

# Conceiving and Researching Women's Networks in Globalisation

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**The twentieth-first century has begun amidst economic, political, social and cultural processes transcending national boundaries. These processes, intensified particularly in the past few decades, involve the disruption of national entities. I argue that women's networks as well as other networks have increased in significance in the context of the new social formations and attempt to position research on women's networks within a wide range of network research with respect to the new social realities. I also deliberate that future women's network research should be concerned with the webs of transnational social relationships and of power relations. These factors also crosscut women's networks.**

The twentieth-first century has begun amidst an unprecedented quantity of economic, political, social and cultural processes that transcend national boundaries. These processes, intensified particularly in the past few decades, involve the disruption of national entities. Women's networks as well as other kinds of networks have emerged in these transformative processes. This paper aims to contribute to research on women's networks in the context of the new social formations. It discusses and attempts to conceptualise the current stage of social transformations and the increased role of networks therein.

The first section reviews existing scholarship on networks in the social sciences and poses a methodological question. The second scrutinises women's networks in the global context and examines some existing studies on women's networks in the light of the development of gender politics. The final section deliberates possibilities for future research in an age of globalisation.

## NEW SOCIAL FORMATIONS AND THE RISE OF NETWORKS

The view that the world is changing is often associated with the word "globalisation". Yet "globalisation" is perceived in various ways, producing different interpretations and definitions (e.g. Giddens 1994; Harvey 1989; Beck 1997). Despite their differences, all the interpretations have in common that they perceive unparalleled changes in terms of what we conventionally

describe as "internationalisation". In fact, some prefer the term "internationalisation" to "globalisation", seeing current transformations as involving intensified cross-border processes as the further development of internationalisation (Hirst and Thompson 1996). But present social formations involve qualitative as well as quantitative changes, and cannot be understood simply as the expansion of "internationalisation", the notion of which often has a strong focus on the nation-states or nation-state based societies. Current transformations clearly disrupt the entities based on nation-states and we need a new analytical category to capture newly created social realities within and between these disrupted entities (Sassen 1999). Yet it is important to note here that nation-states continue to be relevant. States may seem to be eroded and weakening in some aspects, but under changed circumstances they are instead reorganising. States remain important players, affecting the social, political and economic lives of people by retaining, relaxing or renewing their regulations.

Thus I refer to *globalisation* not as a literal globalisation that would reach the whole globe but as processes of current social configurations that entail qualitative as well as quantitative changes. In order to incorporate the significance of geographic spaces of the national in the analysis of the present stage of globalisation, I employ the term *transnational* to refer to social realities that exist across a multiple of national societies. I use *transnationalisation* to refer to cross-border processes in which the transnational emerges and is sustained with respect to qualitatively new social worlds across borders.

In this context, I attempt to analyse the rise of networks by associating the transnational with a simple understanding of network. Networks are seen as structures that involve more than two actors at different sites and the relational ties between them. A transnational phenomenon can be thought to involve a multiplicity of sites in different countries. Structurally, therefore, these can be understood to be multi-sited (see Marcus 1995) or pluri-local (Pries 2001). The understanding of transnationalisation as multi-sited processes enables us to highlight network structure. A network consists of nodes and relational ties between the nodes. Nodes may be people, groups or organisations. The ties connecting the nodes constitute a multi-sited structure. A conscious or unconscious process of producing and sustaining the networks is termed *networking*. If the networks or networking occurs across boundaries of the nation-states, they are *transnational networks* or *transnational networking*. An attempt to connect nodes constitutes a first step toward network formation. Once nodes are interconnected, a network emerges. In terms of conscious networking, a network is increasingly regarded as a practical organisational form due to its structural flexibility and ability to mobilise resources such as time and money. This is a significant aspect of the present proliferation of networks.

Although not all networks are global, it becomes increasingly difficult to demarcate local and cross-border networks (Hannerz 1992). The techno-

logical innovations of the last century, including the improvement of the transportation system (which reduced the cost and time of mobility) and new information communication technologies (NICTs) (which made the mobility not only physical but also virtual), have contributed much to this.

How can networks be studied, then, in the context of globalisation? Though the current upsurge of networks seems to have much to do with globalisation, the network phenomenon has long been a concern of social scientists. The existence of webs of social relationships occupied scholars in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, particularly Simmel (1958). The following decades witnessed the development of various approaches for researching networks. These approaches developed in an inter-related way rather than independently of one another. In the next sections, I discuss four of them. These approaches are of potential utility for conducting systematic research on women's networks in the context of globalisation.

## SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

Social network analysis can be traced back to several areas of social science in the early twentieth century, especially German and Austrian social psychology, British structural-functional anthropology and American industrial sociology and community studies. These developments were followed by several significant methodical advances and theoretical innovations that resulted in today's social network analysis (see Scott 1991; Wasserman and Faust 1994).

Social network analysis seeks to describe a formal social structure of interaction among a set of actors who comprise a network. In theoretical terms, this approach is characterised by a structuralist position whose main concern is to analyse the structural characteristics of the network rather than the characteristics of actors within a network. Another characteristic is the extensive use of formal methods for description. Usually, the data is collected and processed employing mathematical or algebraic techniques and the results are shown with matrices and/or graphs. Graphs can help in the visualisation of network structures, particularly the relational ties of which networks consist. The graph method originates in the sociometry developed within social psychology in the 1930s (Moreno 1953). In a graph, each actor is represented with a node and a straight line or occasionally an arrow that presents a relational tie between the two nodes. Within a certain group of people, for example, some of them may have specific relationships with one another such as those of friendship. In the case of friendship ties, the nodes representing those who identify each other as friends are connected either by lines or arrows. Arrows can be used to describe directions of relational ties between people who choose, or do not choose, to associate (see Figure 1). To analyse the structure of social relations in empirical terms, social network analysis

$N = n_1, n_2, n_3, n_4, n_5$

$L = (n_1, n_5), (n_2, n_1), (n_2, n_3), (n_5, n_4)$

	$n_1$	$n_2$	$n_3$	$n_4$	$n_5$
$n_1$	0	0	0	0	1
$n_2$	1	0	1	0	0
$n_3$	0	0	0	0	0
$n_4$	0	0	0	0	0
$n_5$	0	0	0	1	0

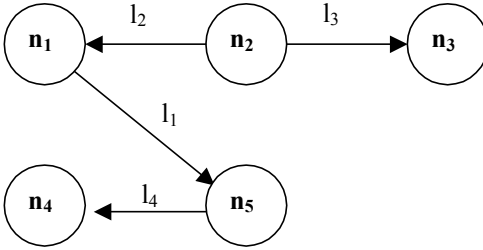


Figure 1: Relational Ties between People.

Notes:  $N$  represents nodes.  $L$  represents relational ties. In this example, there are five nodes ( $n_1, n_2, n_3, n_4$  and  $n_5$ ) and four relational ties ( $l_1, l_2, l_3$  and  $l_4$ ).  $L_1$ , i.e. ( $n_1, n_5$ ) means  $n_1$  chooses  $n_5$ . In the matrix the ties are shown with digits, either 0 (no tie) or 1 (existence of a tie).

developed several key concepts. These include:

- density (the number of ties between actors),
- centrality (relative importance of certain actors within the network compared with the other actors),
- the strength of the ties (strong or weak relationships between the actors) (Granovetter 1973), to name a few.

As a metaphor for the structure of social relationships, the concept of “social network” was first introduced in social anthropology (Radcliffe-Brown 1940) and further developed as an analytical tool by anthropologists at the University of Manchester in their research on communities (e.g. Barnes 1954), family and kinship networks (e.g. Bott 1971) and urban settings (e.g. Mitchell 1969). Almost parallel with this, researchers at Harvard University conducted a study on informal social relationships in a group of workers in a factory and its relation to effectiveness of work, known as “Hawthorn experiment” (Roethlisberger/Dickson 1939). The data generated in this study were later re-analysed with the sociometric methods of Moreno (Homans 1951). Since then, techniques of social network analysis have been further developed and applied in various research fields.<sup>1</sup>

The study of power structure, particularly in US society, and of inter-organisational relationships, especially of firms, are two areas in which the

techniques have been extensively used. The concern of power structure research is how society is organised around social networks of certain sets of influential people (e.g. corporate, political and military elites) and organisations they belong to (Mills 1956). These networks are often studied using methods of social network analysis (see Knoke 1993). Social network analysis, which started with a focus on relationships of individuals, inspired those who study organisations such as firms to look at relations between organisations. Research on inter-organisational networks has also been influenced by works of power structure researchers such as Mills (1956) and Domhoff (1967) and produced many studies on networks of influential corporations (e.g. Mintz and Schwartz 1985).

During the past few decades a different style of network research has started to spread in different areas of research, especially in organisation studies, policy studies and transnational studies. According to their different theoretical perspectives and empirical interests, I term these different approaches, respectively, an economic network approach, a policy network approach and a transnational network approach. Social network analysis can be seen as a methodological approach, using the concept of network for (mainly) quantitative data collection. The other three approaches tend to use the term metaphorically, to describe certain pictures or models of social organisation. They are not as strongly oriented towards the quantification of data as is social network analysis.

## ECONOMIC NETWORK APPROACH

While several researchers in organisation studies began using methods of social network analysis in the 1970s and the 1980s, as discussed, a different network approach has also emerged under the influence of theories of economics. This has become significant, particularly in Germany. In this approach, networks are seen as a third form of socio-economic institution, along with “markets” and “hierarchies” i.e. hierarchical organisations such as firms.<sup>2</sup> In economics, particularly according to neoclassical theory, “markets” and firms constitute two distinct, alternative forms of organisation that govern economic activities. Theoretically, this means that while transactions in the markets take place on the basis of prices and are therefore opportunistic and competitive, firms as hierarchical organisations operate under the logic of authority exercised by leading personnel within the firms. There exist theoretical and practical motivations for studying organisational forms and organisational behaviour of firms and for searching for possibilities of improving the present form of organisation. The potential of networks as alternative organisational forms is illuminated by three types of issue: technical issues (e.g. the use of NICTs for inter-organisational communication), managerial issues (e.g. the importance of trust) and economic issues (e.g. cost reduction). It is

thought here that firms could reduce certain risks originating in the conventional hierarchical organisational model (see Vetschera 2000, 225-6). Thus, for example, some corporations consciously form an inter-organisational network from the perspective of risk management (externalising certain risks outside their own organisations) and of resource maximisation (sharing resources within the network). Often this kind of network has a focal actor who plays a central role within the network as a coordinator. For example, in a subcontracting network of an automobile industry, several suppliers are organised around a main manufacturing company (see Sydow 1993).

## POLICY NETWORK APPROACHES

A policy network approach concentrates on network structures that can be observed in policy-making process. Similarly to the economic network approach, the policy network approach is interested in inter-organisational networks, but its theoretical and empirical perspective differs. Policy network research, which grew dramatically in the 1980s and the 1990s,<sup>3</sup> has two different sub-approaches (Börzel 1998). The first sub-approach tends to regard networks, under the influence of the economy-oriented approach, as a specific form of organisation that coordinates policy formation process by urging cooperation between, and bringing interests from, both the public and the private sectors. This sub-approach concerns itself with the problem of governance: in hierarchical decision-making, the "losers" may have to carry the costs emerging out of a newly created policy. Furthermore, conventional, hierarchical, state-centred policy coordination is becoming increasingly dysfunctional amidst the changing nature of the economic and political environment. In the context of this governance problem, this approach argues that actors from the public (e.g. state agencies, public research institutes, etc.) and private sectors (e.g. business interests) react to such a political crisis by consciously networking themselves to achieve common policy goals (Börzel 1998). How public and private actors including socially and politically less influential ones really work for a "common" goal, is an open question. In the domain of gender policy, the increasing significance of women's policy machineries indicates that there are possibilities for cooperation between public and private actors (see Stetson and Mazur 1995).

In this context, protagonists of this sub-approach assume a certain level of change in political decision-making structures, and see much potential in network organisation, which may overcome a state-society divide prevailing in the conventional top-down structure of governance. This view is similar to that of the economic network approach, which also treats networks as a new form of organisation that may help solve problems originating in hierarchical forms of organisations of corporations.

While the first sub-approach of policy network can be seen mainly

among European (particularly German) policy researchers, the second sub-approach has emerged especially in Anglo-American research. Although these two sub-approaches are not clearly separated in policy network research, the second does not share a theoretical basis with the first or with the economic network approach. This affects the way each approach conceptualises policy networks. While the first approach means by “policy network”, a non-hierarchical coordinative form of interaction between public and private actors, the second approach does not necessarily focus on such a cooperative form of organisation. It studies relationships between various actors in policy-making processes and assumes a measure of hierarchy: that is, outcomes can be influenced by the dominance of certain interests with more resources (Börzel 1998). In the area of labour policy, for instance, measures resulting from policy-making processes are often more favourable to business interest groups than to interests representing working people (e.g. trade unions).

## TRANSNATIONAL NETWORK APPROACH

Studies on networks in which relational ties span national boundaries are also on the increase, particularly in studies on transnational migration, TNCs and transnational political actors. Studies on transnational networks constitute a third approach. This partly converges with the economic and policy network approaches in that research interests in globalisation increase. In transnational migration research, social networks of friends, relatives and acquaintances, which at the earlier stage and/or pre-stage of migration of workers, for example, often help would-be migrants to migrate to and/or find jobs in the host country, constitute important research topics. In the age of globalisation, migrants “develop multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organisational, religious, and political—that span borders” (Basch *et al* 1994, 7).

At the core of skilled and unskilled labour migration, there exists the operation of transnational enterprises. Transnational enterprises include transnational entrepreneurship and TNCs. The former can be associated with transnational networks of migrant workers (Portes 1998), while the latter are associated with transnational networks between corporate organisations, produced in the emergence and the transnationalisation of corporate activities. Organisation researchers who are conscious of globalisation processes are concerned especially about inter-organisational networks of corporate units such as production networks (Zysman, Doherty and Schwert 1996), supplier commodity chains (Gereffi 1999) and network structures of a “transnational company” (Barlett and Goshall 1989). A transnational company is characterized organisationally by dispersed and interdependent resources, differentiated and specialised subsidiary roles and joint development and worldwide sharing of knowledge and can increasingly be seen as an integrated network of specialised units which “achieve[s] their multidimensional strategic objectives of

efficiency, responsiveness, and innovation" (Barlett and Goshall 1989: 89). Relatedly, some researchers suggest that transnational business communities (Carroll and Fennema 2002) or the transnational capitalist class (Sklair 1995) have emerged. Yet what kind of informal as well as formal social networks they consist of is still largely an open-ended empirical question.

The transnational network approach can also be seen among researchers studying political phenomena who are aware of the newly emerging world order (Commission on Global Governance 1995). The new political world order includes the rise of non-governmental (corporate and non-corporate) actors across borders (Risse-Kappen 1995) and transnational social movements (TSMs) (Smith, Chatfield and Pagnucco 1997). Networks formed between social movement organisations (SMOs) and between various organisational actors are increasingly studied. Since the 1980s, social movement researchers have increasingly been interested in social networks of individuals as an important resource for mobilization (see Diani 2003) and since the 1990s the number of studies on TSMs has grown. Most literature on these mentions the importance of network structure in cross-border activism with regard to human rights issues, environmental issues, etc. As an example of such a network of transnational social movements, Smith (1997) analyses networks formed between international NGOs by using techniques of social network analysis.

Transnational political networks formed between various political actors such as NGOs, corporations, foundations, churches and governmental bodies interest international relations researchers in particular. Benner, Reinicke and Witte (2003) study networks that would bring diverse kinds of actors, often with different views, together as global public policy networks. Observing the rise of activist networks formed around principled ideas or values, Keck and Sikkink (1998) identify the growing interaction and interconnectivity between actors in civil societies, states and international organisations and call the emergent network structure that links those various actors transnational advocacy networks (TANs). TANs are most likely to emerge, when the initial process of negotiation over a certain issue between national government and domestic non-governmental actors stagnates. Thus emergent TANs strive to process and disseminate useful information across borders for maximum influence, to "frame" issues or problems, to exert political leverage on governments.

While transnational migration researchers tend to concentrate on small-scale networks such as inter-personal networks, researchers of transnational corporate and transnational political networks seem to have been concerned more about inter-organisational networks. All these transnational network studies are based on different disciplinary backgrounds. Yet, they apparently share an assumption that the emergent network structure is embedded in globalisation processes. This does not, however, mean that the transnational studies differ from scholarship on non-transnational networks in simply



adding a transnational level to the analysis. All the transnational networks represent qualitatively new social relationships emergent in transnational spaces, to which the emergent transnational network research seems to be responding. One factor can be associated with the rise of a new informational economy (Castells 2000) or new information politics (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Few would dispute the importance of NICTs for globalisation. In fact most transnational networks use the technologies for their communication and information exchange. Virtuality is no privilege of transnational networks, yet the use of virtual space may be even more important for transnational networks than non-transnational ones, since transnational networks are more likely to face the challenge of coping with longer geographical distances in order to sustain the network structure.

## RESEARCHING NETWORKS IN GLOBALISATION: A METHODOLOGICAL QUESTION

In a nutshell, what the transnational network researchers attempt to conceive is *qualitatively* new social realities that have emerged in the present stage of globalisation. The research on transnationalisation, including transnational networks, should entail a more radical paradigm change than simply incorporating a “transnational level” into the conventional framework. This involves discussions about methodological as well as ontological and epistemological issues.

Which methodologies and methods can be used, then, for empirical research on transnational networks? Though this is still rarely discussed in most studies on transnational networks, a discussion of the methodological clustering of the world into national units or “methodological nationalism” (Smith 1979) has already begun in other areas of research. Some conventional methods such as cross-national comparative methods are criticised as being limited to analysing social relations in the context of globalisation (Axtman 1993). This partly explains why the problem of quantitative approaches such as statistical methods, which depend strongly on national units of analysis, turn out to be even more problematic amidst globalisation processes. It is thus no accident that qualitative approaches have increased in significance recently.

To think about possible approaches to the study of networks, it is worth looking at recent discussions in ethnography, because these not only expand the methodological scope of network analysis, to which social network analysis has long been contributing, but also include several innovative attempts to review conventional methodologies. And they may be able to contribute to empirical research on transnational networks with new qualitative ethnographic approaches. For example, the ethnography of Marcus (1995) offers insight for empirical research into network structures across national

borders. He argues that ethnography must react to globalisation by transforming itself from having a "single-sited" focus on the macro, capitalist world system to a multi-sited focus on transcending the local and the global (Marcus 1995: 95). In this new ethnography, an ethnographer physically and imaginatively locates herself on multiple sites and moves across sites by constructing and following mobile objects of study such as people, things/commodity chains, metaphors, allegories, biographies and conflicts. By doing so, multi-sited ethnography develops into a sort of activism in that ethnographers encounter various identities on multiple sites and negotiate even their own assumed identities. Issues of identity are likely to emerge in multi-sited ethnography on networks as well. For example, a feminist researcher may conduct ethnographic research at several sites in several countries to analyse how transnational feminist networking can occur. In her ethnography, sometimes she may be a researcher, sometimes a volunteer in a women's organisation, sometimes a participant observer in another organisation. She may share a certain feminist standpoint with people and/or groups she studies, but eventually, she may have to negotiate with different identities, values and ideas of people she meets and even with her own identities. For multi-sited ethnography involves "a variety of sites, where the politics and ethics of working in any one reflects on work in the others." (Marcus 1995, 113). How can we position the rise of women's networks in the past decades in these contexts? What are women's networks? How can they be examined?

## CONCEIVING WOMEN'S NETWORKS IN GLOBALISATION

Politics concerning the betterment of women's lives has dramatically developed over the past decades, transcending the conventional political units at local, national, international and supranational levels. This development is largely founded on the older and newer histories of women's struggles for gender equality in various parts of the world. The local/national women's movements made efforts to bring about change in their community or country through their own initiatives. There were also various events in the arena of international politics such as UN world conferences. These events attempted to affect domestic politics and to help improve women's lives on the world-wide scale. They also created significant moments for the emergence of gender politics across borders (Meyer and Prügl 1999).

Meanwhile, women's movements searched for solidarity across borders. Localities of women are scattered across societies and cultures, and their experiences are marked by different social, cultural, and historical backgrounds. This often resulted in conflicts—most notably as in the form of the North-South divide. The issue of women's solidarity is still an open question (e.g. Ong 1996). Nevertheless, the last decades have witnessed advances such as women from the North and South developing common strategies and many

have started speaking of the emergence of a “global women’s movement” (Dorsey 1997). This was followed by attempts to critically position local women’s movements in the global context (Basu 1995; Naples and Desai 2002).

It was in these political contexts that “women’s networks” and “women’s networking” started being talked about. On the one hand, more and more women striving for gender equality started using these terms. On the other hand, a large number of publications on women’s movements and women’s politics or gender politics followed this tendency. Most publications, however, tend to speak of women’s networks without elaborating on what they are. Furthermore, notwithstanding the growing interest in the rise of networks in relation to globalisation, there are still only a few attempts systematically to analyse women’s networks (see below).

## EMERGENT RESEARCH ON WOMEN’S NETWORKS

Since the late 1990s, some scholars have been examining women’s networks in more depth. Within the social sciences there appear to be two approaches to women’s networks. The first approach is concerned with the cooperative interaction between different feminist political actors. The second focuses on certain types of organisation as women’s networks and looks at their internal organisational structure.

Researchers of gender politics, especially of gender policy, began to employ the concept of the women’s network to study the interplay between several sets of actors who can be identified in the women’s policy-making process. For Vargas and Wieringa (1998) the sets of actors are the women’s movement, feminist politicians and feminist civil servants, *femocrats*.<sup>4</sup> Vargas and Wieringa call the interaction between the three groups aiming for women’s empowerment the “triangle of empowerment”, through which women’s needs are framed and transferred to policy issues and broader political support is striven for (Vargas and Wieringa 1998, 3-4). The triangle of empowerment represents a shared goal among the three sets of actors i.e. women’s empowerment.

The “velvet triangle” (Woodward 2001) also refers to the interaction between different types of female actors who nevertheless share a common goal of achieving the improvement of women’s status. By “velvet” she means the blurry divisions between the three actors. What is different from the “triangle of empowerment” is that the velvet triangle brackets together women civil servants and women politicians—who are separated in the triangle of empowerment—into the same set of actors. By doing this, feminist scholars are fitted into the third “angle” of the triangle. Drawing on the idea of the “velvet ghetto” (Ghilionis 1988, cited in Woodward 2001, 35), which refers to the horizontal segregation of women in firms, Woodward claims that most women in the velvet triangle find themselves in a male-dominated area

(Woodward 2001, 35). This is an important factor that explains why networking is important for women to achieve their agenda in institutionalised politics.

As an analytical tool, Lycklama á Nijeholt, Swiebel and Vargas (1998) use the concept of a triangle of empowerment to analyse the contribution of Latin American and Caribbean women's movements to the Beijing Conference. In this analysis, they emphasise, for example, the importance of the role played by women working in UN organisations to "familializ [*sic*] the movement with how to operate in official international spheres" (36), while femocrats in Latin American and Caribbean countries are less common than in some European countries. This study shows a picture of transnational gender politics, characterised by a mesh of relational ties growing within and across national societies. The "triangle of empowerment" is used also in analysis of the role of feminist actors in policy-making processes (e.g. Mazur 2001). It can be applied to study gender-policy making process on national-regional level, the EU level and the global UN level (Woodward 2001). For example, on the EU level, femocrats in the European Commission, feminist politicians in the European Parliament, academic experts in gender issues and women's movement activists constitute the three main actors in gender policy making process. These actors not only cooperate in the process, but also often share similar biographic experiences and are connected with each other by personal relationships.

Women's movement researchers appear to be most interested in the network structure of women's movement networks. Freeman (1973) was one of the first works that examined this. One of her important arguments was that formal and informal communications networks of individuals pre-exist before a women's movement emerges. She emphasised that communications networks are prerequisites for the origins of the women's movement. For Moghadam (2000), a women's network is rather a certain type of women's movement organisation. She analyses the origins, objectives and activities of four feminist movement networks of individual women or of organisations from different countries.<sup>5</sup> She identifies two other characteristics of transnational feminist networks aside from the transnational membership: "a conscious crossing of national boundaries and a superseding of nationalist orientations" (60-61) and "a common agenda across national borders" (62). This recognition is based on her strict differentiation between transnational and international, unlike that of most other writers on women's movements.

German literature on women's movement networks looks at the internal structure of women's networks in more detail. Regarding a network as an organisational form mediating between the local, the national and the global, Lenz (1999) holds that potential in feminist networks can ideally typically be thought—compared to the hierarchical, Weberian bureaucratic organisations—to possess the following characteristics:

- achieving flexibility and efficiency with limited resources;

- horizontal, egalitarian and reciprocal;
- homogenous and heterogeneous in terms of socio-cultural backgrounds (e.g. class, ethnicity); and
- oriented by personal communication and support and common aims for socio-cultural or political change.

Frerichs (2000) has studied local women's networks in Cologne, Germany (see also Frerichs and Wiemert 2000). Her studies see a newly emerged form of cooperation in women's networking between and among autonomous groups of women's movements, occupational associations and local political institutions that are engaged in women's policy. Conceptually, Frerichs takes a dualistic approach to women's networks: she terms both women's groups or organisations themselves and a set of relationships between the groups and/or organisations as women's networks. Methodologically, unlike most other studies, Frerichs explains how she studied the women's networks (Frerichs and Wiemert 2000). Drawing on grounded theory as the overall empirical research guide, she uses qualitative and quantitative methods including qualitative interviews, survey research and methods of social network analysis such as graphic description of networks. This makes the analysis more than merely a descriptive account.

Of particular interest in Frerichs' study is the existence of differences and inequalities within women's networks. She found that most women who come to the Cologne networks are from middle- or upper-class backgrounds in terms of education, social status and economic resources. But women involved in the networking can be differentiated in terms of possession of resources and this can affect the networking structure. Frerichs applies Bourdieu's theory of social capital (Bourdieu 1987). Bourdieu conceptualised social space in which people tend to be differentiated according to their family backgrounds, socialisation, education, social networks, tastes for clothes, music, food, etc, occupational and financial situations, and so on. Along with this, he showed how the amount of economic capital the person possesses is related to the amount of cultural capital they possess. So, for example, preferences for certain types of music or paintings tend to have affinity with certain levels of education and certain types of occupation. Drawing on this theory, Frerichs mapped out the women's networks she examines, according to the amount of economic capital and cultural capital the networks possess. As a result, she found out that, although the local political institutions such as the Women's Bureau (Frauenbüro) and the local Community Office for Women and Economy (Kommunalstelle Frau & Wirtschaft) play a role of broker in the whole picture of women's networking in the city, the "networking does not mean networking with all" (Frerichs and Wiemert 2002, 118). That is, apart from the local political institutions, women's networking occurs between organisations of women with similar middle- or upper-middle class backgrounds. For example, the Association of Women Entrepreneurs (Verband deutscher Unternehmerinnen) is not only constituted of women who

have relatively high incomes, but also networks itself with other organisations comprised of people with similar economic background, such as the Confederation of German Employers' Association, the German Association of Women Jurists and the European Women's Management Development Network. In an extreme contrast with the occupational women's networks, the networking of Women Against Unemployment (*Frauen gegen Erwerbslosigkeit*) shows a constellation of women's groups whose members have relatively few material resources. The inter-organisational network of the Women Against Unemployment consists of women's groups working in areas of violence against women, migrant women, women's health, etc. Relationally, these women's networks tend to be excluded from other networks including the Association of German Women Entrepreneurs. However, they do have links with some local institutions such as the Women's Bureau and the Community Office for Women and Economy. But the relationships of the Women Against Unemployment with these institutions tend to be "strategic" (Frerichs and Wiemert 2002, 130). This means that the Women Against Unemployment consciously tries to avoid institutionalisation, keeping a distance from public bodies. For example, in the case of the women's bureau, one reason for the purported relative weakness of the relationship is that the bureau has funding programs for the women's networks.

Networks have been analysed as being horizontal and egalitarian (eg. Meyer and Prügl 1999). However, those researching women's networks are increasingly noticing elements of conflict and exclusivity. Vargas and Wieringa (1998) emphasise the sometimes contradictory, even conflicting interests within a triangle of empowerment and call for the analysis of this dynamic. Woodward (2001) indicates a paradoxical aspect of the velvet triangle: one has to be recognised as participating in it by those who have power. This is a "puzzle" (Woodward 2001, 37) particularly for social movements that can be established and de-legitimised within this mechanism. In terms of access to the network, Woodward (2001) and Lenz (1999) mention that women's networks can be exclusionary as well as inclusive. In reference to the velvet triangle, Woodward (2001) also draws attention to the needed accommodation to the conditions specified by the state. To let information flow in the triangle, for instance, a common language—understandable for all the actors in the triangle—is necessary. In the case of achieving something in the institutional context, it is more or less indispensable to adjust to the official language of the state and public administration.

My research in Japan on women's networks of and between various sets of actors working in gender politics—e.g. activists, politicians and bureaucrats—also supports the existence of differentiation, exclusivity and informal hierarchies. Within the networks, women can be differentiated according to the resources they have, such as money, social contacts, social status, knowledge, information, skills, etc (see Tanaka forthcoming). Frerichs also found that women's networks tend to operate under the logic of "give and

take” and that this reciprocal basis plays a significant role in sustaining networking (Frerichs and Wiemert 2002). This is sometimes related to the question of membership of the networks. More specifically, those who have fewer resources may not be included within networks, because they cannot participate in reciprocal exchanges.

It is perhaps ironic that women’s networks do not always manage to practice their ideal of being equal and egalitarian, but it is no wonder that they have conflictual aspects just as do other types of organisation. This might challenge the “myth” of women’s networks as being horizontal, egalitarian and democratic by nature. As Lenz (1999) says, “Informal hierarchies are tacitly acknowledged but rarely investigated empirically or theoretically.”(65)

## TOWARDS RESEARCHING WOMEN’S NETWORKS IN GLOBALISATION

Studies of women’s networks still comprise a minority of network studies as well as of gender studies. To conclude, I would formulate several suggestions for further research on women’s networks. First, what a women’s network is should be clarified. Though we should not necessarily decide upon one single definition of network, refining this term is necessary for analysing women’s networks systematically. My suggestion would be using the network concept for an organisational-structural approach to women’s networks. Various network approaches, introduced above, would be helpful in generating such an approach, which is likely to start with basic questions about network structure such as: “What are the nodes?” “What do they consist of?” “Are there any connections between the nodes?” “What kind of relational ties exist between the nodes?” These questions can help identify a network structure, whether one use quantitative or qualitative approaches or combine both.

Second, future research on women’s networks should be more conscious of the new social formations within and across national societies. For this, the transnational network approach would offer insights. Whether the networks are transnational or not, our social worlds are increasingly intertwined with phenomena occurring across national boundaries, while the importance of territories and territorialities continues or is redefined.

This is related to the third point: methodology. As in the case of other kinds of networks, both quantitative and qualitative methods can be applied to women’s network research. The social network approach may be interesting for those who favour for quantitative approaches to networks (cf. Diani and McAdam 2003; Smith 1997). In the age of globalisation, qualitative methods will become increasingly important for future research on women’s networks. Transnational social formations entail the emergence of new features in our social worlds. It is necessary not only to test hypotheses on the basis of already established concepts and theories, as in quantitative

research, but also to tackle the complexity of new social realities by developing new categories and theories out of our own research. Qualitative methods may be useful in this enterprise.

Last but not least, analyses of women's networks should not overlook the question of power relations. Power relations are both external and internal to the networks. External power relations may involve other individuals, networks, groups or organisations. Examining the power dimension of networks challenges an idealised image of a women's network as a horizontal, egalitarian form of organisation. But such examination would contribute to a fruitful discussion about the problems as well as potentials of women's networks. Such discussion is also necessary to realise fully the potential of networks as innovative forms of organisation. Whether transnational or not, the power dimension of networks should be hard to ignore.<sup>6</sup> Women's networks are deeply related to feminist struggles for broader democracy; networking is a way that women can make links with one another to reach common objectives without ignoring diversities and differences between them.

## NOTES

1. Along with many books, a journal, *Social Networks: An International Journal of Structural Analysis*, provides a number of empirical studies conducted with the use of methods of social network analysis.
2. In this theoretical approach, there are two different views concerning the position of networks between "markets" and "hierarchies": networks as a hybrid form of organisation that contains characteristics of both "markets" and "hierarchies" (Sydow 1993) and networks as distinct forms of organisation that are neither "markets" nor "hierarchies" (Powell 1990).
3. Several journals have published special issues on policy networks. E.g. *European Journal of Political Research* (vol. 21, 1992), *Journal of Theoretical Politics* (vol. 14, No. 2, 1998), *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* (No. 24, 1993) and *Public Administration* (vol. 76, No.2, 1998).
4. The term, "femocrat" was created in the Australian context in reference to any feminist in bureaucracy (Eisenstein 1996). Drawing on this, Vargas and Wieringa (1998) also use it for "any feminist in the public administration." (20) More narrowly, Stetson and Mazur (1995) refer to femocrats as women in women's policy machineries.
5. Analysed are Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, Network Women in Development Europe, Women Living Under Muslim Laws and the Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region.
6. As several studies on transnationalism (Smith and Guarnizo 1999) or cyberspace (Wellman 1999; Sassen 1999) argue, newly created spaces are not transparent spaces in which everything is equally distributed, everyone is equally situated. The question of inequality should apply to spaces in which networks emerge. Also, studies on other types of networks, which this paper has partly reviewed, such as those in power structure research, show the significance of influence within network structure.



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