GENDER AND AGRICULTURE AFTER NEOLIBERALISM

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Report of a Workshop organized by the
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the
Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

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Acronyms

ADLI	Agricultural development-led industrialization
AGRA	African Green Revolution in Agriculture
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GMO	Genetically modified organism
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IHEID	Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies
TNC	Transnational corporation
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front

Note

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Background

From the 1980s onwards neoliberal reforms instituted regimes of market-liberalizing governance that profoundly transformed agricultural production systems. New neoliberal-inspired policies took a variety of forms depending on the strength of ideological commitment, the size and structure of the farming sector, the organization of social forces in the countryside, and the degree of integration into the global economy. But international (and sometimes national) priorities converged around the need to reduce state involvement and "de-regulate" markets for agricultural products and inputs, finance and credit. The new policies were expected to launch agriculture on a path towards increased productivity.

By the mid-1990s, however, it was becoming increasingly clear that the hoped-for dynamism of the agricultural sector had not materialized. In sub-Saharan Africa, the region where agricultural policies had been most radically overhauled, growth rates remained low, and the impact in terms of poverty reduction was patchy, if not negligible. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s as markets continued to be liberalized, sub-Saharan Africa witnessed the steady decline of its agricultural exports as a share of world agricultural trade, while problems surrounding food production and food security remained unresolved (UNRISD 2005). In Latin America, after the "lost decade" of the 1980s, agricultural growth rates remained low throughout the 1990s while poverty indices improved at a laggardly pace. Economic reforms meanwhile reinforced existing divides between regions and producers: highly capitalized farmers with links to international agro-industry and export markets were able to enter markets for highly dynamic products, while small farmers were stuck growing products in decline (UNRISD 2005).

The differential impacts on women and men of market liberalization received some attention. Many observers pointed to the livelihood diversification that accompanied moves out of subsistence farming, which accelerated with deregulation. Diversification out of agriculture is a gendered process and shows different patterns in various parts of the world. In rapidly urbanizing Latin America, for example, women's participation in agriculture seemed to intensify relative to men's; agriculture became "feminized" (Deere 2005). Here research suggested that women were no longer merely "secondary" workers; they were emerging as farm managers, providing the bulk of family farm labour and taking on extra tasks as men migrated in search of alternative sources of income. In India where the proportion of agricultural workers declined, due largely to male workers moving out of agriculture, women remained in agriculture but comprised an increasingly large share of the casual agricultural labour force rather than being independent farmers (Jackson and Rao 2009; Garikipati and Pfaffenzeller 2012). In Zimbabwe, while both women and men were moving out of agriculture, women's off-farm activities faced numerous social impediments related to gender ideologies and social norms at the centre of "gatekeeping institutions" (such as informal guilds and networks) stunted women's off-farm enterprises (Gaidzanwa 1997).

These shifts in male and female labour have taken place in a context where there continue to be formidable challenges to successfully maintaining agricultural production systems that allow local populations to produce affordable and good-quality products. In many parts of the global South, a move out of agriculture and into the city has not signalled a transition of labour as in the stylized scenario of economic development. The poorest people, especially women, exit agriculture on the least favourable terms. Many

hold on to their small plots of land not necessarily to conserve an ancient way of life, but to back-stop economic strategies that involve family members seeking work far and wide, in a context where national economies, and the global capitalist system, fail to generate off-farm jobs that pay a living wage (Li 2011).

There are policy changes afoot, however, that are likely to make the strategy of falling back on a small plot of land to complement low wages increasingly difficult. Recent years have seen significant interest on the part of both national and transnational economic actors in land acquisitions that can serve as sites for fuel and food production (or merely speculation). The drivers behind these "land grabs" are multiple, including market forces such as the hike in food prices since 2008, increased production of biofuels (in part as a result of government incentives), and the "financialization" of agriculture and related interest in farmland on the part of investment funds. But public policies of both investor and receiving countries have also played a part. Investor countries, such as China and Saudi Arabia, encourage overseas land acquisitions in order to enhance food security. At the receiving end, many developing country governments are eager to attract foreign (and domestic) capital into their agricultural sectors in the hope of generating jobs and foreign exchange, and building infrastructure (Cotula 2012; GRAIN 2008).

In the 2008 *World Development Report* on agriculture, the World Bank recognizes that smallholder agriculture is in deep crisis, and sees the policy options in terms of "enterprising" peasant farmers having to either "upgrade" themselves or find a way out of agriculture (through work in the rural non-farm sector or migration to the cities). In parallel, and often in direct response to the corporate-led style of "rural development", counter-initiatives are taking shape at the grassroots level. These are often connected to broader national, regional and global movements re-claiming rights to land and to food (van der Ploeg et al. 2012). In their different ways, these initiatives and movements defend the interests of smallholders and propose alternative ways for using land more productively, in ways that are both more equitable and more environmentally sustainable.

Workshop Aims

A workshop was organized on 19-20 July 2012 to help the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies (IHEID) assess knowledge gaps and define new perspectives to understand the relationship between the rapidly changing policy landscape, and transformations of gender power relations in the countryside.

The main aim of the workshop was to flesh out key research questions with a view to developing a research proposal. It sought to pool the knowledge of a group of researchers from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe who are studying the gender dimensions of agrarian change in a variety of developing countries from diverse disciplinary standpoints. The organizers drafted a concept note, which was distributed before the workshop, and invited participants to prepared short inputs based on the note. The workshop allowed for a genuine discussion among potential research partners about the conceptual framing of a research project—something that is highly appreciated, but often missing, in North-South collaborations. The workshop was organized into four sessions:

- Agrarian transformations and their gender fault lines;
- Changing land tenure systems and their gender implications;
- Agrarian capitalism, global forces and land grabbing: Continuity and change; and
- Feminization of labour within agrarian economies: Autonomy or subordination?

The main issues that emerged from the presentations and discussions are discussed below.

Agrarian Transformations and their Gender Fault Lines

Referring to the "post-neoliberal" moniker in the title of the workshop, **Elisabeth Prügl** raised critical questions about the alleged return of the state: what is the nature of this post-neoliberal state? Is it accountable to its citizens within a largely democratic context, or is it more beholden to capital (both domestic and foreign)? More than three decades after the onset of neoliberal policies, the agrarian-rural-agricultural societies of the South are "reaping the harvest of neoliberal seeds", which is manifesting itself in a number of inter-related domains, including an accelerated commodification of formerly communal land that was privatized under neoliberal policies, an increased financialization of commodity markets, and a strong move towards titling land to farmers, including women farmers.

Building on the work of property economics, **Fenneke Reysoo** drew attention to the shift from *possession* to *property* regimes. In contexts characterized by possession regimes, all members of a community, including women, generally have access to land for their own use and income. This collective governance within possession regimes, however, has been increasingly shifting towards property regimes, with individual titling to ownership rights that allow the new holders to engage land titles as collateral in credit relations. As a consequence, property rights transform goods and resources into saleable commodities and rentable assets (Heinsohn and Steiger 2008:191). This shift has two major consequences with often unintended gender outcomes. First, individual land titles are mainly given to male heads of family farms. Women's power position to access land thus increasingly erodes, although it needs to be acknowledged that in some contexts dual land titling is proposed as a measure to protect women. Second, once a land title is engaged in a credit relationship debtors enter the logic of economic growth, becoming dependent on monetary conditions and temporalities defined by financial institutions. If they cannot pay their financial obligations they risk losing their land. Women's access to land is thus guaranteed collectively in the logic of possession regimes, whereas in property regimes they become more dependent in terms of access to food and income on their husband's entrepreneurship.

In the context of agrarian transitions, what types of employment/livelihoods are likely to be generated, and what will be lost? As land is increasingly consolidated, what happens to those whose labour is no longer needed? Drawing on the work of Tania Li and other scholars, **Shahra Razavi** shifted attention to the "labour question": even if we assume that land that is consolidated is put to productive use (rather than kept for speculation), the quantity and quality of paid work that is generated will largely depend on the type of crop that is grown, the degree of mechanization, and the labour regimes that determine the

terms and conditions of work. There is ample evidence to show that even in the "best-case scenario" where land is allocated to horticultural production that employs significant numbers of women, labour regimes are likely to be gender-stratified and women are likely to be employed as a casualized labour force, with no access to land for self-subsistence and thus dependent on money wages to buy food. Razavi also drew attention to other social concerns that are often left out of "labourist" analyses: what happens to social reproduction (access to public resources for self-provisioning of fuel, housing, food and so on); what role social policy is likely to play in this context; and to what extent the real costs of social reproduction are likely to be shifted onto families and households with women's unpaid work compensating for the shortfalls.

In the discussion that followed several participants emphasized the intensification of *commodification*—and that large land acquisitions, shifts from possession to property regimes, and shifts in labour regimes are all symptoms of this underlying process. However, in the frame of "co-opted feminism" some of the problematic developments around "land grabs" are celebrated as potentially creating "jobs for women". Others argued that the existing literature on land grabs is too shallow, and needs to be given greater depth by linking it to the broader context within which land grabs are happening: one of continued economic liberalization and commodification. In Africa, there has been a very aggressive resurgence of primitive accumulation, with efforts to convert subsistence farming into more mechanized and commercialized ventures. There thus needs to be much greater appreciation of both continuities (with colonialism, with the globalization/liberalization agenda of the 1980s and 1990s, and with neoliberalism) as well as discontinuities (for example, the role being played by Southern states, sometimes in collusion with global and national capital). There were also useful reminders that liberalization and globalization are not top-down processes manipulating women as passive pawns, but also that women are resisting: women are thus both heavily affected *and* fighting back.

In short, the fundamental shift in agricultural production systems rung in by neoliberalism from the 1980s onwards imposed a new template on developing countries, creating new forms of "legitimacy" for state intervention. Mechanisms such as land titling have transformed rules of possession into rights of property. Changing forms of accumulation and changes in agrarian regimes (including strong efforts to reshape production regimes and the conversion of subsistence farming into more mechanized and "economical" methods) have found great favour with states, despite often problematic gendered implications. The forces driving these changes come from outside (foreign investors, private capital) and also from within (local investors, such as big merchants and political elites), so any analysis must take into account differentiated forces of change.

Changing Land Tenure Systems and their Gender Implications

It is now widely recognized that the agrarian reforms implemented in the era of state-led redistributive efforts—the "golden age" of land reform from the 1910s to the 1970s—were largely gender-blind. These reforms were often based on an implicit assumption that assets allocated to households—typically to the male "head"—would benefit all members equitably. Not only did such assumptions ignore the well-being of women and their dependents in the event of household dissolution (upon separation, divorce or

widowhood), they were also blind to women's differing relationship to property and the fact that household (often male) ownership of land can more deeply exploit women's labour through heavier workloads in the form of generally unpaid family labour, and adversely affect their position within the household.

In contrast to this early history of land reform, the past two decades have seen the rise and influence of associations and groups of women lawyers and social activists in several regions that seem to confirm Manji's (2006) observation that the last two decades have been "the age of land *law* reform in Africa". The context for this has been the broader "rule of law" and "good governance" agendas pioneered and funded by international financial institutions, most notably the World Bank, as the emphasis shifted away from macroeconomic policy to the "institutions" that undergird development and growth, i.e. "getting institutions right" for a market-based economy. The fact that some feminist advocates speak the language of "rights" and "rule of law" continues to be seen by some as a reflection of their buy-in to the neoliberal agenda (Manji 2006). Set against this background, the presentations in this session drew attention to the many ways in which women's rights are on the policy-making agenda as well as being actively pursued on the ground.

In her presentation on Zimbabwe's agrarian structure in the aftermath of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), **Patience Mutopo** argued that a significant percentage of beneficiaries have been women (18 per cent according to official figures, but in reality probably higher). Women, she argued, were able to access land through both hidden and overt means, including their family bonds, marriage, political ties (to the ruling party, ZANU–PF) as well as their relations with traditional authorities. In the aftermath of FTLRP, while many men have left the rural communities, women now dominate production of cash crops such as cotton, tobacco, sunflowers and maize (formerly male products). Within the new structures, women are also negotiating cotton prices and carrying a voice in the farmers' union, crossing borders to sell their produce in South Africa, as well as dominating smallholder farming.

In contrast to the fast pace of agrarian change brought about through the FTLRP in Zimbabwe, the process of agrarian change in Ghana, analysed by **Dzodzi Tsikata**, shows much greater continuities with the past. Ghanaian agriculture can be described as smallholder agriculture par excellence, even though land scarcity is becoming a problem. Along with wholesale liberalization, which has dismantled state support to agriculture, state policies have continued to privilege exports while neglecting food crops. The agrarian scene is thus marked by increasing inequalities in terms of distribution of land and wages, with women predominantly confined to informal agricultural labour (crop farming, livestock production, household production) as well as unpaid reproductive work that remains their responsibility.

The case of Ethiopia, presented by **Tom Lavers**, offered an example of the impact of large-scale foreign investment that has dominated the land grabs debate on gender relations. It illustrates the central importance of local politics and particular histories interacting to produce very different outcomes. While recent Ethiopian policies have been lauded for their focus on gender equality in land titling, the cooperative established for an out-grower scheme to expand a sugar plantation included only men holding titles from earlier land reform efforts that had denied women's land rights. In contrast, ethnic

politics led the government to reinstall a traditional system of land governance in a more marginal area. While customary law discriminating against women undermined land registration efforts here, the local government was able to create informal institutions promoting a woman's right approach to keep land after the death of her husband.

The importance of keeping gender equality as a prerequisite not only for enhancing women's lives, but for ensuring survival was illustrated in **Carla Braga**'s intervention, reporting the experience of women farmers in Mozambique, who were unable to receive AIDS treatment because programmes did not recognize their work as work and denied them support that would have allowed them to reach treatment centres.

In the following discussion, participants emphasized that gender-equitable land laws are on the books in many places (including Mozambique), but they are often subverted in practice. They also recalled the need to keep in mind not only the impacts of agrarian investments on women's access to land, but also on the kinds of labour relations created and on the environment. Discussion arose again around liberal conceptions of law that individualize rights, framing the question of "compensation" in a particular way in the Zimbabwean context. Though government statistics on the number of female beneficiaries are problematic, the Zimbabwean FTLRP has apparently generated precisely the outcomes envisioned as ideal in market-oriented approaches, i.e. large-scale farms with a large number of women participating as wage labourers.

Changes in land tenure thus take radically different forms, ranging from the very active government efforts to more equally allocate land in Zimbabwe, to the inadvertent increase of inequality through untamed liberalization in Ghana. Regarding gender, government-supported large-scale investments in land seem to generate highly differentiated impacts in Ethiopia, depending on existing ownership structures in the case of an out-grower scheme in the highlands, and on ethnic politics in the case of a large investment deal in the lowlands. In sum, policies of liberalization may generate inequality, and large-scale land acquisitions may lead to inequitable outcomes. However, local policy commitments can channel productive forces to counteract gender inequalities.

Agrarian Capitalism, Global Forces and Land Grabbing: Continuity and Change

Large scale land acquisitions or "agricultural investments" (World Bank 2010) are happening rapidly and on a large scale, with estimates varying from 20 million hectares (International Food Policy Research Institute/IFPRI) to 45 million hectares, (World Bank) exchanging hands between 2005 and 2009, and across diverse regional contexts, including Africa, South America, Central America, Southeast Asia and the former USSR (Borras et al. 2011). Within academic and activist circles there is talk of new corporate-led enclosures (at times "painted in green") that evict inhabitants and users from large tracts of "marginal" land. There are concerns that if and when cleared lands are put into production they are likely to generate few jobs (given the levels of mechanization) and herald a risky (re)turn to agrarian mono-crop production with all that entails (White and Dasgupta 2010). Questions are also being raised about the political and power inequalities that are shaping the terms on which deals are made, sometimes "over the

heads of local people", and involving "thin consultations" that lack mechanisms for accountability to citizens (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010; Nhantumbo and Salomao 2010).

Presentations and discussions considered the gendered impacts of new international market forces, and of large-scale land acquisitions in particular. In his presentation, **Jun Borras**, pointed to some of the blind spots and unsubstantiated assumptions in the expanding literature and debate on global land grabs. This literature, he argued, has been too "food-centric" and too focused on the 2007/8 price hikes as the main trigger of land grabs; but this narrative does not adequately capture the totality of the phenomenon as large-scale land acquisitions did not only start in 2007/8. The literature has also been too centered on a "foreignization of land" narrative, and on newly emerging powers. Finally, it has been too Africa-centric. The claim is that 70 per cent of land grabs have taken place in Africa and this is explained in terms of "fragile states"; but the methodology that is used is inconsistent and unclear. The evidence from countries such as Argentina and Brazil suggests that grabs do not take place only where states are fragile.

Borras emphasized the challenge of defining land grabbing, distinguishing "control grabbing" from other types of land grabs. In the case of the first, the interest is less in the land itself, but in the political control gained from owning land. He also cautioned that land grabbing does not always lead to dispossession and forced removals—sometimes the labour is needed to continue to work the land. A good analysis needs to pair what is happening to land with an analysis of the scale and character of the capital involved. The current phenomenon of land acquisitions is different from colonial times in that it constitutes a response of capital to the convergence of multiple crises, i.e. a global food crisis, an energy crisis, and the demands of capital from emerging economies. Finally, Borras warned against viewing "the local community" as a homogeneous entity responding to land grabs; there are likely to be multiple responses along the fault lines of gender, class and ethnicity.

Marjorie Mbilinyi shifted the spotlight to Tanzania, a country long known for its experiments in communal agriculture. With *Ujamaa* billed a failure, structural adjustment led to major increases of productivity, but also a contraction of peasant agriculture. In the context of the African Green Revolution in Agriculture (AGRA) the focus has shifted to smallholder farmers, who are now pushed to maximize output and efficiency. The involvement of big agribusiness (Monsanto, Unilever and other TNCs) in this effort has turned land grabbing into green grabbing and seed grabbing. Whereas Tanzania and Kenya previously rejected GMOs, now agribusinesses are packaging seeds for smallholder farmers and seeking to approach female farmers through women's associations. In order to better understand the new round of primitive accumulation, Mbliniyi pleaded for studying "the money"—corporations and their strategies in Tanzania.

Returning to the case of Ethiopia, **Zenebeworke Tadesse** highlighted the role of the local state in agricultural development, which, she argued, in the case of Ethiopia never quit. Here the military government implemented a programme of "agricultural development-led industrialization" (ADLI) and adopted strong gender-egalitarian policies whose implementation foundered in the face of patriarchal resistance. The failure of ADLI provoked a shift to commercial farming, and an attempt to attract both domestic and foreign investors. A "villagization" programme has resettled populations without being able to compensate for the loss of livelihoods. Some women have found jobs in the

growing floriculture industry, and some have gone into trading and migrated to the Middle East. There is an urgent need for more study on the gendered effects of large-scale land acquisitions.

Considerable discussion followed on the role of the state in large-scale land acquisitions, and what the state is prepared to do to prevent discrimination against women. The state that is coming back after the height of neoliberalism (or has never left, as in the case of Ethiopia) is not a reformist state, and it is necessary to question the place given to women in contemporary discourses of democratization. Participants also questioned the difference between foreign and domestic capital investing in agriculture. Local capital may be more interested in local development. But perhaps it is less the nationality of the capital that matters than the form of accumulation pursued. Furthermore, participants questioned the assumption that large-scale land acquisitions always threatened food security: existing data on Latin America and the Caribbean show no decisive negative impact. Finally, participants problematized the idea that out-grower schemes would provide a more equitable approach to the commercialization of farming: out-growers are usually men; such arrangements may thus do little to further gender equality in farming.

Overall, there was agreement that contemporary agriculture finds itself in a significantly new international context, facing new international forces. The character and scope of capital investing in agriculture matters to the kinds of (in)equalities, labour relations, and food (in)securities produced. But equally important seems to be the local state, which directs the shape of commercialization and of agrarian capitalism.

Feminization of Labour within Agrarian Economies: Autonomy or Subordination?

Presentations and discussions focused on the question of whether the new agrarian policies contribute to poverty reduction. Answering this question raises interesting issues of methodology and measurement. **Supriya Garikipati** discussed two nationwide surveys and their reliability to measure impacts on the ground in India. Data from the National Sample Survey, mainly used by the political left, show that agrarian reforms have not produced a trickling down of wealth to the poor. In contrast, data from the National Account Statistics indicate a massive decrease in poverty in rural India. In her own research, Garikipati uses village studies (Andhra Pradesh, 2001–2010) to determine how liberalization policies affect the organization of livelihoods at the grassroots level. The research findings demonstrate that since India's economic reforms, which began in 1991, women have increasingly become involved in agriculture, while men are participating more in non-agricultural work. With the removal of subsidies, male farm owners had to cut down on labour, leading to the feminization of particular agricultural tasks. The preference for female agricultural labourers is linked to their lower wages, but also to their assumed steady work discipline and ability to multi-task. Furthermore, whereas women are mainly involved in agricultural wage-work, men are more often self-employed—both inside and outside agriculture. Yet this sexual division of labour and feminization of agriculture are manifested in distinctive ways. Indeed, credit tightening has resulted in increased levels of seasonal migration and greater dependence on landlord lenders. Poverty alleviation strategies have also disproportionately favoured men; for example, land distribution has more often benefited men. Hence, village studies are a necessary

complement to nationwide surveys in order to better document differentiations within local contexts.

According to the research conducted by **Yiching Song**, the feminization of agriculture in southwest China (provinces of Guangxi, Yunnan and Guizhou) is mainly due to processes of ageing and de-agrarianization. Since the 1980s, China has opened its door to foreign investments. As a result, both seasonal and permanent out-migration of men from the rural areas to the cities has escalated, leaving women and elderly people behind (with limited access to credit and technology). The out-migration of men has contributed to livelihood diversification, since 55 to 70 per cent of households are now dependent on subsistence farming complemented by income derived from non-farm work. In the areas under study only 3 to10 per cent of the households have converted to industrial farming. Non-farm incomes have increased gradually, but investments in farming have lagged behind as investments in children's education and small businesses are taking precedence. As a result, the areas studied suffer from food insecurity and are characterized by larger income gaps. The feminization and ageing of agriculture, and de-agrarianization, have led to the creation of organizations that support women founding co-operatives and self-organized groups. Facilitating access to credit, technology and information, these initiatives have the potential to provide rural households with the means to improve their livelihoods.

Patricia Arias's study on Mexico provided insights into the change in state policy from guaranteeing food self-sufficiency to liberalizing markets. This affected access to land, reshuffled the local organization of agricultural production and induced social exclusions. In the first part of the twentieth century, the state owned all the agricultural land and allocated it for use based on a male breadwinner model. Although this allowed households to secure food, the male mode of transmission of land was problematic for widows, divorced and single women, who were excluded from access to land. This patriarchal system thus discriminated against women, and their relationship to land could be characterized as tenuous. The model partly shaped what happened after the Mexican state liberalized the land market in the early 1990s. While men were migrating to industrial zones, women took over the care of the land from their husbands, preventing their husbands from being expropriated. But they themselves lacked property, inheritance or political rights. At the end of the agrarian reform era, the state re-introduced individual land titles. Since women were massively working the land, they were targeted as the new holders of land titles and inheritance rights. This explains why 10 per cent of land titles nowadays belong to women. The new situation has profoundly shaken traditional constructions of gender. Husband-wife relationships that used to be hierarchical have tended to become slightly more egalitarian.

In his presentation, **Andrew Fischer** questioned common, simplistic associations between neoliberal policies on the one hand, and agrarian change on the other, by drawing attention to demographic change as an important intervening factor. Old theories of demographic change predicted a gradual drop in fertility in rural societies. However, almost everywhere (except in some West African countries) fertility rates have dropped very rapidly. How can this reduction be explained, and what does neoliberalism have to do with it? One suggestion is that before a demographic transition, when fertility rates average around six children per woman, women spend long periods of their lives bearing and rearing children. After a demographic transition, women have more time for market-

oriented work and can participate in economic diversification. This might explain the fact that even in the absence of growth, we still observe changes in employment. The interesting question is to assess which part of depopulation of the countryside is due to (the absence of) economic development, and which part can be correlated with demographic modernization. The demographic vantage point helps us break with structural determinisms.

Discussion arose over the diverse meanings of feminization. In India, this seemed to be a story about agricultural wage labourers and gender divisions of labour, while in China and Mexico it was about farm managers. Participants also cautioned that there is considerable diversity within countries, particularly in China. Furthermore, they observed the divergent results of processes of feminization—dependence and disempowerment in India, but signs of empowerment in Mexico and China, where some women have gained land rights and/or have organized in various ways. The strategies of the Chinese government, which seems to invest in agriculture abroad but not at home, were another topic of discussion. While smallholder farming is diminishing, the government does not seem to have a clear line on whether to promote large-scale agriculture at home, but for ecological reasons favours multiple models. In sum, the panel problematized the simplistic association of liberalization with a feminization of agriculture (additionally alerting us to demographic processes), and brought to the fore diversity within apparently common patterns and outcomes. As in the discussions of land grabbing and changing land tenure systems, state policies emerged as a key driver.

Questions and Issues to Take Forward

A number of insights emerged from the presentations and discussions that are useful for UNRISD and IHEID to reflect upon as they design new research in this area. Some of these themes are highlighted below in bullet form.

- Large-scale land acquisitions are one clear manifestation of processes of commodification that can be analysed from a Polanyian perspective as part of the expansion of market logics (or as "primitive accumulation" as some preferred to call it); agrarian questions are broader than "land grabs" and concern longer-term processes of land concentration, as well as shifts in property regimes and labour regimes, both of which have clear gender implications.
- A research focus on processes of commodification of land and labour can highlight the salience of gender in large-scale land acquisitions. Research needs to examine shifts from regimes of possession to property rights, and from independent farmers to wage labourers. It also needs to get a better handle on how processes of social reproduction and care are changing in line with new representations of female and male economic and social responsibilities.
- Processes of commodification need to be placed in historical context so that the research can identify both continuities and change, i.e., the extent to which, and in what ways, new are processes at work, and in what ways are they a continuation of past trends. A historical perspective will also shed light on the current scope and pace of social transformations.

- Processes of neoliberal development (or incentives to farmers to become internationally competitive and entrepreneurial) are manifested and expressed differently in different locales. Research must strive to understand the mechanisms of change at the intersection of local communities and national and international market governance.
- Large-scale land acquisitions may offer a timely and politically salient starting point for analysis, but future research also needs to confront the narrowness of existing land grab literature, which has been too food-centric (drawing unwarranted causal connections between land grabs and food insecurity), too land-centric (ignoring mechanisms of control over other resources, such as water), too focused on the role of foreign capital (ignoring the role of national capital), and too Africa-centric; there also needs to be greater appreciation that land concentration can lead both to dispossession and exclusion, as well as unfavourable inclusion (through contract farming, for example, which has important gender implications).
- The role of the state in facilitating processes of agrarian transformation and deepening the commodification of agriculture (including land) needs to be problematized, along with the role of the state in putting in place social policies that temper the negative and unequal effects of such transformation.
- Processes of de-agrarianization, diversification out of agriculture, out-migration to cities, and becoming wage labourers profoundly affect male and female peasants' sense of self and ethos. Studies that focus on labour transformation, on resettlements (see Ethiopia's villagization programme) and on land reform may overlook changes in identities and the break-down of existing family and kinship relations. New social arrangements of trans-geographical families with specific livelihood and economic diversity strategies emerge, challenging traditional territory-bound units of analysis such as the household
- Reference to a "post-neoliberal" moment, provocatively included in the title of the workshop, may be premature, as processes of neoliberalization continue to take root and intensify in many locales with national and local states often complicit.

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