and hybridisation with a focus on negotiation of meaning of institutions in translocal/transnational spaces. This also implies to investigate new forms of social cohesion and collective agency of society including social movements and civil society organisations, and the constitution of crosscutting spaces for negotiating meaning. Another methodological requisite would be a systematic analyis of (encounters at) interfaces (of knowledge systems) and the interconnectedness or redrawing of boundaries between different sites and spaces.

We think that we can thereby overcome in our analysis the tendency to conceptualise institutions in very formalistic and modernistic ways, distinguishing between formal and informal institutions and sectors as well as social security,

public and private, traditional and modern forms of governance, civil society and the state. This would imply drawing strict boundaries without taking into account interfaces, crosscutting knowledge and resource transfers and management, the social embeddedness of institutions, the permanent renegotiation of social identities, i.e. the enormous flexibility of structures and agency. However, we would look at processes of formalisation, organisation-building, development in translocal/transnational spaces, of participation, ownership and transformation of 'traditional' institutions.

Unfortunately, in mainstream transnationalism studies in general there is hardly any explicit engendering of analysis, although a gender perspective is very pertinent and fruitful. This is especially true regarding the structuration of social fields where gender clearly makes a difference and provides relevant insights into the construction of social reality.[3] However, there are some very thorough and rich empirical studies, mainly in the field of transnational identity formation (e.g. Thapan (ed.) 2005; Thapan 2005; Chaudhuri 2005). Often, only a conventional number-taking or comparison of men and women takes place. This looks at the very statically conceived 'role of women' in 'households', without taking into account research on translocal gender relations and their renegotiation, gendered modes of (circular) migration, construction of gender in institutions and organisations, including policies, and societal gender order.

When applying this gender perspective (Lachenmann 2004a; Lachenmann 2004b; Dannecker 2005), we realised that there are gendered (translocal) social spaces on the one hand, where the instrumentalisation of women in migration, identity and poverty reduction policies takes place. The construction of gender is often very essentialist, with gender constructs influencing, to a great extent, the orientalisation of migrants. This occurs through concepts such as vulnerable groups, forced marriage, oppression of women, thereby characterising the sending countries as underdeveloped and culturally inferior. On the other hand, far-fetched implications about what these 'suppressed' women should do are implied in policies. Also the gendered structure of transnational migration and the very big gender differences and interesting gendered networks are hardly taken into account.

Furthermore, it is very important to development and localisation, as Nina Glick Schiller has stressed, to study localities within the global 'new economy', overcoming the 'ethnic economy' approach. To do this she suggests a scaling approach to transnational migration research, including the positioning of nation-states and global cities within global fields of power affecting the "processes through which migrants move, settle, and maintain transnational connection" (Glick Schiller 2007: 6).

There is certainly a need for a global perspective, but at the same time we need to strengthen the methodological links between localities, localising pro-

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3   Sarah J. Mahler and Patricia R. Pessar (2006) put it nicely: "Gender matters: ethnographers bring gender from the periphery toward the core of migration studies".

cesses, interfaces at different levels and crosscutting and overlapping social spaces. Of course we cannot consider migrants as 'actors of globalisation' (in the sense that political scientists often do) without unravelling underlying power structures. Agency and (power) structuration of translocal fields are constituting globalisation which is also 'made by migrants' in the sense of 'social worlds', establishing relations and institutions. We would refer to modes of structuration, dimensions, even think of strategies. A methodological consequence is to overcome dichotomies by showing that new cultural spaces are created – what could be called 'spaces of migration' (intersecting at many borders and internally structured) – in contrast to a concept of container culture (see e.g. Pries 2001).

The constitution of spaces can lead to formation of communities, but the more interesting approach of global ethnography would be to analyse negotiation within, e.g. between concepts of culture, development and obligations, gender relations etc. between migrants and people at home. Otherwise there is the danger of assuming a framework of 'global capitalism' without showing how combined power structures work on a local level. This is what can be conceived as a paradigm of 'translocality' (Appadurai 1998; Freitag/von Oppen 2005).

Development, in a framework of globalisation, must be conceived of as "social transformation" in a broad sense such as "multiple modernities". This concept implies looking at othering processes, different institutional solutions but also informalisation processes (e.g. of social services). These need to be defined in terms of knowledge production and use, as well as arenas of the negotiation of meaning in a scalar sense on different levels. In general, transnationalisation, including migration, should overcome tendencies to become closed epistemic communities. Following a translocal paradigm, our questions with regard to development and migrants as carriers of flows (in the sense of Appadurai 1998) would be: What concepts do they carry? Can they overcome the 'stranger'-'natives' divide which is used in development co-operation, addressed by social concepts such as local knowledge, participation, ownership etc. We are introducing methodological approaches in order to do analysis based on sociology of knowledge, including ideas of authority of knowledge, dominant knowledge etc. (e.g. article by Eva Gerharz in this volume).

The phenomenological approach of structuration, which is connected to the theory and methodological approach of social action – necessarily goes beyond an "actors" approach. This can not be done by concentrating on transnational organisations (Pries 2001). In our view, agency and the negotiation of meaning leading to structuration must be the basis for studying social spaces. Social space would be conceived of as the operationalisation of the life-world concept, which includes the dimension of "borders" or "boundaries". Instead of conceptualising fixed units of analysis, we suggest analysing dynamic interfaces of systems of knowledge in social spaces by showing how they are constituted. If globalisation and localisation are produced in a constructivist sense by migrants, or like in our

project case study by women activists and researchers, everyday life and organisational life and linkages between these have to be brought together. We consider the micro-macro relation as best captured through the structuration and institutionalisation approach. Regarding the defining levels, we can indeed distinguish different complexities of societal organisation. However the linkages and interactions appear to be increasingly important. Very interesting indeed are the crossing of levels and the multiple entanglements.

Translocal Agency and Institutionalisation

Given the global and translocal phenomena of connectedness, methodological challenges are indeed to replace classical comparison because independent units of analysis cannot be distinguished any more. We analyse how social spaces are constituted through agency (e.g. Peleikis 2003 on Lebanon – Ivory Coast migrants) and we can formulate certain dimensions and perspectives in order to look at processes and dynamics in other cases. Such relational studies need to include systematic contextualisation thereby overcoming methodological nationalism by considering e.g. the interaction with the state when negotiating concepts in different spheres as only one of several dimensions.

Often organisations are considered as the relevant actors, whereas social movements are neglected. Social movements are typical actors in social spaces with blurred boundaries between formal and informal contexts. Relevant social spaces can be constituted by organisations, which, however, are not social spaces per se. Instead, we look at crosscutting spaces and multiple social worlds, not as concentric circles but as overlapping spheres, also regarding everyday life in and with the economy which is socially organised and transnationally embedded. Perspectives on both need to be combined in analysis. The methodological imperative of structuration has to be taken seriously. Pertinent here are some Bielefeld studies such as "The Traders' dilemma" (Evers/Schrader 1994), or "Doing IT in the Philippines" (Saloma-Akpedonu 2006), where the everyday life and organisational boundaries are blurred and where translocal interaction amongst actors within organisations or individually takes place. One example is the exchanging of IT knowledge and contracts with Philippine migrants to the United States. We assume that this blurring of the relations with organisations is one of the phenomena of globalisation which has to be understood. The way the global economy is structured for example by Bolivian migrants living and working in private sweat shops in Argentina ("cama dentro" lit. bed inside the sweatshop, Spiegel 2005), includes all forms of outsourcing, privatising and precarious working relations. Another relevant case would be cleaning staff and housemaids in global cities. Analysis can be based on concepts of modes of transformation, processes of institutionalisation and of organisation building.

With regard to the question of the institutionalisation of agency in social spaces, thereby contributing to the analysis of the migration/development nexus, we suggest studying interfaces between formal and informal institutions (such as social security or finance), crosscutting boundaries of formal institutions and formally employed persons including migrants overcoming distances. There are innovative forms of linking, conceiving and combating poverty by taking into account social networks, livelihoods, and cooperation between genders. These also take into account the exchange of resources and labour, boundary crossing between different logics of economic agency such as the reproductive and productive field, for example between women in informal business interacting with men in institutions and the other way round. It is important to analyse how boundaries are drawn and the interfaces between local governance and civil society organisations are take place. These can be analysed by looking at the social spaces for negotiating public issues or developing formal institutions. Examples are social forestry or informal institutions such as rehabilitation of irrigation schemes or male/female groups and organisations.

A phenomenological methodology clearly helps to overcome the 'society equals nation state' syndrome. We can render relational and interactive approaches more visible by using systematic dense methodology which includes the study of trajectories. Contextualisation can also be done systematically according to structures of relevance in the field. I am afraid the trap of territorial reference remains if cross-cutting worlds and boundaries are not examined; we have to study how these are permanently (re)produced and negotiated. This can be done by using concepts such as arena, platforms and public sphere(s) where power relations are generated and challenged and the meanings of policy issues are negotiated as well as the images of (gendered) migrants are constructed.

In our project we use the concept of 'translocal' social spaces in a broader sense, looking at processes of 'othering' and negotiating multiple feminisms, Islams, Islamic feminism, African feminism etc. (Lachenmann 2005). I consider "African" not as an ethnic but rather a political concept. In these debates 'migrants' from the respective countries play a decisive role. We talk about a 'cosmopolitan epistemic community' which brings together gender researchers, activists and experts on different levels of international organisations and links between their social movement/organisational base and regional regimes which influence and conceive global policy and rights concepts and debates, e.g. regarding UN women conferences.

M. Salzbrunn (see contribution in this volume) discusses different approaches to theorising locality in migration studies, "local-global embedding processes" and "globalisation from below" (a term used quite early in gender research). Following these approaches she very convincingly suggests studying certain "political and cultural events in a context of migration" in order to "recognise the rooting of transnational networks". Her epistemological focus considers them to be "platforms for the negotiation of inclusion/exclusion and transformation pro-

cesses" (i.e. boundary drawing regarding power of definition). She avoids conceptualising "ethnic" essentialised communities by using the 'neutral' definition of "minorities", and looks at processes of communitarisation. In this process she sees the formation of "new identity" based on "experience of circulation".

I think these are very interesting directions in a 'localisation' approach, which can be connected to concepts of 'politics of the place' (Harcourt 2000; Gupta/Ferguson 1997) and 'translocality', in the sense of the constitution of social spaces where new hybrid social worlds, identities, interactions, modes of transformation and gender order are negotiated, showing how they are constructed in translocal social spaces.

The dimension of comparison applied in the sense mentioned above, when looking at agency in public spheres, is seen in the relationship and the location e.g. of Muslim minorities in a secular state, thereby applying a situational approach, elaborating on arrangements, modes of interaction etc., and doing systematic contextualisation. The instrument applied is event analysis. These new forms of comparison are concerned with dimensions such as "religious references in the public sphere" (Salzbrunn in this volume). This I consider to be a meso level of social organisation, as well as a middle range theorising approach, including the phenomena of sociality (*Vergesellschaftung*). Methodologically this implies institutionalisation processes and social change. The production of hybridity, a concept which is supposed to overcome old dichotomies between developed and underdeveloped countries (Nederveen Pieterse/Parekh eds. 1995), is shown in translocal spaces through interactions as well as economic, cultural and social structures and institutions.

In order to further study globalisation processes, and even if we regard them to be constitutive of a "world society", it is certainly fruitful to use hermeneutics to open up stocks of knowledge on non Western societies. The sociology of knowledge laid the necessary methodological foundations rather early through the works of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966). These works are still very relevant for studying the social construction of reality through the situated negotiation of meaning. Following this approach ensures that cultural relativism is avoided .

We attempt to do systematic contextualisation, in transcultural global social research, elaborating on translocal social spaces, referring to these foundations in sociology of knowledge and trying to come up with different possible interpretations of meaning (such as implied in Geertz 1983; Knoblauch ed. 1996 etc.). When our methodology is based on "grounded theory", we come up with key categories and working (hypo)thesis, which demonstrate the explanatory power of various concepts. The idea of 'different meanings' has always been implied in constructivism along with logics of actions, interfaces of systems of knowledge and the multiplicity of social worlds .

The idea of "multi-sited ethnography" (Marcus 1998) has influenced social anthropology. In this approach I would claim that the "sociological" view should

be highlighted more explicitly. We have used it in several forms, combining "thick and complex methods" such as trajectories, multi-level analysis (Berg-Schlosser 2000; Lang 2005), mobile research (Schlee 1985), and structured designs including triangulation. We have also developed new forms of comparison, where it is not the same researcher who has to do all the different studies, but rather works with collectively elaborated dimensions, and typologies as developed in interpretative sociology.

This debate has been highly enriched through the work of Michael Burawoy and his research group in California, and also by debates in social anthropology, which refer to global power structures and ask how new forms of power structuration can be taken into account in what they call "Global ethnography. Forces, connections, and imaginations in a postmodern world" (Burawoy et al. 2000). They want to overcome the restrictedness of the ethnographic site represented by the Chicago school in this new approach. "Within any field, whether it had global reach or was bounded by community or nation, our fieldwork had to assemble a picture of the whole by recognising diverse perspectives from the parts, from singular but connected sites", striving at a "historically grounded, theoretically driven, macro ethnography" (Burawoy 2000: 4). Inda and Rosaldo (2002) use the term "anthropology of globalisation", Long (2000: 184pp) talks about "exploring local/global transformations". This approach can be combined with systematising structuration, translocality and contextualisation, in the sense of empirically grounding globalisation theory.

Studying Translocality and Comparison Through Case Studies

In our research project we studied, through field studies as well as common workshops, how global development concepts are localised and negotiated in translocal social spaces in three different Muslim societies – Senegal, Sudan, and Malaysia. We study how women academics, activists and movements interact with civil society and the state, thereby restructuring the public sphere. We restricted the scope of our studies by looking very specifically at female activities and the gendered structure of development processes including concepts of vulnerability and rights. Nevertheless, we have been able to arrive at more generalised conclusions beyond merely comparing the three cases. Our research process is guided thus by the question of how comparative research can contribute in a fruitful way to theory building and at the same time to understanding our 'special cases'.

The diversity of concepts and constructs of gender, development and religious identity, that we came across in our research project, is not only pre-determined because of the highly contrasting case studies we did in countries and societies which have completely different constellations in regard to Islam. In

these three countries, Islam varies in its importance for state and society, type of development and socio-economic issues, as well as the influence of religion on societal and international conflicts. The theoretical sampling of these countries was complemented by the results which emerged when theory was grounded in empirical findings. In Senegal – a secular state – Islam is hardly relevant at all for development efforts. However, it is omnipresent, in a localised Brotherhood structure, and in some newly Islamising forces which are starting to compete on a national level with state legitimacy (e.g. with regard to family code debates). In our empirical results the Senegal case shows how local development works and how women network, linking it to women rights in a very basic way – even in some discourses such as those against equality (when women want to uphold family obligations of men).

Sudan – as an Islamist state – stands for Islam as the permanent force as against which to negotiate room for manoeuvre by women and defining the meaning of global as against popular Islam. At the same time, development issues resulting from poverty are omnipresent in all women's groups. Their social spaces seem to have grown enormously in the context of the present day conflict and of the peace debates being supported by the international and donor community. These spaces constitute a very interesting arena of societal transformation. In our comparative design, Sudan therefore indicates that the interface between the state and the civil society is being strengthened and the public sphere restructured.

The case of Malaysia, on the other hand, has shown that the force of women's and feminist organisations and networks is struggling in a complex national context based on political ethnicity and national Islam. Its power of negotiation and conquered space seems not to refer to the development model per se: There are astonishingly conventional welfare or service oriented women's organisations reflecting the typical developmentalist constructs of 'vulnerable women'. At the same time, rather conventional left-wing 'progressive' organisations seem to have little power to change the miserable working and rights situations of mainly labourers belonging to ethnic minorities (plantation workers etc.). However, there are very important feminist organisations and networks which have entered an inner Islamic debate on situated interpretations of Islam relating to women's rights and which seriously challenge hegemonic religious authorities, Islamic practices and the state. This question, which we have conceptualised as "authority of knowledge", is an interesting feature of all three societies. However, in Malaysia it seems to be on a high scholarly level and is especially crucial at this point in time before the possible institutionalisation of *Sharia* law. At the same time women groups seem to get their main legitimacy from their important transnational presence and reputation in networking. Here, of course, the feminist Islamic exchange is one important field, but at least as important is the participation in regional and global debates about globally defined rights (see CEDAW) from which they draw their power for national activism.

It became clear that the relevant issues being discussed are very different in the three countries. For example, discussions of sexualised violence or illegitimate children, an issue raised in Malaysia, are still taboo in Sudan. There is no single uniform globalising force called Islamisation. We can, on the contrary, see more and more diversified processes of Islamisation going on in very different settings.

However, on the national/societal level we have worked out ideal types of power in civil society which could be applied to and compared with other societies. In Malaysia we see strongly gendered public spaces and networking in order to negotiate national forms of Islamisation by means of human rights discourses. This action is – nearly exclusively – legitimised to a very high degree by external networking, thereby influencing and contributing strongly to inter-Islamic gender discourses. In Sudan a strong Islamist State is fighting the diversity of Islam often including local, and popular Islam of women, and with strong pressure to open up to Western and global development donors. This is leading to development discourses on poverty, but is combined with peace keeping and conflict resolution processes and activities. In Senegal there is increasing neglect of the Muslim societal context in favour of very liberal, Western oriented development concepts. Also, the degree of influence on negotiating development concepts in the public sphere seems to be less with regard to gender issues. There are Islamisation processes going on within the global discourse with very clear implications for gender and development, and these are considered to be politically critical.

New Interactive Methodological Perspectives

Othering processes vs. glocalisation

We have been able to observe developments taking place within the international women's organisations and positioning in the international arena. We could witness that othering processes are not uniform and sometimes absent. In Malaysia activists claim not to be anti-Western but rather – as in global feminist discourse – anti neo-liberalism and denounce the impact of globalisation. Here, the present discourse goes in the direction of very generalised criticism, which often very simply claims that human and women rights discourses should be linked to or replace macro-economic debates.

Although there is a consensus on the diversity of feminisms in a global arena, this might indeed cause certain new boundaries to be drawn and othering processes and exclusions to be produced. Moreover, since the Malaysian women's movement claims global solidarity with women and sisterhood, this might be constituted in global female spaces where globalisation and relevant concepts seem indeed to be negotiated. In Senegal the othering works through different

constructions of gender and, thereby, conceptions of (universal human) equality, which sometimes does not address the global feminist discourses on difference. This debate takes place between feeling labelled by the term 'Muslim' women and claiming universal exchange on the one hand, and working for the consideration of specific, nationally relevant, contexts of culture and tradition on the other. Development can mean neo-traditional reconstruction of community. When theorising about new global forms of diversity and difference, we can refer to these translocal relations, where it is clear that neither economy nor women's movements nor NGOs are bound to one place.

We have found references to different Islams, and claims of everyday Islam against global homogenisation and fundamentalisms, as well as different feminisms reflecting regional and political diversity. These phenomena can be interpreted as different modernities in relation to public space, secularism, economic institutions, cultural re-vitalisation, social movements and civil society.

Translocal Public Spheres

The constitution of public spheres where universal concepts are being negotiated, has been a very interesting aspect of comparison in our project. Forms of activism were discovered (such as those taking place at Women's days) to be very global culture oriented (consumerism, popular music etc. in shopping malls in Malaysia), as well as very conventional and state dominated (Senegal) or even ambivalent such like Sudan where womens' groups are part of the peace making process but enter very little into the constitutional debates. In Malaysia the importance of the women's movement in entering and restructuring the public sphere is shown in the remarkable "shadow report" elaborated for the (World Conference on Women in) Beijing plus 10 process. In Senegal the official national Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity (SNEEG) adopted in 2005 lacks professional quality regarding agency in society and a vision of any sort of gender movement. This is the case although it is supported and even contributed to by a large women's organisation. In Sudan, one can say that women groups have for quite some time been, in a less conspicuous way than Human Rights activists, upholding a public discourse by occupying spaces concerning women's issues, poverty, and now peace and democracy.

Sociology, including that of "world society", mostly neglects these new interactions and spheres. These relations are not addressed when studying the 'impacts' of globalisation or new global regimes of development and social policies. Mostly, relevant interactions become invisible as seen from a modernist view on the one hand and a paternalistic antipoverty and diffusionist perspective on the other. Transnational relations in migration, new forms of shadow economy in formerly socialist regimes, social embeddedness, interface between all so called informal forms of economy and politics have only recently been discovered (see

e.g. Yurkowa 2004). The relational approach goes far beyond studying reactions to impacts, survival strategies etc. which are discovered in an exotised sense. These are structurations and institutionalisations which take place in very cross-cutting ways.[4]

Transfer vs. Interconnectedness

Modernity implies pluralism and globalisation implies diversity yet in an interrelated system of interactions, constitution of spaces and negotiation of meanings as understood by the term of battlefields of knowledge (Long/Long 1992). There is clearly no doubt any more about the transfer of knowledge, patterns of modernity and so forth. Thus theorisation about globalisation has to be based especially on these glocalisation and localisation processes. At the same time, this does not mean that we should and can study 'the impact' of globalisation processes in general or of certain global governance policies, economic policies etc. in particular. This has been the case especially within the feminist global arena, i.a. generated within different UN-environments, and of global movements often criticising in a too general way and constructing 'neo-liberalism' as a global anti-force. Neither should we look at 'reactions' of societies or groups even if we envision active coping or survival strategies. This also means that we cannot just look at the transfer, diffusion or movement of concepts and institutional arrangements in different policy domains (such as gender policies, local governance, and social services) without analysing the contexts and problem solutions in the respective situations. This forces us to introduce completely different perspectives, crosscutting unquestioned analytical concepts such as formal and informal, market and subsistence, public and private.

Often it is not a question of diffusion or transfer of models and solutions. When exploring interconnectedness and localisation, the perspective changes and one no longer oversees phenomena of glocalisation within a given societal context. This is neither impact nor resistance, but it is also not some completely new alternative or independent idea.

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4   The Internet, or information technology per se, could be considered to be a new form of translocal public space (Spiegel, Harig rapp. 2002). It is a matter of a (gendered) structure of knowledge, which means combining agency and knowledge, and added to the new debates on knowledge management in development agencies (Worldbank 1999, 2000). Feminist economists (Lachenmann 1998a; Marchand/Parpart eds. 1995,) are what could be called a strategic global group of women activists and researchers – an epistemic community which has partly become virtual, with many members who are cosmopolitan migrants (Hannerz 2000). They argue very strongly that the socio-economic consequences of globalisation are especially harmful because of gender inequality, conceiving economy as a gendered structure (Cagatay/Elson/Grown 1995). If we look at economy as being socially and globally embedded (Lachenmann/Dannecker eds. 2001), we should abandon 'impact analysis' in favour of interaction and structuration.

The problem is less the transfer than the understanding of these globalisation processes, implying active diversity. Of course these processes often mean powerlessness in the sense of reduction of room to manoeuvre. This is exemplified with regard to all development issues such as economy, poverty, decentralisation, resource protection and gender, even knowledge. With globalisation, (mostly informal) economic patterns are travelling which implies the creation or destruction of (precarious) jobs as well as investments.

Observing Globalisation: Empirically Grounding Globalisation/Doing "Global Ethnography"

An important aspect which has changed the practice of adhering strictly to one country/society/community or ethnic group, is certainly the fact that more and more concepts of intercultural and especially translocal, transnational and also transcultural relevance are being developed in social science. This is probably an empirical feature of glocalisation. In our research project this has already proven to be very useful in terms of organising the empirical research around networking and discourses on development concepts in the different communities etc.

Stauth's (1995) concept of *"kulturübergreifende Sozialforschung"* – we call it trans-cultural social research – is absolutely pertinent. He criticises a concept he calls "comparative sociology of civilisations" for "assuming a homogenous, universalistic classificatory system of communication absent in multicultural societies" (ibid: 1995: 102). Within this framework our approach consists of looking at different dimensions relevant to our subject of engendering development and how they are situated within an Islamic cultural orientation.

Thereby, it is certainly useful to work out typologies. In our project we generate concepts of gender/social equality, types of gender constructs with regard to occupying public spaces and engaging in economic activities, concepts of poverty and wealth and societal obligations, types of NGOs and their closeness to the state and types of intensity of inward/outward looking social legitimacy of gender policies. Also female types of representing Islam, including local or popular forms, can be found, and of discourses regarding gender and development (see above), as well as intensity and type of transnational networking.

The comparative approach we follow does not aim at developing fixed indicators or categories for comparing the various cases focused on. Rather the comparative perspective is based on "comparing by contextualising" (Nageeb 2005) and explaining the ways in which the issues under study, be it the constitution of spaces, or the negotiation of development concepts, are embedded in specific local and trans-local contexts. Indeed the nature of the state, Islamisation processes, development institutions and policies, political and social structures have presented themselves in very decisive ways and influence our subject matter. It is clear, however, that the actors and arenas involved in the field of negotiating develop-

ment, as well as the subjects of negotiation, are different in the three regions be-ing studied. The comparative perspective is thus meant to reflect on the different nature of the actors involved and their modes of interaction in each context. The variation lies in the development concepts which are signified as subjects for ne-gotiation in each case, and the kind of spaces and identities which are being con-stituted while negotiating development in the different countries being studied.

In our approach, the comparison takes place on a meso level using middle range theories and tries to explain the differences through contextualisation. This means that our methodology is interactive and cross-cultural diversity oriented. Our comparative approach therefore operates in the sense of explaining integra-tion through difference, overcoming a dualistic approach, as well as through glocalisation and localisation, and perhaps hybridisation. The conventional com-parative approach is outdated (Kaelble/Schriewer 2003; Kaschuba 2003) because of the ongoing processes of interaction, deterritorialisation etc.. Theoretical sampling within the countries and across our three countries is based on ideas of similarity or of difference. If we take grounded theory serious we can extend the outcome of empirical research to other contexts – which is not a comparison in the classical sense. Grounded theory generates theses which can be fed into fur-ther research. We very clearly realise that the relevance of our research subject for the context, i.e. adequacy regarding the object of research, has to be chal-lenged in each and every case with regard to the relevance structure of the re-spective community or society when studying women's rights conventions and politics with their completely different histories and backgrounds of the women's movement and political struggle.

Complex or thick methods of empirical research are being used to structure the analysis of data (Geertz 1983; Elwert 2003). Design and theoretical sampling, always implying comparison, have been thoroughly developed for each country and mutually discussed. Methods which have been employed quite successfully were contrasting case studies, typologies (even trans-cultural), interfaces between different actors and knowledge systems, biographies and trajectories of activists in networking, event analysis especially of workshops and transnational confer-ences (who organises, invites, participates, excludes; major topics, discussions, conflicts, consequences), organisational analysis (leaders, discourses, network-ing.).

Marcus (1998: 10pp.), in his chapter on "ethnography of the world system" (ibid: 79pp.) stresses contextualisation; mobile ethnography according to him constructs "aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites". He takes an interesting position regarding "the loss of the subaltern", thereby "also decentring the resistance and accommodation framework ... for the sake of a reconfigured space of multiple sites of cultural production". He claims that "comparison reenters the very act of ethnographic specification by a research design of juxtapositions in which the global is col-

lapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations rather than something monolithic or external to them" (ibid: 80, 85p.).

Burawoy et al. (2000) pursue the explicit aim of linking critical ideas of globalisation theories (considered to be of "too high abstraction") and political economy with what they had called "ethnography unbound", asking whether their "extended case method...[was] flexible enough to link everyday life to transnational flows of population, discourse, commodities and power" (ibid: x, ix).

"We wondered whether exploring the global dimensions of the local changes the very experience of doing ethnography. The narrow boundaries of the traditional ethnographic 'site' as conceived by the Chicago school were, for us, permeated by broader power flows in the form of local racial and gender orders, free-flowing public discourses, economic structures...one of the questions facing us was whether globalisation had rendered ethnography, apparently fixed in the local, impossible or even irrelevant. Our experience...has suggested quite the reverse: ...ethnography's concern with concrete, lived experience can sharpen the abstractions of globalisation theories into more precise and meaningful conceptual tools" (ibid: xii).

Regarding contextualisation, Burawoy acknowledges that many ethnographers are "systematically incorporating historical and geographical context" (27). Pulling together "questions of power and reflexivity" is an important dimension to him, so are "extensions of observations over time and space", in order to understand "the succession of situations as a social process", demanding strongly more thorough historical work and asking for a "'structured' macro-micro link ... in which the part is shaped by its relation to the whole" (17).

And fortunately he does see that "constituting the extralocal as forces gives them a false sense of durability" (27), problematising "the concept of forces" by seeing themselves as "product of contingent social processes"; "they are examined as the product of flows of people, things, and ideas", and as "global forces and...connections [being] constituted imaginatively, inspiring social movements to seize control over their immediate but also their more distant worlds, challenging the mythology of an inexorable, runaway world". He sees the "locality fight back, adapt, or simply be destroyed" (ibid: 27, 17, 29).

We try to operationalise these ideas by an interface approach revealing power constellations and adding complex methods crosscutting communities, places, levels, time, space and social worlds, such as the analysis of trajectories. In our research field this applies to, over and beyond biographic research, persons whose personal history and career in different knowledge spaces, institutions and organisations we follow based on the narrative approach. Here we would complement it with an approach dealing with agency, knowledge, authority, and meaning. Also, combined with studies at the interface we very fruitfully practice multi-level analysis (see Lang 2005; Berg-Schlosser 2000) which can be applied

in very different ranges studying concrete interactions and following movements and discourses.

Burawoy (2000: 28) promotes "the study of global connections" whereby "multi-sitedness becomes the object of theorisation". "Space and time, rather than being disembedded, are intensified by the global workplace". Therefore he wants to "demystify…globalisation as something given", to study "how different images of globalisation are produced and disseminated" as a resource of what is possible forming a "thickening global public sphere" (ibid: 30-32).

Research Questions, Process and Interpretation

A complex comparative design and interpretation has to appear in the research process on the basis of a mix of methods and ongoing new questions. We explicitly formulate dimensions of contextualisation which are directly relevant to the problem researched, thereby constituting an instrument of validation – and not, as is often done – just of background information.

After studying the relevant literature and the discussion of the empirical data collected, brainstorming on possible differences and similarities between the case studies took place and constantly became more analytical concerning different issues: Gender discourse is influenced in Malaysia by a high level of industrial participation of women, in Senegal by poverty and in Sudan (especially recently) by conflict and peace constituencies. Regarding local moral discourse on gender and religion, in Malaysia a clear instrumentalisation of the 'good Muslim woman' is taking place. In Senegal a conventional women in development approach is dominant, feminism is regarded as Western or non-African, or as non-religious. In Sudan complete othering is taking place, although more and more local NGOs have been created and are cooperating with external donors. In Malaysia ethnic and religious differences play an important economic, national and social role. In Senegal, these are of minor relevance although certain Islams are clearly linked to ethnic differences. In Sudan ethnic/identity discourses are highly political and conflictive as the current political situation shows.

Based on our empirical studies, concrete comparative questions have emerged to be asked for analysis. These questions include: How is Islam, religion, rules, religiosity addressed by the organisations researched? Is it addressed in texts, discourses, as well as in interviews/narratives/conversations, directly or indirectly, without or with explicit questioning by researcher? What are the ascriptions made by different types of religious women regarding the West and their religiosity and its connection to gender and development, economy, education and public sphere participation? When and how are certain issues taken up by the state, such as human rights, following (women's) civil society activities, especially their external visibility?

The instrument of conducting workshops turned out to be especially fruitful at first at a very small scale in the three countries studied, organised with the local community of researchers and activists, and then at the level of exchange between researchers and activists from each country as well as researchers working on relevant areas in Europe/the North (Nageeb/Sieveking/Spiegel 2005a, b). The debates on our work presented as well the (written) inputs of the participants took place on a very intensive, highly theoretical and methodological level. Thereby we produced or re-produced the object of our research, interpreting data and debating about conclusions, and showing how translocal spaces for negotiating knowledge are constituted.

The theoretical and political importance of networking, and of constituting and restructuring the public sphere, is evident. We think in both a methodological as well as empirical sense, and our approach is to look at interfaces between different female social spaces and cross-cutting national boundaries. But we also look at diversity and battles within national and transnational spheres. These interfaces of female spaces and public spheres permit to formulate conclusions concerning national societies and processes and the institutionalisation of globalisation.

Gendered social spaces can be seen as constituting a non-homogeneous public sphere, one that does not converge in one common public interest. We are using the concept of social space in the sense that it is a relatively non institutionalised and non delineating concept, going beyond community, place or territorial or physical space. The concept of social space is clearly linked to agency, to the production of gender specific and culturally defined meanings, and to the social construction of reality and the life-world (Spiegel 2005).

We wanted, in a common effort, to deepen our theoretical and methodological interest with regard to the dimensions of networking and of structuring the public sphere which had been introduced as main concepts in our research project and were empirically grounded. How far does the networking indeed take place so to be able to say that this is where glocalisation takes place? Do female spaces indeed intersect with a societal public sphere, or do we need to qualify this concept more for Muslim societies in the sense of gendered social structure. Does the state discourse still dominate, or would indeed the female social spaces and the interfaces they institutionalise be the relevant actors in civil society – as in Malaysia and Sudan. Are they as marginalised and reduced to a female vulnerability and rights discourse, restricted to gender specific difference or to women in development discourses as it seems to be the case in Senegal? I.e. does no engendering of development take place?

The result of our studies, however, seems ambivalent. The gender networks and public debates are indeed to be very diverse and relevant for constructing the global arena. At the same time we might question in how far the link to the national civil society and global public sphere does indeed take place as regards rel-

evant issues of hegemonic concern, or whether it is a field tolerated and instrumentalised by global governance.

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