



# *Locating Gender Politics in the New Techno-Industrial Complex*

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# *The Military-Industrial Complex*

Generally associated with U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1961 speech in which he warns of the dangers of networks and flows of money and other power resources circulating among individuals, governments, industries, and military institutions (actually dates back to the 1930s)



# *The Techno-Industrial Complex, Defined by Herbert Marcuse*

"The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their souls in their automobile and hi-fi sets. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced" (Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 1964: 9).



# *The New Techno-Industrial Complex*

- ❖ Dominated by “informational capitalism” and the notion of a knowledge and/or information economy which often is treated as synonymous with an “information society” (marked by technocratic, meritocratic, and technophilic approaches)
- ❖ Defined in terms of the flow of knowledge and (technological, economic) competences
- ❖ Dominated by complex technologies and expert decision-making, with little opportunity for citizens to be integrated into technology policy decision-making and thus discourages them from voicing opinions on issues that directly affect their lives
- ❖ Layers of technological knowledge structured by a set of corporate/industrial sectors



*The “New Global Governance” (NGG) as Defined by the World Summit on the Information Society: A Counter-balance to the New Techno-Industrial Complex’s Undemocratic Tendencies?*

- ✦ NGG: ostensibly a “multi-stakeholder mode of governance” in which civil society and the private sector participate on an “equal footing” as partners with governments (or member-states of the United Nations)
- ✦ NGG: presumably differs from the top-down tendencies of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates; includes “multi-cultural” and “grassroots” groups
- ✦ As the power of labor unions has eroded, regional and global governance institutions have begun to create cooperative



## *However...*

- ✦ The private sector rises to the head of the body politic (in traditional corporatism, the state remains the head); UN member-states and many NGOs have become instrumentalized by neoliberal economic imperatives.
- ✦ Corporations increasingly have more power to frame and set the development agenda (constructing a dominant vision for future-oriented social change).
- ✦ Multi-stakeholder processes tend to exclude or tokenize groups which threaten economic imperatives.
- ✦ As development agencies and governments become unable or unwilling to pursue or provide funding for development, the private sector offers financing for development as a form of “corporate social responsibility.”



# *Gender Governance Orders*

Gender governance orders become institutionalized as a result of systems of capital accumulation and state power, cultural definitions of gender, and the production and re-production of gender relations as a form of social ordering (Brijitte Young, 2001).



# *Gender Mainstreaming as a Gender Governance Order*

- ★ Emerged alongside the corporatization of development
- ★ Definition: “a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

-FCOSOC Agreed Conclusions





# *Views of Gender Mainstreaming*

- ★ Gender mainstreaming as “state-sponsored feminism” (P. Preston 2005)
- ★ Gender mainstreaming as policy diffusion driven primarily by women’s transnational networks
- ★ Gender mainstreaming as serving the needs of market-based development



# *Gender and the “New Information Economy”*

- ★ Focuses on “human capacity-building” and “skills acquisition” to encourage women’s participation in the new (information, service, knowledge) economy
- ★ Women as preferred informational labor, especially for cheap-wage technology work in the informal economy (“small, foreign, and female”)
- ★ Serves the neoliberal economic imperative for labor as a flexible, mobile commodity (e.g.: “home work”)




# *Neoliberal Governmentality Meets Gender Governance Orders*

- ✦ Neoliberal governmentality defined: multiple institutions within society, including the state, regulate populations at the same time that individuals within these populations regulate themselves.
- ✦ Neoliberal governmentality produces a specific subject that is critical to knowledge economies —the mobile, flexible, self-governing laborer who is capable of working in several sectors of the information economy.
- ✦ Women increasingly are targeted for ICT public-private partnership training initiatives that also are the development modus operandi of emerging knowledge economies.



# *Women and Information Work*

- ★ Many gender and development (GAD) experts argue that, largely because of patriarchal biases, policies and practices in the area of ICT for development often are gender-blind, gender-insensitive, and/or gender neutral in tenor.
- ★ Counter-argument: far from being inattentive to various forms of women's inequalities and potentialities, current ICT development policies and practices routinely exhibit a form of gender awareness narrowly focused on defining and targeting women as information workers.



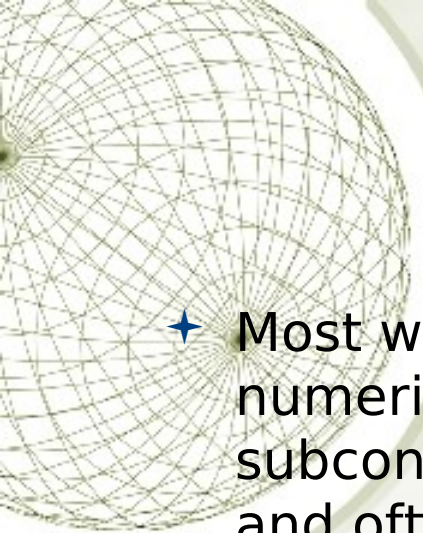
# *Elson and Pearson, 29 years Ago:*

- ★ “We do not accept that the problem is one of women being left out of the development process. Rather it is precisely the relations through which women are “integrated” into the development process that need to be problematized and investigated. For such relations may well be part of the *problem*, rather than part of the *solution*.” (Elson and Pearson 1981: 87)
- ★ The provision of jobs becomes the most important element in integrating women into the development process and the panacea for overcoming gender subordination



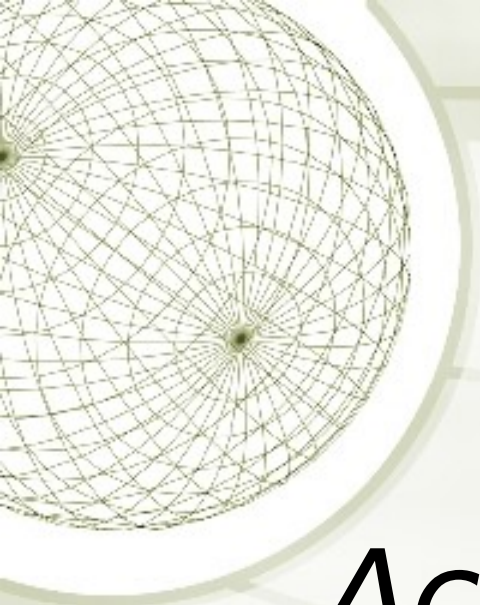
# *Flexible Women of the Information Society*

- ★ The “new” capitalist economy features a feminization of paid labor; Manuel Castells: “‘flexible woman’ gradually replac[es] the ‘organization man’ as the harbinger of the new type of worker” (2000: 12). “New social relationships of production translate into a good fit between the ‘flexible woman’ (forced to flexibility cope with her multiple roles) and the network enterprise” (p. 20).
- ★ New social relationships of production lead to new gendered social relationships. Patriarchy falls into crisis because of the massive influx of women into informational labor and the mobilization of feminism as a political



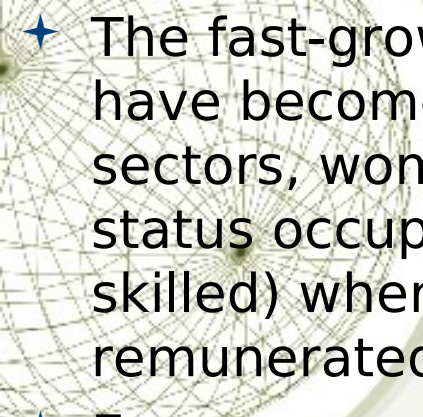
# *Flexible Women?*

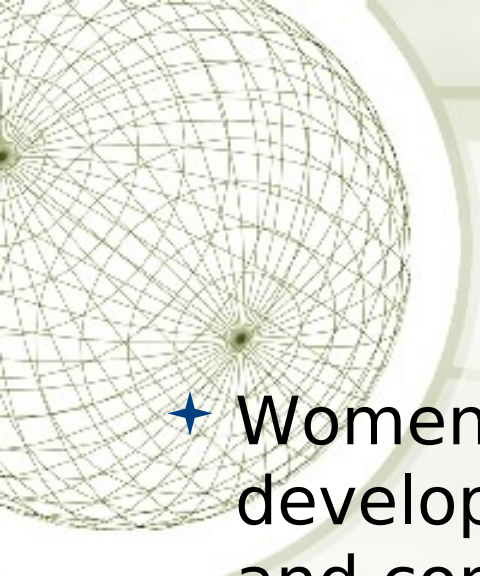
- ★ Most women are clustered within the category of numerically-flexible, low-skilled, and casual and subcontracted laborers who are stereotyped as docile and often forced into compliance because they lack the social status and job and income security which would provide them with the resources to resist occupational subordination.
- ★ From the International Labor Organization (ILO) to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), it is recognized that women tend to predominate in service sectors involving routinized, low-skilled labor and limited technical training. Men are far more likely to have access to the better-paying, higher-skilled jobs in the ICT service sector, such as those in software development or programming.



*Accumulation Goals  
Dominate Social  
Development Goals*




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- ✦ The fast-growing retail and financial services industries have become increasingly feminized, and, within these sectors, women generally are employed in the lower status occupations (which are usually defined as less-skilled) where work is often temporary and poorly remunerated
  - ✦ Even more women endure employment insecurity as laborers in the informal economy or in low-wage telework, call center work, and electronics assembly. The latter, although it does not qualify as informational labor, occupies a capital-intensive place in the information economy. Since the 1970s, electronics and computer component manufacturing industries have been among those which most outsource their products to “developing countries,” with women targeted in particular for employment in this labor-intensive, low-waged, and sometimes hazardous work
  - ✦ The stratification of labor by gender, race, and nation is especially intense in electronics manufacturing where cultural and political forms of oppression, such as managers’ stereotyping of Asian women as “nimble-




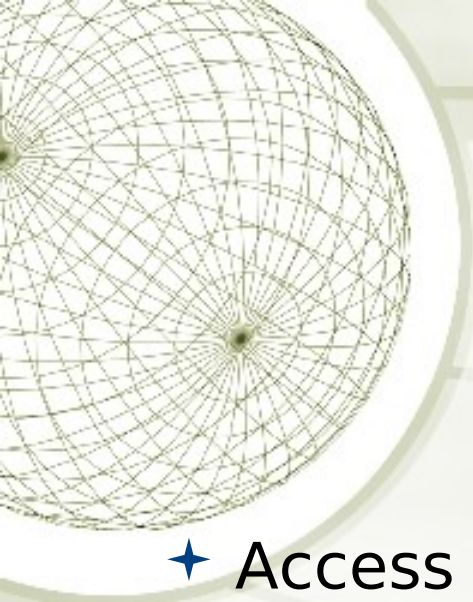
## *Suggestions (However Insufficient)\**

- ★ Women should be more involved in the development of ICT for work environments and conditions that are sensitive to their needs, well-being, and objectives. If public-private partnerships are necessary in order to achieve this, they must be transparent, accountable, and designed to constitute justly gendered ICT workplaces and cyberspace, where women have access to the wealth of information that ICT can provide in a knowledge society.

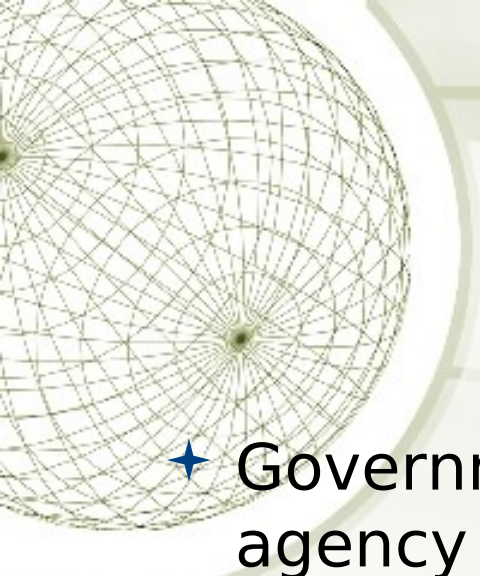
- ★ Access to resources such as information and

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- ★ A key to overcoming the barriers, shortcomings, and misconceptions of women's participation in ICT development resides in a more comprehensive education of women, the promotion of equal access for women to scientific and technological arenas, the provision of opportunities for increased technological training, and the strengthening of decision-making in women's roles. While governments legislate to enable equal access and opportunity for all via their policies and programs and more broadly in the private sector and the larger civil society, social attitudes, cultural ideologies, and gender stereotypes must also be changed.

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- ★ Women must be educated to use ICT, and governments must provide adequate funding for women's access to ICT; women should be trained in the ICT industry at management and senior levels and in ways which involve them in creating, analyzing, and interpreting communications, whether in the form of software or hardware. Women's unpaid labor should be recognized and valued as equal in importance to the economic sector as paid labor. And, not all ICT education should be oriented to enhancing economic development; for example, women should be educated to create and share online resources that are women-focused as well as to form networks which expose and seek to rectify injustices against marginalized groups.



- ★ Access to resources such as information and communication technology, education, time, and money is not equivalent to control over them. Access is not fully effective in the absence of control.

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- ★ Government policy should facilitate women's agency and protect their interests in the name of social justice rather than to promote women's access only for purposes of national economic development. The latter approach perpetually defers women's empowerment until the moment when the myth of "the market" will become a reality and lift all persons out of poverty and into prosperity.



Women's capacities and desires to make choices about how they experience, and interact with, ICT in their workplaces and leisure times must be explored in such a way that recognizes both structure and agency.

\*Lisa McLaughlin and Helen Johnson (2007)