

Gender, Work and Organization. Vol. 15 No. 5 September 2008

***Fluid Bonds: Views on Gender and Water* edited by Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt.**

STREE, 2006, 464pp., Rs 650.00 hbk

This book adopts a gender lens to discuss the power and politics of water production, maintenance and consumption, drawing on research in both the developed and developing world. Its broad sweep is a good introduction to the complex issue of how water resources can be managed and sustained as part of increasing commodification. It raises questions about the apparent gender neutrality of international policies on water access and distribution and will be of interest to social scientists, economists, environmentalists and development theorists. Its contribution to an already well-developed hydrofeminism literature will be considerable. Divided into four parts, the book's central themes are global discourses on gendered water practices, gendered and located perspectives on water rights, gendered cultures and economies of water and women's agency and representation in water. A gender analysis highlights women's reproductive relationship with water practices that is often overshadowed by the dominant discourse of water production as espoused by international development agencies. While this collection of articles prioritizes the gender lens, it acknowledges other perspectives of tradition, culture and politics, all of which contribute to different water ideologies. This multifaceted approach is what makes the book so readable. The Zwarteveen and Boelens article about gendered water rights in the Andes, in the first part, is an example of how this book traces deeply held beliefs about water ownership and access. *BOOK REVIEWS 545*

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Differentiated concepts of water rights highlight a matrix of gender demarcations often associated with land rights. Insecure land tenure translates to insecure water rights disenfranchising women. The articles in part two discuss localized gendered water behaviour in Nepal, Australia, India and Vietnam. The critique of women's engagement with the fishing industry in Australia is a fascinating account of the ways in which both Aboriginal and settled women participate in this heavily male-dominated activity that is increasingly under threat as a viable wage-earning occupation. The issues of women's invisibility and lack of ownership of fishing capital and rights is highlighted. The issue of water capital is developed in discussing women's perceptions of water priorities in rural India: this is the subject of another article in this section. The desire for simple infrastructure capital such as building a water trough for the animals in the area adjacent to their homes is an example of water capital at the most basic level. Subsistence water needs have political force, with women in the Patan district of Gujarat declaring that they will vote only for candidates who promise to solve their water problems. Women's concerns do not relate only to domestic responsibilities but also extend to land irrigation and the management of water supply systems in agricultural production. Women who participate in irrigation management benefit in an increase of social capital by enhancing the respect in which they are held in their community. Part three of the book is the shortest and, for me, the least engaging. The theme of gendered cultures and economies of water presents an artificial category and the four articles in this section could have been dispersed into the first two parts of the collection. This leads to what, for me, is the undoubted high point of the book: women's water agency, that is the theme of part four. Readers are offered a rich discussion of how women in mature economies mobilize to acquire water power, defending what they see as their birthright that reflects a bond with the land and the enterprise of feeding people. Other contributions in this part consider how communities in southern Africa, India and Bangladesh are reclaiming their cultural water heritage against the backdrop of a

colonial legacy that privileged the technologies of pipes, pumps and reservoirs. In Bangladesh, nature's cycles that cause widespread annual inundations and problems of arsenic-contaminated groundwater create enormous water management problems that require an interdisciplinary approach. Feminist theories, when used in parallel with the literatures of political ecology, are likely to prove useful in maintaining a focus on the need for continuing development of community-based water management structures. Readers are reminded that, when confronted by these almost unmanageable natural phenomena, men and women's interests are often not different.

Space does not allow for a more detailed exploration here of the strengths of this book, though the critical quality of the articles would certainly merit this. Having completed reading the articles and looking back through my would further contributions on the gendered power relations of water hierarchies in Africa, particularly as gender mainstreaming in water resource management and development discourses has been gaining favour among policymakers who are working in the area. Within the international economy water is contested. In the past, because it was seen as a natural monopoly, water was the province and responsibility of governments. Now water is a profit-making enterprise with water business transacted transnationally through corporations like Vivendi and Bechtel. The trend towards water privatization across the globe is an unstoppable market phenomenon and this has had profound effects on the ways in which development agencies can now establish and support water supply and irrigation projects. The dynamics of water has been transformed and, even in developed countries, access to and control over water vary across class, location, race and gender. The analysis here emphasizes the implausibility of considering water rights in isolation: they intersect with political, economic and citizenship rights. This book offers diverse and fresh understandings of the changing relationships between gender and water and will inspire some readers to explore these issues in greater depth.

JACQUELINE WATTS

Faculty of Health and Social Care, Open University, UK

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notes I have identified some gaps. A debate about water, gender and power in Palestine, for example, could have widened the locus of discussion. So, too,