

## The feminization of survival: alternative global circuits<sup>1</sup>

The last decade has seen a growing presence of women in a variety of cross-border circuits. These circuits are enormously diverse but share one feature: they are profit- or revenue-making circuits developed on the backs of the truly disadvantaged. They include the illegal trafficking in people for the sex industry and for various types of formal and informal labor markets as well as other cross-border migrations, both documented and not, which have become an important source of hard currency for governments in home countries. The formation and strengthening of these circuits is in good part a consequence of broader structural conditions. Among the key actors emerging out of these broader conditions are the women themselves in search of work, but also, and increasingly so, illegal traffickers and contractors as well as governments of home countries.

I conceptualize these circuits as countergeographies of globalization. They are deeply imbricated with some of the major dynamics constitutive of globalization: the formation of global markets, the intensifying of transnational and trans-local networks, and the development of communication technologies which easily escape conventional surveillance practices. The strengthening, and in some of these cases the formation, of new global circuits is embedded in or made possible by the existence of a global economic system and its associated development of various institutional supports for cross-border money flows and markets. As I have argued for the case of international labor migrations these counter-geographies are dynamic and changing in their locational features: to some extent they are part of the shadow economy, but they use some of the institutional infrastructure of the regular economy (Sassen, 1998; see also e.g. Bonilla, Melendez, Morales & Torres, 1998; Castro, 2000). This type of partial shadow economy is dynamic and multi-locational.

This article describes some of the key features of these countergeographies, particularly as they involve migrant women. The underlying logic is the possibility of systemic links between the growth of these alternative circuits for sur-

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vival, for profit-making and for hard-currency earning on the one hand, and major conditions in developing countries that are associated with economic globalization on the other. Among these conditions are an increase in unemployment, the closure of a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises oriented towards national rather than export markets, and large, often increasing, government debt. These economies are often struggling or stagnant and even shrinking. Despite their diversity they are usually grouped under the term ‘developing.’

## 1. Mapping a new conceptual landscape

The variety of global circuits that incorporate growing numbers of women have strengthened at a time when major dynamics linked to economic globalization have had significant impacts on developing economies. The latter have had to implement a bundle of new policies to accommodate new conditions associated with globalization: the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs, the opening up of these economies to foreign firms, the elimination of multiple state subsidies, and – almost inevitably – financial crises and the prevailing types of programmatic solutions put forth by the IMF. In most of the countries involved – whether Mexico or South Korea – these conditions have created enormous costs for certain sectors of the economy and for the population, and have not fundamentally reduced government debt. Among these costs are the growth in unemployment, the closure of a large number of firms in traditional sectors oriented towards the local or national market, the promotion of export-oriented cash crops which have increasingly replaced subsistence agriculture and food production for local or national markets, and, finally, the ongoing and mostly heavy burden of government debt in most of these economies.

The question is whether there are systemic links between these two sets of developments—the growing presence of women from developing economies in the variety of global circuits described above and the rise in unemployment and debt in those same economies. One way of articulating this in substantive terms is to posit that

- a) the shrinking opportunities for male employment in many of these countries,
- b) the shrinking opportunities for more traditional forms of profit-making as these countries increasingly accept foreign firms in a widening range of economic sectors and are pressured to develop export industries, and
- c) the fall in revenues for the governments in many of these countries, partly linked to these conditions and to the burden of debt servicing, have all contributed to increase the importance of alternative ways of making a living, making a profit, and securing government revenue.

The evidence for any of these conditions is incomplete and partial, yet there is a growing consensus among experts about the importance of the factors listed above. I will go further and argue that these three conditions are expanding into a new politico-economic reality for a growing number of developing, typically struggling, economies, and that it is in this context that the importance of alternative ways of making a living emerges. I also posit that all of these conditions have emerged as factors influencing the lives of a growing number of women from developing or struggling economies, even when the articulations are often not self-evident or visible. This fact has marked much of the difficulty in understanding the role of women in development generally, as I discuss in the next section. These are, in many ways, old conditions. What is different today is their rapid internationalization and considerable institutionalization.

My main analytical effort is to uncover the systemic connections between what are considered poor, low-earning and in that regard low value-added individuals, often represented as a burden rather than a resource, on the one hand, and what are emerging as significant sources for profit-making, especially in the shadow economy and for government revenue enhancement, on the other. Prostitution and labor migration are growing in importance as ways of making a living. Illegal trafficking in women and children for the sex industry and recruitment for foreign labor markets are growing in importance as ways of making a profit. The remittances sent by emigrants, as well as the organized export of workers, are increasingly important sources of revenue for some of these sending country governments. Women are by far the majority in prostitution and in trafficking for the sex industry, and they are becoming a majority group in labor migration streams. The employment and/or use of migrant women covers an increasingly broad range of economic sectors, both illegal and illicit, such as prostitution, and some highly regulated industries, such as nursing.

These circuits can be thought of as indicating the – albeit partial – feminization of survival, because it is increasingly women who make a living, create a profit and secure government revenue. Thus in using the notion of feminization of survival I am not only referring to the fact that households and whole communities are increasingly dependent on women for their survival. I want to emphasize the fact that also governments are dependent on women's earnings in these various circuits, and so are types of enterprises whose ways of profit-making exist at the margins of the 'licit' economy. Finally, in using the term circuits, I want to underline the fact that there is a degree of institutionalization in these dynamics—they are not simply aggregates of individual actions.

What I have described above is indeed a conceptual landscape. The data are inadequate to prove the argument as such. There are, however, partial bodies of data to document some of these developments. Further, it is possible to juxtapose several data sets, albeit each gathered autonomously from the other, to document some of the interconnections presented above. There is, also, an older

literature on women and debt, focused on the implementation of a first generation of Structural Adjustment Programs in several developing countries linked to the growing debt of governments in the 1980s. This literature has documented the disproportionate burden these programs put on women. This is by now a large literature in many different languages; it also includes a vast number of limited-circulation items produced by various activist and support organizations. And now there is a new literature in many languages on a second generation of such programs, especially on the implementation of the global economy in the 1990s (Beneria & Feldman, 1992; Bose & Acosta-Belen, 1995; Bradshaw, Noonan, Gash, & Buchmann, 1993; Moser, 1989; Tinker, 1990; Ward, 1991; Ward & Pyle, 1995). All these various sources of information, however, do not amount to a full empirical specification of the actual dynamics hypothesized here, but they allow us to document parts of it.

## 2. Strategic instantiations of gendering in the global economy

There is by now a fairly long-standing research and theorization effort engaged in uncovering the role of women in international economic processes. The central effort in much of this earlier research literature was to balance the focus on men in international economic development research. In the mainstream development literature, these processes have often, perhaps unwittingly, been represented as neutral when it comes to gender despite its important role (Morokvasic, 1984; Tinker, 1990; Ward 1991).

In my reading, globalization has produced yet another set of dynamics in which women are playing a critical role. The new economic literature on current globalization processes proceeds as if this new economic process is gender-neutral. These gender dynamics have been rendered invisible in terms of their articulation with the mainstream global economy. This set of dynamics can be found in the alternative cross-border circuits described above in which the role of women, and especially the condition of being a migrant woman, is crucial. These gender dynamics can also be found in key features of the mainstream global economy. For instance, the *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* (1996) focused on the impacts of economic globalization not on the shadow economy but on lawful features: the partial unbundling of sovereignty and what this means for the emergence of cross-border feminist agendas, the place of women and of feminist consciousness in the new Asian mode of implementing advanced global capitalism, and the global spread of a set of core human rights and its power to alter the position of women (see also Knop, 1993; Mehra, 1997; Peterson, 1992). I think we need to see these current developments as part of

this longer-standing history that has made visible women's role in crucial economic processes. We can identify two older phases in the study of gendering in the recent history of economic internationalization, both concerned with processes that continue today. A third phase focuses on more recent transformations, often involving an elaboration of the categories and findings of the previous two phases.

A first phase is the development literature about the implantation of cash crops and wage labor generally, typically by foreign firms, and its partial dependence on women subsidizing the waged labor of men through their household production and subsistence farming. Boserup (1970), Deere (1976) and many others produced an enormously rich and nuanced literature showing the variants of this dynamic. Far from being unconnected, the subsistence sector and the modern capitalist enterprise were shown to be articulated through a gender dynamic; this gender dynamic, in turn, veiled this articulation. It was the 'invisible' work of women producing food and other necessities in the subsistence economy that contributed to maintain extremely low wages on commercial plantations and mines, mostly geared to export markets. Women in the so-called subsistence sector thereby contributed to the financing of the 'modernized' sector through their largely unmonetized subsistence production. But the standard development literature represented the subsistence sector, if at all, as a drain on the modern sector and as an indicator of backwardness. It was not measured in standard economic analyses. Feminist analyses showed the actual dynamics of this process of modernization and its dependence on the subsistence sector.

A second phase was the scholarship on the internationalization of manufacturing production and the feminization of the proletariat that came with it (e.g. Smith & Wallerstein, 1992). The key analytic element in this scholarship was that off-shoring manufacturing jobs under pressure of low-cost imports mobilized a disproportionately female workforce in poorer countries which had hitherto largely remained outside the industrial economy. In this regard it is an analysis that also intersected with national issues, such as why women predominate in certain industries, notably garment and electronics assembly, no matter what the level of development of a country (Beneria & Feldman, 1992; Milkman, 1987). From the perspective of the world economy, the formation of a feminized off-shore proletariat facilitated firms' avoidance of increasingly strong unions in the countries where the capital originated and secured competitive prices for the re-imported goods assembled off-shore.

A third phase of scholarship on women and the global economy is emerging around processes that underline transformations in gendering in women's subjectivities and in women's notions of membership. These represent many different literatures. Among the richest, and most pertinent to the subjects discussed in this article, is the new feminist scholarship on women immigrants, which examines, for example, how international migration alters gender patterns and how

the formation of transnational households can empower women (Boyd, 1989; Castro, 1986; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). There is also an important new scholarship which focuses on new forms of cross-border solidarity, experiences of membership and identity formation that represent new subjectivities, including feminist subjectivities (Eisenstein, 1996; Malkki, 1995; Ong, 1996; Soysal, 1994).

One important methodological question is what the strategic sites are where international economic processes can be studied from a feminist perspective. In the case of export-oriented agriculture, this strategic site is the nexus between subsistence economies and capitalist enterprise. In the case of the internationalization of manufacturing production, it is the nexus between the dismantling of an established, largely male 'labor aristocracy' in major industries whose gains spread to a large share of the workforce in developed economies, and the formation of a low-wage off-shore, largely female proletariat in new and old growth sectors. Off-shoring and feminizing this proletariat has kept it from becoming an empowered 'labor aristocracy' with actual union power, and prevents existing largely male 'labor aristocracies' from becoming stronger. Introducing a gendered understanding of economic processes lays bare these connections – the existence of the nexus as an operational reality and an analytic strategy.

What are the strategic sites in today's leading processes of globalization? I have examined this issue from the perspective of key features of the current global economic system in global cities – strategic sites for the specialized servicing, financing and management of global economic processes. These cities are also a site for the incorporation of large numbers of women and immigrants in activities that service the strategic sectors, but this is a mode of incorporation that makes invisible the fact that these workers are part of the global information economy, therewith breaking the nexus between being workers in leading industries and the opportunity to become – as had been historically the case in industrialized economies – a 'labor aristocracy' or its contemporary equivalent. In this sense 'women and immigrants' emerge as the systemic equivalent of the off-shore proletariat. Further, the demands placed on the top level professional and managerial workforce in global cities are such that the usual modes of handling household tasks and lifestyle are inadequate. As a consequence we are seeing the return of the so-called 'serving classes' in all the global cities around the world, made up largely of immigrant and migrant women (Sassen, 2001).

The alternative global circuits that concern me here are yet another instantiation of these dynamics of globalization, but from the perspective of developing economies rather than from the perspective of global cities. Economic globalization needs to be understood in its multiple localizations, many of which do not generally get coded as having anything to do with the global economy. In the next section I give a first empirical specification of some of the localizations of these alternative global circuits, these countergeographies of globalization. Be-

cause the data are inadequate, this is a partial specification. Yet it should serve to illustrate some of the key dimensions.

### **3. Government debt**

Debt and debt servicing problems have become a systemic feature of the developing world since the 1980s. They are, in my reading, also a systemic feature inducing the formation of the new countergeographies of globalization. The impact on women and on the feminization of survival is mediated through the particular features of this debt rather than the fact of debt per se. It is with this logic in mind that this section examines various features of government debt in developing economies.

There is considerable research showing the detrimental effects of debt on government programs for women and children, notably education and health care—clearly investments necessary to ensure a better future. Further, the increased unemployment typically associated with the austerity and adjustment programs implemented by international agencies to address government debt have also been found to have adverse effects on women (Chossudovsky, 1997; Elson, 1995; Rahman, 1999; Standing, 1999; Ward, 1999). Unemployment, both of women themselves, but also more generally of the men in their households, has added to the pressure on women to find ways to ensure household survival. Subsistence food production, informal work, emigration, prostitution, have all become survival options for women (Alarcon-Gonzalez & McKinley, 1999; Buchmann, 1996; Cagaty & Ozler, 1995; Jones, 1999; Safa, 1995; Pyle 2001).

Heavy government debt and high unemployment have brought with them the need to search for survival alternatives, and a shrinking of regular economic opportunities has brought with it a widened use of illegal profit-making by enterprises and organizations. In this regard, heavy debt burdens play an important role in the formation of countergeographies of survival, of profit-making, and of government revenue enhancement. Economic globalization has to some extent added to the rapid increase in certain components of this debt, and has provided an institutional infrastructure for cross-border flows and global markets. We can see economic globalization as facilitating the operation of these countergeographies at a global scale. Once there is an institutional infrastructure for globalization, processes which have basically operated at the national level can scale up to the global level even when this is not necessary for their operation. This would contrast with processes that are by their very nature global, such as the network of financial centers underlying the formation of a global capital market.

Generally, most countries which became indebted in the 1980s have not been able to solve their debt problem. In the 1990s we have seen a new set of countries going into debt. In 1998, the debt was held as follows: Multilateral institutions (IMF, World Bank and regional development banks) hold 45% of the debt; bilateral institutions, individual countries and the Paris group hold 45% of the debt; and private commercial institutions hold 10% (Ambrogi 1999). Over these two decades many innovations were launched, most importantly by the IMF and the World Bank through their Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and Structural Adjustment Loans. The latter were tied to economic policy reform rather than the funding of a particular project. The purpose of such programs is to make states more 'competitive,' which typically means sharp cuts in various social programs. By 1990 there were almost 200 such loans in place. Furthermore, in the 1980s the Reagan administration put enormous pressure on many countries to implement neo-liberal policies which resembled the SAPs.

Structural Adjustment Programs became a new norm for the World Bank and the IMF on grounds that they were a promising way to secure long-term growth and sound government policy. Yet all of these countries have remained deeply indebted, with forty-one of them now considered as Highly Indebted Poor Countries. Furthermore, the actual structure of these debts, their servicing and how they fit into debtor countries economies, suggest that it is not likely that most of these countries will under current conditions be able to pay their debt in full. SAPs seem to have made this even more likely by demanding economic reforms that have added to unemployment and the bankruptcy of many smaller, national market oriented firms.

Even before the economic crisis of the 1990s, the debt of poor countries in the South grew from US\$ 507 billion in 1980 to US\$ 1.4 trillion in 1992. Debt service payments alone had increased to 1.6 trillion dollars, more than the actual debt. According to some estimates, from 1982 to 1998 indebted countries paid four times their original debts, and at the same time their debt stocks went up by four times (Toussaint, 1999, p. 1). These countries had to use a significant share of their total revenues to service these debts. Thirty-three of the forty-one Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC's) paid three dollars in debt service payments to the North for every one dollar in development assistance. Many of these countries pay over 50% of their government revenues toward debt service, or 20 to 25% of their export earnings (Ambrogi, 1999).

This debt burden inevitably has large repercussions on state spending composition. This is well illustrated in the case of Zambia, Ghana and Uganda, three countries which have been seen as cooperative and responsible by the World Bank as well as effective in implementing SAPs. In Zambia, for example, the government paid 1.3 billion dollars in debt but only 37 million dollars for primary education; Ghana's social expenses, at 75 million dollars, represented 20% of its debt service; and Uganda paid nine dollars per capita on its debt and only



one dollar for health care (Ismi, 1998). In 1994 alone these three countries remitted \$2.7 billion to bankers in the North. Africa's payments reached \$5 billion in 1998, which means that for every one dollar in aid, African countries paid 1.4 dollars in debt service in 1998.

In many of the HIPC countries debt service ratios to GNP exceed sustainable limits; many are far more extreme than what were considered unmanageable levels in the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s (OXFAM, 1999). Debt to GNP ratios are especially high in Africa, where they stood at 123%, compared with 42% in Latin America and 28% in Asia. Generally, the IMF asks HIPCs to pay 20 to 25% of their export earnings toward debt service. By contrast, in 1953 the Allies cancelled 80% of Germany's war debt and only insisted on 3 to 5% of export earnings debt service. Similar conditions were applied to Central European countries in the 1990s.

It is these features of the current situation which suggest that most of these countries will not get out of their indebtedness through such strategies as SAPs. Indeed it would seem that the latter have in many cases had the effect of raising the debt dependence of countries. Further, together with various other dynamics, SAPs have contributed to an increase in unemployment and poverty. In this regard the current financial crisis in Southeast Asia is illuminating. These were and remain highly dynamic economies. Yet they had to face high levels of indebtedness and economic failure in a broad range of enterprises and sectors. The financial crisis-both its architecture and its consequences-has brought with it the imposition of structural adjustment policies and a growth in unemployment and poverty due to widespread bankruptcies of small and medium sized firms catering to both national and export markets (Olds, Dicken, Kelly, Kong & Yeung, 1999). The 120 billion dollar rescue package that allowed for the introduction of SAP provisions, which reduce the autonomy of these governments, went to compensate the losses of foreign institutional investors, rather than to solve the poverty and unemployment of a large number of the people. Using IMF policies to manage the crisis has been seen by some as worsening the situation for the unemployed and poor. (OXFAM, 1999; Ismi, 1998; Ward & Pyle, 1995; Ambrogi, 1999)

#### **4. Alternative circuits for survival**

It is in this context that alternative circuits of survival emerge. This is a context marked by what I interpret as a systemic condition marked by high unemployment, poverty, bankruptcies of large numbers of firms, and shrinking resources in the state to meet social needs. Here I want to focus on some of the data on the trafficking of women for the sex industries and for work; the growing weight of

this trafficking as a profit-making option; and the growing weight of emigrants' remittances in the account balance of many of the sending states.

#### 4.1 Trafficking in women

Trafficking involves the forced recruitment and/or transportation of people within and across states for work or services through a variety of ways involving some degree of coercion. Trafficking is a violation of several types of rights: human, civil, political. Trafficking in people appears to be mainly related to the sex market, to informal labor markets, and to illegal migration. Much legislative work has been done to address trafficking: international treaties and charters, UN resolutions, and various bodies and commissions (Chuang, 1998). Trafficking has become sufficiently recognized as an issue that it was also addressed in the G8 meeting in Birmingham in May 1998. The heads of the eight major industrialized countries stressed the importance of cooperation against international organized crime and trafficking in persons. The US President issued a set of directives to his administration in order to strengthen and increase efforts against trafficking in women and girls. This, in turn, generated the legislation initiative by senator Paul Wellstone; bill S.600 was introduced in the US senate in 1999 (for a good critical analysis see Dayan, 2000). NGOs also play an increasingly important role in addressing this issue. The *Coalition Against Trafficking in Women*, for example, has centers and representatives in Australia, Bangladesh, Europe, Latin America, North America, Africa and Asia Pacific, and the *Women's Rights Advocacy Program* has established the 'Initiative Against Trafficking in Persons' to combat the global trade in persons.

Trafficking in women for the sex industry is highly profitable for those organizing the trade (see generally CIA, 2000). The United Nations estimates that four million people were trafficked in 1998, producing a profit of US\$ 7 billion for criminal groups. This includes remittances from prostitutes' earnings and payments to organizers and facilitators in these countries. In Japan, profits in the sex industry were about 4.2 trillion yen per year over the last few years. In Poland, police estimate that for each Polish woman delivered, the trafficker receives about US\$ 700. In Australia, the Federal Police estimate that the cash flow from 200 prostitutes is up to \$900,000 a week. Ukrainian and Russian women, highly prized in the sex market, earn the criminal gangs involved about \$500 to \$1000 per woman delivered. These women can be expected to service on average fifteen clients a day, and each can be expected to make about \$US 215,000 per month for the gang (Altink, 1999; Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998; Shannon, 1995; Lin & Marjan, 1997; Lim, 1998).

It is estimated that in recent years several million women and girls were trafficked within and out of Asia and the former Soviet Union, two major traffick-

ing areas (CIA, 2000). Increases in trafficking in both these areas can be linked to women being pushed into poverty or sold to brokers due to the poverty of their households or parents. High unemployment in the former Soviet republics has been one factor promoting growth of criminal gangs as well as the increase in trafficking in women. Unemployment rates among women in Armenia, Russia, Bulgaria and Croatia reached 70% and in Ukraine 80% with the implementation of market policies. There is also a growing trade in children for the sex industry-this has long been the case in Thailand but now is also present in several other Asian countries, in Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

Trafficking in migrants is also a profitable business. According to a UN report, criminal organizations in the 1990s generated an estimated 3.5 billion US\$ per year in profits from trafficking migrants generally (not just women) (IOM, 1996). The entry of organized crime is a recent development in the case of migrant trafficking; in the past it was mostly petty criminals who engaged in this type of trafficking. There are also reports that organized crime groups are creating intercontinental strategic alliances through networks of co-ethnics throughout several countries; this facilitates transport, local contact and distribution, provision of false documents, etc. The Global Survival Network reported on these practices after a two year investigation (Global Survival Network, 1997). Malay brokers sell Malay women into prostitution in Australia. East European women from Albania and Kosovo have been trafficked by gangs into prostitution in London (Hamzic & Sheehan, 1999). European teens from Paris and other cities have been sold to Arab and African customers (Shannon, 1999). In the US the police broke up an international Asian ring that imported women from China, Thailand, Korea, Malaysia and Vietnam (Booth, 1999). The women were charged between US\$ 30,000 and 40,000 in contracts to be paid through their work in the sex or needle trades. The women in the sex trade were shuttled around several states in the US to bring continuing variety to the clients. Such networks also facilitate the organized circulation of trafficked women among third countries -not only from sending to receiving countries. Traffickers may move women from Burma, Laos, Vietnam and China to Thailand, while Thai women may have been moved to Japan and the US. Some of the features of immigration policy and enforcement may well contribute to make female victims of trafficking even more vulnerable and give them little recourse to the law. If they are undocumented, which they are likely to be, they will not be treated as victims of abuse but as violators of the law insofar as they have violated entry, residence and work laws (Castles & Miller, 1998; Mahler, 1995). The attempt to address undocumented immigration and trafficking through stricter border controls raises the likelihood that women will use traffickers to cross the border, and some of these may turn out to belong to criminal organizations linked to the sex industry.

Further, in many countries prostitution is forbidden for foreign women, which further enhances the role of criminal gangs in prostitution. It also diminishes one of the survival options of foreign women who may have limited access to jobs generally. Prostitution is tolerated for foreign women in many countries while regular labor market jobs are less so – this is the case for instance in the Netherlands and in Switzerland. According to IOM data, the number of migrant women prostitutes in many EU countries is far higher than that for nationals: 75% in Germany, 80% in the case of Milan in Italy, etc. (IOM, various years).

While some women know that they are being trafficked for prostitution, for many the conditions of their recruitment and the extent of abuse and bondage only become evident after they arrive in the receiving country. The conditions of confinement are often extreme, akin to slavery, and so are the conditions of abuse, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, and physical punishments. They are severely underpaid, and wages are often withheld. They are prevented from using protection methods against AIDS, and typically have no access to medical treatment. If they seek police help they may be taken into detention because they are in violation of immigration laws; if they have been provided with false documents there are criminal charges.

As tourism has grown sharply over the last decade and become a major development strategy for cities, regions and whole countries, the entertainment sector has seen a parallel growth and recognition as a key development strategy (Judd & Fainstein, 1999). In many places, the sex trade is part of the entertainment industry and has similarly grown (Bishop & Robinson, 1998; Booth, 1999; Wonders & Michalowski, 2001). The sex trade itself can become a development strategy in areas with high unemployment and poverty and governments desperate for revenue and foreign exchange reserves. When local manufacturing and agriculture can no longer function as sources of employment, profits and government revenue, what was once a marginal source of earnings, profits and revenues, now becomes a far more important one. The increased importance of these sectors in development generates growing tie-ins. For instance, when the IMF and the World Bank see tourism as a solution to some of the growth challenges in many poor countries and provide loans for its development or expansion, they may well be contributing to the expansion of the entertainment industry and indirectly of the sex trade. This tie-in with development strategies signals that trafficking in women may well see a sharp expansion. These tie-ins are structural, not a function of conspiracies (Pyle, 2001). Their weight in an economy will be raised by the absence or limitations of other sources for securing a livelihood, profits and revenues for workers, enterprises and governments.

## 4.2 Remittances

Women, and migrants generally, enter the macro-level of development strategies through yet another channel: the sending of remittances, which in many countries represent a major source of foreign exchange reserves for the government. While the flows of remittances may be minor compared to the massive daily capital flows in various financial markets, they are often very significant for developing or struggling economies. In 1998 global remittances sent by immigrants to their home countries reached over US\$ 70 billion (Castles & Miller, 1998; Castro, 2000). To understand the significance of this figure, it should be related to the GDP and foreign currency reserves in the specific countries involved, rather than compared to the global flow of capital. For instance, in the Philippines, a key sender of migrants generally and of women for the entertainment industry in particular, remittances were the third largest source of foreign exchange over the last several years. In Bangladesh, another country with significant numbers of its workers in the Middle East, Japan, and several European countries, remittances represent about a third of foreign exchange.

Exporting workers and receiving their remittances are means of coping with unemployment and foreign debt for the governments of the sending countries. There are two ways in which governments have secured benefits through these strategies. One of these is highly formalized, while the other is simply a by-product of the migration process itself. Among the strongest examples of a formal labor export program are South Korea and the Philippines (Sassen, 1988). In the 1970s, South Korea developed extensive programs to promote the export of workers as an integral part of its growing overseas construction industry, initially to the Middle Eastern OPEC countries and then worldwide. As South Korea entered its own economic boom, exporting workers became a less necessary and attractive option. In contrast, the Philippine government, if anything, expanded and diversified the concept of exporting its citizens as a way of dealing with unemployment and securing needed foreign exchange reserves through their remittances. It is to this case that I turn now as it illuminates a whole series of issues at the heart of this article.

The Filipino government has played an important role in the emigration of Filipino women to the US, the Middle East and Japan, through the *Philippines Overseas Employment Administration* (POEA). Established in 1982, it organized and oversaw the export of nurses and maids to high demand areas in the world. High foreign debt and high unemployment combined make this an attractive policy. In the last few years, Filipino overseas workers send home almost US\$ 1 billion on average a year. The various labor importing countries welcomed this policy for their own specific reasons. The OPEC countries of the Middle East saw the demand for domestic workers grow sharply after the 1973 oil boom. Confronted with a shortage of nurses, a profession that demanded

years of training yet garnered rather low wages and little prestige or recognition, the US passed the Immigration Nursing Relief Act of 1989 which allowed for the import of nurses; about 80% of the nurses brought in under the new act were from the Philippines (Yamamoto 2000).

The Philippines' government also passed regulations that permitted mail-order bride agencies to recruit young Filipinas to marry foreign men as a matter of contractual agreement. The rapid increase in this trade was due to the organized effort by the government. Among the major clients were the US and Japan. Japan's agricultural communities were a key destination for these brides, given enormous shortages of people and especially young women in the Japanese countryside when the economy was booming and demand for labor in the large metropolitan areas was extremely high. Municipal governments made it a policy to accept Filipino brides.

The largest number of Filipinas going through these channels work overseas as maids, particularly in other Asian countries (Chin, 1997; Heyzer, 1994; Yeoh, Huang & Gonzales, 1999). The second largest group and the fastest growing, is entertainers, who go largely to Japan (Sassen, 2001: chapter 9). Japan passed legislation which permitted the entry of 'entertainment workers' into its booming economy in the 1980s, marked by rising expendable incomes and strong labor shortages. The rapid increase in the numbers of migrants going as entertainers is largely due to the over five hundred 'entertainment brokers' in the Philippines operating outside the state umbrella – even though the government still benefits from the remittances of these workers. These brokers work to provide women for the sex industry in Japan, where it is basically supported or controlled by organized gangs rather than going through the government controlled program for the entry of entertainers. These women are recruited for singing and entertaining, but frequently, perhaps mostly they are forced into prostitution.

There is growing evidence of significant violence against mail-order brides in several countries, regardless of nationality of origin. In the US the INS has recently reported that domestic violence towards mail-order wives has become acute (Yamamoto, 2000). Again, the law operates against these women seeking recourse, as they are liable to be detained if they do so before two years of marriage. In Japan, foreign mail-order wives are not granted full equal legal status, and there is considerable evidence that many are subject to abuse not only by the husband but by the extended family as well. The Philippine government approved most mail-order bride organizations until 1989, but under the government of Corazon Aquino, the stories of abuse by foreign husbands led to the banning of the mail-order bride business. However, it is almost impossible to eliminate these organizations, and they continue to operate in violation of the law.

The Philippines, while perhaps the country with the most developed program, is not the only country to have explored these strategies. Thailand started

a campaign in 1998 after the 1997-8 financial crisis to promote migration for work and recruitment by firms overseas of Thai workers. The government sought to export workers to the Middle East, the US, Great Britain, Germany, Australia and Greece. Sri Lanka's government has tried to export another 200,000 workers in addition to the one million it already has overseas; Sri Lankan women remitted US\$ 880 million in 1998, mostly from their earnings as maids in the Middle East and Far East. In the 1970s Bangladesh already organized extensive labor export programs to the OPEC countries of the Middle East. This has continued, and along with the individual migrations to these and other countries, notably the US and Great Britain, is a significant source of foreign exchange. Its workers remitted \$US 1.4 billion in each of the last few years (David, 1999).

## 5. Conclusion

We are seeing the growth of a variety of alternative global circuits for making a living, making a profit and securing government revenue. These circuits incorporate increasing numbers of women. Among the most important of these global circuits are the illegal trafficking in women for prostitution as well as for regular work, organized exports of women as brides, nurses, and domestic servants, and the remittances sent back to their home countries by an increasingly female emigrant workforce. Some of these circuits operate partly or wholly in the shadow economy.

This article described some of the main features of these circuits and argued that their emergence and/or strengthening is linked to major dynamics of economic globalization which have had significant impacts on developing economies. Key indicators of such impacts are the heavy and increasing burden of government debt, the growth in unemployment, sharp cuts in government social expenditures, the closure of a large number of firms in often fairly traditional sectors oriented towards the local or national market, and the promotion of export-oriented growth.

I call these circuits countergeographies of globalization because they are a) directly or indirectly associated with some of the key programs and conditions that are at the heart of the global economy, but b) are circuits not typically represented or seen as connected to globalization, and often actually operate in violation of laws and treaties, yet are not exclusively embedded in criminal operations as is the case with the illegal drug trade. Further, the growth of a global economy has brought with it an institutional infrastructure that facilitates cross-border flows and represents, in that regard, an enabling environment for these alternative circuits.

It is increasingly women who create these forms of survival, profit-making and government revenue enhancement. To this we can add the additional government revenue through savings due to severe cuts in health care and education. These cuts are often part of the effort of making the state more competitive as demanded by Structural Adjustment Programs and other policies linked to the current phase of globalization. These types of cuts are generally recognized as affecting women in particular insofar as they are responsible for the health and education of household members.

These countergeographies lay bare the systemic connections between the mostly poor and low-wage women often represented as a burden rather than a resource on the one hand, and what are emerging as significant sources for illegal profit-making and as an important source of hard currency for governments on the other hand. Linking these countergeographies to programs and conditions at the heart of the global economy also helps us understand how gendering enters into their formation and viability.

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