

Why the Creation of a Better World is Premised on Achieving Gender Equity and on Celebrating Multiple Gender Diversities

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Abstract

This article investigates changes in global gender regimes over the last hundred years and proposes that these regimes will further change. Drawing on contemporary theoretical understandings of gender within gender studies the article extrapolates some current developments into the future. A number of scenarios for gender futures are discussed. The article concludes with the assertion that the development of a better world throughout the 21st century is directly premised on re-making of traditional, and patriarchal gender identities and on creation of alternative gender identities based on distinctively different (gender partnership and equity) worldview.

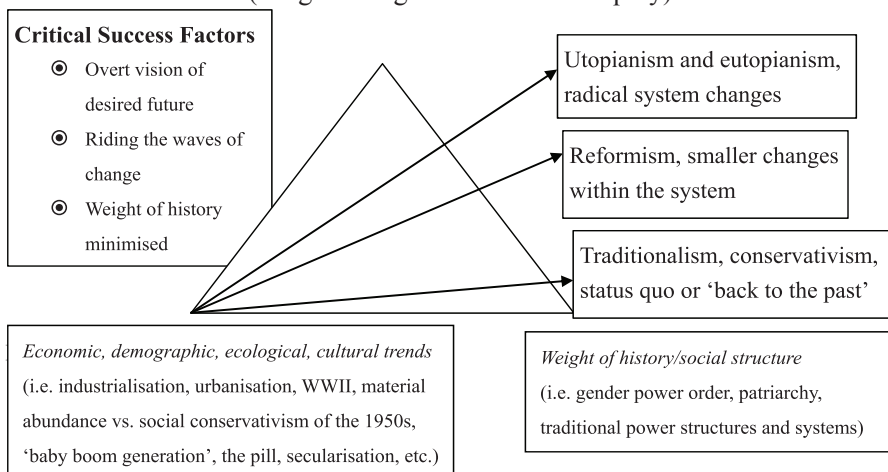
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Introduction

Some hundred years ago gender arrangements and regimes in the western world, as well as globally, looked very different than they do today. To start with there was no female prime minister, president or secretary of state, and almost all businesses were run by men. In other words, political and economic power was solely the provenance of men. Courtesy of economic changes (i.e. industrialisation, urbanisation, post WWII material abundance in the west), political changes (i.e. higher political participation, women's and feminists' social change movements, the impact of world wars), educational changes (i.e. democratisation of education, women's higher participation), technological changes (i.e. invention of the pill) and cultural changes (i.e. human rights discourse, overall desire for equity and equality amongst people), the world of today, compared to the situation in the early 20th century, is the world wherein higher levels of gender equity are present. However, this equity is not equally distributed amongst world regions nor across the various social realms. For example, the 2010 Global Index of

Women's Power that combines three other relatively recent indexes (The World Economic Forum's The Global Gender Gap Report, The Economist Intelligence Unit's Women's Economic Opportunity Index and the UNDP's Gender Related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)) shows that globally, improvements in gender equality are largely due to the closing of health and education gender gaps (96% and 93% of the gap closed respectively). At the same time, the gender gap in regards to economic participation remains wide (only 59% of the gap closed globally). The gap is the widest as far as political empowerment is concerned (only 18% of the gap has been closed). Men are thus still 'vastly more likely to control a major block of capital as chief executive of a major corporation, or as direct owner' (Connell, 2005, p.82) and are globally 'ten times more likely than women to hold office as a member of parliament' (ibid.). This is despite the fact that women and men work on average about the same number of hours in the year, at least in the wealthy countries (ibid.), the difference in 'economic participation' however arises based on how much of that work gets paid. So despite all the litany of achieved gender equity in 'post-feminist' times a global gender order wherein men remain privileged 'is a structural fact, independent of whether men as individuals love or hate women, or believe in equality or abjection, and independent of whether women are currently pursuing change' (Connell, 2005a, p.82). In some pockets of the world economy women fair better than men or are on equal footing, but these are still exceptions to the general rule and the structural fact within the global gender order Connell describes. This gender order is inherently based on conflict of interest (ibid.) even if this conflict - embedded in gender relations - is not visible. That some groups of people dominate others, either directly or structurally (most commonly these two systems of domination are interrelated), is what prevents the creation of more inclusive, just and fairer world. Structures, however, can and do change, despite the fact that our current world is still, to a large extent, patriarchal. The changes described in the paragraph above are summarised by the following Futures Triangle.

Desired futures visions (i.e. gender egalitarianism and equity)



Futures Triangle 1. Summary of the 20th Century women's movements and social change

Traditional patriarchal gender order has been most successfully transformed in places where alternative visions for the future were offered, such as gender partnership, egalitarianism and equity, and wherein social movements promoting these desired futures managed to tap into broader social changes as well as minimise the weight of history and patriarchal social structure. In places of the world where traditional, patriarchal power structures remain strong and alternative visions weak, social change continue to reinforce the former. In other words, as mentioned earlier the existing relative rise in equity during the 20th century is not equally distributed globally: ‘While in many parts of the world today women enjoy greater power and opportunity than ever before, there are also places where women remain essentially powerless, lacking access to even basic education or human rights’ (Global Index of Women’s Power, 2010). The situation for gender and sexual minorities is as well very diverse globally.

The Human Development Report for 2010 also highlights a similar diversity of gender (in)equality. Furthermore, this report links gender equality with overall social/human development. For example, Asian countries with a relatively high Gender Inequality Index such as Singapore (10), Japan (12) and South Korea (20), also rank highly on the Human Development Index (27, 11 and 12 respectively). Similarly, lower rates of both gender equality as well as the overall human development have been noted for Asian countries such as Afghanistan (Gender Inequality Index: 134, Human Development Index 155), Nepal (GII: 110, HDI: 138), Bangladesh (GII: 116, HDI: 129), Pakistan (GII: 112, HDI: 125), and India (GII: 122, HDI 119). Globally, the top twenty countries with the highest women’s power are also economically and industrially developed countries such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, Great Britain, Spain, France, USA, Ireland, Portugal, Luxemburg and Austria. In the last ten places are countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Egypt, Pakistan, Cote D’Ivoire, Bangladesh, Chad and Yemen.

Crucial to the interpretation of these numbers and rankings is the realisation that gender equality is both a cause and an effect of the overall social/human development (HDR, 2010). At the same time, while overall social development certainly plays a role in regards to gender relationships so do underlying cultural values and the dominant worldview in a society. For example, relatively highly developed Saudi Arabia (HDI 55) is rather low on the Gender Inequality Index (128). There is also space for Australia and New Zealand to improve gender equality, relative to the overall human development in those countries (GII: 18 and HDI: 2 for Australia; GII: 25 and HDI 3 for New Zealand). Rapidly developing China (HDI: 89) has had lower gender gap scores, mostly due to the widening gap in regards to the sex ratio at birth – down in 2010 to 0.88 girls for every boy, compared to the last year when it was 0.91 girls for every boy. Despite legal measures that ban prenatal sex determination and sex-specific abortions, the numbers have actually deteriorated. Currently it is estimated that there were 134 million of women missing in 2010 globally, which can mostly be attributed to the skewed birth sex ratio in China and India. The cost of the patriarchal worldview is also seen in ‘parts of Latin America, [where] while on a much smaller scale, there are ‘missing young men’ (Barker, 2005, p.1): ‘In Brazil, for example, the 2000 census confirmed that there were nearly 200,000 fewer men than women in the age range 15-29 because of higher rates of mortality through accidents, homicide and suicide among young men ... By the

year 2050, Brazil will have 6 million fewer men than women, principally because of violence'. Some of those deaths are directly related to the struggle by some young men to become 'top dogs', i.e. to achieve higher status and power commonly assigned to dominant, androcratic or 'hegemonic' (Connell, 2005b) males, in the 'culture of violence called patriarchy' (Gilligan, 2001).

Overall human and social development as well as legal measures are thus necessary but not sufficient strategies needed to address global inequality in general and global gender inequality in particular. Further to this, a change in a patriarchal worldview is necessary to address the issue of both 'missing women and men' as both are victims of 'rigid ways of defining what it means to be men and women' (Barker, 2005, p.1). Further to this, between and within countries of the world women's and men's experiences remain diverse, indicating that to improve lives of all women and men other systems of oppression (such as, for example: racism, classism, colonialism, nationalism) need to be addressed as well.

This is because it is hard, if not impossible, to create a society wherein most of its members are able to fulfil their potential and contribute to the development of that society unless androcentrism, sexism, gender stereotypes, misogyny, homophobia and compulsory heteronormativity are challenged. If a person is discriminated based on her or his psychological characteristics or due to her/his cultural attributes that person will have a difficult if not an impossible task of overcoming barriers instead of channelling their energies into more productive and creative pursuits. When a whole group of people is discriminated based on their physiological or cultural attributes the situation worsens exponentially. And when both individual persons as well as groups are assigned certain characteristics by the society that reduce their holistic humanity onto certain selective features this is called (gender, cultural, class etc.) stereotyping. Stereotyping creates a black and white world that dampens our collective resourcefulness and minimises alternatives available to us, given our assigned membership into certain cultural groups. If future societies are to become more flexible, freer and creatively dynamic, or in sum 'better' to the present ones, moving beyond such binary worlds and thinking is paramount.

The cultural phenomena that is behind stereotyping and discriminating of certain groups need to be addressed via cultural changes, even though economic, legal and political changes aimed at minimising (cultural or gender) inequality may also create a positive impact on the cultural sphere of a society. Economic globalisation, for example, is closely intertwined with the global exchange of ideas and cultural memes, which in turn influence economy. Likewise, traditional patriarchy is a social system not only characterised by an unequal distribution of economic and political power, as well as unequal distribution of power in the public sphere overall, but also by the asymmetric and unjust distribution of power between genders in the private sphere. Patriarchy therefore does not disappear if there is merely an equal participation of men and women in the public sphere (i.e. equal voting rights, equal participation in education and paid labour outside of the home) unless there is also some degree of equal participation of men and women in the private sphere (i.e. housework, child rearing, unpaid labour in the 'economy of love'). This does not imply that each and every task needs to be equally shared among genders, but rather that people of various genders are equally free to participate in the public sphere and fairly rewarded for the work they do.

At present, however, traditional female work is still largely considered

‘unproductive’ (i.e. unpaid work in the household) or of lesser value (i.e. feminisation of labour or devaluing of traditional ‘female’ jobs). Further to this, within patriarchal societies, other areas traditionally considered ‘feminine’, such as nonviolent conflict resolution or care of people and nature, also have lower status assigned. As ecofeminists point out, nature itself has often been considered feminine, or closer to women, or somehow in women’s domain, whilst culture and civilisation were not only seen as being in male/masculine domain but also as somehow superior to the passivity and simple ‘being’ of nature realm. The practice of patriarchy, consequently, requires activities in which nature, like the female gender, is absent from planning and from our collective minds. Like activities women perform nature too is taken for granted, resulting in extreme forms of exploitation of both women and nature: sadly, many negative consequences of such exploitation are yet to manifest. Activities and realms considered male and masculine, on the other hand, are given higher status and privileged by a patriarchal society. Violent conflict resolution and non-sustainable economic development, for example, given that they have traditionally been (and remain) ‘masculine’ fields, still yield much higher social and economic benefits to individuals, groups and states that participate in these activities (i.e. military industrial complex). Therefore, without the transformation of both public and private patriarchy, gender equity and the overall social development (including creation of ecologically sustainable societies) will be extremely difficult to achieve.

As was the case with the shortcomings transformation of public patriarchy brought when it was not coupled with the transformation of private patriarchy, transformation of cognitive templates that patriarchy requires (including lower valuing of nature) will not be possible without radical restructuring of gender regimes and identities. In other words transformation of the patriarchal cognitive template does not only depend on achieving of male-female equality and closing of gender gaps but also on alternative reading of gender and gender relations as well. Cognitive change in how we collectively view gender and gender relations is not only as important as is systemic social change in the public sphere but is also both a prerequisite and a consequence of such systemic change. This means that in addition to transforming social institutions, personal transformation and transformation of the dominant patriarchal worldview is also necessary.

The patriarchal template exists collectively and both males and females internalise it and then further propagate it. It is a social, cultural and historical phenomenon, that belongs to the past and yet still informs our decisions in the present and thus still limits available options for futures ahead of us. Both men and women internalise patriarchal worldview despite the fact that it is mostly men (as a social group) who ‘gain a dividend from patriarchy in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command [as well as gain] a material dividend’ (Connell, 2005a, p.82). Because of structural inequalities that exist on a global scale ‘social struggle must result from [these] inequalities ...[as there are] groups that will gain and lose differently by sustaining or by changing the structure’ (ibid.). Any gender order wherein ‘men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change’ (Connell, ibid.). This is why, historically, the first and second feminist wave of the 20th century proposed a wealth of progressive alternatives for the future and away from patriarchy, some of which have become our presents and some of which are yet

to materialise.

The similar situation occurs when so called ‘hegemonic masculinities’ and ‘subservient masculinities’ are in question. Once again, inequality embedded in various gender hierarchies is a ‘structural fact’, thus politics of masculinity and femininity cannot concern ‘only questions of personal life and identity [but they]... must also concern questions of social justice’ (ibid.). Studying power embedded in gender relationships, including power embedded in various expressions of masculinity thus also helps with certain insights regarding the practice of hierarchical ordering of gender relations. Insights from homophile/gay liberation/LGBT movements and queer theory also alerted us to the existence of sexual and gender diversity, beyond men-women binarism. Coupled with anthropological and sociological comparative and historical studies these insights testify about social rather than ‘natural’ construction of sexual and gender identities. And so if these identities are imagined in unjust and discriminatory ways a resulting society is also going to manifest as overall unjust and discriminatory.

But despite the fact that the power to describe reality in certain (unjust and discriminatory) ways still lies with patriarchy, postmodern thinkers remind us that power may not be a permanent ‘possession’ of economic, cultural and gender elites. Whilst power relationships are everywhere and whilst ‘truth’ about reality is rarely not in some way connected with the power of certain groups to define that very reality, power is, according to this view, also potentially positive and creative. For Michel Foucault and postmodern thinkers generally power exists only when it is put in action (Foucault, 1982, p.861). And while Foucault did not ‘deny that there are individual and organizations that rule over other people’ (McPhail, 1999, p.29), he also argues that resistance is always possible because the process of normalization is never complete (ibid., p.854). That is, ‘...knowledge is never fully co-opted and ... there will always be subjugated forms of (power/)knowledge that can be used to resist prevailing and hegemonic forms of (power/) knowledge’ (ibid.). It is in these subjugated forms of power/knowledge that we could look for alternative readings of current reality as well as of available and desirable choices for our futures. Dominant systems of thought, including patriarchy, are currently highly invested in the maintenance of social inequality and other detrimental social and cultural phenomena (i.e. violent conflict resolution via wars and preparation for wars, subjugation of certain groups of people, destruction of nature, etc.). To create a better world (i.e. presence of equity and social justice, more harmonious and ecologically balanced ‘development’) alternative systems of thinking which come from more marginal spaces, may thus be more useful.

Questions of social justice, for their part, require critical rethinking and a re-evaluation of gender orders and regimes. In sum, to change societies for the better detrimental gender arrangements must also be abandoned. Positive social and cultural change would require not only transformation of gender identities, roles and functions in the family and society but also the overall transformation of the patriarchal worldview and the dominant understanding of gender within it.

Challenging Patriarchal Understanding of Gender

Patriarchy has traditionally been understood as the structuring of society on the basis of family units, where fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of, and authority over, their families. This understanding is followed by the expectation

that men take primary responsibility for the welfare of the community as a whole, for example, by acting as representatives via public office. Further to this, classic patriarchy considers male life experience to be ‘the norm’ and automatically devalues ‘feminine’ traits and characteristics. It implies that difference must be theorised as of ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ value and that these difference arise from ‘natural’ characteristics of men and women. The patriarchal worldview also relies on gender binarism (male-female distinction) which is the basis of sharp distinctions between other binary pairs (such as rationality-emotions, strength-weakness, power-submissiveness, dominance-marginality, protection-vulnerability, objectivity-subjectivity, activity-passivity, culture-nature, norm-deviation and so on). As already mentioned, the patriarchal worldview is usually extremely hierarchical, and thus differences are organised according to higher-lower value and social status.

Patriarchy takes many forms and shapes but one of its most enduring characteristics that makes this system recognisable is the attachment of higher value status to so called ‘hegemonic’ males and traits attached to them. Whilst still highly contested (Connell, 2005b, p.832) the concept of hegemonic masculinity commonly refers to the ‘pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allows men’s dominance over women’ as well as of hegemonic masculinity over other alternative masculinities. Though not assumed to be ‘normal in the statistical sense’ (ibid.) given that only a minority of men might enact it, it certainly is normative. Furthermore, the notion of hegemonic masculinity is based on the recognition that both the plurality of masculinities as well as the hierarchy of masculinities exist (ibid., p.846). This hierarchy is often asserted via (direct and structural) violence which ‘becomes a way for men to accomplish masculinity and to maintain positions of privilege within the hierarchy’ (Cook-Huffman, 2010, p.214).

Violence may be exercised ‘against young men during rites of passage into manhood ... [however] ...the mark of male maturity... is most often a demonstration of one’s capacity to exercise violence against others.’ (McInturff, 2010, p.223). Patriarchy thus assigns all men the role of ‘violence-objects,’ (Gilligan, 2001, p.59), dehumanising men and making their lives ‘expendable’ (Barry, 2010, p.8). This ‘expendability of men’ means that the internalised patriarchal mindset sees it as somehow ‘more “appropriate” to kill a man than to kill a woman’ (Gilligan, 2001, p.59), which is why Gilligan uses the term violence-object rather than violence-subjects for men, which especially holds true during wars and other times of violent political and social uprisings. Hegemonic masculinities require both subservient masculinities as well as women (real and symbolic femininity) to ‘exist as its counterpart’ (Cook-Huffman, ibid.). They also require discourses on ‘real men’ and desirable manhood, which are in a context of dominator societies most commonly defined by psychological traits such as mental endurance, bravery, valuing of high achievement socially, respect of authority, self-control, and being low in empathy and sensitivity to other people (Brock-Utne, 2010, p.210).

Simultaneously, patriarchal society relegates women to a private sphere and honours them not by their engagement with violence, which is reserved for men, but by their ‘chastity outside marriage, and fidelity (and fertility) within marriage’ (Gilligan, 2001, p.60). While it assigns the role of ‘violence-objects’ to men, the role assigned to women is that of a ‘sex-object,’ argues James Gilligan (ibid.). To this we could add a variant, the role of a beauty-object (Wolf, 1991). In other words, male expendability via violence is ‘corollary to the sexual objectification of girls

and women who are socialised to know themselves as sexual [and beauty] objects' (Barry, 2010, p.12). Once again, the stronger the patriarchy, the more resilient this template is.

Interestingly enough, once women enter the public realm they too must become of a male gender. A female soldier, CEO, prime minister or president, is also expected to exhibit what are traditionally considered male psychological traits (i.e. toughness, competitiveness, emotional self-control, low sensitivity, and so on). But unlike 'he' who plays those role 'she' is further expected to simultaneously remain 'feminine' (read 'beautiful', 'well-kept' etc.) as far as her external appearance goes. Being of female physiology, or of female sex, therefore does not prevent a person from carrying the cultural characteristics of male gender (or 'masculine'/desirable behaviour), or of needing to incorporate characteristics of both genders (masculine behaviour and feminine appearance), as constructed and deemed desirable by a society. This is yet another evidence testifying about social construction of gender, which unlike our biological sex (male or female), has very little to do with 'nature'.

Detrimental consequence of previously described patriarchal template are many and some have already been described in the first part of this article. Further to this, patriarchal cognitive frame is an example of a totalitarian rather than democratic-open system of thinking because there is no freedom given to challenge the binary (male-female) coupling and hierarchies within it. For example, the patriarchal worldview demands existence of a phenomena termed 'heteronormativity' by postmodern and queer theorists, in which female genitalia automatically requires creation of 'female' identity which is translated into 'feminine' behaviour including desiring of a male partner. Alternatively, for males, male genitalia equates male identity which equates masculine behaviour including desiring of female partner. Individuals that break any of the above mentioned links (i.e. those of homosexual or bisexual orientation, 'masculine' women and 'feminine' men, transgendered individuals etc.) are most commonly violently 'punished'. For a number of people such dichotomous view on gender is highly disturbing and unsettling. As already mentioned earlier, women entering the public sphere are simultaneously required to become of male gender and yet often chastised (by both men and women who internalise patriarchal cognitive frame) for loosing their 'femininity' or for 'destroying their own families' if they do so. Another example is the punishment of 'feminine' boys by their peers; this punishment takes a form of physical and psychological violence as well as social exclusion. The stronger the patriarchal cognitive frame, within the overall society or within certain social groups within it, the higher and more violent is the pressure to move away from alternative gender arrangements such as androgyny and multiple gender identities into binarism of genders and heteronormativity.

And yet even traditional patriarchal societies often allowed for the existence of 'third' gender (i.e. South Asian Hijras, Balkan virdzine or 'Sworn virgins'), which means that despite patriarchal ideology and mythology of heteronormativity the reality on the ground has always been that of multiple gender diversities. This reality is allowed expression within more gender equitable worldviews and suppressed within more totalitarian and fundamentalist systems of thought. If we are to create better world in the future former rather than the later needs to be enhanced. Carbond masculinities and femininities hardly serve anybody any longer, if they ever did have a positive role to play.

Contemporary Understanding of Gender

Developments in feminist and gender theories (i.e. Butler, 1990) have focused on the performativity of gender, that is, on gender as something that we do rather than who we are. These theoretical developments are not yet accepted as a dominant understanding of gender within our mainstream gender discourses that exist in the wider society. That is, 'many people imagine masculinity, femininity and gender relations only in terms of their own local gender system' (Connell, 2009, p.ix). They thus simultaneously 'miss the vast diversity of gender patterns across cultures and down history' (ibid.). This is why one's own local gender system often appears 'natural', 'ahistorical', 'universal' or even 'God given'.

Gender in gender studies is, however, now understood as distinct from one's biological sex, the former term denoting social practices by which specific gendered orders are established and maintained and the later denoting male/female physiology and biology. Women and men are in social theory no longer seen as existing ontologically, objectively, *sui generis*, *apriori*, generically and ahistorically. Rather, this binary division has been replaced by a visibility of multitude of genders which are seen as existing epistemologically, culturally and psychologically and via a daily practice of reaffirming socially constructed gender roles, identities and discourses. This is critically important because an understanding of gender as a social construction also means that dominant constructions could be deconstructed and reconstructed and alternatives to these dominant constructions enhanced and developed. Through the creation and re-creation of our gender identities and behaviours we construct both ourselves as well as our societies and the (present-future) world(s).

The process of doing gender is apparent when gender differences that exist or may exist biologically and physiologically are enhanced. For example, contemporary social practices in the western world ask of 'ideal women' to invest time and energy in becoming 'smaller' (thinner, toned but not muscular) and of 'ideal men' to become 'larger' (bulked up, well defined and enlarged muscles), which is one way of enhancing some pre-existing differences. Other social practices of doing gender include making differences where there are no pre-existing 'natural' ones: for example, given that both-all genders are born with nasolacrimal or tear duct, 'naturally' men are also capable or 'meant to' cry, even the so called 'hegemonic males', however, culturally they are in general not 'supposed to'. Rather, their emotional expression is limited to maintenance of their role of 'violence objects' and emotions considered masculine, such as anger and rage. This has huge (and negative) implications to the society at large, given that over 90% of all acts of physical violence are committed by men (Galtung, 2009, UNESCAP, 2003 quoted in Kelleher, 2010, Cockburn and Oakley, 2011). Differential psychology for different genders thus creates a world in which androcratic-hegemonic males compete for domination and feminine females compete for attention, neither process facilitating creation of an inclusive, fair and equitable world. Fortunately, differential psychology for genders that exists within a patriarchal cognitive frame has increasingly been challenged by some current trends pushing us towards different gender futures.

Gender futures

Historically, gender was one of the earliest and more universally accepted means for social distribution of power and inequality. To elaborate on some points mentioned earlier, the concept of male-female polarity has been instrumental in creating a division of labour between the two genders and subsequent creation of unequal and patriarchal societies. In these societies women were/are primarily in charge of child rearing, education, healthcare and housekeeping which are in turn generally regarded as subservient activities given that this work is relegated to the private sphere of the non-monetised 'love economy'. On the other hand, men have been in charge of higher socially desired positions, entrusted with decision making and with ruling the monetised, professional public sphere. Various economic, political and cultural developments during the 20th century have put gender equality on the global agenda (some of which are summarised within the Futures Triangle presented earlier). This gender equality was initially imagined mostly in terms of achieving gender sameness in the future, that is, the ideal of androgynous gender future was proposed as a means of transcending inherited gender hierarchies.

The ideal of an androgynous future has been propagated among some societies and groups (i.e. communist societies, some aspects of classic feminist liberalism of the first wave, classical humanism) as an ideal future wherein sexual and gender equality would manifest. Unisex androgyny has also been imagined as a psychological condition or characteristic, where men would increasingly adopt traditional 'feminine' virtues, while women would increasingly adopt traditional 'masculine' ones. Twentieth century developments have seen women, as a group, more successfully adopting a number of masculine traits (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992), which is understandable because it is these that have been valued for centuries by patriarchal societies. This 'masculinisation of women' has also occurred due to the fact that initially gender equality was understood to predominantly mean women being given equal rights in the public sphere. As a consequence of both these phenomena, as well as being a result of higher valuing of male activity within patriarchal cognitive frame, for the most part it was women who have entered traditional 'male spheres' whereas relatively fewer males have assumed roles traditionally reserved for women. Moreover, the higher valuing of 'masculine' social spheres at the expense of 'feminine' ones remained, resulting in some rewards for masculinised women but mostly penalties for 'feminised males'. Further to this, when 'unisex androgyny' was proposed as a way of reaching more equitable societies, the sameness implicit within this model was predominantly modelled upon existing male norms. For both these reasons, unisex androgyny has increasingly been abandoned during the 20th century by gender theorists and various women's/feminist movements as a vision for their preferred gender futures.

The emergence of concepts such as performativity of gender in the 1990s and the increased understandings coming from gender research that throughout history and space multiple gender diversities have always existed, have fundamentally challenged the inherited patriarchal cognitive frame that we have inherited. These new theoretical developments see beyond gender binaries as well as beyond gender sameness to propose a concept of multiplicity of genders.

Multiple gender diversities assume that gender is a socially constructed category, meaning that we are 'doing' rather than 'being' women or men, or both,

or something in between, or neither. This concept also assumes that we (humans) engage in cultural behaviours of practicing femininities and masculinities as well as that gender categories are more fluid than simply constituting of women/men, even though patriarchal society reifies such concepts and awards obligations and privileges accordingly. Rather, it is proposed that gender expressions exist on a continuum between ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’, meaning that most people exhibit a combination of binary opposing ‘female’ and ‘male’ traits. It is remarkable ‘how similar the two sexes become, psychologically, when gender fades into the background’ argue, Michael Kimmel as well as Cordelia Fine (2010, p.237): ‘love, tenderness, nurturance; competence, ambition, assertion – they are human qualities, and all human beings – both women and men – should have equal access to them’.

Multiple gender diversities are allowed to play with these similarities and differences, in order to find the right mix for each and every individual. The flexibility also allows for different ‘mixing’ throughout life-span and in different circumstances, thus helping individuals better cope with ever changing present-future environments. In this sense one can imagine more fluidity in gender as we live longer – i.e. post-gender or gender sensitive aging.

A recognition that neither one of us, humans, is ‘either/or’ but most commonly ‘both/and’ may help with transformation of existing gender hierarchies and the unequal world order based on them. Mal-adaption of many men in situations wherein their traditional power status is revoked (i.e. loss of employment when traditional male industries are weakened) has by now been well documented, including attempts to restore power via violence (i.e. domestic violence, gang wars, revenge attacks etc.). Better adaptation to new circumstances (i.e. rise of service and other ‘feminine’ industries) thus requires more flexible masculine/feminine identities and more flexible gender regimes. A recognition that all of us can be and may be required to be ‘both/and’, needs to be simultaneously followed by the equal valuing of all parts of ‘female-male’ qualities within ourselves as well as within our local/global society, if we are to have truly flexible (as well as equitable) gender regimes. Equal valuing means the dismantling of existing hierarchies and inequalities, including existing gender inequalities.

The promise for the fairer world is therefore closely connected with the radical transfiguring of gender order and politics of femininity and masculinity. When people are free to express themselves along the female-male continuum depending on internal and external circumstance, making an informed choice, without fear of reprisal, in this process of dismantling gender hierarchies more democratic, equal and fairer social practices (and ultimately societies and social structures) are also simultaneously created. Human agency, done over and over again, results in creation of firmer social structures and institutions which than in turn reinforce desired human agency. Personal and group agency towards gender equality and equity thus means the creation of equitable social structures and institutions, or, in other words, the creation of equitable societies. Flattened hierarchies assume both more integrated and diverse social arrangements as well as higher gender equality.

Crucially important is that such gender equality does not imply men and women becoming or having to become ‘the same’, but rather that males and females as well as all genders have equal access to ‘rights, resources, opportunities and protections’ (UNICEF, 2006). In other words full gender equality will exist when all human beings are ‘free to develop their personal abilities and make choices

without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices' (ibid.). Most importantly, the existence of gender equality will mean equal consideration, valuing and favouring of different gender-based behaviours, aspirations and needs (UNESCO, 2000). In sum, it will mean fairness of treatment according to respective needs of various genders (ibid.). Once gender relations are more balanced the likelihood of balancing other features of our world increases. Alternatively, without balancing gender relations it is highly likely that the current world which patriarchy and other hierarchies of domination have created will remain to plague humanity well into the future.

The existence of gender and social equity is premised on the acceptance and celebration of multiple gender diversities, because that is the reality of our world and because that reality has been in existence since human cultures and civilisations were created. Furthermore, the perspectives of various gender stakeholders are valuable in understanding current global problems from a range of angles from which diverse strategies are proposed. Our current world requires radical restructuring and it is more likely that it will be gender groups structurally put in a position to be concerned with change rather than with defence (Connell, 2005, p.82) that may propose alternative solutions needed for this radical restructuring. To qualify as the 'alternative gender group' some level of self-awareness of systems of domination and marginalisation is necessary. Without it the pure fact that one is born with a certain physiology does not mean much, as both (all) genders are equally capable of internalising and propagating dominant (patriarchal) as well as alternative (gender partnership and equity) worldview. Giving currently marginalised genders and worldviews emerging from this marginalisation a voice, globally and locally, will be both a result of a more inclusive society as well as a prerequisite in achieving it.

On the other hand, as long as the reality of the multiplicity of gendered expressions is denied and all humans are asked to become either 'masculine (and heterosexual) males' or 'feminine (and heterosexual) females' freedom to develop own personal abilities and make informed choices will also be denied. The stifling of individual freedoms often goes hand in hand with the development of totalitarian systems of thought and totalitarian societies. No democracy is complete without gender arrangements also being organised democratically. Totalitarian systems and societies have also shown to rely on violence and compulsion to smother creativity and individual expression. Neither of these occurrences is nor will be helpful in addressing current global challenges. The further democratisation of gender roles, identities and regimes, on the other hand, is necessary for the development of alternative global society, which is fairer and wherein all human differences and diversities are respected and valued. Not only might such global society be more integrated and diverse, it may also exhibit qualitatively different human – nature as well as human-human relations. For that to happen the patriarchal cognitive frame needs to be further destabilised.

So far, one of the most powerful alternative systems of thought that has challenged patriarchal gender paradigm (hierarchical, binary) has been the cognitive frame of feminism. This alternative cognitive frame envisions society marked by gender equality and challenges all other social hierarchies whilst simultaneously focusing on the centrality of human relatedness, valuing peace, justice and life. Its huge potential can be measured by the viciousness of attacks coming from those

humans who invest into the continuation of unjust social arrangements between various social groups. In addition to the framework of feminism, insights from queer theory, postmodern theory, critical men's studies, humanism and ecocentrism are also helpful in creation of more progressive gender performativity. These cognitive frameworks also challenge binarisms and hierarchical social arrangement and propose visions of a better world based on 'our own collective, creative imaginations', rather than from a 'firmly set, a priori ideology' (Doll, 1995, p.89). These visions are characterised by their focus on heterogeneity, multiplicity, difference and equality: equality consisting not of sameness, but of differences, including of gender differences.

Conclusion

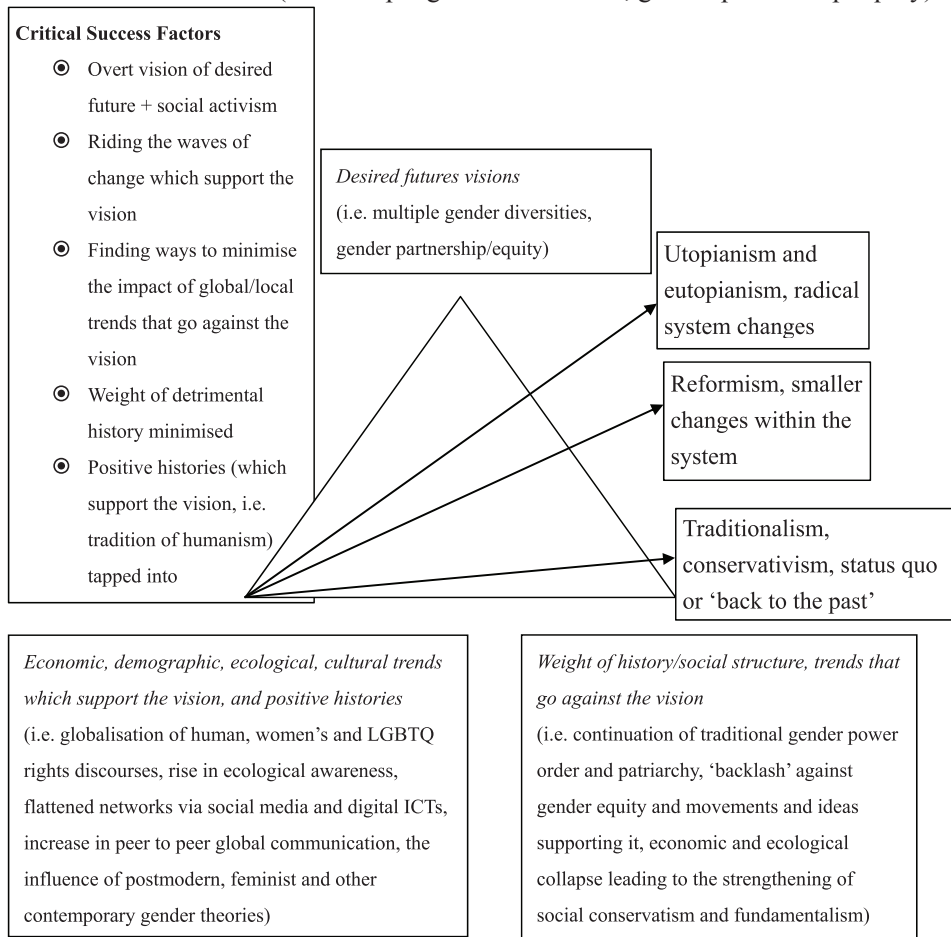
The development of a better world throughout the 21st century is directly premised on the re-making of traditional, and patriarchal gender identities. This is because such identities have been complicit in creating hierarchies of domination, of devaluing human life and nature – as these were seen more connected to women and thus 'feminine'. When women are marginalised so are areas that are considered feminine and in their domain also. Re-valuing of nature goes hand in hand with re-valuing of female gender and its contribution to the world. Other 'invisible' gender groups (i.e. third gender, queer, sexual minorities) also need to be (1) made visible and (2) equally valued. An emerging better world could be seen as consisting of societies with more individual freedom and choice as well as being based on empathetic approaches towards collective well-being. For this world to materialise in the future, traditional 'feminine' values (such as: caring, nurturing, nonviolence, support and empathy with others, intimacy, forgiveness, love, tenderness, vulnerability) need to be re-valued – re-considered as critically important for creation of such better world. This re-evaluation and re-valuing can only happen within a framework that abandons patriarchal cognitive template. The closing of various gender gaps and work on gender equality is paramount if we are to make more informed choices for our future including more informed choices about our own gender-based identities and behaviours. This means that instead of being forced into certain gendered behaviours based on our physiology we need to create those behaviours based on our values. If the ending of inequality and development of social equity is one indicator by which a better world will be measured than achieving gender equity will be both a result as well as a condition for such world to happen.

The empowering of the female gender has never been just about benefiting women. Empowering of other marginalised genders is as well not just about empowering those sexual/gender minority groups. Rather, such efforts have always also been connected with the desire to create multitude of benefits for families, societies and the world as a whole. As we are facing major challenges related to the collapse of many human-human as well as human-nature relationships never before has the empowerment of females and femininity, and other marginalised gender identities, been more important. As the gender gap indicators continue to be improved so will hopefully all of ours' quality of life as well. Going beyond male-female polarity and embracing equal value of all genders is the first step in that direction.

There are some indications that current global developments will indeed lead

to a more inclusive and equitable futures. The globalisation of human, women’s and LGBTQ rights discourses, rise in ecological awareness, flattened networks via social media and digital ICTs, increase in peer to peer global communication and the influence of postmodern as well as feminist theories will continue to push towards such futures. On the other hand, economic and ecological collapse, increase in social conservatism and fundamentalism, various forms of ‘backlash’ against socially progressive movements and ideas will continue to act as both our ‘weight of history’ as well as a detrimental pull towards inequitable futures. These developments are summarised by the following Futures Triangle.

Desired futures visions (i.e. multiple gender diversities, gender partnership/equity)



Futures Triangle 2. Emerging new equitable gender regimes for a better future world

As is always the case, any future is premised on actions by humans at present, and dependant on their belief which particular futures visions are preferable for themselves and the group they belong to. The actions by various individuals, groups, communities and societies will remain diverse, conflicting and pulling towards different, both equitable and inequitable futures. Hope remains that individuals and groups working towards equitable futures in general and equitable gender futures in

particular will eventually prevail, bringing about a better world benefiting most.

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