Co-option or Transformation? Women's and Gender Studies Worldwide
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Introduction
The establishment of Women's or Gender Studies¹ as a world-wide phenomenon in higher education - a world-wide phenomenon here meaning that many countries around the world have Women's or Gender Studies programs in higher education - took shape from the 1970s onwards. Often thought of as western², it is worth noting that whilst the Department of Feminist Studies at Odense University in Denmark was established in 1981, for example, and Women's Studies at the Australian National University began in 1976, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in the Lebanon was actually founded in 1973³. The point is that the institutionalization of Women's Studies in higher education has occurred over a period of some thirty years, but its geochronology is not as straightforward as we might think. The politics of location was and remains critical here. In general, it is the case that Women's Studies was established as an institutionalized subject in higher education in western countries in particular during the 1980s, and that the institutionalization of Women's Studies in Eastern European countries and in Africa, for example, was more a phenomenon of the late 1980s and the 1990s, associated respectively with the end of communism on the one hand, and the rise of self-determination and nationalism in the so-called post-colonial countries, on the other. Thus the Ahmad University for Women's Studies Unit in the Sudan was established in 1989, the Moscow Centre for Gender Studies was founded in 1990, the Department of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University in Uganda in 1991, the Centre for Gender and Development Studies in the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, in 1993, the Gender and Women's Studies graduate program of the Middle East Technical University in Turkey was set up in 1994, the Center for Gender Studies the Kharkov Center for Gender Studies in the Ukraine in 1994, and the first graduate program in Women's Studies in Japan at Jissai International University in 1996. Women's Studies in higher education has thus proliferated from being found predominantly in western countries to becoming institutionalized in Eastern European, African and Asian countries, and certainly during the early to mid-1990s the subject enjoyed a hitherto unprecedented growth world-wide.
How global is sisterhood?

If one correlates this geochronology with educational and research content, with the curricula that the programs offer and the research projects they undertake, it becomes evident that on one level sisterhood is global, but on another it is intensely local and regional. The globality of sisterhood is made evident whenever we read world statistics such as those published by the United Nations or by the World Bank (WISTAT). On their website, the Sisterhood is Global Institute in Montreal, Canada, for instance, regularly reproduce certain statistics which are selected to highlight areas of concern for and about women. Grouped together under headings such as 'Women and Violence', 'Women and Work', 'Women and Education', 'Women, Health and Family', and 'Women and Money', these statistics in many ways replicate the kinds of titles that courses within Women's Studies had when they first became institutionalized, and continue to have to this day. The focus of these statistics on what are some of the most important issues for women, the world over, issues such as women and the economy, women in education, women's health etc., reinforce the notion of the globality of sisterhood. At the same time, the statistics as figures both conflate and disaggregate the world's women into various forms of affliction, suggesting simultaneously that women's deprivation, exclusion, and degradation is universal and that this takes particular and localized forms. If we look at the statistics on 'Women and Violence' for instance, both general pronouncements such as 'every day 6000 girls are genitally mutilated' and country- or continent-specific statements are made: 'In Russia, half of all murder victims are women killed by their male partners.' These geo-specific statements may articulate a country-specific problem, they may be intended to speak to specific audiences about their own or another's country, or they may simply 'other' the problem, so that the 5000 brides who are murdered or commit suicide because their marriage dowries are considered inadequate are an issue for India, rather than for the rest of the world. Hurrying as these statistics are, taken altogether they serve to indicate the structural inequalities which position women as victims, as deprived of agency and subjectivity, as vulnerable and unaccounted for in the public sphere, and as second-class citizens of the world. Sisterhood is here constructed as global in its suffering and in its oppression which may take different forms in diverse locations but is universal in its gender specificity—this is the penultimate message of these statistics.

However, the implication of a universally subjugated sisterhood as manifesting an 'even spread' of this victimization which global statistics invite with statements such as '70% of the world's illiterates are women', is, as we all know, misplaced, and questions need to be asked about where and under what circumstances such literacy, for example, occurs. It is at this point that differences among women become apparent. In Robin Morgan's wonderful and illuminating volume *Sisterhood is Global* of 1984, the demographic information about Australia, for example, was divided at certain points into information about Euroustralians and Aborigines. The literacy rate among women was declared to be 100%, but with the bracketed postfix ('Eurostalian'). The literacy rate among Aborigine women was thus revealed as unknown but simultaneously established as different from that of Eurostalian women. Inequality, then, is not evenly spread, global statistics on women may index common areas of concern we as women have but they also, more importantly, frequently mask the differences in circumstance under which women exist.

Institutionalizing Women's Studies

These differences to some extent shape the curricula and research projects of Women's Studies programs in universities around the world today. But only to some extent. When one reads the details of Women's or Gender Studies curricula from institutions around the world, it is surprising to note the degree of surface similarity across them. Thus gender research methodologies, women and change, gender and development, women, family and society, indeed women and culture, are commonly taught from the Sudan, through the Asian Institute of Technology, to Women's Studies courses in the UK. However, that surface similarity which also suggests a certain globalization of knowledge, obscures the specificities of the very real differences which exist among programs, and the politics of knowledge production and dissemination which underlie these. These differences are impossible to enumerate here but for every country they are the result of factors such as

- the country's political history;
- its educational history and intellectual traditions;
- its infrastructural bases and the politics of those bases;
- its geographical location;
- its international positioning.
Let me put some detail on these factors. It is noticeable, for example, that in many Protestant countries in Europe with no recent history of fascism, Women's Studies evolved from disciplines such as sociology and the arts. This in the UK, for instance, an important site for the beginnings of institutionalized Women's Studies was the 1974 British Sociological Association Conference on Sexual Divisions where women at the meeting organized a separate women's caucus, fiercely debating whether or not Women's Studies should become a separate discipline within universities or should remain an extra-mural and autonomous critique of patriarchal structures and institutions such as universities. This debate, involving many - though not exclusively - women who had a history of involvement in left-wing socialist policies, finally resulted in optional Women's Studies courses for final-year undergraduate students of sociology beginning in 1974-5. In contrast to this role of Women's Studies in sociology and in the arts in the UK, mirrored in some respects in a similar location of Women's Studies in the Scandinavian countries, institutionalized Women's Studies is many Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Portugal, and Italy, Catholic countries with recent histories of fascism, and/or right-wing and/or military dictatorships, emerged from the discipline of history, possibly because these countries have recently had to re-write their histories and history as a discipline thus constitutes a site of radicalism.

In several East European countries such as Slovenia, the Ukraine, etc. one of the key disciplines for the emergence of institutionalized Women's Studies has been philosophy, a discipline very much marginalized within Women's Studies as it occurs in African countries or, for that matter, in the UK. In all these instances, the political and socio-cultural history of the country plays a vital role in determining the disciplinary base from which Women's Studies has emerged, and the particular emphasis its curricula project.

Additionally, if one compares the Scandinavian, Benelux, and Mediterranean countries in terms of the extent to which Women's Studies is institutionalized, it becomes clear that the so-called liberal democratic states are more likely to support Women's Studies as part of their equality agenda than are the more overtly patriarchal states which operate systems of patronage in hierarchized structures based on pre-eminence rather than merit. To become a professor in Italy, for instance, you have to sit a public exam but you cannot self-nominate to sit that exam; you have to be nominated - an easy way to bypass academics whose focus does not support hegemonic disciplines and positions. It is no wonder then, that feminism and the women's movement in Italy have only just begun to become institutionalized within the academy, and that most of the feminist work there has been carried out outside higher education institutions.

The degrees of institutionalization of Women's Studies around the world are thus very variable, and not as determined as one might imagine by how advanced or economically privileged individual countries might be. Delhi, for instance, has a long-standing, well-established Women's Studies Centre whereas in Japan Women's Studies is a comparatively recent phenomenon. In Portugal the only Women's Studies degree is two years old and run by the Portuguese Open University, and whilst one might argue that short lecture courses or modules on feminist topics as well as feminist research in general have proliferated in European universities, the ability to convert this activity into full-fledged, financially supported degrees and departments has been very limited indeed. In the UK which is one of the countries with a very high level of institutionalization of Women's Studies, meaning that most universities offer degrees in the subject, for example, the Higher Education Funding Council has not recognized Women's Studies as a discipline with the consequence that for public assessment and funding purposes the subject does not exist. Since no income stream, as it is called, is directly associated with Women's Studies, universities have very little incentive to support Women's Studies degrees. Few staff are appointed who work solely in Women's Studies. In consequence promotion is virtually impossible and through the years we have in fact seen a decline in the subject. There are now fewer professors of Women's or Gender Studies in the UK than there were even in the mid-1990s, the only named department, at Roehampton, is seeing cut its last students, courses are closing down, and student numbers are decreasing.
therefore experiencing something of a mid-life crisis. And perhaps in consequence of this the subject in those countries has become more abstracted, has experienced what one might describe as the 'cultural turn'. Denmark is a good example here. At present Denmark is experiencing a significant drain of senior feminist academics because despite its long-standing institutionalization of Women's Studies in universities such as Aalborg and Aarhus, it has not established full professorships in the discipline. Women such as Nina Lykke, and she is not the only one, therefore migrate from Denmark to Sweden or Norway to become Women's Studies professors. At the same time there is a marked preoccupation in the Women's Studies curricula in Denmark with 'culture and technology', cyber-space and Lara Croft, the virtual world as new frontier. No similar curricular preoccupation can be found in African Women's Studies courses I've looked at or in those of many other European countries where Women's Studies is just beginning. One interesting aspect of this development is that the work on gender and cyber technologies/cyber-space is remarkably free of visceral debates about political agendas. Virtual reality seems to exist as sets of identifiable, subdividable communities, chat rooms and websites, if you like, with which feminist researchers engage in what I would describe as a curiously depoliticized way. One might argue with those working in the field of radical democracy (e.g. Mouffe; Alexander and Mohanty) that we no longer believe in the nation state and in the political efficacy of the state apparatus, that therefore certain kinds of political engagement have become obsolete, and need to be re-thought. But, will that be achieved through the cultural turn?

The sites of Women’s Studies
Research into women's issues is without doubt a global phenomenon, occurring both within universities and in so-called non-governamental organizations (NGOs). Many countries which have not institutionalized Women’s Studies as named degree routes in the academy - and that includes countries such as Portugal, Greece, and Italy where there are few courses in Women’s Studies offered in universities - nonetheless have well-established women’s research and documentation centres, and long traditions of undertaking research on women’s issues. Women's Studies as a taught, academic discipline exists in three kinds of site, sites here referring to the kind of institution or organization in which Women's Studies takes place. The three sites are:

• universities

knowledge, and this is the real achievement of the institutionalization of Women's Studies.

Activism and the academy
In many countries which have institutionalized Women's Studies there was a preceding grassroots movement of feminist activism trying to achieve change for women. Indeed, one might argue that Women's Studies as an academic discipline does not exist where there is no grassroots movement and that in most countries today it is more likely that there are non-academic women’s organizations than academic courses in Women’s Studies. The relationship between activism and the academy is therefore of great importance but it has also been a fraught one (see Morley and Walsh 1995; Malina and Maskin-Prothero 1998; Griffin and Braidotti 2002). Several changes have occurred during the last two decades which have affected both activist organizations and the academy in similar ways. These include changes in

• the impact of global organizations on activism and the academy;
• the role of the nation state in determining citizens' lives;
• the mainstreaming of activism and the academy as part of the redistribution of responsibilities between various governmental and civil actors and agencies.

In many of the countries which have long histories of institutionalization of Women's Studies, the subject has become divorced to significant degrees from the grassroots movement, projecting increasingly what one might describe as the equivalent of a liberal arts agenda, devoid or depleted of political content, and with little sense of bringing about any change or achieving transformations for women. That absence of a transformative politics underlying the classroom agenda of Women's Studies is what drove Alexander, Mohanty and others in 1988 to set up the 'Women of Color Institute for Radical Research and Action' (1997), intense upon, 'collaborating on the transformation of a feminist politics and to establish an autonomous institution that would serve women committed to social justice and revolutionary praxis' (xiii). One might argue that the realities which prompted women to organize themselves in the 1960s and 1970s in first instance have not significantly changed during the thirty years in which organized activism and teaching has occurred and that a certain disillusionment has set in for all concerned. In some countries with long histories of integration of Women's Studies into universities, Women's Studies is perhaps
- non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- and organizations that are simultaneously part of an educational establishment such as a university and are also a non-governmental organization.

This last phenomenon is rare but it does occur. These three sites, universities, NGOs, and mixed-economy organizations which are part NGO, part university, have a certain geopolitical distribution, manifesting, broadly speaking, and speaking from a northern European perspective - a north-south as well as an east-west divide, a divide which holds true both for Europe as the micro level, and for the world as the macro level of gender training. Whilst it is more common for Women’s Studies to be taught at degree level in universities in northern and western countries, it is equally common for Women’s Studies to be taught at degree level in NGOs or mixed-economy organizations in southern and eastern countries. Thus in the UK, in the Netherlands, and in the Scandinavian countries, but also in the United States and - and here the geopolitical divide breaks down - in countries which have late capitalist economies such as Australia, New Zealand and Japan, Women’s Studies is more likely to be taught in universities than in NGOs. As I shall indicate, the type of organization in which Women’s Studies is taught reflects not only the infrastructural, educational, and geopolitical historicity of the country but also articulates the kind of Women’s Studies program one is likely to find within it. There is, therefore, an important correlation between the kind of organization within which Women’s Studies is taught and the kind of Women’s Studies program that is offered.

The location and the content of Women’s Studies programs intersects significantly with changes in the gender agenda in global politics. Thus the emergence of Women’s Studies in higher education curricula constituted both a strategic initiative and a strategic response to the emergence of an increasingly global recognition of the importance of gender issues in world economics and world politics, ‘gender issues’ referring in the main to the socio-cultural, political and economic conditions under which women are sexed, biological, material and cultural entities exist. Under the banners of ‘access’ and ‘widening participation’ governments and international organizations sought to harness women’s productive potential. Cynically speaking, one might argue that the recognition that women’s exclusion from political participation and from the formal economic sector was unproductive, and specifically unproductive of change on a variety of levels, led to the establishment, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, of national and international policies which were designed to facilitate women’s access to resources and participation in economic and political change. These policies typically articulated the importance of gender in political and economic contexts, and included gender as a key criterion for incorporation into legal frameworks, financial aid programs, and policy-making. Their basis in capitalist democracies did not easily lend itself to application in the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe, for example, in which women had enjoyed greater equality under the law, in terms of welfare provision, and in the formal labour economy than they did subsequent to the collapse of those regimes. Nonetheless, in general it is true to say that there was an import of gender into global politics and policy-making in the 1980s and 1990s which resulted in the widening of participation and access for women in political and economic terms at a world-wide level.

‘Widening participation’ and ‘access’ as concepts and as lived realities have, of course, been the objects of vigorous feminist critiques which raised questions such as “On whose terms is participation for women expanded?” and viewed the answer as articulating the self-subjugation, recolonization and co-option which has also dogged the integration of Women’s Studies into the academy. One key influence in the widening of participation were global organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, all of whom from the mid-1970s onwards began to produce what might be termed pro-gender interventions, resulting by the mid-1990s in, for example, the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Report of 1995 which featured the ‘Gender Disparity Index’ and the ‘Gender Empowerment Measure’, the United Nations’ report The World’s Women: Trends and Statistics (1995), the World Bank’s analytical framework entitled Toward Gender Equality: The Role of Public Policy, also of 1995, and, of course, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. As an aside, it is perhaps worth noting that the word ‘feminist’ had, by that time, virtually disappeared; agendas were now ‘gendered’, with ‘gender’ seeming to be or to become the acceptable, financially supportable, indeed mainstream-able face of what had been feminism, since ‘gender’ provided an apparently neutral term that could take the place of the ideologically and politically much more overtly implicated word ‘feminist’.
With this background in mind, I want to return to the issue of the inter-relationship between the kind of organization in which Women's Studies is taught and the kind of programme that is offered. My claim is that where Women's Studies is taught, exclusively or predominantly in universities, that is in the north-western parts of Europe and of the world, the subject—partly due to the degree of its institutionalization within universities and partly due to the length of its institutional history—has become increasingly divorced from grassroots organizations, policy-making, and agendas for change, at the same time that the NGOs which have established themselves in these countries have become increasingly professionalized and bound into service-provision rather than campaigning (see Griffin (1995)) so that today we have two types of female, no longer always feminist, professionals: the Women's Studies academic, and the female professional working in the voluntary and private sector, servicing those needs of women and local communities which the declining welfare state is no longer willing or able to provide for, or never did provide for in the first place. These two types of female professionals in many instances reside in parallel rather than in interconnected universes, their agendas driven more directly by the funding bodies which support their activities than by feminist agendas of transformation. The absence of any form of collectivism which is visible in this parallel-universe world, is indicated in the plurals which dominate the teaching programmes, where 'sexuality', 'identities', 'technologies', 'cultures' and 'minorities' bespeak the pluralism of fragmentation, the individualism of late capitalism, and the dissipation of political energy. The challenge, it is clear, remains how to retain a political impetus despite institutionalization. It is a challenge which universities in the north-western parts of Europe and of the world find hard to meet.

Women's Studies as an education for change agents

The situation is rather different when one analyses the taught Women's Studies programs that are offered by NGOs, universities, and mixed-economy institutions in the south, south-western, and south-eastern parts of the world. Here 'sexuality', 'identity', and other postmodern concepts feature much less prominently, if at all. A different kind of instrumentality prevails. Instead, we have mission statements and aims and objectives which relate directly to agendas for change that are meant to be enacted rather than merely contemplated. One of these agendas is the education at tertiary level and professionalization of women, and their integration into the administrative middle classes. The Asian Institute of Technology (2001) for instance has as two of its objectives 'to facilitate increased participation of Asian women in professions in science, technology, environment and resource management' and 'to gain for women access to the status and authority in the larger society that participation in technological planning and decision-making brings.' This is about the education of a new ruling elite of professionals. Whilst one may well ask—apart from countries such as many Eastern European ones but also China, for instance, serve as counter-indicators here—how much actual access to status and authority women's participation in technological planning and decision-making brings, the aspiration articulated here is clear enough. It is also articulated within a framework which sees this aspiration as firmly embedded in a politics that connects the teaching in the university with the women's movement and women's activism outside of the academy. Thus Gender and Development Studies within the Asian Institute of Technology has as a further objective 'to contribute to empowering women at professional level and at grassroots level in Asia through gender sensitization and the extension of scientific knowledge.' It places 'high priorities' on 'regional outreach and extension activities' and regards itself as 'functioning as an academic arm of community-based efforts for the advancement of women, equity-based sustainable development and the environment.' I doubt that any Women's Studies program in a British university, for example, would describe itself in its publicity as 'the academic arm of community-based efforts for the advancement of women', simply because that connection has become increasingly tenuous. The mission of the Department of Women and Gender Studies of Makerere University (2001), Kampala, Uganda is 'to contribute to the development of Uganda through ensuring that the gender component is an integral part of the development process.' Its first objective, more bluntly, is 'to train a cadre of various backgrounds who will serve in government, academic and non-governmental organisations, where they will act as catalysts for change and will facilitate the integration of gender in decision-making and policy formulation.' The terminology may surprise, again, I doubt that many north-western Women's Studies courses would use words such as 'cadre'—but the underlying intention is, again, very clear: the programme is committed to educating the administrators and professionals who will lead the country as 'catalysts for change'. Similarly, the Gender and Women's Studies Graduate Program at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey (2001) has as its objectives 'to increase the number of professionals and experts in different
Co-option or transformation?

Although these programs are concerned with interventions at policy and government levels that are quite rare in western democracies today, in itself a laudable enterprise, there have been extensive debates about the meanings of these programs. On the one hand, feminists such as Monica Threlfall (1996), for instance, argue that "engaging with the mainstream has not led to the feared one-sided dependence or absorption. On the contrary: women's groups have made creative use of opportunities provided by parties, institutions and governments, pushing for advantage and gaining access to different levels of power, and using them to defend or develop what was understood to be in women's interest." (289-90). Threlfall insists that rather than viewing the strategy of making use of existing institutions, whether understood as "mainstreaming" or as "institutionalization," as problematic, one should recognize that "few improvements occur without it." (290). Against this positive and optimistic assessment of the impact of the institutionalization of Women's Studies on women's lived conditions may be set an analysis of the 'relations of ruling' (Smith 1990) such as Naiia Kaber's (1994) representation of "reversed realities" or Alexander and Mohanty's (1997) view that the institutionalization of a particular definition of Women's Studies 'bolster up inherited regimes of race and Eurocentrism' (xiv) which amounts to 'processes of recolonization' (xvii) in which the contemporary practices of postcolonial and advanced colonial states are both imbricated and implicated. The clearest way in which one might demonstrate Alexander and Mohanty's point is by considering the flow of knowledge production and dissemination. Go to any European countries, east or west, today and ask if women in the academy have heard of Judith Butler, and the answer will be a uniform 'yes.' Ask in the same country, exemplifying the country of origin, and the same women, if they have heard of Laura Balbo or of Svetha Sripak the answer is likely to be 'no.' Few women in England, for example, can name more than one or two contemporary German feminist theorists. Many cannot name a single one. The translation projects common in many European countries are non-existent in the UK and, to a lesser degree, in the States. 32 By contrast, the second book the Khankov Center for Gender Studies in the Ukraine published was 'an anthology of modern Western works on gender theory.' On the Graduate Program in Women's Studies in Japan (2001) 'directed readings are designed to develop a firm comprehension of the literature on Women's Studies in English.'

One of the imbalances which emerges in any analysis of institutionalized Women's areas who are sensitive to and knowledgeable in Gender Studies and women's issues in Turkey and 'to train civil servants for institutions and departments dealing with gender issues and problems.' Akek University for Women in the Sudan aims to 'prepare women to assume responsible roles in families, communities, and in the nation,' and intends 'to prepare women from all parts of Sudan to become change agents in their families and communities and to assume leadership positions in society.' The African Gender Institute (2001) at the University of Cape Town in South Africa is even more specific than that. Focusing on capacity building, the Institute offers a graduate program on 'Gender and Transformation' which devotes particularly to the different interests of various agencies involved in development work and the transformative potential of different development strategies they deploy.' Graduates, it states, will be equipped to contribute to democratization and bring about the changes demanded by significant sectors of the population.'

These claims on behalf of women for participation in a gender-conscious transformation of society are claims which go hand in hand with the drives toward democratization and a free-market economy which international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank support. The resultant opportunities for the funding of research projects are key to the success of the programs referred to. Whether it be through the SOROS-funded Open Society Institute, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Sudan-American Foundation for Education, Inc., the Eurasia Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, or the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, what many of the NGO and university Women's Studies programs in the southern and eastern parts of the world share is a funding-driven, transformation and change-oriented agenda such as north-western university programs in Women's Studies rarely tend to have. These frequently include outreach programs to communities and groups of women who have little or no access to education. Outreach programs such as the one the Asian Institute of Technology offers are much more common in the southern and eastern regions of the world, and are more often done by NGOs and mixed-economy institutions than by universities. The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (2001) in Beirut, the Lebanon, for instance, offers action programs for women which include income generating, rural development, and basic living skills programs for 'illiterate and semi-literate women.'
Studies programs around the world is the one-way information and communication flow which dominates the epistemic distribution of the subject. In her recent book *Science Multi-Cultural?* Sandm Harding (1998) demonstrates the ways in which Western scientific knowledge has failed to learn from knowledge generated elsewhere, assuming instead a missionary position which has been difficult to resist. A similar problem has been observed in the context of the post-communist countries, where Western funding initiatives on the one hand and histories of extramural resistance on the other have clashed in the effort to determine agendas and institutional structures. Thus in February 2000 I attended a lively debate at the Central European University in Budapest where questions were being asked about infrastructural issues - eg What kind of an institution do we want? - and issues of epistemic context - What sort of knowledge do we need? - at a point in time when historically Women's Studies had been the territory of oppositional NGOs and when countries, obliged to re-invent themselves following the collapse of their previous regimes, had an opportunity to think seriously about the kinds of institutions and programs they might want. That opportunity was then given shape in many Eastern countries, not least Hungary, by Western funders willing to provide financial support, with the effect that a kind of re-colonization occurred. At one point in the 1990s there was an almost unscrupulously scramble for influence, with the Nordic countries on the one hand, European Union-funded initiatives, on the other, and transatlantic input in addition, vying for territorial rights in the Women's Studies knowledge stakes in Eastern European countries, all vying to recreate those countries' Women's Studies agendas in their own image. Nora Jung (1990) has interestingly shown how that process shaped and distorted ideas about feminist activism and teaching in those countries, not only through the disregard of existing indigenous knowledges but also through the ways in which Western feminists' access to feminists within these countries was determined by the latter's ability to speak English, for example.

Major issues in establishing Women's/Gender Studies in higher education
A number of key issues emerge, then, in the context of establishing Women's/Gender Studies in higher education. These are:

Problem 1: The public is profoundly patriarchal.

By this I mean that universities all over the world to this day, especially in their management structures, are dominated by men who have no whole interest in supporting the subject except for strategic reasons.

Problem 2: Utility is therefore the key to integration.
By this I mean that the demonstration of economic and/or political relevance both to the institution and to wider public aims and objectives is key to achieving visibility and integration for Women's Studies in universities.

Problem 3: The hegemony of monologic traditional disciplines.
In many countries the institutionalization of Women's Studies is obstructed by the hegemony of monologic traditional disciplines which do not allow for the multi-, trans- and/or inter-disciplinary nature of subjects such as Women's Studies. This is made worse by the fact that the resource models in many institutions favour traditional disciplines and departments rather than interdisciplinarity and cross-faculty collaboration.

Problem 4: Women's Studies socio-political agendas
As a subject which seems to front its political agendas, especially in so far as they are counter-hegemonic, Women's Studies defies epistemic traditions that stress objectivity, neutrality and disinterested enquiry since Women's Studies does not pretend to be disinterested or neutral. This is a problem in many countries which embrace a very particular idea of knowledge and of the sciences.

Problem 5: The advancement of knowledge versus the transformation of knowledge.
The advancement of knowledge is not the same as the transformation of knowledge. There can be no doubt that Women's Studies has advanced knowledge in significant ways but there remain questions to be asked about the extent to which it has achieved paradigmatic shifts in knowledge production and dissemination. Maybe Lorde was right that the master's tools can never dismantle the master's house but at present, and despite Women's Studies, it is not clear what another set of tools might look like, or whether they would or could make a significant difference to the master's house.

Problem 6: The next generation.
Another problem associated with the establishment of Women's Studies in higher education is the question of who and where are the next generation of feminists? Being a feminist means putting your life in danger in countries such as Algeria, for example. In north European countries that particular threat does not exist but nonetheless there is something of a crisis of succession amongst feminists, and of the accommodation between older and younger feminists with quite divergent political histories and interests. The mobilization of a new, younger generation of feminists is key to the survival of the discipline and the maintenance of an aspiration of transformative politics. It is a task that needs addressing.

Problem 7: Co-option or transformation?

Finally, there is the problematic of compromise. What Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty describe as the self-subjugation of women as the price paid for inserting themselves in hegemonic orders and institutions such as universities.

The future of Women's/Gender Studies

However, for all these obstacles to the establishment to Women's Studies in higher education I would want to argue that the future of Women's Studies on a world-wide scale is very rosy indeed. As the cartoonist Jackie Fleming put it: 'Never give up!' But my optimism is not just a function of wanting or needing to project a fighting spirit; it is also fuelled by the fact that the recognition, at an international level, of the importance of gender as a criterion in policy-making has provided women globally with opportunities for participation in the public sphere and for transformation of that sphere in ways which in the 1960s and early 1970s people, especially perhaps women, would probably not have thought possible. We should not underestimate what it means to have the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union, and other such bodies recognize that women should be supported to act as change agents. Therein, as the saying goes, lies both our opportunity and our challenge. How to use the opportunities without compromising feminist politics is the challenge of today and tomorrow.

Bibliography


Gender and Women's Studies Graduate Program, Middle East Technical University, Turkey at http://www.metu.edu.tr/home/wws/group.html, 15/05/2001, 16:14.


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1 There have been extended debates in the English-speaking world concerning the use of ‘Women’s’ as opposed to ‘Gender’ Studies. I shall not rehearse the arguments here (see instead Evans), or engage with the issues of terminology arising from these but shall throughout use ‘Women’s’ rather than ‘Gender’ Studies as my preferred term since, in my view, Gender Studies worldwide is still basically Women’s Studies, meaning that the emphasis, as evidenced in the taught programs around the world, is on women, and I continue to think that the persistent structural inequalities between women and men at all levels of existence warrant a focus on women.

2 There are a number of directories and internet sources which list Women’s and Gender Studies programs at local, regional, and global levels. They include GRACE (the European Women’s Studies Databank), the 1995 SIGMA report on Women’s Studies, the *International Handbook of Women’s Studies,* ed. Louta Brown et al; and sites such as http://www.sigi.org by the Sisterhood is Global Institute, or http://research.unbc.edu/-kowenman/wmst/programs.html.
Alexander and Mohanty (1997) articulate a powerful critique of 'feminism' as a concept that foregrounds 'the liberal-pluralist understanding of feminism, an inheritance of the preeminently liberal roots of American feminist praxis' (xvi) and of 'international feminism as 'almost always [originating] in the West' (xviii), a situation which they view as at the root of the marginalization and 'othering' of Third World women and women of color within feminist theorizing and practice.

This Institute is, of course, part of the American University in Beirut, and, one might argue, the early establishment of Women's Studies there was related to that alliance with America where Women's Studies was institutionalized equally early.

This is of course one of the great lessons of the debates among women during the late 1970s and the 1980s concerning an acknowledgment of differences among women rather than succumbing to a false universalization of women's conditions under patriarchy. This debate was spearheaded, in the US and the UK, by so-called 'women of color' and by lesbians, as well as by women of working-class background who felt themselves to be excluded from the feminine mystique analysed by writers such as Betty Friedan who were viewed as espousing a white, western, middle-class position regarding women and projecting that standpoint as representative of universal womanhood.

It has to be noted, of course, that systems of promotion through preferment in universities such as described here are not the only reasons why Women's Studies has not been institutionalized to the same degree in Italy as in the Netherlands and the UK, for instance. For a further discussion see Sapegna in Griffin and Braidotti (2002), and Bono and Kempt (1991).

This is, in fact, a global phenomenon. Most programs world-wide specify the particular disciplinary bases from which their staff are drawn and, in the case of graduate programs, detail the traditional disciplinary background, such as Social Sciences, required of students wanting to attend.

In 2000 the University of Manchester which has an established Women's Studies Centre, until recently under the direction of Professor Liz Stanley, decided to focus its activities on research and postgraduate work. This new focus on graduate studies and research is increasingly common in the UK, and is currently being contemplated also by Roehampton (now part of the University of Surrey), the only institution in the UK which had a Women's Studies department.

In Failing the Future: A Dream Looks at Higher Education (1998) Annette Kolodny argues that feminists have failed to make an impact in institutions in part because they have refused to move into management positions.

Miller (1991) provides a vivid account of this.

The others are Bente Rosenbeck who has moved to Lund University, Drude Dahlerup who has gone to Stockholm University, and Signe Arnfjord who is now at Uppsala University. The action plan for Women's Studies, which was established in the 1980s in Denmark and which agreed eight associate professorships in Women's Studies has not resulted in the kind of infrastructure that would support the subject at the highest level long-term. This is a salutary lesson for Women's Studies in that it reminds us that there is no teleological certainty of progress for any discipline; things cannot only not get better - they can get worse. The opposite is, of course, also true, and we should not forget that.

It is not that they do not address politics (see for instance Case 1996) but since the location of their analysis is cyberspace and thus rather remote, the attendant political debate also seems to occur at a distance, and to relate to something from which the viewer/reader/audience is fundamentally dissociated.

Non-governmental organizations flourished from the 1970s onwards, especially in the so-called developing countries, in response to and as a function of the recognition by international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that states and governments were not the most effective actors in inaugurating and supporting economic, social, and political change along the lines supported by western democracies. In consequence, the state was increasingly bypassed as the key recipient and distributor of funds in favour of NGOs who were regarded as closer to the problems, more invested in problem-solving and change, and more likely to achieve change (see Jackson, C. and R. Pearson, 1998).

This statement of course ignores the ways in which the end of the communist era in the Eastern European countries led to a disenfranchisement of women unprecedented since the establishment of the communist regimes (see Lange 2000, Molynieux 1996, Watase 1996). Here we now have a re-regulation of women to assume 'their place' in the emergent market economies.

This has been widely discussed and analysed including in Scott et al (1997) and Threlfall (1996).

The United Nations (2001) has an extended history of actions for women which, in parallel with the establishment of taught Women's Studies programs, dates back to the 1970s. Thus it observed 1973 as International Women's Year and held the First World Conference on Women in Mexico. In 1979 it produced the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Ten years
later, at the Nairobi World Conference on Women (1985) it adopted the 'Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000'. Not without its critics (see for example Baden and Goetz 1998; Dutt 2000), the United Nations has nonetheless been a highly influential body in promoting the recognition of gender issues at global level.

17 In a revealing account of this phenomenon, Miller (1991) charts, and attempts to account for the transformative potential of, the move from collectivism to individualism which she regards as always already - to use a hackneyed postmodern phrase - embedded in feminism and its claim that the personal is the political.

18 In the UK a number of courses in Women's Studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate level have closed down during the last five years. The Women's Studies Network (UK) Association newsletter offers regular articles and comments on this phenomenon. In Australia the Women's Studies program at Monash University has just been threatened with closure.

19 Significantly, the Moscow Center for Gender Studies (2001), an NGO, has as one of its mission statements 'withstanding sexism in the humanities, mass consciousness and social policies under the present conditions, with the growing tendencies to consider women in the light of traditional role stereotypes.'

20 Renata Scribar (2002) provides an interesting account of the ways in which the re-location of the Open Society Institute impacted on women's NGOs.

21 Ketaki Kushari Dyson (2000) points out that 'while English is the most-translated-from language in the world, it [is] the least-translated-into of all the Western languages.' (v)