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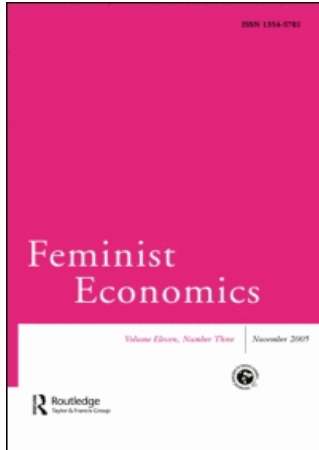
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The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea

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cannot be tested as individual hypotheses. Hence the choice between the “heterodox” exploration of models on the one hand and the “orthodox” testing of hypotheses on the other, does not appear to be easily avoided.

The advantages of focusing on model construction are well displayed in the article by Tom Palley (“Class Conflict and the Cambridge Theory of Distribution”) that develops a scheme in which both workers and capitalists earn wages and profits, exploring the proposition that shares of wage earnings going to each class (for example, the huge executive salaries in the US) can influence whether an economy experiences stagnation or its opposite just as much or more than might the share of profit relative to wages. An insightful idea that could inspire a whole new line of research – or remain neglected as just another idea without data or tests to back it up.

Other articles on Robinson’s contribution to international economics and on her views on money and credit still offer interesting insights for current readers, even though their intent is to review Robinson’s lesser known efforts. Robinson’s interest in modeling processes rather than systems tended to put her in the mode of giving advice or commenting on government policy, and thus her work radiates the excitement of action-packed narrative.

Overall, the articles are well written and with clear purpose. The book is thought-provoking for those interested in issues of macroeconomic theory and political economy and for those curious about what the sources of some of the major twentieth-century controversies were, and to some extent still are. Its main interest to feminists lies not in any explicit feminist approach in the book, but in a well developed, albeit “pre-feminist,” viewpoint that insists on taking history and culture into account in economic theorizing.

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The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea, by Kristen Ghodsee. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005. 240 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8223-3650-1, ISBN-10: 0-8223-3650-2 (hbk.). US\$74.95; 226 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8223-3662-4, ISBN-10: 0-8223-3662-6 (pbk.). US\$21.95.

In her book *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea* Kristen Ghodsee accomplishes the impossible: she makes a relatively dry

academic subject – occupational segregation in post-Communist Bulgaria – come to life. She expertly weaves ethnography, feminist theory, sociology, and economic data with personal stories about women in the Bulgarian tourism industry into a fascinating explanation for their post-Socialist success.

Her main thesis addresses a documented but unexpected result: women in certain sectors are succeeding in post-Socialist countries. Many scholars predicted that the transition process in Eastern Europe would negatively affect women in transition economies (Chris Corrin 1992; Barbara Einhorn 1993; Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller 1993; Nahid Aslanbeigui, Steve Pressman, and Gale Summerfield 1994; Marilyn Rueschemeyer 1994; Mary Buckley 1997; Kristen Ghodsee 2000). However, in *The Red Riviera*, Ghodsee shows that women have continued to dominate Bulgaria's growing tourism sector, even at upper-level management positions. In this regard, not only are women doing better than expected in post-Socialist Bulgaria, where wages have fallen, unemployment abounds, and the social safety net has been drastically cut; in this case, they are even surpassing men.

The book is organized in a unique manner that captures the reader's attention. The five chapters of the book move through time in Bulgaria beginning with a description of the social and economic climate under communism in Chapter One "Shattered Windows, Broken Lives" and moving on into the transition culminating with Chapter Four "To the Wolves: Tourism and Economic Transformation." Within each chapter, the author incorporates the unique stories of several of her women respondents in their particular job and location within the tourist industry. By weaving the personal information with the economic and social information she essentially tells a story about real individuals to which the reader responds and reacts. The last chapter, "Feminism-by-Design" shifts the focus to current feminist policies that are being pursued in the region as well as the author's suggestions for improvement.

While Mieke Meurs and I have shown elsewhere that women in Bulgaria are faring better than expected in terms of a decline in the wage gap (see, for example, Lisa Giddings [2000, 2002]) and in terms of being overrepresented in growth sectors of the economy (see Mieke Meurs and Lisa Giddings 2006), Ghodsee's in-depth ethnographic analysis gets below the surface that our data only skims. While we recognized that women have been able to take advantage of their overrepresentation in the growing services and commerce industries, Ghodsee is able to get beyond the large, industry-level data that we used. For example, while our data was based on broad industry categories such as "agriculture" and "services," the author's surveys inquire into specific occupations within the industry to get at what is really happening in the economy and within these sectors. In order to do this, the author focuses on the tourism sector – sea and ski

resorts – in Bulgaria. This sector of the Socialist economy employed the highest concentration of women and is one of the few sectors in the post-Socialist economy that has continued to expand since 1989.

Ghodsee's analysis relies on both quantitative and qualitative methods. She spent twenty months doing research in Bulgaria over five years, collecting most of her qualitative data during more than fifteen months of fieldwork and participant observation in 1999 and 2000. During that time, she conducted over 100 formal interviews with Bulgarians employed in all levels of tourism and with politicians and government officials in charge of the international tourism sector. On the quantitative side, Ghodsee conducted two large surveys of workers employed in this sector in 1999–2000. The first survey, the "International Tourism Survey," included a snowball sample of 828 Bulgarians employed in international tourism. She conducted this study in the resorts of Borovetz, Pamporovo, Golden Sands, and Albena, as well as in the capital city of Sofia and the small town of Hissarya. The second survey, or the "Seaside Survey," queried a random sample of 711 Bulgarian tourism employees and entrepreneurs in the seaside resorts of Golden Sands, Sunny Beach, and Albena, and in the town of Nessebur.

Women participating in Bulgaria's tourism sector prior to the transition appear to have been in the right place at the right time. Ghodsee argues that the women who dominated Socialist tourism developed the right human and, what she calls, "cultural" capital to negotiate the transition to markets in post-Socialist Bulgaria. Tourism workers in the Socialist era had high levels of general education and were trained in foreign languages. Furthermore, they had regular contact with Western tourists, which "gave women employed in tourism a chance to practice and perfect their foreign-language skills, to interact with and understand capitalist culture, and to receive tips in hard currency" (p. 5).

What is particularly interesting about Ghodsee's results is that women continue to dominate Bulgaria's tourism sector despite the evidence that it is one of the only growth sectors in the economy. In other words, in contrast to other empirical results that show that men tend to respond more quickly to market incentives, entering growth industries faster than women (and, in some cases even pushing women out), this has not happened in Bulgaria's tourism industry. To explain this, Ghodsee provides a short history of "totalitarian tourism" in Bulgaria. She describes a sector that, while organized around capitalist models, was independent of the dictates of supply, demand, and essentially, the bottom line. Employment in the tourism sector was "exceptionally prestigious" and because of "internal dynamics of communist gender politics" women got most of the jobs (p. 55–6). The nature of the job – cleaning, cooking, entertaining – combined with its seasonality and the general education it required made Bulgarians perceive it as "women's

work.” Because women have the education and experience to succeed in the sector and because the stereotype has remained intact, women have continued to dominate the sector at all levels of management in the post-Socialist era.

Ghodsee does, however, warn of possible pitfalls for women in tourism. One participant/respondent that she interviewed was unable to acquire higher education due to a lack of resources. “The crushing news that Svetla did not get a high enough score on her exam to get a scholarship made me realize that if women in tourism are succeeding due to the revaluation of cultural capital they gained under communism, then the next generation of women like Svetla will not have the same advantages” (p. 156). As the Bulgarian state dismantles its extensive social safety net and education becomes a commodity that is no longer universally available, will women be able to acquire the cultural capital necessary to succeed in the industry?

The book is aimed primarily at an international audience concerned with issues of women in the global labor market. The Bulgarian case offers unique insight into a country in the midst of transition from socialism to a market-oriented economy. This work makes an important contribution to the literature on women in transition, in development, and in the global economy. While the mainly qualitative results that Ghodsee documents in the tourism sector may not be generalized to other sectors, she provides an important example of excellent methodology and a particularly interesting case. Her in-depth analysis of women in the tourist sector in Bulgaria documents a unique empirical case in development theory, which usually highlights the negative consequences of development on women. Instead, Ghodsee presents a case where women have taken advantage of opportunity in a transitioning economy.

The author’s feminist perspective also offers a critique of women’s NGOs and their role in aiding women in transitioning economies. Ghodsee particularly focuses on the success of those NGOs that emphasize non-economic issues and the importance of creating programs that are relevant to the issues of the local community. She argues that Western funding overly influences the NGOs in Bulgaria, which results in Western feminist organizations making assumptions about the problems that women face in Bulgaria and attempting to apply one-size-fits-all solutions rather than finding “homegrown solutions to local problems” (p. 172). The author hopes that in the future NGOs will pay attention to local leaders who know and understand local issues to develop more nuanced solutions that would be more applicable than policies that have worked in Western contexts.

Ghodsee acknowledges some limitations of her analysis. Rather than calling these “shortcomings,” however, I will point to an opportunity for future study. While some women in Bulgaria have been lucky enough to

possess skills that are useful under the new regime, most others have not been so lucky. According to Ghodsee, “[w]hile a small group of women experienced an increase in their standard of living, the majority of Bulgarian women slid into poverty. This is a process that mirrors the emerging economic inequalities in Bulgarian society as a whole” (p. 5). Obviously, the category “woman” is not monolithic. It would be interesting to further examine these emerging economic inequalities in order to define the lines along which they emerge. How are different women affected? In particular, where do Bulgaria’s large ethnic minority populations – ethnic Turks (15 percent of the population), Muslim Bulgarians or “Pomaks” (9 percent), and Roma (5 percent) – fit into the analysis? Which women succeed, and which strategies are particularly helpful in bridging class, race, and ethnic lines?

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