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**CROSSING BORDERS:  
FEMINISM, INTERSECTIONALITY  
AND GLOBALISATION**

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# **CROSSING BORDERS: FEMINISM, INTERSECTIONALITY AND GLOBALISATION**

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This paper is motivated by the question of how to generate political strategies and processes that can facilitate the development of broad-based coalitions across differences. To accomplish this goal, I argue, it is also necessary to create stronger links between local organising and transnational politics, and, in turn, to translate the political strategies and organising frames developed on the transnational political stage to benefit local social and economic justice movements. I am especially interested in considering how difference matters in these diverse efforts and how different discursive frames mobilise activism and shape political claims in campaigns for social and economic justice in different locations.

Global class formations are, by necessity, the consequence of extensive, often contentious, political organising that takes place in local communities across the globe. I wholeheartedly agree with European sociologists Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen that 'What is missing [in the literature on resistance to neo-liberal globalisation] is a strong sense of process: of how movements develop through the fusion of people's attempts to meet their local needs and organize around their particular issues, via collective processes of learning through struggle at many levels' (2007: 431).

The last issue brings to the fore the need to generate an intersectional form of praxis. Intersectional analyses require crossing many different kinds of borders including those drawn between academic disciplines, between academic feminism and feminist activism, and between local and transnational politics. This paper considers how activists and activist scholars conceptualise the many borders that inhibit the development of solidarity across different constituencies and political concerns. My analysis dovetails well with Chris Chase-Dunn and Terry Boswell's discussion of global democracy, which they define as 'real economic, political and cultural rights and influence for the majority of the world's people over the local and global institutions that affect their lives' (2004: para 29).

## **Intersectional feminist praxis**

Calls for analyses that simultaneously take into account the dynamics of race, class, gender and other dimensions of social inequality and difference have been central to feminist scholarship for decades. The call for intersectionality was first heard from feminists of colour who critiqued approaches that constructed women's concerns without attention to the ways that race, class, nation and sexuality shaped women's experiences.

Intersectional theorists offer a variety of approaches that include a focus on either an individual (embodied or experiential) level of analysis; a relational or interactional framework; or a social structural analytic view. An experiential or embodied approach emphasises the ways in which diverse social locations shape lived experience. A relational approach focuses on the construction of power and oppression through social interaction.

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Rather than locating an intersectional analysis in the embodied experiences of diverse social actors or in the intersection of systems of oppression, the third approach examines the social structural conditions that contribute to different forms of inequality. Leslie McCall uses the construct ‘configurations of inequality’ in her structural intersectional analysis of the ways ‘in which race, gender, and class intersect in a variety of ways depending on underlying economic conditions in local economies’ (2001: 6).

McCall emphasises the importance of regional variation, an emphasis that is also featured in Evelyn Nakano Glenn’s (1992) historical analysis of gender, race and class in three different regions of the US. While Glenn focuses on the relationships between white women and women of colour in interdependent labour contexts, McCall uses quantitative data to examine the structure of inequality in the labour markets of different regions.

I have also identified a fourth approach that, in my view, is more powerful than the other approaches in that it brings into view the multiple dimensions of intersectionality. I call this type of intersectional analysis an epistemological approach. This approach draws on the insights from the different theoretical perspectives developed to analyse gender, race and class inequalities. For example, I draw on insights from materialist feminism, racialisation theory, political economic theory and queer theory for my intersectional research on social policy, citizenship and community activism.

An epistemological view is also evident in Patricia Hill Collins’ and Dorothy Smith’s approaches. Collins’ (2000) intersectional approach centres on the construct ‘matrix of domination’. She identifies four dimensions of power that form the ‘matrix of domination’ and that are woven together to shape Black women’s social, political and economic lives:

- (1) a structural dimension (i.e. ‘how social institutions are organized to reproduce Black women’s subordination over time’ (2000: 277);
- (2) a disciplinary dimension, which highlights the role of the state and other institutions that rely on bureaucracy and surveillance to regulate inequalities;
- (3) a hegemonic dimension, which deals with ideology, culture and consciousness; and
- (4) an interpersonal dimension, the ‘level of everyday social interaction’ (ibid).

Collins argues that ‘By manipulating ideology and culture, the hegemonic domain acts as a link between social institutions (structural domain), their organizational practices (disciplinary domain), and the level of everyday social interaction (interpersonal domain)’ (2000: 284).

Dorothy Smith’s (1987, 1990, 1999) approach to intersectionality includes attention to historical, cultural, textual, discursive, institutional and other structural dimensions that contour the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, and national and religious identity, among other social phenomena. She uses the term ‘relations of ruling’ to capture the ways in which these different dimensions shape everyday life. Her institutional ethnographic approach is especially powerful for revealing how interactions within and across these different dimensions of social life produce contradictions and tensions that can create the grounds for resistance and politicisation.

Regardless of whether one takes an embodied, relational, structural or epistemological approach to intersectional analysis, an intersectional angle of vision inevitably highlights the limits of dichotomous formulations and borders between: us–them, oppressor–oppressed, western–nonwestern, local–global, activism–scholarship and theory–practice. In my own work, I argue that an intersectional approach provides a powerful analytic lens through which activist scholars

can uncover what Grewal and Kaplan (1994) term ‘scattered hegemonies’ that differentially structure our everyday lives.

Perhaps the most powerful approach to intersectionality is what I call ‘intersectional feminist praxis’. This approach offers methods for contesting dominant categories and revealing the complexities of relations of ruling as they are manifest in everyday life. In fact, if one views the epistemological frames mentioned above as derived from praxis, then this form of intersectionality overlaps significantly with the previous approach. However, it also foregrounds the ways in which activism or experience shapes knowledge, something that is often lost when theoretical approaches are institutionalised in the academy. This approach to intersectionality reflects the feminist praxis that gave rise to the concept and honours the fact that theory develops in a dialogic fashion from practice.

### **Border crossing**

This is not the first talk I have had the opportunity to give this academic year. Last semester, I was invited to give a talk at McGill University in Montreal. In preparation for the talk, I went to the website for one of the talk’s main sponsors, the McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women. There I came across a group called Women Without Borders. The group was founded by a women’s studies student in the autumn of 2006.

As I read their mission statement, I wondered why the title of this group troubled me since it was evidence that feminist activism was alive and well at McGill. Was it the fact that it seemed to hark back to the failed promise of global sisterhood? Was it the fact that this frame seems to be so popular that even Microsoft has taken it up in a new ad campaign that claims: ‘We see business without borders’? Or was it my scepticism that a call to transcend borders can easily lead scholars and activists alike to render invisible the complex differences that differentially shape women’s experiences in different parts of the globe?

Viewed from one perspective, Women Without Borders is an exciting new venture developed by young feminists interested in exploring, in their words, ‘the possibilities of greater solidarity within a feminist movement by examining different aspects of culture and the subsequent links that can be made between local and international gender issues. Women Without Borders advocates change through student initiatives that lead to tangible results and believes this is a key component to linking academia and activism’ (2008).

Among the actions they have taken was a 24-hour fast (which they termed ‘famine’) to raise funds to contribute to the UN Population Fund’s mission in Darfur. They describe this mission’s work as focused on ‘tangibly improv[ing] the lives of women living in refugee camps through an emphasis on skill-training, sexual violence prevention, and trauma counseling’. This action seems less like political activism and more like the humanitarian approaches of other groups using the phrase ‘without borders’ in their name.

When I searched the internet for groups ‘without borders’, I discovered that the term has become so ubiquitous that almost every professional identity was represented. I found Teachers Without Borders, Librarians Without Borders, Reporters Without Borders, Scientists Without Borders and Lawyers Without Borders. I also found MBAs Without Borders, Acupuncturists Without Borders, Builders Without Borders and Basketball Without Borders.

Lawyers Without Borders viewed their mission as ‘crossing borders to make a difference’ by ‘providing pro bono services to Rule of Law initiatives, Human Rights work, and non-

governmental organizations from around the world'. Sociologists Without Borders defined their mission as promoting 'an understanding that collective goods including a sustainable environment cannot be privatized'. These groups foregrounded their politics in their mission statements. However, most of the groups 'without borders' defined their mission in purely humanitarian terms. For example, Mothers Without Borders defined their mission as supporting 'programs that ensure that orphaned and vulnerable children [in Mexico, Romania, Guatemala, Ecuador among other countries] are provided with safe shelter, nutritious food, clean water, education, health care ... opportunities to contribute to their community and access to caring adults'. Clowns Without Borders provided performances for people in refugee camps and zones of conflict to help relieve their stress.

However, I also found a number of groups that were not focused on humanitarian goals. For example, Photographers Without Borders saw their mission as 'picturing a better world through the sale of fine art photography'. When I clicked on the link for Careers Without Borders, a recruitment service for international development workers, I was advised to 'join Careers Without Borders and get discovered by employers'. MBAs Without Borders stated their goal as bringing 'innovative solutions to developing countries by matching experienced business volunteers with local businesses and NGOs to unleash a big secret ... *Business Can do Amazing Things!*'

In a book called *Global humanitarianism: NGOs and the crafting of community*, communications scholar Robert DeChaine (2005) offers a critical assessment of Doctors Without Borders, which was founded in 1971 by French doctor Bernard Kouchner. Kouchner was moved to establish the group as a consequence of his experience in Biafra during its fight for independence from Nigeria. As James Taub reports, the Red Cross, who first sponsored Kouchner's and other doctors' visit to provide medical assistance, would not permit them 'to speak publicly about what they viewed as state-sponsored genocide' (Taub 2008: 48). Doctors Without Borders was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999. Despite the politics that form the backdrop to the development of Doctors Without Borders, the group 'claims complete political neutrality ... premising its borderless actions on a professed right of interference in the name of ... humanitarian values' (DeChaine 2005: 352). As DeChaine explains, 'Gaining broad moral legitimacy from its adherence to the conception of "humanity" enshrined in the UN's Declaration of Human Rights, [Doctors Without Borders] is able to mobilize popular support for its deterritorialized action – but [he cautions] any moves to deterritorialize space ... necessarily entails concomitant reterritorializations that have implications for those in whose name action without borders is undertaken' (2005: 352).

As I reflected on DeChaine's critique, I thought about the number of times my students in women's studies said they no longer claimed feminism as their political identity. Instead, they were drawn to 'humanism' because they believed it offered a broader political identity. It is this claim to humanism along with the process of reterritorialisation that most concerns me when I see feminist groups take up the frame 'without borders'. Perhaps the call 'beyond borders' participates in the very dynamic that feminists like Chandra Mohanty (2003), who calls for 'feminism beyond borders', caution against.

Many of my students are focusing their activist energies far from the local concerns that shape their everyday lives without effectively exploring the ways in which the neo-liberal global economic and political agenda is landing in the places they inhabit. Sociologist Francisco Entrena cautions that

ease of communication tends to make us forget what is happening on our doorstep and turns our attention to what is going on thousands of kilometres away. We are becoming more and more linked to what is distant and alien, and more and more detached from what is near and familiar. In this way, society is undergoing increasing deborderization or deterritorialization of symbolic-cultural points of reference in collective and individual identity. (2001: 303)

What are the political consequences of focusing our activism on organising efforts beyond the local? On the one hand, how can transnational organising efforts be conducted in such a way that the local remains in view? And, on the other hand, what strategies do we need to develop that can facilitate linking the local with the transnational? How can activists who do focus on the local avoid, in Entrena's words, 'a nostalgia which creates or fans the flames of phenomena such as local nationalism or xenophobia' (2001: 306)?

Many critics of locality-based struggles have dismissed community-based protests as parochial or particularistic. These critics view with suspicion the emphasis on localism, community and tradition that often accompanies locality-based struggles. In contrast, while these concerns are somewhat justified given the extent to which many community-based actions are designed to protect individual interests or narrowly conceived community values, I have witnessed the power of local struggles in the development of political analyses and strategies that contribute to broader movements for progressive social change.

### **Theorising the border**

Like many scholars here at the University of South Australia, I situate my work at the border of scholarship and activism, and disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge and practice. Locating myself in these academic borderlands (to borrow from Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), the scholar activist whose work has contributed most to the development of what is now called 'border theory') I have been preoccupied, even obsessed, with understanding how to link local organising with extra-local and transnational efforts; as well as to understand the ways in which activists draw on transnational organising frames and documents and extra-local support for local struggles.

To begin with, how do activists and activist scholars conceptualise the local and the global? How does the notion of borders enter into these constructions and how have the many different approaches to borders and borderlands entered into academic discourse and activist strategies? How do these different understandings contribute to the limits and possibilities of linking local struggles with transnational organising? Furthermore, how has the construction of borders changed over time and, more specifically, how are borders of different kinds (geographic, emotional, political, theoretical, institutional) shaping organising efforts? While I will not be able to address all of these issues here, I will offer some thoughts about the notion of borders that I hope will be the grounds for future discussion. I will first provide a brief overview of the contemporary trends in 'border theory' as it relates to organising and then conclude with a discussion of intersectionality as a form of praxis.

Most contemporary authors writing about 'borders' are focused on the geographic borders between nation-states and the borders between legality and illegality that are set through immigration law and citizenship. However, within this literature we see a number of different ways of theorising the border.

In her book *The citizen and the alien*, Linda Bosniak defines the border as ‘a site that divides insiders and outsiders, and where decisions about who may or may not become insiders are made. It is, moreover, a sphere with its own normative logic, one that itself is structured neither entirely by insider nor outsider but which lies at the interface between them’ (2006: 126). Anzaldúa’s analysis of borderlands offers a more dynamic vision. She writes: ‘A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants’ (1987: 3).

The idea of the border as a fluid, ever-changing space ‘which must be (constantly) negotiated – crossed, transgressed, played with, inhabited’ (DeChaine 2005: 357) stands in stark contrast to analyses of geographic and other structural borders that divide insiders and outsiders or citizens and aliens. For example, the US–Mexico border is the subject of constant surveillance of one sort or another. Legislators, the media, the Minutemen and other anti-immigrant groups in communities across the US are engaged in physically and rhetorically policing the US border. Policing the US border has become one of the most salient discursive frames for the politics of fear and insecurity that has deepened since 9/11. Gated communities, racial profiling, educational tracking and so-called welfare reform also serve to divide the deserving citizen from others constructed as non-deserving.

These structures and policies, among others, further the politics of fear and division that shape the everyday lives of all residents of the US regardless of formal legal status. Racial profiling places further constraints on anyone who is perceived as non-American. And I mean this both in the legal and patriotic sense of the term. Tighter border control measures are putting extra pressure on residents who live and work along the US–Mexico border. As Maria Luisa O’Connell, president of the Border Trade Alliance, complained: ‘We are Americans who live at the border, with our economy and livelihood that depend on moving efficiently back and forth ... Now suddenly we have measures that make it less efficient but don’t make us any safer’ (Preston 2007: para 14).

Luis Garcia, the El Paso field director for Customs and Border Protection, said the new policy that required border control agents to check passports or other official photo ID against law enforcement, immigration and anti-terrorism databases demands a change of culture. He explained that ‘These two communities are very interlinked, not only by trade and commerce, but by family, religion, education ... When a person leaves El Paso to go to Juárez, it’s like going across the street. They don’t consider it leaving the country’ (Preston 2007: para 24).

Here I want to point out another border that is too often taken for granted, namely the so-called boundary between the state and civil society. In their study of the organising efforts of women’s micro-credit groups in Morocco, Poster and Salime analyse the ‘complicated transnational web of funding, which involves not only the international agencies and the state, but varying forms of big and small local women’s organizations’ that results in a hierarchical arrangement that ‘can be antithetical to women’s empowerment and transnational feminist movements’ (2002: 190). The co-optation of women’s leadership by international NGOs has been well documented in other contexts as well (see, for example, Ghodsee 2004; Hrycak 2002). Feminist scholars who explore the role of NGOs in post-socialist countries have been especially critical of the problems associated with dependence on international NGOs for funding and other resources.

As political scientist Leela Fernandes also emphasises, ‘the boundaries between state and civil society are not predetermined or self-evident’ (2005: 57). She further notes that state practices draw on ideologies of race, gender and nation to both ‘invoke and produce the boundaries of categories such as civil society, civilization, terror, and terrorism’ (p. 58).



In a fascinating chapter in the edited book *Making threats: biofears and environmental anxieties*, Ronnie Lipschutz and Heather Turcotte point out, ‘No one is safe, but no one is beyond suspicion’ (2005: 31). For anyone who has taken a flight in or out of the US, the ritual of security checks and limits on the amount of fluids we can take on board the plane has risen to the height of absurdity. (Travelling to Canada with my year-old twin daughters on the morning following the shoe bomber’s arrest at London’s Heathrow airport, we were forced to pour out their milk and water, and throw away their diaper cream before we could pass through security.)

Perceptions of who is or is not an American also shapes the mobility of US citizens who are perceived as unpatriotic. In October 2007, two anti-war activists were stopped at the Buffalo–Niagara Falls Bridge and denied entry to Canada due to their protest-related arrests. One of the activists was Medea Benjamin and the other was Ann Wright, a retired US Army colonel and a former deputy ambassador who ‘served 16 years in the US diplomatic corps representing the US government in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, ... Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia’. She ‘was given the US Department of State’s Award for Heroism for [her] role in the 1997 evacuation of 2500 persons from the civil war in Sierra Leone ... In March, 2003, after thirty-five years of military and diplomatic service to the United States, [she] resigned from the US diplomatic corps in opposition to President George W. Bush and Vice-President Richard B. Cheney’s decision to wage war on Iraq’ (Wright 2007: para 1–2).

Both women are members of Code Pink, the anti-war group that uses the internet to organise against the war in Iraq and, in their words, work to ‘stop new wars, and redirect our resources into healthcare, education and other life-affirming activities’ (Code Pink nd: para 1). In fact, Benjamin is one of the founding members of the group. Benjamin and Wright were told that ‘they would need to be “criminally rehabilitated” before they could gain entry into Canada’ (Grim 2007: para 6). Again, ‘No one is safe, but no one is beyond suspicion’ (Lipschutz and Turcotte 2005: 31).

### **Borderlands and feminist praxis**

In these examples, borders inhibit free movement, freedom of association, and access to social, civil and political rights more generally, but borders and boundaries can also foster freedom. In other words, they can ‘both protect and violate life’, in the words of Johns Hopkins political scientist William Connolly (1995: 163). In their introduction to a recent issue of the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Mechana Nayak and Jennifer Suchland offer a similar ‘view of “the border” as paradoxical – as a place of everyday violence and space for potential radical political subjectivity’ (2006: 480).

The potential for ‘radical political subjectivity’ is the hallmark of Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) analysis of *la frontera*. Anzaldúa and other scholars influenced by her work view borderlands as sites that can enable those dwelling there to be able to negotiate the contradictions and tensions found in diverse settings. In response to this view of borderlands, Temple University sociologist Pablo Vila expresses concern about what he sees as ‘the tendency to construct the border crosser or the hybrid ... into a new *privileged subject of history*’ (2003: 307). As Vila points out, border theory now takes as its

object of inquiry any physical or psychic space about which it is possible to address problems of boundaries: borders among different countries, borders among ethnicities within the United States, borders between genders, borders among disciplines, and the like. Borderlands and border crossings seem to have become ubiquitous terms to

represent the experience of (some) people in a postmodern world described as fragmented and continually producing new borders that must again and again be crossed. And if current border studies and theory propose that borders are everywhere, the border-crossing experience is in some instances assumed to be similar: that is, it seems that for the 'border crosser' or the 'hybrid,' the experience of moving among different disciplines, different ethnicities, and different countries and cultures is not dissimilar in character ... This approach not only *homogenizes distinctive experiences* but also *homogenizes borders*. (2003: 308)

... and cultural identities. Furthermore, as Vila points out, 'For scholars doing border studies from the Mexican side of the line [along the US–Mexico border, and I would add from almost any other community across the US], it is difficult to see the border as mere metaphor, as the epitomized possibility of crossings, hybrids, and the like' (pp. 312–13).

### **Translation work**

So how should we conceptualise borders in our attempts to organise across them. Well, my first caution is that, regardless of the social location from which organising takes place, it remains important to recognise the myriad of ways borders are constructed, how they function to divide us, and what purposes they serve for different constituencies. Perhaps borders drawn by grassroots activists in different communities should be respected as we attempt to support their campaigns for social and economic justice or to envision links between their concerns and issues that derive from another social location. Here I am reminded of Rigoberta Menchu's (1984) discussion of the silences in her testimony – things she would not speak about to outsiders for fear that they might be used against her community.

Law professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos is among the many scholars who are trying to understand the factors that contribute to the development of globalisation from below. He uses the image of 'translation work' as a way to 'clarify what unites and separates the different movements and practices so as to ascertain the possibilities and limits of articulation and aggregation among them' (Santos 2004: 182).

Santos points out that, 'Because there is no single universal social practice or collective subject to confer meaning and direction to history, the work of translation becomes crucial in defining, in each concrete and historical moment or context, which constellations of nonhegemonic practices carry more counterhegemonic potential' (2004: 184). He also draws on the concept of the 'contact zone' to describe the 'social fields in which different normative life worlds, practices, and knowledges meet, clash, and interact'. Contact 'zones are characterized by the disparity among the realities in contact and by the inequality of the power relations among them' (p. 184).

In multicultural contact zones, it is up to each cultural practice to decide which aspects must be selected for multicultural confrontation. In every culture, there are features deemed too central to be exposed and rendered vulnerable by the confrontation in the contact zone, or aspects deemed inherently untranslatable into another culture. These decisions are part and parcel of the work of translation itself and are susceptible to revision as the work proceeds. If the work of translation progresses, it is to be expected that more features will be brought to the contact zone, which, in turn, will contribute to further translation progress. (p. 185)

I understand translation work to have at least two components: modelling democratic practice in everyday organising – in other words, seeking opportunities to organise with others as equals and putting democracy into practice – and identifying ways to link the issues and analysis generated from one campaign or social movement to another in order to strengthen praxis.

The first component reminds me of the 1960s organising efforts shaped around the notion of ‘participatory democracy’. In fact, a version of this trope made its way into the 1964 War on Poverty legislation as an emphasis on the ‘maximum feasible participation of residents in poor neighborhoods’ in employment and decision making. While the US state’s support for community activism and community decision making was short lived,<sup>1</sup> local residents (a disproportionate number of whom were women of colour) seized this window of opportunity to improve the services and quality of life in their neighbourhoods.

While state-sponsored ‘maximum feasible participation’ was a failed experiment, we now have models of participatory democracy that offer other strategies for broadening citizen input into decisions that affect daily life. For example, participatory budgeting (Baiocchi 2005) is now practised in a number of cities; the most well known is Porto Alegre, Brazil, which first implemented this strategy in 1989. Participatory budgeting involves ‘a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making, in which ordinary city residents decide how to allocate part of a public budget through a series of local assemblies and meetings’ (ParticipatoryBudgeting.org 2008: para 2).

The spread of participatory budgeting to cities in Latin America, Europe, Asia, Africa and North America is one example of border crossing of activist frames and strategies that incorporates the egalitarian democratic principles espoused by feminists and others committed to social and economic justice.

The development of gender budgets, a product of feminist activism here in Australia, is another strategy that has been exported from a national context to the transnational stage. It has been incorporated into the UN’s Beijing Platform for Action and taken up by activists in many other countries. As Rhonda Sharp and Ray Broomhill (2002) explain, it is important to examine the implementation of gender budgeting in the local context to determine its effectiveness and identify the limits and possibilities for enhancing gender equity through government expenditures. Sharp and Broomhill conclude that ‘the closure of available spaces for contestation within the state may necessitate a more broadly based economic strategy by feminists’ (2002: 43). They call for increased community awareness and involvement, as captured by the community-based Canadian alternative federal budget approach.

I am reminded here of Iris Young’s important work on deliberative democracy and her insightful analysis of both external and internal exclusions that limit the participation of ethnic and racial minorities, women, people with disabilities, working-class residents and those who do not share the dominant language (see Fung 2004). Democratic and deliberative processes require an understanding of difference to ensure the widest participation and inclusion possible. As Chase-Dunn and Reese also emphasise in their discussion of the World Social Forum, the process of ‘creating democratic mechanisms of accountability through which WSF participants can engage in global collective action and move towards greater political unity remains an important political task’ (2007: para 26). However, it is important to address this challenge at all

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1 For example, by 1971 most community action programs were circumscribed by narrow definitions of service delivery that undercut the enactment of maximum feasible participation. See Naples (1998).

levels of organising on behalf of social and economic justice. In fact, the problem of access and representation remains, even with attention to creating deliberative and democratic structures of governance.

As many other activist scholars note, the rural poor, indigenous people, the working class and women are underrepresented in transnational social justice movements. Even with the expansion of the internet, which many have touted for its value in broadening the base for dialogue, deliberation and movement organising, many people throughout the world do not have access to this technology or the skills required for web-based engagement with other activists.

The second meaning I take from Santos' analysis of globalisation from below relates to efforts to bridge different social movements to generate broader coalitions for social and economic justice. Women activists are among the most skillful practitioners of this bridging work. As members of movements in support of the environment, peace and justice, anti-violence, civil rights and indigenous rights, women activists have applied gendered and feminist analyses to the organisation of and strategy used by these movements to integrate the movement politics with the expressed political goals of social justice, participatory democracy and social change.

Translation work also includes attending to how different organising frames and political strategies travel from one context to another. In her analysis of policies against sexual harassment and 'common feminist tropes, such as "the personal is political"', Jennifer Suchland points out the border-crossing limits of these frames. For example, she found that since they do not translate to the Russian context they 'do not [serve to] politicize violence against women' (Suchland 2007).

Another obvious dimension of translation work relates to the need to temper our claims to global sisterhood and to listen more closely to how different women define their needs and political strategies. Building on Jane Jaquette's (1995: 48) insightful analysis of the Mid-decade UN Conference on Women held in Copenhagen in 1980, Mary Hawkesworth notes that 'feminist activists may share strong commitments "to improve the condition of women", but there [is] "no prior epistemic community of agreement" about what such improvement entails or which strategies [are] most likely to achieve it' (2006: 126).

### **Linking local struggles for basic needs**

Feminist activists and scholars have long debated the possibilities for an anti-racist and post-colonial transnational progressive movement that does not reproduce the inequalities that mark the divisions of North and South or western and eastern regions of the world. Some coalition strategies that I find most promising are those linking local concerns with broader neo-liberal policies and global economic restructuring.

For example, the Iowa-based Women, Food, and Agriculture Network (WFAN), a group founded by women family farmers in Iowa, tie their organising efforts to the international 'food sovereignty' movement. They define food sovereignty as a basic human right that is tied directly to sustainable agriculture and environmental health and safety, thus bringing together the interests of small farmers, consumers and environmentalists. Along with other organisations like Food First and DAWN (Development Alternatives for a New Era), WFAN has turned its attention to the problem of water privatisation. WFAN is working to: first, reject the hegemonic view that water is a commodity and redefine it 'as a basic human right and commonly held resource – like air – that can't be commodified and/or exploited for profit'; second, prevent transnational corporations from gaining control over public utilities and water delivery systems;

and third, challenge ‘the sale of permits to extract millions of gallons of publicly held water to bottle and/or sell for enormous profits’ (Adams 2004: 1, 6).

For US residents, the privatisation of water raises a number of immediate concerns: the added cost of purchasing water is one concern; but less visible is how this contributes to the neglect of our public water supply and the deterioration of the infrastructure that supports it. As US residents are refashioned as consumers, the claims-making strategies are also restructured so that claims are based on our ability to purchase services rather than as entitlements due to us as citizens. This shift from citizen to consumer further marginalises those who cannot afford to purchase the essentials. Water is now added to the list of basic needs, alongside housing and health care, that are outside the reach of a growing number of US residents.

Organising against the privatisation of water also has profound implications for people in other parts of the world. As Tara Logan points out in a recent AlterNet article,

In Africa, an estimated 5 million people die each year for lack of safe drinking water. And yet Africa, with its many cash-strapped countries, is targeted by multinationals that force governments to turn over their public water systems in exchange for promises of debt relief ...

This same philosophy of corporate control drives the construction of dams, which have displaced an estimated 80 million people worldwide. In India alone, over 4,000 dams have submerged 37,500 square kilometers of land and forced 42 million people from their homes. (2007: paras 20, 22)

Logan points out that control over our basic needs brings to the fore ‘fundamental questions of democracy itself: Who will make the decisions that affect our future, and who will be excluded? ... And if citizens no longer control their most basic resource, their water, do they really control anything at all?’ (Snitow, Kaufman and Fox 2007, quoted in Logan 2007: para 49).

I am not suggesting that only by organising for basic needs can we link local and global movements for social and economic justice and find common ground. However, I am recommending that we consider all local issues in the context of transnational struggles for social and economic justice. And vice versa. In fact, as anthropologist Akhil Gupta cautions, we need to resist replicating ‘the implicit spatial hierarchy constructed in’ distinguishing ‘the local from the global’; as he also points out, “‘the global’ too originates from *some* location’ (1998: 24, emphasis original).

Another example of transnational organising that is explicitly shaped around the concerns of working-class and poor people is found in transnational labor organising. Suzanne Franzway and Mary Margaret Fonow argue that ‘not all activists need to leave home in order to become transnational activities. Local actors join international campaigns for labor rights, boycott products made in sweatshops, seek legal redress from discrimination by intergovernmental bodies such as the European Trade Union Commission and the International Labour Organization’ among other strategies (2008: 538). These strategies require a consciousness of the links between local economic issues, international trade policy and neo-liberal economics, and challenge the all-too-common nationalist and anti-immigrant rhetoric that is dominant in much local labour organising in my country.

### **Update on Women Without Borders**

Before I conclude I want to provide an update on what Women Without Borders has accomplished since last autumn. They held another fundraiser, but this time they used a different strategy. Rather than send the money to a UN agency, they raised money for Avega, a network of women in Rwanda. The fundraiser included a roundtable discussion that featured a survivor of the genocide and a McGill professor who has experience working with government officials in Rwanda to develop policies on sexual violence.

Women Without Borders also provides funds when they can to support a local group called Women on the Rise, which helps new immigrants, single mothers and other women in so-called 'isolated and vulnerable positions' (Christiansen, personal communication, 2008). Last month, they held a forum called Women in Canada: Issues of Strategies for Equality with representatives from each federal political party in Canada to discuss their party's platform on women's issues.

Joan Christiansen, the founder of the group, explained that they 'conceptualise "local" and "international" women's issues quite broadly, so sometimes [they] focus on Montreal itself, or Canada as a whole (or the US, etc.)'. She reported that they have 500 people on their listserve and that they try to hold one event each month. The McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women has offered them office space, which will improve their ability to reserve space on campus, among other things. Recall that this group started in 2006 and has already had a number of important successes. For example, Joan mentioned that among the big names attending the Women in Canada event are Alexa McDonough (who was once the leader of the New Democratic Party) and Elizabeth May, the leader of Canada's Green Party.

So I ask myself again, what's in a name? It is clear that Joan and her co-organisers are not taking up the frame 'without borders' unreflexively. They are aware of the differences that shape women's lives and of their own privileges as they develop a multi-level and multi-sited politics. While I do not know if they have directly discussed the issues of representation that motivate me in this talk, I am confident that they would have the capacity to examine these issues: how can different individuals, communities, groups and local concerns be represented at the level of transnational politics; and how can we represent the consequences and politics of globalisation locally? What Women Without Borders has, which is missing from many of the other groups 'without borders', is access to intersectional feminist praxis.

As I hope I have demonstrated, intersectional feminist praxis provides a valuable framework for cross-border activism of many different kinds, including crossing the borders between academic disciplines, academic feminism and feminist activism. Borders are undeniably human made; therefore we must continue to ask who has the ability to construct borders, what functions do different borders serve, who are privileged by different kinds of borders, and 'what moral consequences' do they have, 'are they justified and are there ... alternatives that could be produced?' (van Houtum 2005: 278).

We cannot simply will borders away in our efforts to organise across them, nor can we treat all borders that divide with equal suspicion or fear or acquiescence. Whether we are organising with others in our immediate geographic community or beyond, we must keep in mind the activist serenity prayer: How can the borders that surround us be brought into view? Which ones can and should we challenge in our daily organising practices? What borders should be respected? And how can we develop the wisdom to know the difference? I believe that feminist intersectional praxis can provide guidance to activists and activist scholars alike to develop the wisdom needed for this challenging project.

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Globalization can be defined as a phenomenon of increased economic integration among nations, characterized by the movement of people, ideas, social customs and products across borders. This phenomenon has a long history, dating back to the trade routes developed during the Roman Empire, as well as those pioneered by Marco Polo or ocean voyagers like Columbus and Magellan. Globalization has been crucial for economic growth over time. In his influential study "The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective," the noted economic historian Angus Maddison argued that economic advancement across the world has been uneven. Intersectionality as white feminist rhetoric, then, becomes a shield behind which progressive organizations covertly elide radicality and ultimately uphold the status quo. The failure of intersectionality to be meaningful in white liberal feminist discourse is not then, as some white women have erroneously suggested, a result of the term's own limitations. An intersectional feminism will not only aim to uncover and dismantle the modes of power that serve to denigrate all women, but also those that further create hierarchies among women such that white women, able-bodied women, straight women, cis women, rich women, etc., are not the only beneficiaries of feminist liberation. *Feminism Divided*. There is a type of feminism whose views are more broadly attuned to range of oppression and dominance conditions. These feminists approach feminism primarily through inclusive values-based solidarity rooted in intersectional anti-oppression values, and aim to overcome patriarchal and oppressive domination (cf. Ferguson, 2010; hooks, 2004; Rottenberg, 2014, 2017). They reject the belief that their privilege is "just so" and therefore actively refuse the promotion of privileged interests for themselves; meanwhile, with what privilege they have, they work inclusively on behalf