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(Re) thinking gender:

Confronting challenges to gender mainstreaming in development practice

A project of the South Asia Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP)

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This manuscript started its life as a research essay by Toby during his CSIRO 2017-18 summer vacation scholarship, under the guidance of Drs Joyce Wu and Tira Foran. As the content engendered such interest, it was agreed to make it more widely available through being published as a CSIRO report in the SDIP series. For this purpose, the manuscript went through some revision, copy editing, review and reformatting, but has retained the narrative structure of a research essay.

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Important disclaimer

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SDIP's goal is increased water, food and energy security in South Asia to support climate resilient livelihoods and economic growth, benefiting the poor and vulnerable, particularly women and girls

SDIP end-of-strategy (2024) objective: Improve the integrated management of water, energy and food in the major Himalayan river basins – especially addressing climate change and the interest of women and girls.

SDIP end-of-investment (2020) objective: Key actors are using and sharing evidence, and facilitating private sector engagement, to improve the integrated management of water, energy and food across two or more countries - addressing gender and climate change.

Preamble

Gender challenge remains one of the key obstacles in the quest for sustainable water resources development and management in South Asia. The Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP) aims to address this challenge *through improved integrated management of water, food and energy in the major Himalayan river basins – especially addressing climate change and the interests of women and girls*. As a SDIP partner, CSIRO is making coordinated efforts to generate knowledge and strengthen capacity that underpin delivery of long-term, inclusive and equitable water policies, strategies and plans in South Asia.

In 2017–18, we asked ourselves: why are we thinking about gender in the first place? Do we need to rethink about gender in our research of development practice? Under the guidance and scholarship of Dr Joyce Wu, CSIRO and ANU joint appointment, two young scholars, Toby Walmsley and Evangeline Packett, looked at ways of doing this. Evie's essay on how gender can be incorporated into all steps of modelling practice was published in 2018[1], and this essay publishes Toby's research. Their joint seminar, together with transcripts and presentations, can be accessed through http://research.csiro.au/sdip/gender.

In this fresh insightful essay, Toby Walmsley gives a historical background of gender in water development and highlights why gender mainstreaming still remains a considerable challenge. He argues that a lack of a thoughtful theory of change around poverty, social hierarchy and injustice is challenging many development programs to see mainstreaming as only a modern policy-making exercise. His proposed key lines of interrogation should prompt us to reflect on the values of gender equity in our research for development projects and render water policies, strategies and plans efficient and substantial. The CSIRO SDIP team congratulates Toby on his scholarship and are confident that it will make a significant contribution to the way in which we progress our work.

Dr Shahriar Wahid
CSIRO SDIP Director

[1] Packett E, J Wu, N Grigg (2018) Mainstreaming and modelling: how gender analysis can be applied to a water management modelling framework. A project of the South Asia Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP). CSIRO, Australia. 64 pages.

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Figures and tables

Acknowledgments

I would first like to pay my respects to the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, on whose land I studied and lived throughout the creation of this essay. Indigenous peoples, from Australia and elsewhere, have been sustainable managers of land, water, and cultural heritage for tens of thousands of years. Gender justice in water development is intrinsically tied to justice for indigenous peoples.

I would like to thank CSIRO's Vacation Scholar program for providing me with the opportunity to create this essay. I would also like to thank everyone in the CSIRO-SDIP teams, who made me feel welcome and helped me through my basic and sometimes laborious enquiries.

For her wonderful supervision, I can't thank Dr Joyce Wu, SDIP Research Fellow, enough. Her continuing support and intellectual guidance was invaluable. I also want to thank Dr Nikki Grigg, CSIRO principal research scientist, for making me feel welcome in my first few days, and for being an enthusiastic advocate of our work. Those words are also relevant for Sue Cuddy, who always brought an infectious energy into the office. I would also like to thank Dr Tira Foran, whose insightful feedback made sure my essay stayed relevant and on track.

A huge thanks goes to my fellow vacation scholar, Evangeline Packett. She not only endured countless dead end conversations about half-baked ideas that never made it into the essay, but was a great companion and source of motivation.

Gender is a key pillar of the Australian aid program and development programs funded under the Australian Government’s aid program are expected to consider gender in their project planning, execution and reporting. It is my hope that this essay makes a small but valuable contribution to progressing this goal.

Introduction

The stakes for integrating gender into development have long been acknowledged as high – "*Human development, if not engendered, is endangered*" (UNDP 1995: 1). Addressing gender inequality is now seen as fundamental to the success of development of all kinds. However, evidence has shown that the results of gendered development practice have not been significant, across the water, agriculture, forest, health, and education fields. If development practices aren't actually achieving their stated outcomes, then it's necessary to question: what is it about our practice that is causing difficulty in addressing gender inequality? To address that question properly, this essay will show that organisations themselves need to ask: why are we thinking about gender in the first place?

This essay aims to provide the historical context behind gender mainstreaming in water development, point to key barriers to gender mainstreaming in planning, design, and implementation, as well as provide an approach to rethinking gender in water development.

By detailing the historical development of gender in water development, I highlight the philosophy, methodology, and critique of three major gendered development paradigms: Women in Development (WID), Gender and Development (GAD), and Gender Mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming has been adopted as a contemporary approach to gender in the development space, particularly within Australian institutions. However, despite organisations adopting the terminology of gender mainstreaming wholeheartedly, mainstreaming is having little impact on organisational structure and practice (Allwood 2013; Moser and Moser 2005; van Reisen and Ussar 2005). This essay examines key reasons why mainstreaming has had minimal impact.

This essay then draws out three themes that underlie gender mainstreaming's difficulty in implementation: masculinity, scales[2], and indicators. More than merely scientific or organisational tools, geographical and organisational scale, as well as development project indicators, have a significant social function that results in potentially reproducing gender inequality. Scale and indicators can function as a mechanism by which good gender policy can fail to translate to change, making them a worthy contribution to examining the difficulties of implementing gender mainstreaming. I examine the impact of these social factors on the outcomes of projects, and theories of change[3] around science-based development. To further highlight these social dimensions in practice, the essay examines a significant set of international mainstreamed gender goals: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and outlines the influence of gender mainstreaming on their construction.

Organisations must question the values at the centre of their organisational culture and their theory of change in a way that is critical of scale, indicators, and ultimately gender, if they are to genuinely implement gender sensitive practices. This requires scientists in the development field to understand the assumptions behind and limits of their scientific work, and question how their work is being influenced, and will influence, organisations that promote gender norms intentionally and unintentionally.

[2] "Scale" for now is used to refer to two different understandings of space. Firstly, *geographical scale* refers to distinct descriptions of geographical space that uses words such as 'regional', 'local', and 'international', to bind certain spaces for analysis. *Scale* in a more general sense often refers to levels of analysis, which refers to the relationship between organisations at different levels, likewise such as "national", 'local'. A more systemic analysis of these conceptions of scale is saved for the later discussion.

[3] Theory of Change (ToC) is a methodology for project design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning. The premise of the ToC is that research or project outcomes will bring about socially transformative change. Thus, ToC works "backwards" in that it first establishes the desired change or outcome, and then identifies the enabling conditions, agents and knowledge needed to bring about this change/outcome.

Key challenges to gender integration in water development practice:

- A culture of male dominance in the water engineering context, both in Australia and overseas
- Individual focus (i.e. on women and younger scientists) of gender mainstreaming does not translate into institutional and structural changes
- Women are still the ones who 'do' gender, which excuses men from engaging with the issues
- Gender integration is seen as 'good policy making', instead of about equality, livelihoods, and having an inclusive approach to gender research and practice
- Lack of clear interdisciplinary communication
- Specific policy can be replaced with imprecise indicators which do not capture the objectives of the project
- Underfunding of gender dimensions to projects undercuts success.

Gender mainstreaming and development: the key paradigms

It has been increasingly recognised over the last few decades that gender equality is a fundamental precondition for ending all forms of inequality (van Reisen and Ussar 2005: 18). For agencies that focus on water and sanitation, this has often resulted in a focus on the role of women in collecting and using water at a 'local scale', both for agricultural and household purposes, and empowering women to make decisions around water management within their communities, or on reforming national legislation and organisations to be gender equitable. This follows a global trend of 'mainstreaming', which intends to challenge the role and structural power of gender in both organisational practice and program implementation (Kilby and Crawford 2011: 5). The assumption is that if gender is mainstreamed, or integrated into institutional policies and practices, this will translate into better gender outcomes from the work that these organisations undertake.

Mainstreaming as a policy tool has emerged out of four decades of policy and practice in the gendered development space. I begin my analysis of mainstreaming in development by looking at the historical construction of mainstreaming in literature and practice, before looking at the contradiction between policy and implementation of gender mainstreaming in the development field. This will provide a background on the importance, development of, and key problems with, gender mainstreaming in the water development field.

Table 1 Key approaches in feminist development studies, and their features

Women in Development (WID)	Criticised how development focused on women's reproductive social roles Highlighted how encouraging women in employment could make development more effective Criticised for an 'add women and stir' approach
Gender and Development (GAD)	Cast an eye to women's subjugation relative to men, and unequal power relations Focuses on equality over efficiency (Moser 1993: 3) 'Gender' is not an easily understandable or relatable term. Often interpreted as 'women and girls'
Mainstreaming	Presented as a mechanism or strategy that analyses the effect of policy on women and men before decision making. Analyses the role of women in projects, but also the role of women in organisations implementing the projects. Faced sustained resistance in reforming organisational culture.

The second wave feminist movement in the 1970s reopened the question of the social and economic role of women in Western society. This question was particularly pertinent in the United States, where liberal feminist discourse flourished within international development circles in the United States (Razavi and Miller 1995). This movement provided the conceptual background to criticise how women's contributions in 'Third World' development were primarily seen through their reproductive role (i.e. child caring and other household work), and as 'passive' recipients in the mainstream development programs (Moser 1993). These debates focused on how highlighting women's role in employment and productivity could make 'Third World' development more effective. This re-imagination of the role of women in development studies, coined Women in Development (WID), theorised that women's disadvantages stemmed from stereotypes of female behaviour, namely that they were interested solely in being domestic child bearers, and that if these myths were disproven, so would the material oppression of women (Razavi and Miller 1995). The result of this is that projects tended to focus on fighting gender stereotypes by recasting women as participants in economy and production, particularly by giving women and girls better training and more role models, through anti-discrimination legislation, and by freeing labour markets (Connell 1987, in Razavi and Miller 1995). This led to popular development policies like credit access and the opening of employment opportunities (Moser 1993: 3). Although these projects tackled real injustices women faced based on their gender, they were subsequently critiqued for not considering relational aspects of inequality, injustice, and inherent hierarchy of gendered relationships (Cornwall 2014: 128). These projects tended to focus on women as an isolated economic, or worse passive, subject of development, casting women as victims of violence, deprivation, and oppression. The consequence of this is that women were not equal nor empowered participants in their own development and emancipation (Cornwall 2014).

From these critiques, and the limited success of the paradigm to produce results, an alternative approach, Gender and Development (GAD), emerged. GAD focused on the nature of women's subordination relative to men, that is, the relative deprivation of resources women had access to in comparison to men in their household or community. This differed from WID by analysing more closely how power functioned in gender relationships, primarily by comparing material concerns. The distinction can be confusing, since ideas about GAD were developing whilst WID was still influential, and therefore the two cannot be easily separated. GAD's formation was largely a response from feminists who were realising the limitations of WID. However, Moser (1993: 3) argues, WID can be seen as a distinct paradigm as it focuses on efficiency over equity, and considers women in isolation, whereas GAD focuses on a social transformation of women's role in the spaces they work in and occupy. Cornwall (2014) argues that although the GAD approach was far more nuanced than WID conceptually, GAD was not without problems. Firstly, the GAD model assumed that women and men did not have common interests. Secondly, the different ways that men and women could be masculine or feminine were not explored, particularly in the context of people's sexualities. Jolly (2011) shows that this is a common feature of international development, which considers gender relationships primarily by considering heterosexual imbalances with a male head of household. This yet again structures the type of people who receive resources, often in a way that disadvantages non-normative sexualities or gender arrangements (Jolly 2011: 21-22). Furthermore, by pushing gender injustice into a category to analyse isolated from any others, complete transformations of gendered relationships in all areas of policy and organisational life are rarely substantiated. As Leder et al. (2017) show through analysis of gender and water development practice, gender development often occurs in non-linear ways, meaning that a 'one-size fits all' approach to empowerment will not be effective.[4] If the key critique of WID was conceptual, then the key critique of GAD was practical. Whilst WID has been shown to have a variety of conceptual flaws, its advantage of quick implementation ('add women and stir') and a focus on practical needs led it to be adopted widely by development organisations (Moser 1993). GAD, although not perfect, has a conceptual

[4] I brush over a diversity of feminist discussion in this space for the sake of brevity. For a more nuanced and thorough analysis of the development of WID, GAD, and mainstreaming: see Razavi and Miller (1995), Cornwall (2014), the introduction and part 1 of Moser's (1993) book, and for an Australian context, Kilby and Crawford (2011).

advantage to WID, as it provides the space for a more nuanced account of gender relationships than WID. However, GAD struggled to be implemented in development agencies, due to its more challenging, and not so clear cut, conclusions.

Mainstreaming emerged from the struggle of GAD to apply itself in development practice, becoming particularly prevalent after the UN Beijing Declaration on gender equality in 1995 (UN 1995). Mainstreaming "*was presented as a mechanism to broaden the concept of development to respond to women's lives*" (Charlesworth 2005: 2-3) by "*mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programs, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects for women and men*" (UN 1995)[5]. This approach considers the subjugation of women in a wider context, especially in relation to their material or representative deprivation, as gender outcomes are targeted at all levels and sectors of decision making. It also attempts to open avenues where men and women have common interests in dismantling gender relationships within development organisational contexts. It is worth noting that mainstreaming is distinct from GAD as it is also analysing *the role of organisations* in causing gender transformation, and coming up with multi-level frameworks and procedures that can normalise gender sensitive practice. This is argued on the basis that organisations that are not reflexive about gender themselves will not have the means to engender that reflexivity in their projects. This approach requires organisations to reconsider the role of gender in *influencing* their projects alongside an analysis of gender *within* their projects. Given prior approaches to gendered development focused on the role of projects, research and policy focus shifted to the role of organisations, although both organisational interest and thoughtful policy are required to genuinely implement gender policy. The new challenge for institutions was to reflect on how gendered outcomes can be *integrated* into projects, with the intention of transforming both the outcome of gender goals in projects, and the culture of organisations implementing the projects.

Australia was a pioneer of the expert-bureaucratic approach to gender mainstreaming, particularly through its Office for the Status of Women (OSW) (Donaghy 2004: 397). This integrated gender expertise into government department through "femocrats". However, due to a decline of political will, a lack of continuing resourcing, insufficient accountability mechanisms, "there is little evidence of any impact of any formal gender mainstreamed strategy on current federal policy-making" (Donaghy 2004: 407).

Although mainstreaming tackles many of the problems of previous approaches to thinking about gender and development, it is far from flawless. Despite some examples of success[6], "*practices that successfully promote women's empowerment and gender equality are not normalised into the day-to-day routines of state and international development agencies*" (Rao and Kelleher 2005: 57-8). They argue that a focus on organisations has entrenched a managerial approach to gender development. This, in turn, makes gender policy implementation hierarchical, and strips mainstreaming of its challenging, transformative, political content. This is reinforced by Moser and Moser (2005), and corroborated by other authors (Allwood 2013; van Reisen and Ussar 2005), who show that although organisations have adopted the right terminology and have mostly established the right kind of gender policies, implementation tends to evaporate in favour of other organisational priorities. Daly (2005) argues this is because gender mainstreaming is seen as modern policy making practice, rather than stemming from a thoughtful theory of change around poverty, inequality, and injustice. Smyth (2007) builds on this argument to say that many organisations attempting to gender

[5] This is expressed in various similar ways throughout the declaration.

[6] Rao and Kelleher (2005) admit there have been some material successes of mainstreaming: bringing women to the table in the Burundi peace process, mainstreaming gender issues into law reform processes in Botswana, greater visibility for women's work in Nepal, India, and Pakistan through the census, and equitable peace-building in Rwanda, to name a few.

mainstream their practice tokenistically use the language gender empowerment, leading to a lack of reflection and the depoliticisation of terms like 'empowerment' and 'gender mainstreaming'. Additionally, Charlesworth (2005) shows that mainstream has 'encountered sustained resistance' (Charlesworth 2005: 11) due to inadequate budgeting, insufficient development of gender analysis skills, and a lack of political commitment. As the realisation grew that mainstreaming could be a lengthy process, some organisations abandoned the process all together (Mehra and Gupta 2006: 4). This means that organisations genuine about gender mainstreaming their practices and projects need to do so in a way that has adequate political and values-based backing to ensure that this resistance is overcome.

Table 2 Key barriers to gender mainstreaming

• Seen as good policy practice instead of being informed by values or theory as to why gender matters (Daly 2005)
• Implementation is bureaucratic - 'checkbox' approach (Rao and Kelleher 2005)
• Inadequate funding for gender dimensions (Charlesworth 2005)
• Language of gender mainstreaming can lose its meaning (Smyth 2007)
• Gender is perceived as a women's problem, leaving masculinity to be unexamined and for women to be the only ones who 'do' gender (Wanner and Wadham 2015)

The mainstreaming literature makes it clear that it's not just project outcomes, but institutions themselves, that must be assessed for the impact of gender in order for gendered development to be successful. However, the current need in a majority of development organisations and projects is an analysis of the role of gender in the organisation, given many have adopted the project-oriented features of WID and GAD paradigms over the last four decades, and have struggled with overcoming the barriers to necessary organisational reform. The remainder of this essay will consequently focus on underlying barriers to organisational reform necessary for successful gender policy, in theory and practice.

Further barriers: masculinity, scale, and indicators in gender mainstreaming

Beyond the barriers that prevent gender mainstreaming as describe above, I argue that there are three further barriers to gender mainstreaming that underlie the above critiques. I first present a rough outline of critical masculinity studies' intersection with gender mainstreaming theory. This articulates the background to my arguments above about the problem of gender policy generally targeting and expecting the work from women exclusively. I then discuss a further barrier to mainstreaming implementation: the role of gender in scales such as geographical localities like 'local' and 'basin', to 'levels' such as 'community' and 'national'. The issue of scale presents itself in indicators, a key mechanism used by organisations to integrate gender into their organisation and projects. This will show why indicators alone are insufficient to cause the transformative change that gender mainstreaming aims to achieve. I then briefly assess the impact of the gendered production of scales on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Masculinity

Both within and beyond this critique of the organisational structure of development agencies lies a critique of mainstreaming from the field of critical masculinity studies. Critical masculinity studies reframes the issue of gender inequality from the perspective of the privileged, in this case men. This involves analysing how it is

that men tend to have power over women, and how conscious acts or unconscious habits can reinforce a type of masculinity that enforces inequality. This field of research is important for Gender and Development, as well as mainstreaming, because if it is agreed that gender disadvantage is a relational issue between men and women, then we need to understand how to dismantle the privilege of masculinity, not just to overcome the disadvantages of femininity. The work of R.W. Connell (1995) is particularly enlightening on the structure of masculinity. It highlights how masculinity is not a singular social concept, but that there are a diversity of *masculinities*, that determine different ways of being a man that are present in different societies. However, as Connell argues:

> To recognise diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognise the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity. (Connell 1995: 37)

This argues that, like the relationship between men and women, that disadvantages some and privileges others, there are relationships between different masculinities. These relationships establish cultural ideals for masculinity, regulate acceptable behaviour for men, and legitimises behaviour that conforms to masculine ideals. The problem that this competition within masculinity presents for mainstreaming is that critiquing masculinity's role in organisational practices challenges decision makers, who are typically men who follow hegemonic masculine ideals.[7] This understanding of competition within masculinity serves to highlight how dominating forms of masculinity are not inherent to gender relationships. "*To operate within the matrix of power is not the same as to replicate uncritically relations of domination*." (Butler 1999: 40). That is, just because somebody has traits traditionally associated with masculinity (e.g. prioritising physical strength or rationality over affective concerns) does not mean that they use these traits in dominating ways (implying these traits are inherently masculine or feminine, influencing others to conform to gender roles). Instead, there are ways in which men can understand the power of their social position and reconsider its impact on their work and life[8].

In the context of development, Laurie (2005) shows that the language of global development is structured in ways that reinforce gendered understandings of the world, that is, the language of the discipline *itself* is built on masculine understandings of the world. In particular, Laurie shows that there are a range of conceptual masculine subjects presented by development institutions in their policy and projects, as well as in gender mainstreaming literature. There are heroic masculinities, that fight in geographically bounded communities for local change, vulnerable and feminised men who are in need of help by NGOs (often through big development projects), or violent oppressors. This categorisation has a dual effect. It limits the avenues by which masculinity can be challenged and subverted through the process of development, as the development institutions will not recognise subversive masculinities. The impact of this, through terms such as 'modernity' and 'development', is a dominative and one-sided view of how a community ought to develop. This view of 'modernity' is reinforced by "Chapter 7: Men of Reason" in Connell (1995), which talks about how masculinity has claimed power partly off its perceived rationality compared to women, with science and technology becoming defined as masculine realms.

The consequences of this for policy are elaborated by Wanner and Wadham (2015), who provide a comprehensive review of the policy response to the inclusion of critical masculinity in gender

[7] For a more thorough analysis of masculinities than I can offer here, including concepts implicitly employed in this article such as toxic and hegemonic masculinity, R.W. Connell's Masculinities (1995) is eye opening. Of particular interest to scientists in the development space is Connell's critique of positivist conceptions of gender (Connell 1995: 33-4, 44, 69).

[8] Although outside the scope of this essay, further reading on reforming masculinity in general can be found in Pease (2002). Only some literature has been produced surrounding the ways in which organisations can concretely encourage this reformation (Pease and Flood 2005; Wanner and Wadham 2015). This essay can thus only present potential avenues for change, as opposed to existing empirical studies.

mainstreaming, called ‘men-streaming’. ‘Men-streaming’ is a policy approach that reframes the issue of gender disadvantage from the perspective of privileged men, thinking of how to 'denaturalise' masculine domination over decision making, language, and policy outcomes. Despite the consensus among international institutions that masculinity is a concept that needs to be grappled with in development policy making (Flood 2004), there is little evidence of policy actually achieving this goal (Wanner and Wadham 2015: 28). Where reasons are provided as to why this has occurred, they argue that this is the case due to it challenging the advantages that men obtain through patriarchal relations, and challenges men's concept of their own identity. I will elaborate on the source and power of this resistance in development using two examples from Zwarteveen (2008; 2011).

Zwarteveen (2008) highlights the effects of masculine development policy in gender mainstreaming of science-based development projects by showing that they often operate on the assumption, adopted by traditional mainstreaming, that men are visible decision makers, whilst women are invisible, passive actors. She argues that the reverse is true in mainstreaming – the power behind the masculinity of men is rendered invisible by focusing on women as objects of analysis, meaning that men can continue to subjugate in different, but just as harmful, ways once the gender dynamic shifts. This leads to engineers in the development space using the concept of modern development to justify their masculine behaviour, and exclusive domination over decision making. As Zwarteveen (2011) continues, this invisibility of masculinity allows the masculine conception of an ‘engineer’ to remain unscrutinised, implicitly excluding women from mid to high level ‘rational’ decision making, as women who make it to the role of water decision makers often do it by affirming masculine traits in a bargain that reinforces their subjugation.

These authors show that the neglect of an analysis of masculinity is leading to ineffectual gender mainstreaming policy and practice, as an analysis of gender without the role of masculinity cannot tackle the relational nature of gender. Wanner and Wadham (2015) leave us with some directions going forward, arguing that there are three key principles for a Gender and Development approach that includes men and masculinities to be successful:

i. a focus on women's issues and a priority on women's safety, given the male dominated character of global gender relations
ii. a focus on men's role in gender relations, thus marking men as a specific population group and removing them from the naturalised subject of development thinking; and
iii. the development of a focus on men's needs and issues in relation to women's needs (Wanner and Wadham 2015: 23, line breaks added for emphasis).

Overall, the lack of analysis of masculinity in gender mainstreaming displays how gender, in development practice, has become code for women’s development. This has tended to give men a pass to be uncritical of their role in gender power relationships, and thus reduces the opportunity for the development of a positive masculinity. We know from as early as Gender and Development theory that the issue of gender is a *relational* issue, where men are privileged through women's disadvantage. Therefore, if men's role as privileged power holders is not addressed in mainstreaming policy and discourse, it will not be able to overturn the relational dimension of gender discrimination, the source of gender imbalance. [9]

The impact of mainstreaming is dependent on the ability of development professionals to apply these principles in their projects. It requires an understanding of *how* gender empowerment can link from a community, to national, to international scales in a coherent theory of change within development project

[9] I note my lack of engagement with a significant concept in gender theory: intersectionality. Intersectionality acknowledges that the way in which gender is experienced and influences people is informed by other social relationships, such as class and race. This means that gender is a relationship that is dependent on a wider network of social relationships, and that a full analysis of gender cannot occur without an analysis of how class and race influences it. Whilst this concept is critical to remember when practicing gender analysis, the scope of this paper has little room for a full investigation of the different social relationships working alongside gender in the development context.

goals and implementation. To achieve this end we need to interrogate a fundamental concept that has caused a disconnect between gender policy and gender outcomes: the notion of scale itself. Instead of attempting to cross the 'community/national divide' through a framework that attempts to marry the two together using an explanatory theory, let's begin with more fundamental questions: How is the notion of household, community, national, and international determined, and who determines them? Who benefits from implementing policies at certain scales, and how is this being done?

The gendered construction of scales and indicators

The initial analysis made it clear that many authors place the blame for the difficulty that gender mainstreaming has had in implementation on the bureaucratisation of development agencies, the priorities of organisations, a tokenistic adoption of mainstreaming, and lack of engagement with gender in international organisations, rather than strictly the content of their gender goals. These are important critiques, but they do not necessarily outline the *process* by which the gender goals become an instrument of policy instead of having a real impact. That is, although gender policy may be bureaucratised and tokenistic, why does this necessarily imply that they will fail? How does an instrumental approach result in unsuccessful implementation of gender mainstreaming? I explore these questions by analysing the *production of geographical scale* as a process that causes gender policy to not translate to changes to gender relationships. This is followed by a practical application to the gendered use of scales and indicators the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The conception of scale used by development organisations is one which is *essential* and *hierarchical*. That is, when we use a notion such as 'local' or 'regional', we assume that this region is a space that exists externally from human contact (essential), and that it has a spatial relationship where it is contained or contains other regions (hierarchical). However, research into scale in political geography has discovered that scale is *socially constructed* (Marston 2000). This means that scale only appears essential and in relation to one another because of an implicit or underlying social agreement about what scales are, and what scale denotes what. This is not to say that physical space does not exist outside of human discourse: it is instead to say that the way in which we talk about that space is socially constructed.

The interest in this social construction is because *scale* contains a variety of social understandings about space, most critically including who are the legitimate actors and what are the legitimate behaviours in a particular space. For organisations using a notion of scale, what this means is that scale codes for an idea about who has the rightful say over decisions in a space, and in what way this decision can be made. In the SDG example above, the 'national' scale for gender used by the UN implicitly made national policy makers the legitimate decision makers around gender issues in target countries. However, if these national decision makers themselves have gendered ways of making decisions, these will be left unchallenged by this notion of scale. This is where gender problems emerge: gender dynamics are powerful because they determine who is the legitimate voice and who has legitimate power over space. Scale, as it empowers certain actors, legitimises certain ways of making decisions, and so can easily legitimise gendered ways of acting that can be harmful to gender justice. This makes scale an unavoidable political and social issue that needs to be considered when embarking on a project. Organisations that fail to understand their values or social position in a theory of scale could be at risk of empowering the wrong kinds of actors or values in the space they are working in.

This risk is heightened as the social construction of scale has implications for the use of project performance indicators. Indicators are presented and described as a tool used by policy makers to measure performance and to provide easy to apprehend conditions or trends (von Schirnding 2002: 19-20). Indicators can provide clear, specific, measurable targets that provide a way for organisations to easily understand and to make decisions about complex social situations. As a result, they are often presented as policy tools that can clarify

gender policy making. However, it has long been observed that indicators appear objective, but are in fact politically charged based on the interest of agencies, based on their political priorities (Davis et al. 2010), and that what the indicator is measuring often becomes the target of development instead of merely an indication (Shore and Wright 2015). Additionally, indicators are designed by institutions with certain theories of development and gender in mind, and are often designed with certain geographies in mind. As could be seen in the SDG example, indicators have an implicit theory of scale that implies that certain organisations have a certain mandate over certain spaces. The result of this is that indicators alone are not the answer to solving the gap between policy and implementation. Indicators require a theory of development, scale, and gender in order for them to apply to a project. Thus, indicators need to be backed by a deeper understanding of the political and social position of the organisation implementing them to be effective. Otherwise, indicators can end up being hollow targets, followed without any theory or understanding to back it.

Mainstreaming in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The potential impact of the gendered production of scale can be seen in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are a set of 17 key goals, with specific outcomes and indicators, agreed in the UN General Assembly in 2015 to be priorities for social and economic development to be achieved by 2030. These goals and targets are designed to help direct the efforts of international development and government agencies in the work of international development. The SDGs have a specific section for Gender Equality (SDG5).

Figure 1 The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2015)

The SDGs have been used as a goals-oriented background by development agencies to enact the necessary organisational reform for comprehensive gender mainstreaming. It is worth noting the mainstreaming mechanisms at work here: mainstreaming is working to integrate gender goals and indicators throughout the SDGs, and hopefully the outcome of development projects, but this is done on the proviso that development agencies themselves mainstream gender in their own organisational practices prior to engaging with these goals. However, as we have outlined above, success has been so far being limited despite strong policy. This raises the question of gender mainstream processes at the organisational level. What is the process leading to this lack of implementation?

Looking at the scale at which the indicators and goals that SDG5 and SDG6 operate reveals an interesting discrepancy that can hint an answer to this question. When a notion of scales is used in SDG6, goals and indicators tend to focus on livelihood outcomes, which translate to community based solutions (notably 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, and 6.6). There are some national or international goals or indicators, but these are only committed to in reference to enhancing community level outcomes (6.3, 6.4, 6.5, and 6.a). This attaches SDG6 with an implicit theory of change: that if community level sanitation and water access increases, then national sanitation outcomes will also be achieved. Contrast this to the goals and indicators of SDG5. When a notion of scale is used, they are 'nationally' based – they primarily focus on broad statistics about parliamentary or business participation (5.5, 5.c; 5.6, 5.a, and 5.b to some extent). This is reinforced by the UN Secretary General stressing the pivotal role of legal changes (UN 2017a) in the SDG5 progress report. In contrast, SDG6 has an implementation and indication focus on the community level, with the UN Secretary General stressing stakeholder participation as the key to water development (UN 2017b). The Chief of Research and Data section at UN Women, Shahrashoub Razavi, argues that the development goals around women make intra-household and community participation by women 'invisible' (Razavi 2016: 32), with an assumption of 'trickle-down equality' flowing from national targets.

This disparity of scale leads to a dilemma when it comes to mainstreaming gender: when issues of gender are conceived nationally and organisationally, and issues of water and sanitation are conceived locally, integrating the necessary complimentary indicators and outcomes becomes a task bound to fail on the basis of its differing focuses and its theories of change. What is missing are underlying values or ideas that bind the goals and indicators of the SDGs together.

A common solution to this scale dilemma is to reframe goals and indicators of gender equality to focus on the 'local' scale, so that gender projects are asssured to achieve local outcomes (Moser and Moser 2005: 18-19; Mosse 1995: 643). This has been the approach of a variety of participatory management approaches to involve women in water decision making. However, as Mosse (1994) discovered through their own fieldwork, participatory approaches have the potential to reinforce existing power structures if implemented the wrong way, likely by re-enforcing entrenched organisational values, holding back the progress in gender outcomes. This is not to say that 'local' participatory approaches cannot yield positive results – however, without an accompanying analysis of what 'local' means in the context of a wider climate of gender analysis, and in the context of the development institutions and their understanding of gender, the changes they produce can be trivial or misguided. A more nuanced analysis is needed than simply reducing change to the local scale.

What do we do now?

As the above analysis should have made clear, a checkbox approach will not be sufficient to cause genuine gender transformative change, as what is needed first is an informed understanding of the gender power and organisational situation. This mirrors Mehra and Gupta's (2006) reflection that "*gender mainstreaming required organizations to first demonstrate their own commitment to gender equality goals and values and that this had to be done through significant internal organizational change*" (Mehra and Gupta 2006: 4). Instead of a fully developed framework, I provide some lines of questioning informed by four arguments made in this essay. These arguments concern the importance of a theory of change based on values of social justice; scale; and masculinity. All scientists and managers can use these to interrogate their own projects and organisations, and draw out some of the key issues that may be present.

Table 3 Key lines of questioning that can be used to interrogate projects for their commitment to gender

Concept	Explanation and questions
Values and Theory of Change	• Organisational gender mainstreaming requires a reflection on individual values around gender equality, and an organisational theory of change, that's tied to the role, understanding, and positioning of the organisation and people within it. • What is my understanding about gender and gender equality? • Why is gender equality important for this project? • Does our theory of change involve more than discussion around efficiency (i.e that progress will be accelerated) and funding requirements? Is our approach to gender *functional* (to serve a greater purpose to a project) or *structural* (about genuinely undoing harmful gender dynamics)? • What key principles and assumptions are behind our concern about gender? • How will the work that is proposed translate to transformative change in gender dynamics? • Have we thought about, step-by-step, how this change will happen? • Does this theory have an appropriate understanding of scales? (as below) • What responsibility do individuals have to reflect on and speak up about gender concerns in their organisation or projects? • How is this responsibility communicated to people? • How will we know if this is equitable and effective?
Scale	• We should be conscious that scales legitimise certain actors and processes that can have gendered dimensions within the geography being worked in. We must understand the implications of favouring particular scales. • Who are the stakeholders that contribute to the scale that we work in? • What are the dominant understandings of gender in key stakeholder institutions? • What concrete policies are in place to actualise these understandings? • Do these policies and understandings have the intended outcome? • Are there any stakeholders that are not being engaged that might need to be engaged with? • What kind of actor are in the scale we are inhabiting? • How do we consider the gender relationships within our own work? • How do we gather the information to act? • How does this inform the scope, risk, or content of our project or organisation? • What power do we have to change or challenge traditional ways of engaging with stakeholders?
Masculinity	• We need to critique and understand the role of scientists and science in reinforcing masculine norms, and challenge organisations that use the idea of a neutral science to dominate discussion – who defines our science and who is it for? • We need to thoughtfully and consistently reflect on and challenge masculinity throughout our work. • Do the projects we design engage and challenge men about their gender? • Is gender a 'women's job' or 'women's problem', or is it everyone's problem? Why should gender be everyone's problem? • Based on the project's theory of change, why should men engage with gender? • Recalling that "*scientific truth has been intricately linked to power and the location of the observer*" (Pavlovskaya and Martin 2007: 588) in the geophysical space – what position do I inhabit as a scientist? • Do I take responsibility and reflect on how gender empowers or disempowers my work?
Indicators	• It is critical to interrogate the meaning and purpose of indicators to ensure that they are fit for purpose. • How do our indicators fit into our theory of change, our desired outcome? • Do they measure an 'if' or a 'then'? • To what extent is what we're measuring quantifiable? • What other factors will we need to consider before using the indicators to make claims? • Are the indicators appropriate to our scale/the actors we are engaging? • How do indicators support the creation of our gender equity story? • How responsible/adaptable are the indicators to changing contexts?

Conclusion

The implantation of gender mainstreaming requires a thoughtful and articulated theory around the value of gender equity, and the roles individuals and organisations play in upholding contemporary inequality. This essay has made clear the historical importance of gender mainstreaming, and its challenge to organisations and projects to rethink the way they think about and do gender. I have also analysed how the use of scales by actors without values and reflections to guide them can render good gender policy inefficient and insubstantial. Organisations cannot deny that they are a part of the process that constitutes the structure of authority and legitimacy over decisions. This means that they too are a part of the system that upholds gender inequality – who is empowered and how must be questioned in order to move towards gender justice. This is particularly critical when it comes to examining the role of masculinity, in projects and organisations, given that men are often power holders whose authority should be analysed and questioned. My analysis has shown that organisations continue to struggle to implement these lessons, but have opportunities to learn these lessons and adopt practices that cause genuine gender transformation through their work.

If organisations are struggling to integrate gender concerns into their projects and practice, they ought to ask why they are thinking about gender in the first place. This is not to discourage work in gender, but to provide the ground on which an understanding and valuation of gender, beyond rhetoric, can begin. The questions I've provided at the end of this essay should serve as such seeds for thought. It should also prompt reflection on broader organisational limitations and enabling conditions to integrate gender into their work.

I recall the statement by the UN Development Program that I posed earlier in this essay: "*Human development, if not engendered, is endangered*" (UNDP 1995: 1). In the context of mainstreaming, this can be read in two ways. Development projects will only be successful if they consider the role of gender in their work. But also, development organisations themselves, and how the people operate and think within them, are too at risk of reinforcing unjust power relationships, if they do not challenge the role of masculinity and gendered power through thoughtful reflection.

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