

Globalized home environments: on the questions of production and social reproduction in rural Finland *

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Abstract. Major international changes often summarized as globalization have taken place throughout the end of the 20th century. The increased interconnectedness of the globe has certain impacts even on rural Finland and its women entrepreneurs, locations and people in the North, far away from the centers of global economy and politics. In this article, the following idea is under consideration: if the core characteristic behind globalization is the increased and accelerating interaction between different geographical scales, as I am inclined to see it, then in order to analyze processes, experiences and meanings in which globalization lies within but is still somehow hidden, one has to search for a mediating concept and trace the path of globalization from scale to scale in concrete phenomena. I suggest that in my study on female rural entrepreneurship, this mediating concept is the one of the discourse on entrepreneurship itself. It 'collapses' the global into personal while it 'expands' the personal to the scale of the global.

Major international changes have taken place throughout the end of the 20th century: liberalization of the global financial market, the progressing European integration, the transnational economic cooperation in Asia, Europe and USA, and the informational interconnectedness through new technologies. However, what do these accounts, summarized by many analysts as globalization, have to do with rural Finland and its women entrepreneurs, locations and people in the North, far away from the centers of global economy and politics?

In this article, I will put forward the following idea: if the core characteristic behind globalization is indeed the increased and accelerating interaction between different geographical scales, as I am inclined to see it, then in order to analyze processes, experiences and meanings in which globalization lies within but is still somehow hidden, one has to search for a mediating concept and trace the path of globalization from scale to scale in concrete phenomena. I suggest that in my study on female entrepreneurship in the contemporary Finnish countryside, this mediating concept is the one of

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the discourse on entrepreneurship itself. It ‘collapses’ the global into personal while it ‘expands’ the personal to the scale of the global. What I am trying to do below is to construct a framework which best situates the everyday life sphere of my research subjects into wider processes, and which may inspire others to see the concrete interaction of global and local/personal in various phenomena.

Globalizations

In the recent discussion, both by academics and laymen, the term globalization seems to have penetrated everywhere, covering all types of cultural, social, economic and political phenomena. Although serious conceptualizations around globalization are meeting a dead end and are thus highly untenable, it is possible to mention some general aspects. In a recent textbook on Human Geography, for example, globalization is defined as a:

“process (or processes) whereby all parts of the world are becoming subject to the same sorts of influences. Here, economic, social and political institutions, flows and networks are all regarded as significant in linking the world together in single ‘world-system’, creating a global situation where what occurs in one nation inevitably impacts on other nations (with the nation-state consequently seen as of diminishing importance as a political force).” (Hollway & Hubbart 2001: 16)

This definition definitely holds true, but it is also rather general. It is fairly imprecise when it comes to the framing of globalization concretely, both temporally and spatially; materially and experientially. It is, however, misleading to narrow the concept of globalization by arguing the phenomenon would have marked the last two

or three decades only, because globalization is, actually, nothing new (e.g. Katz 2001a: 1213). For example, global trade has continued for one thousand years, even though the concept of ‘the globe’ has widened constantly. Neither does globalization stand out as an undifferentiated unity (e.g. Harvey 2001: 403). There are disparities between people’s, regions’ and nation-states’ abilities to affect the ways global, in the first hand economic, processes appear. ‘The end of geography’ and the emergence of ‘a placeless world’ are slogans too often repeated without basing the argument on and closely following some concrete single process or phenomenon. Further, the definition tells very little about the factors behind the processes it labels globalization. It can namely be argued that the most important thing to pay attention to is the close link between globalization and the capitalist production system, other global changes being more or less caused by this. It is capitalism, not globalization *per se*, that crosses national borders, leads to the disinvestments in traditional industrial centers (and degradation of regions strongly influenced by those centers) and foreign investments in the areas offering lower production costs and other expenses, and it is this “vagabond capitalism” that results into attempts of building new types of alliances (such as EU) to guarantee further capital accumulation (see Katz 2001b: 715).

Simultaneously, “the free movement of capital, labor, goods and services” is followed by the flow of ideas and ideologies. Individualism, neo-liberalism and entrepreneurialism are the core ideologies of globalization which are manifested everywhere – throughout the scales. By spreading the capitalist ideology, globalization is changing many fields of life of people, from

New York to Howa in Sudan as well as Nurmes in Finland: everyday material social practices, relationships between local residents and their social networks and, what is engagingly said and very true, the “sense of their place in the world (and the world in their place)” (Katz 2001a: 1219) becomes contested.

Seen from this perspective then, globalization signifies increased and accelerating interaction between different geographical scales. It is a process working at different scales and in various locations, including those less explicitly understood as having to do with *globalization*. In what follows, I agree with David Harvey (2000) and several feminist geographers (e.g. WGSF 1997; Nast & Pile 1998; Teather 1999) who argue that the consequences of globalization and local changes are definitively experienced bodily, in the very personal area of human beings. In the case of rural female entrepreneurs the area of body can be traced back to the scale of home and household.

Enterprising discourse: making you dream ‘private dreams’

The connections between the scales of global, home and body cannot be seen directly, but a mediating concept is needed. David Harvey (2001: 402-404) provides an evocative starting point for this type of mosaic analysis of globalization. He writes about *urban entrepreneurialism* and relates it to the neo-liberal form of globalization which he defines as a “pattern of behavior within urban governance that mixes together state powers [—] and a wide array of organizational forms in civil society [—] and private interests [—] to form coalitions to *promote or manage urban/regional development* of some

sort or other” (Harvey 2001: 402-403, my emphasis). The same aim, the promotion of regional or communal development, is equally central to rural entrepreneurialism which can also be called *enterprising discourse*. Actually, the whole discourse aims at promoting regional living conditions and improving the public image of a region, and in the current situation, this is done by pushing inhabitants and officials toward entrepreneurial thinking.

In the context of Finnish rural developing work, I use the term enterprising discourse to refer both to the fact that enterprising has arisen as a salient theme of discussion and that it is discussed in a certain way, i.e. rural areas and people are told to get over most of their problems by turning toward entrepreneurship. Enterprising is a slogan that has penetrated almost all the layers and institutions of present societies, and it has clear linkages with the same global, neo-liberal capitalism Harvey depicts. Still, in the Northern rural context, it is loaded with partly different connotations than in the normative, that is urban, areas.

In the rural context, the discourse includes appealing talk about the survival of rural areas and the challenge of a collective battle for a vital countryside. The rural enterprising discourse does not appear clearly marked-oriented, extremely liberal and profit-seeking because these types of ideas would seem too distant to many rural dwellers. However, even though not represented in this manner, the ideology behind the rural enterprising discourse can be exactly the same. Global capitalism is to be introduced subtly in order to prevent critical responses. The introduction of the enterprising attitude is done, for example, by arguing that the State or the municipalities simply do not have resources to main-



tain all the public services. Questions about whether to support private capital or public interventions are not risen and political decisions are presented as the only possible solution, as Anu Kantola and Mikko Kautto (2002) have come to notice. Another rhetoric used is to underline the traditional independence and self-sufficiency of rural inhabitants to which they now have a chance to return. Ironically, those who are primarily targeted by the traditionality rhetoric are farmers, but in EU-Finland they are very dependent on subsidies – which are allocated mainly to large and productively one-sided, that is non-traditional farms.

Thus, there are two conflicting aims to the enterprising discourse. On one hand, its main intention is to make a region, a locality or whatever target area act as an ideal entrepreneur: independently, effectively, without any subsidies from outside, making the right connections. It is considered desirable to create a competitive and dynamic image of a region among other regions. On the other hand, the talk about enterprising is directed toward people who could (and ultimately should!) start an enterprise. In this case, the talk has to be slightly changed, because rural people only seldom share the values of extreme entrepreneurialism. They do not necessarily want to live the life that the entrepreneurial ideal provides. The aim of the talks still remains rather unchanged – to spread the thoughts of economic growth and competitiveness – but it must be expressed differently because of the different set of values possessed by the audience. It is here the appealing talks of vital *home* regions are mobilized.

What is inadequately researched is the role of gender in this entrepreneurial talk which mediates between global and local.

For example, David Harvey (1998) writes about body as a locus and measure of both the material and social world we inhabit, and body as a starting point for knowledge and experience is a much used approach and an essential starting point among several feminist writers (e.g. Grosz 1994; Haraway 1988; Nast & Pile 1998). These fruitful thoughts could lead to pondering the gendered scale of body and experiences through the body in the context of the idealized enterprising discourse that relates to the ideology of global capitalism. In my opinion, what should be studied is the body-scale gender-specific strategies and experiences about the discourse which mediates the neo-liberal entrepreneurial ideal to people. In Harvey's (2001) research on, among other things, urban entrepreneurialism, he does not deal with the discussion on body even though he has done this elsewhere. So, the institutionalized talk and its material, social and emotional consequences, i.e. the scale of body, should be studied together.

Taken together, these ideas suggest that global capitalism (via enterprising discourse which bears neo-liberal values) affects the body: it takes your body and makes it a place in which capitalism begins to act through your thoughts and concrete actions. It makes you dream of a privatized world. Certainly, it is not this straightforward and penetrating, because people are not marionettes without a free will of their own. Personal values and local frames are a part of shaping social reality, and the change is continuous; everything we can catch are short flashes of meanings and relations.

Home and household: politicized social reproduction

By emphasizing private responsibility, both

rhetorics of the rural enterprising discourse (the lack of public resources and the return to the traditional independence) lead to changes not only in production but also in social reproduction. Social reproduction signifies material social practices which sustain and reproduce the society and its people, production system, and cultural forms and practices (Katz 1998: 9). It is the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life (Katz 2001b: 710), which by definition refers to something that belongs to the household's sphere and to women's jobs. However, it is not only the daily but also the long term reproduction that we have to take into account. Therefore, the wider range of material and cultural forms secured by the State, the household, the capital, and the civil society are included in it (see Katz 2001b: 710). It is important to notice that social reproduction is not an issue belonging to the private, the household's or the personal, sphere only, and it is alarming if it is presented as such.

Neil Smith (1992) is one of those who acknowledge that the relations between social reproduction and economic production are intertwined and necessary to each other and for understanding the politics of scale. He sees home as a socially produced scale which is implicated in wider social, political and economic processes and gender systems. Thus, it cannot be left outside the examination of scale issues. Households are sites of micro-level social processes, and especially complex when they involve relations of social and biological reproduction, consumption and even economic production (Marston 2000: 233-234, also Christensen 1993), which often is the case among rural entrepreneurs. As we can see, social reproduction is spatialized (Katz 1998: 109), and a current spatial feature in neo-liberal

ideology is that social reproduction is getting transferred (or brought back) into the private space.

The highlighting of private responsibility typical for current capitalist ideology leads, thus, to changes in social reproduction. The essential consequence of public actors' retreating from tasks related to social reproduction can be seen in gender relations. To take an illustration from my study context, remarkable gendered aspects can be brought up. In Finland, we have a welfare regime approximately similar to the other Nordic countries. Most people have been proud of the Finnish welfare state, and it has often been said to have 'woman-friendly' faces (Rantalaiho 1994). This refers to a feature embedded in the welfare system that makes it possible for women to work full-time outside the home even though they have children and family. This is made possible by day care services, which, as ordered by the Law, have to be available for every child not yet in school-age. It is a part of the so-called Finnish gender contract which, on one hand, allows equal opportunities for women but, on the other hand, does not remove the double day most working mothers have to do.

What is more relevant in the case of rural women is that the maintenance of the welfare state has created jobs for women. Many of these posts are typical female jobs, such as occupations in health care, children's day care, different social services etc. After the Second World War, these have been organized publicly, by the State. After certain concrete occasions such as the economic depression of the 1990s and more abstract changes in the ideological climate, the State has rather dramatically diminished its role in providing chances for making a living all over the country. This type of development



emphasizes the reciprocity of production and reproduction and its gendered consequences in the Finnish context. In the case of rural women and with connection to the body, also the personal but shared meanings of home become essential. Home is a scale strongly influenced by and influencing other scales and, thus, a political place. However, I also see as important the emotional meanings of home and home place, because these are very much emphasized by rural entrepreneurs themselves. The meaning of home culminates especially in the turning points of life (or society), even though it is always present in our everyday life (Vilkko 1997: 27). In addition, the relations between genders are organized so that the genders receive different experiences, which affect their perception of home. Below, some examples are given which show more closely how the scalar impacts appear.

Examples: straight roads and winding paths

Food production is one of the cases in which global imprints can be traced. Similarly to all what we call 'globalization', there is nothing radically new in global food production. Salt and fruits, for instance, have been imported to Finland for hundreds of years. Still, there is one remarkable event that is seen as a dividing line in domestic agricultural production: Finland joining the European Union in 1995. Farmers were strongly against the membership, and heated debates and demonstrations not typical in the Finnish context were experienced. An unadjusted competition between the fruitful Southern Europe and the cold Northern Europe, totally different national subsidy systems and other similar differences

have not been easy to mediate. Some concrete solutions among the Finnish farmers have been to invest huge amounts of money to 'Euro-size' farms, to stop farming and start something new (enterprises or wage work if found) or to begin to work elsewhere or to run an enterprise alongside farming. Solutions vary between regions, families and sexes.

Among my research subjects, there are some women who have changed the work on a family farm to the development of natural or agricultural products. For example, ecological jams and juices are produced and sold in cities or on the farm. In any case, the everyday practices of both production and reproduction have changed at least to some degree. The work women do as entrepreneurs in the food industry is different from that of performed by farmers' wives. If a woman starts an enterprise outside the home, concrete new spatial practices appear. Even if the home has also before been a workplace, the tasks related to social reproduction become organized in a different way. A woman cannot shift from the role of a mother to the role of an entrepreneur as rapidly and freely as before because marketing, product development and clients claim their time and place. Therefore, in the case of women who live in the countryside where e.g. day-care services are distant and few but where these women still want to stay because of familial or personal reasons, it is not only the regional, national or international situation, e.g. the situation in other scales, which draws women toward enterprising. Instead, also the personal time has to be appropriate for enterprising. Actually, even the opportunity to produce ecological foodstuffs is caused by global agriculture, extensive cultivation methods, food crises and so

forth, and herewith the emerged interest in local food cultures. The interplay between scales and their respective expressions are omnipresent.

Another example concerns clothing industry, and it is especially relevant in one of my study regions called Pirkanmaa. The biggest city of the region, Tampere, has long traditions in clothing industry and women's working there. Now, however, several companies have given up because of the toughened international competition, and some of the largest companies have taken a decision typical for the branch: they have moved their production to the countries with cheaper production costs. The consequences in their previous locations, among their former employees have been, for example, attempts at earning one's living as an entrepreneur on this same but now even more hardly competed branch. The results in households and embodied lives can be chased down in the same way as in the previous case; the point is that concrete influences of globalization can be found on the level where changes are experienced. As a locus of these experiences, I conceive the scale of body, which is always marked with intersecting meanings of wider scales and other people.

What comes to looking for possibilities for alternative experiences and their coming out, one has to notice the relation between experience and knowledge. The use of power is connected to knowledge. Having right type of knowledge leads to dominating positions which, for their part, offer possibilities of belonging to those who have the right to define the right knowledge. For instance, nowadays we all 'know' that enterprising is, at least almost, the only way forward for the countryside. However, it should be remembered that there can be

other ways as well, and that the conceptions of good enterprising are also subjective and vary from person to person. This is what the feminist idea of situated knowledge takes into account: what we know is always a partial view constructed from a singular perspective and based on certain experiences. However, as Cindi Katz (2001a: 1230) notices, to be able to use the idea of situated knowledge, one has to overcome the problem with situatedness: 'situated' alludes to somewhere but it specifies no place in particular, leading to a politics of 'sites' and 'places' from which materiality is largely evacuated. Geographers should carefully beware of using the notion of situatedness merely in a metaphorical sense, i.e. saying that knowledge and experiences are always produced from somewhere but, simultaneously, locating that somewhere *nowhere*. There lies also the promise of geography: to illustrate where, and why, knowledge and power connected to it lies, and where the alternative knowledges could be found.

Conclusions

I hope I have managed to show some trends of global influences in the context of rural entrepreneurs. It is above all the extended interaction between scales that is important to follow up. Globalization is very much a question of economic processes which then give rise to changes in other fields of life. The ideology of economic globalization is based on neo-liberal thinking in which profit-seeking and money-related values rule over the others. In such world, there is no space for weakness nor understanding for losers. Besides, without social, cultural, and economic safety nets, which are not valued in the new capitalism, anyone can become a loser. Therefore,



global neo-liberal capitalism is always a risky business and there is a need for discussion on alternative globalizations (though some 'ordinary people' even in the countryside have managed well with their businesses). Globalization is not a phenomenon occurring only at one scale but it can be traced at several scales, and the deeper it is dug, the more complicated it becomes.

A viewpoint of individual people is equally possible and important. In this article, I have chosen a broader approach and have not discussed the perceptions of individuals although I have also studied them. When wanting to see the both ends of the body-global continuum, the theoretical framework can be constructed to stretch from scale to scale by using a mediating

concept, which for me is the discourse on enterprising. Omitting either end makes it impossible to pose certain questions and renders some phenomena to look like a property of only one scale. A step away from this 'either end' perspective is a step toward the possibility of a new viewpoint. It acknowledges the small facts within large issues and concentrates on what follows from their interplay. For me, the enterprising discourse offers the chance of revealing the mosaic of globalization: how enterprising is part of the global expansion of ideologies, how it enters people's lives in concrete national, regional and local contexts and how it 'spices' people's personal experiences and perceptions. Making the discourse visible can also be a means of giving it more complex contents.

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