GENDER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY: A HUGE CHALLENGE

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Contents

Summary

The present chapter analyzes the component of the vulnerable within science and focuses specifically on integral gender studies. Human, Gender and Environmental Security (HUGE) suggested a widened concept of security, which combines an ample gender concept, including children, elders, indigenous and other minorities with a human-centered focus on environmental security challenges, peace-building and gender equity. 'Gender security' is considering livelihood, food security, health care, public security, education and cultural diversity.

The HUGE concept analyzes the patriarchal, violent and exclusive structures within the family and society, questioning the existing process of social representation-building and traditional role assignation between genders.

HUGE focuses on overcoming the consolidated gender discrimination, deepening the narrow male-female relationship of some feminist approaches. It also reorients 'human security' to defeat discrimination through specific governmental policies, institution building and legal reinforcements by stimulating political and social participation of women, young and elders.

It includes 'environmental security' concerns where a healthy environment and resilience-building of highly vulnerable groups (especially women) can reduce risk impacts. For hazard prone areas, HUGE analyzes the potential of technical, financial and human support for reducing this vulnerability, enabling women and other exposed groups to reinforce their own resilience through bottom-up organization combined with top-down policies and tools able to guarantee effective early warning, evacuation, disaster help and reconstruction. Immediate and efficient support for isolated regions affected by social and natural disasters could prevent long-term effects such as famine and violent conflicts.

A diverse world implies political and cultural diversity, able to generate nonviolent conflict resolution processes reinforcing peace-building in conflict-prone regions. At the international level HUGE improves free and equal access to world markets without trade distortions and international agreements able to diminish regional and social inequities. Horizontal interchange of experiences strengthens the empowerment of the vulnerable. It creates world solidarity to support the poorest countries and social groups with financial aid and debt reductions. In synthesis, HUGE integrates social, environmental, human, and cultural and identity concerns, offering solidarity, resilience, peace-building and equity in an increasingly insecure and fragile world, elements retaken by the World Social Fora and the social movements.

1. Presentation of the Chapter

Why do more that 24,000 persons, mostly children, die each day of hunger and why only in Sub-Saharan Africa the number of undernourished children increased from 29 to 37 millions during the 1990s? Why do three billion persons lack access to basic sanitation systems? Why did the world situation create more than 2 billion extremely poor people? Why do 55 millions of Latin Americans not have enough to eat, living in a region of richest biodiversity in the world that provided the world three of the five basic foods (corn, beans and potatoes)? How did this situation develop and is getting worse in different countries of the south? Where are the processes of development, modernization, efficiency and justice? The present situation of gaps existing in a world of plenty together with absolute poverty requires a deeper and wider approach to human security and an epistemological shift from a techno-centric, isolated or individualist perspective to a transdisciplinary, holistic approach.

Gender is socially constructed, and the axis of classification is linked to genital difference (sexual dimorphism: female-male), facts that permit a biological explanation of social representations of gender, rooting still more the mechanisms of distinction and with them the process of discrimination. Macela Lagarde (1990) correctly criticized this process of gender construction as bio-social-cultural) based on the sexual differences. Each culture recognized sexual differences and specified the characteristics that classify

the sexual beings in diverse genders (Skjelsbaek 1997; Rosales 2002; Szasz/Lerner 1998; Foucault 1996). The number of sexual characteristics varies inter- and intra-culturally, although the generic classification is manifested in all known societies and for this reason is considered a universal classification. Gender security revises historically the evolution of the concept starting with epistemological feminism, continuing with feminist empiricism, looking at the different approaches of post-modernism and finally revising the standpoint of feminism.

Developing a gender security approach, the author explores three phases of gender security studies. The first phases is linked to the analysis of Identity and Social Representation, where the historical process of gender security can be perceived to be in difficulties. The second phase enters into the post-modern feminisms and relates it with the gift economy of Genevieve Vaughan, as one of the peaceful processes to overcome the present discrimination and gender violence. The third phase revises the parallels established by ecofeminism between 'violence to gender' and to 'nature and environmental degradation'. The fourth phase opens the view to the new social movements, integrating peace movements, antiwar efforts, environmentalists, feminism and the March of the Women together with indigenous and other social movements against the exclusive globalization, the promotion of a new economy of solidarity and a democratic, *glocal* and participative model of governance, able to guarantee also lasting peace and livelihood with good quality of life into the future.

Having developed the historical and analytical background of the gender security concept, the chapter revises the new threats related to global change and climate change which can no longer be mitigated through military forces and hard security concerns, by including the components of human security, gender security and environmental security, offering finally the HUGE conception as an extended and integrated scientific concept of integral security. Finally in a conclusive approach, the chapter shows the advantages of the new conceptual approach, bringing a trans-disciplinary and holistic tool of analysis, not only able to understand the coming risks and vulnerability, but also empowering the vulnerable with resilience building to deal better with the new threats and risks, which are some times impossible to be perceived at the present stage of analytical capacity. Social vulnerability is a concept related to unsatisfied human needs and limited access to resources. The required minimal access to basic resources should be organized in such a way that meeting the need of the poorest in the community is guaranteed. This procedure would avoid under-consumption and over-consumption and could secure the basic satisfaction of needs to anybody, independent of gender or social class. At the same time it would reduce and limit conflicts on scarce or strategic resources. Finally, it would assure security even for the weakest human beings.

2. Gender Security

There is no doubt and the wing organizations of United Nations in charge of data collection confirmed that violence against women and girls is in most frequent occurrence. Each third woman in the world is beaten and each fifth one is sexually harassed, often raped. Normally, this violent behavior happens within the household; however in research surveys men responsible to commit these crimes are declared to be coming from other cultural backgrounds, different regions and other social classes. This

kind of offence, normally not denounced by the affected women, can not be managed through the traditional system of military/police security. Furthermore, intra-family violence is often not yet recognized as a legal issue because it is taken as normal from a male standpoint. Most countries in the South still lack any laws against this type of violence and when they exist there is no enforcement, due to male judges or patriarchal practice of law and power exercises.

Violence affects also economy. World Bank (1998) documented empirically that with each loss of 1% in GDP in Mexico due to induced socioeconomic crises, the rate of homicides increased by 1% and robberies with violence by 2%. Something similar occurs with the global environmental change and the new threats of extreme hydro-meteorological events or the growing poverty in countries of the South, linked to soil erosion and urbanization due to abandon of the peasant field. Additionally, FAO estimates that the effects of hunger imply 30 billion US dollars loss per year. It affects between 5 to 10% of GDP of poor countries, but mortgage above all the coming generations and their intellectual and health conditions.

A new approach to security can start from the constructivist approach and the positive understanding of peace as "freedom from fear" and "freedom from threat". Trying to understand the interrelationship between different security approaches, the Copenhagen school systematized the links between several of them together (Waever, 2000; Buzan/Waever/de Wilde, 1998). There is no doubt that security dynamics implies also countermeasures to reduce the negative outcomes: often military/police security affects societal and economic ones pushing individuals and groups into a fear for survival. On the other hand, drought, water pollution and scarcity and disasters destroy food reserves and seeds, erode soil and destroy production means. The result can cause a survival dilemma where the people have to emigrate and find in towns or other countries a possibility to redo their life.

Møller (2003) based on the Copenhagen School, systematized several types of securities. The narrow state vision focused on *national security* and was applied in realist security studies and in the intellectual tradition of Tzun Tzu (around 320 adC), Thukydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes (1658), Clausewitz, Morgenthau (1945), and Waltz (1979), where militarism and militarization describe the control of a state by force using weapons and armies to exercise power, internal repression and external defense of the borders against potential invaders. The second meaning is related to the political culture or ideology, where military values such as patriotism are promoted together with national heroism, strength, capacity of armed response, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), superpower behavior, military structure and armed interventions, all of them basic values of patriarchy. Going beyond the traditional realist approach of Wolfers (1962), the security definition of the Copenhagen school distinguished between different referent objects (state, nation, societal groups, individuals, humankind, and ecosystems). Depending on the security concept, the values at risk are sovereignty (Kaplan 2003), national unity, survival and sustainability. Asking for security from whom or what, the sources of threat were other states, nations, globalization and nature (OECD 1994). This classification offered a specific heuristic contribution that has inspired subsequent additions and modifications. In this way *societal security* was understood as extended or

widening and labeled as "incremental" and "radical"; and *environmental security* was termed as "ultra-radical" (see Table 1).

Including social vulnerability considerations, the security dynamics could be oriented to threats to individual identity and social representation, where not only the physical survival is in danger, but also the cultural one, often reinforced by religious concerns. Linking Gramci's 'ideological apparatus of state' with identity and role theories, in the South the past decades of impoverishment, environmental destruction, migration, depopulation due to disasters, wars and desertification, have pushed survival strategies increasingly into the hands of women (Oswald 1991). Expanding the focus to *gender security*, the author proposes a trans-radical level of expansion. The origins of threats are primarily from the patriarchal system, characterized by totalitarian institutions such as authoritarian governments, churches and elites, and secondly, from the established and developed social relations. They are penetrating the most intimate space of a couple and family, affecting labor relations, political and social contacts, and primarily also the exercise of power where a system of discrimination and stigma dominates, threatening equity and personal or group identities.

Degree of expansion	Denomination (security of what?)	References object (security of whom?	Value at risk (security of what?)	Sources of threat (security from whom and for what?)
No expansion	National Security (political, military)	The State	Sovereignty, territorial integrity	Other states, terrorism, sub-state actors, guerrilla
Incremental	Societal Security	Nations, societal groups	National unity and identity	Nations, migrants, alien cultures, mass media
Radical	Human Security	Individuals, humankind	Survival, quality of life, livelihood	State, globalization, elites, terrorism
Ultra-radical	Environmental Security	Ecosystem, Humankind, Anthropocene	Sustainability	Nature, global change, humankind
Trans-radical	**Gender Security**	**Gender relations, indigenous, minorities, children, elders**	**Equity, equality, identity, solidarity, social representations**	**Patriarchy, totalitarian institutions (governments, religions, elites), dominant culture, intolerance, violence**

Source: Møller, 2003:279; Oswald Spring, 2001, 2004, 2008

Table 1. Human, Gender and Environmental Security (HUGE): A Transradical Approach; Source: Møller, 2003:279; Oswald Spring, 2001, 2004& 2008

As the relationship between men and women shows complex interlinkages (Tong 1989) and is partially related to societal security, the threats are not always perceived as purely confrontational. Family structures, schools, work places and clubs are organized to subsume gender into daily life, avoiding also the possibility that gender gets organized into social groups with common interests. Religions in the East and West are strongly reinforcing the existing gender differences; however, like the division of gender also religious roles and norms are socially constructed. Nobody is born as a man or woman; everybody is born with a body which acquires a generic significance in this world (De Beauvoir 1949; Lama 2002, 1996). From early childhood on, gender is socialized (Lloyd/Duveen, 1992; Piaget 1950) and consolidated during the personal life history and the world got organized during millennia along gender relations.

Sociology understands gender identity as "a social construct regarding culture-bound conventions, roles and behaviors, as well as relationships between and among, women and men and boys and girls" (Krieger 2001: 693-700). It is a constructed reality and explains how a person is socially identified, or how the society perceives him or her as a man or a woman. The gender concept could also refer to the process of how other persons define an individual based on roles and behaviors (hair, clothes, behavior). The formation of gender identity is a complex process that includes processes of gestation since birth, of learning during early infancy and later the socialization and acquiring of social roles. Many researchers determine the fixation of gender identity in the early infancy, even when subsequently differentiated and new roles were obtained (Piaget 1950; Freud 1923, 1927; Doise 1986). It is distinct from the concept of sex, which describes only the biological differences. Since it is socially constructed it can be changed, although habits have been socially consolidated during millennia using gender distinction for social discrimination and oppression as something given by physiology (bio-physiological determination). In the symbolic field it represents cultural ideals and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity (Oakes/Haslam/Turner 1994; Lacan 1985; Foucault 1996) reflected in the institutional environment, in the opportunities of job, the levels of salaries and the work loads.

This process generates roles within society where a systematic process of identification establishes the differences between status, needs, positions and privileges of each gender (Falco 1996). These roles have two explanations. First they articulate the totality of ways through which oneself expresses gender identity and secondly, it defines the roles in relation to the type of activities that a society determines as adequate for a person with specific gender identity. As these processes are socially developed, these behaviors are not fixed and greater equity inside a society through a systematic analysis of gender relations, understanding how a woman and a man deal in specific social contexts can be achieved. The result of this longstanding gender discrimination has produced historical inequality and inequity.

The struggle for gender security was first oriented to raise conscience for equity, and later to improve woman's opportunities (Wollstonecraft). It is the systematic examination of the differences in "conditions, needs, rates of participation, access to

resources and development, management of the patrimony, of the power, of decision and images among women and men relating to their roles assigned in function to their sex" (lacitoyennete.com/magazine/mots/glossaireegaliteHF.php), which helps to overcome them. This structural inequity (Werlhof 1983a/b) is taken into account in some progressive countries through quota systems, which can improve the participation of women.

This positive discrimination is a phase for achieving greater gender equity. It gives priority to woman – as being woman – in a process of selection of candidates for labor positions, when both genders show similar profiles and competences. Female quotas of participation in public, electoral or directive charges are also promoted. It is a concession of patriarchy that alleviates symptoms without changing the structural conditions of root causes and although it is a matter of positive discrimination, but it is still discrimination. Clear political norms and role supported with institutions conscious of the existing differences and the reduction in social capital it implies, it can improve gender balance and in the same process reduce gender violence.

To understand the process it is important to look at the historical evolution of the feminist thinking and the different practices evolving. Studies in different countries have shown that the research on feminism has passed through several phases. From theoretical feminism during the illustration, the desire of female vote and greater equality during the 1960s and 1970s was a response to the evident gaps existing due to gender differences.

Kate Millet (1969), Juliet Mitchel (1972) and before them social movements, peasants, and indigenous struggles, trade unionist and independence struggles in the Third World introduced co-operation between social movements. Above all Elise Boulding (1992, 2000) and Betty Reardon (1994, 1996) reinforced the studies of peace research related to gender and after 1980 they launched a third wave, called also neo-feminism. Adrienne Rich (1986), Maria Mies (1982, 1998), Vandana Shiva (1998), Shiva and Mies (1997), Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen et al. (1994, 1999, 2001) and Úrsula Oswald (1990, 1991, 2000, 2006) linked social movements, environmental destruction and peace requirements to subsistence perspectives and survival strategies, offering a process of diversification and an 'epistemology of opposition' (Ritzer 2002: 391) to the consolidated feminist studies.As a result of these pressures, women have deepened their assigned social roles promoting a science with gender impact and analyses, where epistemological feminism gave a solid base to critical analyses such as feminist empiricism, post-modern feminisms and standpoint feminisms.

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