

Men and Masculinities: What Have They Got to Do with Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment?

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1. Introduction

When people mention the words, “gender” and “gender equality”, the conversation often soon turns to women and girls. There are both good and bad reasons why this is so. On one hand, women and women's voices have long been, and continue to be, marginalized and subordinated, especially across various public realms; on the other hand, to limit work, policy development and politics on gender and for gender equality and women's empowerment as a task only women need to be concerned with may easily let men off the hook, and even suggest that it is women who have to change rather than men.

The UN Social Development Goal 5 is the SDG that specifically addresses gender equality, ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, and eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. At the same time, gender equality and women's empowerment are central to the fulfilment of all SDGs. This point is still often forgotten, as if gender equality can be siloed off to a separate arena of policy and politics.

SDG 5 aims to: eliminate harmful practices, such as forced marriage; value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection; promote shared responsibility within households and families; ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in public life; ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; grant women equal rights to economic resources, and access to ownership and control over land, property, finance, and natural resources; enhance use of technology to promote women's empowerment; and adopt and strengthen policies and legislation for the promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. So, which of these questions has to do with men and masculinities? The answer is: all of them.

Working for gender equality means changing repressive structures that oppress and hinder women from thriving. Working for such changes is not only the

responsibility for women. How, indeed, can gender equality and stopping discrimination and violence against women be achieved if men and masculinities do not change? Achieving gender equality means changing and making demands on men. The emergence of men as such a target for action stems not only from women's struggles, but also from other movements, such as those for labor reform and occupational safety, gay, queer and transgender (LGBTIQA+) rights, and ethnic, racial, and post/decolonial justice—and, in some cases, from some men's resistance to those progressive movements. Men are key actors in both local and societal gender regimes (Connell 1987; Walby 2009), and specifically the struggles for greater gender equality, and the development of gender equality policy itself. Different local, societal and transnational gender regimes vary in the extent of their engagement of men and masculinities in gender equality and SDG policy processes (Hearn 2011).

Different traditions in gender and SDG policy have definite implications for men's practices, for example, in men's relations to home and work, different constructions of men as breadwinners, prioritization or neglect of anti-violence work. As such, this chapter addresses what might be called the "man problem" in the promotion of gender equality, in the context of the persistence of gender inequality in society and policy development that impedes the achievement of SDG5 and other SDGs. This concerns both how gender regimes can and do change men, and how men can be and are involved in changing gender regimes (Hearn 2011). In particular, I address challenges in terms of organizing with and by men, and strategies for changing men and masculinities, including transnational approaches. Thus, two sets of interrelations can be recognized: between gender regimes that construct men and masculinities, and men as actors and foci of policy within gender regimes; and between local, national and transnational gender regimes.

2. Changing Men and Masculinities

In the long story of addressing men, masculinities and gender equality, and building on much long-term preparatory action, the 1995 Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women was a crucial step. It read:

The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue. . . . The Platform for Action emphasises that women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world. (United Nations 1995, sec. 3, 41)

Since 1995, these issues have been increasingly taken up in the UN (United Nations) and other transgovernmental political and policy discussions. In 2003, the UN's Division for the Advancement of Women organized a worldwide online discussion forum and expert group meeting in Brasilia, on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality as part of its preparation for the 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, with the following comments:

Over the last decade, there has been a growing interest in the role of men in promoting gender equality, in particular as the achievement of gender equality is now clearly seen as a societal responsibility that concerns and should fully engage men as well as women. (Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations 2003, sec. II)

Engaging men in gender equality activities can be understood and located within these developing historical contexts. Targeting men through gender equality and other politics, policies and actions means working with agendas at different levels and with different scopes and ranges, and it also needs both immediate urgent action and a long-term process of change, as discussed below. However, which men should be targeted? It may be tempting to focus on those who are explicitly sexist or dominant, but it should involve all men. Different men have variable relations to gender (in)equality, politics and policy change, and are involved and implicated in a wide variety of ways, as: family members, friends, community members and leaders, workers, service users, professionals, practitioners, political and social activists, (non-)citizens, policy-makers, members of organizations, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), the state, business leaders and managers, and so on. Gender equality work has to become normal and normalized for boys as well as men: in kindergartens, schools, workplaces, governments, business, sport, religion, in families, households, friendship, intimacy, and sexual relations.

Men are not just individuals, but operate collectively, as in public politics, social movements, organizations, management, trade unions, the state, capitalism, religion, science and technology, and so on. Indeed, many mainstream (or malestream) organizations, for example, in government and business, are places of men's organizing, often, in effect, 'men's organizations', with a variety of unnoticed and unnamed 'men's groups' of different sizes and powers. It is towards such organizations that women's individual and collective demands for greater gender equality are often necessarily directed, and it is also in those settings that men are likely to respond, often predominantly negatively, and without explicitly naming or thinking of those responses as 'men's responses' (Hearn 2015b, p. 145). Recognizing "men" as a policy area, and indeed, developing specifically and explicitly men-related

politics and policy, still seem to be relatively rare phenomena. States, governments, NGOs, businesses, community structures and policy institutions are part of both the “man problem” and the solution. The “man problem” remains obscure, partly because so much policy is about and for men, and yet is not recognized as such, and partly because explicit policy on men and masculinities is at uneven stages of formulation—sometimes as part of gender equality or social justice projects, but sometimes as a means of furthering men’s interests (Hearn 2015b, p. 148). In recent years, many countries have undertaken some form of initiative focused on supporting men’s greater participation in promoting gender equality. There have been various initiatives at the international and supranational levels focused on men, boys and gender equality since the mid-1990s, for example, the EU (European Union) study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality (Scambor et al. 2013) drew on expertise from all EU member states and beyond. Such initiatives must continue, and must not be hijacked by men trying to argue that they are really the ones suffering most from discrimination (see Hearn 2015a, p. 24). Yet, it is amazing how the mass of national, international and supranational policies and reports on gender equality and resources devoted to gender equality hardly mention men or the need to change men and masculinities, and make no demands at all for them to change. They are still all too often treated as the unspoken norm, presented as gender-neutral “policy-makers”, “stakeholders”, and so on.

3. Costs, Difference, and Privilege

Organizing and policy development on and by men also need to be contextualized in the larger context of patriarchal social relations—transnational, national, local. At each level, there is a continuum from ‘gender-non-conscious’ to ‘gender-conscious’ forms of organizing (Egeberg Holmgren and Hearn 2009). For example, much transnational organizing, by, say, transnational business corporations or within international inter-governmental relations, is done mainly by men, arguably for men and men’s interests, and in a ‘non-gender-conscious’ way. In contrast, there are also various forms of men’s transnational gender-conscious organizing for or against women’s reproductive rights, or for or against (pro)feminism.

Men’s national and local organizing ‘gender consciousness’ varies from reproducing and advancing men’s privilege, for example, men’s rights organizing, fathers’ rights, and misogynist, anti-women, anti-feminist or ‘postfeminist’ politics, to opposing such privilege, for example, profeminist organizing, men assisting in the promotion of women’s greater equality and working against violence, to emphasizing

men's differences from each other, for example, organizing around gay rights, racialization of men, men with caring responsibilities, men in non-traditional work. These local and national forms of organizing are increasingly subject to transnational influences, as we discuss later in this chapter.

Within these local, national and transnational contexts, there are many gender-conscious reasons why men can become positively interested in, or indeed can resist, gender equality. Positive orientations include: to highlight and redress the costs of 'being a man'; to tackle differences amongst men; and to end male privileges (Messner 1997). These generally, though not always, positive motives are not necessarily in conflict, but they may become so if taken to their logical conclusion, for example, when only costs are emphasized and privilege is forgotten.

First, the costs: These might include costs to some men's health and life expectancy (see Lohan (2007) for a critical review), risks from occupational hazards and lower educational achievements. These are especially important when coupled with disadvantages of class, ethnicity and other inequalities. Being a patriarchal man is probably not good for your health, though the effects may be offset by more resources. There are also effects of violence and sexual violence towards men and boys by other men and older boys. There is a strong case for men to become more involved in gender equality on these grounds.

Next, differences: The motivation for engagement here comes from differences amongst men: age, ethnicity, gender identity, migration status, sexuality, and much more, as well as composite interests of, for example, black gay men or white older men. Policies for men are developed in various areas, including fatherhood and health and anti-violence programs, but these may not recognize differences between them. The very question of 'what is a man?' is becoming problematic, not least because of increasing numbers of older and old men living lives that are a very long way from the stereotypes of their masculine youth (Jackson 2015).

From the perspective of ending male privileges, men's involvement in gender equality means acting against oppression, injustice and violations of gender systems, and seeking a better life for all. It suggests a need for profeminist, (pro)gay strategies across all policy areas. Rather than seeking to change only those men defined as 'problems' or excluded, the focus may shift to men in positions with the power to exclude and control. For example, anti-violence interventions could be directed to ending men's silence on these issues. Even among men who oppose privileging one gender over another, there are totally different notions of the aims of gender equality in the long term, never mind among those who are anti-gender equality. To paraphrase Judith Lorber (2005): Is the key feminist task to introduce reforms and

abolish gender imbalances between women and men, as in reform feminism, or to resist and abolish patriarchy as a general gender system, as in resistance feminism, or to be rebellious and abolish gender categories, as in rebellious feminism? Do we aim to celebrate, transform or abolish 'men' as a category of gender power? These different feminisms suggest different reasons for involving men in gender equality, different possible motivations for men to become involved in gender equality, and indeed very different gendered futures for all.

These three motivations—around costs, differences, and privileges—may come from different directions, but they are not mutually exclusive. There is much to be done to bring them together. A good example here concerns what needs to be done in moving from war to peace. This entails recognizing the vulnerabilities of, and damage to, some men in and after war, as well as the real differences between different groups of men in war and peace. This is obviously not to suggest that only men are involved in war, less still to essentialize men (Hearn 2012), but it does highlight men's historical responsibility for, and propensity to instigate, many wars, as well as carrying out most of the killing and threats of war.

More broadly still, according to research by Øystein Gullvåg Holter (Holter 2014), greater gender equality is likely to bring greater happiness, less depression, and better well-being for both women and men, through better health and reduced threat of violence from other men. This refutes the argument of anti-feminist men who suggest that greater gender equality harms men. Other benefits for men from greater equality may include, at the more immediate level, the positive impacts of increased love and care for and from other men, and, at the more macro level, less likelihood of war, armed conflict, nuclear annihilation, and profound ecological damage and disaster (Hearn 1987; Enarson and Pease 2016).

4. Strategies for Changing Men and Masculinities

The emergence of men as 'gendered subjects' has partly been articulated in relation to women's and feminist struggles, but is also partly in relation to other forms of affiliation and organizing, such as racial justice, labor struggles, and gay and other non-normative gender and sexuality civil and legal rights. Spaces and opportunities for profeminist, (pro)queer gender work with men exist within civil society and social movements. The mobilization and politicizing of the social status and social power of 'men' and 'masculinity', so as to advance a broader justice agenda, are necessary. Strategies for changing men and masculinities take several forms: working on obviously gendered areas; acting against the persistence problem of violence; intersectional strategies; gendering the non-gendered; and transnational approaches.

4.1. Working on Clearly Gendered Areas

There are many obviously gendered areas for changing men and masculinities, whether we are talking at the interpersonal, local community or broader levels of analysis and practice. This involves profeminist, (pro)queer strategies in what are obviously gendered policy areas, such as work and the gender division of labor, health and welfare, family relations, sexuality, education, and interpersonal violence. In all these arenas, grassroots organizing, activism and educational work with men and boys, in collaboration with feminist organizing, is necessary. Changing to, or at least towards, egalitarian practices at home, at work and in the community and civil society are key here. Moreover, although national and regional laws, policies and explicitly gendered interventions with men may seem relatively rare, there are a number of areas where explicit state policy and action on men is often developed, if unevenly, including:

- men as workers/breadwinners/heads of family and household;
- fatherhood and paternity, including legal rights and obligations of fathers;
- fatherhood, husband and other family statuses in immigration and nationality;
- gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, non-binary and agender (LGBTIQA+) issues;
- crimes of sexual violence;
- programs on men who have been violent to women and children;
- military conscription;
- men's health education programs;
- reproductive technology and reproductive rights.

In addition, there are multiple policies and practices in schooling, education and elsewhere that are specifically designed on and for boys. These may either reinforce or subvert dominant gender power relations.

4.2. Acting against the Persistent Problem of Violence

An absolutely central aspect of changing men and masculinities which deserves special mention and attention is the reduction and stopping of violence. Ending violence and the threat of violence is a fundamental motivation for, and a necessary means to, ending gender inequality and achieving the aims of SDG5 and other SDGs. Violence here includes violence against women, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, sexual violence, violence by men against men, human trafficking, violence to non-humans, misogyny, hate speech, and many further forms of violence and abuse.

These all need direct and effective action and intervention by men, both to prevent violence and also to counter the predominant perpetration by men (Edström et al. 2015; Jewkes et al. 2015; Flood 2019). Having said that, rather than seeking to change only those men defined as ‘problems’ or excluded, the focus can be shifted to powerful men in positions with power to exclude and control. Similarly, anti-violence intervention can be directed to non-violent men, not just men using violence; the silence of non-violent men partly maintains men’s violence (Pease 2008). Such strategies also appeal to the reduction of threat of violence between men.

In their book *Societies at Peace*, Howell and Willis (1990) posed the question: what can we learn from peaceful societies? In societies where men were permitted to acknowledge fear, levels of violence were lower; in those where masculine bravado, repression and the denial of fear were defined as masculinity, violence was likely to be higher. In societies where bravado was prescribed for men, definitions of masculinity and femininity were often highly differentiated. The less the gender differentiation between women and men, the more men were nurturing and caring, and the more women were seen as capable, rational and competent in the public sphere, and men’s violence was less likely. The more recent IMAGES (International Men and Gender Equality Survey) project has found that predictors of men’s more gender-equal attitudes include: own education; mother’s education; men’s reports of father’s domestic participation; family background of mother, alone or joint decision-making parents; not witnessing violence to mother. Self-reported attitudes in turn predict men’s gender-equal practices, more domestic participation and childcare, more satisfaction with primary relationship, less interpersonal violence (Levtov et al. (2014); also see El Feki et al. (2017)). While gender policy against gender-based, ‘domestic’ and interpersonal violence is well recognized, as in anti-violence programs, this is less the case for civil disorder, terrorism, racist violence, riots, state violence, militarism and war.

... men in different parts of the world are spending vast amounts of money trying to kill each other, whilst a large proportion of the world’s population (mostly, but not exclusively women and children) are allowed to starve to death. ... Male violence, sexual or otherwise, is not the unusual behaviour of a few “odd” individuals, neither is it an expression of overwhelming biological urges: it is a product of the social world in which we live. (Cowburn et al. 1992, pp. 281–82)

Thus, to address men’s violence necessarily means addressing collective violence and militarism; to do otherwise is to place militarism outside of violence, and, even if unwittingly, condone violence. Military activity is one of the most clearly gendered

and clearest examples of the hegemony of men, with or without conscription. Militaries are part of the state and organized in association with political, economic, administrative power in the highest reaches of the state, including policing, security services, foreign policy, and economic interests. They are concerned with both national offence and defense. They are specifically geared to the ability, actual and potential, to inflict extensive and severe violence and harm. At the structural level, men's domination of labor force participation links with the greater likelihood of societal internal violent conflict (Caprioli 2005), whilst women's well-being tends to link with societal peacefulness (Hudson et al. 2012). Indeed, the most gender unequal and homophobic countries are also those with the highest level of societal violence and most at risk of armed conflict in their own territory (Ekvall 2019), and there seem to be close associations between misogyny and terrorism (Díaz and Valji 2019). On the other hand, and interestingly, societies with the most positive attitudes to (male) homosexuality, including from men, are also those most likely to be arms exporters (Ekvall 2019), which indeed are likely to be used in armed conflicts in more explicitly homophobic countries. Changing this contradictory set of relations requires joined-up policy and politics that bring together sexuality politics, feminist and profeminist politics, peace politics, and last, but by no means least, politics around trade, industry and innovation. What is needed more generally is the promotion of positive peace (Galtung 1969, 1990; Farmer 2001; Murray 2014), that is, not just the absence of war, armed conflict, direct and interpersonal violence, but the absence of structural violence and injustice, and transformations to more healthy, non-violent masculinities and gender relations (Ratele 2012; Hearn et al. 2021). Arms exporting to other parts of the world is clearly not countering structural violence and not promoting positive peace.

4.3. Intersectional Strategies

Another important way forward is through intersectional strategies. Men are not only men; boys are not only boys; boys and men are constructed intersectionally. So, how are men's relations to gender equality and inequality gender discrimination to be understood? There may be cases of discrimination against men by women, but these are more likely driven by power relations other than gender, such as class or racialization; much more common are men's negative treatment of other men for being gay, black, old, young, unmanly, and so on. The disadvantages experienced by some men and boys largely results from domination by other men. Poorer outcomes for some men and boys are not the same as gender discrimination. Most inequalities that affect men and boys do not result from domination by women.

Lower educational performance by some boys, for example, results largely from poverty, class, migration status and attitudes towards masculinity that are not conducive (or are even antagonistic) to education (Hearn 2015a, p. 26).

Unequal social divisions—by class, race, religion, and many further divisions—all have an impact on men. Gender equality policies have to be pro-equality and anti-hierarchy more generally. Though, in one sense, some forms of ‘gender equality’ can co-exist alongside power hierarchies and inequalities; reducing wider inequalities generally promotes more thorough-going gender equality. This means opposing the intensification of neoliberal capitalism, with its increasing inequalities and hierarchies, opposing heteronormativity and structural domination, and it extends to inequalities between societies. Addressing inequalities generally can stimulate men’s positive engagement with gender equality, with a focus on social exclusion and inclusion. Many white people and white men support anti-racism, but men rarely identify themselves as supporting anti-sexism. Anti-racism and anti-classism necessarily involve anti-sexism (Hearn 2015a, pp. 26–27).

In pursuing these agendas, a powerful way to proceed is through intersectional strategies that link men, gender relations and other forms of social inequality, such as ethnicity. While intersectional approaches remain relatively undeveloped in most law and policy, there are, for example, high correlations between poor health and the social disadvantages of class, ethnicity and other inequalities. Addressing these can stimulate men’s positive engagement with gender equality and (pro)feminism, with critical attention to men’s practices in both social exclusion and inclusion. Another arena for positive intersectional change is the linkage between men as parents and careers, and men as violent partners or violent parents. In many countries, fatherhood and men’s violence are generally treated as separate policy issues. There may be the enthusiastic promotion of fatherhood and then, quite separately, policy to tackle men’s violence against women and children. This gap needs to be bridged (Eriksson 2002). In developing effective political and policy responses, splits between ‘problems which some men experience’ and ‘problems which some men create’ need to be overcome. Joining what might seem to be disparate policy areas is essential, if rather rarely adopted (Hearn et al. 2006).

4.4. Gendering the ‘Non-Gendered’

Mainstream organizing, politics and policymaking are typically presented as gender-neutral, however much they remain forms of men’s organizing. Both the “man problem” and differences amongst men may easily remain obscured, partly

because so much policy is about men, but not recognized as such, partly because explicit policies are at uneven stages of development.

The notion of policy can easily appear at first as gender-neutral. Yet not only is much policy and policy development constructed by and through assumptions about gender, but also much policy and policy development can be understood as policy on and about gender and gender relations. Gender constructs policy, as policy constructs gender. (Hearn and McKie 2008, p. 75)

Gendered policy on men and masculinities are mostly framed within a form of nation-based welfarism. However, strategies for change are needed beyond the policy areas mentioned thus far—at all levels and in all forums. This means thinking of gender agendas, not only in terms of those seen as ‘gender issues’, or so-called ‘men’s issues’, but rather beyond the more obvious and explicit gender policies, as with, say, local economies, microfinance, capitalist production, finance, energy, transport, and environment, which also tend to be transnational in form. There is the gradually increasing recognition of the central place of men and masculinities, in what are usually seen as ‘non-gendered’ policy arenas: foreign, trade, security, militarism and war, and sustainable and just development and aid (Cornwall et al. 2011). This approach, gendering the ‘non-gendered’, ties in with strategies of change with men leaders and men who are not defined as the problem, as well as changing the institutional and societal structures that often remain dominated by men. This is not only a matter for individual and collective actors but applies also to social structures and structural arenas of international (capitalist) economy, international politics and relations, and sustainability in its various forms more generally.

Recent economic crises have highlighted significant gender biases in policy development and implementation. Finance ministers, financial boards, economists and banks, both nationally and transnationally, have generally maintained a ‘strategic silence’ on gender, even though their policies have an uneven impact on men and women. Deflationary policies, policies based on assumptions of male breadwinners and public spending cuts (rather than higher taxes) tend to affect men less than women. Economic crisis may initially have a stronger impact on men’s employment, but later more on women (Young et al. 2011). Policies designed to boost economic growth without considering the overall impact tend to benefit men more than women overall, not least in terms of resources allocated by governments, investments and priorities. The promotion of economic growth without consideration of its effects tends to benefit men more than women, not least in resources allocated by government expenditures and investments, and R&D. Men tend to work in the

capitalist sector more than women, and to identify more closely with narrowly economic ideologies and less with welfare values.

4.5. Transnational Approaches

Political and policy debates on men and masculinities have largely been framed in terms of a given society; yet, global transformations and regional restructurings are changing the form of the hegemony of men. All of the issues already noted need to be placed into transnational contexts, raising the need for transnational strategies. Gender policies that are directed explicitly and specifically at men have been developed most fully when they address issues, such as men's health and 'domestic' violence, that may appear as immediate and close to the individual, mostly within nation-state welfarism, rather than in relation to transnational capitalism, global finance, or ecological frameworks. However, increasingly, local and national struggles in politics and policy, whether for or against gender equality, are transnational in character, as strategies tried, lessons learnt, and information gained in one location are transferred for use elsewhere. This is no more obvious than in the online activity of men's anti-feminist and far right movements.

Many transnational agencies now address, at least rhetorically: the place of men in moving towards gender equality; the links between masculinity, nationalism and racism; and risks of failing to act. Men's violence to women and children is receiving greater attention from the EU, the Council of Europe, OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) (Seftaoui 2011), UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and other transnational organizations. Taking transnational action to foster change is essential, not least to counter transnational neoliberal hegemonies and transnational patriarchies (Hearn 2015b). The insights of postcolonial and decolonial theory and practice are vital here (Shefer et al. 2007; Ratele 2014, 2016; Izugbara 2015). It is likely that the process of considering the policy implications for changing men's practices transnationally will increase. A further key transnational issue concerns the impact of new bio- and socio-technologies, information and communication technologies (ICTs) and artificial intelligence (AI) in both reinforcing and contesting hegemony. They create potential for extensions and reinforcements of the hegemony of men, yet make some men and women dispensable. ICTs have been hugely 'successful' in promoting online violence and abuse, pornography, trafficking and sexual exploitation of women, as in supplying encyclopedic information on prostitution and the global sex trade (Hearn and Parkin 2001; Dines 2010).

On the other hand, there are also many transnational campaigns, projects and actions for changing men and masculinities, many in the Global South (Jones 2006; van der Gaag 2014), with a transnational, internationalist orientation, such as: Promundo, Sonke Gender Justice, One Man Can (South Africa, Sudan), MenCare, Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (India), and CariMAN (Caribbean Men's Action Network). The umbrella organization, MenEngage, has over 700, mainly group, members, with national networks in Africa (22), the Caribbean (9), Europe (23), Latin America (11), North America (2), and South Asia (5). The 2014 2nd MenEngage Alliance Global Symposium in New Delhi attracted over 1200 people and 400 abstracts from 94 and 63 countries, respectively, and produced the 'Delhi Declaration and Call to Action', setting out aspirations for global change of men, boys and masculinities. The 3rd Symposium, Ubuntu, was held as a hybrid global event, beginning in Rwanda in November 2020 and continuing until July 2021.

5. Concluding Comments

In this chapter, a range of challenges in organizing with and by men in relation to SDG5, and how men can contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, have been addressed. Most fundamentally, there is the need to gender men and masculinities explicitly and critically, and develop gender strategies for changing men and masculinities that contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. One way to approach these challenges is by recognizing the costs, differences and privileges that accrue to men with patriarchal relations, and how the tensions and overlaps between these three positionings can be related to different feminist agendas: problematizing, and even abolishing, gender inequality, patriarchal systems, and current gender categories, respectively.

More specifically, men and masculinities can be transformed through: working critically on what are clearly gendered issues, including the persistent problem of violence, in its fullest meaning; adopting intersectional strategies; working on the gendering of what are typically seen as 'non-gendered' areas of policy and politics; and developing positive transnational approaches and linkages, that are both positively proactive and reactive against anti-feminist policy and politics.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that different men, both individual and collective, can have complex, even contradictory, relations to gender equality and other forms of equality. Engaging men in gender equality means dealing with many contradictions, between: the power and privileges of some men, and marginalization of others; explicit naming of men as men, and questioning and deconstructing the *very*

category of 'men'; seeing gender in terms of binaries, such as masculinity/femininity, and as a continuum; and fostering changes in attitudes among men and boys to become more gender equal, while supporting those who are suffering.

The relationship between men and gender equality is neither a zero-sum game, nor a win-win situation. In other words, greater gender equality does not mean that if women gain, men necessarily or automatically lose; and neither does it mean that women's gains are necessarily or automatically also beneficial for men, at least not so in the short term. In the processes of women's empowerment, men, different intersectionally positioned men, as individuals, groups and collectivities, are likely to face reduced formal power and domination over resources, but, at the same time, may unevenly gain, not least in reductions of violence, war, armed conflict and ecological damage, and destruction.

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