Caught between the Orientalist-Occidentalist Polemic

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AS FEMINIST TRANSFORMATION OR NEOCOLONIAL SUBVERSION?

SUZANNE CLISBY
University of Hull, UK

ATHENA-MARIA ENDERSTEIN[1]
University of Hull, UK

Abstract --
Here we provide a critical reading of gender mainstreaming as a potential emancipatory force that has been co-opted within Orientalist-Occidentalist polemics. This remains a critical period in the "mainstreaming" debate, where feminist reappropriation is necessary to repoliticize the concept and reorient development sector focus from tokenistic inclusivity to social transformation. We consider two sides of the debate. In the first scenario, the requirement for gender mainstreaming in international development discourse has not only failed to address its original feminist goals, but has become (or remained) an extension of Orientalist, neocolonial projects to control and "civilize" developing economies. Here, a putative concern for gender equality in development is used as a means to distinguish between the modern, civilized *One* and the colonial, traditional *Other*. In the second scenario, gender mainstreaming is held up as all that these "othered" Occidentalist forces stand against; an exemplar of the inappropriate imposition of "Western" moralistic paradigms in non-Western contexts. Ultimately, the co-optation of gendered discourses in development through these Orientalist-Occidentalist polemics serves to obfuscate the continued *depoliticization* of mainstreaming. A critical question remains: can gender mainstreaming ever transcend this discursive impasse and reassert its feminist transformatory potential?
-- **Keywords**
co-optation, feminism, gender mainstreaming, Occidentalism, Orientalism

INTRODUCTION

In this article we bring together two tropes of inquiry: the feminist transformatory project of gender mainstreaming (GeM) and co-optation effected through Orientalist and Occidentalist polemics. In so doing we contribute to an understanding of how the macrostructure of international development policy discourse is open to contextual

mediation through these ideological paradigms in such a way that its original feminist goals are subverted.

The world is currently witnessing an incremental polarization of Orientalist and Occidentalist paradigms. The sound of Orientalist sabers rattling between the "Western, modern, civilized *One*" and the "underdeveloped, traditional *Other*" are ever voluble. Simultaneously, we see an Occidentalist resistance to the inappropriate imposition and retrogressive "decivilizing" corruption of "Western" moralistic paradigms in non-Western contexts.

Caught in this nexus, transformatory feminist projects can be co-opted in the struggle for epistemic and ideological dominance. We argue that in this process the *repoliticizing* of gendered discourses of development becomes a weapon in the armory of Orientalist-Occidentialist polemics. Critically, this serves to further obfuscate the sleight of hand at play – namely the continued *depoliticization* of gender mainstreaming, whereby it becomes hollowed of its original emancipatory purpose in Longwe's (1999) "patriarchal cooking pot" (63).

First, we sketch the camps of Orientalism and Occidentalism as theoretical perspectives. We then chart the trajectory of gender mainstreaming implemented in global development policy and processes, framed within the aforementioned ideological landscape. We consider the extent to which gender mainstreaming in some contexts has become an extension of Orientalist, neocolonial projects to control and "civilize" developing economies. Conversely, in others it is deemed a foreign, imperialistic imposition designed to undermine local culture. We argue that there is a

need for development sector focus to shift from tokenistic inclusivity of gendered discourse at the policy level to genuine "engendering" of development processes (Clisby 2005, 32; Mannell 2012, 426; Warren 2012, 514).

Writing from a material feminist, Gender and Development (GAD) standpoint, we use GeM as a case to explore how co-optation occurs through the conflicts between Orientalism and Occidentalism. In so doing we ask a critical question: if gender mainstreaming has been *co-opted*, *depoliticized* and *repoliticized*, can it transcend both the discursive polemic impasse and this proverbial three cup shuffle and reassert its feminist transformatory potential?

We consider the mechanisms, effects and processes of co-optation (see de Jong and Kimm this issue) through the lens of GeM, providing illustrations from two ends of its history. First we draw on anthropological research conducted by Clisby (2005) (coauthor of this article), in Bolivia in the late 1990s and early 2000s, at the beginning of the mainstreaming journey. Then, linking early concerns to more recent critiques, we draw on the experiences of Enderstein (coauthor of this article) in her work in South Africa in the 2000s, in addition to other empirical research that focuses on the realities of gender mainstreaming application in parts of Africa in recent years (Wendoh and Wallace 2005; Mannell 2012).

FRAMING ORIENTALISM, OCCIDENTALISM AND CO-OPTATION

Orientalism, defined by Edward Said in his 1978 seminal work, refers to a pervasive and prejudiced stereotyped Western representation of the "Other" of the "East,"

shaped by the attitudes of European imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These representations and the ontological and epistemological assumptions on which they are based were used to legitimize European colonial and neocolonial domination. This included the pernicious representation of the Eastern subject as "irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and – perhaps most importantly, prototypical" (Said, 1978, 207). Orientalism, replete with subordinating discourses and cultural essentialism, is an example of the pervasive binary discourses of the "West and the Rest." Orientalism is thus among the strategies of representation through which the "West" is consolidated as progressive and desirable, while the non-West is underdeveloped and undesirable. It is within the formation of this "West and Rest" discourse that we locate our understanding of Orientalism.

We refer to Occidentalism as a counterpoint to Orientalism, involving a caricaturing and oversimplification of Western modes of life and thought so as to exaggerate their contrast with those of non-Western peoples (Carrier 1995). Occidentalism incorporates a resistance to Orientalism, but is not simply oppositional. Rather, Occidentalism is relational, employing mechanisms used to create the subject status of the non-Westerner, and "practices and arrangements justified in and against the imagined idea of 'the West' in the non-West" (Ahiska 2003, 366). Importantly, these projections of the West as a threat to indigenous values are frequently deployed to perpetuate the hegemony of those in power. Coronil (1996) similarly articulates Occidentalism as the "Othering" of the West through the reflection of the "Othering" of the East, which is achieved through:

> . . . the ensemble of representational practices that participate in the production
>
> of conceptions of the world, which (1) separate the world's components into

bounded units; (2) disaggregate their relational histories; (3) turn difference into hierarchy; (4) naturalize these representations; and thus (5) intervene, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations. (57)

Hence, Orientalism and Occidentalism cannot be understood except in relation to one another, but neither can they be seen as simplistically oppositional. They are sociohistorically determined, relationally constituted discourses in constant evolution.

The action of co-optation – in this case of gender equality – effected through the reciprocally negotiated discourses of Orientalism and Occidentalism leads to a diffusion and resignification of emancipatory intent (Busse and Strang 2011, 4). As outlined by Coy and Heerden (2005), co-optation occurs incrementally, processes they identify as: engagement, appropriation, assimilation, transformation, regulation and response. This provides a useful analytical frame to articulate how goals of equality underpinning GeM have been diversely co-opted and mobilized in service both of Orientalist notions of Western civilizational supremacy and Occidentalist arguments against perceived Western imposed development models. For us, this process takes place primarily through *co-optation* (a laying claim to), *resignification* (changing the meaning thereof), *depoliticization* (of original emancipatory aims) and a *repoliticization* (to serve "Othering" discourses).

Here we draw on Von der Lippe and Väyrynen's (2011) definition of co-optation as "a common discursive, rhetorical and linguistic practice that absorbs and neutralizes the meanings of the original concepts to fit into the prevailing political priorities" (20). Returning to Coy and Heerden's (2005) stage model, appropriation, as a step in

the process of co-optation, should be understood as part of a process of *cultural appropriation*, defined as:

> . . . the use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture . . . it is involved in the assimilation and exploitation of marginalized and colonized cultures and in the survival of subordinated cultures and their resistance to dominant cultures. (Rogers 2006, 474)

However, we argue that through co-optation meanings go beyond being *assimilated* or indeed *neutralized*. Rather, they are *repoliticized* in ways that have far from neutral consequences. The dynamics of this process of co-optation, resignification, depoliticization, and repoliticization are rendered visible through the contestations of Orientalism and Occidentalism. Currently there are numerous examples of polemic forms of Orientalist-Occidentalist narratives in daily news reports and social media. Conflicts in the name of a putative "Islamic" extremism are the subject of daily reporting and debate. Examples from 2014 to 2016 include the ongoing actions of Islamic Jihadist group Boko Haram in northern Nigeria (Agbiboa 2014), the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris in January 2015, and the population migrations escaping conflicts leading to the "refugee crisis" in Europe (Aras and Mencutek 2015). In November 2015, the self-styled ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) claimed terrorist attacks in Paris as a direct response to French airstrikes in Syria (Doherty 2015). In retaliation, politicians such as US Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump and French far-right political leader Marine Le Pen have advocated barring entry to Muslim/migrants into their respective countries (Chak 2015). June 2016 saw the worst shooting in recent US history when US citizen and self-styled "Islamic

Soldier" executed a homophobic attack on a well-known gay nightclub in Orlando (Orlando gay nightclub shooting BBC 2016). These illustrations exemplify the ways in which complex, contested, multilayered dynamics of Orientalist and Occidentalist discourses influence media portrayal, public consciousness and political action.

The fields of social imagination that these Orientalist-Occidentalist discourses inhabit are located in the contemporary neocolonial global context. Neocolonialism refers to the continued domination of nations and peoples in the postcolonial context through economic and political structures of power, rather than through explicit territorial colonization. Thus, in this critical analysis development can be perceived as a form of colonialism by other means. The strategies of representation involved in the discourse of "West and Rest" constructed a conceptual and discursive infrastructure casting the non-Western "Other" as different and inferior and thus meriting colonization (Said 1978; Hall 1992). Although we now inhabit an allegedly "postcolonial" space, with all the problematics that this term invokes (McClintock 1995; Biccum 2002), this justification for colonial projects based on notions of civilizational supremacy laid the ground for neocolonial intervention based on similar principles (Crush 1995).

Neocolonialism is exemplified in liberal interventionist international development discourse, which echoes recurrent tropes of colonialism and Western civilizational supremacy characterized by: an oppositional geography of developed North and developing South (Hall 1992); the implied relationship between the affluent and emerging nations (Cooper and Packard 1997); notions of development as a healing, sanitizing, civilizing response to Third World "chaos" (Crush 1995 10); and a dehistoricized and decontextualized "traditional" in need of progression through

Western expertise (Crush 1995; Biccum 2002). The institutionalization of neocolonial development discourse and the circulation of knowledge about the "Third World" has thus enabled the "control of countries in increasingly detailed . . . and encompassing ways" (Escobar 1995, 47). We are thus able to "understand development as the increased governance of the Third World" (Du Bois 1991, 28) through the configuration of developing economies to the capitalist world market (Rist 2002; Ziai 2015). This is effected in part through the networks and production chains of transnational and multinational organizations of Western nations, and in part through international development agencies that provide aid and advice (Scholz 2010, 149). Civil society and NGOs located in the Global South, for example, commonly receive funding from institutions such as the United Nations, social democratic governments in the North and private foundations in capitalist core countries (Schild 1998, 105; Brenner 2003, 28; Jaggar 2005, 12). This engenders an underlying rhetoric and practice of development that relies on Orientalist conceptions of aiding the uncivilized to progress (McEwan 2001, 94). Occidentalist forces enter this nexus in resistance to the casting of the South as "backward, degenerate and primitive" (McEwan 2001, 94).

Although global divisions of economic and political power created by colonialism are still in place, the genealogies of colonialism and neocolonialism are diverse and discontinuous. Development is itself a contested practice, and those inhabiting the putatively *underdeveloped* space are not without agency (Biccum 2002; Ziai 2015). Development practice and discourse "for all its power to speak and to control the terms of speaking, has never been impervious to challenge or resistance, nor, in response, to reformulation and change" (Crush 1995, 6).

It is against this backdrop that a concern about the abuse of gendered discourses and claims for the protection of women's rights as a front for colonial/neocolonial politicking has been ongoing within postcolonial feminist writings at least since the 1980s (see Trinh 1989; Mohanty 1991; McClintock 1995; Narayan 1997). Notably Spivak (1988), in the context of British colonial rule in India, asserts that the British stance against the rite of *Sati* has been "understood as a case of 'White men saving brown women from brown men'" (297). Here she infers that this colonial opposition had little to do with a desire to secure women's human rights, but was, rather, a clear illustration of the use of such discourses to assert the colonial rulers as the "civilized one" as marked against the colonized "uncivilized other." In an extension of these postcolonial feminist critiques, we explore the extent to which gendered discourses in international development continue to be used within contemporary Orientalist-Occidentalist polemics.

This neocolonial international backdrop is pertinent because the implementation of GeM is mediated by the current sociohistorical milieu. The Orientalist and Occidentalist negotiations of meaning surrounding, for example, Islamic extremism, constitute the political sphere within which GeM is being applied. For us the critical point is that these highly *politicized* narratives can mask the *depoliticization* of gender discourses. In the extremes of these polemic debates between "One" and "Other" an almost Machiavellian political sleight of hand takes place, obfuscating a lack of "gender mainstreaming" and a lack of commitment to gender equality within the dominant patriarchal frameworks of *both* "One" and "Other."

FRAMING GENDER MAINSTREAMING (GeM)

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the United Nations held increasing numbers of international conferences that became critical forums at which feminist activists and academics lobbied for the incorporation of gender analysis, and of GAD, into development processes and institutions. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was a pivotal point at which a commitment to integrating a gender perspective in all forms of development and political processes was drawn up in the Platform for Action (PfA). This commitment subsequently became labeled *gender mainstreaming,* and it has become a major global strategy for ensuring the incorporation of gender perspectives in all areas of social development (United Nations 2008).

Gender mainstreaming has become ubiquitous within development discourse, and is now found in policy and programming across sectors, at national and international levels, from civil society at the grassroots level to international development agencies (Moser and Moser 2005; Smyth 2010). This includes bilateral institutions such as DFID, CIDA and Sida; international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Development Bank and Asian Development Bank; UN agencies such as UNIFEM, UNICEF and UNDP; international NGOs such as Hivos, ActionAid and Oxfam; and local civil society organizations across the world (Moser and Moser, 2005 12). In terms of state actors, since the late 1990s designated departments, ministries, workgroups and commissions have been established by governments in at least 140 countries to incorporate gender awareness at different levels (Beall 1998). Although there is heterogeneity in intra- and interorganizational interpretation and

application of GeM, an entire apparatus of gender analysis frameworks, gender infrastructure and specialists has emerged (Moser, Tornqvist, and Van Bronkhorst 1998; Sweetman 2012).

It is through the established spaces of this apparatus that GeM as a development discourse is produced, reproduced, critiqued, and co-opted, a process made "possible when a challenging group or social movement opposes the practices, initiatives, or policies of more powerful social organisations or political institutions" (Coy and Heedon 2003, 406). Concern about the co-optation of GeM has been the subject of feminist debate over the past two decades (see, for example, Mukhopadhyay 2004; Walby 2005; Wendoh and Wallace 2005; Subrahmanian 2007; Mannell 2012; and De Jong Forthcoming). The *Gender & Development* journal and the UK Gender and Development Network "Beyond Gender Mainstreaming Project" (2011-2012), for example, charted the trajectory of GeM, outlining its successes and failures (Sweetman 2012).

We have thus seen a proliferation of discussion of the ways in which gender has been incorporated into global development, a dialogue that became known as the "mainstreaming debate" (Pearson 2005, 166). On the one hand, recent research shows that GeM can be a valuable process with significant impact if it is supported by the right institutional infrastructure and a conducive policy context. Derbyshire (2012), for example, uses the case of Oxfam GB to illustrate how intraorganizational systems can support the integration of gender into policies and processes. On the other hand, the implementation of GeM is complex and often inconsistent, as revealed in Moser, Tornqvist, and Van Bronkhorst's (1998) review of the internal application of GeM

within the World Bank. More critically, one could argue that "[w]hile the intention of GeM is transformation, it has been chewed up and spit out by development bureaucracies in forms that feminists would barely recognize" (Rao 2006, 64).

Nevertheless, we can count as a success the very fact of the creation of governmental and organizational machineries around GeM that have become embedded within state bureaucracy, as these represent an unprecedented symbolic acknowledgement of the importance of women's rights (Højlund Madsen 2012). However, it is the indiscriminate and noncontextually specific application of GeM which has given rise to the greatest critique (Subrahmanian, 2007). Other concerns include the lack of conceptual clarity, charges of ethnocentrism, impracticability and infrastructural constraints surrounding GeM (Moser, Tornqvist, and Van Bronkhorst 1998; Apffel-Marglin and Sanchez 2002; Clisby 2005; Sweetman 2012).

A critical concern is about the ways in which GeM has been *depoliticized* from original feminist thinking and activism (Razavi and Miller 1995; Batliwala 2010; Smyth 2010; Sandler and Rao 2012), decoupled from the original "political nature of feminist transformative visions" with which it was conceived (Subrahmanian 2007, 114). This renders GeM vulnerable to *repoliticization* in the service of Orientalist and Occidentalist discourses, but, importantly, this co-optation can simultaneously obscure the continued and increasing *depoliticization* of gender and equality initiatives in development arenas in a negative cyclical dynamic.

MAINSTREAMING IN THE ORIENTALIST/OCCIDENTALIST POLEMIC

In some cases, then, GeM evidences the success of international feminist movements in placing gender on the development agenda, but this is by no means the whole story. GeM remains trapped, deployed both as an extension of Orientalist neocolonial discourses and repudiated through Occidentalist discourses, serving to "other" citizens of *both* "West" and "Rest." Thus, in this section we look at examples of development projects where these Occidentalist and Orientalist discourses are evoked in the implementation of mainstreaming.

First we consider an early example of mainstreaming in the late 1990s by revisiting Clisby's (2005) analysis of the process of GeM through the implementation and progress of a potentially radical political reform – the Law of Popular Participation (LPP) – rolled out across Bolivia in the late 1990s. The LPP was concerned with an extension of political participation, enhanced citizenship and the devolution of greater power and resources to local levels for community development work. It was also the first significant attempt by policymakers in Bolivia to "mainstream gender" into a national development initiative. This represents the engagement phase of co-optation, where the challenge of women's and feminist movements – resulting in the emergence of gender mainstreaming – exerted external pressure on US-aligned Bolivian politics to implement policy reforms that explicitly incorporated a gender awareness.

The LPP thus emerged from a very specific political context. It was the brainchild of then President Gonzalez Sánchez de Lozada, or "Goni" as he was popularly called. Goni was an American-educated Bolivian president, very much part of the Washington Consensus. That he spoke Spanish with an American accent was the

source of some mirth for ordinary Bolivians. His reforms, including the LPP and the gender mainstreaming therein were perceived – both positively and negatively – from the outset as "nonindigenous" impositions from the American West. This example, then, touches on the politics of implementation of GeM, and emerging concerns about GeM being caught within the Orientalist-Occidentalist polemic.

Based on her ethnographic study, Clisby argued that while dressed in the linguistic guise of GAD, the LPP largely "tagged women on" (WID style[2]) to the development process after the fact, so that the goal of gender mainstreaming was missed through a lack of effective and systematic GAD analysis of the preexisting structural barriers to gender equality. Thus, while the LPP was intended to formalize women's political equality of participation through legislative reform, it largely ignored the preexisting structures that deprived them of their political power in the first place. In this stage of co-optation, therefore, the state appropriated the language and techniques of GeM and legitimized it through institutionalization, albeit inadequately.

Moreover, in some cases the LPP actually served to displace women from the very site of their traditional forms of political activism – the community level. Community organization became a political arena within which, for the first time, there were genuine opportunities to control resources and have a direct structural relationship with, and recognition of, both municipal government and national political parties. In the worst case scenarios, rather than a valorization, increased visibility and enhancement of women's roles at these levels, men were able to appropriate these new, more powerful positions, and consign the remnants of community organizing and decision making to women with a concomitant reduction in their relative status.

Thus, the formalization of community-level politics channeled power *away* from some women's community-based organizations, minimizing the salience of women's issues in a continued process of co-optation. This process was then further cemented through the assimilation of women's organizing into the new political arena and through a continued regulation, standardization and legislation of community spaces (Coy and Heerden 2005, 424). This said, the LPP did introduce cracks into gendered barriers to women's formal participation into which women could and, in some cases, did manage to exert greater leverage. But the fact remained that the LPP could actually serve to reinscribe unequal gender relations through a series of biases and assumptions written into the law. As Clisby (2005) summarized:

> The LPP talked about gender mainstreaming but failed to add real power to the text by not providing adequate capacity-building in any comprehensive and sustainable way. It shied away from positive action measures, failed to incorporate a gendered analysis of differential gender roles and made assumptions about women's capabilities and their forms of community organizing that discriminated against women from the outset. (31)

Clisby's initial critique of GeM in Bolivia centered on the problems with the appropriation of a particular (feminist) discourse without the concomitant ideological and political transformation in gender inequalities underlying (feminist) GAD theory. However this critique also gave rise to her broader concern about perceptions of globalizing (Western) discourses: about what gender/equality means to different people in different contexts, not only vis-a-vis mainstreaming, but more generally within international development discourses. From the outset, the LPP was popularly perceived as a "nonindigenous" American (Western) development project

implemented by a US-raised and educated President. This led some indigenous Bolivian *ayllus* (indigenous forms of sociopolitical organization) and academics to critique the process and question the concept of "gender" in the local context. Apffel-Marglin and Sanchez (2002), for example, argued that:

> The term "gender" . . . has forced itself on many Andean peasant communities since the establishment in Bolivia of the Junior Ministry of Gender. . . . The official notion of gender cannot be mapped onto Andean's notions of what is male and female. Even though the official notion of gender is meant to emphasize the sociocultural variability of the content of gender, what creates the difficulty is its invariable anchoring in a universal unitary biological body, re-establishing thereby the whole of Western modernist dualist ontology. . . . The official notion of gender, institutionalized into laws by the government of Bolivia, remains . . . Eurocentric. (169)

In many cases the normativizing implied through the indiscriminate and universal application of GeM colludes with ethnocentric Orientalism where a posited moral high ground of gender and sexual rights discourse legitimates the infantilization of developing country populations (Cornwall 2006, 275). From a critical perspective, the implementation of GeM as envisioned by the UN becomes an expression of Orientalism. It is consistently a conditionality for aid, externally imposed through institutionalization in countries which are aid dependent. Donor representatives and aid agency consultants are employed to educate staff on the ground in establishing a "correct line on what is gender and how the term should be used" (Standing 2007,

83). This is despite the fact that the Beijing PfA lacks conceptual clarity about the application of GeM across diverse contexts (Moser 2005, 585).

This emphasis on bureaucratic frameworks not only erroneously frames bureaucracies as "engines of social and political transformation" (Standing 2007, 84), but also assumes a lack of education and independent agency on the part of, to again evoke Spivak (1988), the "subaltern" subject. Indeed the planning and implementation of projects is carried out by international agents, an Orientalist tendency further reflected in the mass production of GeM toolkits, checklists and training generated by the elites of the gender and development hegemony of Western provenance. These processes are conducted mostly in English and enforce the use of "foreign" terms (Wendoh and Wallace 2005, 71). An increasing technocratic approach and professionalization of international development abets a depoliticization of development processes and the co-optation of alternative or critical discourses (Kothari 2005). Thus emerges the contention that GeM represents the imposition of modernizing, Eurocentric world views that "reign to the exclusion of other frameworks" (Woodford-Berger 2004, 65).

Conversely, the very same language and infrastructure of GeM is contested through Occidentalist discourse, which positions gender equality, sexual rights, and by extension, GeM, as a representation of the "insidious creep of Westernization" (Cornwall 2006, 279). The application of GeM is replete with paradox, and although it was conceived with a transformatory agenda for gender equality it has become an Occidentalist symbol of the imposition of culturally inappropriate ideas and external Western ideology (Wendoh and Wallace 2005). The wholesale rejection of what have come to be perceived as neocolonial "Western" values can, however, have

consequences not necessarily welcomed by all. As Okoro, a Nigerian feminist activist and academic, states:

> For many years, Nigerians fought against Western interventions in Nigerian politics, so that the Nigerian government would be truly sovereign and make decisions free from imperialist hegemony. Following that ideology, International NGOs were welcome in Nigeria as long as they did not interfere in Nigerian politics. This stance prevailed and Nigerians were proud of Nigeria's sovereignty, until the government proposed to criminalize homosexuality in 2013 and we sought Western intervention and, to our shock, their intervention could not sway our government. Today, homosexual acts are punishable by law. (personal communication with Clisby, 15 December 2015)

Okoro explained her and her peer's dismay that an anti-imperialist, Occidentalist stance was used strategically by the Nigerian government to support extreme homophobia as "culturally" appropriate. This was not, however, what she and many Nigerians recognize as "their" culture.

In other cases, the donor conditionalities and checklists are perceived to undermine work with gender issues at a grassroots level because of a lack of cultural specificity (Warren 2012). The concept of "gender" can be seen as an imposed term that lacks local resonance. Indeed, "gender" is considered a "bad word" in some parts of the South African civil society sector because it is deemed tokenistic, obscuring the reality of other social inequalities (Mannell 2012, 431). The experience of co-author Enderstein between 2006 and 2012 illustrates this understanding. As a South African

trainer working on gender and diversity in an array of civil society environments in the South African context, Enderstein witnessed first hand the reception of the term and concept of "gender." Group reactions transmitted the sense that both the word and the concept were initially unwieldy and difficult to understand, used within NGO parlance and government processes but void of situational meaning. Thus, she found that the political potency of GeM was somewhat lost, opening up "gender" terminology to appropriation in service of nongender equality agendas. This was part of a larger process of co-optation in which state and civil society reforms to mainstream gender initiated an iterative chain of institutionalization and assimilation of women and feminist actors, which resulted in the dilution of their aims at best, and, at worst, rendered the "gender project" little more than empty rhetoric through regulation and standardization.

In research with NGOs across four African countries, Wendoh and Wallace (2005) also found that GeM was considered antithetical to African culture and concepts of gender. More seriously, the term became synonymous with an Orientalist, threatening, countercultural loss of power for men enforced by the foreign Beijing PfA (Wendoh and Wallace 2005). The word "gender" in English, untranslated, became for some NGO workers an example of what Occidentalist forces stand against.

FEMINISM AS IMPERIALISM?

The more practical issues concerning the implementation and outcomes of GeM lead us to ask less tangible questions about the extent to which feminism has been increasingly mobilized for imperial purposes (Bhatt 2008, 26). As Fraser (2013) has

argued, across the decades feminism has both combated capitalist imperialist processes and become inextricably entangled with them. We are concerned about how the discourse of GeM is itself caught in the Orientalist-Occidentalist polemic. Feminist/GAD concerns for greater equity, rights, opportunity, decision making and empowerment based not only on gender relations, between women and men, but along all unequal indices of power and constructions of difference – for example around sexuality, age, ability, ethnicity and religious beliefs – are (still) being appropriated and used as symbolic weapons of war between what have been characterized as opposing global ideologies.

These sets of oppositions are of course themselves chimera, built on highly unstable and contradictory foundations. There is no such thing as a unitary "West" and "Rest," or a Liberal (Christian) versus Fundamentalist (Islamic) positionality that can be neatly mapped onto a geographic and cultural trope. Moreover, the notion that Western industrialized nations occupy a moral high ground when it comes to, for example, promotion and understanding of gender equality, women's rights, tolerance (if not wholesale acceptance) of sexual diversity and how best to care for the environment is ironic in the context of global history and indeed current practice. This point is echoed by Woodhead (2008) in her work on secular privilege and religious disadvantage when she says that "it is the rankest hypocrisy when freedoms are invoked for the purpose of oppression by those who do not respect the rights of women and sexual minorities in the first place" (53).

Nevertheless, this symbolic power struggle is taking place on a range of fronts around putatively dominant "white liberal Western" discourses. As Butler (2008) has argued

along similar lines in the context of sexual politics and religion, ". . . hegemonic conceptions of progress define themselves over and against a pre-modern temporality that they produce for the purposes of their own self-legitimation" (2). The question for Butler is, politically, "Are all of us in the same time? And specifically, who has arrived in modernity and who has not?" (1). Just as for Butler sexual politics is embroiled in a "serious political contestation" (1), so too are other "liberal" discourses of environmentalism, secularism and gender equality, and within this power play over forms of symbolic capital the rules of the game are set in favor of some people and not others (Johnson and Clisby 2008). And as Butler concludes, with echoes of Spivak's (1988) concerns raised two decades earlier, "If freedom is one of the ideals we hope for, perhaps it will be important to start remembering how easily freedom can become deployed in the name of a state self-legitimation whose coercive force gives lie to its claim to safeguard humanity" (21).

Puar (2006, 2007, 2013) is a significant voice in these debates, developing a conceptual frame of "homonationalism" for understanding "how 'acceptance' and 'tolerance' for gay and lesbian subjects have become a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated" (Puar 2013, 336). By way of illustration, Puar talks about the critical academic commentary that has emerged surrounding Israel's gay-friendly public relations campaign, referred to as a prime example of pinkwashing, "or Israel's promotion of an LGBTQfriendly image to reframe the occupation of Palestine in terms of civilizational narratives measured by (sexual) modernity" (337).

So just as we have seen debates about sexuality and minority sexual rights used as a moral stick with which to beat the "Other" within the Orientalist-Occidentalist polemic, so we can see "gender" and GeM processes and policies being deployed in the same way. In both cases this illustrates how processes of co-optation rely on a rationale of civilizational supremacy.

CAN GENDER MAINSTREAMING TRANSCEND CO-OPTATION?

We have argued that we are faced with a paradoxical situation whereby the project of "mainstreaming" becomes simultaneously *repoliticized* when linked to cultural and political resources and economic conditionalities, with notions of, for example, "good governance," and *depoliticized* in the context of demand for mass produced toolkits and checklists (Standing 2007, 104).

But, on the one hand, is the process of GeM salvageable, worth supporting in the hope that we are going through a period of inevitable transition toward a more qualitative and positively transformative future? As Clisby (2005) found in the context of Bolivia, mainstreaming did create some spaces for transformative change in unequal gender relations and empowerment of indigenous minorities, creating, as a Minister for Gender Affairs claimed, ". . . 'a beautiful dynamic' in which many traditional relationships of ethnic and gender oppression have come to be questioned seriously for the first time" (25).

On the other hand, was the mainstreaming project doomed to fail from its inception because the very concept is flawed? The expectation that it is possible for GeM to be

the tool for the realization of feminist gender and development goals is trying to put a square peg into a round hole. The problem here is in the "relocation of the possibility of political transformation to an inherently non-transformatory context [because] [b]ureaucracies are not engines of social and political transformation. Indeed, as Orwell and Kafka remind us, we need to be ever-vigilant that they are not" (Standing, 2007 104–105). There are particular locations where gender concepts are especially prone to co-optation and require greater vigilance, where classifications of difference and the unequal power relations are most marked between "developed" and "developing" worlds (Kothari 2005, 426). These locations lie at the various points of interface of (mis)interpretation – from texts and toolkits produced by the policymaker and development planner, to the take-up and reinterpretation of these narratives by development project officers on the ground

Moreover, when complex ideological positions, with a whole history of development and debate, analysis and counter-analysis, become reduced to a bureaucratic checklist, the point is not only potentially lost but it can serve to reinscribe the same negative processes of unequal power relations the theory of GeM was trying to overcome.

These are some of the concerns about the uses and abuses of feminist discourses of GeM. This begs a broader critical question, namely, can we ever rescue, or shield, discourses of gender equality and feminist discourses of empowerment from appropriation and subsequent co-optation by competing struggles for dominance and power? For as long as we have had GeM as an aspect of feminist engagement with development, there have been concerns about political dilution and appropriation.

For Subrahmanian (2007), a good starting point in response to these dilemmas is to reduce expectations of GeM and "not to get caught up in debates about whether 'gender mainstreaming' is good or bad, a success or failure, but instead to focus more on breaking down these processes of change, understanding them and the context in which they are being played out" (120). We agree that we need to keep sight of the feminist transformatory intentions of GeM but not to expect the world. GeM never was a global panacea for all development ills, but it is the result of a long battle to bring gender and equality concerns to the conceptual table of development practice. It can provide an effective framework through which, when sensitively and intelligently adapted to local spaces and needs, a "beautiful dynamic" can be created.

In a wider sense, moving beyond the mainstreaming debate, one stance of resistance against the co-optation of feminist discourses in the symbolic contest between competing Orientalist-Occidentalist ideologies is in refusing to allow the polemic to stand, to break down of dichotomous chimeric positionalities between the neocolonial West and the colonized Rest. Of course this is not to forget that GAD itself is now part of the project of development, which as we have argued might always be complicit – however unwillingly – in Orientalisms. But one way we might attempt to refuse the polemic is through an insistence on a return to the feminist roots of GAD, the foremother of GeM, which privileges ethnographic sensitivity and contextual specificity. We need an ever more sophisticated focus on understandings of the *commonalities* as well as differences between people's experiences of gender and power from particular sociocultural, economic and geographical positions.

So, on the one hand we call for a vigilant resistance to the homogenizing Orientalist-Occidentalist discourses of the "West" and the "Rest." These discourses have never been accurate and are even less so now in our globalizing world, but ironically they seem to be increasingly ubiquitous or at least more overtly voluble. On the other hand we call for greater attention to feminist reflexivity. We need a conscious self-awareness of our own implicated positionalities as feminists, development theorists, practitioners and policymakers in the face of Orientalisms and Occidentalisms, not as a rod for pointless self-flagellation, but rather as a way of being overtly conscious of our own place within and perhaps inevitable complicity with these debates as situated knowers and socioculturally positioned subjects.

We end by again drawing attention to the sleight of hand three-cup shuffle we are dealing with here, where co-optation is key. The "One" makes Orientalist claims for the promotion of GeM and equality of women's rights a marker of their civilization and an indication of a lack of modernity of the "Other." Occidentalist counter-narratives evoke "gender" as an exemplar of the ills of Western secularization. All the while, gender discourses within development are being repoliticized, becoming political pawns in a dangerous game. As part of this co-optation process they are simultaneously depoliticized, as their feminist transformatory foundations *still* "evaporate" in Longwe's (1999) "patriarchal cooking pot" (63), but one that is highly charged within current Occidentalist-Orientalist polemic positionings. This serves to obfuscate a lack of genuine commitment to equality within the dominant patriarchal frameworks of *both* "One" and "Other." So, in answer to our question: can gender mainstreaming escape co-optation? Possibly not, but to even begin to attempt to

transcend this Machiavellian circus and reassert the feminist foundations of mainstreaming we must first be aware of what we are dealing with.

Suzanne Clisby

School of Social Sciences

University of Hull

Cottingham Road

Hull, HU6 7RX, UK

Email: s.m.clisby@hull.ac.uk

Athena-Maria Enderstein

School of Social Sciences

University of Hull

Cottingham Road

Hull, HU6 7RX, UK

Email: aenderstein@women.it

[1] This work has been co-authored, with equal contributions from both collaborators at each stage of writing.

[2] Women in Development (WID) is an approach employed widely in the development sector emerging in the 1970s and 1980s which recognized the absence of women in development planning as problematic. The integration of women was intended to make the development process more efficient, but critiques of WID include the charge of "tagging women on" rather than changing the flawed development paradigm itself (see, for example, Momsen 2010).

Notes on Contributors

Suzanne Clisby is a senior lecturer, director of postgraduate Gender Studies at the University of Hull and P.I. of the Horizon 2020 GRACE Project. She is an editor of the Journal of Gender Studies and her research focuses on feminisms, gender, identity and development in UK and global contexts. She has published across a range of areas within gender, policy and development arenas, most recently a monograph focusing on links between gendering women's identities and mental wellbeing.

Athena-Maria Enderstein is a Research Fellow at Associazione Orlando in Italy working on the Horizon 2020 GRACE Project and pursuing a PhD at the University of Hull in the UK. Her current work focuses on translating gender expertise and key competencies into innovative cultural practices for equality in Europe. She is interested in gender transformative approaches, emergent technologies in feminist research, masculinities and transnational equality processes.

Acknowledgements

References

Agbiboa, D. E. 2014. "Peace at Dagger Drawn? Boko Haram and the State of Emergency in Nigeria." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37: 41–67. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.853602.

Ahiska, M. 2003. "Occidentalism: The Historical Fantasy of the Modern." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 (2-3): 351–379. doi:10.1215/00382876-102-2-3-351.

Aras, N. E., and Z. S. Mencutek. 2015. "The International Migration and Foreign Policy Nexus: The Case of Syrian Refugee Crisis and Turkey." *Migration Letters* 12 (3): 193–208.

Apffel-Marglin, F., and L. Sanchez. 2002. "Developmentalist Feminism and Neo-Colonialism in Andean Communities." In *Feminist Post-Development Thought: Rethinking Modernity, Post-Colonialism and Representation*, edited by K. Saunders, 159–179. London: Zed Books.

Batliwala, S. 2010. "Taking the Power Out of Empowerment – an Experiential Account." In *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*, edited by A. Cornwall, and D. Eade, 111–122. Oxford: Oxfam.

"Orlando Gay Nightclub Shooting: Who Was Omar Mateen?" *BBC News*, June 14. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-36513468.

Beall, J. 1998. "Trickle- Down or Rising Tide? Lessons on Mainstreaming Gender Policy from Columbia and South Africa." *Social Policy & Administration* 32 (5): 513–534. doi:10.1111/1467-9515.00112.

Bhatt, C. 2008. "The Times of Movements: a Response." *The British Journal of Sociology* 59 (1): 25V33. doi:10.1111/j.1468-4446.2007.00177.x.

Biccum, A. R. 2002. "Interrupting the Discourse of Development: On a Collision Course with Postcolonial Theory." *Culture, Theory and Critique* 43 (1): 33–50. doi:10.1080/14735780210162094.

Brenner, J. 2003. "Transnational Feminism and the Struggle for Global Justice." *New Politics* 9 (2): 26–34.

Busse, M., and V. Strang. 2011. "Introduction: Ownership and Appropriation." In *Ownership and Appropriation*, edited by V. Strang, and M. Busse, 1–19. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Butler, J. 2008. "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time." *The British Journal of Sociology* 59 (1): 1–21. doi:10.1111/j.1468-4446.2007.00176.x.

Carrier, J. 1995. *Occidentalism: Images of the West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chak, A. 2015. "Trump v. Le Penn: in their own words" *BBC News*, December 12. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35075439.

Clisby, S. 2005. "Gender Mainstreaming or Just More Male-Streaming? Experiences of Popular Participation in Bolivia." *Gender and Development* 13 (2): 23–35. doi:10.1080/13552070512331332284.

Cooper, F., and R. Packard, eds. 1997. *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Cornwall, A. 2006. "Marginalisation by Sexuality: Report of an IDS Workshop." *Gender & Development* 14 (2): 273–289. doi:10.1080/13552070600747305.

Coronil, F. 1996. "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorial Categories." *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1): 51–87. doi:http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/51234.

Coy, P. G., and T. Hedeen. 2005. "A Stage Model of Social Movement Co-Optation: Community Mediation in the United States." *The Sociological Quarterly* 46: 405–435.

Crush, J. 1995. *Power of Development*. London: Routledge.

Derbyshire, H. 2012. "Gender Mainstreaming: Recognizing and Building on Progress. Views from the UK Gender and Development Network." *Gender & Development* 20 (3): 405–422. doi:10.1080/13552074.2012.731750.

De Jong, S. Forthcoming. "Mainstream(ing) Has Never Run Clean, Perhaps Never Can: Gender in the Main/Stream of Development." In *The Palgrave Handbook on*

Gender and Development Handbook: Critical Engagements in Feminist Theory and Practice, edited by W. Harcourt. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

DuBois, M. 1991. "The Governance of the Third World: A Foucauldian Perspective on Power Relations in Development" *Alternatives* 16 (1): 1–30.

Escobar, A. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Fraser, N. 2013. "How Feminism became Capitalism's Handmaiden - and How to Reclaim It." *The Guardian*. March 16.
http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/14/feminism-capitalist-handmaiden-neoliberal.

Doherty, B. 2015. "France Launches 'Massive' Airstrike on Isis Stronghold of Raqqa." *The Guardian*, November 16.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/16/france-launches-massive-airstrike-on-isis-stronghold-in-syria-after-paris-attack.

Hall, S. 1992. "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power." In *Formations of Modernity,* edited S. Hall, and B. Gieben, 275–331. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Højlund Madsen, D. 2012. "Mainstreaming from Beijing to Ghana – The Role of the Women's Movement in Ghana." *Gender & Development* 20 (3): 573–584.
doi:10.1080/13552074.2012.731746.

Jaggar, A. 2005. "Civil Society, State and the Global Order." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7 (1): 3–25. doi:10.1093/0195175344.003.0006.

Johnson, M., and S. Clisby. 2008. "Both One and the Other: Environmental Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Hybridity." *Nature and Culture* 3 (1): 63–81. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.3167/nc.2008.030105.

Kothari, U. 2005. *A Radical History of Development Studies: Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies*. London: Zed Books.

Longwe, S. H. 1999. "The Evaporation of Government Policies in the Patriarchal Cooking Pot." In *Development with Women*, edited by D. Eade, 63–76. Oxford: Oxfam.

Mannell, J. 2012. "'It's Just Been Such a Horrible Experience.' Perceptions of Gender Mainstreaming by Practitioners in South African Organizations." *Gender & Development* 20 (3): 423–434. doi:10.1080/13552074.2012.731753.

McClintock, A. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. London: Routledge

McEwan, C. 2001. "Postcolonialism, Feminism and Development: Intersections and Dilemmas" *Progress in Development Studies*, 1 (2):93–111. doi:10.1177/146499340100100201.

Mohanty, C. T. 1991. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse." In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,* edited by C. T. Mohanty, A. Russo, and L. Torres, 51–80. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Momsen, J. 2010. *Gender and Development*. London: Routledge.

Moser, C. 2005. "Has Gender Mainstreaming Failed?" *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7 (4): 576–590. doi:10.1080/14616740500284573.

Moser, C., and A. Moser. 2005. "Gender Mainstreaming Since Beijing: A Review of Success and Limitations in International Institutions." *Gender & Development* 13 (2): 11–22. doi:10.1080/13552070512331332283.

Moser, C., A. Tornqvist, and B. Van Bronkhorst. 1998. *Mainstreaming Gender and Development in the World Bank: Progress and Recommendations*. Washington, DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Mukhopadhyay, M. 2004. "Mainstreaming Gender or 'Streaming' Gender Away: Feminist Marooned in the Development Business." *IDS Bulletin* 35 (4): 95–103.

Narayan, U. 1997. *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminism*. New York: Routledge.

Pearson, R. 2005. "The Rise and Rise of Gender Development." In *A Radical History of Development Studies*, edited by U. Kothari, 157–179. London: Zed Books.

Puar, J. 2006. "Mapping US Homonormativities." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13 (1): 67–88. doi:10.1080/09663690500531014.

Puar, J. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Puar, J. 2013. "Rethinking Homonationalism." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45: 336–339. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S002074381300007X.

Rist, G. 2002. *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*. London: Zed Books.

Rao, A. 2006. "Making Institutions Work for Women." *Development* 49 (1): 63–7. doi:10.1057/palgrave.development.1100207.

Razavi, S., and C. Miller. 1995. *From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse.* Occasional Paper 1. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. http://unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/ab82a6805797760f80256b4f005da1ab/d9c3fca78d3db32e80256b67005b6ab5/$FILE/opb1.pdf.

Rogers, R. 2006. "From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation" *Communication Theory* 16 (4): 474–503. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00277.x

Said, E. W. 1978. *Orientalism.* London: Penguin.

Sandler, J., and A. Rao. 2012. "The Elephant in the Room and the Dragons at the Gate: Strategising for Gender Equality in the 21st Century." *Gender & Development* 20 (3): 547–562.

Scholz, S. J. 2010. *Feminism*. Oxford: One World Publications.

Schild, V. 1998. "New Subjects of Rights? Women's Movements and the Construction of Citizenship in the 'New Democracies'." In *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures,* edited by S. E. Alvarez, E. Dagnino, and A. Escobar, 93–116. Boulder: Westview Press.

Smyth, I. 2010. "Talking of Gender: Words and Meanings in Development Organisations." In *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*, edited by A. Cornwall, and D. Eade. 143–151. Oxford: Oxfam.

Spivak, G. C. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by C. Nelson, and L. Grossberg, 271–313. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.

Standing, H. 2007. "Gender, Myth and Fable: the Perils of Mainstreaming in Sector Bureaucracies." In *Feminisms, Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges in Development,* edited by A. Cornwall, E. Harrison, and A. Whitehead, 101–111. London: Zed Books.

Sweetman, C. 2012. "Introduction." *Gender & Development* 20 (3): 389–403. doi:10.1080/13552074.2012.743266.

Subrahmanian, R. 2007. "Making Sense of Gender in Shifting Institutional Contexts: Some Reflections on Gender Mainstreaming." In *Feminisms, Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges in Development,* edited by A. Cornwall, E. Harrison, and A. Whitehead, 112–121. London: Zed Books.

Trinh, M. T. T. 1989. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

United Nations. 2008. "Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into All Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System." ECOSOC Resolution 2008/34. http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2008/resolution%202008-34.pdf.

Von der Lippe, B. and T. Väyrnen. 2011. "Co-Opting Feminist Voices for the War on Terror: Laura Bush Meets Nordic Feminism." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 18 (1): 19–33. doi:10.1177/1350506810386082.

Warren, H. 2012. "'. . . the Donor Community, They Are Not Sensitised about These Kind of Gender Things': Incorporating 'Gender' into the Work of a Ghanaian NGO." *Gender & Development* 20 (3): 505–516. doi:10.1080/13552074.2012.731748.

Walby, S. 2005 "Introduction: Comparative Gender Mainstreaming in a Global Era." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7 (4): 453–470.

Wendoh, S. and T. Wallace. 2005. "Re-Thinking Gender Mainstreaming in African NGOs and Communities." *Gender & Development* 13 (2): 70–79. doi:10.1080/13552070512331332288.

Woodford-Berger, P. 2004. "Gender Mainstreaming: What Is It About and Should We Continue Doing It?" *Repositioning Feminisms in Development IDS Bulletin* 35 (4): 65–72. doi:10.1111/j.1759-5436.2004.tb00157.x.

Woodhead, L. 2008. "Secular Privilege, Religious Disadvantage." *The British Journal of Sociology* 59 (1): 54–58. doi:10.1111/j.1468-4446.2007.00181.x.

Ziai, A. 2015. *Development Discourse and Global History: From Colonialism to the Sustainable Development Goals*. New York: Routledge.