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Gendered processes of empowerment and disempowerment

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Introduction

The development discourse and practices have in the past been criticised by feminists around the world for its male-centred conceptualisation. The substance of the critique was that women hadn't been treated as equal contributors to development, and neither had they not been equal recipients of the benefits of development.[1] This consequently led to a focus on women through the Women and Development approach (WAD). However, an explicit focus on women has now changed to a more engendered approach. Many development actors have adopted the so-called Gender and Development approach (GAD), which recognizes both men and women as a gender and seeks addressing structural inequalities between men and women. Diane Elson addresses that we have to acknowledge that men and women play out gendered roles within their societies and that "supposedly gender-neutral terms are in fact imbued with male bias, presenting a view of the world that both obscures and legitimates ill-founded asymmetry"[2]. A GAD approach also recognizes that women's role in society isn't autonomous from gender relations and we should study and analyse the relation between men and women rather than study women as separate beings[3]. Andrea Cornwall states that "it [GAD] came into being as an approach that sought to tackle women's subordination through an explicit emphasis on socially and historically constructed relations between women and men"[4]. In the GAD approach, gender is seen as "shaped not only by a multiplicity of interacting time- and place-contingent influences (culture, mode of production, legal and political institutions, for example), but is further mediated by men's and women's insertions into other socially generated categories such as class, age and 'race"[5]. However, GAD principles of including and speaking of both genders are rarely put into practice; where gender is mentioned it mostly implies women[6].

Gender equality has been recognised in the development discourse as an end in itself, i.e. it's not only desirable for the achievement of other goals such as poverty

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[1] **McIlwaine, Cathy & Datta**, **Kavita** (2003) "From Feminising to Engendering Development, *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Femninist Geography,* 10:4, pp.369–382), p.369.

[2] **Elson, Diane** (1991), *Male Bias In The Development Process,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[3] **Cupples, Julie** (2013) Latin American Development, London: Routledge, p.154; **Chant, Sylvia** and **Sweetman, Caroline** (2012) "Fixing women or fixing the world? Smart economics, efficiency approaches and gender equality in development", Gender and Development 20 (3) 517-529, p.518; see also **Peet, Richard and Hartwick, Elaine** (2009) "Theories of Development: contentions, arguments alternatives", Chapter 7 in Feminist theories of development. London; The Guilford Press, p.267–268.

[4] **Cornwall, Andrea** (2000) "Missing Men? Reflections on Men, Masculinities and Gender in GAD", *IDS BULLETIN* 31 (2) pp.18–27. P.18.

[5] Moser 1993:3 cited in **Chant, Sylvia** (2000), "From 'Woman-blind' to 'Man-kind': Should Men Have More Space in Gender and Development?", *IDS BULLETIN* 31 (2), pp. 7–17, p.8.

[6] **Chant** 2000:14; see also **Cornwall** 2000.

reduction[7]. Globally there is a structural tendency for women to lag behind men in most aspects of societal life. According to the United Nations Development Program women scores lower on the Human Development Index (HDI) worldwide[8]. The index measures development based on three factors: a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living[9]. In other words, men live generally healthier lives; have more knowledge and better living standards than women globally.

This paper sets out to analyse the theoretical concept of empowerment that aims to analyse the processes of gender equality. Empowerment is often defined as the ability or self-confidence for making choices or changes in ones life[10]. It has been argued that a women's empowerment approach is an important way for reaching gender equality[11]. However, a body of literature have questioned if it's beneficial or justified to only focus on women's empowerment. Some scholars have argued that an important factor for reaching gender equality is to encourage and also include men. Sylvia Chant argues that due to limited progress on gendered equality that "involving men may be a more effective alternative for scaling down gender inequalities" and she also stresses that "excluding men gives them little chance to challenge the stereotypes ascribed to them"[12]. The rationale for this claim has mostly been that women do sometimes become disempowered by empowerment projects, because men sometimes oppose women's empowerment by, for example, being violent towards women[13].

1.1 Aim and method

The aim for this paper is to examine the gendered processes of empowerment and disempowerment. The question I seek to answer in this paper is the following one: is gendered empowerment a relational issue? The question originates from the claim that women's empowerment cannot be approached as an isolated phenomenon but has to,

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[7] Kabeer 2005:13.

[8] **UNDP** (2013) Human Development Report 2013 Gender-related Development Index, http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-5-gender-related-development-index-gdi. (Accessed 2016-04-17).

[9] **Willis, Katie** (2011) *Theories and Practices of Development*, London: Routledge, p.7.

[10] **Kabeer, Naila** (1999) "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment", *Development and Change,* Vol.30, pp.435–464.

[11] **Kabeer**, **Naila** (2005) "Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goals" *Gender and Development* 13(1) pp.13-24, p.13.

[12] Chant 2000:10–11.

[13] **Leach, Fiona & Sitaram, Shashikala** (2002) "Microfinance and women's empowerment: a lesson form India", Development in practice, VOL 12, No 5.

some extent, also include men[14]. Andrea Cornwall and Nana Akua Anyidoho criticises the empowerment discourse for having a isolating approach to women and says that empowerment often is approached as "individualistic, instrumental, neo-liberal. It peddles in gender myths that sustain an image of the 'good woman' as the deserving object of development assistance"[15]. Cornwall also stresses that we have to rethink how we approach gender issues and that we shouldn't see gender "as a unilateral women's issue, but in terms of relations of power and powerlessness in which men as well as women may experience vulnerability, disempowerment and disadvantage"[16]. A GAD approach that only focuses on women isn't sound since women aren't always the losers. Sylvia Chant says that "the late twentieth century has witnessed growing talk of 'men in crisis'…with young lower-income males singled out as especially vulnerable to insecurity and marginalisation". Thus men and women both experience disempowerment though its nature, scale and processes may vary. Cornwall further stresses that "[…] 'gender relations' is used in GAD discourse not to signify any kinds of relations between women and men"[17]. But "refer to rather particular kinds of relations, which are constructed in particular kinds of ways: oppressive relationships, exemplified by and premised on heterosexual relationships between men and women" and "there is no space at all for men's experiences of powerlessness, love or dependant in their relationships with women"[18]. The claim here is that perhaps it's too narrow to only focus on women and empowerment since men can also experience disempowerment.

However, claiming that men can also be disempowered isn't without friction. Cornwall and White reports that during a seminar about current GAD practices, a participant raised its concerns by questioning "whether empowerment activities would extend to men. Some would regard this as problematic, given existing associations of men with power: men ought, in these terms, to be giving up power rather than seeking empowerment"[19]. There is also a fear from GAD workers that men would start to take or seek positions of control in various projects[20]. Ruth Pearson claims that there is a bias against men in many gender equity projects, first of all there are mostly women with

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[14] Chant 2000:12; Cornwall 2000; see also **Cleaver, Francis** (2002) Chapter 1"Men and masculinities: new directions in gender and development", in Cleaver, F. (2002) Masculinities matter: men, gender and development. London: Zed Books.

[15] **Cornwall, Andrea and Anyidoho, Nana Akua** (2010), "Introduction: Women's empowerment: contentions and contestations", *Development*, 2010,53(2), pp.144–149, p.145.

[16] Cornwall 2000:24.

[17] Tcherzekoff 1993: Cornwall 1998 cited in Cornwall 2000:20.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] **Cornwall, Andrea & White, Sarah C**. (2000) "Men, Masculinities and Development: Politics, Policies and Practices", IDS BULLETIN 31 (2) pp.1–6, p.2; Cornwall 2000:20.

power in empowerment projects (men often consciously excluded), and secondly there is a lack of actually launching projects for change of typical (often seen as homogenous) male stereotypes[21]. Cornwall also states that there seem to be an assumption within the empowerment discourse "that all men have power and as a corollary, that all of those who have power are male"[22]. Thus it's claimed that the inclusion of men, both as actors implementing projects and as targets of empowerment, would undermine the feminist work that has already been done.

So, in order to answer the posed question a so-called analysis of ideas will be applied as a method, i.e. the scientifically study of political messages[23]. This will be done through a descriptive analysis that aims at explaining what a phenomenon is and say something about a texts message that's not self-evident[24]. Beckman tells us that "to describe isn't to refer but rather to read between the lines. A scientifically description doesn't reproduce a material but rather draws conclusions about it"[25]. And the analytical technique used and combined with the descriptive analysis will be of an argumentation analysis. The analysis will be centred on ideas and not the actors that have presented them[26]. The reason for choosing an argumentation analysis is firstly because it's a desk-based research and secondly because it focuses theoretically on different scholar's perspectives or approaches to empowerment. Ludvig Beckman says that "argumentation analysis is a partly formalised analytical technique for systematically describing those arguments that figures in a debate in a particular subject"[27]. Beckman states that "the scientist can construct a debate by juxtaposition arguments from different texts that discusses one and the same question"[28]. What I intend doing is constructing a debate between the claim that men have power and that empowerment is mainly a women's issue contra the claim that also men could be disempowered and that empowerment has to be approached as a relational issue, that's to say both men and women's (dis)empowerment has to be taken into account. The aim here isn't to prove the strength of the arguments but rather investigate their implications and consequences. Firstly, I will describe the arguments around what empowerment is and that men could also be

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[21] **Pearson, Ruth** (2000) "Which Men? Why Now? Reflections on Men and Development", *IDS BULLETIN* 31 (2) pp.42–48, p.44–45,47.
[22] Cornwall 1997 cited in Cornwall 2000:23.
[23] **Beckman, Ludvig** (2005) *Grundbok i idéanalys – det kritiska studiet av politiska texter och idéer,* Stockholm: Santérus Förlag, p.11–12, (in Swedish).
[24] Beckman 2005:49–50.
[25] Beckman 2005:50 my own translation.
[26] Beckman, 2005:17.
[27] Beckman 2005:38, my own translation.
[28] Beckman 2005:40, my own translation.

disempowered. Secondly, I'm going to draw from these arguments and scholars arguing about empowerment as a relational issue and examine what consequences their arguments might lead to and build upon that. Since what I haven't found in my readings of the empowerment discourse is a more concrete theoretical understanding of how power relations within the context of men and women constructs (dis)empowerment.

What my argumentation seeks adding the empowerment discourse is a suggestion of how we can theoretically understand the processes of (dis)empowerment as relational. As will be discussed through out the paper, some scholars have already postulated that empowerment, for both men and women, have to be seen as relational. Scholars have also tried to show empirically that ones disempowerment might lead to another's disempowerment. However, if some scholars are already admitting to the idea that we need to approach empowerment as a relational issue, isn't this paper then stating the obvious? I would say no because firstly, claiming empowerment to be relational isn't necessarily also claiming that men could be disempowered. And secondly to postulate if a persons empowerment has to be seen relational or, as an isolated or individualistic phenomenon is to make a metaphysical claim, i.e. in basic terms how the world and reality is constituted and therefore to some degree a philosophical claim.

What I claim to have been lacking in the empowerment discourse is a discussion of this sort, that is to say how it's, as some scholars stress, that women's empowerment, metaphysically speaking, cannot be approached as an isolated phenomenon. But why is it that social science needs to discuss metaphysical questions or phenomena? Alexander Rosenberg says that the reason is simple because "though the sciences cannot answer philosophical questions, individual scientists have to take sides on the right answers to them. The position scientist take on answers to philosophical questions determine the questions they consider answerable by science and choose to address, as well the methods they employ to answer them"[29]. Rosenberg also claim that it's important for scientist to acknowledge that they have taken sides in philosophical questions since "the philosophical positions of scientist must be consistent with the theoretical and observational findings of their sciences"[30]. This paper isn't aiming at investigating whether or not we should adopt a relational or individualist approach to empowerment. The point here is rather to examine how a relational empowerment could look like. Scholars claiming empowerment to be relational could be said to adopt a sociological holistic approach to empowerment, i.e. "the doctrine that the whole is more than the

[29] **Rosenberg, Alexander** (2012) *Philosophy of Social Science,* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, P.3.
[30] Ibid.

sum of its parts: society is more than the individuals who make it up"[31]. This view is however contested by so-called methodological individualists who claim that how people are behaving in social circumstances is best explained by and reduced to individual behaviour[32]. A scientist or development worker might have to defend their choice of position, but if the answer could be found empirically is still debated within the philosophy of science.

The paper is further structured in four chapters. Chapter two consists of an analysis of the different dimensions and definitions of empowerment understood by different scholars. Chapter two will focus on four common themes or dimensions connected to the empowerment approach focusing on, first of all, women. What empowerment is or how it's supposed to be approached is disputed amongst scholars and I will here try to separate the different arguments for and against the different approaches to empowerment[33]. Sometimes different actors or scholars use different ways of expressing the same kind of empowerment or some scholars would accept some of the dimensions discussed in chapter two but neglect others. However, what I intend to do is for epistemic reasons, i.e. separate what I see as four common ways of understanding empowerment to make it easier to examine them. This may not be fully comprehensive as I'm aware that there could be other ways of understanding empowerment.[34] This chapter also works as a background for the third chapter that elaborates on the approach suggesting that it's successful for neither men nor women to exclude men from empowerment projects. This chapter aims at showing that also men suffer from dominating structures and that there is a need for emphasising men's empowerment as well. The starting premise will be the work of German philosopher G.W.F Hegel and his theory of lordship and bondage. I will argue, in the light of Hegel, that having 'power over' someone doesn't imply that one is empowered. Exercising power over someone rather seems to be an effect of disempowerment. Why men engage in the struggle of subordinate others will be explained in terms of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. Connell's theory also aims at showing that some men also experience subordination and disempowerment by some other men.

Chapter four then examines how we could understand men and women's dynamic relation, how they occupy contextual space together and how it consequently

[31] Rosenberg 2012:170.
[32] Rosenberg 2012:171.
[33] Beckman 2005:38.
[34] Beckman 2005:25–27.

might lead to (dis)empowerment. I'm then bringing in Sara Ahmed because Hegel's theory might not show the complexities of power relations. The main point in Ahmed's section will be that empowerment isn't something one attains as something fixed, but rather something that's negotiated with others in the particular context. The argument aims at showing that it's important to emphasis the common context of men and women. The reason for using these two theorists is simple: after investigating those arguments posed by scholars about men's disempowerment and the importance of recognizing empowerment as a relational issue these were two theorists that I knew of that seemed to metaphysically fit and explain previous claims. These theories also seem to fit with the empirical data I found from the readings that I've made and which will be discussed through out the paper. These empirical data will be used to get a better grip of the arguments and theories that are elaborated on in chapter four. But, I also want to stress here that I'm open for better theories explaining these structures or that fits better with other empirical data. What I intend to do here is just to develop from those claims that already have been made. The last and fifth chapter will then consist of some concluding remarks.

2. Empowerment and women

What exactly is meant by empowerment then? This section aims at sketching out four core themes or dimensions of empowerment. Each of these themes isn't necessarily separated or specific ways of approaching empowerment. The reasons for presenting four separated themes are that they often occur in the empowerment discourse and because of analytical reasons, i.e. to make a clear presentation and clear premises to criticise or further develop in the paper. However, what many scholars have claimed within the empowerment discourse is that women have to be the main targets in the pursuit for gender equality. The very concept of 'power' seems to be ambiguous and can be very confusing, it's not always clear how we should understand or define it. However, the main idea of empowerment seems to be that a person gets, in some sense, more power and therefore more control over their own lives. Power related to empowerment isn't supposed, even though they are highly related, to be understood as a 'power over', i.e. a relation of dominance where one gets subordinated the other[35]. The idea is that by being subordinated or dominated you loose the opportunity to define and enact your

[35] **Lukes, Steven** (2004) *Maktens ansikten,* Göteborg: Daidalos, p.82–83 (in Swedish).

goals in life[36]. However, we should here understand power as a 'power within' and/or 'power to', i.e. self-esteem that comes from within and/or the ability to see opportunities for change[37]. It's also important to mention that empowerment isn't something that can be entirely given or forced upon people; it's argued to be a process that must be voluntary[38]. However, 'Power over' comes from the Latin word *potestas*. 'Power over' is a sub-concept to 'power to exist' or 'to act' or in Latin *potentia*, a distinction made by philosopher Baruch Spinoza[39]. The idea is that having power over (*potestas*) someone restricts the other from *potentia,* i.e. it becomes a relation of dominance. However, empowerment has to be something more than just the absence of dominance, it would otherwise be an unnecessary concept. People might be disempowered even in equal relations or even as superior, which hopefully becomes clearer in the fourth chapter.

(1)

The first theme of empowerment presented here is one advocated by the World Bank. They advocate empowerment through something called 'smart economics". The World Bank defines empowerment as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives"[40]. The World Bank argues that having control over these assets will expand people's horizons of choice and give people a fairer chance to negotiate their own lives. Having capabilities means that a person is enabled to use its assets to increase its wellbeing, i.e. to increase education, health, a sense of identity, leadership, and values that gives meaning to life[41]. So, by investing in women it's suggested that development will come in terms of economic growth and "by raising productivity and promoting the more efficient use of resources; it produces significant social returns, improving child survival and reducing fertility, and it has a considerable inter-generational pay-offs."[42].

It's also often argued that formal education leads to the empowerment of women. Since the education of women gives them greater bargaining power within male-

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36 **Frye, Marilyn**, (1983) *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, Freedom, California: The Crossing Press, p.105.
37 Kabeer 2005:14; see also Willis 2005:112.
38 Willis 2005:113.
39 Lukes 2004:82
40 **World Bank** (2002) Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook (pdf) World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPOWERMENT/Resources/4863121095094954594/draft2.pdf (Accessed 2016-04-14).
41 Ibid.
42 World Bank 1995, quoted in Chant and Sweetman 2012: 519.

headed household[43]. Investments in all levels of education seem to be important for decreasing inequality and for economical growth. People get a higher income and the probability of getting employed becomes higher[44]. People might therefore be empowered in terms of getting more assets/income.

However, Sarah Bradshaw and Brian Linneker have argued that an efficiency approach, like the World Bank approach, treats women as tools rather than as persons with certain rights, desires and with an own agenda[45]. Treating women as tools might imply some problematic normative notions. In simplified terms it could be argued that the World Banks approach to women emphasises women as essentially altruistic and caring beings, and therefore being willing to 'give up' themselves for the benefit of the family as a whole. Chant and Sweetman states that "conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes and micro-finance initiatives which, in relying on essentialising maternalist gender stereotypes and expecting particular kinds of contributions from women, often lead to increased labour burdens and the perpetuation of 'female altruism"[46]. Thus, the idea seems to be that viewing women primarily as caring would constitute the best foundation for empowerment policies. But this view has been criticised for not taking into account that the very reason for women to see themselves as primarily altruistic beings is in fact evidence for women's internalization of their own subordination[47]. Advocators of 'smart economic' seems to make the assumption that men and women are biological different hence manifesting differently in terms of, for example, behaviour. This assumption also seems to accept and claim that social differences are based and justified by biological differences or essential characteristics amongst men and women. Essentialism is the idea that gender is something fixed and correlates with a person's sex[48]. That what is seen as typical masculine characteristics, such as being dominating, rational and/or violent are features that men are determined with, because of their sex. And women are determined with characteristics such as being caring, irrational and emotional[49].

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[43] **Kambhampati, Uma** (2004), "Human Capital and Human Welfare: Health and Education",in Kambhampati, U. (2004) *Development and the developing world*, Cambridge: Polity. Chapter 13, p.228.
[44] Ibid.
[45] **Bradshaw, Sarah & Linneker Brian** (2003) *Challenging women's poverty Perspectives on gender and poverty reduction strategies from Nicaragua and Honduras*, London: Catholic Institute for International Relations Unit 3, p.6.
[46] Chant & Sweetman 2012:524.
[47] Kabeer 1999:459.
[48]**Grosz, Elizabeth** (1995) *Space, time, and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies*, New York: Routledge.
[49] Ibid.

Focusing on women as mothers and wives haven't only been used to promote women's empowerment, it has also been used against the liberalisation of women and gender equality. In the debate of legalising therapeutic abortion in Nicaragua, the church and state referred to women as beings tied to their homes and not to as political beings, making demands that threatens traditional male domains of power[50]. A growing antifeminists movement in Nicaragua had on their agenda to lob the importance of family life and traditions and claimed that it even trumped women's right to abortion[51]. Noel Pereira Majano, president of the National Assembly's Justice Commission even stated that: "(…) we must unite against the liberated woman, who thinks she can control all parts of her body"[52]. Therefore, having an essentialist approach of women might even reproduce women's subordination or disempowerment.

'Smart economics' could be criticised for not acknowledging the structures behind women's subordination. This is the reason why many feminists are talking about this as an insufficient way of empowering women across the globe. Without a change of laws, social practices and norms one wouldn't necessarily help, but instead expect too much of what women in strict patriarchal societies are capable of. Bieri & Sancar argue that a focus on income-generating activities, such as 'smart economics' might lead to empowerment, increasing living standards and improved livelihoods. But this can only be achieved if a more comprehensive analysis is applied on specific contexts and made on relations within the households[53].

(ii)

So, the critique against approaches such as 'smart economics' leads to a second theme of empowerment, an anti-essentialist approach, i.e. the idea that gender is socially constructed. Gender is then seen as the effect of our actions and something one does rather than one is. Social actors can therefore reshape gendered structures and form new political interventions.[54] This view rather neglects the focus on women as primarily caring beings. These scholars argue that to be able to increase women's ability to make choices, that's to say increase women's empowerment, women have to see themselves as

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[50] **Bradshaw, Sarah** (2008) "An unholy trinity: the church, the state, the banks and the challenges for women mobilising for change in Nicaragua" *IDS BULLETIN* 39 (6) Sussex: IDS, p.70.
[51] **Kampwirth, Karen** (2014) "Abortion, antifeminism and the return of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Leftist politics?", Latin American Perspectives, Issue 163 35 (6), 122-136, p.123.
[52] Arroliga cited in Kampwirth 2014:132.
[53] **Bieri, Sabin and Sancar, Annemarie** (2009) *Pathways out of poverty: gender and rural employment.* Switzerland: Swiss Development Agency, p.3.
[54] **Cupples, Julie** (2013) *Latin American Development,* London: Routledge, p.142.

individual beings rather than members of a family or a group[55]. Thus becoming less self-sacrificing and more autonomous. One of the most influential scholars in the empowerment discourse is Naila Kabeer and her theorizations are widely used and referred to. She defines empowerment as "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic choices acquire such an ability"[56]. Thus, being disempowered means being denied choice in life. Empowerment is a process of change according to this definition and Kabeer states that "people who exercise a great deal of choice in their lives may be very *powerful,* but they are not *empowered* in the sense in which I am using the word, because they were never disempowered in the first place[57]. Kabeer claim that for a person to have choices it necessarily implies the possibility of alternatives, that's to say a person, must be able to choose from a variety of alternatives. However, these choices need to be transformative, i.e. for a choice to have value it also needs to challenge social inequalities and not reproduce them.[58]

What seems to be one of the central claims in Kabeers theory of empowerment is the goal for people to reach a sense of strong agency. Agency can be understood in terms of autonomy, i.e. being self-governed and acting on reasons and values that are, in some sense, your own[59]. And agency is in Kabeers terms "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them"[60]. Agency or autonomy seems to be generally of great importance in the development discourse and particularly in the empowerment discourse. What scholars have been focusing on is how people can become strong agents who negotiate their own lives[61]. However, Elise Klein is arguing that agency is both a matter of social structures/relations, ability for choice making *and* a person's psychological state, such as self-confidence and/or a sense of self-belief[62].

(iii)

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55 Kabeer 1999:459.
56 **Kabeer, Naila** (2001) *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought.* London:Verso, p.435.
57 Kabeer 1999:437.
58 Ibid.
59 **Stoljar, Natalie**, (2015) "Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/feminism-autonomy/. (Accessed 2016-04-15).
60 Kabeer 1999:438.
61 **Klein, Elise** (2014) "Psychological agency: Evidence from the urban fringe of Bamako", *OPHI Working Paper* 69, p.1.
62 Klein 2014:3.

So, this leads to a third theme of empowerment. Because not only is there a need for socio-economic structures to be made beneficial for those that are disempowered, people *also* need to have the confidence to *actually* go for the opportunities. Klein explains that:

> While it may be partially the case that manipulating an agent's structural environment, such as by increasing their education, providing better access to markets (like microcredit), and increasing assets, does increase levels of empowerment for many people, viewing empowerment solely through proxies can be problematic as it assumes that resources automatically translate into purposeful agency, which in the findings of my research is certainly not the case.[63]

What Klein claims, through psychologist Albert Bandura's theories, is the importance for purposeful agency, i.e. self-efficacy. According to Bandura, agency can be "gained through development of personal efficacy that enables people to take advantage of opportunities and to remove environmental constraints guarded by those whose interests are served by them"[64]. Social efficacy is the individual's belief to create change within a group or community. But efficacy isn't necessarily something individual; efficacy can also be collective, which is to say the dynamics of the group's belief to make change. Important to note here is that self-efficacy isn't necessarily determined by socio-economic structures, this is why it's of great significance to also include the psychological aspect of agency. So Klein claims that "where one person could believe that a situation is hopeless, another person with the same socio-economic characteristics may believe the situation is full of opportunities to change"[65].

Agency, even though it's seen as some sort of self-efficacy, still has to be seen in the light of its context. Bandura, for example, has been criticised for not taking into account that a person's desire or what a person values might be under some coerced circumstance, i.e. a person's values might be forced upon them by a social order that is hard to change or even naturalized to such degree that the person cannot even imagine things being differently. Kabeer writes for example that "in such contexts, even in the situations of rising female employment and wages cited earlier, women do not *actively* seek the opportunity to set up separate units from men because such autonomous units are neither socially acceptable nor individually desired"[66].

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[63] Klein 2014:4.
[64] Bandura 2005:477 cited in Klein 2014:7.
[65] Klein 2014:8.
[66] Kabeer 1999:460.

(iv)

Acknowledging people's context ultimately lead to a fourth theme. Kabeer says "indicators of women's empowerment, therefore have to be sensitive to the ways in which context will shape processes of empowerment"[67]. Some approaches to empowerment have strongly been criticised for advocating an illusory atomization and individualisation of women, Sylvia Chant argues that "women rarely operates as autonomous individuals in their communities and daily lives"[68]. There are now many scholars stressing the importance of including men in empowerment projects[69]. If a GAD approach recognises gender as being relational, then there is a need to emphasis men's situation as well. So how are we to understand the relationship between men and women in empowerment theorisations and projects? What is the role of men in empowerment discourse? Francis Cleaver claims that "where men are considered they are generally seen as obstacles to women's development"[70]. However, some scholars have argued that it's questionable whether it's beneficial or not in the long run to promote women's empowerment at the expense of men. Micro-credit loans for women have for example resulted in women being disempowered in terms of increased domestic violence[71]. Excluding men from GAD projects have resulted in hostilities between men and women. Where men have been sabotaging different attempts of enhancing women's lives and empowerment[72]. One of these examples is the Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) system in India, where women were given reserved seats and representation in local governments. Devaki Jain notes that "Women's empowerment challenges traditional ideas of male authority and supremacy. It is unsurprising, then that PRI has been opposed by some men…Ratna [one of the women given a seat)] was beaten up as soon as she assumed office by her rival who could not accept the fact that a female had outwitted him"[73].

Men, somehow, need to be included in development and empowerment strategies and it's therefore of great significance (if not necessary) to stop seeing men as villains and instead an ally that could be cooperated with. Of course, it should also be raised that we need to be cautious of such an approach; since we don't want to end up

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Chant 2000:12.
[69] Ibid; Cornwall 2000; see also Cleaver (2002).
[70] Cleaver 2002:1.
[71] Cleaver 2002:8; Leach, Fiona & Sitaram, Shashikala 2002:576.
[72] Chant 2000:10.
[73] Jain 1996:13 cited in **Grieg, Alan** (2000) "The Spectacle of Men Fighting", *IDS BULLETIN* 31 (2) pp.28–32, p.28.

reproducing socially subordinating structures. As Cornwall puts it "what is clear, however, is that simply 'bringing men in' without a more fundamental reflection on what GAD is about or for is not going to solve the central issue at stake"[74]. However, the idea is basically that: in order to understand women's contextual situation through which empowerment discourse tries to operate within, we also have to understand men's contextual situation. Cleaver writes:

> An example of women's empowerment often quoted is that of the women's anti-liquor campaigns in India in which direct action ensures that poor men are prevented from spending their money on alcohol. But studies of poor working men in India give us an insight into why they drink so much; the daily remorseless effort of heavy labouring jobs for low wages makes alcohol a practical escape from grim reality.[75]

To conclude and sum up a proposed empowerment definition based on the above discussion: it has been argued that the empowerment of women would contribute to the equality between men and women. Empowerment is argued to be the sense or ability to negotiate one's own life and the ability of making choices. For women to be empowered or autonomous, scholars stress the need for transformation of societal structures, such as introducing women to the labour market and supporting individuals in believing in themselves, i.e. the psychological aspect of agency. Therefore, when advocating empowerment and autonomy for women, it seems that we have to take into account people's internalization of social norms, and the social context that people are acting within. The definition of empowerment suggested here would be that for one to be empowered one has to have the ability to define one's goals and to actually have the confidence to go for the opportunities. In order to do that, as we will see later in this paper, we have to consider both men and women's contexts, which ultimately is the same context. Chant says that "dealing with 'the problem' *through* women can burden the latter with a task that would perhaps be better shared rather than shouldered single handedly"[76]. However, claiming that we have to look at women's context when having an empowerment approach isn't the same as saying or implying that also men's empowerment has to be considered. But, as has been mentioned earlier, are some scholars claiming that men has to be included in empowerment projects since they also experience disempowerment. Next section therefore aims at showing how it could be argued that men also experience disempowerment. The claim will not just be that men

[74] Cornwall 2000:24.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Chant 2000:10.

can be disempowerment by being subordinated other men but that by being superior one might also experience disempowerment.

3. Men and development

3.1 Hegel's Lordship and Bondage Dialectics

The second chapter discussed women's empowerment, where it's argued that to reach gender equality, there is a need for emphasizing women's empowerment. Women's subordinated situation needs to be stressed since women tend to be structurally subordinated men, i.e. women are in general and in most cultures and aspects of societal life subordinated men. What the rest of the paper aims at showing is how gender equality and empowerment could be seen as a dialectical and as a relational issue. That's to say, a person doesn't exist in a vacuum; we always acts within a situation with other people and situations are structured in a way that involves certain possibilities but exclude others. We constantly reshape and recreate the world we live in. I believe that there has been too little theorization in the empowerment discourse on how relations between men and women could structurally be understood. The concepts and manifestations of 'power over' and 'power to' can be obscure and confusing sometimes, and what I think has been a common misconception in the empowerment discourse is that 'power over' often is understood as being 'empowered'. Men have often been seen as villains and men's empowerment has been neglected or seemingly been taken for granted. Sonia Corrêa argues against this simplified notions of power within the empowerment discourse and says that "instead of a nuance, complex and intricate understanding of power, the dominant use of the idea is confined within binary way of thinking in which men have all the power and women have none"[77]. And I will argue through German philosopher G.W.F Hegel's theory of lordship and bondage that the superior, the one exercising 'power over' the other, is caught in a struggle where the superior isn't free but rather alienated or disempowered. Hence exercising 'power over' doesn't imply that one is also empowered. I believe that this is an important input to the empowerment discourse since it stresses the importance to consider the relation between people and consequently the addressing of men's empowerment as well.

What will here be meant as relational or dialectics is the active relation or interaction between people, or in other words the relation between the superior and the

[77] **Corrêa, Sonia** (2010) 'Sexuality, Gender and Empowerment', *Development* 53(2): 183-186, p.184.

subordinated. This relation is a process of change where two opposites by being dynamic realize a new relation[78]. What I want to stress here is that the whole is not the sum of all parts[79]. According to Czech philosopher Karel Kosík, we shouldn't understand the world as made up by particular things that are absolute isolated and unique, what he rather argues is that the world is constituted by parts of a dynamic wholeness[80]. Parts of the world behave very differently when studied isolated or studied as whole. Kosík argues that isolated parts or facts are merely abstractions in the world, however, to study only the whole without acknowledging the parts making up the whole would also be to study an abstraction[81]. Kosík states that: "a dialectical conception of totality means that the parts not only internally interact and interconnect both among themselves and with the whole, but also that the whole cannot be petrified in an abstraction superior to the facts, because precisely in the interaction of its parts does the whole *form* itself as a whole."[82]. So what do I mean that there is a need for stressing that the whole isn't a sum of all parts? My point here is that women and men's experiences aren't isolated phenomena, and for men and women to be empowered we have to understand how their interaction might lead to (dis)empowerment.

So what Hegel is claiming in the chapter of Lordship and bondage in his famous book *Phenomenology of Spirit*[83] is basically that the relation between a lord (superior) and a bondsman (subordinated) is an unequal relation where the lord objectifies the bondsman, but ultimately also objectifies itself. Hegel says that humans, as self-conscious, are seeking autonomy i.e. to be recognized as a subject. A person can only reach this autonomy by getting recognized by another self-consciousness (subject). However, the dominating role that consolidates in the superior through the objectification of the subordinated creates a desire that can only be satisfied by means of that person getting recognized by a subordinated as a superior. Hegel says that "the relations of the two self-conscious individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life-

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[78] **Kojéve, Alexandre** (2012) "Résumé des six premiers chapitres de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit", in *Intriduction à la lecture de Hegel. Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des Hautes Études*, red. Raymond Queneau, pp.161–195, Paris: Gallimard, translated by Carl Montan in *Att läsa Hegel*, ed. Anders Burman & Anders Bartonek, Hägersten: Tankekraft Förlag, p.103 (in Swedish).

[79] **Kosík, Karel** (1976) *Dialectics of the Concrete: a Study on Problems of Man and World,* Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Kosík 1976:23.

[83] **Hegel, G.W.F** (1807:1977) *Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. by A. V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

and-death struggle. They must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being *for themselves*"[84].

Carl-Göran Heidegren interprets this battle as every subjects desire to be recognized by the other without acknowledging this; therefore, recognition has to be forced. The enforcement leads to a battle around dominance and subordination[85]. In this battle the loosing part (the subordinated) becomes downgraded to a mere object. For the winning part (the superior) it's of ultimate importance that the subordinated keeps being subordinated: since the superior is only superior due to the subordinated. Nevertheless, the superior doesn't want to recognize the subordinated as subject because the subordinated has 'chosen' a life as subordinated (a mere object). The idea is that the superior manifests itself above the 'mere' biological existence whereas the subordinated never becomes more than 'mere' nature or a biological being[86].

Heidegren claims, that the superior rest its truth in a consciousness that's not autonomous. And that it's only autonomous beings that can confirm someone's autonomy; only mere *equal*'s can confirm each other's autonomy through a reciprocal recognition. The superior reaches a so-called 'existential dead-end'[87]. I will here suggest that the autonomy Hegel speaks of could be understood as 'empowerment' or more exactly 'agency'. Hegel[88] also states that what people suffer from, in this battle of getting recognized, is self-alienation, i.e. a discouragement, which could be read as: the loss of belief in ability for change. Therefore, being self-alienated could be seen as a disempowered state, which might be an effect of the relation between men and women. Hannah Arendt is also making a similar claim, but she goes further and says that exercising 'power over' is an effect of what could be called disempowerment. She claims that power is the very fundament for people to get along and to strive for common goals. She further claims that "it is insufficient to say that power and violence are not the same. Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy…violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it"[89]. And on the other hand, might a person become empowered when it reaches recognition by the other, since the person is treated as a subject by the other and is given the ability, by the other and itself, to make choices in life. So what

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[84] Hegel 1807:1977:113–114.
[85] **Heidegren, Carl-Göran** (1995) *Hegels Fenomenlogi: En analys och kommentar,* Stockholm/Stehag: Brutus Östling Bokförlag Symposion, p.123 (in Swedish).
[86] Kojéve 2012:104–106.
[87] Heidegren 1995:126.
[88] Hegel 1807:1977.
[89] **Arendt, Hannah** (1970) *On Violence,* Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company. P.56.

needs to be emphasized is the structural conditions between men and women, i.e. how the relation between men and women is structured and what the dynamic or interaction is. Kabeer have also mentioned the importance for the empowerment discourse to stress the conditions for greater agency and ability to make choices. Kabeer writes: "the criterion of *alternatives* relates to the structural conditions under which choices are made while the criterion of *consequences* relates to the extent to which the choices made have the potential for transforming these structural conditions"[90].

Nonetheless, how can this 'power over' that seems to be an effect of disempowerment look like? Margrethe Silberschmidt found in her studies in East-Africa that men tended to be aggressive and exaggerating of masculine behaviour, in order to take control over their situation, when they felt that their masculinity was no longer as beneficial for them as before[91]. Men in these examples seem to have lost, to some extent, control or agency over their lives by having the need to be aggressive. And when a person engages in this battle for more recognition by having 'power over' another, it could be argued that they, in the light of Hegel, don't exercise autonomy. Thus being disempowered. Silberschmidt says that: "many men resort to other measures to establish their authority…Thus, being sexually aggressive and violent…and demonstrating sexual potency may represent a way for men to regain control of women, authority and self-esteem"[92]. Another example of men having the pressure of being superior can be found in Izugbara's and Okal's studies of men and HIV in Malawi. They found that boys or men couldn't allow them to feel scared of contracting sexual diseases or even withdraw from having unprotected sex due to pressure to maintain their role as heterosexual men. "Malawian boys enact their heterosexuality through a number of critical sexual practices, including regularly seeking sexual partners, multiple sex partnerships, sexual exchange, sexual harassment of women, unprotected sex, and the quest for sex from 'easy' women"[93]. Spreading HIV in Malawi challenged the boys' masculine practices and this was too difficult for many boys to accept. Instead of being cautious, boys rather choose to ignore the danger of contracting HIV. Izgubara and Okal states that "according to many responding boys, HIV no longer bothered them and they no longer feared it…one respondent said he preferred to be killed by HIV rather than to 'Live in fear like small

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[90] Kabeer 1999:461.

[91] **Silberschmidt, Margrethe** (2011) "What Would Make Men Interested in Gender Equality? Reflections from East Africa", Chapter 8 in *Men and Development: Politicising Masculinities,* London: Zed Books.

[92] Silberschmidt 2011:106.

[93] **Izugbara O. Chimaraoke & Okal, Jerry** (2011) "Performing Heterosexuality: Male Youth, Vulnerability and HIV in Malawi", Chapter 2 in *Men and Development: Politicising Masculinities,* London: Zed Books, p.26.

girl"[94]. I want to claim here that this study exemplifies that these men or boys, strives for superiority when they experience a kind if disempowerment, i.e. fear of not fulfilling their role as a man. Male violence has often been presented as something natural to men or an effect of gender differences arranged by hierarchical structures[95]. However, it rather seems to be an effect of men feeling disempowered, and be argued that "there is no political system in which the spectacle of two men fighting is not a striking, if unintended, image of the political impotence of most men"[96]. And as Grieg puts it: "power and impotence co-exist in men's lives"[97]. Thomson argues that there is a need to see boys and men as victims as well as perpetrators[98].

There has been argued that men are in crisis, i.e. masculinity is in crisis. Masculine values are no longer valued in such a way that used to give some men certain advantages towards women and some men[99]. This crisis seems to bring forth violent behaviour amongst some men, and where "men tend to be violent at the very point when they feel at least powerful"[100]. To be a 'man' seems to be very important for many men, and men wage daily battles in many cultures to prove to themselves and others that they are 'real men'. Not being a man often implies that you are a woman or a homosexual[101]. Sara Ahmed claims that heterosexuality often function "as a compulsory orientation [which] reproduces more than "itself": it is a mechanism for the reproduction of culture[102]. Patrick Welsh claims that in Nicaragua is physical and psychological violence systematically used, by (macho) men, and against (some) men who fail to fulfil the norms of traditional masculinity[103]. Homosexuals (*Cochones*) are considered as feminine men in Nicaragua and therefore not fully male men. However, *cochones* aren't what is usually considered a homosexual in Europe, to give (sexually) is being considered to be masculine and to receive is to be feminine[104]. Roger Lancaster says that: "consequently, when one [a man] uses a *cochón* [a man considered gay], one acquires

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94 Izugbara & Okal 2011:30.
95 Grieg 2000:28.
96 Oates 1987:63 cited in Grieg 2000:28.
97 Grieg 2000:29.
98 Thomson 1999a cited in Cleaver 2002:12.
99 Chant 2000:13.
100 Grieg 2000:30.
101 Ibid.
102 **Ahmed, Sara** (2006) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others,* Duke University Press: Durham and London, p.161.
103 **Welsh, Patrick** (2001) *Men aren't from March: unlearning machismo in Nicaragua,* London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, p.19.
104 **Lancaster, Roger N.** (1988) "Subject Honor and Object Shame: The Construction of Male Homosexuality and Stigma in Nicaragua", Ethnology Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 111-125, p.114.

masculinity; when one is "used" as a *cochón*, one expends it"[105]. A man, in Nicaragua, is said to gain sexual status amongst other men by having sexual intercourse with both men and women. Nevertheless, to gain status a man needs to be the active (the penetrator) and not the passive (the receiver)[106]. Leach and Sitaram argues that men often feel threatened or more precisely their masculine identity gets threatened when women's empowerment is emphasized[107]. It has been found that violence against women, depression, drug and alcohol abuse is common amongst men when hegemonic masculinity (which will be further explained in the next section) has lost its significance in societies[108].

This isn't to say that some men aren't gaining advantages from having 'power over' others. Raewyn Connell says that "to speak of a patriarchal dividend is to raise exactly this question of interest. Men gain a dividend from patriarchy in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command. They also gain a material dividend"[109]. However, when claiming that men are disempowered or that some men also could be seen as victims instead of perpetrators, isn't the same as saying that men aren't accountable for their actions. On the contrary, it could actually enable men to be more accountable. Men are often portrayed as being indifferent to equality projects and they are often essentialised in a way that seems to imply men's unchangeable character[110]. That is to say men are rather seen as determined to be aggressive and dominating. As Grieg puts it: "[We are] simultaneously and paradoxically blaming men but not holding them accountable"[111]. When we recognize men as both being dynamically a part of women's disempowerment and at the same time victims of the patriarchy/hegemonic masculinity, we surely have to include them in empowerment projects. And we could then recognize them as accountable subjects.

The point in this section has been to show that having 'power over' someone doesn't imply that one is empowered, on the contrary, it might be argued that it's an effect of disempowerment. And where both the superior and the subordinated become disempowered. Since exercising 'power over' seems to be an alienating project where one have lost or looses its agency rather than plays it out. If empowerment means having a

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105 Ibid.
106 Lancaster 1988:117.
107 Leach & Sitaram 2002.
108 Chant 2000; Leach & Sitaram 2002; see also **Silberschmidt, Margrethe** (2011) "What Would Make Men Interested in Gender Equality? Reflections from East Africa", Chapter 8 in *Men and Development: Politicising Masculinities,* London: Zed Books.
109 Connell 1995:82 cited in Greig 2000:29.
110 Grieg 2000:29.
111 Ibid.

strong sense of agency, being self-governed and having a belief in individual and societal change, then it doesn't necessarily correlates with having power over someone. How it comes that men seek this position of dominance over others could be explained in terms of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. Cornwall says that it figures, by some scholars, "narratives of 'male crisis' and role conflict', presuming at the same time that all men desperately wish to emulate particular styles of being a man and it is their frustration with their inability to achieve this that drives them into 'behaving badly"[112]. This is, however, a very simplified description of men, which tend to presume that all men seek to acquire a homogenous type of character. Next section therefore aims at investigating the complexities of masculinity and mainly the relations between men, and show that there are existing hierarchies, not only between men and women, but amongst men themselves as well[113].

3.2 Hegemonic Masculinity and multiple masculinities

To better understand empowerment we have to discuss hegemonic masculinity and multiple masculinities, since we then get a better grip of the complexities around gender. The aim here is to show that also men experience disempowerment and that masculinity could be disempowering for men. Raewyn Connell claims that masculinities "(...) are configurations of practice within gender relations, a structure that includes large-scale institutions and economic relations as well as face to face relationships and sexuality"[114]. To understand different masculinities, how they function and how they are structured in hierarchies, it's important to know what Connell means by 'hegemonic masculinity'. She defines hegemonic masculinities as:

> (...) The pattern of masculinity which is most honoured, which occupies the position of centrality in a structure of gender relations, and whose privileged position helps to stabilize the gender order as a whole, especially the social subordination of women. Hegemonic masculinity is contrasted not only with femininity, but also with subordinated or marginalized masculinities that exist in the same society.[115]

Hegemonic masculinity is the form or configuration of gender practices that legitimises the prescribed patriarchal structure. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity isn't supposed to be understood as normal in a statistical sense, but as a role that only a

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[112] Cornwall 2000:22.
[113] **Connell, Raewyn** (1995a) "Gender as a structure of social practice", in McDowell and Sharpe (eds), Space Gender and Knowledge, London: Arnold, p.49.
[114] Connell 2000:29 cited in Cleaver 2002:6.
[115] Connell 2014:8.

minority of men in a particular society manifest. Hegemonic masculinity is highly normative though and embodies the most honourable or desirable way of being a man[116]. All other men are positioning themselves in relation to the hegemonic masculinity. The hegemonic masculinity isn't something fixed or constant, but is always under reconstruction and reshaping[117]. And masculine characteristics aren't only something that applies to men but also women[118].

We shouldn't understand masculinity as a vague set of qualities nor as an abstract role, that can be acted out or not acted out but "(...) masculinity is that sense of self, that sense of worth, that right to power that accrues to every male". Masculinity derives form the patriarchy and the idea that men's power over women is legitimized[119]. Connell argues that not all men benefit equally from the patriarchy, some forms of masculinity are culturally subordinated others types of masculinities. Nonetheless is the majority of men benefitting from hegemonic masculinity, for example, in terms of the advantages that the patriarchy serves when it subordinates women[120]. So even though most men aren't in the hegemonic front line, they still take part of the hegemonic masculinity. A Philippine woman, in a study by Sylvia Chant, who worked as a helper of her husbands coconut selling business said: "Men don't take problems as seriously as women. Men don't worry much even when there is nothing to eat or no food to be cooked. They only depend on women"[121]. And a Gambian woman who worked as a fruit seller said: "men are not doing anything – if they pay for breakfast, it's women who pay for lunch and dinner. Women pay for school lunches. You see the festivals, and it's the women who are selling. . . some men are not working, and some men refuse to work, or if they work they don't do it for that (the family)".[122]

The idea of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities reflects the power dimensions of gender relations[123]. Connell and Messerschmidt says that "the idea of hierarchy of masculinities grew directly out of homosexual men's experience with violence and prejudice form straight men[124]. Therefore, multiple masculinities can be

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116 Connell 1995a: 48–49.
117 **Connel, Raewyn & Messerschmidt, James W.** (2005) "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept", Gender and Society, Vol. 19, No. 6, pp. 829-859, p.832.
118 Connell 2014:6.
119 **Stoltenberg, John** (2009) "Toward Gender Justice" in Peter F. Murphy (eds.) Feminism & Masculinities, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.47.
120 **Connell, Raewyn** (1995B) *Maskuliniteter*, Göteborg: Daidalos, p.117, (In Swedish)
121 **Chant, Sylvia** (2008) "The 'Feminisation of Poverty' and the 'Feminisation' of Anti-Poverty Programmes: Room for Revision?', Journal of Development Studies, 44:2, 165 –197, p.177.
122 Ibid.
123 Connell 1987 cited in Cleaver 2002:7.
124 Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:831.

distinguished. There are for example, Connell states, feminine factory workers, black homosexuals and businessmen that are transvestites[125]. A male worker at the Nicaraguan feminist organization "Puntos de Encuentro" reflects upon his masculinity in an article and writes: "When I was a teenager I hurt my head, it hurt very much and I wanted to cry, but at the beginning I held it back because I knew from my memory: guys don't cry, they are machos! But inside me was an ocean of pain and tears. At one point I couldn't stand it anymore and I cried, for which my friends always labelled me as 'a weak guy"[126]. He also talks about how the Nicaraguan man is destined to have an emotionless life, where men rarely cry, express love, pain, nostalgia or happiness. The suppressing of these feelings leads to physical and psychological health problems such as depression, addiction to alcohol and drugs. Men become distant to their children, and the possibility of experiencing a beautiful life with giving love and receiving love gets limited. More precisely, men are suffering from the machismo culture.[127]

Andrea Cornwall argues that men are almost always seen as a homogenous category and this category almost never implies that they are "sons, lovers, husbands, fathers – with whom women have shared interests and concerns, let alone love and cherish"[128]. However, to overcome machismo, alternative roles for men and boys needs to be stressed and "to build on 'positive deviancy' by identifying pathways to gender equitable manhood and focus on more equitable practices within household"[129]. If masculinity is, just as feminists claim femininity to be, socially constructed, it could also be reconstructed. Many scholars and development workers have adopted this view on gender, and there are now programmes and campaigns for challenging hegemonic masculinities around the world[130]. The point here hasn't been to argue that oppressing masculine expressions are to be preserved or that we are to feel sorry for men not being able to live out these subordinating behaviours. The point is rather that men constructs masculinity, which subordinates some other men and that some men experience a threat to their identities, which might have some serious effects on both men and women. It seems that men's experience of lacking masculinity makes them disempowered. So both men and women can be disempowered, though its nature, scale and processes may vary.

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125 Connell 1995b:114.

126 **Lopez, Fransisco & Sanchez, Moises** (2015) "Si Cambio Yo, Cambia mi Enterno" in *La Boletina*, Vol.97, Marzo, pp. 20–27, p.24 my own translation (in Spanish).

127 Lopez & Sanchez 2015:25; see also **Cupples, Julie** (2009) "Rethinking electoral geography: spaces and practices of democracy in Nicaragua", *Transactions*, Intsitute of British Geographers, p.25.

128 Cornwall 2000:18–19.

129 Cleaver 2002:12.

130 **Cornwall, Andrea, Edström, Jerker & Greig, Alan** (2011) "Introduction: Politicising Masculinities in Development", Chapter 1 in Men and Development: Politicising Masculinities, London: Zed Books, p.5.

Next chapter is moving even further in the empowerment discourse. Chapter four aims at bringing an empowerment focus on women and a focus on men together, based on the arguments made in chapter two and three and its implications. Or more precisely try to sketch out how we could understand empowerment as a relational issue. Since as, Cornwall claims many empowerment strategies "may implicitly presume that their target group [women] exists as an entity that lies outside the nexus of social relations in which individual members are embedded"[131]. And as Hannah Arendt states that "*Power* corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act on concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together[132]. So, if we better want to understand the complexities around men and women's empowerment, then there is a need to elaborate on the contexts and spaces which men and women are moving through, and how they play a roll in the empowerment discourse. However, Hegel's theory doesn't seem to capture is the complexities of superiority and subordination. Power relations intersect and enhance each other and we need to study power relations through an intersectional analysis, i.e. people could experience multiple discriminations in, for example, terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age and disabilities[133]. Kimberlé Crenshaw argues that an intersectional analysis aims at capturing how subordination based on, for example, ethnicity and gender together give an enhanced effect and we could therefore not isolate and analyse different subordinations separately[134]. One writer that elaborates on these complexities is feminist theorist Sara Ahmed that claims emotions and 'properties' to be like gender, i.e. not inherently in a person, but rather an effect by the context or space that we inhabit[135]. So, what I'm suggesting in the next section is that empowerment might work in a similar way; it's not that a person becomes empowered as such, but rather that empowerment is an effect of the space or the context one inhabits. What next section could offer the 'empowerment' discourse is to show how we move through a co-inhabiting space, which shapes and constructs the conditions for empowerment.

4. Empowerment is neither 'in' nor 'outside' the subject

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131 Cornwall 2000:19.

132 Arendt 1970:44.

133 **Haslanger, Sally, Tuana, Nancy & O'Connor, Peg** (2015) "Topics in Feminism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/feminism-topics/, (Accessed 2016-04-14).

134 **Crenshaw, Kimberlé** (1991) "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" *Stanford Law Review* Vol. 43. Issue 6. pp. 1241-1299, p.1242,1244.

135 **Ahmed, Sara** (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; see also Ahmed (2006).

This section aims at examine the concept of 'empowerment' in the light of feminist theorist Sara Ahmed. She sets out to explore what it means for bodies to be situated in space and time, drawing from the phenomenological tradition. Ahmed claims that the subject consists of emotions, and that it's through emotions that we experience the world and our lives, where everything we do in life, to some extent, brings forth emotions[136]. If, as argued by Klein and Kabeer, being empowered is a matter of ability to make change through a sense of self-confidence/self-efficacy (or emotions in some sense) then it seems important to examine what emotions might do. In Ahmed's book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* she aims at explaining what emotions *do* with us and in relation to other subjects and objects. And what Ahmed seeks to answer in *Queer Phenomenology* is "what does it mean to be oriented?" and where she argues: "bodies are gendered, sexualized, and raced by how they extend into space…what is offered, in other words, is a model of how bodies become oriented by how they take up time and space"[137]. Orientation is conditioned by how bodies inhabit space and Ahmed claims that "orientations involve directions toward objects that affect what we do…we move toward and away from objects depending on how we are moved by them"[138]. By exploring the concept of orientation and what emotions do, Ahmed's theory could help us understand the complexities of empowerment, where it's not necessarily the case that we feel empowered in every sphere of life. Empowerment could be said to be contextual in the sense that our empowerment depends on which space we act through. As mentioned in the last section, subordination can work in a multiple dimensions. And as will be elaborated in this section, it's not necessarily the case that we only have to feel disempowered in a space of domination; even in seemingly equal spaces I can experience disempowerment. However, the purpose with Ahmed's theory isn't to claim that we are completely determined by the context. What I rather want to show is how we are affected by the context and that our (dis)empowerment is, to some degree, dependant on the context.

So how are bodies functioning in the world? According to philosopher Edmund Husserl consciousness is intentional and hence always directed "toward" objects and existence is "the lived experience of inhabiting a body"[139]. In other words, consciousness orients itself towards something particular and it perceives the world "around" us, hence

[136] Ahmed 2004.
[137] Ahmed 2006:5.
[138] Ahmed 2006:28.
[139] Ahmed 2006:2.

becoming embodied and situated. Orientation of a body starts from the point where the world unfolds itself, i.e. where one finds oneself is also where one starts one's orientation in space[140]. But the "here" doesn't start with the body, but where the body situates or "dwells" in the world. However, space isn't supposed to be understood as something exterior to us, "instead spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body"[141]. Which means that spaces through which our bodies inhabits also shapes our bodies. Spaces mark us with 'impressions', and shape our body surfaces. Emotions are, for instance, such impressions and Ahmed says that "emotions tell us a lot about time; emotions are the very 'flesh' of time. They show us the time it takes to move, or to move on, is a time that exceeds the time of an individual life. Through emotions, the past persists on the surface of the bodies"[142]. However, we aren't *objects* in the world, and as Merleau-Ponty puts it "we grasp external space through our bodily situation...our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It implies itself to space like a hand to an instrument and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object" (Merleau-Ponty 1964:5 cited in Ahmed 2006:53). Space isn't supposed to be seen as a room in which we can move our bodies, rather bodies becomes the space through which they inhabit. Both spaces and bodies are taking shape through this movement.

How our interactions with space shape us might become clearer when we consider what emotions do. What Ahmed claims is that we as individuals do not *own* our emotions. What does she mean by this? To answer this we must first understand what Ahmed is criticising in the first place. Ahmed criticises two different notions of emotions. The first one is the psychological one, the so-called 'inside-out' model. This model claims that emotions are formed within the subject. Whereas the second model, the sociological 'outside-in' model suggests that emotions are constructed within the group and then gets transferred over to the individual. What Ahmed is criticising here is that both these models seems to suggest that emotions are owned by either the individual or the group, and then making emotions as something passive, waiting to be activated.[143]

Notice how similar these two models are to two dimensions, mentioned in chapter two, of how to define the empowered woman. A psychological model would certainly fit with the approach of those scholars that advocate a more individual

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[140] Ahmed 2006:8.
[141] Ahmed 2006:9.
[142] Ahmed 2004:202.
[143] Ahmed 2004:9.

approach to empowering women. And the sociological approach would fit the approach that advocate a more essentials view of women, where women have to be seen as caring beings caught in their context. However, what Ahmed seeks to sketch out is a more dynamic view of emotions, emotions are neither "in" a person nor objects. Emotions are instead in a constant move, circulating within the space and in between subjects and objects[144]. Ahmed claims that reactions and emotions are an effect of the context or the space. How we react is shaped by past history, and hence not available to you in the present.

How empowerment could be said to be contextual can be seen in Elise Klein's study where she studied empowerment in Mali and stressed the importance of self-efficacy, and that we have to take into account aspects of psychological agency when discussing empowerment. She found two factors or emotional states that was important for being empowered according to the informants of the study. For people to feel empowered it was important to have *dusu*, i.e. "an internal motivation experienced by agents that drives purposeful action"[145]. And another important factor was *ka da I yèrè la*, i.e. "the belief in one's ability to initiate action"[146]. However, it was determined by the context if one could experience these psychological states. Klein states that "we can understand the 'power within' of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and the narrative of change as contributions to social development. While this power within is experienced internally, we can understand it as being relationally constituted through encouragement, positive envy, and watching others succeed"[147]. So even though Klein stresses the importance of the internal experience it's not something fixed, but rather contextual.

Also, think of following example from a study in India about micro-finance loans for women. Men reacted aggressively when they felt excluded by women becoming the family's new breadwinner, since the past had suggested that men were supposed to carry out this role within the family[148]. What Ahmed's theory might suggest if applied is that the frustration or anger that men felt isn't something inherently in micro-finance projects, women or men. But rather contextual, emotions shape their form through history and language. Language is historically conditioned and the meaning of concepts is 'beyond' the individual, that is to say an individual acts within the space, which is conditioned by language. It's through the interaction of subjects or objects in a space that

[144] Ahmed 2004:10.
[145] Klein 2014:14.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Klein 2014:21.
[148] Leach & Sitaram 2002:576.

emotions evoke.[149] Thus, some subjects or objects due to the space or context, becomes targets for what we feel. The social and the psychic become effects by emotions and emotions are in its turn an effect of the context, which is formed by history and language. Emotions could therefore be said to be cultural rather than psychological.

However, it isn't only when one is subordinated that one might be disempowered. We can also be disempowered in seemingly equal relations, and where the context allows or enables us to be empowered. For instance, think of a person that is given a high ranked position in a hierarchical corporation, where this high position implies lots of authority over other people. Authority isn't the same thing as having 'power over' someone; a doctor for instance, has authority over me since I 'give' the doctor my consent. Arendt writes "[authority's] hallmark is unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed"[150]. Thus, a boss could have authority without it necessarily implies a relation of dominance. However, despite a person being given this position, we can easily imagine this person being a pessimistic person, not believing in the ability of changing herself/himself or societal structures. Maybe the person is depressed and feels the world to be a hopeless place. I would suggest here that a person like this couldn't, by any means and in such a state, be labelled 'empowered'. Or the person may have internalised a subordinated approach to oneself. For example, lets imagine a black female boss, she might, even though she has authority at work, not feel secure enough to give orders to white male or even other white female staff members. However, as emotions and empowerment seems to be contextual, she might feel self-confident to give out orders to other coloured staff members, members with different disabilities, lower age or with other sexualities.

We are very often, which Ahmed claims are misconceptions, blaming or praising other people or objects for the origin of our pain or pleasure, implying that something in itself has pleasure or pain. How we conceive others and ourselves is according to Ahmed very much dependant on which space or context we are moving through. Bodies are shaped by their way of inhabiting space, however, spaces are co-habituated, i.e. subjects are sharing space. And by being oriented towards each other, subjects are shaping each other. Being oriented is according to Ahmed having ones body extended into space or "we could say that some spaces extend certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others"[151]. More precisely, being oriented could be feeling at home, where space extends

[149] Ahmed 2004:7, 25.
[150] Arendt 1970:45.
[151] Ahmed 2006:11.

your skin, and the surroundings become familiar to you. Ultimately, being disoriented might be when you are feeling displaced or 'out of place'. However, feeling lost still seems to take us somewhere in life, by being lost we inhabit space by recognising what isn't familiar, which might, in the end, become a familiar feeling. So Ahmed then argues "that familiarity is not, then "in" the world as that which is already given. The familiar is an effect of inhabitance; we are not simply in the familiar, but rather the familiar is shaped by actions that reach out toward objects that are already within reach"[152]. I'm here suggesting that it's in spaces that we can be co-creators of and shape our way of living or make changes where we also feel empowered. Some bodies might not be accepted as co-creators in certain spaces and then they might not be accepted or if accepted then having less or no power compared to those bodies that are already oriented or accepted. For instance, think of female bodies in strong patriarchal societies, where these bodies are in many spheres of the society not welcomed or denied access. In many societies female bodies are confined to the domestic or private sphere. Suruchi Thapar-Björkert comments on women's situation in India that "rural upper caste women are referred to as *grihalaxmies* (goddesses of the home), the symbolic custodians of the domestic domain and *purdah* is observed in many castes"[153].

Which bodies that are allowed in certain spaces or which bodies that tends towards some bodies or objects aren't because tendencies originate from the subject itself; rather it's the effect of repetition of the tending toward[154]. As Julia Wardhaugh suggests: "it is the activities that are performed in these spaces at given times and in given relationship contexts that reflect and/or subvert ideas about gender"[155]. So, we are shaped by the interaction with each other in or through a space which shapes us by how the space is organized, i.e. for instance, through which history shapes laws, norms or rules are dictated or prohibited. Also, different spaces, different bodies or objects affect us differently. So, I suggest here that we need to see spaces as a dialectical issue as discussed in the last section. It's not that one static body inhabits space with other static bodies, something is happening depending on which space and which bodies that inhabits it. However, gender, race nor sexuality is supposed to be seen as something inherently embodied, i.e. bodies as such are not gendered, raced or sexualised. Ahmed suggests that "gender is an effect of the kind of work that bodies do, which in turn

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[152] Ahmed 2006:7.
[153] **Thapar-Björkert, Suruchi** (2006) "Women as arm-bearers: Gendered caste-violence and the Indian state", Women's Studies International Forum, 29, pp.474–488, p.481.
[154] Ahmed 2006:58.
[155] Wardhaugh 1999:92 cited in Ahmed 2006:61.

"directs" bodies, affecting what they "can do". At the same time, it's not always decided which bodies inhabit which spaces, even when spaces extend the form of some bodies and not others"[156]. 'Having' a gender can be seen analogously with how 'things' come to have properties. An object or a thing comes have properties in the way Heidegger suggests: a thing "is not merely an aggregate of traits, nor an accumulation of properties by which the aggregate arises," instead we should understand a thing as "that around which the properties have assembled"[157]. So as Ahmed puts it "the object itself has been shaped for something, *which means it takes the shape of what it is for*. The object is not just material, although it is material: the object is matter given some form or another where the form "intends" toward something"[158]. What an object intends to do isn't "in" the object itself. Ahmed exemplifies with a 'writing table'. Writing has been seen as a masculine action, however it's not that the table has a gender "in" it, rather "gender is an effect of how bodies take up objects, which involves how they occupy space by being occupied in one way or another"[159]. If writing is associated with the masculine body, then writing tends to attract those that fulfil the shape of a masculine body. Thus gender is bodily oriented, where bodies get directed. Gender then is seen as something natural and becomes or seen as a property of a body, this is an effect of the repetition of habits or how bodies inhabit space, therefore shaping bodies and what they can do.

Properties of bodies are, nonetheless, not static that's to say they differ from context to context. Andrea Cornwall stresses how the context is important for constituting whether someone has power or not and she states when considering power relations amongst men that:

> Seeing the relationship between men and power as contingent enables us to focus on relations in itself powerful rather than render maleness in itself powerful and problematic. Particular individual men take up, and move between, a range of different subject positions in their everyday lives, positions that are infected with and constituted by other dimensions of difference. They may be powerful in some interactions, but by being less powerful in others they are no less gendered.[160]

This argument goes for women as well. What an intersectional analysis and a consideration for how spaces are shaping our empowerment can do is to show how women aren't only and primarily women. To see one only in the light of gender is too

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[156] Ahmed 2006:60.
[157] Heidegger 1975:22–23 cited in Ahmed 2006:46.
[158] Ahmed 2006:46.
[159] Ahmed 2006:59.
[160] Cornwall 2000:23.

narrow. The caste system in India and violence between castes highlights the importance of studying multiple power relations together. Suruchi Thapar-Björkert argues that "the struggle against gendered inequalities is mediated by other inequalities such as caste, religion and class, which puts gender on the back-burner. Women forsake patriarchal concerns for caste-community concerns. Thus some women's empowerment comes at the cost of disempowerment of others"[161]. The point here is that some positions in society seems more important to uphold or strengthen than others. An Indian woman in an upper caste might be subordinated her husband or other women in the same caste but she is superior to lower caste men and women. Ultimately being disempowered in one space but empowered in another. One could therefore be a 'victim' but at the same time, in another context a 'perpetrator'[162]. 'Power over' someone isn't then, as Virginia Held has argued, something necessarily typically male but can be exercised by anyone against anyone[163]. The main point in this section has been that empowerment isn't something one attains as something fixed, but rather something that's negotiated with others in a particular context. Not all men have power over women and not all men are empowered in every space. All women aren't subordinated men; women can be superior to both men and women. And even if equal structures exist it doesn't necessarily imply that one's empowered.

5. Conclusion

This paper set out to examine gendered processes of empowerment and disempowerment. The question through out the paper was the following one: is gendered empowerment a relational issue? The idea to investigate theoretically around empowerment as relational issue originates from the body of literature which claim that women's empowerment cannot be approached as an isolated phenomenon but has to, some extent, also include men. However, how and why men have to be included has been disputed amongst scholars. What my argumentation have tried to add the empowerment discourse is a suggestion of how we can theoretically understand the processes of (dis)empowerment as relational. The debate have basically been between the claim that men have power and rather out to give up power for the benefit of women, and the critique arguing that men also experience disempowerment. What I aimed to

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[161] Thapar Björkert 2006:479.
[162] Thapar Björkert 2006:482.
[163] **Held, Virginia** (1993) *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.136.

show and conclude was that men and women's (dis)empowerment is constructed in a dialectic and relational matter. The first part of the paper tried to sketch out some important themes and arguments of how we can understand the concept of empowerment. Empowerment is often explained to be the sense or ability to negotiate one's own life, the ability of making choices and to actually have the confidence to go for the opportunities. For women to be empowered or autonomous, scholars stress the need for transformation of societal structures, such as introducing women to the labour market and supporting individuals in believing in themselves, i.e. the psychological aspect of agency. Nonetheless, to reach this agency, we have to consider what relations and what contexts men and women are acting within. But as we saw through out the second part of the paper is there a body of literature also claiming that both men and women experience disempowerment though its nature, scale and processes may vary. Not only women experience subordination by men, also men could be subordinated other men.

I have also argued, in the light of G.W.H Hegel, that having 'power over' someone doesn't imply that one is empowered, since both the superior and the subordinated become disempowered in the struggle for recognition. But it might also be argued that exercising 'power over' someone is rather the effect of one being disempowered. But Hegel's theory doesn't seem to capture the complexities of relations and empowerment. We aren't only men and women, relations can be structured in a multiple of ways and discriminations and dominance could also take a multiple forms. I have here argued through Sarah Ahmed's theories that empowerment isn't something one attains as fixed, but rather is negotiated with others in the particular context. I claim that it's important for social science, not only in philosophy, to discuss around metaphysical questions such as the one in this paper, i.e. if a person's empowerment could be approach as a somewhat isolated phenomenon or as a relational phenomenon. A scientist or development worker might have to defend their choice of position, but if the answer could be found empirically is still debated within the philosophy of science.