

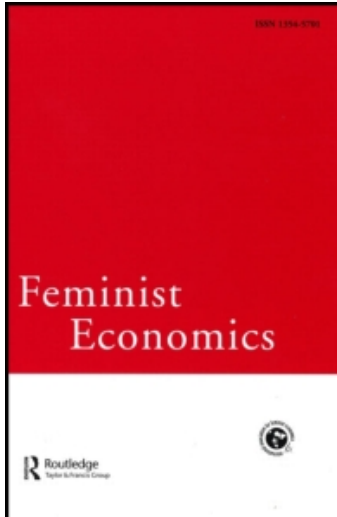
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Publisher Routledge

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Feminist Economics

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713700748>

Imagining Economics Otherwise: Encounters with Identity/Difference

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Online publication date: 12 May 2010

To cite this Article Charusheela, S.(2010) 'Imagining Economics Otherwise: Encounters with Identity/Difference', *Feminist Economics*, 16: 2, 141 – 146

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/13545701003731864

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13545701003731864>

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BOOK REVIEWS

Imagining Economics Otherwise: Encounters with Identity/Difference, by Nitasha Kaul. New York: Routledge, 2007. 304 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-415-38397-4 (hbk.). US\$140.

Feminist economics seeks to provide an account of women's experiences within economy. But *how* do we account for the problematic of female identity and gender subordination in relation to economy and economics? One way is to take existing frameworks of economics, neoclassical or heterodox, as adequate to the task of representing or explaining economy *as such*, and then account for the female or feminine within them. To integrate gender into existing economic analysis is to ask "the woman question": how do we account for women within pre-existing agendas and priorities? The woman question assumes that the item in need of clarification or integration is women, so that feminist economics is no more than the economics of women.

The critical alternative takes a page from Kathy E. Ferguson and asks "the man question." Ferguson writes:

Just as the woman question has very little to do with women, and everything to do with filling in the gaps in male-ordered claims about reality, so the man question has very little to do, directly, with men. It has to do, rather, with making it possible to view male power and female subordination, and/or maleness and femaleness per se, *as phenomena in need of explanation and redress*. (Ferguson 1993, 6; emphasis added.)

One strategy Ferguson outlines for asking the man question is genealogy:

In its genealogical guise, asking the man question entails calling into question the field of meaning within which man and woman can be understood as stable categories at all. . . . Engaging feminist questions at the level of metatheory enables us to ask what Heidegger and others have called the question of the frame. The questions we ask

about the world are enabled, and other questions disabled, by the frame that orders the questioning. (ibid., 6–7.)

Nitasha Kaul's *Imagining Economics Otherwise* provides a sustained genealogical interrogation of the categories of economic analysis (particularly, but not exclusively, neoclassical economics). She asks why its *structure* of analysis makes economics ask the woman question but not the man question. At the heart of her interrogation is an exploration of the understandings of subjectivity – and hence identity – built into the logic of the discipline.

The genealogical focus of the book places it within the strands of heterodox scholarship that “self-consciously challenge the modernist aspect of mainstream economics” (p. 20). Thus, Kaul highlights the works of David Ruccio, Jack Amariglio, Antonio Callari, Warren Samuels, Eiman Zein-Elabdin, S. Charusheela, and Rajni Kanth. One pleasure of this book is that it is consistently counterdisciplinary (not to be confused with interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary – see Eiman Zein-Elabdin and S. Charusheela [2004: 6]). Drawing on postcolonial theory, comparative politics, philosophy (especially epistemology), and poststructural feminism, the book calls for reader effort and a willingness to think through the meanings of words as they are used in other disciplines. In exchange, the reader receives clarity on vexing questions about the integration of identity into economic analysis.

The book consists of five chapter-long sections (except Part 4, “Juxtaposing Questions of Identity and the Economic,” which has two chapters). Parts 1–3 provide the analytical groundwork for the insights taken up in Parts 4 and 5. Kaul's exploration of mathematical formalization (held up as a sign of scientism in the discipline) in Chapters 2, 4, and 5 is especially pertinent for feminist economics. She shows that dependence on formalism has a *consequence* for how we conceptualize identity within economics. Formalization requires the ability to abstract and universalize, which means that if we do not posit a single human rational kernel, as in rational economic man, the only available alternative is to theorize identity around a stereotype of the behavior of a subgroup. Thus, only those approaches that see identity or difference as *the possession or attribute of an individual or group* are amenable to formalization.

For example, George A. Akerlof and Rachel E. Kranton's (2000) work, which Kaul examines in Chapter 5, asks and answers the woman question. It begins with “male” and “female” activities, asks what women's and men's preferences are in terms of “fit” with the pre-given activities, and explores what happens when women choose a “male” activity. But, as Kaul shows, Akerlof and Kranton's work cannot ask, let alone answer, the man question. That is, it cannot address the mechanisms of gender constitution and sexuation, since it takes socially gendered men and women for granted.

It cannot ask how activities become and remain male or female, since it assumes male and female activities. It cannot ask how power affects the organization of desire and control.

Kaul addresses the mechanistic metaphors and models that underlie the equilibrium formulation in economics. Such metaphors entail seeing the parts (be they individuals or groups) as organized into a cohesive and functioning social whole. The role of power and conflict becomes invisible when we envisage society or markets operating in machine-like fashion through the concept of equilibrium. Linking this to identity, Kaul's discussion of the Akerlof–Kranton article shows how a mechanistic conceptualization of social interaction leads inevitably to the conclusion that the solution to problems of identity and difference is assimilation.

The ongoing difficulty in integrating comparable worth (as opposed to equal opportunity) into formal models also stems from this problem: in models where there is difference but no overt social power, assimilation becomes the only visible solution (see also Joan Scott [1988]). Kaul's demonstration of the limitations built into formalism also applies to heterodox efforts to “parametrize” difference, whether via modifications of bargaining models (see Cheryl Doss [1996] and the critique of the concept of identity embedded in that and similar models in S. Charusheela [2003]), or via modifications of structuralist and new structuralist models in William Darity, Jr. [1995]). These efforts still pose the “woman question” when they integrate “gender” into their models.

These insights link to another central clarification the book develops (introduced in Chapter 4, “Identity Problematics,” and developed through Chapters 5 and 6): there are *different* ways to “think” identity, which affect how one addresses gender, race, and national and sexual identity in economics. Kaul examines three ways of conceptualizing identity in relation to economy by commenting on Akerlof and Kranton, Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum. Kaul's genealogical approach pays dividends, since it shows how particular frames *foreclose* ways of asking and answering the question of identity. Foreclosure is distinct from simple omission, as the quote from Ferguson at the start of this review emphasizes.

An example is Kaul's dissection of Amartya K. Sen's (1999) *Reason before Identity*. Drawing on William E. Connolly (2002), Kaul shows that because Sen's work is grounded in liberal individualism, it “*reduces the political to the juridical*” (p. 178; emphasis original). This may appear to be an overly severe reading of Sen, because one can certainly apply his framework integrating bargaining (conceptualized via understandings of human nature and interaction that do not rest on the narrow formulations of rationality found in the formalist bargaining models) and capabilities to a much broader political terrain, as has been done by Bina Agarwal (1994, 1997) and Naila Kabeer (2002). But I would suggest that Kaul has a valid

argument: Agarwal's and Kabeer's ability to move beyond Sen's solutions rests on the way they *modify* his approach to bargaining and rework his treatment of identity. The liberal-modernist grounds on which Sen's analysis rests derive from a conception of the individual governed by reason (which trumps identity), and consequently, a conception of power that normalizes (idealizes) the institutional form of citizen–state relations. The stakes can be seen in Violet Eudine Barribeau's (2006) demonstration that gender-mainstreaming policies in the World Bank's (2001) *Engendering Development* fail to address strong gender inequalities in Commonwealth Caribbean settings, where juridical protections and provision of educational capabilities for women are relatively robust.

Kaul is strongest when she works out how particular frames of reference enable or foreclose specific ways of addressing the question of identity. There are, of course, gaps. For example, in developing alternate frames for conceptualizing identity, Kaul elaborates the difference between “identity politics” and the “politics of identity” (developed in Chapter 4). Identity politics takes identities as givens, and works a politics from that given-ness. Politics of identity views identity as forged in and through the sphere of power and discourse. Remaking identity thus entails strategies of collective and discursive intervention that are always attentive to the politics of making and remaking present in any given strategy or framework – how does this social framing of identity enable or disable an engagement with difference?

This is useful. But there are many ways one can organize or frame the concept of identity for the purpose of engaging in a politics of identity. Kaul (Chapter 6) suggests Homi K. Bhabha's concept of translational identity as a framework. Bhabha conceives of identity as a “translational” architecture, an effort to constantly translate social interactions and engagements, received histories and categories, and personal experiences into a form of *ethical* engagement with the world that is attentive to the relationship between power and knowledge. This (rightly) foregrounds identity as something that does *not* emerge from a prior ontological-logical analysis of “the subject,” which then provides ethical evaluations (this is the case in standpoint theory, where an identity corresponds to a specific perspective and a specific politics). Instead, following Bhabha, Spivak, and other postcolonial theorists, the politics of identity *begins* from *ethics as a mode of engaging with the world* that then shapes our interventions in the realm of analysis.

What is missing in Kaul's work is the interpretive grid used to map the relation between identity, affect, and labor/exploitation (in the case of economics). For example, in order to integrate questions of sexual desire with questions of labor, more work is needed on the role of gendering in the distinctions between desire and labor and desire and consumption. Should this integration be done through a conceptualization of

sexuation and psyche following feminist revisions of Jacques Lacan? Or though a feminist-queer theoretic exploration of biopolitics along the axes provided by Michel Foucault? Or through the intersectional approach developed by Black Feminists and Critical Race Theorists? All of these approaches provide frameworks for interpretation with translational possibilities, but the analytical terrain they map differs because the locus and nature of power, and consequently the relationship between power/knowledge and the constitution of subjectivity/identity in their frames differs. There are other gaps, such as a lack of adequate engagement with the history and evolution of Marxism, Institutionalism, and other heterodox approaches (though the discussion of Sen does provide some insights about the ground of shared modernity that needs displacing beyond a simple displacement of neoclassical economics).

But this book claims neither to provide an exhaustive overview of economic theories of identity nor to furnish the “right” way to ask questions of identity. It is a sustained critique of dominant approaches in the field. Kaul’s intervention is thus useful for all feminist economists posing “the man question,” whether or not they share her theoretical commitments, because she addresses limitations encountered in a wide range of feminist efforts to provide gendered accounts of material life. The book requires both a familiarity with mainstream economics (both neoclassical economics and the more popular capabilities-style alternatives/modifications to it) and a willingness to engage substantively with scholarship from other disciplines. It is thus more suitable for senior-level or graduate seminars and as a resource for scholars in the field. It would be especially valuable for scholars from both mainstream and heterodox traditions interested in the limits of using specific approaches to identity within economics.

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Feminism, Economics and Utopia: Time Travelling through Paradigms, by Karin Schönpflug. New York: Routledge, 2008. 264 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-415-41784-6 (hbk.). US\$150.00.

This is an ambitious book. I mean this, first, in the positive sense of the creative ambition that characterizes, or should characterize, feminist critique and theory. Such creativity and breadth are certainly in evidence in *Feminism, Economics and Utopia*, and the book provides an important springboard for launching feminist economics into new conversations about what a feminist economy might look like.

Drawing from several disciplinary backgrounds, such as history, philosophy, political science, and literary criticism, Schönpflug investigates the proposition that feminist utopian thought should be integral to a feminist economics. She argues persuasively that insights from other disciplines, in particular from past utopian projects and feminist utopian fiction, offer feminist economics much to draw from as it moves beyond a critique of, or accommodations with, masculinist economic "science" and practice to an economic vision that would, in the author's words, represent a "new paradigm far afield from dual hierarchies" (author's preface, p. xiv).

The book is structured in eight chapters, titled as follows: Introduction; Gender relations; The Cartesian Turn in utopia; Nuts and bolts: Methodology; Work; Femeconers and utopia: paradigm change now?; "Der neue mensch" and his need to be governed; and The vision of the

free market: “Free to choose?” In these chapters, Schönplflug covers broad ground, of which I will attempt to give an overview that will be thematic rather than linear.

First, she locates “utopia,” coined by Thomas More in 1516, philosophically, historically and politically, connecting it as she does so to the concepts of “time, place, knowing and knowledge production, and action” (pp. 1–2) – as well as to the development of a humanist but masculinist world view from the Renaissance onward.

Second, Schönplflug considers the potential of the utopian imagination to inform feminist economics. She traces the history of Western utopian (as well as some dystopian) fiction that remained within male-supremacist paradigms, but notes a parallel development of utopian narratives that either presumed some degree of gender equality (mostly written by men such as Tommaso Campanella) or presented radical challenges to masculinist views (exclusively written by women such as Margaret Cavendish or Christine de Pizan). Particular attention is given, throughout the book, to feminist science fiction. The author focuses primarily on Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), a very early model of feminist radical utopianism, and three groundbreaking works from the 1970s: Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1975), Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man* (1976), and Gerd Brantenberg’s *Egalia’s Daughters* (1985). She also considers Starhawk’s *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993). These are considered alongside feminist philosophical writings that contain utopian visions, such as Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) and Donna Haraway’s *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1980).

Third, Schönplflug situates the modern Western “scientific mind” within the historical context of the legacy of Descartes’s deductive method and later classical empiricism, which not only presumes a rational and neutral subject but, once again, presumes this subject to be male. She considers some important feminist challenges to the notion of male objectivity, in particular from feminist economics, and highlights the groundbreaking work of feminist economists such as Drucilla Barker and Nancy Folbre, to name but two of the many discussed in the book.

Fourth, she considers utopian political philosophies and social experiments, the latter discussed largely, but not solely, in relation to the issue of work. The former are situated within left-wing ([proto-]socialist, anarchist) and right-wing neoliberal (free-market) paradigms, and critiques of the role of the state from both left and right are considered. The difficulties inherent in many feminist (and antiglobalization) positionings with regard to the State as protector are noted, but not discussed at length. Schönplflug also briefly considers some recent feminist alternative economic projects, such as the gift economy.

Fifth, she considers the responses of feminist economics to masculinist economics – and finds them mostly lacking. Her overview of articles

published in *Feminist Economics* shows that the majority treat, in descending order: history of economic thought and critiques of dominant masculinist theories (by far the largest number of articles); wages; and caring labor. Welfare and poverty issues pretty much tie for fourth place. In terms of method, qualitative approaches dominate in all areas except wages, where quantitative approaches are in the majority. Approaches that pose theoretical questions (challenges and deconstructions) are in the minority, and approaches that Schönplflug characterizes as utopian, that is, as “creatively envisioning radical change” (p. 140), are almost nonexistent.

Finally, Schönplflug advances the concept of queer economics as providing a possible conceptual opening toward a more textured feminist economics that not only more fully integrates issues of ethnicity, sexual orientation, and geopolitics, for example, into feminist economic thinking, but also begins to theorize more comprehensively what a feminist economy might look like.

In describing *Feminism, Economics and Utopia* as ambitious, I also mean, however, something akin to the more usual meaning ascribed to such comments: the ambition is grand, but on some counts, not realized. The first problem lies with one of Schönplflug’s core concepts. Given her premise that queer economics might enable a way forward, she does not provide a satisfactory account of what she means by this concept, even though an entire section of Chapter 2 is devoted to discussing it (pp. 32–6). At one point she distinguishes it from “gay and lesbian economics” (p. 34), which would apparently mean an “add gays and stir” approach, as a conceptual framework that enables us to move beyond gender-and-sexuality binaries. She does not, however, provide any illumination on what this shift might mean for feminist economics, or how it might be different, for example, from a radical lesbian project. Later, in her discussion of femconer themes, she characterizes “queer economics” as covering “the implications of same-sex orientation in all instances of life” (p. 139), which would appear to contradict her thesis in Chapter 2 as described above: that is, that queer economics moves beyond such “binaries.”

Second, Schönplflug, without explanation or development, makes assertions that appear almost as postmodern bylines, such as the idea that the category of “women” is no longer useful – an odd assertion indeed within any discussion of male supremacist practices and feminist challenges to them. Such postmodern arguments, which started to appear in the late 1980s and early 1990s, appear to be based on a somewhat disingenuous misinterpretation: because many feminists have posited a commonality of female experience of male domination, this has been interpreted by some postmodern or poststructuralist critics (Judith Butler identifies as the latter), as claims that all women are essentially the same, or have the same experience, or have some “natural” community. For

examples, see Jane Flax (1989); Linda J. Nicholson (1990), especially the chapters by Flax, Iris Young and Butler; see also Butler and Joan W. Scott (1992), in particular Butler's own chapter. Schönplflug similarly adopts uncritically Jane Flax's rather confused arguments about supposed feminist metanarratives and ambitions to control (pp. 79–80): like Flax, she appears to confuse feminist analysis and vision with a desire for "control." Such building of straw women within some postmodern scholarship such as that mentioned above has been the subject of much critique (for example, Marilyn Frye [1990]; Somer Brodribb [1992]; Stevi Jackson [1992]; Diane Bell and Renate Klein [1996]; Bronwyn Winter [2000]; Liz Stanley and Sue Wise [2000]), and it is disappointing that Schönplflug does not investigate such postmodern "truth claims" a little more rigorously. (I use the term "truth claims" ironically, as it is often a criticism leveled by postmodern feminist scholars themselves against other feminist theories.)

My third concern is with inaccuracy of definitions and of historical/political contextualization. I was, for example, extremely surprised to read, in Chapter 3, that the "early Renaissance" was in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This period was, in fact, the *end* of the Renaissance and the cultural and philosophical sensibility of most of Western Europe at the time would be more appropriately characterized as Baroque. Another example is a curious reference to an apparently dominant Protestant work ethic in relation to Charles Fourier (who is credited with having coined the term "feminism" in 1837) in nineteenth-century France, a country that was, and remains, overwhelmingly of Catholic tradition (p. 91). A reference to Hélène Cixous as one of "the French feminist philopfers" (p. 63), who presumably include Julia Kristeva (cited on p. 4), and Luce Irigaray (p. 174) – these three are frequently grouped as representing "French feminism" – is similarly misleading, because Cixous does not identify as feminist, nor is she identified as such by most of the French feminist movement and community of scholars (Christine Delphy 1996; Claire Moses 1996; Bronwyn Winter 1997). A final example is Schönplflug's use of the term "libertarian" to refer to neoliberal free-market theories. The term is ambiguous and its meaning different in different contexts. In France, a libertarian is an anarchist and thus is *opposed* to free market ideology.

Fourth, Schönplflug rightly critiques the White Eurocentrism within much feminist thought, but then to a great extent evidences it herself. For example, in considering examples of utopian collectivist projects (woman-friendly or otherwise), why does she ignore the Israeli kibbutzim (which existed long before the state of Israel was created)? Why does she not *at least* refer to farmers' or fishers' cooperatives among the rural poor in many nations of the world? Why is the work of women of color writing outside the US not considered? Why is the usefulness of the concept "queer" outside the urban centers of Western nations similarly not considered? I would also

have appreciated further discussion, in terms of its implications for a truly collective and diverse feminist utopian economics, of the very important critique made by women of color, and picked up by Schönplflug (p. 73), that privileged women's simply "taking on" new perspectives offered by the less privileged may enrich the former, but does not substantially give anything in return to the latter.

Finally, and most importantly, Schönplflug glosses over discussions of feminist utopian theories and social projects. The discussion of the gift economy is minimal, and no other contemporary feminist projects (outside literary ones) are discussed. Schönplflug tells us that feminist economists are not being creatively utopian in their approach, but in the end, neither is she. She remains within the critique of what *is*, rather than suggesting, even sketchily, what *could be*.

Notwithstanding all of these criticisms, Karin Schönplflug's first book is an entertaining, mostly well-researched, and constructive contribution to feminist economist scholarly literature, in terms of both its content and its transdisciplinary methodology. It opens considerable scope for further development of a creative vision in feminist economics.

I thus look forward to Schönplflug's second book!

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Assets, Livelihoods, and Social Policy, edited by Caroline Moser and Anis. A. Dani. Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2008. 337 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8213-6995-1 (pbk.). US\$30.00.

This book grew out of a 2005 conference on New Frontiers of Social Policy convened by the World Bank in Arusha, Tanzania. The aim of the conference was to examine the commitments and outcomes of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen. The framework of the book very much reflects how the thinking of the development community changed over that decade, to now include livelihoods and assets as a main focus of social policy.

In the first chapter, "Asset-Based Social Policy and Public Action in a Polycentric World," the coeditors, Anis A. Dani and Caroline Moser, make the case for an asset-based social policy. They argue that "attention to assets can enhance the effectiveness of public policies in achieving social and economic development by increasing the capability of people to strengthen their asset base, obtain higher returns on their assets, and attain more secure livelihoods" (p. 3). An asset-based social policy focuses on how policy decisions and public actions (such as institutional reforms and public investment) can increase the assets and capabilities of the poor and enhance their opportunities and resilience. In subsequent sections this framework is applied to the study of international migration, housing, and other asset-based livelihood strategies (such as community forestry and microenterprise programs). Another section deals with the erosion of livelihoods and assets in weak states.

While this collection does not have an explicit gender focus, the issues raised are clearly important to a feminist analysis of social policy. The chapters on international migration as a livelihood and asset accumulation strategy are particularly worth reading. Case studies of Ecuador, West Africa, Pakistan, and the Philippines illustrate how international migration constitutes an asset-building opportunity and how appropriate policies of sending countries can strengthen the asset accumulation of their migrants while reducing the risks of migration. Chapter 6 on the international migration of care workers, specifically of nurses from the Philippines, by Nicola Yeates, should be of particular interest to readers of *Feminist Economics*. Nannies have received the most attention in the globalization-of-care literature, but the international migration of nurses – highly skilled

workers – has also intensified in recent decades. Countries such as the Philippines have been producing nurses for export since the 1970s; the author estimates that 85 percent of employed Philippine nurses work outside the country (p. 157).

In the asset-based approach, international migration constitutes a process whereby individuals acquire financial and human capital assets that may increase their ability to consolidate asset accumulation in the long run. A varying portion of this financial capital is returned through remittances and supports the survival and accumulation strategies of the migrant's family and local community. But, as Yeates demonstrates, there are contradictions to this process. In the case of nursing, international migration sometimes leads to de-skilling of the individual migrant when she accepts work much below her qualifications in segmented labor pools. At the national level, it may constitute "asset stripping" of a nation's human capital, which has important development implications. While the health systems of the host countries gain, the major costs are borne by the healthcare system of the sending country. The costs include not only those of educating and training each migrant nurse, but also "the health deficit caused by the migration of the nurse and the effect that a depleted health service has on the social and economic development of the country of origin" (p. 165). Yeates ends by noting that much more research is needed before it is concluded that international remittances compensate for the total economic and social loss involved in nurse emigration. An important contribution of this chapter is to show how transnational processes intersect with internal social policies, and how resolution of the contradictions may require a transnational view of social policy, including "the regulation of international migration in the interests of public health, welfare, and social development" (p. 165).

Housing often constitutes the most important productive asset of the urban poor. The chapters on housing in informal settlements show how organizations of the urban poor and homeless in India, South Africa, and Thailand are driving changes on the part of local and national governments with respect to access to land, housing, and the provision of basic services. Many of these organizations are using the demand for decent housing as a strategy to change state-civil social relationships. Chapter 7, by David Satterthwaite, on the role of federations of the urban poor in India and South Africa, is particularly interesting. He notes that community savings groups have been the foundation for many of these national housing federations, and that these savings groups are often managed by women. The groups usually pass through various stages, initially focusing on access to housing and services and then on upgrading what has been acquired, engendering both a steady process of asset accumulation and agency.

In Chapter 12, Vibha Pingle focuses on women's microenterprises and the factors that explain the success or failure of these in generating sustainable livelihoods in Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa. She notes how, in principle, microenterprise development should have a double, positive impact, both social (empowerment) and financial (stabilizing financial flows and purchasing power). In her analysis, however, the social capital generated via membership in local community associations of microentrepreneurs has no noticeable positive impact on microenterprise sustainability. Governments could assist by integrating local community associations into wider networks and by giving attention to the provision of childcare support and health services.

Both Pingle's chapter and the concluding one, "Beyond Sectoral Traps: Creating Wealth for the Poor," by Deepa Narayan and Soumya Kapoor, draw attention to how health shocks are often one of the main reasons households fall into poverty. Narayan and Kapoor argue for an integrated approach to economic and social policies that, on one hand, create opportunities for producers, while on the other protect the assets of the poor – including their health. Drawing on case studies from India, they suggest that among the tasks of social policy is to scale up poor people's participation in markets on fairer terms by (1) improving the investment climate for new economic opportunities linked to their livelihoods; (2) investing in organizations of the poor to protect their limited assets as consumers; and (3) creating vehicles to alter their bargaining power in markets, such as by aggregating their supply and demand as producers.

One lesson to be drawn from these studies regards the important role of grassroots organizations or social movements in the development of successful social policies. The coeditors highlight this by their focus on assets and livelihoods in a "polycentric world," one where a range of actors and agents needs to be mobilized for social policy, and where social policy should be responsive to both national needs and transnational processes. The collection falls short, however, by often being gender-blind. The coeditors assume that an asset-based social policy, by focusing on poor households' access to assets, will benefit all the individuals within them, something that feminist scholarship has demonstrated to hardly be the case. Even some of the chapters that take into account women's livelihood and asset accumulation strategies ignore how gender relations may impinge on women's ability to access and accumulate assets and utilize these to enhance their and their families' well-being.

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Discretionary Time: A New Measure of Freedom, by Robert E. Goodin, James Mahmud Rice, Antti Parpo, and Lina Eriksson. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 484 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0521709514 (pbk.). US\$33.00.

This is a carefully thought-out and crafted book that proposes a new concept, discretionary time, as a fundamental aspect of welfare. Discretionary time is time over which individuals have “autonomous control” because it is not “dictated” by the “necessities of life” (p. 34). Discretionary time is a “scalar measure”: “the more discretionary time you have, the greater your ‘temporal autonomy’” (p. 19). In arriving at this concept, the authors are informed by philosophy, well-being economic theory, and welfare-state literature. In operationalizing it, they resort to the Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS) and the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) to produce data on individuals’ discretionary time in the US, Australia, Germany, France, Sweden, and Finland. By focusing on these countries, which taken in pairs roughly correspond to the “corporatist/conservative welfare regime,” the “liberal welfare regime,” and the “social-democratic welfare regime” (p. 25), respectively, the authors take an international comparative perspective on developed countries, which allows them to identify “country differences” and “common patterns.”

Findings point to variations in mean discretionary time across welfare regimes, gender, and family circumstances. For example, mean discretionary time varies from 76 hours per week in France to 85 hours per week in Sweden, with men enjoying more discretionary time than women in all countries under analysis (the gender difference is stronger in France and Finland; p. 62). Within each country, individuals in dual-earner couples and single-earner couples without children have the greatest discretionary time (over 80 hours a week), followed by dual earners with children, singles, and single-earner couples with children (between 60 and 80 hours a week). Lone parents are the worst off in terms of their “temporal autonomy”: they enjoy less than an average of 60 hours a week of discretionary time across countries, with lone parents in the US having just above 50 hours a week and their counterparts in Sweden almost 70 hours (p. 64).

The book is organized in six parts, with Parts II–V being the substantial contributions. Part II engages in the debate on time pressure and differentiates between spare time (the residual of *actual* time spent in unpaid household labor, paid labor, and personal care) and discretionary time (the residual of *necessary* time spent performing these three types of activities). In so doing, these sections forcefully criticize the existing definitions of time poverty based on (scarce) spare time (p. 264). Discretionary time is subsequently used in Part III to present a temporal perspective on the analysis of welfare regimes; in Part IV to expand the analysis of gender regimes; and in Part V to evaluate household regimes.

In a move that is laudable because it is infrequently made, the authors discuss (and disclose in a very detailed appendix) the many technicalities and assumptions made in calculating socially constructed, necessary time and its residual, discretionary time. They operationalize the social construction of needs by resorting to relative measures for different household groups (for example, “half of the median of equivalent [adjusted by a standard equivalence scale] actual unpaid household labour time,” p. 49). This method allows the authors to get rid of “objective” considerations regarding the outputs, or results, of unpaid household labor (including the difficult issue of differing individual productivity) or personal care (differing individual needs). Using the measuring rod of time is more complex when calculating necessary time in paid labor because authors need to resort to an *objective* (“ad hoc” or “external”) measure to convert necessary income into necessary time: the individual wage rate. According to standard labor market theory, this wage rate carries with it information on individuals’ *productivity* in paid labor. (If unexplained gender wage gaps exist, this means that women’s discretionary time will be lower than men’s for this reason.) The interesting thing about this work’s approach, however, is that the authors do not need to assume that actual wages *are* equilibrium ones, but only that wage rates do not vary with hours worked, therefore being equal at the “actual” time in paid labor and at the “necessary” time in paid labor. Although this assumption might be contested (part-timers’ and full-timers’ wage rates usually vary), the authors state that it is safe when reasoning at the margin (p. 44).

The emphasis on socially constructed needs has a distinct “classic” flavor, as references to Marxian theory indicate. It poses a refreshing limit to the overarching emphasis on choice and individual utility maximization that has permeated discussions on individuals’ time allocation within mainstream economics, precisely because the authors do not *assume* all time is “autonomous” and differentiate it from “non-autonomous/necessary” time. In so doing, for example, they do not need to (arbitrarily) differentiate childcare from housework depending on whether or not these activities produce “process benefits” (give utility, and not only disutility; see F. Thomas Juster and Frank P. Stafford [1991: 491]). According to these authors, individuals make choices only *after* the “socially necessary” time has been spent to satisfy bodily, financial, and household necessities. Both childcare and housework are *necessary* up to a certain threshold, and a matter of choice beyond it. (The authors go as far as to say, “for any broader purposes, defining unpaid household labor in such a way as to exclude childcare is just plain daft” [p. 35, footnote 31].)

Given the clarity and refinement of the conceptual issues involved in defining discretionary time, it is a bit surprising that the authors do not elaborate more on assumptions required to go from socially constructed *household needs* to individuals’ discretionary time. Indeed, sometimes

household- and individual-based measures of discretionary time are treated as if they are interchangeable. This is because the within-household distribution of necessary time is assumed to replicate actual time shares. For example, a full-time homemaker's necessary time in paid labor is zero given that her actual paid labor time is zero. (Authors restrict their analysis to households where at least one adult engages in paid labor.) While this assumption is convenient (there is no need to estimate the full-time homemaker's reservation wage), it is problematic precisely because it leaves the within-household distribution of time in paid labor and unpaid housework unproblematicized.

This issue is partly addressed in Part V, in which "household regimes," meaning intrahousehold arrangements, are analyzed. Whether intrahousehold arrangements can be thought of as "regimes" – comparable to welfare and gender regimes – is a matter of some debate. The authors do not strongly maintain the "regime" idea, but resort more to the sharing-rule concept. These intrahousehold arrangements are, however, hypothetical constructs, used to perform a comparative exercise between dual-earner couples and a counterfactual defined as *all couples* switching to different sharing rules ("male breadwinner," Becker-inspired "most efficient breadwinner," and "egalitarian rules"). Therefore, these exercises are silent on the *actual* prevalence of different household sharing-rules *within each country*.

The strongest and most interesting contributions of this book are presented in Parts III and IV, as they focus on government impact on temporal autonomy. Part III deals with what "the state can do to ease or exacerbate time pressures that people would otherwise suffer. . . . The state transfers money, goods, and services (or takes money from people in the form of taxes), which has the effect of altering the amount of time that people would otherwise have to spend in pursuit of those things" (p. 133). Though the authors restrict their comparison of the effect of governments' actions specifically to taxation, transfer payments, and childcare subsidies, they recognize (quite unusually, again) that fiscal policy is more than taxation, and public policies consist of more than these particular social policies. For example, the authors acknowledge that "governments do many *other* things that powerfully influence how much discretionary time people have," through macroeconomic policy, labor-market policy, industrial relations policies, or antidiscrimination policies, all of which have distributive impacts, particularly on wages, and affect discretionary time (what authors term "pre-government," that is "before government taxes, transfers and childcare subsidies" discretionary time [p. 134]). As expected, taxes have a negative impact on average discretionary time, while childcare support always increases discretionary time. In all countries under analysis, except Sweden, pre-government discretionary time is higher on average than post-government discretionary time (p. 149).

Of course, the correct way to see the effect of these policies is to identify the effect on different household types, given that these policies are meant to have *distributive* impacts. For example, in the “liberal” countries and in Germany, pre-government discretionary time is greater than post-government discretionary time *even in the case there are children in the household*, meaning that childcare support does not counteract the negative effect of taxes and transfers to these families (p. 139). On the contrary, in social-democratic countries and in France, parents of children below 18 years of age enjoy a positive discretionary time transfer. In all countries but Germany, state action has a strong positive impact on lone parents’ discretionary time. Single-earner couples with children get positive time transfers in corporatist and social-democratic countries, but not in liberal ones; and “the states almost invariably have a negative impact on the discretionary time of dual-earners parents,” the exception being Sweden (p. 143). Results show that government action does not completely counteract the absolute differences in discretionary time according to household type, described above. They also show that *without state intervention* matters would be even worse for lone parents, but far better for childless individuals and childless couples in terms of temporal autonomy.

Part IV brings gender into the analysis by focusing “narrowly on the social policy aspects of gender regimes, and more narrowly on policies that impact upon women as employees and as caregivers” (p. 157). The authors classify Sweden and Finland as “dual-earner gender regimes” (p. 167), given their high female employment rates. They deem France and Germany “male-breadwinner gender regimes” (p. 165), judging from the support they provide stay-at-home mothers; while they classify the US and Australia as somewhere in between. The question posed is whether these features of gender regimes influence women’s and men’s discretionary time, and how strongly if that is the case. As mentioned, in all countries men enjoy (a little) more discretionary time than women do, but the situation would be worse on average were it not for government intervention (p. 180). Social-democratic regimes appear to be better for women, as they enjoy “more discretionary time there than they do in liberal or corporatist regimes” (p. 193).

The authors identify gender differences on state intervention regarding parenthood, which were not evident in the household-based analysis in Part III. For example, liberal countries and France give positive (though low) time transfers *only* to mothers, while social-democratic countries give positive time transfers to *both* fathers and mothers (p. 182). Germany, in turn, *penalizes* both mothers and fathers (p. 183). There are also differences across regimes regarding which *types of mother* they help. Liberal countries help only lone mothers, with the US *penalizing* mothers in dual-earner couples. Social-democratic countries

help lone mothers in paid labor *and* mothers in single-earner couples, but Finland *penalizes* mothers in dual-earner couples. Corporatist countries help coupled stay-at-home mothers. The authors therefore find Australia, France, Germany, and Sweden behave as expected in terms of supporting mothers' temporal autonomy, regarding the characteristics of their gender regimes. But, contrary to their expectations, they find that the US is not "neutral" but provides incentives for married mothers to stay at home; and Finland is "neutral" (much like Australia) with respect to married mothers, instead of encouraging them into paid employment (p. 195).

These are, of course, only a few of the many results this book presents. Other equally relevant results relate to the *form* that time transfers to mothers and families take in different welfare-cum-gender regimes; the gender effect in temporal autonomy of existing divorce rules; and the degree to which women and men in different household types experience time pressure. *All* results are documented at length in the appendix, for researchers interested in particular issues and/or in country-specific analyses.

The authors close with a brief set of implications concerning public policy as seen through the lens of temporal autonomy. They emphasize that the ability to *choose* how much time to devote to paid labor would be the key way for individuals to truly exercise their temporal autonomy. And given the high time costs of life-cycle changes, the authors stress the positive *distributive* impact on discretionary time that transfer payments and subsidized services have to those who bear the higher "time costs." The authors cannot make much of other crucial determinants of discretionary time, like wage policy, because the effect of wages (the higher and more equal the wages, the greater discretionary time *by construction*) is mixed with other "cultural" (country-specific) determinants of discretionary time. They cannot say much about intrahousehold equality, either, because the degree of intrahousehold equality/inequality in discretionary time was taken as given. Both aspects point to possible avenues for future research.

This book will probably change the debate on time poverty as it presently stands. It points to a more satisfactory conceptual solution for researchers who are truly worried about those with few choices but to overwork in different realms but not so much worried about very busy high earners (see, for example, Daniel S. Hamermesh and Jungman Lee [2007] as an example of the latter). It also brings in fresh air to issues that mainstream economics dispatches by assumption, many times only resorting to (very disputable) "common knowledge." The book shows that assumptions are necessary, but presents a far more elaborated, refined, and informed way of making them. There is as much to learn from the book in the way it is theoretically and methodologically constructed as from its results. It is a

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carefully thought-out and crafted book with strong conceptual and methodological contributions indeed.

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Policy for a Change: Local Labour Market Analysis and Gender Equality, edited by Sue Yeandle. Portland, OR: The Policy Press, 2009. 232 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1847420541 (hbk.). US\$110.00.

Policy for a Change is a culmination of the Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets (GELLM) project that began in England in 2002. The research project into women's positions in the labor market had a national remit, but its distinctive contribution lies in its examination of gender and employment in twelve local labor markets in England, in addition to its national-level analysis. These twelve localities were chosen to include larger cities and smaller towns of England, rural and urban areas, and more and less affluent localities, as well as to depict diversity in the proportions of the local populations with a minority ethnic background. The title *Policy for a Change* reflects the aim of the research team to address policymakers directly. To this end, the researchers engaged in close partnership with a range of organizations, including those from the voluntary sector, employer organizations, and local governments, to help frame the research questions and to facilitate the dissemination of findings and recommendations and enhance the impact of the GELLM project. The project has resulted in a large number of publications that feed into this summative collection, and readers are referred to these other outputs for more details on methodologies and research findings. The research employed a multi-method framework, combining the secondary analysis of 2001 census data on England with special surveys of women and employers, interviews, and focus groups.

A number of questions concerned me when I first began reviewing the edited collection. As a sociologist based in England myself, my first question was, how applicable is a book on England, and on twelve localities within

England, to the international readership of *Feminist Economics*? My second question concerned the disciplinary relevance of the collection. Though the book's cover specifies labor market economists as part of its potential audience, the research is not located within economics; nor do the writers identify themselves as economists (most are located within sociology and social policy). The references the authors draw upon to frame the research and inform their analysis are predominantly UK based, and they pay no direct attention to contributions from economists, apart from one or two exceptions. *Feminist Economics* is also notably absent from the bibliography, an apparent sign that the authors' approach to their subject might not match the frameworks typically used by readers of this journal. These were my first concerns; but, of course, the readership of *Feminist Economics* is not confined only to economists. Nor do economists only read economics publications. Furthermore, there is a strong fit between the feminist approach that underpins the GELLM project, in particular its explicit attention to public policies to reduce gender inequalities in the labor market, and the concerns of *Feminist Economics* and its readership about such policies, rendering this work of interest to them.

Policy for a Change is divided into two main sections. The first, "Making Connections: Concepts and Debates," consists of two chapters that outline the case for a local approach to labor-market analysis and then set up a number of myths, puzzles, and problems around women's labor market situations. The second and much larger section, "Gender Equality and Local Labour Markets," draws upon the findings from the GELLM project to explore some of these myths, puzzles and problems in more depth. These five empirical chapters take as their remit: gendered labor market segregation in the twelve localities; Black and other minority ethnic women; women's access to the labor market; the design of their jobs, including working hours; and women's career progression. The final chapter concludes with policy recommendations. The appendices include useful summaries of main labor market indicators for England and the twelve localities, plus background information on each locality.

As with many edited collections, some chapters here work better than others. The introduction (Chapter 1) sets up a persuasive case for the analysis of gender inequality at the level of local labor markets that underpins the research project. It demonstrates how the majority of workers in England are employed locally, and shows that this is particularly true for workers who are women and working-class. This chapter argues that the local labor market shapes the nature, range, and quality of the employment opportunities for most workers in England, thus laying a solid foundation for the localities focus of the project and hence this edited collection.

Among the five chapters of Section 2, all of which incorporate analyses of data, those that stand out draw upon the full range of data types collected

by the team. One of the supporting statements on the book's cover lauds its rich mix of quantitative and qualitative material, but not all the chapters take this multimethods approach or dedicate enough space to fully cover insights from the multiple types of data. Accordingly, chapters such as Chapter 7, on work hours, and Chapter 8 (on women's career progression) work very nicely. Chapter 7's discussion of job design and work hours, for example, is a culmination of the team's already influential "working below potential" series of publications on part-time workers in England. Its authors analyze census data and interview data from managers on employing part-timers and from part-timers on training and promotion opportunities. The chapter usefully examines the availability of part-time jobs for women in the twelve localities, and it demonstrates substantial variation in these local part-time labor markets.

There is a very welcome emphasis on women from minority ethnic groups in Chapter 5, namely Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, Indian, and Pakistani women, though a smaller number of localities are the focus here. This chapter addresses a range of topics that are essential in any attempt to understand minority women's labor market experiences in England, including their occupational and industrial distributions in the diverse localities. Analyses of women's household circumstances, faiths, qualifications, birthplaces, and patterns of migration all contribute to a picture that shows how particular Black and minority-ethnic women face varying barriers to work in the different areas. Unfortunately, and no doubt given that this is such a large and important remit for one chapter, Chapter 5 draws little on any interview or focus group findings from these women. For this information, the reader is referred to the other project publications.

The necessarily condensed book makes a real contribution by demonstrating how a local-level analysis of women's working lives adds depth and diversity to the national picture. While the recognition of the importance of locality in labor market analysis is not new, the information on women's lives in different localities is very welcome, and the collection makes a strong case that public policy providers need to take into account this variation in local labor market contexts. The findings on diversity in the lives of women in just twelve localities of so small a country as England, albeit alongside gender labor market inequalities overall, is certainly compelling support for further comparative, local studies of women's working lives, in England and elsewhere. For researchers in England, the analysis of the 2001 census data provided in this collection offers a valuable foundation for future comparative analyses over time of gender inequalities in the labor market. Replicating this analysis using data from the approaching 2011 census can help to answer key questions concerning the impact of a decade of major economic upheaval on gender inequalities in the labor market, at the national and local levels, and so to identify vital recommendations for policy-makers.

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In summary, *Policy for a Change* is a valuable resource for those seeking information on the gendered labor market in England and on localized heterogeneity there, and it refers the reader to other publications (many available online) for more detailed results. It should interest those working on the labor market and on gender from within numerous academic disciplines, as well as those shaping and making policy for gender equality.

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