



Transitioning to Gender Equality

Andrea Zimmermann and Christa Binswanger

1. Introduction

Gender equality is the fifth UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5). It aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. To this end, SDG 5 addresses all forms of violence based on sex or gender, unequally distributed unpaid and unacknowledged care and domestic work, unequal access to resources, as well as the need for equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Thus, the areas in which changes with regard to gender equality on a global scale are needed are very broad. In this volume we focus on three areas of inquiry that are especially pertinent with regard to SDG 5: “politics of difference”, “sexuality”, and “care, work and family”. These areas have been core feminist topics since the 1970s and have proven to be of high importance in societies’ aim of transitioning to gender equality. Each thematic field is introduced by an interview that explores the subject area with regard to important genealogies, theoretic developments, and current challenges in general terms. The format of the dialogue allows for the contextualization of the interviewed experts, their personal approach to the thematic field, as well as to their theoretical, methodological and practical knowledge and experience.

Some theories and methods we deem necessary in the process of transitioning to gender equality are transversal themes of this volume: first, an intersectional perspective, linking gender to further categories of difference; second, the contestations of binary notions of gender constitutive for inequality regimes; third, the difficulties of measuring, controlling and portraying progress with regard to gender equality; and, finally, the need for multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives for understanding the diversity of gender, and to avoid simplifications of complex power regimes.

The volume combines various approaches of critique and, therefore, is to be considered an assemblage of perspectives, methodologies, theoretical concepts and contexts of research. In particular, the configuration of approaches that focus on the impact of hegemonic regimes of gender inequality with those that focus on marginalized communities enables us to gain access to underlying mechanisms of discrimination and othering that grease the wheels of gender inequality. At the same time, calling into question seemingly universal categories and mechanisms

contributes to a rethinking of epistemological and methodological approaches, and a reconceptualization of theoretical instruments to foster further steps on the way to gender equality.

2. Politics of Difference

The volume opens with a look at “politics of difference”, the first thematic field. In this section, theories, methodologies, and practices of intersectionality are of high importance. Intersectionality allows for reflection on gender inequality with regard to different experiences of structural discrimination and power hierarchies. The complexity of power regimes in different contexts, and the need for translation, challenges not only the analysis of difference but, also, practical work aiming at coalition and cooperation, be it local or transnational. Reflections on questions and concepts of difference have a long-standing tradition in feminist theory and have contributed to many theoretical debates within and outside social movements to this day. These movements criticize power regimes that are organized along conditions of recognition and that are at work in manifold mechanisms of the othering of those who are placed and perceived as beyond these norms. Recognizing difference and the challenging of normative settings are important steps towards gender equality, as well as regarding legal systems and the distribution of resources and access to positions of power and authority. At the same time, politics of difference can also lead to new normative exclusions if power is reorganized alongside “new” established identities. Thus, if concepts are transferred to other contexts, they always need to be translated and adapted. A constant reflection about who is included and who is not is, therefore, urgently needed. As the first dialogue by Andrea Zimmermann with Margo Okazawa-Rey suggests, the contextualization of difference is best performed in transnational coalitions. They enable constant translation work and contribute to an ongoing self-reflection on their own premises and a collaborative development of concepts. This first interview is followed by five contributions that focus on the current challenges of politics of difference. Every contribution has its own starting point, its own set of interests, and is situated in different empirical, geographical and theoretical contexts. The different standpoints and topics presented in the following chapters do not form a coherent and easy-to-understand picture. They shed light on specific questions and problems in the context that they analyze. Thereby, they reveal paradoxes, ambivalences and current empirical and theoretical challenges for concepts and policies of gender equality, which require further research.

Margo Okazawa-Rey, a former member of the Combahee River Collective and a world-renowned activist and scholar, talks to Andrea Zimmermann about

challenges for a transnational feminist politics of difference. Reflecting on feminist genealogies and intersectional feminism, Okazawa-Rey points out the importance of questioning and analyzing the complex individual relations between power regimes and differences. As the feminist politics of identity have not managed to change power dynamics fundamentally, but rather reworked them along categories of difference, she strongly advocates coalitions of transnational feminism. These coalitions need to take differences and contexts into account, emphasizing the power of cooperation and mutual exchange at the same time. It is in this vein that Okazawa-Rey proposes the reimagination of politics of difference as politics of connection.

In her chapter on policing, Vanessa Thompson challenges the feminist silence around racist practices and intersectional modalities of police violence. This contribution proves the urgency of the #BlackLivesMatter movement once more. By applying a black feminist framework, Thompson reflects on current debates and her work as an activist scholar on racial profiling. The concept of slow violence, which also takes mental and psychic vulnerabilities, and the long-term effects of everyday racism, into account, forms the cornerstone of her argument. Thereupon, Thompson conceptualizes policing as a multidimensional institutionalized practice and aims at a complex intersectional analysis. Furthermore, Thompson criticizes the entanglement of feminist antiviolence campaigns with the criminal justice system and the acceptance of intersectional state violence by certain feminists. Referring to a term by Elizabeth Bernstein, Thompson calls this stream of the feminist movement “carceral feminism”, an important concept for problematizing the complex relation between feminism and the state’s violence exercised by the criminal justice system. Finally, Thompson advocates for an intersectional and interventional concept of abolition that not only transforms individuals and communities but gender politics as such.

The dialogue between Rahel El-Maawi and Sarah Owens, both members of Bla*sh—the Swiss Network Black She—also considers questions surrounding the recognition of difference and reflections on the importance of networks and communities. The conversation originally took place in 2018 as part of the event series, “The Art of Intervention”, at the Kunstmuseum Gegenwart in Basel, Switzerland.¹ During the exhibition, “War Games”, which staged artwork by Martha

¹ <https://theartofintervention.blog/programm/> (accessed on 5 August 2021).

Rosler and Hito Steyerl,² El-Maawi and Owens, were invited to reflect on motivations and consequences of intersectional activism in arts and culture. As starting points for their conversation, they take quotes from Black women and women of Color that critically intervene in the hegemonic, and very often white, canon of thinkers who are usually quoted. As such, their conversation is not only a dialogue with each other but a dialogue with a genealogy of Black feminism. This format goes hand in hand with their emphasis on the importance of networks and communities as sources of strength. Their dialogue leaves room for different perspectives and individual answers to the everyday challenges of structural discrimination. Finally, art may serve as a space in which hypervisibility/invisibility, everyday racism, experiences of sexualization and exoticization can be negotiated and reflected upon. Here humans can rest from academic or political work and alternative perspectives can be offered and articulated: places for empowerment.

In her chapter about Islamic women activists, Sherin Hafez highlights the need to adapt concepts that have emerged in Western feminist contexts to her field of inquiry. In order to understand Islamic women activists in Egypt, the Western notion of empowerment needs to be revised. The work of these women and their self-perception is deeply embedded in Islamic understandings, including the acceptance of a gender order, which is considered unequal in Western contexts. Nevertheless, their activities create a space for agency, including the power to decide and act, embedded in the values of their religious community. Hafez highlights the need for a consideration of agency and empowerment of activist subjects as created by social relations and not as autonomous from them. Hafez' contribution challenges the often implicit dominance of Western theoretical concepts. She advocates a careful translation, or revision, if applied to differing contexts. Without such a contextualization, these concepts are at risk of failing to question dominant power regimes and systems of exclusion.

The next part of this first section is dedicated to work on men and masculinities. As Jeff Hearn argues, "men" should be recognized as a policy area. There is an urgent need for explicitly men-related politics and policy, even if these are still relatively rare phenomena. Investigating masculinities critically and developing gender strategies for change contribute to the transformation of the hegemonic gender order, to gender equality, and to women's empowerment. Hearn's contribution refutes the argument of antifeminist suggestions that greater gender equality harms men. On the contrary:

² <https://kunstmuseumbasel.ch/de/ausstellungen/2018/rosler-steyerl> (accessed on 5 August 2021).

Findings point to better health, reduced threats of violence and better wellbeing for both men and women, if feminist politics gain importance. Engaging critically in the study of men and masculinities thus opens up possibilities for societal change not yet considered well enough by politics and policies.

Finally, this section is completed with a chapter by Persson Perry Baumgartinger, who discusses the notion of gender in the wording of SDG 5. SDG 5 claims gender equality for “women and girls”. Thus, gender difference is reduced to a gender dualism, consisting of “men and boys” versus “women and girls”. Baumgartinger suggests introducing the term *sexgender*, which includes inter-, trans-, and *sexgender* nonconforming people, thus enlarging a dualistic understanding of gender to a multiplicity of *sexgenders*. Taking the title of the volume literally, *Transitioning* should enable an intersectional approach to *sexgender* diversity. This broader understanding of sexes and genders is needed in order to do inter-, trans-, and *sexgender* nonconforming children and adults justice, and to contribute to the fight against the discriminatory practices that many face on an everyday basis. As such, *sexgender* equality aims to overcome discrimination for all sexes and genders.

This assemblage of articles on “Politics of Difference”, with specific sets of interest and empirical findings, reveals several challenges for theoretical, methodological and practical work on transnational progress towards gender equality. As the contributions by Thompson, Owens, El-Maawi and Hafez suggest, intersectional analysis in different contexts needs to consider the complexity of persistent inequalities and structural discrimination that are shaped by the current hegemonic gender order in a given context. Everyday sexism and racism, as well as other forms of structural discrimination, work along the binary mechanism of othering, of inclusion and exclusion. In order to critique these mechanisms, it is important to point to the exclusionary and privileging effects of binary systems. This is also the starting point for Hearn’s contribution. He explicitly refers to the binary gender order and insists on the necessity of focusing not only on femininities but on masculinities, too. The articles by Thompson and Baumgartinger emphasize that gender equality does not only mean including those who have been excluded so far. The way power is organized in relation to identity has to be fundamentally questioned, e.g., by opening up the categories of gender or race beyond essentialism and binary categorization. Moreover, Margo Okazawa-Rey points out that every new organization of power along identity categories relies on the mechanism of new exclusions. Transnational coalitions are needed for ongoing mutual and intersectional critiques of newly established structures and power mechanisms. In sum, the contributions in this section offer space for different perspectives and the recognition

of different fields of interest and research, and open up a frame for new collaborative answers across disciplines and contexts.

3. Sexuality

The second part of this volume focuses on gendered challenges in the field of sexuality. Pleasure, self-determined and/or consensual sexuality, and reproductive rights are discussed in this section from the viewpoint of gender equality, advocating the right for sexual agency. In many societies at many historical moments, female bodies and pleasures were—and still are—controlled by patriarchy, based on unequal gender orders, and, sometimes, seriously violated. Nevertheless, specific contexts always need to be taken into consideration. Similarly, as in the first section on politics of difference, it is important for a feminist intersectional analysis of sexuality that transnationally oriented feminists look for mutually respectful and helpful alliances. Acknowledging differences among women leads to multiple, individual understandings of how to gain self-determined access to sexuality. Thus, as in the first section, the notion of gender needs to be conceptualized beyond a binary understanding of gender in order to address the whole range of gendered and sexed human beings and claim sexual rights for all genders.

The opening interview by Christa Binswanger with Kathy Davis explores sexuality and sexual agency. The conversation aims to address possible changes towards more equal sexual relations among all sexes. Taking up feminist discussions dealing with inequality within sexual relations since the 1970s, Davis states, self-critically, that the feminist movement that she was part of in the 1970s was too judgmental about what constitutes sexual pleasure. She regards the so-called sex wars in the 1980s as a necessary corrective to such limitations of the movement. Inspired by her research in the feminist self-help book, “Our Bodies, Ourselves”, Davis highlights three aspects of sexuality in view of “feminist” politics: first, to encourage women to explore their bodies and discover what gives them pleasure; second, to encourage an intersectional perspective, as women embody sexuality differently; and finally, to recognize that sexuality is deeply shaped by cultural and societal context. As such, there is no one feminist perspective on sexuality, but manifold and context-sensitive feminist perspectives. For current times, Davis points to the importance of transnational feminism, reflecting on power differences among women and looking for mutually beneficial alliances. Additionally, there is a need to understand sexuality as fluid and complex. As such, sexuality is not bound to sexed or gendered identities but is located in complex configurations of power and difference.

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Mathabo Khau's research focuses on the South African context. She highlights that comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is an important component in the attainment of universal sexual and reproductive health. She points to sexuality education as a driver for the agenda for sustainable communities and the achievement of the SDG 5. Her approach points to the need to overcome current challenges in sexuality education in schools in South Africa. In order to support women and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights, from the perspective of CSE, legal conditions need to be adapted. In addition, the taboo nature of sex talk hinders young women and girls when it comes to talking about their questions and needs, as well as their looking for support. Furthermore, health centers (called *Family Planning Centers*) providing contraceptives are only accessible to married women. Khau discusses how critical and sex-positive sexuality education can help communities move away from the taboo nature of sexuality and support sexual self-understanding. As such, CSE can make young people knowledgeable about the legitimacy to live their sexualities in explorative and different ways. With CSE, this employs participatory pedagogical strategies, and there is hope for addressing harmful norms and stereotypes, and thus contributing to an improvement of gender equality within sexual relationships.

Suruchi Thapar-Björkert and Ruchika Ranwa explore the theoretical framework of the "violence(s) of development". Making use of this framework, they analyze how social institutions of caste, class and gender intersect in rural India, together with political structures, and create contexts of inclusion and exclusion. Their findings on interdependence of son-preference, bride-shortages and bride trafficking are based on empirical research in the state of Haryana in North India. The convergence of two seemingly disparate local realities—the skewed child sex ratio in rural North India and bride trafficking—shows that "development" is inherently paradoxical and, therefore, violent in India: while development envisions the elimination of social inequalities, it inadvertently also recreates them. Instead of questioning patriarchal dominance in bride selection, the present Modi government tacitly supports bride-trafficking and, thus, violent crimes against women. As such, the tacit support of perpetrators persists. Far from eliminating social inequalities regarding these women, they are tolerated against the backdrop of larger development-oriented and women-centric agendas advocated by the government. Calling upon the discourse of gender equality but simultaneously adhering to a discourse of security of Hindu women, and thus the nation, the government violently regulates and disciplines women.

Antke A. Engel's contribution to this chapter focuses on the problematic, exclusionary, binary distinction of sexes throughout SDG 5 and advocates a

fundamental reconceptualization of sexgender in UN politics (also see the chapter by Baumgartinger). Such a reconceptualization has to allow for addressing existing patterns of structural inequality and violence, on the one hand, and must not be discriminatory against nonbinary genders and sexes, on the other. Engel suggests the principle of “queerversity” as a starting point for an alternative mode of conceptualization diversity in light of intersectional justice. Criticizing the binary logic and the implicated hierarchy in binary systems, as well as the mechanisms of othering that come along with binary understandings, Engel turns to the work of Black and Queer scholars of Color. Multiplicity, ambiguity and alterity are important elements of questioning normalcy and allow for a sociocultural order that finds pleasure in complexity, polysemy and subversion. As Engel shows, queerversity is not only ethical and political but an aesthetical strategy for fighting epistemic and structural violence.

In the contributions of this section on sexuality, there are some common problems raised. Binary notions of gender are deeply inscribed in sexual politics, as the sexed and sexualized female body not only stands for the individual but often counts as part of the body of the nation. In many contexts, this body is secured and disciplined by patriarchal politics. Taking up queer–feminist approaches enables one to pay critical attention to the rhetoric of development in which the female body represents the body of the nation. They often conceal structural violence that leads to paradoxical outcomes for marginalized bodies, such as female or queer sexgenders. Sexuality, as discussed in this section, is located in complex configurations of power and difference, depending on the cultural context. Even if this makes it difficult to talk about gender equality and sexuality in general terms, transnational feminist alliances can encourage women to explore their bodies and discover what gives them pleasure by acknowledging the many different ways in which sexualities are lived and experienced in various contexts. Simultaneously, feminist alliances can hopefully contribute to fighting sexual violence, still often persistent in patriarchal contexts.

4. Care, Work and Family

The volume’s third section discusses research on care, work and family. This research field is particularly important for SDG 5 and problematizes the gendered settings of unpaid care work, the gender pay gap, and its connection with concepts of mothering and fathering in relation to hegemonic gender norms.

The gendered spheres of private and public life, normative gender roles and the still dominant role of hegemonic masculinity characterized by relations of exploitation towards the self and others have a tremendous impact on gendered

configurations of work and family. The feminist critique of gendered separations and its consequences has a long-standing tradition: for decades, feminists have worked on alternative models for distribution and—also material—acknowledgement of reproductive work, building on the powerful critique of the bourgeois separation of the private and public sphere.

Currently, global care chains gain more attention. It is a truism that the rising number of women in Western societies who managed to enter the world of work often relied on the work of female migrants. Thus, the ongoing transformation does not change the gender order in the first place. Rather, this transformation relies on postcolonial and more recent class and race specific modes of othering creating new precarious subjectivities.

Another topic that has gained more and more attraction in current theory is social sustainability. This concept takes up the critique of hegemonic masculinity and aims for new understandings of subjectivity. Social sustainability pleads for a notion of the subject that does not rely on the mechanisms of exploitation of the self and others and, rather, cares for sustainable concepts of reproduction. This theoretical approach allows one to rethink the field of work organization and poses current challenges for research on gender, diversity and inclusion. From this perspective, much more research is needed, as gender relations are strongly interconnected with context-shaped logics and systems of politics, labor, markets and education. In parallel, in recent years, the interconnectedness of gender inequality and the exploitation of natural resources has become evident, as both are dependent on economic interests. In order to challenge these complex connections, local, as well as international levels need to be addressed. To a certain degree, family work might be transformed on a national level and the accessibility of professions might improve for all genders due to local affirmative action and the promotion of equal opportunities in the field of education. However, other problems, such as ongoing climate change due to exploitation and powerful interests of international markets, and the dominant perception of care work as being unproductive—as in neoclassical economic understanding—can only be solved in transnational coalitions and collaboration.

These are the themes taken on by the third section of this volume: In the opening interview, Kristina Lanz discusses with Sarah Razavi some of the global challenges related to women's access to paid work. Razavi is Director of the Social Protection Department at the International Labor Organisation (ILO) and former Chief of Data and Research at UN Women. The interview makes clear that data collection is important and highly political: unpaid care and domestic work is

difficult to monitor internationally. Razavi points towards a “lack of gender data”, especially data that allow for trend analysis, a diagnosis that pledges national and international research policies to provide sufficient resources for this field of research. Missing data make it difficult to establish a ground for policies on gender equality. However, as Razavi outlines, there are strong indicators that discrimination based on sex and gender remains an important factor in these fields. Extreme poverty, financial dependency, unpaid care work and experiences of physical and sexual violence are burdens that women* in particular have to carry. However, there are also positive trends to mention, e.g., greater visibility of women* in the field of politics and better education of women* that levels the ground for more women* in powerful positions. As the perspective of human rights as common ground for international action towards gender equality is highly important to Razavi, she also considers strong social protection systems crucial for global progress. Another important aspect on the way to transformation is her critique of heteronormativity, which is still very influential with regard to family rights, tax systems and the mechanisms of gendered labor division. Razavi also points to the need for the transformation of dominant masculinities and femininities, which brings along a challenge for the current systems of statistics and monitoring of data, as well as rhetoric and policies; opening up towards nonbinary organized gender identities puts many feminists “outside of their comfort zones”. The perspective of human rights and the critique of underlying mechanisms of in- and exclusion is a relevant baseline for further feminist politics, as well as for the development of policies in general.

Charlotta Niemistö, Jeff Hearn and Carolyn Kehn discuss care and work in the light of SDG 5. They use a social sustainability approach in order to focus on work–family–life relations. Unpaid care and domestic work are unequally distributed all over the globe and women are especially strongly represented in informal work. A social sustainability approach allows for discussions of the entanglement of gender, work and sustainability, even if the social dimension of sustainability has been described as the least clear of the three aspects of sustainable development. The context of state and corporate policies is an important element in the social relations of care and work, and thus of social sustainability. In the Anglophone world, the development of family-friendly policies has been largely corporate-led, whereas in the Nordic countries, development has been state-led. Comparing empirical data from different parts of the world, the authors take Sweden as an example that demonstrates the highest parity between the genders with regard to time spent in paid and unpaid work. As care is gendered, the distribution of care affects women’s situations, in households and in labor markets, at any given time over

the life course. Currently, one of the major characteristics of knowledge work is the strong blurring of the boundaries between work and “life”, or “nonwork”, or “family-time”. Relatively little is known about the effects of the blurring boundaries on individuals, organizations and societies. Even if some steps are taken towards gender equality, many unequal structures remain. Furthermore, without necessary policy development, care work will remain the domain of the marginalized.

Diana Baumgarten and Andrea Maihofer focus on the horizontal gender-specific segregation of the labor market in the context of Switzerland. In their research on young adults aged around 30 who find themselves before the phase of family formation, they show strong and complex interconnectedness between subjects, institutions and gender-normative factors. Baumgarten and Maihofer illustrate the impact of expectations on future family life, work–life balance and models of work and family on the further career of the interviewees. Regarding fatherhood, there is a shift towards fathering based on being emotionally involved and being present as a father for the child from birth onwards. Many young men* reflect critically upon their workload and look for possibilities to reduce their work time—but, at the same time, they still cling to the idea of being the main breadwinner. Young women* continue to consider motherhood a central part of their envisioned future. They anticipate a great shift in their emotional priorities towards the family as soon as the first child is born. In parallel, work is an important part of women*’s identity, but it is instead framed as an important addition to everyday family life. The future the female interviewees anticipate is that of motherhood and part-time employment. They see themselves as the main responsible caregiver for the future child, knowing that they will likely face professional disadvantages. Young adults, the authors conclude, still perceive partnership as a complimentary construct between female and male qualities, which are strongly linked to gender norms and orders. Dualistic stereotypes are still very powerful, even if, at the same time, they are contested and transformed by individual solutions managing the work–life balance. In the Swiss context, the notion of individualized responsibility impacts heavily on employees. This prevents many young mothers and fathers from building alliances or coalitions to step in for their needs and to challenge institutional structures and conditions at their workplaces.

In the last chapter of this volume, Sybille Bauriedl points out the interconnectedness of gender inequality and mechanisms of exploitation of natural resources—a field of research with a sizeable lack of data and detailed analysis. The answer to the question “who is affected most by the effects of climate change?”, indicates a high relevance of gender stereotypes, gender-conforming behavior and the

unjust distribution of resources in relation to the gender order. The relevance of gender-specific vulnerability, which is not limited to developing countries alone, becomes ever more obvious. Those with the least power and the fewest resources are the worst impacted, and factors such as gender, sexuality, race, class, age, dis/ability and legal status influence the possibilities to deal with current challenges. Unequal mortality rate might be the most obvious factor here but, of course, many more subtle effects can be observed, as Bauriedl points out. In addition, migration due to climate change needs to be considered. Mobility restrictions and limited access to the public sphere regulated by norms of masculinity and femininity are of high relevance to this field of research. Clinging to national interests prevents further progress on the way to overcoming gender inequalities in this context. In summation, the author steps in, not only for a strong intersectional approach but, also, for transnational cooperation and the involvement of grassroots perspectives and actors.

5. Closing Remarks

The assemblage of approaches and fields of research on the topic in this volume analyzing possible transitions to gender equality shed light on a variety of problems that still need to be worked on in order to progress. To conclude, we sum up some communalities and key findings of this volume:

The necessity of contextualizing the various perspectives and different research topics is a major challenge for knowledge production on gender equality. It can build on strong queer-feminist traditions of situated knowledge that stand for self-reflective and context-sensitive academic and public work, questioning one's own interests and opposing the assumption of universal and value-free objectivities. In order to approach the claim to "eliminate all forms of discrimination towards women and girls" adequately, there is a need for a situated analysis of the interconnectedness of power regimes, structural or institutional settings, individual perspectives, subjectivities, and gendered norms. In order to develop suitable concepts and approaches to gender (in-)equalities, the entanglement of these aspects needs to be taken into consideration. Taking different contexts and conditions into account is challenging, as the dimension of the tasks tends to provoke a search for pragmatic solutions. To avoid simplifications of methodological, theoretical and practical answers, a combination of empirical analysis and experience-based knowledge of communities might offer—among others—a suitable ground from which to start. In summation, many of the contributions highlight transnational coalitions and policies that are needed in order to address complex context-specific questions.

As editors, we agree with many of the authors that more research funding and more exchange of knowledge are needed to eliminate the currently weak data basis. Only in-depth research allows for adequate engagement with intersectionality, the unequal distribution of goods and resources, and access to power and knowledge. Furthermore, we highlight some of the core challenges named by the contributors: The reinforcing impact of specific gender norms on regimes of gender inequality is apparent. The connection between hegemonic masculinity and its attributes of exploitation of resources of the self, others and nature needs to be analyzed and reflected on. Critical research on men and masculinity is needed to understand and transform the hegemonic gender order, with its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, to pave the way for alternative modes of becoming.

The critique of underlying principles of binarity, dichotomy and dualism that allows for the powerful system of self-affirmation and othering needs to be developed further. Several authors point to the need for further commitment to transnational perspectives that also draw on postcolonial and decolonial knowledge production. Occidental mechanisms of othering are constituted by gender norms as well as being driven by and resulting in racism, classism and ableism. Here too, precise intersectional analysis is needed, not only to understand but also to transform the given situation of gender inequality, and to avoid the simplification of complex power regimes.

Self-criticism of hegemonic positions, but also critiques originating in marginalized spaces, need to interact and be combined. The manifold ways in which coalitions can work towards politics of difference that allow for recognition and for effective solidarities are of game-changing importance. Academic work and reflection need to find ways to deal with ambivalences and ambiguities, with differences and differentiation in a way that allows for diversity and inclusion. The elimination of all forms of discrimination of those who are excluded and, therefore, face the violent consequences of othering will only succeed in such a manner. To make a difference, the current power regimes and their inherent cultures of self-affirmation and homosocial reproduction need to be transformed in sustainable ways. Activist, cultural and academic work needs to seek alliances aiming for gender—or sexgender—equality, as outlined in the following chapters.

As editors, we are very grateful to all contributors to this volume for their interesting and inspiring work and to the reviewer for valuable comments and suggestions.