

Sara Cantillon
Odile Mackett
Sara Stevano



Feminist Political Economy

A Global Perspective



Pluralist Economics
Certificate Project

Sara Cantillon
Odile Mackett
Sara Stevano



Chapter 2

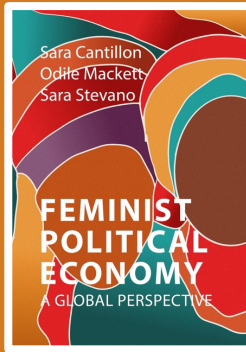
Global Division of Labour



Pluralist Economics
Certificate Project

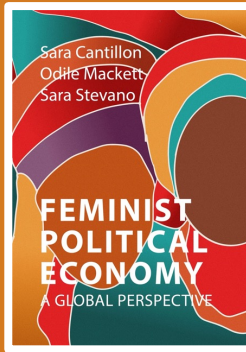
What is the international or global division of labour?

- Transnational organization of production and how labour is organized and distributed across space
- Historical perspective on how the global division of labour has been shaped by the capitalist organization of production
- *'Who does what?'* political economy question aimed at uncovering the social relations of production (Bernstein, 2010)



Key feminist insights on the global division of labour

- The global division of labour entails not only production but also reproduction
- The transnational organization of production and reproduction is gendered and racialized



Outline

- PART I. The colonial origins of the international division of labour
- PART II. Global division of labour in the neoliberal era
- PART III. Contemporary issues: Precarization on a global scale and the Covid-19 pandemic





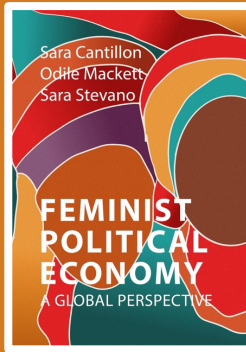
Pluralist Economics
Certificate Project

PART I

The colonial origins of the international division of labour

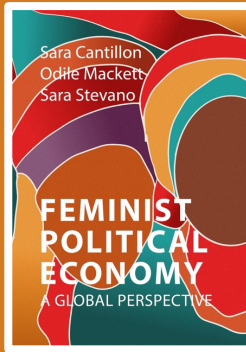
Economic development as a linear process driven by internal factors

- Dominant economic theories of development explain the process through factors and conditions – or their lacking – internal to the country or region of interest
- Lack of physical, human and social capital in poorer economies
- Development is a linear process whereby less developed countries need to create the conditions for capital accumulation, following the trajectories of richer economies



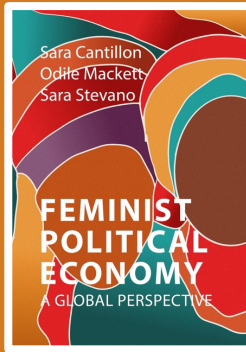
An opposing view: core-periphery dynamics

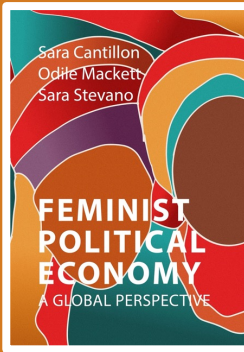
- Marxist and dependency frameworks emphasise the importance of external conditions
- Development of the periphery is conditioned by the centre/core – the core extracts capital and resources from the periphery
- Capitalism is not a self-contained system but one that constantly requires spatial expansion and colonisation



16th century colonization

- European expansion to the West characterized by land expropriation and the plunder of natural resources
- The trading companies combine spice trade and slave trade → plantation economy
- Plantation economy = centrepiece in the creation of a global division of labour that differentiates workers but also connects them across the globe (Federici, 2004)
- Slave labour in the plantation produces consumer goods necessary for the reproduction of the workforce in the European core

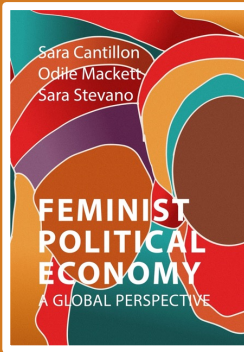




Institutionalisation of racial hierarchies

- In the colonies, alliances between enslaved workers and European convicts/indentured servants emerge
- Laws are passed to institutionalise racial hierarchies – e.g. Africans deprived of civil rights, marriages between white and Black people prohibited, slavery becomes hereditary
- The subordination of the Black population in the colonies ensured access to slave labour





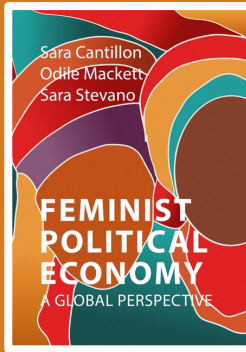
Control of reproduction in the colonies

- A core instrument of colonization and capital accumulation
- In the Caribbean, reproduction of the slave population was initially not encouraged: cheaper to buy slaves, disruption to women's work (Reddock, 1984)
- When slave trade became more expensive and labour was needed in the African colonies, anti-marriage and anti-reproduction measures were reversed – imposition of women's specialization in domestic labour and women become property of their husbands (Reddock, 1984; Federici, 2004)



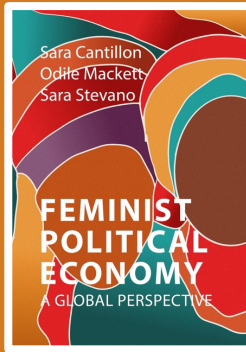
'Housewifisation'

- In Europe and elsewhere, land privatization leads to the loss of the means of production and the separation between production and reproduction
- Housewifisation = women's labour loses value through being confined in the home, whether unpaid or underpaid (Mies, 1986)
- The creation of workers and the accumulation of capital are reliant on the creation of hierarchies among the working classes on grounds of gender, race, age, location and so forth



19th century colonization

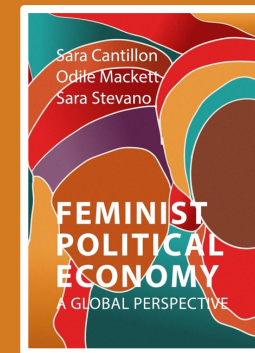
- Colonies of conquest in the tropics; colonization driven by capital's need of cheap inputs and new markets for consumer goods
- The core exports manufactured goods in the colonies, which leads to de-industrialization in the periphery (Patnaik and Patnaik, 2021)
- Impoverishment in the periphery is also caused by the appropriation of economic surplus through slave/forced labour and the imposition of taxation (Patnaik and Patnaik, 2021)



Gendered division of labour

The regimes of capital accumulation of the late colonial period were associated with three key transformations in the gendered division of labour (Benería and Sen, 1981):

1. Women's work in households/families intensified as male labour was drawn into capitalist production
2. Women lost control over land, the labour process and its product
3. Young women started to migrate to urban areas looking for jobs



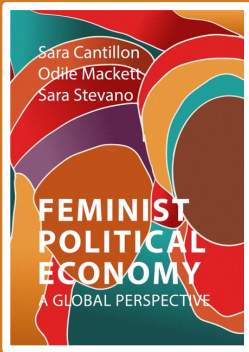


Illustration from Southern Africa

- Extraction of male labour from the region to ensure cheap labour supply to the mines in South Africa
- Prevalence of women-headed, fragmented and divided households in the region
- Time constraints and labour shortages led to shifts in agriculture, e.g. shift to cassava
- Poorly processed cassava resulted in an outbreak of konzo (O’Laughlin, 2013)

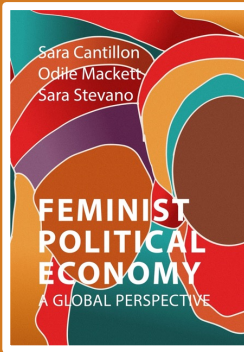




Pluralist Economics
Certificate Project

PART II

Global division of labour in the neoliberal era



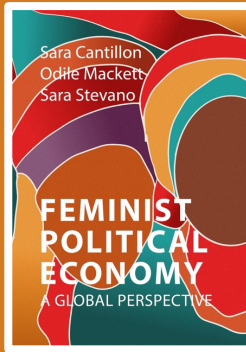
The latest wave of globalization

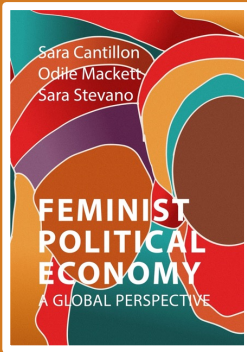
- The era of neoliberal globalization starts in the 1980s
- Capital's ongoing search for cheap labour + technological advancement + liberalization policies → relocation of (parts of) production from the Global North to the Global South
- Era characterized by paradigm shift to the 'Washington Consensus' and market-based models of development



Changes in the global division of labour

- Creation of employment in labour-intensive export-oriented industries in the Global South
- Squeeze of employment in the manufacturing industry in the Global North
- Male unemployment tends to increase across the globe due to shrinking public sector in the South and manufacturing in the North
- Women's participation in the labour force increases





Changing organization of (re)production

Global North

- Model based on the family wage crumbles
- More women in the labour force, although in lower-paid jobs
- More diverse household/family configurations

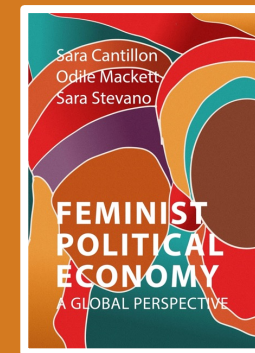
Global South

- More women in the labour force while social reproduction remains family-centred
- Absence of good jobs, spatial re-organization of families and kinships
- Overall fragmentation of social reproduction



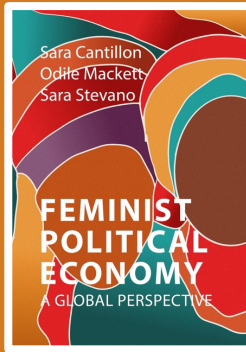
Global care chains

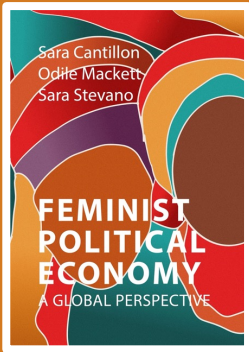
- Transnational migration as another strategy to respond to increasing precarity of life and reproductive constraints
 - Global care chains = nanny migrating from a poorer to a richer country, leaving behind her own family (Hochschild, 2000)
 - They entail the extraction of ‘emotional surplus value’ to the benefit of wealthier families in the North
 - Global care chains refer to nurses, sex workers and cleaners
- *Read case study 2.1 pp. 28-29 for illustrations*



In sum

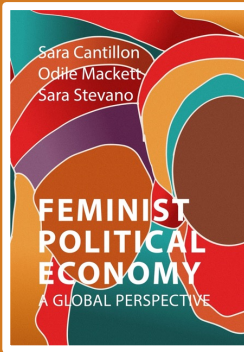
- In the neoliberal era, the organization of productive and reproductive work underwent a process of restructuring that led to the emergence of global and regional chains, which perpetuate inequalities in earnings, working and living conditions
- Break with orthodoxies of the 1950-60s (state-led development) but many aspects of continuity with the colonial past
- Two key themes in feminist analyses: i) **feminization and informalization of the workforce**, ii) **women's double burden**





Feminization and informalization of labour





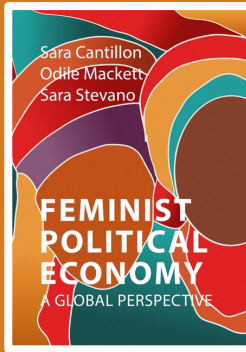
What is the feminization of labour?

- Increase in male unemployment
- Expansion of export-oriented industries in the Global South – in manufacturing and agriculture – but more recent re-appraisals point to the intensity of labour as a factor of production (Tejani and Kucera, 2014; Tejani and Milberg, 2016)
- In quantitative terms, increase in women’s labour force participation relative to men (everywhere but South Asia)
- In qualitative terms, growing precarity, deteriorating working conditions, informalization and falling wages



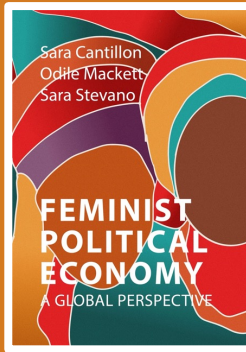
Informalization

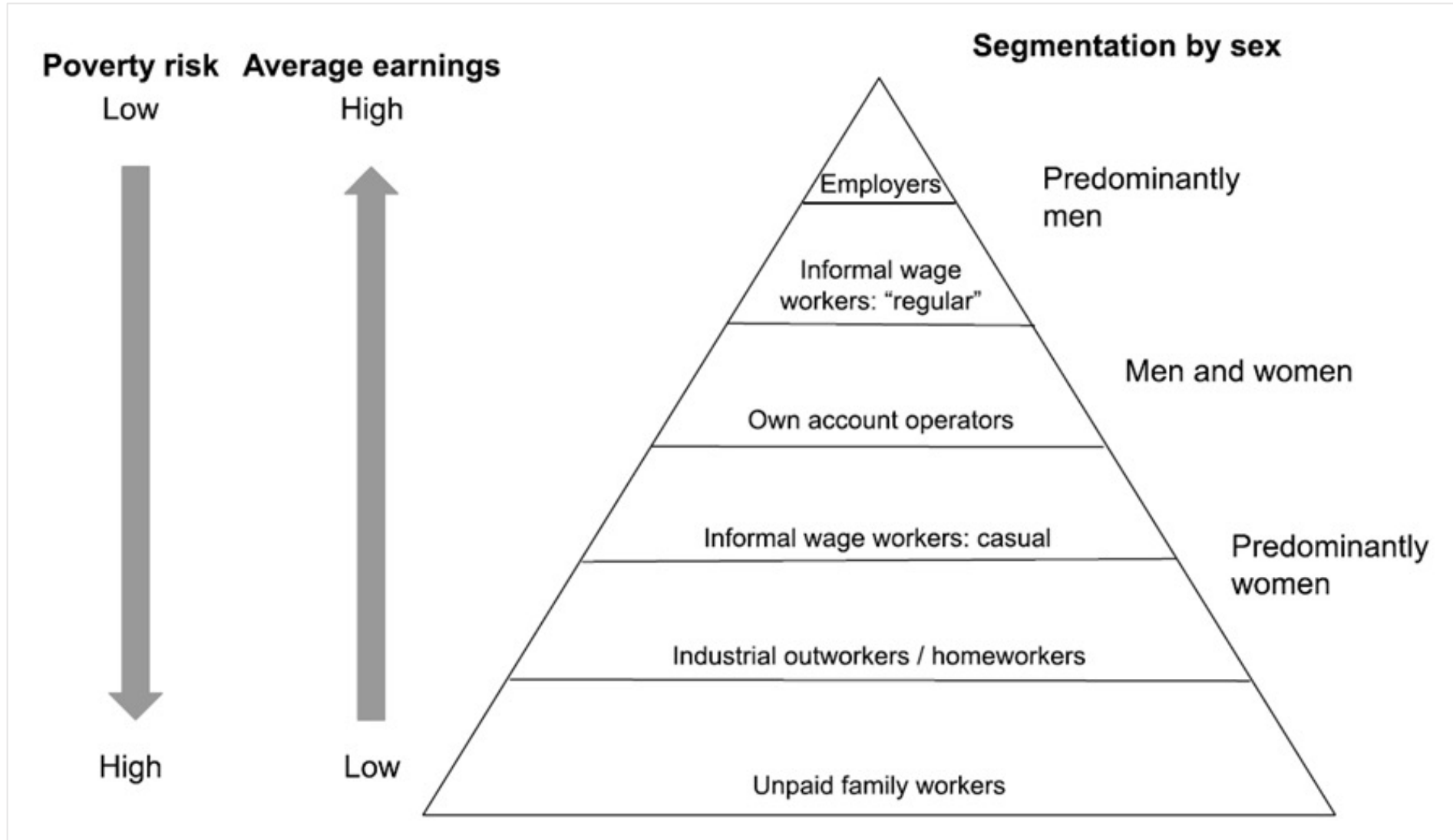
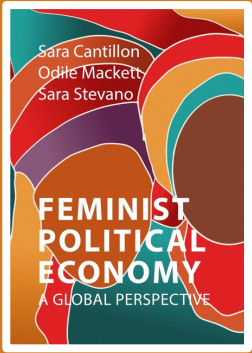
- Competitiveness based on cutting the costs of production (especially through cheap labour) meant that neoliberal globalization has been accompanied by increasing informalization
- Feminization and informalization are interconnected processes



Drivers of the expansion of the informal economy

1. Jobless economic growth, driven by primary commodities and natural resources extraction
2. Economic crises have been managed through a downsizing of the public sector
3. Multinational corporations began to hire workers under more informal arrangements to have a cheaper and more flexible workforce



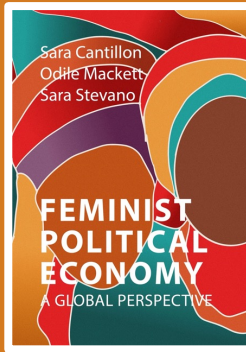


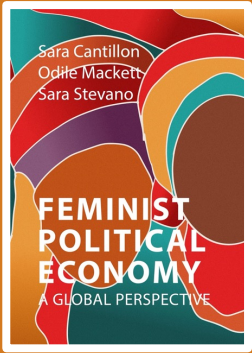
Source: Chen (2012), p. 9



Are women pushed or pulled into the labour force?

- Marital status influences the types of jobs women have (e.g. in Mozambique, married women are more likely to be in lower-paid jobs; in Bangladesh, married women are more likely to be in home-based work)
- In eastern and southern Africa, divorced/widowed women are more likely to be in paid farm and off-farm employment
- Lack of male incomes **pushes** women into the labour force, care responsibilities and socio-cultural norms shape what jobs women may get



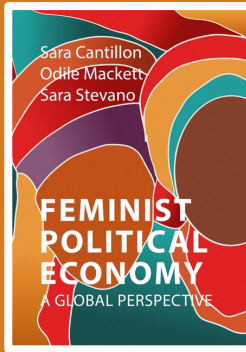


The double burden



In your own time

- Read section 2.3.2 (pp. 35-39)
- Reflect on the following questions:
 - a. What is super-exploitation?*
 - b. Does women's participation in the labour-intensive export-oriented industry lead to super-exploitation?*
 - c. Can participation in the labour force be a route to empowerment for women? And for men?*

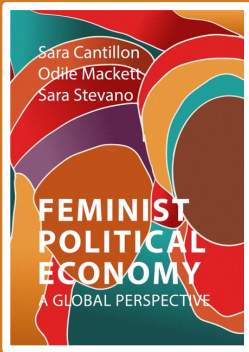




Pluralist Economics
Certificate Project

PART III

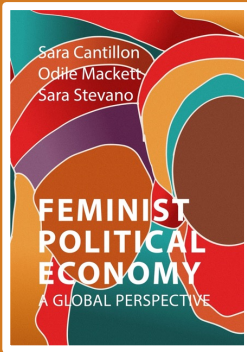
Contemporary issues: Precarization on a global scale and the Covid-19 pandemic



'The West follows the Rest'

- A historical overview of the global division of labour reveals that the formalization of employment, the extension of workers' rights and the state that occurred in some contexts of the Global North in 1950-60s was only a temporary diversion in the history of capitalism
- Capitalism does not offer a path towards greater formalization, better living and working conditions





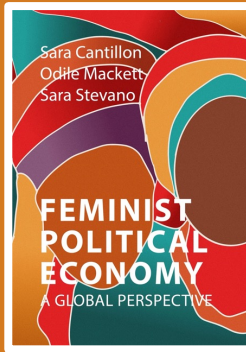
Increasing inequalities (1)

- Stark income inequality: the richest 10% takes 52% of global income, the poorest 50% earns 8.5% of it
- The gap is even starker for wealth: 76% of all wealth owned by the top 10%, the bottom 50% has only 2% of it
- Levels of income and wealth inequality today resemble those at the peak of Western imperialism – growth experienced by some countries in the Global South not sufficient to close the gap with the North
- Key mechanism: impoverishment of government, accumulation of private wealth (World Inequality Report, 2022)



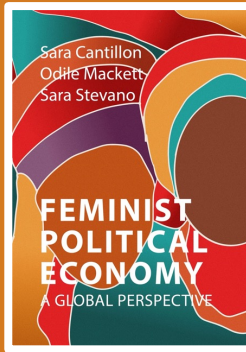
Increasing inequalities (2)

- Gender inequality in the labour share of income persists: women's shares of labour income was 34.7% in 2020
- Gender remains a key organizing principle in the global division of labour and in the world of work (chapter 7)
- Case-study evidence shows that the differentiation of the working classes continues to occur on grounds not only of gender but also of race/ethnicity, migration status and age among others



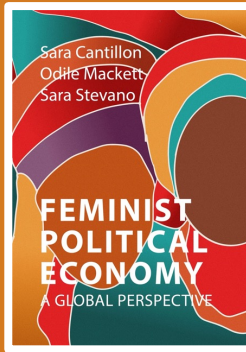
Covid-19 as a magnifying glass

- Regarding the global division of labour, two key processes stand out:
 1. Disruption of global supply chains and mobility (nationally and internationally) exposed the vulnerability of workers at the bottom of commodity chains and migrant workers
 2. The re-branding of some types of work as ‘essential’ exposed the misalignment between the social and economic value of work
- Class, gender and race inequalities as well as South-North divides were exposed and magnified during the Covid-19 crisis



To read more on the Covid-19 pandemic and inequalities

- Kabeer, N., Razavi, S., & van der Meulen Rodgers, Y. (2021). Feminist economic perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic. *Feminist Economics*, 27(1-2), 1-29.
- Stevano, S., Ali, R., & Jamieson, M. (2021). Essential for what? A global social reproduction view on the re-organisation of work during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 42(1-2), 178-199.
- Stevano, S., Franz, T., Dafermos, Y., & Van Waeyenberge, E. (2021). COVID-19 and crises of capitalism: intensifying inequalities and global responses. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 42(1-2), 1-17.
- Tejani, S., & Fukuda-Parr, S. (2021). Gender and COVID-19: Workers in global value chains. *International labour review*, 160(4), 649-667.
- Wiegratz, J., Behuria, P., Laskaridis, C., Pheko, L. L., Radley, B., & Stevano, S. (2023). Common challenges for all? A critical engagement with the emerging vision for post pandemic development studies. *Development and Change*.



Sara Cantillon
Odile Mackett
Sara Stevano



Feminist Political Economy
A Global Perspective
Thanks for watching! 😊



Pluralist Economics
Certificate Project