

**BOOK REVIEW: Gendering the Knowledge Economy. Comparative Perspectives edited by Sylvia Walby, Heidi Gottfried, Karin Gottschall and Mari Osawa. Palgrave Macmillan 2007, i–xiv, 322 pp. hbk US\$105.00**

Gendering the Knowledge Economy is an edited collection focused on theorizing the gendering of the knowledge economy in a global era. It compares processes of gendering, de-gendering and re-gendering associated with the development of the knowledge economy in four countries: the USA, the UK, Germany and Japan, the largest economies in the developed world. I came to the book with a sense of curiosity eager to finally find in one volume theoretical and empirical contributions embedding gender in a contested area of research such as the knowledge economy. By exploring processes of gendering knowledge work comparatively and cross-nationally the book contributes

to debates on globalization, the restructuring of states and polities and their effect on gender and work. For such reasons the book is contemporarily relevant. However, I also feel that a few of the contributors stretched definitions of knowledge work to encompass jobs created or further developed in the new economy (such as call centres advisers and care workers), for which the knowledge creation element is comparable to most jobs generally excluded from the knowledge economy.

Structurally, the book is organized in three parts comprising a total of nine chapters. The first part, 'Re-conceptualizing the Knowledge Economy, Gender and Regulation', includes two chapters introducing and conceptualizing definitions of the knowledge economy, the new economy, varieties of gender regime and varieties of capitalism, to set the ground for developing the comparative approach employed throughout the book. I found this part interesting and informative, providing articulate definitions of the knowledge economy and its relations to non-standard employment forms and to gender regimes in new sectors (information and communications technology, information, knowledge-intensive) in the UK, Germany, Japan and the USA. It also discusses varieties of capitalism (liberal, conservative corporatist, social democratic and hybrid) in relation to varieties of systems of gender relations. It gives the reader up-to-date statistics so that one obtains a clear picture of the state of women's work in the new economy. It does this very effectively, achieving the perfect balance between theoretical analysis and report and discussion of comparative statistics.

The second part, 'Comparative Regulation', comprises three chapters focusing on the development and significance of state regulations of equal opportunities and gender equality. This part is heavily focused on Japan, with both chapters three and five centred on Japan and chapter four taking a global perspective. The section includes interesting discussions about social policy models and the effects of women's movements on the establishment of gender policy institutions and regulations at global and national levels. While I found Glenda Roberts' chapter, based on empirical research, more engaging, I found that the other two chapters were somewhat dreary but this is heavily determined by the necessity to report statistics and regulations.

The third and final part, 'Gendering New Employment Forms', consists of five chapters and brings together empirical work analysing gender in areas of the new economy such as media, care work and call centres in the UK, Germany and Japan. The section takes an eclectic approach in defining the knowledge economy and knowledge work. Karin Gottschall and Daniela Kroos' chapter focuses on self-employment trends and conditions and illustrates a case study of media production industries in Germany and Britain using a comparative approach and integrating gender in the analysis of varieties of capitalism and welfare regime they suggest that 'contrary to the argument that liberal market economies dispose of high class inequality and less gender inequality, we find marked gender differences in self-employment in the UK and the US' (p. 183). In a cooperative market economy such as that of Germany, gender differences in self-employment seems to be less pronounced than in dependant employment. This is explained by the fact that self-employment in Germany is concentrated more in the high qualified services with a significant participation of female professionals.

Diane Perrons' chapter explores the reproduction of old social divisions by class and gender in new forms in both a new sector and in an expanding sector of the economy. She supports her discussion with the empirical finding of a survey of new media workers and care workers in Brighton and Hove (UK). The care sector is also the focus of Makiko Nishikawa and Kazuko Tanaka's chapter, debating whether care work is knowledge work. They explore care work in Japan and suggest that the 'flexibilization of labour prevents care-workers from becoming fully-fledged knowledge workers'. While they suggest that care workers can be considered knowledge workers when they share their individual knowledge with others and collectively externalize it to internalize it again, I have my doubts. If we applied this reasoning to most jobs, as we could, I believe we could consider most types of work as knowledge work.

In the last two chapters Susan Durbin and Ursula Holtgrewe empirically explore call centre work in the UK and Germany respectively. As in the case of Nishikawa and Tanaka's chapter, Holtgrewe recognizes that 'call centres do not fit comfortably into the knowledge-based sectors of the economy' (information and communications technology, information, knowledge-intensive). However, call centres are a new 'business methodology' made possible by the information technology revolution and are an important element of the new economy. The investigation of the reproduction of old practises of gendered work is thus relevant.

It would have been useful to have had a final concluding chapter, drawing together some of the premises raised by the excellent introduction and explored by the various chapters, into a more coherent narrative, while also suggesting new directions for research. In summary, by gendering the new economy (I think this would have been a more appropriate title) the book offers a much needed integration of varieties of gender regimes in varieties of capitalism in different market economies. It definitely provides an in-depth theoretical and empirical contribution, leading the reader throughout a debate about gender in the new global knowledge economy. I would certainly recommend it to researchers and advanced students interested in these contemporary social science debates.

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