

GLOBALISATION, FISHERY COMMUNITIES AND GENDER CONSTRUCTION: THE CASE OF MUROS (GALICIA)

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses relations between narratives, social fields and gender in a context of globalisation. Historically, production systems of fishery dependent communities have been characterised by a sharp division of labour between men and women. The geographical implications were that male tasks were dominated by off-shore activities, while female tasks were dominated by on-shore activities. In terms of gender relations the systems formed a number of interdependent activities (Jentoft and Wadel, 1984). The men were dependent on the processing/marketing of the fish of women and the women dependent on the fish catches/landings of men. Processes of globalisation have changed both the space of interaction and the content of gender relations of such systems. Observers of these processes raise the theoretical question of whether they lead to global convergence or global divergence of interaction. In this discussion, a theoretical approach suggesting that the dynamism of globalisation separate interaction from the particularities of places (Giddens 1991) is challenged by approaches that continue to underline the geographical embeddedness of interaction (Massey 1994, Sack 1997). In the article we acknowledge the cultural and geographical complexity of gender relations, and focus on the interplay between construction of gender on both local and non-local scales.

In section 2 we explain theoretically that construction of gender relations in times of globalisation is influenced by people's embeddedness in both local and non-local social fields and the representations of narratives, gender ideologies, prototypes and conduct within these social fields. From there we outline a methodology that captures the relationship between globalisation, narrative and social fields, addressing geographical and cultural embeddedness, and construction of gender. The terms *narrative* and *social field* are introduced as analytical tools to clarify the geographical and cultural space of men and women in Muros at different times. Our first theorem is that *narratives* — i.e., socially constructed «ideas, sayings and

stories» about people and the world, have a coordinating role on people's relations and rules of conduct (Holloway and Howard 2001). Our second theorem is that narratives are not universally shared, but that the dominance of certain narrative in certain *social fields* — i.e., networks of interdependent individuals and institutions stretched out in socio-space (Fløysand and Jakobsen 2002, 2007), is fundamental in coordinating people's gender relations.

In an analysis of a study in Muros the methodology is put to a practical test (section three). The analysis aims to uncover how globalisation influences the construction of gender by asking the following questions:

- How is globalisation influencing narratives, the social fields system and thereby the prototypes of gender in Muros?
- How is this related to the gendered division of labour at the fish auction hall?
- How can this inform us about the relations between globalisation, the construction of gender relations and context?

The analysis show how globalisation makes men and women in Muros embedded within an increasing number of both local and non-local social fields that give meaning to their everyday management strategies and their construction of gender. One result is new «ideas, sayings and stories» that shape gender relations and gender prototypes. In the past, the social field situation was dominated by local social fields (household field, community field, fishery field, etc.) that supported a gender ideology and gender prototypes found in most societies organised by capitalism. Men controlled the sphere of production (expressed in the prototype of fisherman); while women controlled the sphere of reproduction (expressed in the prototype of fishery woman). The exception from this pattern was trading of fish to the local market. This was controlled by women that developed family-firms based on the fish trade at the fish auction hall. Due to a traditional division of labour and female entrepreneurship, the family firms turned out to represent a gender situation contrary to most others business activities in Spanish society: a modernised business of high profits controlled by women or *un cambio del mundo*.

Recently, further processes of globalisation have lead to a significant change in the social fields system, narratives and gender prototypes in Muros. For example, the relationship between the genders at the fish auction hall has been changed by gender bending. Crisis in the fishery field of Muros meant less job opportunities for young men in the local fishery system and increased integration of youths in the educational field. This has caused a gender bending situation in the family-firm fields of the fish auction hall. Thus, men are about to dominate this trading business as well. The changes in the national education field compared to earlier times, also means that the prototype of «student» is gaining influence in Muros. This development is partly a consequence of the collapse of the fishery sector in Muros, partly linked to globalisation processes resulting in increased education and job opportunities for young people in Spain. Finally, we summarize how these changes inform us of the relations between globalisation, the construction of gender relation and contexts. The interpretations of the case study are:

- Globalisation and time-space compression makes people embedded in an increasing number of both local and non-local social fields

- Despite increasing globalisation and time-space compression, gender construction remains rooted in generic gender narratives based on geographical embedded ideas, sayings and stories of «natural inequalities» between the sexes.
- Globalisation stretches social space and twist narrative in fishery communities in way that makes women leave the fishery sector. The outcome is a weakening of the position of women in the production system. Globalisation and time-space compression seems to challenge the idea of the strong fishery woman that has been essential in the construction of gender in coastal communities.

