
Re-negotiating Social Reproduction, Work and Gender Roles in Occupied Palestine

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Résumé

This article uncovers the ways in which paid and unpaid work in Occupied Palestine have transformed for different categories of men and women since 2000. By considering the interactions of production and reproduction, the aim is to overcome the problems of their isolated treatment in traditional IPE studies (Steans and Tepe 2010). In fact, the dominant focus on the productive sphere in relation to women and work has led to a narrow understanding of the factors that have kept women out of formal employment.

While research has focused on supply and demand-side factors that have kept women *out* of the formal labour market, far less attention has been devoted to a consideration of the interaction between paid and unpaid work in the context of Palestine's occupation and stifled economic development (Turner and Shweiki 2014). This article contributes to bridging this gap by consulting two time-use surveys (2000 and 2012). Our results confirm that a large proportion of educated, young women are not finding paid work and are therefore unemployed. In contrast, married women's participation in the labour market has increased, as a result of deteriorating economic conditions, which have forced employed married women to hold on to their jobs rather than exiting the labour market upon marriage.

These women have renegotiated their domestic and caring responsibilities alongside paid work. It has been noted that "married women are finding ways to maintain their jobs and combine their productive and reproductive roles through coping mechanisms." (Al-Botmeh 2013: 33). Through analysis of time-use surveys and key informant interviews, we further unpack such 'coping mechanisms'. Our findings show that re-distribution of domestic and care work from married women to married men has been negligible. Instead, the dominant pattern is one in which women within extended families set new roles for each other. The rise of such extended-family based arrangements for child and elder care have gendered and socio-economic consequences. The article concludes by making the case for moving away from the current extended family-based care arrangements and instead for investing in publicly available, affordable child and elder care.

References:

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