

*Notas para la ponencia a ser presentada por Susan Paulson. U Florida
Descrecimiento México 3-7 septiembre 2018. Tema del Día: Supervivencia.*

Toward ethnic and gender systems that support diversity and interconnection for human survival

Hacia sistemas étnicos y de género que respaldan la diversidad e interconexión para la supervivencia

Together with decreases in the quantity of material and energy used by human economies, our world needs sociocultural transformations that re-establish livelihoods, relationships and politics around values and goals not driven by growth.

People gathered here are working in many ways to foster such transformation:

1. Establishing supportive structural conditions by changing political economic institutions and processes (Boillat et al. 2012; Sekulova et al. 2013; Daly 1996; Spratt et al. 2009).
2. Widening epistemological horizons by supporting a pluriverse of knowledge and value (Escobar, Sousa xxxx)

Today we explore a third front:

3. Altering the systems through which socialized humans and socioecological worlds are produced, sustained and adapted.

Homo sapiens have not survived or evolved as individuals.

Among organisms that interact in the earth's ecosystems, **individual** Homo sapiens are poorly equipped to meet their own needs, or to assure their descendants' survival.

Selfish competition and drive for private property are **not** instincts hardwired through biological evolution. On the contrary. These individualistic values and behaviors are relics of recent history.

The evolutionary key to survival of our species is a biophysical capacity for symbolic thought and communication that enables **groups** of humans to **collaboratively** develop languages, religions, economies, sciences, kinship and gender. These sociocultural systems survive the individual organism, and help to produce new generations of humans, their habits and their habitats.

They are our most fundamental commons. For hundreds of thousands of years, diverse manifestations of these sociocultural systems have enabled some human communities to survive, reproduce and adapt. And led others to collapse.

Let us focus on two of these systems: gender and ethnicity

In all known human groups, gender and ethnicity have intertwined with kinship and production systems to shape division of labor, collaboration, and shared environmental management--all vital for socio-ecological survival.

Gender Definition

A sociocultural system that works to organize and give meaning to practices and relations through which human groups produce and reproduce people and communities, distribute and use resources, and develop institutions and environments, all with symbolic reference to sex and sexuality.¹

Ethnicity Definition

“Members of an **ethnic group** may consider themselves or be defined by others as different and special because of their language, religion, geography, history, ancestry, or physical traits. When an ethnic group is assumed to have a **biological basis** (shared blood or genetic material), it is called a *race*.” (Conrad Kottak and Kathryn Kozaitis. 2007, p. 87).

These two systems are vital for socio-ecological resilience and supervivencia

For 20 years I carried out research in the Andes on ways in which identities and relations of gender and ethnicity structure management of diverse technical skills and knowledges, numerous species of plants and animals, eco-niches at various altitudes, places that are geographically distant, and various forms of exchange and reciprocity. Especially relevant is how these sophisticated technologies of socio-environmental management evolved to sustain populations through millennia---adapting in the face of Aymara, Inca, and Iberian empires, as well as western development.

Just as biodiversity is key to resilience of ecosystems, so too the phenomenal diversity created by human sociocultural systems, and diverse identities and landscapes produced by them, are key to resilience of human life.

Greatly varying forms of knowing and being associated with identities within and between groups have prevented all humans from seeing the world in the same way, from putting all their eggs in one basket.

We need to distinguish general definitions from specific manifestations:

Gender and ethnic systems are not by definition equitable or inequitable, sustainable or unsustainable, just or unjust. These are *historical* questions that need to be asked in the analysis of specific manifestations. (quote...postcolonial feminism)

Ethnicity ≠ xenophobia, solidarity, racism

Gender ≠ patriarchy, complementarity, sexism

¹ Paulson 2014. P. 18.

Today we look at specific manifestations adapted and disseminated as part of the capitolocene an era that dawned five centuries ago with interrelated expansion of colonialism, capitalism and western science, and has led to unprecedented damage to earth systems. (Jason Moore XXX).

For some 200,000 years, modern humans have been walking, talking, enacting an astonishing variety of gender and ethnic identities and relations.

Over the past 500 hundred years, hierarchical systems of ethnorace and gender have developed in ways that engineer—and justify—unequal exchanges that enable an astonishing expansion of fossil-fueled industrialized economies with sky-rocketing ecological footprint.

Capitolocene language, science and philosophy have established hierarchical binaries of white over non-white, man over woman, human over other nature, engraved in the world—and in our bodies--- in ways that make it difficult to question forms of exploitation that enables accumulation and growth.

Two features unique to the capitolocene pose challenges to survival.

1. Diversity has been diminished by the global dominance of one mode of being and knowing
2. Attempts to change have been suppressed by the scientific portrayal of dominant mode (including ethnic and gender distinctions) as determined by biology

In this historical process, gender and ethnicity have been harnessed with exceptional success to serve expanding appropriation, exploitation and accumulation. Two key mechanisms are:

1. Appropriation through racialization
2. Gendering and hierarchization of productive vs. reproductive realms

1. Appropriation through racialization

Racialization and racism are different from (although always intersecting with) other forms of ethnicity and ethnocentrism in two ways. First, racialization is a *historically specific phenomenon* that developed and evolved in conjunction with European conquest of distant colonies and the development of capitalism starting around the sixteenth century, then evolved in diverse contexts. Second, racial ideologies are rooted in *biological understandings* of human difference that were consolidated through the logic and language of natural science in 19th and 20th centuries (Wade 2010; Omi and Winant 1986, 2009).²

² Chapter 20

Land-claims: Racialized environmental struggles in Latin America

Susan Paulson

I am particularly interested in the emergence and operation of racialization as a technology for appropriation of human and other resources toward ends of accumulating wealth and expanding economies.

In American colonies, Europeans and their descendants practiced a variety of arrangements to appropriate land, labor, and other resources from people of African and Native American descent. These ranged from policies promoting miscegenation and incorporation of mixed offspring aimed to reduce an indigenous population with rival claims to the land to systems of racial exclusion and hypodescent aimed to enlarge enslaved labor forces (Wolfe 2011).

Juanita Sundberg (2008:573) and Jonathan Amith's (2005) reveal justifications for such theft in racialized distinctions between what colonists' represented as their own rational and productive exploitation of land and labor, and traditional resource practices perceived as lazy, derelict and unproductive.

I think I agree that Euro man's strategies have often been superior for the goal of transforming select resources into financial gain for a few, and thereby increasing GDPs.

What Scientific economic rationale left out was the skill and knowledge for sustaining and reproducing human and other natural resources over time and space.

Cumulative effects of this shortsighted calculus now evident in earth systems reveals that Capitalocene productive strategies have led to damage not only to colonized and enslaved people – but to privileged ones as well.

2. Gendering and hierarchization of productive and reproductive realms

Before the 20th century, the vast majority of labor in the world was not performed to earn money, or to accumulate wealth (Polanyi 1944). Masculine, feminine and other social identities were established through activities oriented to reproducing human groups, together with material and cultural conditions that sustain them.

Historical moves to transform this situation faced profound challenges. During European industrialization, it was not easy to convince people to sell their labor for money: forms of coercion ranged from enclosing the commons to chaining workers to the loom (see Polanyi, 1944, Weber, 1920 and Weeks, 2011).

Nor was it easy in Latin America, where historical records demonstrate brutal efforts made to force or lure indigenous and African people, as well as Europeans, to work in mines, logging, plantations and other (Mangan, 2005; Zulawski, 1990).

From English textile mills to American plantations --- early forms of capitalist production that used men's, women's, children's labor ran into trouble sustaining human resources. Employees or slaves suffered high rates of sickness and death, and struggled to replace themselves with new generations.

A historic mode of production and reproduction emerged to supply labor for expanding economies. The tripartite model includes: conceptual and institutional divorce between activities identified as "productive" and those identified as "reproductive"; the designation of the first as "masculine" and the second as "feminine"; and the disproportionate allocation of monetary value, resources and power to masculine-associated production.

Portrayed as a modern and civilized way to live, and pushed by national and international development policies and programs as an effective way to stimulate economic growth, by the 20th century this mode had come to be perceived as natural and universal.

Varying ideological and institutional forces interacted to produce human identities and family relations that supported capital growth.

With time, men in many contexts were raised with motivation to sell their labor ---not only to access desired money, but to gain prestige, political power, and dignity. For many, the endurance of painful and exploitative conditions became a way to experience and display virility.

Women were raised to reproduce that labor day by day through food, rest, healthcare, and to reproduce that labor over generations by raising children.

These gender arrangements were integral to historical changes absolutely vital to growth: those through which monetary value gained prominence over other valuations.

Masculinized realms called "production" became increasingly monetized and valued in the market, while feminized labor of care work, housework, and reproducing socialized humans was much less monetized, and gained little market value.

Some aspects of this mode of production have been widely critiqued and challenged--namely the discrimination that women face in gaining use, control, power and management over diverse resources and capitals associated with paid work, and the lesser value and power that women experience in "reproductive" labor.

The past few decades have been marked by multi-million dollar investment by international organizations, governments, and private industry to move women into paid work. In Latin America, since 1980 more than 80 million additional women were incorporated into the workforce. (WB xxx)

I argue that official motives for these efforts --- desires to promote equality of rights and opportunities between women and men in given populations---have obscured deeper drives to harness more and cheaper labor to expand economic production and accelerate growth.

What are implications of this dangerous liaison between feminist and pro-growth drives?

Massive moves of women into paid work with almost no financial, political, or intellectual support for shifts in masculine roles, nor increased social-political support for reproductive and care work, has led to contradictory outcomes:

1. Some individual women have gained greater access to money and associated capitals.
2. Women's labor has fueled growth of economies and societal metabolisms.
3. Feminist aims of healthier gender identities and relations have produced very mixed results (WB xx).
4. Lopsided changes have left devastating impacts on survival for men and women, families, communities, environments.

A more Degrowth-friendly response to concerns of gender inequality might involve working to increase the valuation of and investment in reproductive realm, together with support for masculinities that are positively correlated with care for and sustenance of individuals, families, communities and environments.

Men are, of course, trained to resist such initiative as emasculating for selves and disastrous for nation.

Perhaps we can encourage change of course by making visible the costs of the Faustian bargain of growth.

Naturalization of gender roles—together with prioritization of money value--have made us blind to the severe costs associated with masculinities.

The great acceleration in global economic growth and ecological footprint (starting mid 20th century) has corresponded with drastic quantitative changes for men throughout the world.

Latin America moved from a relatively gender-equitable life expectancy in 1950 to one in which women, on average, outlive men by 6.5 years.

In Latin America, economic growth has been driven by activities that degrade local environments and exacerbate global climate change: mining, logging, oil production, ranching and agro-industry. Ecological economists have demonstrated that the profitability of these companies depends on the unequal exchange of ecological value of material and energy (Hornborg, 2012). An additional common requisite is access to certain type of human resource in the form of workers produced as strong, tough, and disposable.

Today, millions of men struggle to meet expectations of masculinity and to demonstrate their virility through underpaid work that is dangerous and destructive for both men and the environment.

Feminist analysis can help reveal how productivist policies and propaganda have bent gender and kinship systems to support economic growth.

Intersectionality can help reveal how this gendered mode of production works with

socioeconomic and ethnoracial distinctions to produce subordinate masculinities.

Among cases I've studied in several Latin American contexts the symbolic binary that associates masculinity with paid "productive work," in contrast to inferior and unpaid "reproductive work" interacts with constructions of subordinate masculinities in which manliness is measured by one's capacity to perform brutally hard labor in uncomfortable conditions, and virility is displayed by taking risks, and by exercising and enduring violence. These norms did not come from the Garden of Eden. Over generations, different kinds of policies and propaganda have influenced the adaptation of gender and kinship systems to produce bodies and identities that serve the evolving growth machine.

Violent regimes of masculinity not only produce and drive masculine workers into hazardous and harmful labor; they also produce cannon fodder for conflicts in which elites and states conscript poor men to fight against other poor men over control of land and other resources.

Intersectionality also reveals that it is not only poor, low-educated men of color whose health and well-being is jeopardized by growth-driven expectations of masculinity.

Successful men in wealthy countries are also drawn into Faustian bargains, and also have shorter life spans than women compatriots, and the gaps are growing. (I am Man, Hear my Roar)

More integral understandings of gender, together with degrowth conversations, move us away from the technical adjustment of shifting the role of women within the dominant mode of production, toward deeper transformations toward modes that are gentler and more nurturing for men, women, and the environment.

Horizon for positive adaptations in ethnic and gender systems

Recent decades have been marked by tremendous innovation, mobilization, and debate in ethnic and gender systems

To date these have rarely been connected with growth-degrowth debates. Now we have fabulous opportunities to find and forge synergies.

For the past 30 years Latin America has been shaken by environmental conflicts in which people engaged in struggles over land and natural resources explicitly identify themselves with African and/or indigenous heritage.

Ethnoracial solidarity and discourse have been motivated to (re)claim re-appropriate territories rights to ethnic-based governance of land, bodies, and human-environment relations. Some of these processes have prioritized value of reproduction of languages, lifeways, stories, cosmologies.

The 500th anniversary of the "discovery" of the Americas was celebrated with extraordinary protests for indigenous territory and dignity. In 1992 thousands of Amazonian residents walked to Quito, then camped for weeks in front of the governmental palace to demand legal recognition

of ancestral territories of Quichua, Shiwiar and Achuar Nations. Lowland participants bore traditional spears, masks and head-dresses marking their Amazonian identity, and thousands of Andean Indians, heretofore organized in separate networks, joined the march and supported what would become an allied movement. In following years, Ecuadorian protestors used their indigenously marked bodies to block bridges and roads, paralyzing the nation in protests over a Hydrocarbon Law and an Agrarian Development Law that tried to abolish communal holdings.

The same year Bolivians marched from the lowlands demanding rights to ancestral territories, and in 1994, indigenous women marched for sovereignty over their bodies, crops, and fields in the Chapare, a militarized coca growing region. In 2000, indigenous organizations joined with other sectors to drive out transnational investors in Cochabamba's famous "Water Wars", and in 2005 to abort a major sale of natural gas, forcing the resignation of two national Presidents along the way. In the Peruvian Amazon nearly 1000 Achuar arrived in boats and headdresses to occupy four oil wells in 2006. Faces streaked with paint and carrying hunting guns and ceremonial spears, they formed a peaceful blockade that shut down most of the region's oil production for two weeks.

Meanwhile, in Brazil, remarkable changes in political and legal conditions opened unprecedented possibilities for poor Brazilians to acquire land, and reconfigured relations between racial identity and land claims. Different parts of Brazil's 1988 constitution outlined routes to access land by landless, indigenous, and African slave descendants (Linhares 2004:818).

Today, some politicians and scientists continue to characterize racially-identified populations as barriers to modern development, or to conservation, others see them as inspirations for sustainable lifeways and environmental management.

Horizon of gender-sexuality identities and relationships have opened to a wider array of identities and arrangements, including new experiments, and resuscitation of long-evolving gender arrangements that were punished or invisibilized in colonial/capitalist/western science expansion (Muxes in Mexico, Hijras in 7 countries w 3rd gender citizenship options).

Gender practices are being adjusted as countless women, and some men, push out of their roles prescribed by capitalocene mode of production.

As contradictions of current growth models destabilize families and communities, my current research explores efforts by low-paid working men to re-value and re-integrate work of care and regeneration (for self and others) into everyday practices and relations.

During interviews carried out this year in Ecuador and Mexico, dozens of men told me about physical and emotional hardships that they (and their fathers before them) had experienced in efforts to meet expectations of manhood. Some also described efforts through which they are trying to change norms that have constrained their own horizons. By adapting their personal practices and interactions, and by adjusting the expectations they communicate for others, some working men are consciously trying to raise sons and daughters capable of following—or even forging—a wider range of paths.

Conclusion: Degrowth in synergy with innovations in gender and ethnic systems

¿Cómo podemos impulsar la movilización y la organización social necesaria, frente a los nuevos riesgos o amenazas creadas por el cambio climático y las nuevas tecnologías dañinas? ¿Frente a las presiones inducidas por el ser humano en el ambiente global; frente a la creciente violencia contra los cuerpos humanos?

Forging and practicing healthy ethnic and gender identities and relationships that are not shaped to drive growth machine, but rather to bring more wellbeing and happiness

- Treat diverse lifeways, languages, gender and ethnic systems as vital resources for global survival.
- Defend lifeways critiqued as inimical to economic growth—from Amazonian tribes to eco-communes in Barcelona.
- Increase value and reward of labor to care for, sustain and regenerate life
- Seek and dignify gentler paths to humanness

Current socio-ecological crises open cracks in the system, opportunities to change aspects of ourselves and our worlds.

A fundamental move is to colonize our minds by exposing popular myths of biological determination that serve to constrain abilities to think beyond the status quo.

Myths:

- Evolutionary drive for self individualism, private property, accumulation
- Binary categories white/black, man/woman, human/nature
- Essentialization of racial categories
- Women as innate caretakers
- Men driven by instinct or hormones to exploit humans and other nature

A parallel move is to celebrate those unique biophysical characteristics that enable humans to imagine, communicate and construct an endless variety of socioecological worlds.

Reflections around degrowth and ethno-gender systems help to shape new conceptualizations of mode of production that pay attention not only to how humans manufacture food, shelter, clothing (and profit); but also to how we co-produce biophysical landscapes, together with regimes of production, knowledge and governance. And, the blueprints we use for the most amazing thing that human communities produce: differentiated human bodies socialized with skills, visions and desires, including appetites for consumption and connection.