

The Changing Nature of the State-Citizen Relationship

The Case for Reproductive Work in the Context of Multidimensional Crisis

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Introduction

- ▶ Genesis for the paper emerged in the Rita Edwards Collective exploration of understanding patriarchy impact on working class women
- ▶ Put our PhD in conversation with each other and it has led us all to see our work in a new light
- ▶ Care work is a constant and a critical aspect of maintaining the society and more so within the current multi-dimensional crisis.

Care work and state-citizenship relations

- ▶ Nature and women reflected as natural static inherited and assumed in state-citizen relationship
- ▶ Commodification of care work - state-citizenship relationships has a bias towards specific socially constructed sex and gender roles. Care work that is male-dominated and formal considered as more important
- ▶ Recognition of work - only seen as valuable if they are formalised and if it serves as a cost minimisation for the state
- ▶ Hierarchy of care work where 'labour of love' is considered as virtuous while waste work is considered as 'dirty'

Locating reproduction historically and socially: an overview

- ▶ Feminist critique of 'work' that is narrowly defined
- ▶ Radical feminist critique highlight the false dichotomy between productive and social reproductive work (Mies, Shiva, James, Dalla Costa, Firestone and others)
- ▶ Implications of this false dichotomy
 - women's work being diminished to non-social activity
 - women considered as unequal and disproportionate to male citizenship
 - Domination of women's labour - domination of nature
 - Invisibilisation of women's work when it is done informally
- ▶ Naturalisation of women's work

Overview of the Multidimensional Crisis in Southern African context: women and social reproduction

- ▶ 2017 International Women's Conference - Accessing decent work remains a challenge - most women work in the informal economy and in non-standard employment
- ▶ Reproductive work is the domain of women - women spend more time than male counterparts doing care work
- ▶ Class and income alter the burden of care work
- ▶ Social reproductive work of women acts as an invisible safety net in the multidimensional of crisis

Case 1: Care work in the health sector: the case of community health workers (CHWs)

- ▶ Care work became important during the HIV/AIDS epidemic
- ▶ Contribution of lay-workers is characterised as product of civic mindedness, social solidarity, active citizenship and offered training to unemployed .
- ▶ In 2004 lay workers in public health system formalised and legitimated through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) - HAART
- ▶ **Implications for care workers**
 - Care work is naturalised - virtuous role
 - Care work is devalued - material and monetary value of work is denied. Work is then made invisible to society and the state
 - Women are politically emasculated
 - Externalisation of labour - NGO's becoming the employers of lay-workers which has implications for labour standards

Case 2: Waste Pickers in South Africa

- ▶ Large percentage of people who make a livelihood from waste picking in most cities in SADC on the streets and landfill sites
- ▶ Local municipal attitudes to waste picking is context specific - persecution, harassment, criminalisation with the exception of a few that has found ways of integrating the waste pickers into waste management.
- ▶ Waste pickers subsidise the local municipal governments where it is unable to provide basic services
- ▶ Waste pickers work perceived as dirty and not seen as desirable work
- ▶ Male-dominated activity with few females involved in the activity
- ▶ Less mobile than their male counterparts - collection sources are limited to what they find in their communities

Waste picker women in City of Cape Town

- ▶ City of Cape Town has one of the most effective and innovative waste management systems in SADC
- ▶ Waste pickers in Cape Town: not directly involved in cleaning of streets and they operate alongside a privatised municipal waste management
- ▶ **Implications for women waste pickers**
 - a) Informal waste work of women is cleaning the community - ‘municipal housekeepers’ (Miraftab, 2005)
 - b) Care work of community and environment - devalued and made invisible
 - c) Work of survival is demonised but work of entrepreneurship is celebrated and supported and subsidised
 - d) local municipality exploits reproductive labour of women through facilitating market access in order to provide a service

Concluding comments

- ▶ Domination of women and nature intimately connected
- ▶ Intimate work of caring for earth and loved ones is framed as natural
- ▶ Value of care worker-citizens increases when work becomes profitable for individuals or cost-minimising mechanisms for the state

Thank you!!

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