4.2. Subsistence and Household Labour

The peasant and the housewife represent two nodes of subsistence relations of production, both connected to but distinct from market economies. Dismissed by Marx and Engels as unproductive labourers for generating use rather than exchange value, they became in the 1970s and 1980s vibrant objects of analysis. Observed German feminist theorist Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen in 1981, “within the present world economy, housewives and peasants (men and women) reproduce labour power for capital without compensation.” They engage in “subsistence production, since it is here that human life and vital capacity to work are continuously produced and reproduced.”¹ Or, as US anthropologist Jane Collins and sociologist Martha Gimenez noted a decade later, “domestic labor—whether in the homes of industrialized nations or the farms and favelas of developing nations—had to be understood in relation to unfolding processes of capital accumulation.”²

Development studies, neo-Marxist world systems theory, and Marxist feminist inquiries into what became known as reproductive labour gained prominence during the late 20th century as ways to rethink fundamental relations between households and economies. In the context of new versions of the dispossession of people from their land and livelihoods and in light of freedom struggles in both the West and the “Third World”, the emerging field of “women and development” sought to turn the subsistence labour of rural women into income generating activities to liberate such women from the family. In practice, development schemes actually disinvested rural women from independent sources of livelihood.³ Critics offered self-organization as an antidote to the hardships of self-employment, while struggling for recognition of domestic labour as work.⁴

This chapter addresses forms of subsistence and household labour that are linked in being essential for the maintenance of life, but usually not performed for a wage. “The producers themselves are in charge of the work of reproducing their own labour and that of their family; capital does not assume any responsibility for it”, explained Bennholdt-Thomsen in the Journal of Peasant Studies, a publication

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⁴ For example, Lourdes Benería (ed.), Women and Development. The Sexual Division of Labor in Rural Societies (New York, 1982).

DOI 10.1515/9783110424584-017
that with its first issue in 1973 announced a field of historically-inflected scholarship. Kinship as an organizing feature has appeared as a central component of subsistence relations over time and space since households have deployed the labour of their inhabitants, blood or fictive, free or unfree, to generate survival of the unit. When defined as housework—cooking, cleaning, caring, and socializing the next generation into class and culture—family labour emerged as a distinct form of subsistence work first among the urban middle classes in the industrialized West as a product of the gendered ideology of domesticity, class conceptions of propriety, and the structural need for consumption.

For many people, even in Western nations, the removal of production from dwelling places was incomplete; the transformation of raw materials into consumable items supplemented wages, salaries, and rents. Commodities made in dwellings subsequently circulated from their place of fabrication to be sold like any other good. Indeed, with British and subsequent textile-based industrialization in North America and then worldwide, the putting out system generated “invisible threads” that tied the home to the mill as an extension of the factory. If one was a housewife, then taking in lace or minding children could be justified as pin-money or just a way to be busy rather than necessary production.

Categories of subsistence labour rarely have existed as pure types, sufficient unto themselves. Their configurations since 1500 have taken distinct forms across the globe, disrupted and reshaped by empire, colonialism, nation-building, development and underdevelopment, and various manifestations of globalization that have created capitalist world systems. Colonializing states have deployed force (as with war), destroyed ecological balances (as with over depletion of resources), disrupted family formation (as through gendered migration) and monetized social relations (as with community ceremonies) so to replace “reproductive forms of subsistence production through the expansion of commodity production.”

Modernization theorists conceive of each “new nation” moving through a similar process of development, leaving behind subsistence for commodified market relations, but the world

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5 Bennholdt-Thomsen, “Subsistence Production and Extended Reproduction”, p. 245.
in which such change occurs was never static.¹¹ Historians recognize that while processes might appear similar, power within the global economy has shifted over time and space since 1500.

The standard story about subsistence production begins with hunter-gathers and early agriculturalists, moves onto serfs under feudalism, and dwells on peasants.¹² Though recognizing the sexual division of labour within these types, such analysis once considered the household as a unit without sufficiently interrogating gendered and generational relations. In contrast, feminist critique not only highlights power relations within the family and home but also investigates the structural impact of the unwaged labour of wives, mothers, daughters, and other women, that is, how tending to household members in the labour force has relieved the employer or capitalist from compensating the waged worker sufficiently to purchase such services on the market, thus aiding in the subsequent extraction of surplus value from the labour of paid workers. Engendering the “Great Transformation” in the magisterial *Caliban and the Witch*, Italian historical theorist Silvia Federici rethinks the dispossession of subsistence relations of production by attributing the domination of women’s bodies through their violent appropriation, as seen in witchcraft persecutions, to the same political economy that fenced in the commons, blocking access to the land on which rural people of all sorts depended upon. Understanding control over the land and over the female body as integral to the spread of capitalism, Federici discovers a historical pattern in the squeezing of European peasantry, the conquest of the Americas, the slave trade, and the penetration of multinational corporations into the global South. However, unlike modernization theorists, she understands that the first enclosure produced a world in which subsequent enclosures have proceeded.¹³

The claim that the peasant and the housewife resemble each other, or that subsistence producers of the past stand in a similar relation to capitalism of their day as those of more recent times, requires refinement. Class and power have mattered. Bennholdt-Thomsen suggests that the “first-world” housewife has shared more with the “third world” peasant than she does with the “third world” housewife who relies on a staff of servants (this incorrectly assumes that the Western housewife employs no “help.”)¹⁴ The connection between past and present, peasant and housewife, must appear as relational: what German sociologist Maria Mies named as “housewifization” developed with colonization and the extraction of surplus from peasants

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¹³ Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn, 2004).

¹⁴ Bennholdt-Thomsen, “Subsistence Production and Extended Reproduction”, p. 244.
around the world.¹ The third world woman of the late 20th century seems similar to the enslaved African and indigenous women of the Americas and the colonized women of Asia in being they who become "'integrated' in the world economy as producers of labour-power to be used and 'consumed' in the industrialized regions; they further produce commodities for export."¹⁶ But the world economy of the 17th and 18th centuries differs from the 21st. In the making of people who migrate to labour for low wages, the mothers of the global South are doubly exploited for their household labour. But this same labour—through remittances or actual foodstuffs, care, and clothing—has sustained their communities, suggesting the power of household relations of production as a resource for not only survival but also for resistance.¹⁷

Drawing from a plethora of scholarship on subsistence and household relations of production, this chapter links theoretical and conceptual discussion of these categories to their historical manifestations. It considers classic literature on subsistence production and explicates the necessary persistence of such relations in other forms of production, as well as the impact of access to resources for sustainable subsistence practices. After parsing the chief arguments of the domestic labour debate, it more briefly turns to the figure of the housewife in relation to household relations of production in the industrialized West. The conclusion looks at the emergence of “women and development” as an intellectual arena where feminists of various persuasions addressed subsistence and household production in the global South during the last third of the twentieth century.

Subsistence beyond a sackful of potatoes

The writings of Marx and Engels remain a starting point to discuss household relations of production. The wide use of the very concept of subsistence highlights the flexibility of the term and its usefulness in describing a range of social formations. Historical specificity nuances theoretical discussions of subsistence by underscoring the centrality of producing life on a daily basis for the continuance, if not thriving, of human societies. Feminist theorists particularly have complicated discussions of subsistence relations of production.

For Marx, subsistence relations of production were essential but insufficient for what amounts to an evolutionary vision of change. He infamously referred to French

¹ Maria Mies, Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour (London, 1986).
¹⁷ Rhacel Parreñas, Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work, 2nd edition (Stanford, 2015); Ton van Naerssen, Lothar Smith, Tine Davids and Marianne H. Marchand, (eds), Women, Gender, Remittances and Development in the Global South (Farnham, Surrey etc., 2015).
peasants as “the great mass [...] formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes much as potatoes in a sack form a sackful of potatoes.” Near self-sufficiency defined the peasant family, which “directly produces the major part of its consumption.” Without specialization (though there existed an internal division of labour, sexual and generational, that Marx hardly noticed), peasant society lacked development: “no diversity of talents, no wealth of social relations.”

However, Marx understood the transformation of the peasant from a worker-proprietor into a wage labourer, along with the severing of the serf from the lord and the land, as a precondition for the growth of capitalism. “The So-Called Primitive Accumulation” occurred “when ‘great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence and hurled as free and ‘unattached’ proletarians on the labour market. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process.” The means of expropriation varied: enclosing the commons, whether in early modern Europe or 20th century Nigeria; damming rivers and diminishing game animals through settler encroachment on indigenous lands; usurping customary rights of squatters through legal titles; relocating peasantry, as to “planned villages” under Tanzanian “Ujamaa Socialism;” cordonning off of hunting and grazing lands for tourist wildlife parks throughout Africa.

Writing on “the peasant question”, Engels associated the peasant with subsistence relations of production: labour undertaken by the family for the household. (Whether just by family, however defined, appears more complicated, especially in societies of slavery, indenture, and other forms of unfree labour.) He predicted that the European peasantry could not maintain viability because of debt, taxes, loss of supplemental handicraft production, failure of crops, too few draft animals, and inheritance practices that divided the land. The peasant economy, however, lingered, even in Europe; only after WWII with deliberate social policies in both West and East Germany, for example, did subsistence farms end. Indeed, peasants long depended on subsistence production because other sources of livelihood, such as wages earned from temporary migration, proved inadequate—the case throughout Latin America even after commercial agriculture had become dominant in the 1970s.

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Under nineteenth century regimes of colonialism, indigenous peoples also combined subsistence production with wage labour, crafts marketing, and self-commodification, as when charging tourists for photographing them or observing their rituals.

Rather than fulfilling basic needs through purchase of commodities, Marxist and modernization theorists alike agree, subsistence regimes produce for use, absorbing the outcome of household labour. But just because subsistence societies consume their production did not mean they eschewed relations of exchange. Writing in the 1920s and 1930s, the Russian agrarian economist A.V. Chayanov judged peasants as non-capitalists, who entered the market to purchase necessary goods or services rather than to increase wealth. With needs fulfilled, they would cease working. But without adequate resources, they would tighten their belts and intensify self-exploitation. The extent of work connected to the number of producers related to consumers (the too young or old) in the household.

As German historian Hans Medick argued in 1976, “the family functioned objectively as an internal engine of growth in the process of proto-industrial expansion precisely because subjectively it remained tied to the norms and rules of behavior of the traditional familial subsistence economy”, that is, the ways that the household regulated its consumption and marshaled all members for labour.

British sociologist Teodor Shanin, an interpreter of Chayanov, has emphasized the leveling mechanisms within such communities that constitute subsistence exchange: rules of behavior that led to sharing or giving away surplus that cemented relationships, affirmed culture and fulfilled obligations. Mutual exchange of labour facilitated ground clearing, harvesting, and house building outside of market relations throughout the world. Such cooperative labour in North America among European settlers, who sometimes conveyed enslaved Africans to “frontier” settlements, occurred while occupying territory previously held by indigenous peoples.

“Moral economy” rather than profit governed some of these societies, even if the genocidal practices of settler colonialism or the forced labour of bondage hardly appears

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27 Waters, Persistence of Subsistence Agriculture, provides much evidence from the 1500s to the 2000s.
“moral.” Into the late 20th century, peasants in Oaxaca, Mexico, for example, came together to confirm social belonging through festivals and participation in community projects.²⁸

Though focused on pre-capitalist formations, economic anthropologists, American Marshall Sahlins and French Claude Meillassoux, have stressed the importance of kinship in ordering subsistence relations of production. As Sahlins explained, “its own inner relations, as between husband and wife, parent and child, are the principal relations of production in society. The built-in etiquette of kinship statuses, the dominance and subordination of domestic life, the reciprocity and cooperation, here make the ‘economic’ a modality of the intimate.”²⁹ Nineteenth century St. Kilda, Scotland exemplifies such processes. Its division of labour resembled work organization among European peasants in which women cared for children and gardens; they made cheese, spun wool, and sewed. Men wove cloth in the winter and otherwise worked outside the home in the fields, here they also sheared sheep and fished in a sustainable relationship with the environment.³⁰ German immigrants to Nebraska’s Great Plains in the 1880s clung to subsistence farming, in which women raised poultry and knitted stockings.³¹ Peasant households throughout East Central Europe, many of which worked land they did not own, also produced necessities for daily life—with a variegated sexual division of labour that sometimes saw women, when relieved of family labour, engaged in tasks elsewhere defined as men’s work.³² The Aymara in Southern Peru provide further evidence of a “flexible sexual division of labor [...] according to what seems the most advantageous strategy at a particular time” when their region became more enmeshed in global capitalist markets in the 1970s. Women as well as men left the home for seasonal wage labour.³³

Meillassoux stressed the domestic mode of production as one of reproduction of the household and community. In “primitive” societies, “power [...] rests on control over the means of human reproduction—subsistence goods and wives—and not over the means of material production.”³⁴ The social and economic structure of peasantry actually coincided with the predominance of the paternal household head determin-

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²⁹ Sahlins, Stone Age Economics, p. 77.
³⁰ Waters, Persistence of Subsistence Agriculture, pp. 77–78.
³⁴ Meillassoux, Maidens, Meal and Money, p. 49.
ing the labour of others. In an extensive review of nonindustrial societies throughout the world, anthropologists Alice Schlegel and Herbert Barry III found that “where men control women’s subsistence, men also control their sexuality—licity through an insistence on virginity, illicitly through rape.” Étienne Cantin similarly concludes for China that during the Ming and Qing dynasties, in determining “women’s work, marriages and persons, women could be made to yield resources convertible into property belonging to men” as they consumed less than they produced beyond the subsistence needs of households. Allocation of women’s labour in India peasant households in the first decades of the 19th century was one factor that stymied Anglo attempts to enhance cotton production for the world market. Women clung to their hand churka gins as part of a household strategy to maintain the family division of labour, maximize food production and minimize the risk to the peasant household by controlling the extent of cotton manufacturing.

Though most women’s work stood outside the public sphere, consumed by the household, the sexual division of labour led to “female economies” in which women controlled the selling of surplus goods. An adage of 1534 underscored the significance of women’s labour: “‘A woman cannot get her living honestly with spinning on the distaff, but it stoppeth a gap.’” Oaxacan women transferred tortilla-making skills into home-based businesses; West African and Caribbean women also displayed comparable strategies to earn cash for taxes and school fees. Elder men retained power in post-colonial rural Mali, for example, but women inherited their own fields, which they used to enhance economic security of their children by producing crops either for direct consumption or for easy exchange. Time to farm depended on other household work, especially raising children, while actual labour did not necessarily translate into greater autonomy.

By absorbing the cost of individual and family maintenance, subsistence production has enabled other relations of production, regimes of unfree as well as free labour. Plantation owners had the enslaved cultivate crops for their own use, either for direct consumption or exchange, sometimes with the masters themselves who would

39 Quoted in Medick, “Proto-Industrial Family Economy”, p. 311.
pay for chickens or produce. The availability of provisioning grounds, often on marginal plots of land, was widespread in the Caribbean and where the task system prevailed in North America, as with rice production. In early 19th century Cuba, frontier regions saw subsistence plots, which persisted in tobacco areas.

Other forms of racialized enterprise sought to offset the cost of worker maintenance through women’s unpaid labour. In the 1930s, while South African mines separated men from their rural households, Northern Rhodesian companies encouraged the presence of wives and other women to service the workforce through cooking, laundry, and sex. Some mines provided plots to grow foodstuffs, purchasing the resulting harvest to feed single men more cheaply. Temporary wives throughout Africa, and in the Caribbean, undertook subsistence in the midst of capitalist extraction of natural resources.

Self-provisioning carried over to post-emancipation plantations and became particularly important for coffee production. Into the mid 20th century, estate owners and merchants in the Sao Paulo region of Brazil, Columbia, Venezuela, Central Costa Rica, and for a time in Puerto Rico relied on peasant self-exploitation. The colonato family labour system, a “coffee and food-crop” combination, provided these ruling classes with “a measure of flexibility in the face of price slumps on the world market that they would not have enjoyed with wage labour”, historian Verena Stolcke documents. Guatemala and El Salvador, in contrast, forced indigenous labour to work on plantations, destroying their rights to the land and seeking to undermine their culture and resistance. Peru offers another variation. Subsistence production allowed Peru to develop a coffee industry after WWII by reducing the cost of reproducing families who remained in the highlands. Land reform between 1969–1975 kept communal ownership inalienable, restricting individual accumulation even while cor-doning off acquisition from outsiders—that effectively “subsidiz[ing] the cost of maintaining and reproducing labor, which must seek economic opportunities outside of the communities.”

Historian Sven Beckert observes that the subsistence activities of “Indian peasants, like their counterparts in Anatolia, western Africa, and elsewhere, had shaped a

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world in which they could resist the onslaught of European merchant capital”, increasing their reliance on the U.S. South and its system of slavery before the Civil War. Indian peasants reserved the best soil for consumable crops, refused new technologies, and retained rights to the land.⁴⁷ Certainly liberated Haitians resisted waged as well as forced labour in the 1820s by having their own land, organized into the extended family lakou system. Here a number of houses encircled a common center, emphasizing independence without discouraging communal exchanges for larger tasks like home construction or some harvests.⁴⁸ Even under slavery, subsistence cultivation provided “spaces of autonomy” that challenged systems of bondage and provided material conditions for resistance, whether funds to purchase freedom or foodstuffs to maintain protests. As historian William A. Morgan concludes, “that autonomous activity ranging from surplus production used for consumption to the production of marketable goods was happening within the constraints of slavery means that enslaved individuals were using an internal economy to push the boundaries and limitations of their enslavement.”⁴⁹ When Jamaica instituted a liminal system of apprenticeship between 1834–1838 prior to emancipation, the formerly enslaved refused continuous labour, insisting on customary practices, including provisioning grounds and gardens allotted for their own use, in negotiations with sugar plantation managers.⁵⁰

Production for use transformed the meaning of the stretch-out of unfree woman’s days. As black feminist theorist Angela Davis contended in a path-breaking 1972 article, “in the infinite anguish of ministering to the needs of the men and children around her ... [the black woman] was performing the only labour of the slave community which could not be directly and immediately claimed by the oppressor.” The black woman wove “into the warp and woof of domestic life a profound consciousness of resistance.” Rather than a symbol of drudgery, household labour became the means of retaining group humanity and, thus, the desire for freedom.⁵¹ Northern Rhodesian women a century later would transform subsistence plots into self-employment, winning through their beer brewing, gardening, and other labours greater independence from their men, as well as some overall household maneuverability against employers.⁵² Wherever workers could return to family plots, they could protest industrial conditions without fear of starvation.⁵³ Joining together in

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⁴⁷ Beckert, Empire of Cotton, 131.
household activities, women obtained “a source of power and protection” through their “intense female sociality and solidarity”, lost under the sexual division of labour under capitalism.⁵⁴

The worth of domestic labour

Even without monetization, the worth of domestic labour seems apparent under systems of subsistence and proto-industrialization. But what was the value of housework under capitalism? The Marxist tradition recognized reproductive labour, though Engels claimed that women’s emancipation required leaving unwaged domestic labour for employment outside of the home. Lenin referred to “domestic slavery” from the conditions of “petty housework”, which “chains her to the kitchen and the nursery” where “she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery.”⁵⁵ The logical conclusion was the full socialization of housework, the dream of early 20th century US feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman as well as late 20th century black Communist feminist Angela Davis.⁵⁶ Despite greater provision of nurseries and legal gender equality, state socialist countries never fully achieved socialization of domestic labour, though Bulgaria made the most headway in the 1970s.⁵⁷ Market economies would socialize household labour through commodification that maintained the illusion of a private sphere by transferring essential tasks from the family into waged work in the service sector or bringing paid workers into the home to substitute their labour for that of the housewife’s.⁵⁸

Beginning in the late 1960s, Marxist and socialist feminists debated the value of domestic labour. Some of them drew upon the Los Angeles activist Mary Inman, whose work the Communist Party USA had rejected in the 1940s as unorthodox on “the woman question.” Casting housework, like factory work, as productive labour, Inman prefigured much of the later domestic labour debate by claiming that “widespread denigration of housework and child rearing” was what led to women’s

⁵⁴ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, p. 25.
subordination, not the economic function of the work itself that produced future and present labour power. Housewives engaged in “necessary social labour;” the work of all the separate households was “the pivot of the system.”³⁹ Three decades later, feminists in the US, Britain, and Western Europe argued whether household labour produced exchange or use value and whether it was the source of women’s oppression and exploitation. Italian writers Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Leopoldina Fortunati and Silvia Federici advanced the discussion by underscoring the production of labour power. Fortunati stressed that the housewife (and the prostitute) both work for capital in reproducing the labour power of the male worker. With American Selma James, Della Costa pushed for wages for housework, though she also called for the refusal of work.⁶⁰ Others argued that the housewife produced no surplus value; her labour was for household consumption. Rather than indirectly working for the capitalist, she worked for her husband. The struggle, as French feminist theoretician Christine Delphy contended, was against men as a sex class. In subsequent decades, feminists revived reproductive labour as the key term to describe a central, if unrecognized, component of economic life.⁶¹

These discussions occurred amid an overall decline of the family wage, earnings that from the mid-19⁰ century in different times and places throughout the industrialized West had allowed organized craftsmen and then unionists in mass productive industries to earn enough to support an unwaged wife and children.⁶² From 19⁰ century Netherlands to 1950s Argentina and Italy, the housewife became the consumer of ready-made goods and later new technologies, indirectly sustaining capitalist production.⁶³ Lack of labour saving devices, as much as social services, led to double exploitation of working-class women’s labour power, as in socialist China and capitalist United States.⁶⁴ In India, professionals as well as the wealthy also substituted the labour of wives, who entered paid work, with the work of migrants, the lower-caste, and even children “at a heavy cost to the reproduction of labour-power in

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⁵⁹ Mary Inman, In Women’s Defense (Los Angeles, 1940), pp. 137, 145.
the households of the workers who take up the burden”, according to Indian scholar Rohini Hensman. Household labour long had depended on slaves, servants, and other insourced workers who undertook the dirtiest and more tasking jobs, whether hauling wood for fires or washing upper windows. The resulting mistress-maid relationship generated conflict, whether in the form of employer violence or worker malingerling and sabotage. These tensions reemerged in the late 20th century when shifts in the global economy and structural adjustment policies helped to generate both the dual-career family and the migrant domestic worker in Singapore and Dubai, no less than New York City and Rome. Simultaneously, the financialization that characterizes post-Fordism, as Australian gender researchers Lisa Adkins and Maryanne Dever explain, “suggests that the social energy implicated in the unpaid work of social reproduction [...] is now connected to flows of value creation [through stocks, credit, and mortgages] which are not necessarily hardwired to the extraction of surplus from (paid) human labour.”

Beyond women and development

In the mid 1970s, Meillassoux underscored the uneven and unequal global reach of subsistence and household production, asserting that “capitalism ... depends both on the domestic communities of the colonized countries and on its modern transformation, the family, which still maintains its reproductive functions although deprived of its productive ones.” This observation paralleled feminist observations on the significance of the domestic economy, but without a profound understanding of male dominance. In the late 1970s, Maria Mies with collaborators Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof conceptualized “the subsistence perspective” out of heady debates over modes of production; their own research on India, Mexico, and other “underdeveloped” places; and a feminist sensibility that valued

69 Meillassoux, Maidens, Meal and Money, p. xiii.
the making of life and rejected the devaluing of housework. “Nature, women, and the exploited countries of the Third World” became “‘the colonies of the White Man’”, subject to forceful expropriation. A continuing process generated capital accumulation.

This fundamental insight contrasted with the main thrust of feminist writing on development. “Women in Development” (WID) informed United Nations actions during the late 1960s and 1970s, propelled by the foreign assistance work of Washington DC feminists like Irene Tinker and UN researchers like Ester Boserup. The Danish Boserup postulated a female farming system that had led to equality between the sexes that development targeted to men was undermining. Adhering to conceptions of meritocracy and the market, WID proponents argued for policies that treated peasant women in the global South as workers and not merely mothers, calling for integrating women into production through training and/or directing resources to women agriculturalists to enhance overall development programs and thus improve overall economic outcomes. Peasants were not to become housewives with rising GNP, but gender inequality would subside from women’s market based income generating activities in food production, crafts, and services. There was some success where women had engaged in subsistence provisioning, as in sub-Saharan Africa. But, as small scale projects, these efforts may have had greater impact in undermining subsistence relations of production than alleviating poverty. By the late 1970s, scholars recognized the need to think in terms of social relations, forging the more critical “Gender and Development” (GAD). By the early twenty-first century, household production represented an alternative to corporate capital that, nonetheless, was made possible by the very inequalities generated by globalization. Ecofeminists, like Mies, and other advocates of sustainability argued for a return to subsistence practices. In contrast, urban homesteaders, do-it-yourself-culture, farmer’s markets, local exchange trading systems, and other “think globally, act locally” movements attracted a range of participants from various political persuasions, most of whom had enough resources or social capital to participate in such ventures. Community gardens aside, most poor and working-class people lacked time and money to engage in household production, even if they still had to stretch wages through foraging, “thrifting”, stretching, remak-

70 Maria Mies, “Housewifisation—Globalization—Subsistence-Perspective”, in: Marcel van der Linden and Karl Heinz Roth with Max Henninger (eds), Beyond Marx. Theorising the Global Labour Relations of the Twenty-First Century, (Leiden and Boston, 2014), pp. 220–221.
71 Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies, Subsistence Perspective, p. 12.
ing, and doing without.\textsuperscript{73} In the new gendered international division of labour, household production in the global North stood apart from subsistence relations as a new arena for commodification, while households of all sorts struggled for subsistence.

\textsuperscript{73} I am indebted here to exchanges with Leigh Dodson, PhD student in Feminist Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara.
Suggested reading


