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New Cross-Border Alliances and Strategies of Resistance in a Post-NAFTA Mexico

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**Gendering Globalization in an Era of Transnational Capital:
New Cross-border Alliances and Strategies of Resistance in a
Post-NAFTA Mexico***

Marianne H. Marchand**

For a while now it appears that we have been living in a ‘post-world’ –the era of ‘post-nationalism’, of ‘post-development’, of ‘post-modernism’, of the ‘post-Cold War,’ and as some suggest, of ‘post-feminism’. Much ado about these developments in talk shows, magazines and the opinion pages in national news papers have led to a popularization of such debates. And, in turn, these discussions have stirred a wave of reactions by advocates of the ‘plus ça change’ camp. Interestingly enough, the most well-known of these claims, Fukuyama’s post-ideology/history thesis is grounded in the continuation of the two most prevalent ideologies and organizing structures of our times: liberalism and capitalism. One thing is clear though, these debates and recent events since the demonstrations against the third Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle are indicative of the fact that we are going through a period of important shifts and changes, both ‘materially’ and ‘ideationally’. The question that most of the participants in these debates and demonstrations are trying to grapple with is how are we going to make sense of all of these changes.

In this paper, I will try to unpack some elements of the more dominant discourse(s) on globalization and show current transformations are multidimensional and mediated through mechanisms and structures of inequality based on gender, ethnicity and class (to name just a few). At the same time the paper will try to show that within the context of these transformations new mechanisms of exclusion are emerging as well as new opportunities for certain (sub-) groups. The emergence of new inequalities, mixed with or super-imposed onto old ones, and of new opportunities - much heralded in dominant discourse on globalization and also adopted by

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international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations - is very much tied to the re-articulation of identities and attendant constructions of space and spatiality. In order to unpack the multidimensionality and gendered underpinnings of globalization (discourse) this paper will rely on the feminist approach of relational thinking. Relational thinking is based on the idea that “gender operates in at least at three distinct, yet interconnected ways: (1) ideologically, especially in terms of gendered representations and valorizations of social processes and practices; (2) at the level of social relations; (3) physically through the social construction of male and female bodies” (Marchand and Runyan, 2000: 8).

Using insights gleaned from the author’s recent research on the Mexican maquiladora sector and the Latin American horticultural sector¹ as illustration, this paper will attempt to show the contingent nature of identity re-articulation and the re-conceptualization of (gendered) bodies in the workplace as embedded in broad (er) global political and economic transformations. As such the paper will raise more questions than it will be able to answer, especially in terms of the broader implications: how do we have to rethink work and labor relations? What kinds of resistance (strategies) can be formulated? What does this mean for feminist (post-) development thinking?

In the first section of the paper I will outline the main tenets of globalization, showing in particular the multidimensionality of its processes and how these are being mediated through various structures of (power) inequality. Needless to say the discussions around globalization are a tricky swamp into which one gets easily drawn. It should be noted therefore from the outset that is not my intention to engage in another exercise of dealing with such questions as: what is globalization? Does it exist or not? And who are the major actors?² Rather I will show the complex nature of globalization or global restructuring. In the next section I deal specifically

¹ See “Competing Regionalisms in North America: Contestation, Spatiality and the Emergence of Cross-Border Identities” various versions of this paper have been presented at international workshops and conferences during 2000 and 2001; and “Engendering Globalization: From Subsistence Farming to Rural Industrialization and Agribusiness”, paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on “The situation of rural women within the context of globalization” organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 4-8 June 2001, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (available under UN document classification EGM/RW/2001/BP.1)

² For some of these discussions I refer to the introduction and the first couple of chapters in Marchand and Runyan (2000).

with gender and globalization. Here relational thinking will be used to show the gendered and interlocking nature of transformations in the global political economy. Section three will further develop these ideas by looking in particular at the transformations in Mexico's maquiladora-industry. It is argued that a triple feminization has taken place in Mexico's political economy. Finally, it will be argued that these transformations in the global political economy also involve re-articulation of space and attendant identities which is partially reflected in the emergence of a regionally based, transnational politics of resistance.

Global Restructuring: an overview

As was indicated in the introduction major transformations in the global political economy are taking place. Often these changes are captured under the "umbrella term" of globalization. As I have argued elsewhere, I prefer to use the term global restructuring instead of globalization (Marchand, 1995; see also Marchand and Runyan, 2000).³ Global restructuring refers to a complex set of processes and transformations which are multi-dimensional, occur at differing speeds and involve a re-articulation of boundaries between the public-private, global-local, national-international, as well as state-market-civil society (Marchand and Runyan, 2000). As such it encompasses economic, political social and cultural dimensions (Castells, 1996-98; Held et al., 1999; Scholte, 2000). Global restructuring involves changes in a wide range of areas, including trade liberalization, the emergence of a global financial system, changes in the process of production, a rapid diffusion of products, technologies, information, and consumption patterns plus a growing tendency toward individualism and individualized lifestyles in certain parts of the world. Politically, we also have seen changes in response to or as part of the previously described transformations. For instance, states have altered their relations with the market and civil society. In the last two decades states have withdrawn themselves increasingly from the market through, for instance, the privatization of state-owned enterprises. Instead they have taken on much more of a managing and balancing role, trying to stimulate economic development through indirect measures and balancing demands from the local to the regional and global levels. Manuel Castells has referred to this as the emergence of the network state, in conjunction with the

³ I also recognize that it is difficult to go against the 'flow' and stick to a different terminology than the now widely popularized term of globalization. In this paper I will try to be as consistent as possible and use the term global restructuring when dealing analytically with processes of globalization. I will use the term globalization when it is in line with dominant or popular discourse, as a way to represent the terminology employed in such discourse.

network society (Castells, 1996-98). It is often forgotten, however, that these processes and transformations are being mediated through unequal power relations, including those informed by gender, class and ethnicity, and tend to result in the social exclusion of particular groups such as minorities, the aged and women with minimum levels of education (Marchand and Runyan, 2000).

As the above provided definition of global restructuring is rather sketchy and abstract in an attempt to capture the complexities of the ongoing changes, it may be helpful to describe some of the major areas in which these changes have occurred or are still under way. Economically, global restructuring is associated with changes in the social organization of production, the liberalization of trade and the emergence of global finance. The introduction of new information and communication technologies has significantly changed production methods and its organization. In particular transnational companies (TNCs) have developed so-called global commodity chains (GCCs), integrating production from start to finish at a regional, or sometimes even global, scale (Gereffi, 1997; Held et al., 1999). The organization of these GCCs involves changes in the organization of production which are often captured by the term post-fordism. In order to increase or regain their competitiveness many TNCs restructured and refocused on core activities during the late 1970s and 1980s. As a result they introduced flexible production strategies which tend to be demand-oriented. This flexibilization involved significant changes in labor relations, creating on the one hand a group of core workers who became part of quality control teams, and on the other by employing people on a variety of flexible and thus less secure contracts. At the same time TNCs started to outsource large parts of their production process relying on just-in-time delivery (by themselves to clients and by their suppliers to themselves). This, of course, involved yet a further flexibilization of both the suppliers and the labor force employed by these suppliers. As Lourdes Benería and Martha Roldán have demonstrated in their seminal work The Crossroads of Class and Gender (1987), the further down the contracting (or commodity) chain one goes the more casualized and feminized the labor force becomes as these chains often reach into the informal sector and homework.

The changes in the organization and methods of production did not take place in isolation as economic globalization also involved the liberalization of trade and the emergence of a global

financial system. Together with deregulation and privatization trade liberalization has been pursued as one of the main objectives of the neoliberal economic agenda, which became the dominant platform for economic policy makers during the 1980s and 1990s. For most of the Latin American and African developmental states this meant that their role in the domestic economy significantly altered with the introduction of structural adjustment policies as well as ongoing reform policies since the early 1980s. In various sub-Saharan countries this led to a severe crisis of the state and, under certain conditions, has even indirectly contributed to outbreaks of civil war (Reno, 1998; Braathn, Bøås and Sæther, 2000; Hodges, 2001; Sæther, 2001). During the same period in Latin America the state became less responsive to the needs of one of its main constituencies, the urban middle classes. In Asia the financial crisis of 1997 has triggered similar changes. States in the former socialist countries have arguably undergone the most significant transformations and many policymakers in these countries are still trying to come to grips with the magnitude of changes their societies are facing. Although less dramatic, states in the OECD area have also undergone a restructuring, shifting away from their post-war welfare state regimes.

Overall, it is clear that there has been a re-articulation of the boundaries between the public and private and state and market whereby the latter domains are being favored. Recently however a backlash against the “rule of the market” and globalization has emerged. For one, failures of deregulation and privatization (e.g. the power failures in California and British Rail accidents) have resulted in an increased wariness and skepticism among a growing segment of the general public, in particular in Western Europe. In addition, the demonstrations in Seattle during the 1999 WTO ministerial meeting and in Prague during the IMF gathering, as well as the summer 2001 meetings in Gothenburg (European Union) and Genoa (G-8) are indicative of increased opposition against unbridled globalization (Rupert, 2000). Ironically, the increased activism of civil society groups has in part been stimulated by neoliberalism’s discourse on reducing the state and strengthening civil society. The question of course is whether NGOs and other grassroots organizations will become permanently involved in policymaking and implementation, as is already happening to a significant extent, and what this entails for issues concerning accountability, representation, participatory decision-making and formulating policy recommendations in any specific policy area.

Gendering Global Restructuring: representations, bodies and social relations

As has been argued above, global restructuring is not a neutral set of processes but is mediated through gender, ethnicity, class etc., thus producing and reproducing inequalities, but also providing new opportunities (Marchand and Runyan, 2000). Within the context of global restructuring we are witnessing the emergence of new (gendered) notions concerning the qualities needed to perform well in this changing environment. One example is the interest by the business community in incorporating and promoting a more “feminine” management style which tends to be more team-oriented, flexible and less hierarchical (Hooper, 2000). This change in perception has provided new opportunities to women in finding management jobs, although it appears that women’s initial advantage is already leveling off (Hooper, 2000). In terms of social relations we can observe some positive and negative developments. On the one hand, women’s contributions to society both in terms of paid and unpaid work are increasingly recognized. The activities of the UN and regional bodies, as well as women’s groups around the world have significantly contributed to this. On the other hand, emerging religious fundamentalisms have also negatively affected women’s position and empowerment in certain countries. Finally, bodies of men and women are socially constructed and social actors (including employers) tap into these constructions to justify certain social and employment practices. The “manual dexterity” argument often used to employ women in Export Processing Zones (EPZ) or for the peeling of shrimp is an example of this. As we will see below, the three dimensions of relational thinking combine to explain and understand the differential ways in which men and women relate to (global) transformations and the extent to which such changes may provide new opportunities or limitations to improve their situation.

Women and men enter the labor market as gendered beings. In other words, they are being considered for certain jobs at least in part on the basis of assumed gender characteristics. As has been well-documented for the export processing industry (Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Mitter, 1986; Ong, 1987) women became the preferred labor force because of gender-stereotyping which depicted them as docile, nimble-fingered and only working for some pocket money, as they were not seen as breadwinners. Interestingly, employers in the agro-industry have also tapped into existing gender ideology and contracted many female employees on the basis of their assumed

“gender” qualities (Barrientos et al., 1999). In the fruit export industry, which now has a highly specialized division of labor this means that women tend to perform tasks which require a high level of concentration and manual dexterity. They are mostly involved in cleaning, selecting and packing the fruit, which is associated with women’s traditional roles in food preparation and presentation. In contrast, men are found in the fields or perform tasks which are seen as more masculine and requiring less finesse and concentration such as transferring boxes (Barrientos et al., 1999).

Although the similarities between EPZs and the fruit and vegetable export industry are striking, local variations remain and may sometimes benefit women to some degree. For instance, in Chile employers don’t seem to prefer young unmarried women as labor force (Barrientos et al., 1999), while Kirstin Appendini found that for the Mexican fruit and vegetable industry this is the case (1995: 14). Although women often receive lower wages than men (e.g. the situation in EPZs), Appendini as well as Barrientos et al. found that this is reversed for specific jobs in the fruit and vegetable export industry where women tend to receive the highly desirable, and sometimes better paying, jobs in the packing area (Appendini, 1995; Barrientos et al., 1999).

Another example of the manipulation of gender ideology by employers is the case of the sugar cane plantations in Guatemala. Over the last 20 years the Guatemalan sugar plantations tripled their productivity (Oglesby, 2001). According to Elizabeth Oglesby, this was possible because the sugar plantations “are now devising alternate means to achieve labor discipline, by combining new technologies with wage incentives, human capital investments and a refashioning of workers’ identities” (2001: 16). In addition to providing heavier machetes, and mechanizing certain parts of the production process, the employers engaged in a masculinization of the labor force, by feeding the cane cutters high energy diets of 3700 calories daily (high in protein and carbohydrates) and by tapping into the cutters’ machismo by organizing competitions (with prizes) for production quotas. Competition among cutters has become so fierce that quite few of them inject themselves with vitamin B which is supposed to enhance their endurance and some even have resorted to amphetamines (Oglesby, 2001).

In the remainder of the paper I will use the example of the Mexican maquila industry and its predominantly female workforce to explore some of the connections between structural transformations, discursive constructs and representations of gendered bodies. The main argument put forth is that a triple feminization is taking place, namely a feminization of the labor force, a feminization of the Mexican political economy and a symbolic feminization. This in turn is reflected in the re-articulation of space and identities.

Triple feminization in/of Mexico: some connections

The regionalization or continentalization of the North American political economy, in conjunction with the institutional framework of the CUFTA (Canadian-United States Free Trade Agreement) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), has been leading to a deepening of the regional division of labor along neoliberal principles. Various metaphors have been employed to describe this, including the hub-and-spoke model or core-periphery model. While supporters of NAFTA have interpreted this regional division of labor as something positive, opponents have focused, in particular, on the social and economic costs of this neoliberal restructuring for ordinary people. For Mexico, in particular, the impact of the further deepening of the regional division of labor has been enormous. After the implementation of NAFTA its exports to the US market have improved considerably, although this has been somewhat off-set by increased levels of import (Mexico and NAFTA Report, 12 January 1999).

Yet, this supposedly positive picture alters when it appears that much of the exports have been a consequence of the exponential growth of the maquiladora industry or export processing industry. As feminist analysis has repeatedly pointed out, women are often targeted for jobs which have been created in the context of a global/regional economy organized around services and just-in-time production processes. The representation of women as being physically better suited for repetitive and often tedious tasks, as being more submissive and hence less likely to join a labor union than men, and their association with reproductive (often non-paid) labor have been the main rationale for this (see, for example, Fernandez-Kelly 1983). With the creation of the maquiladora sector in the late 1960s and its post-NAFTA boom Mexican women have been employed in great numbers in the maquiladoras and are also performing subcontracted sweatshop/homework labor (see, for example, Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Alonso Herrero, 1991;

Gonzalez et al., 1995; Kopinak, 1995; González González, Rodríguez Loredó, and Contreras Urbina, 1997)). Moreover, the employment of women and, increasingly, men in the maquiladora industry⁴ involves the manipulation of gender and gender relations in various ways. This is illustrated by the following passage taken from Debbie Nathan's article "Work, Sex and Danger in Ciudad Juárez"⁵:

But they [=young male assembly workers] often are deliberately segregated from their female counterparts: by job classification (women do "light" work, such as soldering circuit boards, while men put together bigger and heavier television cabinets); by the color of their work smocks (at one factory, men's are dark blue and women's light blue); and by physical placement in separate sections of the plant. Thus, men are marked different from women. Yet they are also derisively equated with women. For one, they earn the same wage as women: one that has always been recognized as a pittance, but which has for long been justified for females. Male maquila workers also feel devalued by management disregard for their masculinity. "Manliness" in male workers is ignored or even deprecated. At best, male operatives are invisible. At worst, those who misbehave or do bad work are disciplined by being moved to the female-only assembly sections. The ultimate humiliation for Juárez's young male workers is thus to be symbolically turned into women (1999: 27).

It is clear from this passage that Mexican male maquila workers find their masculinity under attack. Interestingly, the increased transnationalization and dependency of the Mexican economy (of which the maquiladora industry is the clearest expression) is often being perceived by critics in gendered terms as well. One example is the gendered metaphor used by former finance minister Jesus Silva Herzog in his reaction to President Salinas de Gortari's proposal for NAFTA: "Mexico should have waited to be caressed first, before dropping its pants."⁶ This statement alludes to one of the recurring images of Mexico as a young "maiden", who needs to be

⁴ This is because of a shortage of women workers. See Kopinak (1995) for an analysis of the changing make-up of the maquiladora workforce and her arguments why gender continues to be an important "vehicle" for the subordination of women.

⁵ This article appeared in the special issue "Contested Terrain: the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands", NACLA Report on the Americas, Volume XXXIII, No. 3 (November/December 1999).

⁶ Quoted in R.A. Pastor, "Post-Revolutionary Mexico: the Salinas Opening," Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, 32, 3, 1990, p. 17.

(romantically) wooed before any sexual advances can be made.⁷ At the same time, Silva Herzog's words reflect what Debbie Nathan (1999: 29) describes as Mexico's historical obsession with "open female bodies" which symbolically "signify the openness of the border to the needs of the "other" [=the USA]."⁸ The second example invokes the perceived threat of the USA/transnational capital to Mexico's manliness as is illustrated in the rather explicit caricature by El Fisgón, which depicts Uncle Sam holding Mexico, balancing on the edge of a cliff, literally by the testicles. In this caricature the cliff represents the financial abyss, created by the 1995 Mexican financial crisis, and the only way for Mexico to be "rescued" is being bailed out by the American government and private as well as multilateral financial institutions - but with severe conditionalities attached (El Fisgón, 1996: 82).

In general terms critics have challenged that the maquiladora industry, which is now not longer only present at the border but throughout much of Mexico, for not providing a balanced long-term development as it locks Mexico into a primarily low productivity, low-tech and high labor-intensive strategy. Although conditions seem to be somewhat improving, much of the attention from anti-NAFTA groups has been directed at the maquiladoras for their bad labor conditions, sexual discrimination and unsound environmental practices. As a result, various complaints have been filed under the Labor side agreement.⁹

The increased "maquiladorization" of the Mexican economy has resulted in a situation where, despite its export growth to the US and the growth rates of its economy as a whole, wages have been falling in real terms since 1993 (in addition to their steady decline in the 1980s). The unequal growth, both in terms of wages and in terms of the increased differentiation among sub-regions in Mexico, has even prompted the World Bank to caution for too much optimism.

⁷ See for a more detailed explanation of the use of gendered (and racial) images (sometimes literally in the form of caricatures) to depict Mexico and other Latin American countries: David Slater, 1997, "Geopolitical Imaginations across the North-South Divide: Issues of Difference, Development and Power," *Political Geography* 16 (8): 631-653; John J. Johnson, 1980. *Latin America in Caricature*. Austin : University of Texas Press.

⁸ Nathan is basing her discussion on the work by Pablo Vila (Border Identities: Narratives in Gender, Class and Religion on the U.S.-Mexico Border (unpublished manuscript)) and Norma Alarcon's influential work on the uses of images of the Virgin of Guadalupe and la Malinche as good versus bad woman in Mexican nationalist myth.

⁹ For detailed information see the publications and/or web sites of such organisations as: American Friends Services Committee, Canadian Labour Council, Committee for Justice in the Maquiladoras, Common Frontiers (Canada), Human Rights Watch, Labornet, Public Citizen, Red Mexicana de Accion Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC).

Apparently, the Mexican public is also not very optimistic as a poll of January 1999 revealed: two thirds believed that NAFTA had not brought anything positive to the country (Mexico and NAFTA Report, 12 January 1999).

Thus, the "feminization of labor" in the context of global restructuring involves on the one hand an enormous increase in the numbers of women workers in the formal (and informal) labor force. On the other hand it involves "the "flexibilization" and "casualization" of (especially women's) labor to keep labor costs down and productivity up in the name of free trade, global competitiveness, and economic efficiency" (Marchand and Runyan, 2000: 17). Finally, the examples discussed above illustrate in addition the symbolic feminization of the Mexican economy through gendered and sexualized representations and discursive constructs both at the level of the workplace and the state.

Another feature of the gendered impact of global restructuring is the re-articulation of the public-private divide (Marchand and Runyan, 2000). For instance, the economic problems since the mid-1980s have forced Mexican women to engage in a variety of household survival strategies resulting, among other things, in an increasing number of Mexican women migrating across the US border to earn an income and provide foreign exchange for their families, and by extension their government. Moreover, the North American continentalization of the late 1980s and 1990s has been superimposed onto the structural adjustment programs, which the Mexican state was required to implement under auspices of the IMF and World Bank. As is well-documented, this has led to cutbacks in social services and subsidies on food and transportation provided by the public sector –women have been disproportionately affected by these cutbacks because of their specific assigned (and expected) reproductive tasks as well as the types of productive labor (working in the public sector or performing contract or part-time work) in which they are engaged (see for example, Harrington 1992; Dahlerup 1994; WIDE et al. 1994; Sen 1997). In other words, economic privatization and deregulation are effectively creating a triple burden for women: engaging in productive labor to contribute to the household income, facing an increasing burden in terms of reproductive labor because the state has been reducing its responsibility in terms of social welfare, as well as participating in community level organizing in order to improve immediate living conditions. As some feminist scholars have documented this is often

leading to renegotiations of gender relations in households (see, for example Benería, 1992; Kromhout 2000; Moghadam 2000). Whereas such renegotiations can and have sometimes resulted in an increase in women's empowerment, it can also lead to quite the opposite, such as repeated incidences of alcoholism among male household members, domestic violence, and sexual abuse at both the workplace and at home (Nathan, 1999).

Finally, the restructuring brought about by the deepening of the regional division of labor has also affected communities, industries (in particular, forestry and fishing) and regional economies in Canada as well as parts of the manufacturing sector in the US (Public Citizen' Global Trade Watch, 1998; Canadian Labour Congress, 1999). It can be argued then that the continentalization or regionalization of the North American political economy is creating new social, political, and economic inequalities along the lines of class, race, gender and ethnicity (for more details see Marchand, 1999).

Space and spatialization of the North American Political Economy: implications for resistance strategies

The continentalization of the North American political economy has important consequences in terms of the ways in which regionalization processes are creating new social, economic and political spaces. In other words a fundamental transformation of Mexico's political economy involves, as we have discussed in the previous section, a 'maquiladorization' which is being accompanied by a reorganization and reordering of space. The creation of these new spaces is leading to and exacerbating forms of exclusion along the lines of class, gender and ethnicity. This involves the emergence of multiple, interlocking and reinforcing inequalities which are being perpetuated because they reflect stratified access to global spaces, a decline of the redistributive (developmental) state, the establishment of social hierarchies in global regimes of governance (cf. WTO or NAFTA) and the flexibilization of labor and labor markets (Scholte, 2000). At the same time the reordering of spaces is creating new opportunities for some women and men. As I have argued elsewhere, the contestation over and re-articulation of space also involve a production of meaning concerning the North American region (Marchand, 2000; 2001, forthcoming). As such it is foregrounding questions of identity and identity construction. Much this meaning production has focused on Mexico's most transnationalized space, Mexamerica, and

its relation to subaltern spaces. More specifically, it involves a renewed concern with modernity and modernization which is centered around a reinterpretation or even rejection of the images, narratives and symbols of the Mexican revolution (Marchand, 2000; 2001, forthcoming).

Against this background an interesting issue emerges on the connections between the re-articulation of space with attendant identity construction and emerging transnational strategies and practices of resistance. As we have suggested in the introduction, the emergence of anti-globalist groups in the last few years has engendered a keen academic as well as policy interest in the activities of transnational "protest groups." Often analyses about such groups are framed in terms of an emerging global civil society. However, such discussions about the emergence of a global civil society have spent very little, if any, attention to its spatial articulation, by focussing for instance on the possible emergence of a regional civil society. Instead most discussions about a global civil society have centered around definitional problems, the role of social movements and non-governmental organizations, and its connections to the state. One of the most interesting readings of global civil society has been provided by neo-Gramscians who argue that a global civil society has emerged in relation to global capitalist accumulation. Yet, a paradox emerges if we compare this reading with Michel Albert's suggestion that there are different (regional) types of capitalist accumulation. The question, which presents itself is whether we can still speak of a global civil society or whether we should interpret the emergence of a regional civil society as contingent upon regional regimes of accumulation as well as spatial articulations of "global civil society." An additional feature, which may contribute to the idea of an emerging regional civil society is the ongoing creation of regional institutional frameworks, such as NAFTA, Mercosur, EU, APEC, etc. As we have seen in the last few years, these institutional frameworks often provide focal points for social movements to rally around and can thus further engender a regional politics of resistance. This is not to say, of course, that a transnational politics of resistance takes place exclusively within a regional context or space.

It would go beyond the scope of this paper to fully elaborate the previous suggestions about the emergence of regionally/spatially articulated transnational practices and strategies of resistance. However, I wish to illustrate the rudimentary points raised through some brief examples. These examples illustrate that the politics of resistance not only are transnationalized, but that they also involve spatial (re-) articulations and constructions of identity.

Focusing in particular on the transnationalized politics of resistance in Mexico, we see that much of this is being concentrated in two opposite poles of the political economy's spatial hierarchy. On the one hand we see how many groups are opposing "neoliberal globalization" from the locality of "Mexamerica." RMALC and its activities around NAFTA, the Mexico-EU Agreement, The Free Trade for the Americas (FTAA), APEC etc. is a good example. The organization has many ties to groups in Canada and the US and forms part of the Hemispheric Social Alliance. Yet, RMALC is not exclusively directed at events in Mexico and the Western Hemisphere. It has ties to social movements and NGOs in Asia and Europe as well. As such it illustrates that one cannot assume an exclusive arena called regional civil society.

Although often less visible, women's groups have been very active in organizing within the transnational space of the Mexican (as well as the wider North American) political economy as well. Although they share certain commonalities with other (non-feminist or women's) groups they often employ different resistance practices foregrounding in particular issues of positionality and identity. For instance, during the discussions about the creation of NAFTA an interesting practice of resistance emerged, which has been labeled "feminist internationality" by Gabriel and MacDonald (1994). This feminist internationality entailed an explicit recognition of different subject positions and structural realities of the various Canadian and Mexican women's groups. Implicitly this practice of feminist internationality entailed a rejection of an imposed homogenous identity under NAFTA. After the implementation of NAFTA, i.e. during its consolidation phase, the focus of resistance of these women's groups has shifted: there is now less attention for questions of identity construction; moreover, attention is also less directed at legislative process around NAFTA and more general issues concerning free trade regimes. Instead the focus of these groups, most of them united in the Coalition for Justice for the Maquiladoras has shifted to see how far NAFTA rules (especially the labor and environmental side agreements) allow local groups to challenge labor and environmental practices. The focus of their attention has been primarily on challenging a variety of practices by the subsidiaries of major TNCs, the so-called maquiladoras. In fact we can see a somewhat of a bifurcation in this respect; RMALC is much more involved in a politics of resistance concentrated on challenging various (regional) free trade and investment agreements, while the Coalition for Justice in the

Maquiladoras is more interested in focussing on concrete border issues as they relate to labor conditions, environmental issues and human rights concerns. As such the latter also deals more specifically with women's issues. This bifurcation does not entail an unbridgeable gap, however, as both RMALC and the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras are participating in the Hemispheric Social Alliance.

In contrast to these examples of groups active in "Mexamerica" we find at the bottom of the spatial hierarchy the Zapatistas. Much has written about the Zapatistas and I will not here reiterate the arguments made elsewhere concerning the uniqueness of this movement (cf. Castells, 1997). The immediate context within which the Zapatistas are active is, of course, the subaltern space of Chiapas. According to the Zapatistas, the combination of the historic legacy of large landholdings, recent land reforms in Mexico allowing for privatization as well as the implementation of NAFTA have further paved the way for the production of cash crops (and the importation of staple goods) thus seriously affecting already marginalized indigenous communities. Although the Zapatistas are primarily active within a local and national context, this does not mean that their politics of resistance are not transnationalized. From the onset, the group has used advanced communication technology (e-mail, internet etc) to reach beyond the boundaries of the immediate struggle. It explicitly located its struggle spatially within a wider national, regional and global context using the cosmopolitan argument that we are all living on the same planet, even in the same galaxy, and share our humanity. As such it has fostered and has been supported by a widespread transnational activist network consisting of solidarity groups (esp. in the rest of Latin America, the US and Europe). This widespread support has been further strengthened by the two "encuentros" (meetings) organized in part by the Zapatistas—one in Mexico and one in Spain.

What can we learn from these examples? All three show that spatial articulations of issues and resistance practices are interwoven with identity constructions and that the regional context does play an important, albeit not exclusive, role. As I have argued elsewhere (Marchand, 2000; 2001, forthcoming) these resistance practices involve a redefinition of Mexico's project of modernity based on a reinterpretation of the symbols, narratives and images of the Mexican Revolution in a regional/global context. As such these efforts are aiming for a grounded, socially inclusive ethical cosmopolitanism which has as its primary referent the (North American) region.

Conclusion

What I have tried to address in this paper is that from a (postcolonial) feminist perspective globalization/global restructuring is a complex and contingent set of processes which needs to be historicized and contextualized. Most important, in this respect, is to understand and challenge the ways in which gendered, racialized and sexualized representations and discursive constructs “dove-tail” with material inequalities. This may result in a situation in which inequalities are actually legitimated and sustained through such representations and discourses. As the example of North American continentalization and the maquiladorization of the Mexican political economy illustrates, the conditions (and processes) under which inequalities occur are not only multi-layered and contingent, but they also lead to a re-articulation of space and identities. It is in the context of these re-articulations that opportunities are being created to resist dominant representations and discursive constructs and thus challenge the (discursive) mechanisms, which help to sustain inequalities. The transnational organizing which has emerged in the context of NAFTA is indicative of how alternative, more inclusive spaces and identities are being created.

At this point it is too early to say what the outcome of such resistances and reformulations will be. All that is clear now is that different regionalism projects pursued by different actors are co-existing. As such, this coexistence already undermines the representation or discursive construct that North American continentalization can only lead to one outcome. Instead, these different projects reflect different expressions of regional identity. For instance, the North American elite-led regionalism project based on neoliberal principles is connected to an emerging regional identity based on notions of exclusive cosmopolitanism (see Marchand, 2000; 2001, forthcoming). On the other hand, opposition groups have formulated an alternative ethics-based regional identity or more inclusive cosmopolitanism around notions of social and environmental sustainability social justice. These different projects and associated partial identities are also tied to different positions and policies toward those who may be excluded from the overall process of global/regional restructuring. The elite-driven neoliberal regionalism project is primarily focused on a minimalist institutional framework for trade and investment. The broad coalition of opposition forces is clearly supportive of a much more inclusive, socially driven regionalism project. As such it is challenging the gendered, sexualized and racialized discursive constructs

and dominant representations which help to legitimate and perpetuate a whole complex of inequalities on which the North American continentalization project is being constructed. The practices of resistance developed by a range of groups are important in a variety of ways. Not only because they involve concrete examples of a transnational politics of resistance and because they represent an alternative project and attendant (regional) identity, but also because through their practices they are actually constructing a regional civil society.

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