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Women's dreams: Gender, sexuality and development

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Whose visions of development?

It has rarely, if ever, been women's perceptions or women's dreams which have informed development and social change. The vision from which development is elaborated has been the vision of those few located at the centre of power, at the intersection of the axes of privilege.

This paper explores the relationship between analysis and practice, between how reality is understood and conceptualised and what the implications are for action. I contend that the analysis of a problem shapes and determines development practice, social policy, research priorities and activism.

An important example of this is the conceptualisation of poverty. The complex, diverse, debilitating and dynamic ways that people experience poverty has to do with subjugation, humiliation, isolation, physical incapacity, social inferiority, seasonal deprivation, powerlessness, exploitation and weakness. In much development thinking, however, this chaotic phenomenon has been reduced to income or consumption deprivation - scientifically acceptable, measurable and comparable variables.

As Robert Chambers (1995:8) argues:

In much professional discourse, the narrow technical definition colonises the common usage. Income-poverty starts (as) a proxy or correlate for other deprivations, but then subsumes them. What is recorded as having been measured - usually low consumption - then masquerades in speech and prose as the much larger reality. It is then but a short step to treating what has not been measured as not really real. Patterns of dominance are then reinforced: of the material over the experiential; of the physical over the social; of the measured and measurable over the unmeasured and unmeasurable; of economic over social values; of economists over disciplines concerned with people as people. It then becomes the reductionism of normal economics, not the experiences of the poor, that defines poverty.

It is not only the definition of poverty that gets skewed by the analysis, but also the practice. Poverty alleviation programmes, social policy, research hypotheses and priorities, even the agendas of social movements have become focused on or shaped by a concept of poverty defined by income and the poverty line.

The linkages between the analytical framework and programme development are striking in the population

debate. For the analysts and the activists concerned with women and development, with development, with sexuality and with the HIV epidemic, there is much to learn from the population and development movement. In particular, a backwards glance at the history of discussion and action on population and development shows the critical importance of the initial act of naming a problem, of the adequacy of the analytical framework developed and of the strategies drawn from it to implement it.

Whose visions of population control?

Rampant population growth has been named as a problem. Fears have been expressed about population growth exceeding food supplies threatening human well-being defined broadly (Sen 1994:62-71). The dominant defining images have been of suffocating spaces and of globes with people piled up, overflowing and tumbling off. The images and word pictures contributed significantly to the changes in perception that led to a broad acceptance of population as a global concern.

These catastrophic images encouraged a simplistic analytical framework and emergency solutions. The proposals developed in the 50s and 60s to respond to this so named problem were based on the concept of population control. The operational strategies focused narrowly on the provision of family planning services providing contraceptives, sterilisation and abortion services primarily to women. There was little mention of, for example, women's health in general or even of human well-being as a positive end in itself rather than as something threatened by the population explosion.

Even after this issue was placed on the international agenda at the First World Conference on Population in Bucharest in 1974, both the analytical framework of the conference documents and its operational practice remained narrowly focused on population control. This occurred despite the insistence at the conference by the developing countries that population growth rates were inextricably linked to investment in education and health services and to social and economic development.

This history has had a number of consequences of relevance to the response to the HIV epidemic. Firstly, the analysis of the social changes to be initiated was undertaken at the macro level rather than at the individual, household or couple level. Consequently the indicators of success were based on demographic objectives and targets such as national fertility rates or overall population growth rates. The micro reality in which fertility decisions are taken, the dynamics of decision making between couples, were not considered relevant.

The distancing that a macro level analysis created from the untidy and uncontrollable realities of sexuality, childbearing and childrearing led to the hegemony of concepts such as 'pregnancy outcome', 'reproduction' and 'fertility regulation', hard-edged and depersonalising terms. Would women have chosen these words or images to describe their experiences of these realities? For me, words such as these carry no resonances of the complexity and chaos of the social and cultural pressures, the desires, the physical stirrings, the performance fears, emotional needs, the risk taking, misgivings, delusions, naivete, etc. that characterise sexuality. Nor of the complex of emotions, physical changes, social reactions, social and sexual desires, the ambiguity, pain and conflict which come with pregnancy and nurturing. The language of the analysis distances itself from, even denies, human realities.

The centrality of the concept of 'control' in the analytical framework pre-empted the ethical debates. The analytical framework implicitly asserted that controlling, even coercive, policies and programmes are justified by the ends to be achieved. It legitimised authoritarian interventions instead of advocating consensual approaches. It encouraged the viewing of people as being the means of achieving some externally established goal such as growth in aggregate income per capita, or environmental conservation through population control. Human life, people's dreams were not valued in themselves.

Women as instruments of public policy

Women became the instruments of public policy, the means to achieve the externally established goals. They were not participants or partners in a process of consensus building for social change whose parameters and vision were determined by them and the others essentially involved: their sexual partners, husbands, mothers-in-law and communities. Because it was felt that women were more amenable and their behaviour more easily modified, they became the focus of interventions.

This choice of women as the most effective instrument led to the neglect of men, of male sexuality and sexual behaviour, men's familial desires and their duties and responsibilities in the design and delivery of services.

Sexuality and development

The distancing of the analysis from the complex, diverse and dynamic realities of human sexuality and the failure to engage the sexual actors in the processes of strategic development led inevitably to a mechanistic approach. A set menu of contraceptives, almost exclusively for use by women, and the services required to make them available, both coercive and consensual, were introduced. Later, women's education and breastfeeding were advocated, not as being desirable in themselves, but rather as instruments or means of fertility decline and population control.

The vagaries of sexuality, the fears in the hearts of men, the complexity and ambiguity of a desire to become pregnant, the disempowerment of gender, the socioeconomic settings of these actions, even human well-being, were not the focus of services or programmes. Neither were infertility or maternal mortality and disability, much less the pain and suffering these caused. Even sexually transmitted infections were standardly consigned to a different and equally vertical programme, servicing mainly men.

The starting point for strategic development was not the daily and nightly realities of people's lives. The targets, concepts, values and strategies served the purposes of the outsiders. They did not enable and empower those concerned to express their dreams, fears and aspirations and identify their needs and their own resources.

The linkages were lost between sexuality and childbearing and the complex political, social, cultural and economic forces that influence and mediate daily decision making: access to economic resources, livelihood strategies, social and cultural norms and values, access to education, health and social services, etc. The linkage, unnameable in this analysis, between sexuality, empowerment and development went unnamed.

This is not to argue that family planning services and access to contraceptive technologies were not needed. They are clearly needed by those who have chosen to take reproductive responsibility. However it is not clear that it is their availability that changes patterns of decision making about sexuality, conception and children. There was a failure to differentiate between factors which influenced decision making and the contraceptive technology, and other goods and services required to enable implementation.

As a direct result of the analytical framework, the causes of failure to achieve the set targets were identified as a failure in the coverage or delivery of the propagated services rather than cultural factors such as the widespread valuing of the continuation of the lineage over women's lives, women's subordination to or emotional dependency on men, people's desire to live different lives from those advocated and so on.

The price of failure was seen by the professional, an outsider, as the addition of another unit of population. It was not seen as a serious impairment of the quality of women's lives or the tragedy of their unnecessary deaths or disability. Few or no studies were undertaken on how families and communities unravel, socially and economically, with women's drudgery, death or disability.

All this has now changed. Women lived the consequences of the old analysis, its mechanistic strategies and irrelevant discourse and rose up to change it, nationally and globally. Individual men began taking changing economic circumstances, rising costs of living, legal sanctions and, to some extent, women's health and well-being into account in the expression of their sexuality.

The importance of the Cairo Conference

Over the last three years, the former analytical framework has been replaced by one founded on the concepts of women's health, rights and empowerment and men's roles and responsibility in conception, childbearing and childrearing. The analytical framework of the documents of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development is given structure by these new concepts. They place human sexuality, desires and pleasure, women's health and empowerment, and men's engagement into the context of development in a more integrated and structural way, recognising the complexity of their interlinkages within political and cultural settings. They emphasise the role of the civil society in problem solving and the interrelationships between population, sustained economic growth and human development, between poverty, migration, urbanisation, education, social services and family decision making.

This radical deepening and broadening of the analytical framework and, to a certain extent, its strategies and practice was significantly influenced by one of the most extensive and effective movements of women in living history. Led by women of the South and supported by women of the North, the international women's health movement brought to this task an understanding grounded in the realities of their different daily lives.

They influenced national preparations, revised texts of conference papers, lobbied at the preparatory meetings, became members of national delegations and flocked to Cairo where, determined to hold all those finalising the documents accountable for their content, they queued for hours to get their passes to enter the main conference. No other social constituency or coalition has so influenced the discourse, the analysis or the strategies of a global initiative.

The Cairo analysis had three basic structuring concepts: women's empowerment, women's health and women's rights. There was a fourth concept, not well integrated into the analysis and with little if any presence in the strategies: men's participation and responsibilities. The documents present a rather idealised picture of what the role of men is or could be, a utopian vision of new gender roles in which both men and women share equal responsibility for their reproductive and sexual health (Danforth and Jezowski 1994).

There is little or no evidence that involving men in sexual and reproductive decision making leads to a shared participation in decision making. Nor are there any grounds to believe that, without a fundamental change in power relations between men and women, encouraging male involvement would lead to anything other than men taking over from women whatever capacity women did have for controlling this aspect of their lives. What seems to have 'galvanised men to manage their sperm' (Pyper and Freely 1994:94) is the economic setting of reproduction: the rising cost of feeding, educating and caring for the health of children in times of significantly decreasing real incomes or of access

to the means of production. It is this that underlies the success stories of national fertility decline.

The structuring concepts are the organising principles of the Cairo analysis. Because of them, the programme of action is not an unstructured, endless, aggregated list of women's woes. They provide the principles of selection: those actions are to be included which lead to these ends. This sets the document apart from all of the documents produced for international conferences on women which, because of a lack of analytical structuring concepts, have almost invariably been wish lists.

These structuring concepts, women's empowerment, rights and health, also provide entry points into the complexity of the reality. No longer does complexity paralyse; these threads draw it all together and point to a way of drawing us out of the maze. Perhaps the most striking thing about the Cairo analysis was its women centredness: the focus of the analysis changed from reproduction as the starting point to the reproducers.

Gender analysis: The need for new approaches

I would like to suggest that in the case of women and development or, to more explicitly encompass nations such as Australia, women and social change, the focal length of the analysis has drawn back from women to gender or male-female relations, a move from which, I want to argue, women do not seem to have benefited. Furthermore a gender analysis was then applied to both sexuality and HIV which equally has neither rung true nor provided a basis for effective action.

Let me explore a little what I see as the problematic of gender analysis, in itself and as a basis for practice or action. The concept of gender was developed as a way of describing social relationships as they manifested themselves in the interactions of women and men. At its best, it developed as a strategic theory or analysis exploring how the dynamics of the social relations of gender could be transformed. It named the processes of social construction of gender, explored the playing out of gender within interpersonal relations, both public and private, and led to a practice of transformation of these processes and interactions through social activism and social change. This analysis was born with the Women's Liberation Movement, one of the few social movements of our time which accepted the challenge to link theory and practice.

However, over the decades, this original endeavour has ossified into an analysis which creates a static topology of roles or fixed dichotomous categories (see Connell 1987, Bordo 1990). Although the tendency to gravitate to these undifferentiated categories is almost ubiquitous, I give an example from Susan Brownmiller: 'Rape is a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear' (1975:55).

This tendency is particularly evident in gender analysis as it is used in development theory. In this area, gender becomes an analytical tool for dividing the world into two categories, men and women, and mapping out the distribution of assets or the patterns of access or the allocation of tasks between them. It provides a descriptive topology which is essentially static and time-bound. Both men and women are theorised as internally undifferentiated categories. The analysis takes these two categories as given and maps out the patterns of access and distribution between them.

Thus, a gender analysis of labour would sketch out the division of labour by gender. An example drawn from a simple situation: in this community, men clear the fields and women do all other agricultural tasks. Or: women perform 80 per cent of all agricultural tasks. Or: women trade on the footpaths, men in the market. Or: men use their disposable income to buy consumer goods, women to feed their families. Seductive and even accurate as such statements may seem, they reduce complexity to undifferentiated universals. Gender analysis sets up the gender categories as a simple line of demarcation in social and economic life, adding complexity by mapping out differences over time or across cultures.

This is not to say that such a descriptive topology may not have value in increasing understanding of patterns of distribution but it does not provide a basis for change. It creates binary opposites - men and women - without concerning itself with the construction of these categories or with the social relations that give one a dominant position in sexual politics and which are constitutive of social interest. It may create a sense of outrage and certainly provides a basis for complaint. But it disempowers rather than empowers. It does not itself generate or even identify the fault lines of change nor unearth the practices required for social transformation.

The politics of access

The gender template is not strategic. It substitutes a static and incomplete description for a dynamic analysis of power and of difference. It cannot contain within its analysis the basis for social activism and social change: choice, capabilities, freedom, moral commitment, doubt, failure and transformation.

This analytical approach has led to a politics of access, a demand that women (or men) have access to what the other has in abundance. For example, a demand for more women in political life, in law, in private sector management, greater access for women to education and skills training. This approach has had results. There are now more women in these positions, for example, in Asia and Latin America, where there have been dramatic increases in women's access to education, health and the workplace.

However, the politics of access does not question the social arrangements that created this lack of access. It gives women

access to a workforce, for example, which remains structured around the assumption that the worker has a home-based service industry that provides for him all the domestic services needed to allow him to function efficiently in the workplace as it is structured: washing, ironing, cleaning, child-care, feeding, etc. Without a restructuring of the domestic workplace, women do not and cannot enter the public workplace as equals. They are thus bound to fail to conform to accepted behavioural expectations as they juggle conflicting responsibilities or they choose not to have a 'career', to refuse promotions, take positions not commensurate with their abilities and training or to leave.

Furthermore, in countries where women's access in these areas has improved, there has been little or no improvement in the rate of maternal mortality or disability, of illegal and illicit abortions, of female infanticide, neglect or deprivation, that is, of any variables which allow glimpses of how women are treated and valued in a society. The politics of access does not address the restructuring needed to allow for the interweaving of personal life with changing social and economic structures and social practice.

Us and them: The problem with gender analysis

By creating two such undifferentiated blocks, gender analysis also creates the conditions for confrontation between men and women. It can prejudice processes of dialogue and partnership, making people uncomfortable in a defensive sense. It can thus hinder the development of constructive discourse between men and women. Gender analysis is often heard as an accusation, an accusation that men have benefited from the exercise of extractive power, of having extracted social, economic and political benefits from or at the expense of women. Its reflection of a pervasive exploitation creates a backlash of outrage, self-justification, repudiation, even verbal or physical violence.

By theorising human complexity into two internally undifferentiated categories, gender analysis also leads to exceptionalism. If all men are whatever, then one has to deal with those that are not, or not so, whatever. Thus, one begins mapping out exceptions. For example, men dominate conversations, speaking over or ignoring women, although I must say that my male colleagues always listen without interrupting. It is interesting that even extensive exceptionalism often does not put in question the tendency to undifferentiated universalism.

Sexuality has been theoretically and metaphorically positioned within gender analysis as the plane of interface between these two universal categories. It derives its point of view from its unrelenting focus on the relations between men and women. This set of relations is understood and postulated to structure the social and sexual relations of all humans. This has rendered gender analysis heterosexist. In consequence, all other ways of sexually relating find themselves marginalised, colonised, devalued, excluded or considered as derivative or as instances of otherness.

By placing heterophallic intercourse at the centre of sexuality, gender analysis also makes penetrative intercourse representative of male-female sexual relations. But as women have experienced, sexuality or the exercise of sexual power is not only about intercourse. It permeates all aspects of public and private life (Game and Pringle 1983).

But is this true of men and male sexuality? Reflection on this question leads to the realisation that the historical basis of gender analysis has been an exploration of women's experiences and problems. Gender analysis has been used to try to elucidate the question. Gender analysis has been essentially women-centred. Is this approach then appropriate to an understanding of male sexuality, particularly in the context of the HIV epidemic?

Gender, men and HIV

To use a women-centred gender analysis as a framework for structuring our understanding of male sexual relations is to presuppose that all the elements required for an understanding can be drawn from the context of male-female relations. However, the framework provided by a women-centred analysis may not be adequate to understand why it is difficult for men not to become infected with HIV, or why or how men infect women. It may not help to understand why men enter sexual spaces or to provide insights into men in their relations with women, or the nature of these relations. The framework determines the questions but will these questions provide the insights? Should the focus of the analysis be changed? To men?

It may be that men's heterosexual behaviour and gender relations are derivative, being a reflection of or a consequence of the relations men have with other men: between fathers and sons, of men to themselves, and between men.

For most men, the structuring principles of their relations with men are primarily those of competition, authority, control and coercion. These principles are reflected in patterns of domestic and lineage authority, in the cultural values and hierarchical structures of the state and church, of the workplace and the sporting arena, in interpersonal and institutional rivalry and conflict, and in patterns of male sexual aggression, ambition and, in a number of societies, individualism. The control mechanisms which enforce the centrality of these structuring principles include verbal abuse, the use of terms such as 'effeminate', 'soft', 'sissy', and the emotional abuse of strictures on expressions of caring, tenderness, pain, and such like.

Self is defined in opposition to others, strength in terms of personal imperviousness, and power in terms of assertive or adversarial relations. Relations that men have with men are based on the exercise or the preservation of power through various forms of competition or violence. This reinforces tendencies to individualism or, where individual interest is dependent on a collective exercise of power, to the

establishment of groups of men whose access to and retention of power is dependent on their collective existence.

But there is something more worrying about the context of men's relations. This might be called male-centredness or pervasiveness. It is the assumption, conscious or unconscious, that maleness, or certain types of maleness, provide the standard for being human. Or that male ways of relating provide the norm for interacting as human beings. Reminders that there are alternative ways of relating, different reasons for coming together, alternative values and structuring principles, are rare for men in their daily lives. For many they are quite absent. The world is co-extensive with their world. Dominance induces not only arrogance but also blindness.

Thus, to understand the way male sexuality is expressed in their relations with women may require an understanding of the nature of their relations with other men. A [historically women centred] gender analysis may not be relevant.

Gender analysis and strategic development

In critiquing the practice of gender analysis in the context of development, I do not wish to argue that our language, history, social forms and organisational cultures are not gendered. They are and this textures the lives of both women and men. But gender manifests itself in the context of lives shaped by a multitude of influences. What I am searching for is an analysis or analytical tools or structuring concepts that will provide a more adequate or complex basis for strategic development. The approach will need to capture the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, of domination and subordination, of self and other - centredness and the ways these dynamics are played out in multiple and shifting settings. It will also need to point towards the fault lines and pressure points through which change could more easily occur and contain within itself means to trigger these changes.

Tools for addressing the situation of women

What other conceptual or analytical tools are there to assist in elucidating women's situation and the practice that will be required to address it? To begin to address this question, I wish to return to women's past history and consider whether there are any women's practices which might provide insights into and point the way to good development practices.

One of the sources of feminism's transformative impetus was the Women's Liberation Movement of the first three decades of this century, the late 60s and 70s. It had a highly developed theoretical framework strategically linked to change and developed some powerful practices for social transformation which, through a process of trivialisation and defamation, have long been discredited. Perhaps it is time to reclaim and reconsider them.

The first such conceptual and strategic practice was the use of the concept of sisterhood. This was a concept to be

instantiated and embodied in all women: all women were part of the sisterhood. Women writing to women, including strangers, signed themselves 'in sisterhood'. Women referred to each other as 'Sister'. This practice was developed to address the lack of trust and the suspicion generated amongst women when they gain their identity and derive their value only from the men in their lives. In such societies, women come to be created as competitors and strangers, without links to each other except through the patriarchy.

As a strategic concept, it was not directly challenging to the patriarchy. It provided an alternative sense of identity and membership in a new and different world. Its use led to tolerance of diversity and acceptance of difference amongst women. It created a sense of oneness in diversity and so of trust and respect. It wove women together as the warp and weft of this unity of sisterhood. It did not destroy their patriarchal, bureaucratic or political linkages but created new ones, directly, woman to woman. Women began to think of women as 'we'. It made possible the emergence of a sense of solidarity.

The second critical instrument was the practice of consciousness raising: the collective sharing of the unarticulated, the pain, the desire, the dreaming. The shared naming of women's experiences of gender, sexuality, violence, indignity, power and subordination created a radically new way of understanding and rethinking women's relations to reality. It transformed women's consciousness, changing their ways of thinking and feeling. In groups they began to name the truth to one another and to see themselves collectively, not individually, trapped in the meshes of patriarchal power. From sharing the private and painful came the determination and courage to work towards a different world.

Consciousness raising made possible the emergence of a sense of empowerment. It created a space for tactical and strategic planning and provided a safe haven for forays into the world outside. And since women's sense of self worth is based on agency, the feeling that they can do something of value, make some of the changes they would like to see in their lives and the world, it created, both for individual women and for women collectively, a sense of their own value.

It also embodied in its structures the way women relate to the world, not as individuals and solitary selves but as being and growing in connectedness with others. It was a practice which rejected the canons of objectivity to embrace the subjective and the empathetic. It was based on the premise that women could come to understand societies and their structures because of the lives that each woman had led, not despite them. It brought the whole person into the processes rather than insisting that a person could and should, in some sense, stand outside of their situation and critically assess it. Together women strove to give voice to and comprehend the reality of women's lives from within the process of living them. This sense of connectedness and the collective will to change are the preconditions for social change based on people's own dreams of the world they would wish to live in. Social change, if it is to be sustainable, must come from within and

both men and women need to participate. Thus, the fundamental challenge to development practice is to facilitate and stimulate such preconditions. Consensus building and empowerment, along with the confidence and hope that they create, become the catalysing concepts.

Theory versus gendered reality

How, in practice, does this work itself out? In *A Quiet Revolution*, (1986), Martha Chen describes the efforts of the Bangladesh Rural Achievement Committee (BRAC) to increase the rate of female literacy in certain rural areas. The project began from a conviction that literacy is important in improving the quality of these secluded women's lives. It was seen as closely linked with other values such as economic and personal autonomy and self-respect. This conviction did not derive from the local traditions of the villages, where women had in fact little autonomy and no experience of education. It derived from the experiences and reflection of the development workers themselves, who were mostly nationals but from many different socioeconomic backgrounds.

In the first phase of the BRAC programme, the development workers went directly to the rural villages with their ideas of literacy and its importance, offering adult literacy materials borrowed from another national programme, and trying to motivate the women of the communities they entered to take them on. They found that general talk of the value of literacy and of self-respect did not interest the women. Women found the borrowed literacy materials boring and irrelevant to their lives. They did not see how literacy would help them. Even the accompanying vocational training was resisted since it focused on skills for which there was little demand in that area. No will for change arose. No will among the village women to reflect upon the convictions of the workers.

Failure made BRAC rethink their approach. They never abandoned their basic conviction that literacy was important for these women. This conviction, based on wide experience and on their vision of what these women's lives might be, still seemed sound. On the other hand, they recognised that far more attention to the lives and thoughts of the women involved would be necessary if they were going to come up with an understanding of what literacy might do and be for them. To do this, the women had to come to believe that their daily experiences were significant and worth the attempt, by themselves and others, to understand them.

BRAC created cooperative groups where the village women and the development workers could explore together the women's experiences and sense of life. This led both the women and the development workers to a much more complex understanding of the situation, as they grasped the network of relationships within which the women had to function and the specific dimensions of their poverty and cultural constraints. At the same time, the women grasped the alternative possibilities for their lives and began to define for themselves a set of aspirations and strategies for change.

The development workers, the outsiders, were the facilitators of these changes, creating a place for reflection, for questioning, for dreaming, a space within the system to challenge it.

The result, which continues, has been a slow and complex evolution in the role of women in the villages. Because all in the village were part of the processes of change, this evolution has not created tensions between men and women and all have benefited. In one fishing village, the women decided to each save a handful of rice from their weekly rations, to pool and sell it. Within a few years, they had saved \$2,000 and were able to lend it to the men of the village to buy better equipment. Other women's groups have invested in new power pumps for the village or seed for the fields. These women, their husbands and families, as well as the development workers, are now experiencing a sense of the unboundedness of life.

Women's dreams and development

Thus the development of which women dream is more radical than the demand that women's voices be heard, than the demand that women be active participants rather than used as instruments or than the demand that development meet women's needs. It is a demand for the possibility of a different way of going about life, of a different way of organising society, of a different way of interacting and of a different way of doing development.

Women's dreaming encompasses the embodied realities of men and women, for it draws upon an ability to identify with and to enter into the perspectives of others. It also encompasses changes in the organising principles of masculinity and femininity. The prevailing cultures of male dominance, of sexism, of patriarchy, would be jostled and distorted, perhaps sidelined, by new social arrangements and forms of organisation. It can only happen if new social processes emerge;

- where decisions are made as a result of consensus building between competing forces, not by force or authority, processes which facilitate free expression and discussion in which imagination, reason and feeling could all shape the outcome;
- where the words, metaphors and images are not

handmaidens of state power, religious or corporate institutions or of gender, class or ethnic privilege.

These new processes will need to be supported by the development of cooperative and non-exploitative productive capacities and socioeconomic structures based on the organisational principles of networks as well as centralised, controlling institutions.

Development then will require a primary focus on social capacity building, on the creation of spaces and processes whereby these new social arrangements can come about (UNDP 1994). Social capacity building seeks to improve the ability of groups to make decisions, reach consensus, act in the common good. It helps to create and strengthen a commitment to inclusion, to empowerment, to relations of mutual respect and connectedness and to the use of images, metaphors and language which reflect and create these new conditions. It is these relations amongst human beings which constitute the basis on which moral communities are built, communities within which human development can occur. Development, thus, has much to learn from the practices that women and their organisations and movements have developed.

The practice of this kind of development is a moral activity for it encompasses those things about which we make moral choices: whether and how to care for others as well as ourselves, when to maintain and when to transform social relations, the kind of economic and political arrangements within which we want to live our lives. It also presupposes a moral commitment, for the achievement of these new forms of development will require individuals to act in the interests of the community or collectivity of which she or he is a member. This will enhance the collective will to change and so the willingness of people to persevere in their pursuits.

The moral communities that form the core of social capacity building evolve only in the context of meaningful human relations and interactions. It is a process of change which is essentially endogenous, arising from within social groups. It leads to mutual agreements among the groups and organisations which make up civil society and nations. Only if communities and nations come to value women and their ways of thinking and acting will women and their dreaming become a part of them.

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