

Feminization of Space and Equality for Women in Morocco

Danielle Davis
Rollins College

Submissin for AFIT Student Awards
ddavis@rollins.edu

Introduction

Economic liberalization throughout the world has had a significant impact on the reorganization of space with respect to what is considered predominantly “male” or “female” spaces. Various cultures have embodied certain ideologies related to particular spaces based on gender. In most cases, males dominate the public spheres of society while women tend to dominate the private spheres. Morocco provides an interesting setting to study this phenomenon. Morocco is a country with impeccably strong ties to Islam and the Middle East. Having been heavily influenced by Spanish and French colonizers throughout the Era of Imperialism (from the 1880s to the 1950s), Moroccan society has been dealing with a clash between tradition and modernity. One of the biggest threats to modernity has been Morocco’s struggle to remain loyal to Islam. Moroccan society illustrates a heterogeneous mixture of liberalizing European ideologies due, not only to the close proximity to the continent, but also the tradition of Islamic values. This clash of tradition and modernity has had a significant impact on the division of gendered spaces over Moroccan history.

These spaces in society constructively personify masculine and feminine characteristics. For example in Morocco, the marketplace and street are closely linked to trade and livestock, most often considered a man’s realm, while the only public space appropriate for women to congregate is the *hammam* (the Turkish bathhouse) and the *sijyid* (the tombs of deceased saints) (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 88). In fact, the *hammam* is one of the few places in Moroccan society that has been studied as one of the most important spheres to analyze women’s power

within Moroccan culture. In this exclusively female dominated space, women often exhibit a much strong sense of power and confidence among fellow female friends and neighbors.

In recent years, Morocco has experienced a reorganization of space, often referred to as the “feminization” of space; this helped to bridge the gender gap by providing women with greater opportunities to engage in economic and social activities. This feminization of space is largely (though not exclusively) the result of six distinct bridging mechanisms: the revision and enforcement of family and civil law, microcredit, a shift in gender ideologies, education, policy initiatives targeted at feminized poverty, and the rise of the informal economy.

As with most societal change, benefits are not evenly dispersed, in Morocco the gender gap between upper and middle class men and women has dramatically decreased as a result of the reorganization of space; however, there still remains a startling disparity between the upper class and poorest of poor in respect to those who reap the benefits of these changes. In particular, there continues to be a colossal gap in equality between women of the higher classes and women of the lower class. Women in urban areas have had greater access to particular resources such as education and healthcare, while the women in rural regions remain far more disadvantaged.

This paper will discuss how economic liberalization and globalization have affected women’s roles in Moroccan society. By focusing on Morocco’s historical makeup, dichotomy of space, the revision of the legal codes, the rise of the informal economy, the importance of education, and microcredit, this paper illustrates a decreasing gap (or progress) in equality not only between men and women, but also urban and rural women. In order to understand the unique society, I will briefly discuss the different types of gaps found in Morocco and how these

gaps can potentially be decreased through policy initiatives. These gaps are prevalent among men and women and different groups of women depending on class and location.

Dichotomy of Public versus Private Space

Pervasive in Moroccan society is the idea of a gendered division of space, which shapes perceptions of male and female roles. This dichotomy also works to maintain the idea that women in society are subordinate to men. Thus, this cultural association emphasizes and capitalizes on ideologies that render women subordinate in society.

This phenomenon is rooted in both religion and in ancient legends. One of the explanations for this is linked to the Greek legend of Hermean, the Greek God of communication, and Hestian, the Greek Goddess of the home. The visible male world was called Hermean, while the private or invisible, feminine world was deemed Hestian (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 87-88). Greek conceptualization of space constitutes a similar notion across most of the Mediterranean. Similar to most religions, Islam's foundation was based on a number of existing cultural ideas based on the division of gendered space. While these ideas are often vaguely outlined in the Qur'an and hadiths, many scholars believe that women in the early days of Islam experienced far more freedom of movement and opportunity in the public sphere. After the death of the Prophet, Muhammad, this dichotomy of gendered space constitutes a far more concrete part of the Islam. Many tend to agree that Islamic theocracy plays a significant role in not only strengthening but also perpetuating the oppressive characteristics of the patriarchy (Massana 1). According to some, the Prophet Muhammad encouraged the seclusion of women from the public sphere in order to uphold "enduring sacred and communal values of modesty and honor built around the gender segregation" (Thompson, 2003, 57). As noted by Sadiqi and Ennaji, "the private sphere is

culturally associated with powerless people and is subordinate to the public space, which is culturally associated with men” (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 88). Even Sufis, a sect of Islamic mysticism, considers the public sphere, or *zahir*, a space of corruption while the private sphere, the *batin*, constitutes as a space of truth (Thompson, 2003, 56). As in most Islamic societies, the public sphere such as the marketplace and the street constitute the space where a male’s masculinity evolves (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 88). The religion of Islam is heavily founded upon a gender-based dichotomy rooted in the patriarchy.

Islam and the patriarchy has played a critical role in Moroccan society by constructing the idea that the public sphere is a dangerous locale for women. This belief is further pervaded throughout Arab societies through manipulation of the veil. According to Islam, “wearing the veil allows greater movement through public space, as veiled women have access to the public space while remaining symbolically in private space” (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 91). Originally, the veil was worn by kings to create a distinction between the community and authority; however, as time progressed the veil, or *hijab*, has been used to “hide” what is considered sacred and vulnerable. In effect, female power in Morocco and Islam is derived from the household. The seclusion of women presents a great deal of ambiguity when viewing the veil as a mechanism once used to value and render an object sacred, such a kings or members of the highest class.

Any male outside of a woman’s family is considered a threat to her chastity and vulnerability. In addition, fundamental Islamists who support the patriarchal gender dichotomy deemed women’s primary role as a “symbol of a coherent and national identity and as a cultural marker against Western influence” (Edwards, 2010, 7). While Moroccan women are, in fact, considered responsible for passing down tradition to their offspring, the public and private

space dichotomy has the ability to falsely justify the social, political, and physical domination of women in contemporary Moroccan society. To many modern-day Moroccans, the veil continues to represent one of the greatest issues surrounding the stagnated status of women.

According to Fatima Mernissi, author of *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*, "it is not possible for an individual to claim a private zone in public space...A woman has no right to use male spaces. If she enters them, she is upsetting the male's order and his peace of mind. She is actually committing an act of aggression against him" (Mernissi, 1982). Newcomb sums up this construction of gendered ideas when she states, "in defining the meanings and uses of new spaces, individuals make claims for collective visions of gendered identity and relationships. Everyday practices, rather than being mere individual tactics, are profoundly social. In this case, gendered everyday practices assert individual ideas of the proper place for women while simultaneously responding to and transforming various discourses about the position of women in Moroccan society" (Newcomb, 2006, 291). In reality, this division of gendered space has contributed to disadvantaging women from education, employment, and political spheres.

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this gendered space dichotomy began to experience disruptions by means of mandates for public education and an increase presence of Moroccan woman in the public spheres of society. Before this, women in the most desperate economic situations were some of the few to work outside of the home, most often in the informal sectors of the economy. Most of these women came from rural areas and chose to immigrate to urban areas. These informal laborers now constitute nearly two-thirds of female labor at the national level (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006 89, and Skalli, 2001, 78). The Moroccan labor

force is composed of close to 12 million individuals, with close to 45% working in agriculture, 20% industry, and 36% working in services. 15% of the country is considered to be living below the level of poverty. According to Freedom House's calculations, close to 42% of women are active within the economy. As a result, most female heads of household are found in the cities; this means that one out of every four Moroccan households are solely supported by a woman's salary (Skalli, 2001, 80). In addition, these women who represent a substantial percentage of the labor force are not only virtually unpaid but also completely unrecognized. What remains true for most women in developing nations, however, is that they are generally the first to fall victim to economic misfortune due in large part to the fact that they benefit less from economic and social progress than men (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 94). The lack of investment in human capital is directly related to the astonishing rate of illiteracy among the female population in Morocco (Skalli, 2001, 77).

Impact of the Revision of Moroccan Laws

One of the greatest impacts on the feminization of space has been the revision of the Moroccan Constitution and Family Laws. The Mudawana is Moroccan family code, the personal status guidelines for issues related to the family including inheritance, divorce, marriage, polygamy, and custody. These family laws are constructed from Islamic law, specifically the Maliki laws. According to many critics of the legal system in Morocco, Mudawana is a male constructed entity that "gave absolute preeminence to men and favored married women [which] encourage social prejudice and male discriminatory behavior toward women" (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 95). Although there is no single reason for such change, many tend to agree that "women demands for a second revision have been more pressing, stressing the need for a complete

rewriting of the Mudawana or at least of some of its articles which were judged incompatible with the evolution of the socio-economic situation of Moroccan women and of society in general. According to political analysts, this is considered as a turning point in the country's history and the most wide-reaching social reform since Morocco gained independence" (Naqrachi, 2007, 9).

In addition, the original Mudawana not only outlined the obligations of a wife and husband, but also favored male kins as heirs. Aside from issues of inheritance and female obligations, it also gave men undisputed rights to divorce his wife and failed to require any sort of consent on the part of a woman during marriage. The original Mudawana (from the late 1950s) authorized the use of a marriage tutor, or wali, responsible for the supervision of the marriage of a single woman. In addition to the wali, the dowry was an essential part of sealing the marriage contract and women were forbidden from marrying a non-Muslim man (Cabre, 2007, 4). This version of the Mudawana allowed a husband to demand from his wife the following: obedience, faithfulness, nursing the baby, organization and care of the household and respect for her husband's family. On the contrary a wife was only allowed to demand a much more concise set of expectations including sustenance, clothing, medical support, equality in polygamous marriages, permission to visit her own family, and freedom to dispose of her patrimonial property (Cabre, 2007, 5-6). In reality, Mudawana served as the "sacred" text that dictated most social and familial aspects of society.

Interestingly enough is the fact that after Morocco was granted independence, the Moroccan government abolished the use of almost all Islamic law in government, except for the laws of Mudawana governing women and children. In 2004, Mudawana was revised in response

to an outcry demanding a more egalitarian stance on relations between men and women. In many cases, the Moroccan Constitution was far more liberal compared to the Mudawana.

Much criticism stemmed from the fact that there were severe inconsistencies between the Constitution and the Mudawana. For example, the Moroccan Constitution gave women political rights equal to those of men, while the Mudawana considered women and children as domestic property with limited rights (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 101). The 2004 revision was designed around three axes: “equality between spouses, family equilibrium, and the protection of the children” (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 108). The 2004 revision under King Mohammed IV to the Mudawana included increasing the legal marriage age from 15 to 18 years old, abolishing male legal supervision of marriage, granting females autonomy in the right to request a divorce and child custody. In addition, it became the responsibility of the judge to divide goods and right to property during a divorce. Furthermore, repudiation is subject to judicial authorization during divorce, and women finally were given the right to forbid a polygamous union through a marriage contract (Cabre, 2007, 10-11).

Because of these monumental revisions, women’s status was elevated to a brand new level. While it has substantially strengthened the position of females in all spheres of society, an ever-present issue surrounds the fact that the revised Family Law is not always enforced or even known by women in some of the most rural areas. Such revisions have empowered the socially privileged, while doing very little for those in some of the poorest realms of society. Another pervasive issue with the legal system remains the fact that since not all women are able to participate in the public political space, many female interests and needs continue to be neglected today.

Impact of the Rise of the Informal Economy

Depending on the school of thought, the informal economy can be classified by a variety of various definitions. Some of these include “a separate marginal economy not directly linked to the formal economy, providing income or a safety net for the poor; a subordinated economy to the formal economy by which privileged capitalist seek to subordinate petty producers and traders in order to reduce costs; and informal work arrangement that are rational responses by micro-entrepreneurs to over-regulation by government bureaucracies” (Becker, 2004, 10). The general characteristics of the informal economy most often include “low entry requirement in terms of capital and professional qualifications, a small space of operations, skills often acquired outside of formal education, and labour-intensive methods of production and adapted technology” (Becker, 2004, 11). These workers usually include street vendors and traders, seasonal or temporary workers, waste collectors and home-based workers (Becker, 2004, 13). Women make up approximately 60-80% of the informal economy worldwide; however, because they are most often categorized as home-based workers carrying out unpaid labor they “fall easily through the gaps in enumeration and statistics on household level is still difficult to measure” (Becker, 2004, 21).

Islamic fundamentalists have fostered resentment for women who have taken up opportunities in the public space by “calling for veiling...and [a] carefully packaged discourse that comforted the patriarchal tendencies among men, especially young, employed males who were easily led to think that women’s work outside the home robbed them of opportunities” (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, 101). However, since the revision of the legal system, women have experienced a greater sense of economic independence by means of venturing outside of the

household and gaining employment. Employment and contributing to the household expenses has increased women's bargaining power in the home (Klasen & Lamanna, 2008, 5). Considered the new agents of development, women's participation in the economy now accounts for over 35% of all activity (Poster & Salime, 2002, 210).

The rise of the informal society such as domestic services, commerce and trading, small-scale production, and subcontracting has been a major trend of globalization and economic restructuring that has predominantly affected women and justified an intermediate link between the public and private spheres of society (Poster & Salime, 2002, 191). The informal economy strategically works by balancing the formal economy and providing the greatest amount of access and opportunity of paid work by women. Eighty-percent of those employed in low-income countries and close to forty-percent of those employed in middle-income countries are employed in informal sectors of the economy (Mehra & Gammage, 1999, 541). According to Poster, "women's work in the informal economy is central in maintaining the global capitalist system [by] providing services that sustain households, augments wages for families on the brink of poverty, and allow capitalists to bypass expensive and politically threatening labor relations that exist in the formal sector" (Poster & Salime, 2002, 191). Like in most developing countries, women are the labor force of choice. Women employees are considered less likely to engage in conflict and far more economically and physically vulnerable than male employees.

According to the International Center for Research on Women, over the past few years particular trends have surfaced in regards to women's employment in the developing world. Such trends suggest that the spread of informal and flexible employment opportunities has been

responsible for not only the feminization of space, but also the feminization of the labor force in North Africa, especially Morocco (Mehra & Gammage, 1999, 534).

Yet the feminization of labor in North Africa is not a result of economic prosperity; instead, the increased participation of women in the economy reflects a desperate need to make up for the decline of incomes in response to an economic recession. While the informal economy does increasingly provide Moroccan women with employment opportunities, the truth is, this recent trend is a consequence of women's lack of occupational mobility, low education level, low skill and training level, the feminization of poverty, and the growing preference of an informal labor force made of women (Mehra & Gammage, 1999, 542). What remains true are these critical factors work in favor of men by legitimizing the gender gap in respect to wage distribution.

The Gender Budget Analysis indicates that increased foreign economic assistance to Morocco has led to streamlining on behalf of the government that has resulted in increased unemployment for men, while forcing women to join the informal sector for economic survival (Edwards, 2010, 6). However, this shift in the family dynamic and roles has been shown to have destabilizing effects on the nuclear family as a whole. The most obvious effect has been the shift in the male's traditional role as the breadwinner.

Impact of Education

Studies have shown that female earnings show a much higher rate of productive investment in healthcare and education. By investing their earnings in the wellbeing of their children, women strengthen the foundation for further economic growth (Klasen & Lamanna, 2008, 5). The tendency of women to act in this manner is in direct conflict with the traditional norms of

society. In terms of gender, inequality in education and employment has typically had a negative impact on the economic performance and growth in human capital in Morocco. Indeed, this type of structural discrimination creates negative ramifications for the entire Middle East and North Africa.

What is often ignored is the fact that studies have demonstrated that “girls have a higher marginal return to education, which is even higher if the impact of female education on fertility and education of the next generation is included” (Klasen & Lamanna, 2008, 3). However, since males have more income producing opportunities it is rational to expect a family to invest more in their sons in order for the family to survive; if there were more income producing opportunities for females, the families would be indifferent between which children they invest in. Thus, there is little opportunity for women to break out of their situation and there will not be more opportunities for women until there are more educated and trained women. The closer the family is to subsistence living the more likely they are to invest in sons who have more opportunities to bring in much needed income. A fundamental question surrounds why highly qualified girls continue to be excluded in various sectors of society. One of the biggest problems is the fact that as the primary caretaker in the household, women often experience obstacles that prevent them from further pursuing their education or participating to the fullest in the public economy (Global Gender Analysis 9).

This obstacle has hindered women’s upward social and economic mobility as a whole. Because educational institutions have been considered part of the public sphere, women have over the course of history been discouraged from joining. Not until recent years has the importance of education and its link to the economy really encouraged women’s participation.

As the dichotomy between the public and private sphere become increasingly blurred, more and more women will continue to reap the benefits of education (Pearson, 2000).

Dichotomy between Urban and Rural Women

Another issue of concern in Morocco is the substantial amount of disparity and unequal opportunity when considering rural Moroccan women and urban Moroccan women. The GINI index “measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A GINI score of zero implies perfect equality while a score of one hundred implies perfect inequality” (Earthtrends, 2003, 6). According to the Center for Applied Policy Research, in 2011 Morocco’s GINI index was 40.9 on a scale of 100 (BTI 2010 Morocco Country Report, 2009). The trickle-down effect of urban economic and social advantages rarely enhance the lives of the rural population (Bhattacharyya, 1997, 118).

In the case of Morocco, the low-income urban woman is still experiencing a higher standard of living as compared to the low-income rural woman. This problem is a direct result of the disparity and limitations of gross national product (Bhattacharyya, 1997, 118). Morocco’s significant unequal distribution of income and opportunity for urban and rural women presents serious ramifications for rural women. With little access to education, rural women experience far greater disadvantages. So not only are women subject to the private versus public space dichotomy, but there also exist a rural versus urban dichotomy.

Policies Initiatives

All in all, we must consider whether this recent reinforcement of dependency of the family on rural women is actually harming or helping to bridge the gender gap as a whole and the gap

between the urban educated middle class women and the rural poor women in Morocco. This disparity began shortly after independence as urban women began to occupy previously deemed “male” spaces (Newcomb, 2006, 295). In order to work towards furthering women’s status in Moroccan society and continue to close the opportunity gap between men and women, and also rural and urban women, certain policies and initiatives must be implemented. First and foremost, programs must be created that encourage the education of females. Enhancing a female’s education and schooling, especially at higher levels, has the ability to play a key role in reducing this disparity. By promoting female access to higher quality jobs as well as employment in the formal sector of the economy, this will significantly initiate a greater sense of equal pay for equal jobs (Nordman & Wolff, 2009, 628). In addition, this goal can be further promoted by creating a mandatory quota of girls in particular education institutions. Another incredibly important effort must be focused on implementing gender-sensitive programs that serve the purpose of extinguishing further cause of vulnerability and seclusion from the private spheres of society (Skalli, 2001, 85). Archaic legal codes and texts promoting female discrimination and patriarchal ideologies must be revised or abandoned. The presence of Moroccan women in every public sphere of Moroccan society must be transformed into a cultural norm that has the capability to enhance national economic progress and growth (Global Gender Analysis, 16).

As mentioned by various experts, “the glass ceiling is more likely to depend on the different educational choices of men and women, because family policies are often non-existent there or insufficiently implemented”(Nordman & Wolff, 2009, 628). In order to alleviate this issue, some suggest that government policies must encourage and provide incentives for the presence of women in all labor forces. These policies could include access to day care for mothers, financial

benefits, and policies aimed at female employment-intensive growth strategies (Klasen & Lamanna, 2008, 5). What is often not addressed is the need for changes in institutions if women enter the workforce in large number. The question surrounds who will care for their children, and elderly. The developing world needs to place far greater value on the care of children and the elderly so that it is considered just as important in society as earning an income.

Furthermore, policies must also be aimed at creating positive links between urban and rural economies. Most experts tend to agree on that fact that poverty alleviation relies heavily upon the encouragement of rural-and urban linkages. In addition, the government must take greater steps in considering the importance of the informal economy. As noted by various NGOs ““The informal sector should not be romanticised as a permanent fixture of the economy or accepted as a necessary catch basin of surplus labour. To do so is to perpetuate the duality between the formal and informal economies where a minority enjoys disproportionate access to resources while the vast majority, though anxious to participate, are excluded by virtue of decades-old policy biases” (The Informal Sector, Firm Dynamics and Institutional Participation, 1998).

Another policy approach to consider would be to increase availability of and access to microcredit. On the other hand, self-generating incomes such as microcredit have played a tremendous role in the feminization of space in rural regions of Morocco (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). Not only as a means of generating money, microcredit has proven to be an empowering tool for many women.

In 2003 alone, Moroccan microcredit institutions accounted for over 40% of all active clients in the Arab world with a managing portfolio over more than \$61 million (Isaia, 2005, 5). Microcredit is oriented toward the poorest population and most often is limited to female clients that are considered part of the most isolated strata of society. Microcredit's success is due to the fact that it allows beneficiaries "to significantly improve the economic results of the microenterprise, especially in those cases in which the stability and the duration of the credit relation is such as to allow to gather the revenues of the investments realized"(Isaia, 2005, 10).

The criteria set forth by the microcredit institutions are imperative to follow in order to receive loans of greater and greater amounts over a period of time. Clients must submit payment on a weekly basis and total reimbursement is due within four months. In addition, clients are eligible for another loan of a higher value if previous loans are paid off in the proper amount of time. The maximum amount for a loan cannot exceed the amount of 1,500 Dirham and loans are only provided to groups of at least five individuals. If one member of the group is unable to repay loans then it is the responsibility of the remaining members to pay the outstanding amount (Poster & Salime, 2002, 202). Microcredit is not designed to finance the startup of an entrepreneurial endeavor; rather, it serves the purpose of development and already existing consolidation.

Beneficiaries of the Zakoura Foundation are also offered financial services for better living conditions. Studies conducted in 2004 on behalf of the Moroccan Ministry of Finance indicated a pervasive lack of access and funds for basic services, including water and electricity. In response to the problem, the Zakoura Foundation implemented a financial framework that allowed beneficiaries with good repayment history to apply for housing loans. In addition, the acquisition

of housing was also a program created by the foundation in order to relocate families living in the slum of Carriere Ben M'sik in Casablanca to a relocation operation composed of low priced apartments. The Zakoura Foundation also provided beneficiaries with administrative formalities when acquiring water and electricity. Studies demonstrated that funding was not the only obstacle for beneficiaries; results demonstrated the fact that beneficiaries needed more than just financial support. The foundation has also proven to be instrumental in providing rural communities devastated by natural disasters with reconstruction loans, in particular the region of Al Hoceima after the earthquake in 2004. Whether it is administrative support or group loans, the core values of the Zakoura Foundation are aimed at promoting solidarity, respect, and equality for Moroccan women.

Studies on Moroccan women who participate in microcredit spend the first earned economic resources on their family's primary needs. Most often, this consists of nutrition, education and healthcare while further economic alleviation demonstrates the use of profit for renovating dwellings (Isaia, 2005, 14). The Zakoura Foundation, one of the most prominent and well-known microcredit institutions in Morocco, has been instrumental in elevating the status of women in some of the poorest regions. The Zakoura Foundation's typical client is female, where 72% are illiterate and poor, 20% of them are widowed or divorced and have more than 6 children, and all earn a monthly income equivalent to 150 USD for a five-person household, or rather \$1 per person in the household per day (Isaia, 2005,14). This particular form of economic independence for women has also presented significant issues in Moroccan society. While microcredit does offer women with an alternative form of earning income and does work to promote their status in society, studies have indicated that this is linked to a shift in the burden

of economic household maintenance away from men and to women, an increase in women's financial responsibility with regards to the nuclear family, a diversion of working women away from development programs and initiatives, a discouragement of male participation, an increased burden on women's daughters for household chores, and a destabilization of inner-household relations (Poster & Salime, 2002, 210-12).

Conclusion

Through analysis of this various influences, it is clear that Moroccan women have been marginalized for a long time. Widespread poverty and illiteracy are linked with low-level jobs and very little opportunity. However, it is important to consider the fact that the feminization of poverty reflects different experiences for different groups of Moroccan women. The majority of poor women are found most often the rural regions. While the Moroccan Constitution guarantees gender equality, women employed in the private sector are still earning close to 30% less than a man's salary. The gender inequality gap is also directly related to the substantially low political participation in behalf of Moroccan woman and while government implemented quotas call for greater political access for women, less than 10% of the political sphere is composed of women officials. Even more of an issue is the fact that this minute representation of women in the political sphere is composed of members of exclusively the middle and upper class. The problem surrounding the gap between urban women and rural women presents an entirely different dichotomy for Moroccan society. The question of how policies and programs can be implemented in a way that not only promotes equality between Moroccan men and women, but also between the urban and rural women, is an important one.

What remains true is the fact that it takes a tremendous amount of time to transform cultural norms, especially when religion is involved. The public and private sphere dichotomy's effect on gender equality in Morocco has been an issue of utmost importance. As with many issues initiatives targeted at alleviating this problem, all seem to present negative and positive impacts. Some of the most important questions to ask in regards to these initiatives are whether or not they are actually succeeding in helping women become literate and economically self-sufficient.

However, what is inarguably true is the fact that women in Morocco are beginning to gain greater opportunities outside of the private sphere. The effects of globalization and economic liberalization have played substantial roles in sparking this tremendous change. Likewise, the revision of the legal system, the rise of the informal economy, education, and microcredit institutions have been some of the most important catalysts for this trajectory. What continues to remain a problem is raising the status of rural women to that of the urban women. With greater access to education, economic opportunity, and various institutions, urban women have continued to possess far greater advantages as opposed to rural Moroccan women. By increasing the value of women and their various roles within the family and informal economy, this tremendous gap can progressively be reduced. Programs and initiatives targeted at promoting gender equality must also take into consideration the different problems and obstacles faced by rural and urban women. As with most issues, one cannot assume that the women of Morocco also face the exact same issues. Instead, policies must be sensitive to all obstacles and work to empower and increase the status of women throughout all regions of Morocco.

References List

- Assaad, R. (2004). Why did economic liberalization lead to feminization of the labor force in morocco and de-feminization in Egypt?. Paper presented at Mediterranean development forum.
- Becker, K. (2004). The informal economy. Retrieved from Department for Infrastructure and economic co-operation website:
<http://rru.worldbank.org/Documents/PapersLinks/Sida.pdf>
- Cabre, Y. (2007). the mudawwana and koranic law from a gender perspective. the substantial changes to the moroccan family code of 2004. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 7(2).
- Edwards, C. J. (2010). *Gender budget analysis in morocco: Achieving education parity for women and girls*. (Doctoral dissertation, American University) Retrieved from
http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=christie_edwards
- Isaia, E. (2005). *Microcredit in morocco: the zakoura foundation's experience* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Turin).
- Klasen, S., & Lamanna, F. World Bank Group, (2008). *The impact of gender inequality in education and employment on economic growth in developing countries: updates and extensions* Retrieved from
http://www.eudnet.net/download/wp/EUDN2008_10.pdf
- Massana, M. D. (n.d.). The silent revolution: family laws, an insurmountable wall for gender equality. *Quaderns de la Mediterrania*, Retrieved from
http://www.iemed.org/publicacions/quaderns/7/093_Massana.pdf
- Mehra, R., & Gammage, S. (1999). Trends, countertrends, and gaps in women's employment. *World Development*, 27(3), 533-550.
- Mernissi, F. (1982). Women and the impact of capitalist development in morocco part 1. *Gender Issues*, 2(2).
- Moghadam, V., & Sadiqi, F. (2006). Women's activism and the public sphere. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 2(2), 1-7.
- Naciri, R. (n.d.). *Freedom house: Morocco*. Retrieved from
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=178>

- Naqrachi, A. (2007). Morocco: country gender profile. Retrieved from Nour Association for Solidarity with Rural Women website: <http://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/gender/pdf/e06mor.pdf>
- Pearson, R. (2000). All change? men, women and reproductive work in the global economy. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 12, 129-237.
- Newcomb, R. (2006). Gendering the city, gender the nation: Contesting urban spaces in Fes, morocco. *City & Society*, 18(2), 288-311.
- Nordman, C., & Wolff, F. (2009). Is there a class ceiling in morocco?. *Journal of African Economics*, 18(4), 592-633. Retrieved from <http://jae.oxfordjournals.org/content/18/4/592.full>
- Petmesidou, M., & Papatheodorou, C. (2006). poverty and social deprivation in the mediterranean: trends, policies and welfare prospects in the new millennium. New York, NY: International Studies in Poverty Research.
- Poster, W., & Salime, Z. (2002). The limits of microcredit. In N. Naples & M. Desai (Eds.), *Women's Activism and Globalization* (pp. 189-219). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sadiqi, F., & Ennaji, M. (2006). The feminization of public space: women's activism, the family law, and social change in morocco. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 2(2), 86-114.
- Skalli, L. (2001). Women and poverty in morocco: the many faces of social exclusion. *Feminist Review*, 69, 73-89.
- The world factbook: Morocco*. (2011, Oct 24). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>
- Thompson, E. (2003). Public and private in Middle Eastern women's history. *Journal of Women's History*, 15(1), 52-69.
- (2008). Mobilizing Muslim women: multiple voices, the sharia, and the state. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 28(1), 200-2011.

(2009). BTI 2010 morocco country report. Retrieved from Center for Applied Policy Research at Munich University website:

http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/fileadmin/pdf/Gutachten_BTI2010/MENA/Morocco.pdf