Gender Relations, Violence and Conflict Transformation

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1.
Introduction

Why is it important to understand the gendered dimensions of war and peace? The reason is simple and profound: even though it is quite possible to make formal peace without including women and looking at gender relations, the *transformation* of violent conflict is impossible without using these gendered lenses. I therefore will argue that there are compelling empirical, theoretical and normative reasons to include gender as a main category of analysis.[1]

First, on an empirical level, societies organise the access to and use of different types of violence in a gendered way. For example, the world's armed forces are still a male domain even though women are entering the military to a certain degree. Heads of state, diplomats, foreign and defence ministers and the world's richest persons are predominantly men. Women enter this picture mostly as exceptions to the rule or as victims of violence. Accepting this allocation of roles as a given and restricting one's research to just one realm would imply disregarding the experiences and actions of 50 percent of the population.

Second, on a more conceptual level, if war and peace involve both men and women in specific ways, we need to broaden our theoretical understanding of the state, peace, war, security and democracy in order to adequately tackle these specific mechanisms of gendered inclusion and exclusion. This involves both the material and the symbolic or discursive levels of power relations, the gendered practices of states and the construction of masculinities and femininities. Unless we take these into account, the root causes of violent conflict and their social and political contexts can neither be understood nor addressed in a transformative way.

Third, seen from a normative perspective, the lack of participation and representation of women in the domestic and international institutions of war and peace – such as parliaments, governments, foreign and defence ministries, armies, peacekeeping missions or UN institutions – constitutes a severe democratic deficit (Harders 2005). Consequently, the potential of gender-democratic politics and polities for achieving sustainable peace and development is left unexplored. In addition, no democratic state can accept high levels of individual or collective violence against some groups in that society, for example domestic violence against women and children, or public violence and other human rights violations against vulnerable minorities.

These empirical, theoretical and normative arguments have been analysed in more detail in a rich body of literature, which can again be divided into empirically, conceptually and normatively orientated studies. The first group focuses on "blind spots", asking the question: where are the women? And where are the men? Why is this so? The authors are interested in "en-gendering" their given fields, whether they be peace missions, the army, NGO work, humanitarian aid interventions or conflict and development (Enloe 1990; Rehn/Sirleaf 2002; Eifler/Seifert 2009). The second group of studies takes issue with the theoretical mainstream of political science, bringing to the fore the implicit gender dimensions in definitions of "national

security", "international politics" and "war". For example, they shed light on the relationship between the gendered concepts of the nation state, the military and citizenship (Yuval-Davis 2003; Ruppert 1998). The third, normative group of studies deals with peace in theory and practice. They often relate to historical or current women's and peace movements and develop visions of a more peaceful and just world. Many consider unjust patriarchal gender relations to be a root cause of violence (Reardon 1985; Holland 2006; Peterson/Runyan 1993).

This chapter discusses the relevance of gender relations for conflict transformation, summarising the state of the art of the academic debate and linking it to some of the challenges of gender-sensitive practice. It is based on the assumption that war and peace mark extremes on a gendered "continuum of violence" (Cockburn 2004), which links private and public, collective and individual, physical and structural or symbolic violence. This approach stresses the interconnectedness of structures such as state institutions, gendered identity constructions and violence on the one hand and individual agency on the other, as I argue in *section 2*. Also in *section 2*, I discuss the main concepts used and specifically address two sets of questions: how are conflict, violence, war and peace linked and gendered; and how can gender and gender relations be understood, how are they being shaped and sustained? *Section 3* explores the relationship between gender and violence, most notably the relation between masculinities, femininities and violence. It asks: how are gender relations and violence linked? How do specific gendered role perceptions and identities influence the way conflicts are handled in a given society? Do gender relations change in conflict and does conflict change due to gender relations? More generally, this approach introduces a method of asking: what do we see when looking through a gendered lens (Enloe 2004)? – which can then be applied to other time- and context-bound examples. *Section 4* offers some suggestions of how to apply this perspective in the practice of conflict transformation, asking how conflicts can be transformed in a gender-sensitive way. The conclusion, finally, discusses several dilemmas of doing gendered conflict transformation work.

2.
Main Concepts

Human beings are dependent on bonding and relationships, which renders them vulnerable and gives them the power to violate others. But this essential human vulnerability only leads to victimisation and violence under certain circumstances. Societies take precautions: they institutionalise, regulate, civilise or unleash collective or personal violence within institutionalised power relations. They define "legitimate" and "illegitimate" violence and create institutions in order to enforce the formal or informal rules that apply to the use or prevention of violence. These processes are culturally and historically diverse. The gendered orders of violence are built through institutions such as the state, the military, the bureaucracy, the educational system and the family (Sauer 2009; Enloe 1990). They are enshrined in religious beliefs, language and symbolic orders. They are dynamic and they are organised along the lines of gender, class, "race" and other "identities".

2.1
Conflict, Violence, War and Peace – A Gendered View

Peace and conflict researchers use many approaches, ranging from international law to (social) psychology. They analyse the causes, developments and characteristics of violent conflicts; ways of preventing violence and ways of overcoming violence's causes and consequences. Peace research focuses furthermore on the preconditions, barriers to and practices of peace (Adolf 2009; Senghaas 1995). Not surprisingly, the breadth of perspectives and disciplines is reflected in a host of different terms used in the field: conflict resolution, conflict settlement, conflict management, conflict prevention, conflict transformation, peace alliances, peacekeeping, peacemaking, peacebuilding – to name but a few.

Yet in dealing with (violent) conflict, two basic perspectives can be distinguished – an operational and a transformative way of seeking conflict resolution. Conflict management focuses on the state and formal actors, using formal instruments (early warning, preventive diplomacy, sanctions, coercive action, etc.). Conflict transformation aims to address the social root causes of collective violence by creating human security, catering to basic human needs and supporting justice and reconciliation (Reimann 2004).

The idea of conflict management as a state-centred operative approach is closely connected to a realist and neo-realist theory of international relations (IR). This theory has been criticised for its implicit androcentrism and focus on the state (Tickner 2001), which it models more or less explicitly along the lines of classical male role models: states (and men) search for autonomy, they use power to reach their aims and the ultimate means of power is the capacity to use violence. As a consequence, classical ways of dealing with conflict tend to rely heavily on military or other sources of hard power [see also Diana Francis in this volume].

Conflict resolution (for some: transformation) as a strategy to address basic needs was developed by John Burton (1990) and avoids some of the pitfalls of conflict management described above. The basic needs approach is people-centred, rather than state-centred. It addresses the root causes of violence rather than managing it via formal diplomatic means. In terms of gender, however, it long used an "add women and stir" approach[2] rather than incorporating gender issues because of a deep understanding that they are closely linked to conflict dynamics and the escalation and de-escalation of violence (Reimann 2004).

Feminists and gender researchers have challenged these mainstream debates by questioning narrow concepts of war(making) and/or peace(building) and especially by stressing the inter-connectedness of different types of violence. Focusing on the micro-level of personal experience and starting from the so-called private sphere, gender scholars have discussed, for example, the highly ambivalent role of the state as the producer of "public" security and "private" insecurity: there might well be a state of peace between states, but if a state cannot provide for the security of all citizens, e.g. if the degree of domestic violence or the degree of violence against minorities is

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2   This ironic phrase was first used in critical development studies. It means that non-gender-sensitive approaches include women without re-thinking their (deeply gendered) concepts of conflict, violence, etc.

very high, violence is "privatised" and security is only provided for some parts of a society (Zwingel 2002; Holland 2006).

This, in turn, has implications for our understanding of "war" and the relation between different types of violence. War (or violence), in this perspective, is not limited to enduring collective violence between states or organised groups. War should rather be framed as a specific type of collective violence, which is shaped by social dynamics of escalation and de-escalation (Elwert et al. 1999, 10). It then represents only one of many forms of violence. Wars are a product of social interaction, as human beings engage in dynamics of escalation. Furthermore, societies develop intricate material and symbolic structures, which "allow" the use of violence on an individual level. Violence can indeed be used as a means of enacting individuality. All of these structures and practices are deeply gendered. For example, in most societies, the ability to use violence is attributed to the male gender. "Manliness" thus becomes visible when men use violence. At the same time, they are judged along these lines – hence the many demeaning words describing men who do not wish to use violence. For example, men in administrative jobs in the army are called "suppo-weenies" or "sissies" (Eifler/Seifert 1999; Apelt/Dittmer 2009).

There is generally little consensus about the root causes of violent conflict among researchers, as men and women have produced a rich and controversial body of thought about the causes of war throughout history (Daase 2003, 176; Sahm et al. 2002; Adolf 2009). There are several strands to this debate. First, wars, as understood in IR theory, can be seen as products of systemic asymmetry and anarchy. In this conception, states are the main actors and the structure of the international system is the main cause of war. Second, anthropological approaches may explain war with the human potential for aggression. Often, they build on biology and even genetics. Third, some actor-orientated approaches propose that human interest in securing power, fighting for political ideologies and economic gain, or fighting social injustice are important drivers of violent conflict. Fourth, a domestic politics argument (by which the internal structure and relations of a state strongly influence its external affairs) expects undemocratic or weak states to be the causes of war.

Feminist thinking has contributed a great deal of interesting insight in particular to this fourth perspective, based on analyses of the gendered deficits in the realm of participation and representation, the organisation of the welfare state, or the philosophical foundations of democracy (Pateman 1988; Sauer 2009). Current scholarship supports these arguments with quantitative data: Mary Caprioli (2005) and Erik Melander (2005), for example, analysed the relationship between state behaviour, gender justice and democracy. They sustained the feminist claim that the private and the political spheres are as deeply linked as the domestic and the international spheres, and that peaceful domestic gender relations have a positive impact on external state behaviour (Clasen/Zwingel 2009).

A feminist perspective hence systematically links the domestic and the international realm and addresses unjust gender relations as a root cause of violence (Tickner 1992, 128):

> "[...] the achievement of peace, economic justice, and ecological sustainability is inseparable from overcoming social relations of domination and subordination; genuine security requires not only the absence of war but also the elimination of unjust social relations, including unequal gender relations."

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In the context of our discussion, violence is mostly thought of in two ways: first, as direct physical violence. The absence of such violence (and the absence of any imminent threat of it) has been called negative peace. Second, there is a much broader range of violence, including structural, symbolic and cultural violence (Hagemann-White 2001). Johan Galtung holds that structural violence exists whenever the potential development of an individual or group is diminished – for example by uneven distribution of power and resources (Galtung 1972; Confortini 2006). The absence of these more indirect, non-physical types of violence is a precondition for realising comprehensive visions of "positive peace".

Within peace research there has been a long and diverse debate about the usefulness and necessity of broader or narrower conceptions of violence (and peace), which cannot be examined in detail here (Moser/Clark 2001; Senghaas 1995; Brock 1995). British peace activist and sociologist Cynthia Cockburn suggests thinking of violence as a "continuum of violence" (Cockburn 2004, 43):

> "[…] Gender links violence at different points on a scale reaching from the personal to the international, from the home to the back street to the manoeuvres of the tank column and the sortie of the stealth bomber: battering and marital rape, confinement, "dowry" burnings, honour killings, and genital mutilation in peacetime; military rape, sequestration, prostitutions, and sexualized torture in war."

The idea of a continuum of violence poses some conceptual and practical problems for those aiming to stop or transform it. Where to start? What are the most urgent types of violence to be addressed? How to define thresholds between different types and degrees of violence? Are there legitimate types of violence? And if so, how can they possibly be legitimised?

While these questions cannot be discussed in greater detail here, some preliminary suggestions can be made using Clasen's "Gendered Peace Index" (Clasen 2006). The Gendered Peace Index measures the degree of peacefulness of a society based on a process-orientated conception of peace. This means that peace is not a given status or defined aim, but has to be continuously created through social processes that are open to change. Clasen defines three conditions for positive peace, which represent a progression from negative peace (i.e. the absence of war) to a culture of peace. Firstly, a secure physical existence for all men and women (*Existenzerhaltung*) forms the minimum requirement for peace. This can be measured by a balanced sex-ratio, a low degree of domestic violence, and a low degree of public violence. Secondly, the possibility to live a good life (*Existenzentfaltung*) must be secured. This can be measured by the degree of gender justice in a society in terms of life expectancy, literacy, schooling, fertility and economic and political participation of women. Thirdly, and most importantly for conflict transformation: a plurality of lifestyles and roles (*Rollenpluralismus*) forms the last major step towards a culture of peace. This can be measured, for example, by looking at the discrimination of minorities, especially homosexuals, in a society.

In light of the discussion so far, it appears that what we need is a multi-causal and multi-dimensional model of root causes of violence, which is sensitive to the gendered links between different types of violence and different stages of escalation. Collective and individual violence must be seen as products of gendered social processes and interactions. Thus, a gendered theory

of society and the state is needed in order to understand (and change) the various social, political and symbolic orders of violence.

2.2
Gender Relations

2.2.1 Sex, Gender, Gender Relations

Gender matters. Being a man or a woman entails a difference in access to material and symbolic resources and rights all around the world, as the yearly global Gender Gap Report documents (World Economic Forum 2009).

But apart from this rather simple (and simplistic) truth there has been a long and controversial discussion about the concept of "gender" and its implications. Judith Lorber (2008, 538) defines gender as "a social institution based on three structural principles: the division of people in two social groups, 'men' and 'women'; the social construction of perceptible differences between them; and their differential treatment, legitimated by socially produced differences."

I speak of gender relations in this chapter in order to stress that gender is a relational category. In most societies, this concerns the relations of "men" and "women", as already indicated by Lorber. It also implies that – as an institution – gender has a structural dimension and a process dimension. This means that the social, economic, cultural, linguistic and religious systems we live in tend to be very stable. They deeply affect our individual behaviour and beliefs. Individuals and groups act within these structures, and through their actions they shape and change the structures they live in. How the structural and process-related dimensions of gender interact, though, has been a matter of ongoing discussion in social and feminist theory.

The first debate in this context focuses on the difference between sex and gender. It starts from the assumption that biological sex can be distinguished from socially constructed gender. Conventional wisdom has it that the male and female sexes differ greatly: they have different genes, different physical capabilities and bodily abilities (like being able to give birth). But even though female and male bodies do differ, intergroup differences are much bigger than the average difference between men and women.[3] Furthermore, the meanings we attach to these physical differences are not natural, they are the product of social processes. Post-structuralist theorising has drawn our attention to the fact that both sex and gender are socially produced categories within a 'heterosexual matrix' that imposes the idea of two sexes (Knapp 2001). Very often these processes of giving gendered meaning to bodies, behaviour and experiences tend to be linked back to nature. This renders invisible the multi-layered, constant individual and collective efforts that are needed to produce 'properly' gendered 'women' and 'men'. Cross-cultural research on gender diversity, on the other hand, shows "that there is no simple, universal, inevitable, or 'correct' correspondence between sex and gender and that the Euro-American privileging of biological sex (anatomy) is not universal" (Nanda 2000, 2; Tuider 2007).

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3   See Goldstein 2001 for a very detailed discussion on the biological dimensions of warfare.

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The second debate focuses on the relationship between agency and structure, between "doing gender" and "gender being done". "Doing gender" stresses the agency dimension. It means that while we talk, eat, dress, laugh, sing, pursue a career, raise a child or go to the doctor we also (re-)produce gender relations – consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly. These processes are context-specific and time-bound. Take the changes in European perceptions of "women's work": being a secretary had been a male domain for many centuries when education was not accessible to most women or to many men; it only became a "typical" women's job during the last 60 years.[4] Talking about "gender being done" refers to the symbolically, materially and culturally diverse structures that shape our actions and perceptions despite individual preferences. This includes the institutional and structural side of the social organisation of gender relations, such as state institutions. For example, most women gained their full political rights over 200 years later than men did. In France, the country of the Revolution of 1789, women gained their full rights in 1948. Or take the labour market, which is segregated along gender lines in terms of wages, representation of women in management positions and access to wealth. Welfare services re-produce a certain model of the family, including gender roles. The German tax and social system, for example, still privileges a rather traditional type of relationship, in which women stay at home and take care of the children while men do the paid work.

The third debate is the so-called "intersectionality debate". I have pointed out that gender is a relational category and that differentiation is a relational process: "female" cannot be understood without "male", "poor" not without "rich", "black" not without "white". Obviously, there is differentiation between "men" and "women", but there is also differentiation within each group. Thus, there is a homosocial and a heterosocial "axis of difference" (Knapp 2001). "Homosocial differences" are those between a female businesswoman and the nanny she employs. In addition to the class differences between the two women, there might be racial or ethnic differences, e.g. between black and white women but also between immigrants and members of the dominant social group. "Heterosocial differentiation" describes the differences between men and women. Here, too, other categories like class, ethnic origin, religion, age, disabilities, sexual orientation and individual choices interact. This complex web of categories of difference has been called "intersectionality" (McCall 2001; Klinger/Knapp 2008).

Throughout these debates there has been major disagreement about the political implications of the various conceptions of gender relations. Should women pursue identity politics "as women" based on their shared gender? Or do such strategies lead to the exclusion of men and other women? Should feminist peace politics thus rather be based on universal human rights or on politics of difference? (More on this in *section 5*.)

Using an intersectional conception of gender – as a power relation in which "masculinities" and "femininities" have ascribed and shifting meanings rather than essential qualities – has

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4   That this in turn implies that it has lost prestige and that the pay is usually bad forms the link to the structural side of gender relations. There is a great deal of evidence in our societies to suggest that if a profession becomes predominantly "female", it is devalued (Campa et al. 2009).

important practical implications: it helps us to analyse the durability and stability of unjust gender and social orders, including the use of violence by men against other men, women and children, without taking the connection between "violence" and "masculinity" as something natural or unchangeable. Rather, it allows us to question gendered stereotypes and to inquire about the possible functions of related structures. Sarah Clasen and Susanne Zwingel show, for example, that in order to understand the very high degree of murderous violence against women in Guatemala, we need to look at the history of a long and extremely violent civil war, which is rooted in the colonial experience and a class struggle. These led to the establishment of a culture of violence and, at the same time, to poverty and the destruction of families and traditional livelihoods. We also need to look at US-American immigration policies that led to the development of urban youth gangs, which were then forced back to Guatemala and reorganised as "maras". And we need to look at the current economic situation of lower class boys and men in Guatemala (Clasen/Zwingel 2009; Luciak/Olmos 2005).

2.2.2 Habitus, Hegemony, Society and the State: Understanding the Relationship between Structure and Agency

One of the core questions of modern critical social and feminist theory is how gendered differentiation is converted into a system of gendered de-valuation and hierarchy, and how such an unjust system is sustained. There is a host of different answers. As indicated above, the relationship between agency and structure – between individual will and decision-making and those structures that are outside our reach – is of central importance.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed the concepts of "habitus" and "social field" in order to understand this relationship. Habitus is described as a "system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1977, 73). Thus, habitus is the link between durable social structures and different individual agents with their choices, convictions, dreams and perceptions.

Bourdieu stresses that the habitus of a person is at the same time deeply gendered and gendering (Bourdieu 1977, 94; Bourdieu 2001). Again, habitus links individual agency (i.e. the decision to behave like a "good woman/man") and social and political structures (i.e. education, experience in the social realm, state institutions, symbols, norms about being a "good woman/man"). Furthermore, according to Bourdieu, habitus is shaped through experience and interaction in a "social field"; also, it is a bodily affair as it is incorporated in a very physical sense (Bourdieu 1977, 76). We see habitus as "natural" because it is literally "embodied" in us from an early age. Joshua Goldstein, for example, argues that gendered differences in children's education – especially the toughening up of boys – may be the most important factor for creating men and women who are willing to go to war (Goldstein 2001, 406ff.).

Gendered habitus is a generating principle of masculinities and femininities (Meuser 1998, 115). And although there have been great variations in the conceptions and practices of masculine and feminine habitus around the world throughout history, there are also dominant features of the gender habitus: shared expectations about appropriate behaviour, language and bodies. With respect to masculinities, these very specific dominant types have been called

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"hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 1995). The concept stresses differences among men as well as differences between men and women.[5] Hegemony, in the Gramscian sense, implies the power of being able to dominate without using raw force as the main or only means of domination. Applied to gender relations this means that the powerful privileging of some types of masculinity in relation to "women", as well as subordinate men, is mostly based on consent and voluntary subordination in "a cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (ibid., 77).

The partial empowerment of some women may be a precondition for consent, as the discussion about intersectionality above has shown. Deniz Kandiyoti aptly named this the "patriarchal bargain" offered to women (Kandiyoti 1988). Within this social contract, women gain security and protection in the framework of family roles as mothers, daughters and mothers-in-law. In turn, they impose the rules of a patriarchal order on younger and dependent women.

Male dominance is enacted "heterosocially" towards women and "homosocially" towards non-hegemonic masculinities such as poor, homosexual or minority men. Still, all men, even those confined to subordinate or complicit masculinities, may benefit from "patriarchal dividends". These are structural benefits, which accrue to men regardless of their individual behaviour and perceptions (Connell 1995; Connell/Messerschmidt 2005).[6] For example, a gender-segregated labour market allows employers to offer worse pay to women than to most men in the same position.

Even though hegemonic masculinity and femininity represent models – i.e. they do not fully reflect the complexity of most men and women's lives – they are embodied in the male and female habitus and, on the structural side, in the institutions of the state and of society. Birgit Sauer describes this as the "masculinity" of the state. She argues that the ways in which states organise inclusion and exclusion – for example access to education, health, jobs, welfare services, housing or political participation – is both patriarchal and violent at the same time (Sauer 2009, 61).

Based on a feminist reading of political theories of the state, Sauer and others show that the civilisation of collective violence in a monopoly of power/force held by the state has always been incomplete. The "fraternal contract" is a sexual contract, as Pateman (1988) argues. It offers peace and participation to a society of brothers in a public sphere, while leaving the domestic sphere un-regulated and women, children and minorities in a state of patriarchal dependency and vulnerability. The monopoly of power, which in a democratic polity is regulated and controlled by law, has only lately been extended to this private sphere, as the difficulties in enacting and enforcing laws against domestic violence show.

Using a broad conception of violence, Sauer hence argues that state-society relations are gendered relations of violence (Sauer 2009, 63), which are embodied in economic, social, reproductive and political insecurity. This includes discourses and constructions of femininity

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5   *Section 3* will show how the gendered perceptions of the legitimate use of violence systematically include women and men. Aggressive, powerful and violent masculinities can only be constructed by relating them to passive, powerless and vulnerable femininities.
6   It is important to note, though, that intersectionality often contradicts these simple hierarchies of power, as power is also distributed along the lines of class and "race".

and masculinity. Masculinities in many cultures are linked to the "power of violation", whereas femininities are "open to vulnerability". Thus, gender relations are (latent) relations of violence as they systematically (re-)produce the "vulnerability" of women.

The concept of gendered habitus has important practical implications. It helps us to understand the durability and stability of unjust gender and social orders – including the use of violence – without claiming that there is a "natural" or unchangeable connection between violence and masculinity. Moreover, it allows us to question the gendered stereotypes regarding the use of violence and to inquire into the possible functions of such structures.

3.
Gender Relations and Violence

3.1
Gendered Perceptions of Violence

Gendered beliefs about violence are quite similar cross-culturally and over time, as Goldstein's comprehensive study about gender and war proves. They imply that men fight and women don't (Goldstein 2001; Elshtain 1987). This is not to say that women do not want to fight or that they never have done. They have always participated in collective violence throughout history, from the days of the Greek amazons to the American civil war and up to today's armed conflicts. Still, it is true that the majority of women do not take up weapons and that contemporary armies, as well as guerrilla groups or transnational terrorist networks, tend to be predominantly male. Thus, the gendered habitus produces two distinct, yet connected perceptions and practices: an aggressive, active, life-taking and violent masculine character versus a life-giving, passive, peaceful and caring feminine character. As relational concepts, they depend on each other (Harders 2004).

Jean Elshtain, in her important study about fighting women, suggested two opposite features of the female habitus: the "beautiful soul" and the "spartan mother" (Elshtain 1987). The "beautiful soul" depicts women as better human beings, distanced from the dirt and brutality of the world – the caring and nonviolent mother and wife. The "spartan mother" by contrast encourages men to fight, or wishes to fight herself, and actively supports war. War propaganda has always used these perceptions – by honouring the mothers who gave birth to future soldiers, by encouraging women to work in the military sector or recruiting them for combat. Women are thus assigned a very important role on the "home front".

On the male side of this equation, we find the male citizen and the soldier. Both roles are related to the use of violence, as the creation of the modern nation-state went hand in hand with the development of huge armies and general conscription. At the same time, women – who always had been a more or less formal part of military institutions and practices – were systematically excluded politically (Frevert 2001). Paradoxically, the warring soldier as a

symbol of powerful masculinity is at the same time "feminised": soldiers cook, clean, iron and take up other tasks that are often assigned to women. For example, a German soldier stated in a recent study that he never took better care of his clothing and cleanliness than during his time in the army (Apelt/Dittmer 2009). Through military hierarchies, the power of violation and vulnerabilities are redistributed in a new way, which differs from civilian life. New recruits in particular undergo a harsh regime of bodily and physical training and hierarchical submission. These processes are deeply gendered, since they rely on gender stereotypes and at the same time create and re-produce certain types of masculinity and femininity (Dittmer 2009). In this context, feminisation is meant to de-value. This systematically leads to incidents of (sexualised) violence against women and men in almost all armies in the world (Scheub 2010; Dittmer 2009).

In addition, the soldier has to be willing to die for his or her comrades and ideologies. Again, the willingness to die for rather abstract concepts such as the "nation" or "religion" is not "natural", and neither is the willingness to apply violence as means of social interaction. The military plays a crucial role in the (re)production of hegemonic masculinities, which are open to the use of violence. Goldstein (2001, 331) argues:

> "Cultures need to coax and trick soldiers into participating in combat […] and gender presents a handy means to do so by linking attainment of manhood to performance in battle. In addition, cultures directly mould boys from an early age to suppress emotions in order to function more effectively in battle. This system, supported in various ways by women, produces men capable of fighting wars, but emotionally impaired. The militarized masculinity of men who fight war is reinforced by women's symbolic embodiment of 'normal' life and by women's witnessing of male bravery."

These gendered perceptions are as hierarchical as gender relations are. Even though the "beautiful soul" is as important for a militarised culture as the "soldier", in patriarchal structures the "female" is devalued. Thus, constructs of femininity are rather contradictory: feminisation is applied to dissenting men from the same group like conscientious objectors, deserters or homosexual men. Feminisation discourses often coalesce with homophobia. They are also often linked to hyper-nationalism, racism, religious fervour and other radicalised identities. At the same time, the "male enemy" can be effectively portrayed as a beast by blaming him for exceptionally cruel deeds against women and children of the own group. Hence, the construction of an "aggressive male" produces the idea of a threatened passive "femininity" that is in need of protection.

These discourses can serve as the basis for a discursive and practical escalation of violence. For example, in many cases alleged or actual rape by one group provokes violence by the other. Thus, the stereotypes of peaceful, passive and defenceless women are intimately connected with the active, aggressive and defending men. As such, these discourses shape the male and female habitus and they create the power to violate, as well as vulnerability.

3.2
Masculinities and Violence

Empirically, men run a high risk of experiencing (physical) violence ranging from "private" domestic violence, e.g. by parents against their children, to public criminal violence, e.g. in youth gangs, or sexualised violence, e.g. in prisons or as means of torture. Most violent crimes accounted for are perpetrated among men. Many acts of violent crime during times of peace are committed exclusively within male groups (Farr/Gebre-Wold 2002). As a consequence, the overwhelming majority of prison inmates today are male. Most soldiers are men, as are most military victims of war. And in ethnopolitical conflicts, young civilian men frequently become victims of massacres because they are anticipated to be the "future soldiers of the enemy" (for Rwanda, see Zdunnek 2002; for Bosnia, see Cockburn/Zarkov 2002).

In terms of agency, violence can nevertheless be understood as an identity resource for men. This is linked to the idea that the male habitus is constituted and shaped by serious games of competition among men. Homosocial institutions – the military, youth groups and gangs, prisons, boys' schools, sports and some professions – are extremely important symbolic and material spaces for these games of competition. The military often functions as the "school of the nation" by embodying a model of masculinity that is linked to physical power and strength, discipline, order and the ability to fight. Militarised masculinity is a product of over-emphasising the idea of violence as a "natural" part of masculinity. Competition and (group) solidarity are tightly linked (Meuser 2007). Through competition between men, masculinities are shaped, experienced and accomplished.

In addition, "the experience of violence, e.g. in violent conflict, can cause the incorporation and habituation of violent practices" (Streicher 2010, 26). These can in turn lead to a normalisation of violence in the sense that violence becomes an integral part of an individual and collective habitus of certain men. Violence can also be a significant resource for "re-establishing" male domination and identity in a situation of crisis and de-valuation of traditional conceptions of masculinity. This kind of crisis can be provoked by an individual loss of autonomy, as studies about (sexualised) violence among men in prisons show. These studies argue that the use of violence and the fear of being victimised constitute an important dynamic in re-establishing masculinities (Bereswill 2006; Toch 1992; Bowker 1998).

Re-asserting masculine identities after individual or collective crisis is also one potent explanation for the usually high level of domestic violence in post-war societies, where demo-bilised and unemployed ex-combatants use violence in order to re-establish their position in the family and the household (see e.g. Zarkov 2005 for ex-Yugoslavia; Schäfer 2008 and Dolan 2002 for Africa; Scheub 2010 for a comprehensive debate). Ruth Streicher, in her study about "youth gangs" in East Timor, shows how gender, violence, age, class and the legacy of a bloody civil war interact in producing masculinities. Youth gang members perceive themselves as protectors of their communities. They use violence in a ritualised form against other males and thus as a resource for identity building and competition. At the same time they are deeply insecure about their role as "proper men" because they cannot live up to the role model of being a male

breadwinner. European and US-American development aid agencies have had their share in introducing these models in the first place, as part of their humanitarian agenda (Streicher 2010).

To summarise, the capacity to use violence is – in many societies and throughout much of history – an integral part of the male habitus. The use of physical or structural, collective and/ or individual violence against other men, women and children can serve different social and individual functions, as demonstrated above. This does not mean that the use of violence is natural or that all men use violence. On the contrary, men have resisted public and private pressure to use violence throughout history. Young men have evaded conscription to the army or fled from fighting, as the history of "traitors", "cowards" and "deserters" – names they have been called in order to stigmatise them – shows. Men have chosen not to join the guerrilla or militia and they have refrained from using violence in the domestic sphere. Men have also been actively supporting peace and nonviolent movements at all times. Furthermore, in order to sustain a culture of violence, both genders have to contribute.

3.3
Femininities and Violence

The "feminine face" of war (Wasmuht 2002, 88) is as diverse as the male one. In terms of intersectionality, for example, female members of the dominant ethnopolitical or social class may have as much interest in the escalation and the maintenance of violence as men. Like men, they may be driven by greed and grievance, by the belief in ideologies or the struggle for personal gains in power and money. Women may be active or passive supporters of militarised masculinities and, therefore, involved in maintaining a violent conflict culture. As soldiers, nurses, suppliers, weapon producers and smugglers, women also actively sustain armed conflict. Even marginalised women may profit economically from a violent conflict by supplying the troops as merchants.

Women have not only been fighters in armies or guerrilla groups (Hagemann/Schüler-Springorum 2002). They have also played a major role in the execution of collective violence in totalitarian and genocidal systems, as evident in Rwanda where women were heavily involved in violence (Zdunnek 2002; McKelvey 2007) and in Nazi Germany. Anette Kretzer, in her study about the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp in Germany, shows how female perpetrators acted in a militarised and patriarchal system of violence, which was based on the institutionalised dominance of the "male" Nazi organisations (Kretzer 2009). Within this system of patriarchal subordination, female concentration camp guards enjoyed and used a high degree of autonomy in the use of violence, torture, abuse and murder. Even though there is no doubt about their role as active perpetrators, the post-war allied prosecuting authorities, as well as the German public, mostly framed their brutal deeds in terms of female deviation and excess. This can be explained by the deep-rooted gendered perceptions of the legitimate use of violence. For the purpose of our discussion here, it can be noted that – as perpetrators or fellows in crime, and as supporters of a violent conflict culture – women contribute to the escalation and de-escalation of conflicts just as much as men do.

At the same time, though, the gendered habitus, which assigns caring and less violent roles to women, has an important impact on the practices of peace activism. Women are often an important part of local peace alliances, and they often (and for longer) actively maintain social networks and connections with groups or individuals considered as "the enemy". Carolyn Nordstrom shows how dedicated and courageous women keep up medical care for civilians in war zones and thus produce islands of peace in an ocean of violence (Nordstrom 2004). Often, they are the first to reconnect and return after violent conflicts (Cockburn 2001; see also *Box 1*). It is the assumed "private" nature of their micro-level social interactions that allows them to cross lines of conflict and combat.

> **Box 1**
> **Negotiating Differences and Identities**
>
> As for the major political question, the question of identity politics versus politics of rights (see *section 2.1.1*), vital insights can be taken from Cynthia Cockburn's study about peace policies of women's groups in protracted conflicts in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine and Bosnia (Cockburn 2001). The women's groups studied emphasise differences rather than covering them up and deal with them proactively within their groups. The group process becomes the place for creating a truly democratic space:
>> "A good deal of effort therefore goes into structuring a comfortable democratic distance between us, as individuals in marriage, as collectivities in a multicultural city, as nations sharing a world. The space has to afford an optimal distance between difference, small enough for mutual knowledge, for dispelling myths, but big enough for comfort. It has to be strong enough to prevent implosion, a collapse of differences into rape, silencing or annihilation. But it also has to be flexible enough to permit differences to change their form and significance [...]" (ibid., 224).

Women's entry into the political and public spheres for reasons of peacemaking or democratic transformation, on the other hand, often constitutes a rupture with traditional gender roles. It requires special justification. Women frequently use "maternal" patterns of legitimisation. Women thus may relate to their traditional gender roles when demonstrating for peace in order to protect their soldier sons, as this activist from the Philippines states:
> "[it is] perhaps because of [women's] very lack of exposure to the way traditional politics has been played in this country and the way power has been used, there is in their attitude – not because it's in our genes but because it is in our experience and culture – much less of a kind of 'ego-involvement' that has to be overcome in dealing with the consensus building that needs to be done in forging a peace for a people that has been so divided" (IA 1999, 13).

Many female activists utilise positive concepts of femininity and maternity for their peace work. But there is some tension between the political community of "we, the women" and the real-life social, economic and political inequalities between women, as well as those between women and men. The construction of an allegedly homogeneous identity (albeit as peace-

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promoting mothers) can stabilise rigid identity perceptions (Knapp 2001, 43). As a case in point, many nationalist ideologies build on maternalism and thus restrict women to the role of mother and nurturer. This in turn often contributes to the legitimisation of militaristic masculinities. It also contradicts the argument (presented above in *section 2.1*) that the possibility of living a plurality of gendered practices and roles is fundamental for sustaining a culture of peace. Thus, the line between essentialist exclusions and the maternal pragmatism of peace policies and practice is very narrow indeed.

4.
Gender Relations and Conflict Transformation: Connecting Theory and Practice

How then can the complex theoretical considerations presented above serve those who are engaged in the practical politics of conflict transformation? This section suggests some general implications for gender-sensitive conflict transformation. They always have to be put into the specific cultural, political, religious and historical context of the projects concerned.

4.1
Self-Reflexivity

The difficult, conflict-prone and diverse contexts of transformation work demand a substantial level of self-reflexivity. Practitioners of conflict transformation themselves are products of the gendered habitus and gender regimes that have shaped their lives. Practitioners and those they wish to support are constantly involved in doing gender, and whatever they do is part of a structure in which gender is being done. The "gendered lens" proposed here can be applied to all societies, as nearly all societies experience some form of violence.

Changing these deep-rooted beliefs and practices does involve long-term work and it can create severe tensions and conflicts. Nevertheless, self-reflexivity on the level of personal experience and beliefs, the levels of interaction and of professional concepts and actions is crucial.

4.2
Taking Stock: Monitoring, Early Warning and Prevention

All measures of conflict transformation work must be investigated and improved along the lines of gender indicators (Reimann 2001, 32). Today, there is a host of literature about gender mainstreaming, gendered evaluations and gender benchmarks, which suggests coherent ways of making the gendered dimensions of peace and conflict visible. These should be combined with measures that are sensitive to intersectionality, depending on the relevance of specific categories of differentiation for understanding a certain conflict dynamic. This includes collecting data that are disaggregated according to sex, "race", and age, and securing the participation and empowerment of those who have previously been marginalised (women or men, old or young, minority groups according to "race", "religion" or other ascribed identities).

Gender issues are a useful and empirically hard measure for testing social escalation, as they are closely connected to militarised constructs of masculinity. Thus, a narrowing down of women's social roles to mothers and growing public and private violence against women and "unmanly" men (e.g. homosexuals, non-militaristic men, dissenters, peace activists) constitute major early warning indicators (Hill 2003). On the other hand, the possibility of living a plurality of roles and identities for men and women is a major indicator of a peaceful society (Clasen 2006). Indicators like the ones suggested for the Gendered Peace Index (see *section 2.1*) should be systematically included in civil conflict transformation. This kind of data collection could serve as a baseline for situation assessments in observer missions, NGOs or state institutions.

4.3
Tackling the Full Continuum of Violence

Conflict transformation activities need to address different types of violence simultaneously. Understanding the link between different types of violence sheds light on the gendered root causes of violence. The creation of negative peace is then just a precondition for further work. As a next step, practitioners have to ensure that restoring security in a post-war situation includes protection against sexualised violence[7] and changes the culture of violence in all spheres of society.

Feminists, gender and peace activists all over the world have made enormous efforts in order to publicise and politicise the nexus between gendered injustices and collective and individual violence. A growing body of international law has been the result and can now be used as a point of reference. Notable are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In addition, resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) of the UN Security Council highlight the new international and institutional visibility of gender issues in the field of peace and conflict. While development agencies and NGOs have been receptive to these new insights, governments and academia in its

7   A haunting documentation of these acts of violence is provided by UNIFEM at www.womenwarpeace.org/issues/violence.htm.

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more mainstream approaches have been less so. Thus, many gender-sensitive policies are not implemented due to lack of political will and/or resources. Still too often, gender issues are perceived as "women's issues", thus neglecting the male dimension of gender relations.

To begin to change this, awareness has to be raised more broadly still. In post-war contexts, for example, the police have to be trained, the awareness of judges needs to be heightened, safe spaces and hotlines must be made available for those who fall victim to violence. External actors and civil conflict resolution practitioners can support the development of a broader understanding of security, by supporting testimonies against perpetrators and by stressing the urgency of protecting and legitimising human rights. Most importantly, laws have to be passed for the prosecution of different types of violence, including domestic violence, as criminal acts. Finally, all local initiatives taking up this touchy issue should be supported, as it needs to be addressed in an appropriate cultural and political manner.

4.4
Building Coalitions with Men

Any project which envisions building a culture of peace and mutual respect has to address the constructions and practices of masculinity in a given society. After war, this includes work with traumatised combatants, members of the military, police and security forces. In other situations, fighting domestic violence and rape might be a priority.

The goal should be to "develop gender practices for men that shift gender relations in a democratic direction. Democratic gender relations are those that move towards equality, non violence, and mutual respect between people of different genders, sexualities, ethnicities, and generations" (Connell 2001, 16).

As a start, more men have to be won over to act decidedly against violence in everyday culture. Fortunately, men all over the world are already doing so. For example, the African campaign against violence "real men don't rape" has triggered support in many African countries and around the globe (GTZ 2009; Schäfer 2008). "MenEngage"[8] was founded in 2004 and constitutes a global and growing network of emancipatory mens' organisations, who work to promote the engagement of men and boys in achieving gender equality (Scheub 2010, 311 ff.).

Changing gender relations and gendered role perceptions that enhance violence is as important as offering spaces for men and women to voice their concerns. This can be done by supporting men to work on war trauma, supporting gay, lesbian and trans-gender groups, and supporting spaces in which the ambivalence of being a victim and a perpetrator at the same time can be voiced (Schroer 2010).

But sometimes, men – especially male members of minorities under pressure – rely heavily on games of competition and the degradation of women and "femininity". They may lack non-competitive, non-militarised alternative male identity roles, which have to be slowly and carefully created and promoted, as changes in gender roles may create tension and even cause violence (UN 2008).

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8   See "Who we are" at www.menengage.org.

4.5
Dealing with Post-War Regressions

In times of war, women often gain access to new economic, familial, vocational and social fields of action. These gains are, however, mostly of limited duration (Meintjes et al. 2001, 9):

> "The historical records confirm that societies neither defend the spaces women create during struggle nor acknowledge the indigenous way in which women bear new and additional responsibilities. [...W]omen's activism in managing survival and community level agency is predictably devalued as accidental activism and marginalised post-conflict, as politics become more structured and hierarchical."

Post-war restorative tendencies can be traced back to a variety of causes, even though women take up numerous important tasks in reconstruction. Crucially, war and the gender relations it produced are collectively processed as an exceptional circumstance. The desired "restoration of normalcy" is manifested by re-establishing the status quo of gender relations. In predominantly agrarian societies, the older generation has a strong interest in restoring their control over family reproduction, as they rely on the younger generation for survival (ibid., 12f.). Men seek to re-establish their control over women, family structures and decisions (GTZ 2009). Similar setbacks can be witnessed on the political institutional level. Again, there are various reasons. One seems to be that women themselves do not internalise those transformations, and that men and women prefer the return to normalcy even at the price of social and economic losses (Meintjes et al. 2001, 12). For women, newly won access to the labour market and economic independence seem to be the easiest gains to hold on to. Changes in family roles and decision-making structures are more difficult to maintain.

A different but related issue concerns the demobilisation of female combatants. Even though women have taken and still are taking part in conflicts as combatants, they are often ignored during phases of demobilisation and reintegration (Dietrich Ortega 2009; GTZ 2009). They receive little or none of the appreciation given to men, are not incorporated into programmes of demobilisation and receive less compensation to build a new civil life. Female combatants face additional difficulties on the social level, being frequently stigmatised by their home communities, who refuse to reintegrate them (Bop 2001, 30ff.). Following anti-colonial combat initiated by leftist nationalist groups in Algeria, Eritrea and Nicaragua, women were also unsuccessful in retaining their obtained equality (Meintjes et al. 2001, 11).

Conflict transformation should take care not to directly or indirectly facilitate a return to the former (discriminatory) situation. Moreover, it should support processes of raising awareness that restoration does not have to mean a return to the status quo. It has to further encourage those organisations that are promoting concrete steps towards gender equality, and towards creating manifold livelihoods and perspectives for men and women.

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5.
Dilemmas and Perspectives

The complexities of a gendered conflict transformation strategy are great, as are its challenges. At the end of this discussion, it is by no means obvious how to deal politically with the inequalities and injustices produced by intersecting differences along the lines of gender, "race", class or age. Changing gender relations, after all, might create new tensions. In war-torn societies, which have experienced violence and social upheaval, this might in turn lead to new forms of private and public violence.

Feminism has developed three major strategies, which today are implicitly or explicitly adapted in most policy fields, from labour policies to development aid. They include equality and quota policies, affirmative action and identity politics. German sociologist and feminist Gudrun-Axeli Knapp (2001, 44) points to at least three problematic dimensions of these strategies. The "dilemma of equality" implies that ignoring difference by employing "equality policies" actually leads to inequality being maintained. Most "one size fits all" approaches lead to such problems, because they ignore the very different resources and capabilities that different people have. The "dilemma of difference" means that the disparate treatment of differences leads to the maintenance of discrimination. For example, affirmative action policies tend to re-create the categories of discrimination they actually set out to fight and dissolve. The "dilemma of identity" points to the fact that substantial group-identities always produce exclusions of the non-identical. For example, peace politics based on an assumption of the general peacefulness of women exclude all those men who might share such a habitus and severely underestimates the importance of women's agency for war systems.

Another complicating factor is a perceived "clash of cultures": those women and men who struggle for social change, peace and gender justice in their societies often feel neglected and threatened by "western" activism at the same time. Cultural relativism on the part of "western" actors gives oppressive regimes leeway to hide human rights violations behind "traditions". On the other hand, universalist projections of rights, gender roles and modernity have constantly and rightly provoked criticism because of the paternalism and neglect of local experiences related to such unilateral projects of emancipation.

While there are no easy solutions to these dilemmas, there is some good advice. Cynthia Cockburn (2004, 29) argues:

> "An assumption of equality and similarity should prevail except when those liable to suffer from differentiation (women in this case) say that difference should be taken into account. […] When should women be treated as 'mothers', as 'dependents', as 'vulnerable'? When on the contrary, should they be disinterred from 'the family', from 'womenandchildren' […], and seen as themselves, women – people, even? Ask the women in question. They will know."

Thus, successful conflict transformation should be geared towards supporting and initiating those social processes that are necessary for producing context-specific answers to these dilemmas. This implies a participatory approach and a willingness to learn on the part of those

who might come from the outside in order to support local conflict transformation. Knowledge transfer should always be a voluntary, two-way process. International concepts need to be adapted to the local context in a dialogue with those women and men who dare to challenge the gendered rules and restrictions of their societies. Very often, the local activists can suggest sustainable answers to the dilemmas of cultural context sensitivity and cultural relativism.

6.
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[All weblinks accessed 24 September 2010.]

Section I: Challenges and Concepts