Gendering globalization analysis; resistance and compliance in identity construction

Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir
Department of Anthropology, University of Iceland

Hulda Proppé
Department of Anthropology, University of Iceland

Presented at Gender and Power in New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference
August 20-24, 2003 Lund University, Sweden

Our paper explores gender in relation to global processes in Icelandic fisheries. From a feminist point of view, we shed light on how gender is constructed in relation to fisheries, a very important part of Icelandic national economy and identity. We explore how various gendered strategies for dealing with change involve changing identities, resistance and compliance in the lives of people in rural fishery based localities.

Recent feminist literature on diversity and agency is an important element in our approach to gender and globalization. In the making of local identity in a globalized world, women play an active role not just in preserving tradition but also in appropriating new ideas. Women and men apply different strategies in coping with challenges; in the process create new gender-based identities.

In our case studies, we bring out gender as it is constructed in daily life in localities affected by global changes, and examine gender aspects of the transformations taking place. We not only bring forth voices that have until now been ignored or silenced, but also show that the places and spaces that women find themselves occupying in these villages are part of a larger social context. People apply the dominant ideologies of gender and power relations in constructing their identity and in describing their agency and how they use it in their daily life. Embedded in our understanding of social and gender relations is awareness that these are relations among people, incorporating both ambiguities and changes. Although we locate our selves among people in the fisheries we believe that our analysis is only to a limited extent about fisheries but is also an attempt to get a better understanding of gender and globalization.