



(Re)Scaling Gender and Globalization: Livelihood Strategies in Accra, Ghana

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Abstract

Feminist analyses of globalization provide important perspectives on the increasing integration of global political, economic, and social processes. This paper focuses on several themes in feminist scholarship that inform our understanding of globalization as a dynamic and contested process in contemporary society. The discussion encompasses an analysis of scale that incorporates the intersection of diverse economic processes from the level of the body to the global arena. This paper also offers feminist insight on spaces of resistance that have formed alongside neoliberal globalization. The empirical component of this analysis draws from research conducted in the West African nation of Ghana, where externally-driven neoliberal reforms have been instituted for decades with significant implications for livelihood strategies. Specifically, the study focuses on how gender shapes the connections between these global processes and local economic strategies. The conclusion outlines the possibilities for collective resistance to neoliberal globalization that engages social networks, utilizes household resources, and reframes the market-based parameters of capitalist production.



Introduction

This paper addresses the diverse practices and discourses within which people experience globalization. The analysis focuses on how gender shapes and is influenced by the intersection of neoliberal globalization and local economic strategies. During recent decades, neoliberal reforms and globalization have coincided with a shift to more market-oriented economic policies in many parts of the global South, providing a unique opportunity to examine how local livelihoods are integrated with economic globalization. In this analysis, I argue that the shift in economic strategies among households and communities is related to socio-spatial patterns that accompany an increasingly integrated global economy.

The intersection of globalization and local livelihoods is explored here through a feminist lens that reveals how different scales of economic activity are embedded in gender identities and relations. Specifically, this approach critically engages with analyses of how the discursive and material practices of economic livelihoods operate at multiple scales (Afshar and Barrientos, 1999; Marchand and Runyan, 2000; Roberts, 2004). Feminism acknowledges the multiple and heterogenous nature of discourses surrounding diverse economic strategies (Gibson-Graham, 2002). This analysis contributes to this literature by demonstrating how feminism offers a unique perspective on the intersection of scales in the context of dynamic social and economic landscapes in the global South.

The discussion in this paper is organized into six sections that explore the intersection of globalization and local economic strategies from a feminist perspective. Following the introduction, the second section provides a background to the case study of Ghana, once heralded as the 'poster-child' of structural adjustment. A brief overview of this country's political economy provides the basis for further discussion of the implications of globalization for its socio-spatial development. Uneven spatial development is linked to Ghana's social inequalities and especially the growing disparities between northern rural areas and urban areas in the south. The third section outlines how feminist theory deconstructs the hegemonic position of the global arena and approaches scale as fluid and non-hierarchical (Marston, Jones, and Woodward, 2005). This perspective positions household, community, and local scales as flexibly integrated and socially constructed dimensions of global processes.

In the fourth section, feminist work on economic livelihoods and globalization is highlighted through analyses of diverse strategies that comprise the multiple ways in which people earn a living (Beneria, 2003; Francis, 2000). Women's roles in these activities are essential, especially in the global South where they are often excluded from formal employment and tend to be marginalized in

the capitalist economic sphere (Bryceson, 2002; Hanson, 2005). Their participation in informal, barter, subsistence, and other diverse economic strategies reveal crucial, yet often overlooked, aspects of globalization. The fifth section examines how feminist analyses critically engage with issues of power and social inequality that often accompany neoliberal globalization. Complex social relations serve to marginalize some groups while empowering others. In addition to deconstructing the homogenous category of 'woman', postcolonial feminism examines other social axes of power, such as race, ethnicity, class, and stage in the life course, which affect how individuals and groups interact under neoliberal globalization.

Mobilization and collective struggle among those who do not necessarily benefit from globalization are examined in the sixth section. These efforts have increasingly shaped the socio-economic and political landscape throughout the global South. Various means of contesting the oppressive and divisive forces of globalization have arisen throughout the developing world in the form of anti-globalization groups, as well as grassroots efforts to improve economic opportunities and access to resources (Rakowski, 2000; Harcourt and Escobar, 2005). Women play an important role in these struggles by creating alternative means of income generation through individual and collective action. These efforts often ensure the survival of individuals, their families, and communities (Bassett, 2002; Oberhauser and Hanson, 2008). This discussion illustrates how feminist spaces of resistance are constitutive of social and economic integration associated with globalization.

The conclusion explores ways to transform contemporary globalization through economic livelihoods that empower women. A feminist rethinking of scale and economic strategies opens up opportunities for women to affect this transformation. This discussion demonstrates that feminism is well positioned to provide a critical perspective on the intersection of various spatial scales, the importance of alternative economic strategies, and how collective action can be used to challenge unequal power relations.

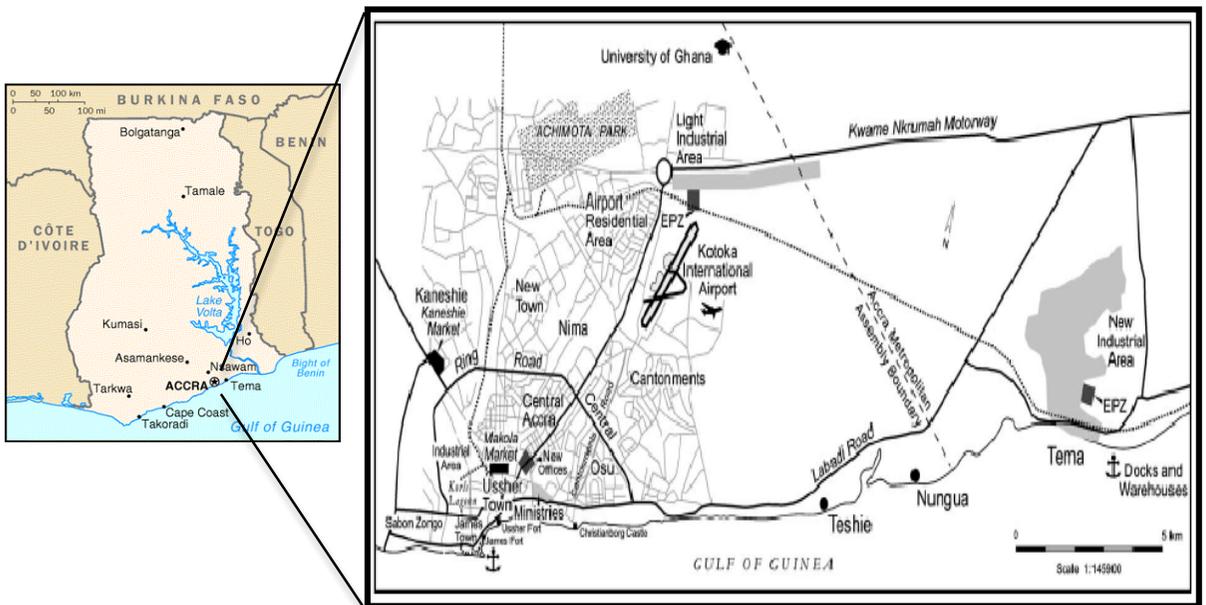
Globalization and Development in Ghana

Ghana has undergone tremendous political and economic change in recent decades, partly as a result of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and other neoliberal economic reforms (Francis, 2000; Ferguson, 2006; Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). These reforms are linked to gendered livelihoods and globalization through the social identities and material components that shape individual, household, and community economic strategies. This analysis situates livelihood strategies as the variety of productive and reproductive, paid and unpaid labor that provides individuals and households with the means for subsistence and, in some cases, accumulation of wealth. The effects of these shifting strategies and globalizing

forces are evident in the West African nation of Ghana and, specifically, people’s engagement in multiple and diverse livelihoods. This conceptualization of gender and globalization is used to critically engage with the possibilities of resisting negative effects of neoliberal economic restructuring through alternative livelihoods.

Ghana’s experience under both colonial and postcolonial rule has included significant international integration and economic reforms, often dictated by global institutions. This background provides a well-documented case of the powerful impact of neoliberal globalization in a developing country (Ferguson, 2006; Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). During colonial times, Ghana was relatively integrated with international trade and investment, especially through the extraction of raw materials such as cocoa and gold. Following its independence from the British in 1957, the wealth gained from these exports, as well as its relatively well-educated and skilled labor force, contributed to its position in the global arena as a dynamic medium-income economy. After a series of military coups in the late 1960s through the early 1980s, Ghana’s political situation has stabilized with peaceful transfers of power since the 1990s. This political stability has helped to modernize its economy and attract foreign investment. The capitol city of Accra grew rapidly during the years immediately following independence, both as a place for those seeking employment as well as a location for foreign investment (Briggs and Yeboah, 2001; Grant and Yankson, 2003) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Ghana and the Capital City of Accra



Uneven development is a spatial materialization of the dynamic economic processes under globalization (Conway and Heynen, 2006). In the case of Ghana, some areas have gained investment, production, and infrastructure, whereas other areas have lost or did not benefit from increased economic activity. Grant and Nijman (2004) explore the process of uneven development under structural adjustment in Ghana since the 1970s. The rapid growth of urban areas such as Accra contributes to uneven development in this country. Consequently, power and control over labor, resources, and investment are concentrated in these areas, often at the expense of more rural regions in Ghana. Increasing labor markets, foreign investment, and producer markets also impact the expansion of peri-urban development and contribute to serious overcrowding in this city (Grant and Yankson, 2003).

Within this socio-economic context, rural/urban migration provides an important strategy for many households where family members leave in search of employment opportunities. Women make up an increasing proportion of this economic migration from rural, northern areas of Ghana to urban areas in the south (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Opare, 2003). Selling produce, marketing clothing and textiles, engaging in prostitution, and other service work are some of the activities in which women engage. Most of their earnings are sent as remittances to their families in rural areas. This pattern of gendered migration is a result of, but also affects, the uneven spatial patterns developing in Ghana.

Ghana's economy suffered in the mid-1960s as the terms of trade for their exports deteriorated and the government was accused of mismanaging revenues from these goods (Hutchful, 2002). Global institutions such as the World Bank and IMF became heavily involved in Ghana's economy in the early 1980s to stabilize and improve their economic standing in the global economy. Among the most notable initiatives are the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) intended to encourage free-market practices and decrease government involvement in public enterprises and overall investment (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000).

The implementation of these programs has increased the scope and impact of globalization in several aspects of Ghana's economy. Initially, external intervention involved the implementation of SAPs, but has progressed into the World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) program and the more recent Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). The latter two programs are designed to bring about poverty reduction through partial debt relief or, in the case of the latter initiative, nearly full debt relief (World Bank, 2007). These programs have been available to many poor countries, the majority of which are in Africa. Overall, the focus on trade liberalization, production for export, and currency controls implemented

under neoliberal economic reforms ,such as those instituted by the World Bank, has resulted in what Yeboah (2003) refers to as a powerful nexus of global and local forces.

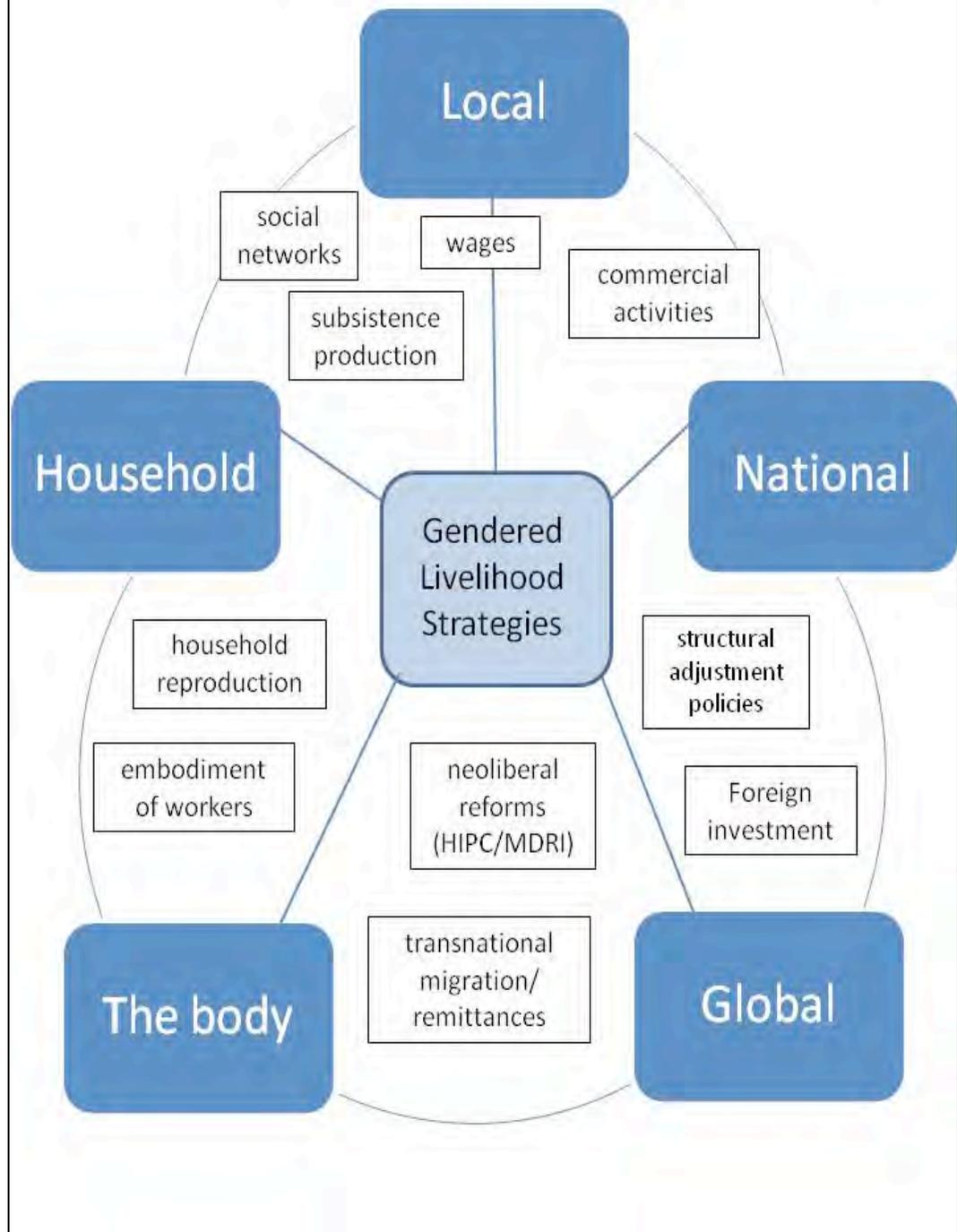
(Re)scaling Gender and Globalization

This discussion outlines my approach to globalization as the material, ideological, and discursive dimensions of increasingly integrated social relations and institutions. These socio-economic and political processes in turn manifest unevenly in space (Conway and Heynen, 2006). Numerous political economists who emphasize the increasing integration of social, political, and cultural life have examined the spatial dimensions of globalization. My analysis draws from Beneria's (1999, 61) definition of globalization as "the transformations linked to ever-expanding markets and the rapid technological change in communications and transportation that transcend national boundaries and shrink space." Her approach attempts to 'engender' this transformation by emphasizing the tensions between economic rationality associated with market behavior and everyday experiences of women and men (Beneria, 1999).

Critical analyses of globalization also focus on the divergent but interconnected trajectories of socio-spatial change under intensified global integration (Afshar and Barrientos, 1999; Conway, 2006; Klak, 1998; Tickell and Peck, 2003). According to Hart (2002, 13), these trajectories "convey the ongoing processes through which sets of power-laden practices in the multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life at different spatial scales constantly rework places and identities." At the center of many of these analyses is the fluid and dynamic connections among spatial scales. While some geographers have argued to dismantle the concept of scale (Marston et al, 2005), I argue that it provides a useful framework to analyze both abstract and concrete aspects of political economic discourse and practice.

Figure 2 illustrates how gendered livelihood strategies are constitutive of multiple scales within diverse socio-economic and political forces. Specifically, various social relations, economic strategies, and political reforms associated with gender and globalization are situated in the context of multiple and intersecting scales. As indicated in this figure, the incorporation of different scales into the globalization process entails specific aspects of the economy that include everything from subsistence production to foreign investment. The spatial dimensions of expanding capitalist (and non-capitalist) relations and the discourses through which globalization is practiced are particularly relevant to this discussion of livelihood strategies in Accra, Ghana.

Figure 2. Intersecting Scales and Gendered Livelihood Strategies



Contemporary globalization is often associated with neoliberalism, or the emphasis of economic development on privatization, austerity measures, and free-market forces (Ferguson, 2006; Klak, 1998; Tickell and Peck, 2003; Lerner, 2000). Analyses of neoliberalism have been extensively discussed in critical human geography as both outcomes and processes of state and market regulation. Much of the emphasis in this literature is on the multiple practices and discourses that are linked to inequality and uneven development. In their discussion of neoliberalism, for example, Tickell and Peck (2003, 170) refer to its “uneven ascendancy that draws attention both to its historically/geographically differentiated nature and to its complex evolution in response to internal and external pressures...within which deep contradictions and systemic vulnerabilities coexist.” Furthermore, the prominence of neoliberal policies in the global economy is linked to the growth of multinational corporations as well as the influence of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and in recent decades the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Peet, 2003). Through their involvement in foreign aid, investment, and trade regulation, these global institutions increasingly shape the operation of the state and market forces in developing countries.

In addition, neoliberal approaches often define economic globalization in a way that emphasizes the hegemonic status of global institutions, and present places and regions as lower in status and homogenous. Ohmae (1995), for example, refers to an interlinked capitalist economy with the free flow of capital, people, goods, services, and information. He prioritizes globalization by arguing that international organizations and structures override national governments. This perspective also dismisses geographical variation or diversity among places. Finally, neoliberal proponents emphasize the positive aspects of globalization in reducing economic inequalities and expanding opportunities for consumption in the global South.

Critical scholarship and resistance to neoliberal models of development have contributed to the rise of alternative discourses on globalization. These discourses are most notable in anti-globalization efforts and economic strategies that are based on opposition to the hegemonic nature of neoliberal economic restructuring (Conway, 2006; Kofman and Youngs, 2003). Critical analyses of scale challenge neoliberal discourses, which position the global scale as hegemonic and thus ignore the role of other scales in the global circuitry of capital and labor (Conway, 2006; Hart, 2002).

Feminist scholarship presents some of the strongest critiques of neoliberal globalization (Kofman and Youngs, 2003; Afshar and Barrientos, 1999; Rankin, 2001). One of feminism’s major critiques is the argument that conventional analyses prioritize the global scale and disregard how individual, household, local, and national scales impact and are constitutive of global processes (Nagar et al., 2002; Roberts, 2004). Figure 2, for example, illustrates that the scale of the body is

both a material and a social construction that shapes the processes of capitalist production and consumption at various scales.

The dynamic nature of globalization highlights how different scales are interrelated. According to Marston (2000), scale is a socially constructed dimension of geography where the local is constructed in relation to the global. In this work she emphasizes social reproduction and consumption as central to theorizing scale. Activities taking place outside capitalist production include household tasks and maintenance of everyday life (Marston, 2000). Critiques of hegemonic discourses of capitalist production thus reinforce this notion of scale as nonhierarchical and fluid (Katz, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 1996). Instead of a top-down and rigid construction of how different scales relate, feminism and other critical perspectives see them as unbounded and interconnected (Massey, 2004).

Challenges to the dichotomous binaries surrounding global/local discourses parallel feminism's critique of other binaries, which are constructed in conventional analyses, such as masculine/feminine, production/reproduction, and culture/nature (Freeman, 2001). Efforts to disrupt these often constraining binaries maintain that the separate and distinct nature of these processes and characteristics are unrealistic and essentialist (Roberts, 2004). For example, Freeman (2001) argues that the attempt to frame globalization as the local contained within the global has been constructed such that the global is masculine and the local is feminine. Her work advances a "framework in which cultural processes are themselves understood to be integrally local and global, mutually constitutive, and bound up in modes of gender at all levels" (Freeman 2001, 1012). My conceptualization of these intersecting processes draws from these feminist reconstructions of scale.

Feminist research on economic globalization and scale also examines the increasing employment of women in activities generated by the expansion of global production and trade (Pearson, 2000). In these contexts, women are situated in various levels of engagement with global and national processes of capital and labor (Afshar and Barrientos, 1999). Their gendered bodies and construction of social identities are often subject to exploitative and demeaning economic practices. Work by Wright (2006) emphasizes the contradictions embodied in the 'disposable third world woman'. This paradox, as she states, "despite her ineluctable demise, the disposable third world woman possesses certain traits that make her labor particularly valuable to global firms that require dexterous, patient, and attentive workers" (Wright, 2006, 3). Thus, in the global sphere women are both dispensable and essential to capitalist production. In the study area of Accra, the myth of the disposable woman is evident in exploitative economic activities. One example is the recent investment of a data processing company, Data Management Internationale, which employs mostly women to process New York

City parking tickets in their office in Accra (Grant and Yankson, 2003). Many other foreign firms employ women in menial jobs with low pay.

Another example of the exploitative conditions women face in Accra's dynamic urban economy is the phenomenon of *kayayi*, or porters. Porters carry goods purchased by people from one location to another in urban markets (Opare, 2003). Women who work as *kayayi* are often migrants from poorer regions in northern Ghana. The physical and material practice of this activity is highly gendered, as access to equipment and tools differ greatly among men and women (Oberhauser and Yeboah, forthcoming). For example, women are more likely to carry their loads in containers on their heads, while men often use trolleys or wagons to transport goods (Figure 3). The different ways in which men and women use their bodies is embedded in gendered constructions of work and, in this case, the use of carts or other equipment to transport their goods. Women generally do not have access to the same equipment as men and consequently experience serious physical hardships in this occupation (Opare, 2003). These gender differences in the practice of urban livelihoods translate to increased vulnerability of women. Yeboah's (2008) work finds that many women are subject to injury, harassment, and even violence as they work and live on the streets or in crowded and unsanitary hostels. In the case of more restrictive economic reforms, the pattern of women migrating from the rural north to work as porters in urban areas in the south has become more common in recent decades (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Oberhauser and Yeboah, forthcoming). Thus the operation of global capitalism and economic reforms implemented in Ghana intersects with gendered economic livelihoods in ways that are grounded and situated in everyday life.



Figure 3. Female and Male Porters in Accra, Ghana (photo by Muriel Yeboah, 2005)

Globalization and Diverse Economic Strategies

This section critically examines the impact of globalization by focusing on economic strategies at the local and household levels. As outlined above, feminists have long called for a shift from the macro-level focus of economic globalization literature to analyses of micro-level processes and especially household and community economic activities (Beneria, 2003; Afshar and Barrientos, 1999; Freeman, 2001; Katz, 2001). As households in the global South become increasingly dependent on multiple and diverse means of income generation, work in the informal sector, unpaid labor, and barter exchange play a crucial role in livelihood strategies. This trend towards alternative economic activities is partly driven by women's marginalization from formal production (Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones, 2002).

Feminists argue that social relations within places such as the household and community are an important aspect of these multiple and diverse economic strategies. Gender relations at the household level, for example, affect expenditure patterns and access to resources. Moreover, studies show that women are disproportionately responsible for reproductive and domestic labor (Beneria, 2003; Pearson, 2000). In an extensive review of shared household labor in developing regions, Elson (1995) concludes that women work longer hours than men when both unpaid domestic labor and paid work are considered. Given this imbalance, women are more likely than men to participate in informal-sector activities and other forms of income generation that allow them the flexibility to engage in both reproductive and productive work.

Recent literature on alternative economic strategies provides a critical perspective on the hegemonic role of global capitalism. As discussed above, Gibson-Graham (1996) approaches globalization through a framework that recognizes an anti-capitalist economy, in which alternative economic activities often lie outside the parameters and regulations of capitalism. These strategies, however, often present contradictory challenges and opportunities for people. Informal, barter-exchange, and household-based strategies, for example, may expand income-generating possibilities, but they also increase vulnerability to failure or exposure to economic downturns. Beneria (2003, 110) states that informal-sector activities focused on survival "tend to represent the most precarious forms of self-employment with weak or no links to the more formal processes and without possibilities for capital accumulation. These are, in fact, the most visible activities in the urban landscapes of Third World cities." Studies such as these have been widely cited as enhancing the scope of critical political economy by providing an alternative theory and practice in studies of globalization and development.

Neoliberal reforms and structural adjustment also contribute to households' increasing engagement in multiple and diverse economic activities (Francis, 2000; Pyle and Ward, 2003). Cutbacks in government-provided services are one area that augments economic and social burdens on households in developing regions (Roberts, 2004; Steans, 2003). In particular, neoliberal economic reforms are intended to decrease public spending on social services as a means of reducing government debt (Beneria, 1999). For example, the IMF-imposed Structural Adjustment Programs in Ghana have reduced state spending on health care, education, and other public services (Grant and Nijman, 2004; Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). This, in turn, has led to situations where households increasingly bear the cost of basic health care and education (Oberhauser and Hanson, 2008; Yeboah, 2003). In some cases, user fees for hospitals or health clinics, which were previously provided by the state, are now charged to individual users. The extent and proportion of these increased service fees have recently changed, however, with shifts in education funding. For example, reduced costs for extra-curricular activities decreases the pressure on households to provide educational funds (Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008). As a result of this capitation grant, primary school enrolments increased from 2005 to 2006. Many argue, however, that the quality of education declined as the number of teachers and supporting material lagged.

Overall, the added cost of basic social services has significantly increased financial burdens for people, especially those living in low-income households. These cutbacks disproportionately affect women, who often assume primary responsibility for the healthcare and education of families (Beneria, 2003). Feminist research thus expands analyses of how gender relations in the household and community are linked to shifting and expanded economic strategies under neoliberal globalization.

The importance of multiple economic activities within poor as well as middle-class households is illustrated by Owusu's (2007) work on livelihoods in urban Africa. He argues that these strategies are instrumental in ensuring survival as well as in accumulating resources for the not-so-poor segment of the population. The focus of his work is on multiple modes of livelihoods within urban areas, especially in the context of macro-economic changes across Africa. This approach has implications for integrating both gender and generational perspectives on livelihoods, as skills, training, and opportunities vary among diverse social groups. According to Owusu (2007, 453), "the nature of the activities of the household members depends on their access to resources, skills, and socioeconomic status (particularly gender and age)." His analysis of private- and public-sector employees as well as private entrepreneurs also highlights the effect of neoliberal reforms on economic strategies of people in the formal sector. In many cases, once-

salaried workers with secure jobs have become ‘marginal workers’ who engage in the informal sector to increase their income-earning opportunities.

Additionally, feminist analyses of globalization and diverse economic strategies examine how gendered social networks relate to these economic activities (Hanson, 2005; Oberhauser and Pratt, 2004). Gender plays an important role, for example, in establishing and maintaining social networks among family, friends, and neighbors that in turn affect employment and economic activities (Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones, 2002). In some cases, these networks further the segregation of women into low-paying and menial jobs because of the women’s specific and sometimes limited contacts. In contrast, social networks often enhance men’s access to higher-paying and more secure jobs through the men’s well-placed contacts. Hanson’s (2005) research in Ghana explores how networks are used to access resources and obtain space for selling goods or providing services. Through a study of urban Ghanaians engaged in home-based microeconomic activities, he analyzes “how such individuals employ their social relations as assets to guard against and alleviate socioeconomic vulnerability resulting from a changing macroeconomic landscape” (Hanson, 2005, 1292). Thus multiple and diverse livelihoods that involve individuals, households, and communities highlight the complexity of economic strategies in the context of globalization.

Unequal Power Relations and Globalization

This analysis also demonstrates how gender as well as other social axes of power play an important yet often overlooked role in social networks. The effect of unequal power relations on livelihood strategies is important to analyses of gender and globalization. Many scholars argue that globalization has contributed to women’s economic marginalization and unequal access to resources and assets in the workplace as well as the domestic sphere, especially in developing regions (Afshar and Barrientos, 1999; Beneria, 2003). The construction of these unequal power relations is connected to processes of globalization that influence people’s ability to gain or improve their socio-economic status. As Staeheli and Kofman (2004, 6) state, “power is often conceptualized in terms of the capacity to control or shape an event, person, or process... Power also...is an attribute or a possession associated with particular institutional roles.” Thus power extends beyond individual actions or behavior and is embedded in social constructions and institutions of society.

These formulations of gender and power inform this analysis by underscoring how control is exerted over local economic activities within the context of neoliberal globalization. As mentioned above, global institutions such as the IMF or World Bank are instrumental in constructing discourses of power relations, which in turn shape capitalist markets, investment decisions, consumption patterns,

and labor relations (Peet, 2003). At the local scale, Carr (2008a) documents how adaptation to shifts in society, environment, and economy influence power relations in rural Ghanaian households. His work shows that decisions to limit women's production negatively affect livelihood strategies, with often long-term impacts on the overall welfare of households. Likewise, men's ability to control women's incomes in these rural households highlights the unequal power relations, whereby women take on disproportionate responsibility for school fees and children's clothing (Carr, 2008a). These processes reside in specific gender roles and the need to conserve men's authority over their households.

Feminist approaches to inequality and power also theorize how the social construction of difference and identity develop along different social axes such as race, gender, class, stage in life course, ethnicity, and sexuality. Some scholars argue that these social characteristics are limited, and thus critical feminist perspectives on power should instead focus on ways in which multiple identities and differences interact (Staeheli and Kofman, 2004). Like gender, social differences concerning race and ethnicity are ideological constructs that are "chosen according to social and cultural criteria in special material circumstances" (Kobayashi and Peake, 1994, 234). Overall, feminist studies have profoundly altered our understanding of different constellations of power in different settings and at different scales (Freeman, 2001).

Postcolonial feminists analyze ideological and material constructs of unequal power relations by engaging in an historical and social critique of hegemonic discourses of colonialism (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997). This approach is helpful in understanding the intersection of globalization and local livelihoods in the study area of Accra, Ghana. In particular, postcolonial feminism challenges the privileging of white, European, and masculine identities and the subordination of the 'Other'. This construction of dominant social identities creates a hierarchical system that excludes certain groups of people from access to resources and economic opportunity. Furthermore, postcolonial feminism dispels the notion of a homogenous woman by revealing the complexity of how power is played out in discursively and materially produced practices of difference (Nagar et al., 2002). These perspectives on socio-spatial processes in the global South have greatly expanded our understanding of the intersection of gender and other social categories that challenge hegemonic binaries in neoliberal discourses of globalization.

In Ghana and other developing countries, women continue to be subjects of discipline or control by advanced capitalism and the postcolonial state. For example, women are disciplined and face subordination as sex workers (Beneria, 2003), as laborers in global corporations (Freeman, 2001), as porters in urban markets (Opare, 2003) and as wives and mothers (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997).

Feminism offers diverse positions on gender inequality as it relates to these aspects of globalization. Some feminists claim that expanded opportunities and access to economic activities under globalization improve gender equality (Rakowski, 2000). According to this argument, women have increased roles in household and community economic livelihoods as men's ability to support households has declined (Marchand and Runyan, 2000). These shifting roles have contributed to greater decision-making among women, as well as expanding their control over resources.

In contrast, some scholars argue that the power relations associated with globalization are inherently biased against women and thus create further social and economic disparities. "Data show that women's poverty has increased relative to men's, their health and nutrition have declined, and the number of women-headed households has risen" (Rakowski, 2000, 116). Thus, although globalization and economic reforms have expanded women's participation in formal production, such as employment in international corporations, this participation often increases their vulnerability to exploitative conditions and oppressive subjectivities (Pyle and Ward, 2003). Examples from sub-Saharan Africa include research in Ghana that reveals growing poverty rates among women, as economic reforms put additional burdens on households to provide health-related care and survive (Yeboah, 2003). Most agree that globalization both expands opportunities and negatively impacts women (Afshar and Barrientos, 1999). In some cases restructuring is economically beneficial to women, while in other instances women face intense discrimination and increased economic hardship. These outcomes often depend on the spatial context, cultural dynamics, and power relations embedded in specific societies.

Feminist Strategies of Resistance to Globalization

This section focuses on the mobilization of individuals and communities against neoliberal globalization in ways that reframe our understanding of the link between local strategies and global processes. Feminism contributes to these perspectives through its critical engagement with resistance and activism as a means of challenging and altering hegemonic discourses of power and marginalization. Recent feminist scholarship demonstrates that globalization has both hindered and bolstered opportunities for resistance and mobilization among those negatively affected by this process (Harcourt and Escobar, 2005; Rakowski, 2000; Sassen, 2002). This work has reframed the 'hegemonic' discourse of global capitalism to focus on action and resistance to unequal power relations that involve alternative economic activities as well as social and political empowerment. Anti-hegemonic discourses of economic development often shift the analytical focus of economic strategies to locally-based acts in a way that also constructs them as forms of resistance and empowerment (Gibson-Graham, 1996). In various

geographic contexts and through diverse struggles women play an important role in transforming and redefining this discourse.

Economic strategies are critical to and at the heart of women's empowerment. Engaging in diverse economic activities as a means of increasing contributions to household income has been shown to significantly shift power dynamics in households and communities. According to Afshar and Barrientos (1999, 5-6), "Increasing household dependence on female income-earning capacity helps to raise the status of women, giving them the potential for greater independence and empowerment."

Globalization also provides the context for spaces of resistance in the economic realm, which in turn reconstitutes the playing field for capital. Feminism has contributed greatly to analyses of social movements and community action in the context of globalization through an emphasis on collective strategies, individual acts of resistance, and progressive possibilities for economic transformation (Marchand and Runyan, 2000; Nagar et al., 2002; Roberts, 2004). These efforts are reframed as creative means of (re)constructing the economic landscape where women especially are not passive victims, but active agents in economic strategies.

As outlined above, neoliberal reforms in countries such as Ghana have cut services, imposed taxes, or instituted fees that in turn have contributed to the development of individual and community economic strategies. Collective strategies often take the form of producer groups or microfinance programs that may lead to economic empowerment and resistance to marginalization (McCusker and Oberhauser, 2006; Oberhauser and Pratt, 2008; Hanson, 2005; Whitehead, 2002). Collective action also entails matters of concern that go beyond income generation to strategies concerning child-care, domestic violence, education, and other quality-of-life issues. Research on social networks, for example, has demonstrated how local forms of association can help alleviate poverty in many developing contexts (Afshar and Barrientos, 1999). Indeed, development agencies have utilized this collective mobilization of social capital and community activities to implement microfinance programs (Pyle and Ward, 2003).

Livelihood strategies among community groups and individuals in Ghana represent a shift in discursive hegemonic forms of globalization to a more local and alternative model of economic activity. In the case of the community groups in Accra, women participate in various types of income-generating activities, such as collective efforts to produce and sell food products, clothing, hair care, and other goods or services (Oberhauser and Hanson, 2008). The gendered nature of these groups, the types of activities, and general opposition to the marginalization brought about by neoliberal economic reforms partly generates the context within which these activities are situated. This mobilization and resistance, in turn,

contributes to autonomy, independence, capacity-building, and most importantly collective actions that link the multiple dimensions of production, reproduction, and social networks (Rakowski, 2000).

Other examples of resistance involve mobilization against patriarchal power relations that position men as the primary decision-maker in terms of household income, resources, and expenditures (Bassett, 2002; Carr, 2008b). Despite this inherently unequal access to material resources, women undertake collective or individual resistance to offset the negative effects of this situation. For example, Carr (2008b) found that women engage in more subsistence-based agricultural work to provide for the household needs first and foremost. While women do not completely accept this, they find ways to “retaliate by refusing to cook or clean for their husband, or even refuse to have sex with them” (Carr, 2008b, 696). These acts of everyday resistance not only show that women are aware of household inequalities in decision-making and access to resources, but they act in ways that produce barriers to social cohesion within households.

Opportunities for women that accompany globalization also stem from migration and specifically the remittances sent from family and friends living abroad. These private sources of income have become more accessible with increasing connections to family and friends living overseas. Wong’s (2006) research highlights how remittances link people who are spatially and socially connected in ways that reinforce gender roles, power dynamics, and household relations. Her analysis of the social dimensions of remittances in transnational families demonstrates that women engaged in these activities continue to fulfill gender obligations, such as the reproduction of families and households, yet their income-generating options have expanded.

A common form of resistance in gendered economic strategies is the materialization of shifting social relations that disrupt the traditional dynamics of male dominance and exploitation of women. With this shift, women are redefining their roles under economic globalization, partly through alternative discourses of power and social identity, but also through material processes of production and economic strategies. For example, globalization affects livelihood strategies among people in urban Ghana (Oberhauser and Hanson, 2008; Owusu, 2007). Their ability to adapt to these economic forces often depends on intersecting social axes of power such as class, ethnicity, gender, and stage in the life course. In many cases, these urban residents are left to negotiate the dominant constructions of access to resources and assets, yet succeed in contributing to household income and raising their status in the household and community. Thus, mobilization against oppressive and marginalizing forces of neoliberal globalization takes many forms. This analysis demonstrates how gender relations and identities are instrumental in defining and initiating these projects. By unpacking and reframing the hegemonic

discourse of neoliberal globalization, one provides opportunities to advance community livelihoods and raise the status of economically marginalized people in society.

Conclusion

Feminist scholarship analyzes the integration of globalization and local livelihood strategies by engaging with a multitude of different material and discursive aspects of contemporary socio-economic processes. This paper focuses on four areas in which feminism contributes to critical analyses of neoliberal globalization. These areas are the (re)construction of scale, participation in alternative or nonmarket economic activities, unequal power relations, and mobilization against hegemonic forces of capitalism. The discussion relates these areas to economic strategies or livelihoods undertaken by women as forms of gendered practices.

This analysis draws from a range of scholarship in order to present a critical perspective on the unique and potentially progressive combination of globalization, gender, and economic strategies. As many feminist geographers have argued, much can be done to expand our engagement with and influence on socio-spatial analyses of contemporary globalization (Roberts, 2004; Nagar et al., 2002; Pyle and Ward, 2003). Gendered practices and social identities are critical in (re)framing the link between global economic discourse and everyday material and social practices.

Using examples from research conducted in Accra, Ghana, this paper argues that neoliberal reforms largely imposed by World Bank and IMF-led policies have greatly influenced the economic strategies of individuals and households. Moreover, gender relations play an important role in these strategies in the specific context of household incomes, divisions of labor, and patterns of expenditure. As outlined in Figure 2 and highlighted in the empirical discussion of this paper, informal work, unpaid labor, migration, subsistence production, and social reproduction are among the practices that are part of this local/global intersection.

While globalization has been constructed as a dominant and positive process by neoliberal thinking, many efforts have occurred to mobilize and engage in actions to empower groups and women marginalized by these same capitalist forces. In some cases, grassroots or non-governmental organizations have become part of the neoliberal discourse (Rankin, 2001). Efforts to essentially co-opt these groups have been criticized, because they often operate without significantly advancing women's position or changing the socio-spatial inequities within capitalism.

In other cases, however, resistance to globalization through collective action and mobilization at the local and global scales work to redefine and to challenge

the dominant tenets of neoliberalism. These social and economic ‘spaces of resistance’ open up opportunities to engage in truly alternative measures and frameworks. Feminist approaches have proven effective in these analyses by offering a critical insight and an activist tradition to remold livelihood strategies and relations of power. According to Nagar et al. (2002, 275), “feminist research...has provided grounded and contextual understandings of globalization by highlighting the ways in which gender—as a social category that is thoroughly interwoven with race, class, religion, and other axes of social difference—has been central to reworked forms of capitalism and to resistance.” This paper emphasizes the economic aspects of resistance, because they inform the integration of global and local scales, the provision of alternative, nonmarket economic strategies, and the overcoming of unequal social and spatial power dynamics. The case study of Ghana shows multiple ways in which individuals and households have the capacity to counter the negative effects of neoliberal globalization through disrupting unequal power relations and engaging in multiple and alternative livelihoods. As analyzed above, these livelihoods are embedded in social axes of power that allow alternative discourses and have the potential to reverse inequities in access to resources and assets (Oberhauser and Hanson, 2008).

In sum, the basis for the feminist approach outlined here supports a critical engagement with economic strategies that lead to a collective means of resistance and change. These efforts are embedded in gendered social identities in ways that draw from household resources, utilize social networks, and reframe the market-based parameters of economic production and exchange. Finally, alternative social and economic strategies present diverse prospects and challenges, as well as provide the basis for critical insights, questions, and analyses that push us towards a more political process of knowledge production.

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