

Gender, Development and Social Change

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The 'Gender, Development and Social Change' series brings together path-breaking writing from gender scholars and activist researchers who are engaged in development as a process of transformation and change. The series pinpoints where gender and development analysis and practice are creating major 'change moments'. Multidisciplinary in scope, it features some of the most important and innovative gender perspectives on development knowledge, policy and social change. The distinctive feature of the series is its dual nature: to publish both scholarly research on key issues informing the gender and development agenda as well as featuring young scholars and activists' accounts of how gender analysis and practice are shaping political and social development processes. The authors aim to capture innovative thinking on a range of hot spot gender and development debates from women's lives on the margins to high level global politics. Each book pivots around a key 'social change' moment or process conceptually envisaged from an intersectional, gender and rights based approach to development.

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Wendy Harcourt
Editor

Bodies in Resistance

Gender and Sexual Politics in the Age of
Neoliberalism

palgrave
macmillan

Editor

Wendy Harcourt

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE TO *BODIES IN
RESISTANCE: GENDER AND SEXUAL POLITICS
IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM*

As with my first edited book that started the series, *Women Reclaiming Sustainable Livelihoods* (2012), this collection is the product of good conversations, innovative research, friendships and memorable encounters. In the case of *Bodies in Resistance* there were two key events at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University in The Hague in 2013 (The Intercultural Dialogue on Sexuality, Reproductive Health and Rights in Development: Going Beyond the Comfort Zone [June] and Theories and Practice in Civic Innovation: Building Bridges among Politics, Markets and Gender/Sexuality) that initiated the discussions in this book.

The fruit of those discussions are now published three years later and are still vitally relevant. Neoliberalism and the new developmentalism are proving to be enduring, and the hopes for new forms of democracy continue to be sorely challenged. Abortion is an even more crucial issue with the rise of fundamentalism in different parts of the world, and also in early 2016 with the horrifying news of the zika virus transmitted by the *Aedes* species of mosquito leading to the risk of thousands of pregnant women having babies with microcephaly. The politics of the body as place, combining health, environment and community responses, is growing in importance in the wake of climate crisis. Feminist solidarity and social justice movements are finding new challenges with the rise of anti-migrant sentiment, the threat of the jihadist militant group “Islamic State” and continuing gender-based violence in world conflicts. The volume’s detailed examination of gender and sexual politics resonates with the sexual rights

of transgender persons now widely acknowledged, and even mainstreamed with films such as Hollywood's *The Danish Girl* (2015).

As the book title suggests, the topics covered are varied: women's community ecology; movement organizing; schismatic debates within feminism; human rights, political rights and abortion; transgender; co-optation and body politics; intergenerational debates about sexual health and reproductive rights; masculinities; and research into pornography. These are discussed in specific places—Colombia, Mexico, India, Nepal, Iran, Turkey, Nicaragua, Brazil, Latin America and East Africa—as well as globally, from different points of view, reflecting diverse cultures, histories and experiences in terms of age, region, gender and race.

Particularly interesting about the book is that many of the authors write as activists first and academics second, if at all. Everyone has made a concerted effort to write in ways that bridge the gap between those two sets of knowledges, equally important in terms of feminism knowledge and movement-building, and for documenting what feminists are confronting under neoliberalism. Another unique and important feature of this collection is that many of the writers are young graduates—the upcoming generation of feminist activists and scholars.

As the Introduction explains, the institutional setting for the book is the fledging research group of the Civic Innovation Research Initiative (CIRI). The initiative undertakes research that fosters creative forms of cultural, political and economic resistance, and establishes pathways to social change. The chapters that follow reflect this CIRI approach—to understand lived experiences in the struggle for democratic power and to capture the fluidity of changing understandings of identities, bodies, emotions, networks, power relations and knowledge in today's "messy" world. This is particularly important when looking at how gender and sexual relations are changing in places that defy easy capture in a social science framing. The book contributes to this CIRI way of doing research by looking at the complexities of gendered embodiment in relation to changing economies, geographies, cultures, networks of communications, experiences of pleasures, and visible and invisible interactions.

Again as stated in the Introduction, the book interrogates historically positioned, engendered and embodied knowledge both in terms of existing resistances and in terms of the possibility for change. It looks at how power is played out in neoliberal regimes and also at how resistance is integral to challenges and changes in these regimes. The sense of frisson in these stories is why it is so important and exciting to have this volume in the series.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

'Bodies in Resistance' is inspired by the courage of the people in feminist and social movements around the world. Special thanks to our colleagues and friends of the Civic Innovation Research Initiative (CIRI) at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University for providing a nurturing space where the book's initial conversations could happen.

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