

ABSTRACTS

Gender Scrambling: A New Comparative Advantage of International Capital

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This paper problematizes the relationship between women's employment and their presumed empowerment as its consequence. Ethnographic examples from Mexico show that women remain disadvantaged by work conditions even when they participate fully in a productive economy. Valuations of work and goods produced are always guided by masculine principles. Economic growth as measured in terms of GDP and other signs of a modern economy has contributed very little towards any positive gains in women's positions. Even in a globalizing market, women remain in the grey areas of the informal section of the larger economy. For women to be labelled entrepreneurs means reaching upwards from negative counts and to engage in struggle to come at par with male players in the market economy. Patriarchal norms go into defining work and it rewards leaving women to receive disproportionately less for their labour inputs and efforts, as compared to men. The same work may mean different pays and, more importantly, work designated as women's work, such as housekeeping, will pay better when it is done by a man. This paper relies on case studies from the author's field data from Mexico to illustrate how in every situation, from the market to household employment, women get an unfair deal, yet display great grit and strength. Women fight against all odds to survive.

Keywords: Neoliberal economy, women's employment, Mexico, informal sectors of the economy.

'I couldn't just sit around at home!': North African Women Living in Imperia, Italy

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This paper focuses on North African Muslim women immigrants to Italy. I examine their entering and adapting to a new country with a different language, culture and religion. These women, mothers and wives sidestep stereotyping and establish social networks not only among themselves but also with local Italians and other immigrants. They can be described as ground level entrepreneurs who are busy creating new homes, making contacts, building communities and earning money. In this paper I show how stereotyping obscures many

activities which may be deemed entrepreneurial, especially by socially marginal groups. The women described here amply demonstrate Frances Angela's notion of a third space — 'neither the margin nor the co-opted centre, but a locus where women's agency, inclusiveness and solidarity are exercised, and where otherness is converted into a space for building alliances and community.' These migrant women express their resistance to global political and economic forces, by maintaining the national and ethnic identities of their home countries and resisting full assimilation in the host culture. At the same time, they are actively creating satisfactory living conditions and engage in sustained and enriching social contacts with Italians and other immigrants in their effort to survive in challenging situations marked by insecurity and vulnerability.

Keywords: Muslim immigrants, stereotyping, ethnicity, resistance, adaptation.

Women Entrepreneurs in Manipur: Their Institution and Their Entrepreneurship

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Just like their counterparts in Southeast Asia, women in Northeast India have been producers and sellers since ancient times. They may not be large-scale entrepreneurs but they are economically self-sufficient. Every household in the villages in Manipur has a loom, a small or a big kitchen garden and a *pukhari* (pond) with plenty of fish. Women all over Northeast India weave as an integral part of their traditions. They are both producers and sellers in the local markets. In Manipur, markets totally run by women are called *Ima Keithel* (mothers' markets); no man is allowed to own a shop there. These are the only markets of their kind in the world. Here, women are mostly vegetable vendors and cloth merchants who primarily sell their own produce. They have a very strong organization. The police are afraid to hassle them. The study of the history of Manipur shows that the *Ima Keithel* was the launching pad of the two-epoch making *Nupi Lans* (women's fights) against the British. It was here that they organized and pursued their movement and fought against colonial forces. It is not only an economic base for the *Imas* (mothers), but also their political base. In this paper I describe this 'institution' of *Ima Keithel* and discuss its significance in the unique socio-cultural context of this region.

Keywords: *Ima Keithel* (women's market), *Nupilan* (women's fight), mothers, collectivity, culture, conflict.