

Project : Transnationalization of solidarities and women movements

Background

Following an initiative by Pascale Dufour, Assistant professor at the department of political science, at the University of Montreal, a workshop entitled, « Transnational Solidarities, and women movements” was held at the University in April 2006. From that workshop, an international research network was put in place.

This network involves researchers engaged in the current stakes of the transnationalization of women movements in five continents, namely Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Canada, the Philippines and Malaysia.

As a continuum to the workshop, we have so far the publication of the workshop Proceedings (<http://www.cccg.umontreal.ca/Atelier%2027-28%20avril%202006-FR.html>), the dedication of a special issue of the review *Lien social et Politiques*, to the theme « Solidarities without borders». (<http://lsp.umontreal.ca>) and the preparation of a collective book on transnational feminism.

Applications for research grants are currently being pursued in both Australia (under the supervision of Lenore Lyons), and in Brazil (under the supervision of Carlos Milani).

Please find below the list of our network members.

Main aims

- The research on transnational collective action and the process of transnationalizing action present a challenge to social scientists, which are reluctant to admit that their subject matter has quantitatively and qualitatively changed in the last decades of the twentieth century. In an implicit or explicit manner, the debates today still too often focus on relations, processes and structures set at the national level; as if transnational activism could not exist by itself. By proposing to focus on diverse examples of

transnational forms of women activism, we are able to present a clearer picture of what transnationalization of social movements is or not.

- How can one understand the process and the consequences of the transnationalization of women's movements? And, how can feminist theory help untangle this process?

4 axes of research

1) Understanding transnationalization : space(s), scale(s) and states

Women's movements have been extending their activity and working at building solidarities beyond and across national borders. In doing so, they have been creating new spatialities for feminist organizing and new spaces for their politics at the transnational scale. The multiplicity and complexity of forms and instances of transnationalization in women's movement organizing need specific analytical answer. Studies organized around this axis expose the diversity of empirical forms and meanings attached to transnationalization and to propose analytical reflections on how to deal with it.

What do various instances of transnationalization in women's movements look like? What are the historical (political, economic, etc.) dynamics that have triggered their creation? To what extent are current expressions of transnationalization in women's movement activity different from the internationalization phenomena of the previous two centuries? Are different transnational women's organizations and networks doing things differently and why? Are women's and feminist transnational networks rooted in some places more than others and how to understand their varied spatialities? What are the linkages between the transnational scale of organizing and other scales of women's movement activity, notably the national and the local, and what are the implications of the multiscale character of transnationalism? What is the role of the national state, as well as of U.N. institutions in opening up or curtailing possibilities for women's movement transnational organizing? Have national boundaries become meaningless or not? Is transnational organizing a necessity for women's movement in the globalization era? Finally, how should we define or approach transnationalization in theoretical and empirical terms? What are the avenues available to go about and conduct research on transnationalization in women's movements? And how can feminist perspectives be helpful to such an endeavour?

2) Transnationalization and identities : what innovations, what dilemmas?

Migrant workers and female migrant workers test the limits of nationally organised solidarity and of our whole conception of rights based on national or domestic citizenship. By organizing at the transnational scale, they propose a different articulation of domestic/global solidarity and enter into a productive and innovative process of redefinition of identities. While particularly acute with the issue of women's migrant workers, these processes of identity formation and articulation of solidarity are common to, women's as they transnationalize and attempt to address the needs, interests, and identities of variously located women. Case studies in this section will examine the situation of women migrant workers' organizing in Southeast Asia and cases of transnationalization in Latin America.

How and to what extent are interlocking oppressions and the multiple identities that make up real-life women taken into account in transnational feminist organizing? How do transnational women's movement networks and organization understand and practice solidarity? How are national identities negotiated in the internal dynamics of transnational women's movement organizing? What is the importance and what are the implications of the places we speak from, and is there such a thing as a global or cosmopolitan feminist identity that can transcend place? Who is the "we" in transnational women's movement organizing, how is it defined and by whom? Following what kind of strategies of recognition and of bridge-building? And with what kind of consequences?

3) Power dynamics : old and new caveats

Women's international networks have existed since at least the second half of the 19^e century. At that time, leaders were white, rich and coming from the North, and international women's organizations could be as sexist, racist and imperialist as others. Today, power dynamics, different perceptions and hierarchies (North-South, academics versus grassroots, etc.) continue to today and affect the process of transnationalising solidarity across borders.

Is the situation different today? How is engagement in transnational activism constrained by structural inequalities in access to resources (funding, the Internet, contacts, skills) and the concrete possibility to travel (does a right to travel really exist)? What are the impacts or potential impacts of these structural imbalances on North/South and elite/base relations in women's transnational organizing? How does power get negotiated in transnational women's

movement organizations and networks? In addition, transnational women's organizing occurs in a wider context of increased transnationalization of movements and issues. How does women's transnational organizing relate to other forms of transnationalization of collective action? What are the possibilities for convergence of mobilizations and for allying with other transnational movements – for instance with anti/alterglobalization forces, social justice or environmental transnational actors? To what extent does (can, should) gender and feminism inform the discourse and practices of other transnational movements and what are the obstacles currently encountered

4) Changes in women's issues and collective action: what are women fighting for?

Time and space affect women's movement aims, claims, repertoires and targets as they transnationalize. While certain themes seem to travel through time, such as human solidarity or global justice, others are more clearly linked with the contemporary period, such as sexual trafficking, trade liberalization and the privatisation of life forms. Moreover, while in the past, many themes were fought at the national level, the acceleration and compression of time and space has made possible the construction of solidarity bridges across bridges and joining common resources.

List of members

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