Making Feminist Leadership Transformative and Sustainable

~ a life-long journey ~

IWE-WELDD

September 2015

Institute for
Women's
Empowerment

Reclaiming the "I", redefining the "WE"

Contents

I   Acknowledgements

From the beginning of the WELDD project in 2012, IWE took on 'Sustainable leadership' with a vague idea that 'sustainability' was needed for ourselves, our organisations, and movements.

The ensuing invaluable process of discussion and analysis of many critical issues around leadership with local partners and other leaders in the women's movements in Asia helped us to deepen our engagement with the notion of sustainability, in addition to 'feminist' and 'transformative' leadership. We were strengthened in our conviction of the usefulness of the endeavour through hearing repeatedly that though everyone was struggling with a conceptual understanding of what it means - all agreed that we (as individual activists and leaders, as organisations, and as movements) are NOT sustainable, and we need to be.....

IWE-WELDD's first attempt to consolidate our learning was a module on Feminist Leadership that is Transformative and Sustainable (FLTS), still to be refined and published, laying out the conceptual and practical components of feminism, transformation and sustainability, and the holistic approach to leadership they entail.

This paper attempts to put it all together in narrative form, with a particular focus on conceptualising the heretofore largely missing piece of sustainability within our feminist discussions and organizing. It brings together the contributions from nearly four years of thinking and discussions in interviews, meetings, and workshops among the IWE-WELDD team and our Indonesian partners.

We hope this paper contributes to furthering the visioning and realisation of ways of thinking, being, working and relating to one another that supports transformation and sustainability for feminist leaders, our organisations and movements.

Institute for Women's Development (WE), September 2015

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[1] Ginger is co-founder and program manager of International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP). www.womenforpeaceandjustice.org

II   Introduction

Achieving gender justice and transforming our societies requires visionary **feminist leadership**, not only strong woman leaders. Leadership is a means, a process, principles and practices that are necessary to gather and direct our resources to achieve set goals. Leadership principles and practices also have the potential to create lasting and profound impacts on individuals, our communities, organizations and our movements. Many conceive leadership as embedded in a person, eg. the formal head of a group or an organisation, the holder of a powerful position. But at its core, leadership is about learning and acting on how to use our power, foster resilience and resistance to oppressive forces, and build peaceful and just societies collectively.

How can our practices of leadership enable us to transform power within ourselves, our communities, organisations and movements as well as the patriarchal power structures that continue to marginalise and oppress people, especially women? How can our leadership practices ensure our own and others' wellbeing in our daily lives, and support the sustainability of our organisations and movements? What does this kind of leadership look like?

Feminist leadership explicitly addresses the unequal gendered power relations in all spheres of life – personal, domestic and public - to promote gender equity, equality and social justice. Feminist leadership is transformative when it addresses the root causes of inequality, recognising the intersections of gendered inequality and all other forms of social and political oppressions - structural as well as interpersonal.

Insightful and substantive work has been produced on the meaning, process, and practice of transformative feminist leadership. IWE-WELDD has drawn on this literature extensively in the design and implementation of our work in Indonesia. In particular, the work of Srilatha Batliwala[2] on conceptualizing feminist leadership, and Batliwala and Michel Friedman's[3] work to build on the concepts through the feminist toolkit, provides a conceptual and practical framework.

Yet through our work with a diverse range of Indonesian civil society organisations, we have found that while transformative feminist leadership is fundamental to engendering personal and social change, it is not sufficient, not complete. Leadership practices that are feminist and transformative have to also ensure *sustainability*, especially given the high demands, risks and multiple threats encountered by feminist leaders and the continuing surveillance and attack on women and civil society organisations. Sustainability at personal, organisational, and movement levels is an essential element of our work and activism for social transformation. While some literature on women's transformative leadership[4] includes sustainability as a value and commitment, the nuance of what that means in practice beyond financial security can be easily overlooked.

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[2] Batliwala, S (2011). Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud. CREA.

[3] Batliwala, S and Friedman, M. (2014) Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership: A Toolkit for Organizations and Movements. CREA.

[4] Jahan, R. 2000. Transformative Leadership in the 21st Century. Centre for Asia Pacific Women in Politics. http://www.capwip.org/resources/womparlconf2000/plenray1.htm

Therefore, the IWE-WELDD program seeks to contribute to the developing feminist leadership discourse by defining the concepts and practices of sustainability as they relate to feminist leaders, organisations, and movements. This paper will first review the previous work on feminist transformative leadership. We will articulate meaning and learning from IWE-WELDD's work with the Indonesian women's movements about transformative feminist leadership and our efforts to incorporate sustainable activism. We will then explore the concept of sustainability in more depth, drawing on other fields in which the concept of sustainability has been critical to their progressive growth and adaptation. Finally, we will look at sustainability in relationship to feminist leadership for social transformation.

III   Defining (or RE-defining?) Leadership

Organizations and movements often confuse the position of *leader* with the many roles of *leadership*, which can be broken into **task** and **morale** functions. Each of these functions are crucial for effective running of an organization or movement, and looking at leadership this way allows us to move past the idea that any one person can or must fulfill all these roles; each member of a group has something to contribute to the success of the group. Feminist leadership encourages the capacity development and confidence of all members of the group to ensure these different functions are adequately covered and that everyone feels they are contributing and their voices are heard.

Leadership functions[5],[6]

Task functions	Morale functions
Initiating activity: Getting the group started on the task; proposing solutions, suggesting new ideas, plans, new definitions of the problems, new approaches to problems or new organisation of material.	**Encouraging**: being friendly, warm, responsive to others, show acceptance and appreciation of others and their ideas, build on and accepting contributions of others.
Information seeking: asking for clarification of suggestions, drawing out resources of group, identifying or requesting additional information to be found elsewhere.	**Harmonising**: mediating, conciliating differences in points of view, helping those in conflict to understand one another's views, making compromise solutions.
Information giving: offering facts or generalisations, relating one's own experience to group problems to illustrate points; sharing relevant experiences.	**Tension- reducing**: reducing negative feelings by jesting or making a well-timed joke, putting a tense situation or problem in a wider context
Opinion giving and asking: stating an opinion of belief concerning a suggestion or one of several suggestions, particularly concerning its	**Active listening:** accepts input and thoughtfully considers it, is receptive to all ideas and proposals

[5] Lakey, G and Kokopeli, B. "Leadership for Change: Toward a Feminist Model." New Society Publishers.
[6] Hope A. & Timmel S.(1984).Training for Transformation. A Handbook for Community Workers. Vol. 2

value rather than its factual basis. Good decision-making depends on knowing what all members think and feel about a suggestion.	
Explaining and clarifying: giving practical examples to make a point clear, asking a question or repeating a point in different words to make it clear, trying to envisage how a proposal might work out if adopted.	**Expressing personal and group feelings**: summarizing what group feeling is sensed to be, describing reactions of the group to ideas or solutions.
Coordinating: clarifying relationships among various ideas or suggestions, trying to pull ideas and suggestions together, trying to draw together activities of various sub-groups or members.	**Evaluating**: examines the process the group uses, providing information and facilitates a self-evaluation process for improvement.
Summarising: pulling together related ideas or suggestions, restating suggestions and synthesising after the group has discussed them.	**Consensus-testing**: tentatively asking for group opinions in order to find out if the group is nearing consensus on a decision, sending up trial balloons to test compromise solutions.
Testing feasibility: making application of suggestions to real situations, examining practicality and workability of ideas, pre-evaluating decisions.	**Creating Space**: trying to make it possible for all members to have a chance to be heard and make contributions to the group (ie, "We haven't heard anything from Dini yet")
Checking standards: submitting group decisions or accomplishments to comparison with group standards, measuring accomplishments against goals.	**Standards-setting**: states and restates the group standards goals to help the group focus the direction of the work and of accomplishments.
Suggesting/facilitating process for decision making/action: determining sources of difficulties, and appropriate steps to take next, checking consensus (see if everyone especially silent members agree on a point)	**Diagnosing difficulties**: supporting decisions of group and helping to articulate difficult moments like "I think we cannot make this decision until we get more information"
	Solving interpersonal problems: promotes open and mediated discussion of conflict between group members to resolve

Of all these functions, it is usually the task functions that are understood and valued as leadership and wield more power in a group. Task functions are often deemed more important as 'getting the job done.' Morale functions are focused on relationships and nurturance and are deemed less crucial within organizational structures. Feminist leadership values the morale functions as just as essential to transformative leadership as the task functions, and

recognizes that all group members can (and should) develop skills of morale-building.

IV Transformative Feminist Leadership

> "Women with a feminist perspective and vision of social justice, ***individually and collectively transform themselves to use their power, resources and skills in non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes to mobilise others*** – esp other women – around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realisation of human rights for all."[7] (emphasis added)

CREA's work since 2010 to conceptualise transformative feminist leadership has helped to frame the global feminist discourse on feminist leadership and how to practice it. Srilatha Batliwala's work, *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud[8]* is a welcome contribution to the field and has prompted rich discussions, evaluation of personal and organizational practices and visioning for feminist movements. In IWE-WELDD's work in Indonesia, the most notable pieces of Batliwala's conceptualizing that has informed the working approach is the holistic definition of feminism, the inclusion of power analyses, and the need to name and address 'deep structures' within organizations, and most innovative – the centrality of "self-transformation."

Feminist movements and the notion of feminism are constantly evolving, influenced by, and influencing, other social justice movements. Batliwala and Friedman's expansive definition of today's feminism encompasses the theory and practice of what is needed for transformation. They describe four distinct and inter-related components of feminism - ideology, social change strategy, analytical framework, and daily practice.

A. Feminism[9]
As an ideology, feminism stands not only for gender equality but for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit or marginalise any set of people on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, ability, class, caste or ethnicity. It also recognises the intersecting nature of people's identities and social locations and the fact that we can experience discrimination, exclusion or oppression simultaneously in intersecting ways.

As an analytical framework, feminism has refined and deepened the concepts of patriarchy and gender; feminists have created a range of analytical tools and methods for unpacking the power imbalances between men and women in various social institutions and structures (e.g. gendered division of labour in the household and

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[7] Batliwala, S and Friedman, M. (2014) Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership: A Toolkit for Organizations and Movements. CREA, page 30.
[8]http://www.creaworld.org/sites/default/files/Feminist%20Leadership%20For%20Social%20Transformation_0.pdf
[9] This definition is taken with minor adaptation from CREA's 'Achieving Transformative Leadership: a Toolkit for Organizations and Movements.' For more, download:
http://www.creaworld.org/publications/achieving-transformative-feminist-leadership-toolkit-organisations-and-movements

economic activities, control of women's sexuality and reproductive life, etc.). Feminist scholars have also developed new frameworks to analyse the way in which multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion operate together, rather than incrementally, in people's lives. Feminism embraces new notions of gender and gender identities that go beyond the social construction of just two genders.

As a social change strategy, feminism prioritises the empowerment of women and other marginalised genders, the transformation of gender power relations and the advancement of gender equality within all change interventions.

As daily practice, feminist practice is concerned with and pays attention to how we use our power and how we respond to other people's use of their power in everyday life, in our personal and professional relationships and interactions. This is true in our own personal relationships and in the organisation and movement cultures we are part of creating.

B.   Power

Power is the 'fulcrum' of transformative feminist leadership. An analysis of individual and structural power, and the ways in which power is used – by others as well as ourselves – is the foundation of feminist activism and leadership.

Leadership as the agency or capacity to act and to move others to action is fundamentally about the intentional exercise of power, others' and our own. There are many ways of understanding power, and no single definition is possible. Some see power as a **resource** wielded by certain people or groups over others, whether as a **means of domination** or as a form of **legitimate authority**. Others see power as a positive force or ability of people to strengthen and mobilise to challenge inequalities and demand rights. Both these views of power recognise it as something exercised by actors or groups – as a kind **of "agency" or capacity to act**, and **powerlessness as the lack of that ability**.

Power is manifested in the prevailing social, political and economic norms and structures that create hierarchies within society, as well as the attitudes and behaviour that lead to domination and marginalisation. Discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and other identities is often caused by the force of such norms which permeate the structures of power. These socialised norms and structures are often "internalised", becoming part of the prevailing social patterns to which people, consciously or unconsciously, conform – both the "powerful" and the "powerless". Challenging power then becomes a question of recognising, naming and shifting these socialised patterns.

Personally, 'power' enables us to maintain control and choice in our lives and provides opportunity to develop ourselves to our fullest potential as human beings.

Power **is relational and contextual and can manifest in both negative and positive forms**. Its expressions and forms can range from **domination and resistance** to **collaboration and transformation**.

Understanding power from a feminist perspective means we recognize that we cannot work to transform power relations in the outside world without addressing it in our own lives and our daily practice of leadership.

Sources of Power

Individuals, groups and institutions gain power from internal and external sources. Sources of power impact our lives, as individuals and as members of groups, because they define our position, status and space in society.

Examples of sources of power include: weapons, legal status, gender, class, material wealth, age, race or ethnicity, position, educational level, social status, family ancestry, physical strength, location (live in town or village, live in global north or south), experience, profession, skills, information and technology, physical appearance, sexual orientation, skills, wisdom, integrity. Some sources we have from birth and others from family ancestry. Others we develop ourselves, like education.

The more sources of power an individual or group has, the more power, opportunities and privileges they will gain. The individual or group that has the fewest sources of power is the one that will have the fewest opportunities and will most likely be oppressed in society. Where power lies and who has power changes according to the context and setting. Someone can be in a dominating position in one area and be relatively weak in another. Similarly, the same source of power may be valued very differently in different contexts.

This understanding challenges the view of power as limited to a zero-sum game – in other words, a finite resource that needs to be taken away from others. Having many sources of power is not bad nor is power itself. How we use our sources of power is the key.

Expressions of Power

For many people, and particularly people whose identities have been marginalized, power is often thought of as negative and coercive, because the experience with power has most often been of someone or a group with power using it over others. *Power over* is when a person or group uses their sources of power to dominate, exploit, control, take advantage of and make decisions for others. Power over is the form of power used by the institutions that govern our lives and is replicated in many personal and public relationships.

Constant exposure to *power over* can make people hesitant to assume any positions of power, or to acknowledge any power, because we have internalized that the very definition of power is to use it over others.

Yet when we can expand the definition of power, it opens endless opportunities for transformation. There are expressions of power that are rooted in agency, choice and empowerment. Transformative feminist leadership fosters these expressions of power as a direct challenge to the forces of *power over* that dominate our institutions.

Expression	What does it mean in practice?
'Power to': individual ability to act	This is rooted in the belief that every individual has the 'power to' make a difference by acknowledging her own sources of power and acting on them in

	ways that allow others to access their own sources of power.
'Power with': collective action, when a person or group uses their sources of power to share resources and decision-making, or to allow others to make their own decisions.	'Power with' helps build bridges across different experiences and knowledge and is about bringing together resources and strategies. Reflects relations based on an empowerment model where there is dialogue, inclusion, negotiation, consensus - the power of people working together to solve a common problem.
'Power within': inner qualities that a person or group has or can develop to overcome obstacles and fear, and take action for change non-violently.	Power within helps individuals build their capacities to envision and come together to work collectively for change

This power analysis encourages thinking about power as a force that can be galvanized to create positive strategies and create multiple opportunities for change.

Starhawk[10] suggests that the only way to reduce violence and create more just and peaceful societies is by rebuilding the *power within* among citizenry. To struggle against, resist, challenge and change power over at all levels of society it is necessary to revive the *power within* of marginalized groups, including women, grassroots people, informal workers, farmers, LGBT people, groups who fight to protect the environment, etc. The *power within* and active struggle of marginalized groups shape social movements to resist the *power over* by the state, institutions, and other privileged groups in order to demand and create opportunities for common citizens to share power in decision making, policy making, and resource distribution and to stop policy, goods, or culture that negatively impact their own livelihoods, society as a whole, and nature.

Much of the time power does not operate in visible and tangible ways.

Visible power includes the aspects of political power that we 'see'– formal rules, structures, institutions and procedures informing decision-making. In other words, it is about how people in certain powerful positions use existing procedures and structures to control / influence the actions of others.

Hidden power is when people with power maintain their power by creating barriers to participation, by excluding key issues from the discussion, or by making decisions 'behind the scenes'.[11] Examples could include: predetermined meeting agendas made without consultation, or contentious issues always being pushed to the end of an agenda and never getting addressed; a lack of clarity around how decisions of hiring or

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[10] Starhawk (1988), *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery*. San Francisco: Harper.
[11] http://www.powercube.net/analyse-power/forms-of-power/hidden-power/

promotions are made; or women being told they are being too emotional or sensitive about issues that effect them, undermining their legitimacy.

While the intention in many feminist organizations is to reject the patriarchal structures of hierarchy and top-down control, hidden power can be especially prevalent in organizations when it is not explicit who holds power and how decisions are made.

Invisible power is the internalisation of dominant belief systems and ideologies that blame people for the marginalisation and oppression they experience. People are made to feel powerless to challenge abuses of power because of the prevailing view that domination is 'natural,' cannot be changed, or is somehow their fault.[12] Advertising campaigns notoriously perpetuate invisible power by, for example, marketing products in ways that make women feel inferior, incomplete, and only valued for their beauty. Within organizations, young staff may silence themselves, or are not consulted, because they are presumed to lack experience and therefore their opinions are not valuable.

It is often easier to engage with visible power holders such as policy makers than to engage with power that is exercised behind the scenes, or is embedded in cultural and social norms and practices. However, ignoring hidden and invisible forms of power will lead to a limited understanding of how change happens, how alternative sources of power can be mobilised, and which change strategies can be developed. Challenging the social and cultural boundaries that condition all actors (powerful or powerless) may require strategies other than challenging the "power-holders" alone, whether they are visible or hidden in the way they exercise power.

C.   *Deep structures*

Addressing deep structures within organizations makes feminist leadership intentionally transformative.

The 'deep structure[13]' is the collection of taken-for-granted, 'unspoken' values, ways of thinking and working that underlie decision-making and action within organizations and movements. Informal norms and rules can be such an integral part of an organization's culture that they stay unnamed, ignored or invisible. They are potentially dangerous as they can perpetuate discrimination and inequality that affect relationships and ways of working within organizations and how effectively the organization interacts with the communities in which they work.

When deep structures are not acknowledged and addressed, people can become marginalized within the organization based on their gender, ethnicity, class, etc. Marginalisation and discrimination are difficult to challenge because they are perpetuated by the deep structure in these inter-related factors:
 • *access*: certain identities (gender, race, class) are not 'at the table', thus they do not participate in decision-making processes and their perspectives and interests are not represented

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[12] http://www.powercube.net/analyse-power/forms-of-power/invisible-power/
[13] 'What Is Gender at Work's Approach to Gender Equality and Institutional Change? From http://www.genderatwork.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Gender-Equality-and-Institutional-Change.pdf

• *accountability*: the organisation prioritises a focus on external accountability to meet quantitative targets instead of internal accountability to equality and empowerment among staff
 • *cultural systems*: The work-family divide that is still unquestioned by most organisations prevents especially women from being full participants in those organisations, as they continue to bear the responsibility for household, child and elderly care; and
• *social norms*: the workplace reinforces the marginalisation and discrimination prevailing in the dominant society. [14]

The deep structure of most organizations is profoundly biased, reflecting society more broadly, and acts as an obstacle to transformative work on social justice.[15]

> 'For example, one aspect of deep structure is the separation between work and family. As Joan Acker pointed out, a key assumption in large organizations is that work can be completely separated from the rest of life, and the organization has first claim on the worker. From this follows the idea of the 'ideal worker', dedicated to the organization, unhampered by familial demands, and …male (Acker 1990). Another aspect of deep structure is the image of heroic individualism. Heroic individualism can lead to a focus on winning, and noticeable achievement. This contrasts with the largely process oriented, and sometimes long-term, business of understanding gender relations in a particular context, and acting for equality. As well, given stereotypic gender roles, heroes tend to be men, further contributing to the idea of men as the ideal worker and women as 'other'.'[16]

V   Feminist praxis in IWE-WELDD and the search for Sustainability

A. Learning from Indonesia

IWE-WELDD's work has been deeply influenced by these conceptual frameworks of feminism, power and deep structures as we developed our program in Indonesia to work cross-sectorally in three thematic areas: ***pluralism and peace, informal workers, and land rights***. A fourth project component - ***sustainable leadership***- has been the common thread linking the leadership capacity building programs in the specific thematic areas.   The 'added value' of our approach to movements for gender justice in Indonesia is our feminist approach to leadership that is fundamentally transformative and sustainable.   We hope that the leadership we promote will contribute to deep structural change while being able to sustain the wellbeing care and security for activists and their organizations as they work for social justice and gender equality.

With our Indonesian partners, IWE-WELDD is committed to supporting feminist leadership "from the ground up".   Through a series of interviews, discussions and informal needs assessments, we sought answ ers to many questions: *What does feminist sustainable leadership mean in the context of the Indonesian women's movement after the oppressive years of the Suharto era?   Are the present leadership practices transformative?*

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[14] 'What Is Gender at Work's Approach to Gender Equality and Institutional Change? From http://www.genderatwork.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Gender-Equality-and-Institutional-Change.pdf
[15] ibid.
[16] ibid.

What's really working and where are the gaps? What are the nuanced meanings in theory and practice of sustainability in this context? How can IWE contribute to strengthening feminist leadership, and thereby the movements for social justice led by our partner groups?

The importance of the feminist leadership principle of ensuring all voices and perspectives are heard and valued was a common theme in the interviews and discussions. People spoke to a need and a commitment to build capacity and build relationships within and across organisations and movements. There was recognition that leadership is a collective concern, and is about changing unequal power relations, and that just as important as the strategies, rules and regulations that guide the work are the values and principles that keep social justice movements passionate and focused.

Women spoke of a generation gap– of history, skills, knowledge, experience, passion – and the need for an inter-generational transfer of positions, skills, and perspectives; the need to find a way to respect and learn from the experience of the seasoned activists and make space for new leadership and new ways of working and relating together.

B.   Defining Feminism starting from our own experiences

For the IWE-WELDD team, feminism is an ongoing process of developing critical awareness, of the roots of injustice, and acting on it. For us, like for most women, the process is based on daily experiences of discrimination that are harmful to self, community and society and the recognition that something needs to change radically. At some point in our lives, we each came to the realization that we could either accept oppression or we resist it, and we chose resistance.

Feminism helps us to see how injustice is tied to the intersections of our multiple identities (gender, class, religion, sexuality…), and how discrimination and oppression are institutionalized and are structural results of patriarchy that limit us all. Feminist analysis helps us see the root causes of oppression and the ways we internalize that oppression.

Feminism helps us make the link between what we as individual women feel and experience, and the oppressive conditions in our organizations, communities, and societies. This is not only an analytical or logical process. Standing up against injustice requires (and re-creates) an empathetic connection from the heart that brings people together to work for change. This empathetic connection – *solidarity* - is not only built on the commonalities of our experiences; it is also about accepting and working across our differences.

As feminists, an analysis of power relations is crucial. We need to learn and analyze personal and institutional power in its various forms, and how we can use both forms of our power effectively to resist structural power. We find ways to (re)distribute power and share responsibilities among each other and across movements.

With our partners, we are increasingly convinced that a "forgotten" aspect of the feminist process of awakening is how to internalize and actualize feminist praxis in daily life, which is very difficult in the face of so much oppression and hostility. It is a process of internal work, discovering the sources of our own self-worth, reclaiming and

re-building our own perceptions of self and our identities, acknowledging our own will. This 'internal work' is essentially about building internal strength, as the authentic core of 'wellbeing'. Doing this together we learn to really recognize each other and work together.

C. What does IWE-WELDD consider transformative feminist leadership?

In each of IWE-WELDD's three components (peace and pluralism, land rights and informal workers), transformative feminist leadership is the foundation for work towards gender justice based on common values, principles and methodologies.

IWE-WELDD considers a leadership process *feminist* when:
- It has a bottom-up approach: starting with the communities' own initiatives for change
- It recognizes that the personal is political and the political is personal
- It encourages people to take responsibility, take risks for change, and take action
- It is built on sharing and learning from one another's experiences
- It recognises, accepts and allows differences
- It is inclusive of all identities
- It is based on power sharing,
- It is based on a strategic analysis of power and the root causes of oppression
- It is based on a vision that something has to change, and there is a strong will to make it happen
- It is grounded in optimism and hope.
- It promotes collective action: people of all genders working together to change.

A leadership process is *transformative* when it is **feminist** (all of the above) plus:
- It works to promote change at four levels: personal consciousness, access to resources, exclusionary cultural practices, and formal laws and policies[17]
- It is built on incremental strategies for structural change
- It is aware of deep (usually invisible) power structures within own organization and has the will to change them
- It facilitates processes to challenge patriarchal practice/thinking in ourselves, our organizations, and our movements, creating cultural shifts

Finally, IWE-WELDD worked to add another dimension to our developing understanding of Feminist, Transformative leadership: *sustainability.*
On the issue of sustainability, there were two common sentiments that made our IWE-WELDD team realize this was a concept that needed further exploration and attention. The commonly understood notions of sustainable leadership were either that the same woman leader continuously serve as leader of the organization, or conversely, that discussions of sustainable leadership automatically implied the need for a change in leadership. As one leader put it, 'Sustainable leadership' implies leadership that continues, without attention to the leadership direction or feminist approaches. So sustainability becomes a neutral phrase without perspective of where it is going."

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[17] 'What Is Gender at Work's Approach to Gender Equality and Institutional Change?' From
http://www.genderatwork.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Gender-Equality-and-Institutional-Change.pdf

The notion of sustainability, therefore, elicited feelings of defensiveness and confusion, and while for some, it implied a certain amount of self reflection on one's own practices, we realized most of us just had not thought about it in the context of our feminist leadership, organizations and movements at all.

These discussions shaped our thinking and praxis on how we approached our work and our relationships with partner groups. As an organization, we have studied, developed, and practiced - among ourselves and with our partner organisations - two specific aspects of sustainability: Wellbeing, Self Care and Integrated Security (WeSIS)[18] and Social Solidarity Economy[19] (SSE), which are discussed in more detail later in this paper. We are convinced that these are practical ways to address the issues of "UNsustainability." We have come to realize that the 'internal work' that is necessary for sustainability spans the whole range of awareness, knowing, positioning, and building solidarity, based on acceptance of differences as well as commonalities.

This recognition has guided our approach to promoting what we call *feminist leadership that is transformative and sustainable (FLTS).*
Our initial "working definition" was formulated thus:

A **feminist** transformative leadership process **is *sustainable* when:**
- There is commitment to the long term goal of gender justice alive in the whole organization and movement and not only in individual leaders
- There is regular, systematic capacity building in feminist transformative leadership to facilitate new leaders emerging
- There is a conscious process for leadership succession
- Women from all backgrounds are supported to take risks and are encouraged into leadership positions
- There is an intentional focus on personal, organizational and movement wellbeing and security
- There is an holistic approach to economic empowerment /security and livelihoods
- Members (staff, activists, leaders) are encouraged and supported to connect with both 'head and heart' to ourselves, others and the larger collective, and act together out of solidarity

In broader perspective, IWE's 2016-2018 Strategic Plan[20] articulated action points for promoting and supporting *sustainable activism* as a strategic priority at four levels: individuals, social movements, the economy, and organizations, which are integral to each other and, as all real life processes do, intersect with each other.

D.   *Sustainable activism - a global feminist re-awakening?*

'Three qualities: **awareness**, **integration** and **emotional resilience**, establish a crucial foundation to sustainable activist practice. They not only help us take better

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[18] Wellbeing, self-care and integrated Security:
[19] Social Solidarity Economy: an ethical/value-based approach to economic development, wherein the wellbeing of people and their communities are central -which makes it an alternative option to the present liberal money economy.
[20] Institute for Women's Development : Strategic plan 2016-2018

care of ourselves and equip ourselves to avoid burnout, but can also give us more flexibility, clarity, and access to deeper resources in ourselves which better empowers us for action.'[21]

Making activism sustainable means integrating a personal and political critical awareness to *how* and *why* we approach our work, for ourselves and collectively with others. It means acknowledging burnout, stress, and overwork as systemic issues threatening activists and our movements. It encourages us to set healthy boundaries (ie saying no), let go of guilt, and a constant sense of obligation due to gender messages and activist culture. It means practicing self care and encouraging others to practice self care.

The following excerpts from the Concept Note for a Wellness Area at the 2012 Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) international forum explains the current global awakening in ourselves and others of the need, right, and value of self-care for ourselves and each other as a critical piece of what it takes to sustain activism.

> 'We practice self-care in many forms: through the way we treat ourselves; the balance we give to the time we dedicate to work and rest; the energy and space we dedicate to undressing and dislodging the knots that we carry from our daily struggles; when we learn to give ourselves and our bodies the same care and attention that we demand for the bodies and lives of other women; when we know, recognize, and take ownership of the resources that exist around us to gain wellness; and when we [re]generate in our personal and organizational surroundings practices that contribute to the sustainability of our movement.
>
> For other activists, self-care is the capacity to commit ourselves to the work in defense and promotion of women's human rights without sacrificing other important parts of our personal life. The capacity to maintain a positive attitude toward the work despite the challenges is another important dimension. Self-care can also be understood as the right of an activist to feel healthy, secure, and satisfied. It brings the need to question the assumption that a "good activist" is one who dedicates all of her energy to others, which frequently leads to exhaustion. An activist idea of wellness suggests that she must meet her own needs in balance with her surroundings, with options and autonomy to define personal boundaries.
>
> Women activists must guarantee the reclaiming of self-care, not just as a personal and basic human right to rest, recreation, dance, and laughter, but also as a strategy that is deeply political and subversive. The sustainability of our movements depends on this self-care, so that we may count on women who are healthy and that we may know how to set limits to our actions. The ability to set limits can develop a longer time-frame for work that is more pleasurable and balanced.[22]

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[21] 'Effective Sustainable Activism.' http://www.ecodharma.com/self-society-a-radical-response/effective-sustainable-activism

[22] AWID Forum 2012: 'Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice.' Concept Note for Wellness Area: Self-Care, Safety and Security, 2012.

IWE coined the term 'WeSIS' (Wellbeing, Self Care and Integrated Security) to denote the whole, diverse, age-old and multi-cultural alchemy of practices and processes which can help activists to connect and act on critical awareness at head and heart in themselves, others and the collective. It is not about particular exercises, techniques or practices - as each individual or group should choose and cultivate those that are relevant and meaningful to them; it is about making personal and collective commitments - to challenge patriarchal practice/thinking in ourselves, organizations, movements and it is about creating cultural shifts. By encouraging healthy collectivity and solidarity, and healthy individuals, it supports processes of transformation of individuals, organizations and movements.

The practise of WeSIS is critical to the necessity for feminist leadership to deconstruct our internalised patriarchal gender mandates and challenge the ways in which these patriarchal gender mandates define women by our relationships with others - as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and designate almost exclusively to women, the explicit caregiving roles, even at the expense of our own sense of wellbeing. Gender mandates are reproduced at the personal and collective levels. Therefore naming the mandates is the first step in releasing the feelings of guilt or selfishness when we determine limits and express our needs, and this helps to strengthen new positive values to practices of self-care and protection.[23]

A commitment to the practise of WeSIS is thus an essential component of Feminist Leadership that is Transformative and Sustainable - building resilience, power within, mindful presence, and awareness.

VI   Sustainability – learning from other movements

Conceptually, however, the ways in which sustainability must permeate our work to ensure health of individuals, organizations and our movements has yet to be fully articulated. Other movements and institutions have engaged with the concept longer than the feminist and gender justice movements, and we can learn much from the values, principles and practices that they have developed to enhance sustainability in their own fields.

It has been most clearly articulated in the fields of (sustainable) development and (sustainable) leadership in education. Overall, sustainability refers to the endurance, maintenance, and nurturance of a living system, be it a person, an organization, a community, a movement, the environment. It therefore requires systems thinking, which is a holistic approach that examines the linkages, interactions, and influences between each of the elements that comprise a system. It helps to understand the connectivity between elements in any situation, so as to think of integrated actions when change is needed. Living systems are by definition dynamic, not fixed, they evolve, and to be sustainable, they must adapt to new circumstances and conditions.

Such systems thinking has influenced the conceptual frameworks in the fields of development and leadership in education that are considered holistic and empowering for people and the environment.

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[23] ibid.

A. *Sustainable development*

> **"Sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible as an idea whose time has come." - Wangari Maathai[24]**

The most common usage of "sustainable" is in relation to development, which was coined in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission report 'Our Common Future' in an effort to unite the global effort towards sustainable development. The most often cited definition of sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

A key piece of this definition is that it includes ***needs*** and the idea of ***limitations*** – what it means to live within the means of the whole ecosystem to maintain health and durability over the long term. While sustainable development was first discussed primarily in relation to ecological limits of growth, feminist critique has expanded the discourse to include "issues of social and environmental justice, inter- and intra-generational equity, ideology, and political practice."[25] It is now commonly understood to include four interconnected systems: ecology, economics, politics and culture. Applied to each of these systems, sustainable development means to nourish the conditions that create positive changes and improvements for the whole system; it does not necessarily mean 'to grow.'

Emerging from the sustainable development movement has been the notion of sustainable communities. "Sustainable communities foster commitment to place, promote vitality, build resilience to stress, act as stewards, and forge connections beyond the community."[26] Sustainable communities:
- Value and respect all people
- Cultivate trusting relationships among people, organizations and institutions
- Cooperate for the common good
- Provide opportunities for communication and learning
- Seek to develop and not just grow

The last decade has seen ambitious and hope-awakening discussions on concepts, polices and implementation of a truly "sustainable development".

However, the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) produced rather meagre results for gender equality and justice, not to mention any significant impacts on the incessant course of impoverishment of diverse populations all over the world.

The following decade, starting from this year, hails a new set of "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) which have been debated, compromised and now accepted. However, in spite of the resolute and rich input of numerous civil society organisations,

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[24] Hargreaves, A. 'Welcome to Sustainable Leadership.' Power point presentation. Downloaded from: www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/saelp/ah-sustainlead.ppt
[25] MacGregor, S. (nd) 'Feminist Perspectives on Sustainability.' *Introduction to Sustainable Development*. Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS) – UNESCO.
[26] http://sustainablemeasures.com/Training/Indicators/Def-NWPI.html

networks and movements concerned about the defense and promotion of core human rights of impoverished and marginalised peoples, which are inexorably linked with the economic and social development system that govern the contours of their lives, the final SDG document is a disappointment.

One radical global movement – with which IWE is associated – is the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Movement . The following is exerpted from the recommendations of the UN SSE Task Force [27], already in 2013:

> "We wish to collectively express our deep concerns about the four High Level Reports presented to the Executive Secretary Ban Ki-moon, and about his proposal presented during the 68th General Assembly in September 2013 on the occasion of a special event on the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals. We believe that the proposals fail to properly address the enormous challenges whichhumankind is facing, given the multiple systemic global crises that result from the prevailing economic model of neoliberalism that has dominated our world in recent decades.
>
> We recommend that Governments adopt the recommendations available in the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) report "Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda". This report was based on the outcomes of a thorough consultation with several Networks and Movements on 5 continents, and was officially handed to the UN State Members by the President of the 68th session of the General Assembly on September 25, 2013 (more information at http://www.un-gls.org/spip.php?page=article_s&id_article=4350). We also endorse the policy briefs produced from this report.
>
> The proposals that follow are based on some of these recommendations (with amendments). They are viewed by the Social Solidarity Economy movement as being crucial to enabling a real paradigm shift in the development model, and they are based on existing practice. The Social Solidarity Economy is part of the answer that is needed today, and thus must be adequately recognized and supported.
> The recommendations are organized in 4 axes:
> *1 – Indicators to measure poverty, inequality, development and material and immaterial well being*;
> *2 – Transitioning to a Fair, Social and Solidarity Economy*;
> *3 –Adopting a human rights-based approach to development*; and
> *4 – Participation and transparency in international instances/processes*.
> ………………………."

Needless to say, the feminist movements[28] are also not happy with the proposed SDGs, as published in *A Feminist Perspective on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 2014:*

> ……………………
> "What Is Missing?
>
> In spite of the concrete recommendations from civil society organisations and some progressive governments, the report misses the opportunity to envision structural transformation. It does not refer to concrete mechanisms for the leverage of alternative visions for development. Nor does it call to change the global economic system and dismantle the existing systems that channel

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[27] Social Solidarity Economy Recommendations for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *July 3rd, 2014*

[28] A Feminist Perspective on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Ana Ines Abelenda et al, http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/ERR%2013%20-%20Abelenda.pdf

resources and wealth from developing countries to wealthy countries and from people to corporations. In the statement released on 24 July 2014 mentioned above, the WMG reacted to the final outcome report with a list of "eight red flags" to signal the areas where the official proposal is still not sufficiently ambitious or transformative and fails to fulfil the entire spectrum of women's right standards, principles, commitments and norms.
These flags are:
• Absence of human rights;
• Sexual and reproductive health targets do not go far enough;
• Concentration of power and wealth imbalances that deepen poverty and inequalities within and between countries are not sufficiently addressed, and the agenda lacks targets to reverse this trend;
• There are no provisions to reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care and domestic work;
 • The call for more productivity based on technology in Goal 2 fails to recognise that women are key for sustainable natural resource management;
• Insufficient attention to women's role in peace and justice;
• Enthusiasm for private sector financing and public-private partnerships lacking references to their accountability;
• Missing recognition of fair and equitable access to technology, including addressing intellectual property barriers.
…………………………………"

B.   Social and Solidarity Economy[29]

Social Solidarity Economy cultivates the principles of democracy, pluralism, equality, justice, mutualism, sustainability, inclusivity and creativity. This movement is not aligned to any single political ideology and does not advocate a new and revolutionary economic model as many socialist movements insist upon. Rather, SSE adopts a process orientated approach which, driven by communities and networks, is malleable to different circumstances and contexts.[30]

Social Solidarity Economy is a values-based and process-oriented approach to economic development that promotes sustainable communities and develops cooperation, support, mutuality and trust. Rather than isolating individuals in a competitive "each person for themselves" mentality, people are united to realise their common goals and how their individual skills and resources can benefit the collective. The founding principle of SSE proposes that intensified and increased levels of solidarity in economic processes generate benefits that contribute to development for the whole of society.

This approach to economic organisation emphasises the ability of the people to collectively and creatively develop solutions to economic problems as economic power

[29] Social and Solidarity Economy and the challenge of Sustainabe development; http://unsse.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Position-Paper_TFSSE_Eng1.pdf

[30] Social and Solidarity Economy: A rising Force?
http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BE6B5/%28httpNews%29/25EB14A44B71C6B4C1257D950053C368?OpenDocument

is retained by the collective rather than being appropriated by a single, and often far removed authority. Collective ownership is dependent upon trust and solidarity as individuals share not only access and control over resources, but a responsibility to maintain and develop their collective economic enterprise.

As SSE is as much a mind-set or approach to economics as it is a practice, the paradigm can be applied to any economic venture. The fair trade movement is a global example of an alternative economic model where the locus of power and resources are being restructured so access no longer resides exclusively in the hands of the elite. At a local level, initiatives such as community gardens and resource centres are also mechanisms for change that challenge the current structure of the dominant economic model. Many of these enterprises can be understood from an SSE perspective as they prioritise the wellbeing of the people over profit, and are founded on solidarity and sustainability.

IWE has introduced SSE into our programming as one practice of sustainable activism. Creative resource mobilisation contributes to sustainability of communities and movements in myriad ways: community mobilisation and empowerment, financial independence and security, and by promoting the maintenance of healthy, local ecosystems of mutuality and support. Addressing community needs for security and livelihood through locally-based sustainable initiatives that reinforce power sharing and community organizing, SSE is a tangible practice of feminist leadership promoting transformation and sustainability.

C.   *Sustainable Leadership in Education*

"Sustainable education is a transformative paradigm which values, sustains and realizes human potential in relation to the need to attain and sustain social, economic, and ecological well being"[31]

Perhaps the conceptualisation within the "sustainable leadership in education" sector / movement comes the closest to offering clear and practical processes and understanding with regard to sustainable leadership in social movements.

Sustainable education requires a systemic change in mainstream thinking and practice. It is appropriate and responsive to today's systemic conditions of uncertainty and complexity and nurtures the qualities of adaptability, creativity, self-reliance, hope and resilience.[32]

Within the field of sustainable education, four primary qualities of sustainable systems have been identified. Sustainable systems by their nature **sustain** people, communities, and ecosystems. They are **tenable**. Sustainable systems are ethically defensible, work with integrity, and promote justice, respect and inclusiveness. Sustainable systems are

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[31] Sterling, S (2001) *Sustainable Education – Re-Visioning Learning and Change*, Schumacher Society Briefing no. 6, Green Books, Dartington.
[32] ibid

healthy. They embody and nurture healthy relationships. And they are **durable**. Sustainable systems work well enough to continue doing what they are doing.[33]

To build on these qualities, Hargreaves and Fink[34], developed seven principles of sustainable leadership in the educational field, to which IWE adds an eighth of *sustaining the self*.

1. Depth matters
Sustainable leadership preserves, protects, and promotes deep and broad learning for all in relationships of care and mutuality. It fosters learning that engages directly with the personal and political and reflexive learning to develop praxis knowledge to live, work and lead.

2. Sustainable leadership lasts
Sustainable leadership secures enduring success over time. Success is guided by transformation –personal & political (self, own organisational practices, address deep culture of institutions).

Sustainable leadership spreads beyond individuals in chains and circles of influence that connect the actions of leaders to the ones who went before and the ones who will take up their legacy. It makes leadership succession central to the process of continuous improvement. Leadership succession challenges individual leaders to consider how the improvements they guided, or will initiate, will live on after them. (Collins & Porras, 1994)

3. Sustainable leadership spreads
Sustainable leadership is about distributed leadership, shared leadership, or "collective" leadership… the idea that every person has the potential to "lead" in some way … Outstanding leadership cannot rest on the shoulders of only a few, and no one leader can control / exercise power over everything and everyone for an indefinite length of time. Not only would the effects of such autocratic leadership be disastrous for the group/community, it is not desirable as a model for a democratic, participatory civil society.

The complexities in today's world need everyone's intelligence to help to respond with creativity and resilience in the face of unpredictable and sometimes overwhelming demands. Dependence on a single leader creates inflexibility and increases the likelihood of mistakes and errors. When we draw on what Brown and Lauder[35] call "collective intelligence" that's infinite rather than fixed, multiple rather than singular, and belongs to everyone, then the capacity for learning and improvement is exponential. Distributed leadership, unlike delegated leadership, creates an environment where other people have the power, initiative, motivation, and capacity to initiate acts of

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[33] Sterling, S. 'Sustainable Education – Putting Relationship back into Education.' Downloaded from http://ecommunities.tafensw.edu.au/pluginfile.php/12139/mod_page/content/145/Stephen%20Stirling %20article.pdf

[34] Hargreaves, A. 'Welcome to Sustainable Leadership.' Power point presentation. Downloaded from: www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/saelp/ah-sustainlead.ppt

[35] Brown, P. and Lauder, H. (2000). 'Collective intelligence.' In S. Baron, J. Field & T Schuller *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

leadership themselves. It empowers everyone involved so that improvement and sustainability is a genuinely-shared responsibility.

4. *Sustainable leadership is about systems thinking and social justice.* As mentioned earlier, sustainability requires evaluating the ways in which each part of the whole influences the others. This includes recognizing the intersectionality of oppression based on our multiple identities (of gender, race, class, religion, etc) and the ways in which our struggles towards gender justice are complexly linked to other struggles for liberation.

5. *Sustainable leadership promotes diversity :* It develops our human, ecological and social diversity and capacity. A sustainable organisation in one where everyone shares their best practices, and learns from praxis. Sustainable leadership recognises the complex interdependency between individuals, organisations, movements, society and the eco-system, and values difference as key to learning and growth.

6. *Sustainable leadership is resourceful.* It conserves expenditure. It is thrifty and resourceful, without being cheap and stingy. Sustainable leadership develops and does not deplete material and human resources. It renews people's energy. Sustainable leadership is prudent and resourceful leadership that wastes neither its money nor its people. Sustainable expenditure is exemplified in spending on skill development that lasts once the resources disappear. Sustainable expenditure is also seen in buying people time to create a collaborative culture that will continue even when the amount of time decreases, once the resources have gone. In short, sustainable leadership develops improvements that can be achieved within existing or achievable resources.

7. *Sustainable leadership conserves:* Sustainable leadership respects and builds on the past in its quest to create a better future. Acknowledge the past. Preserve the best. Learn from the rest. The past is not pure. Do not romanticize it, as the past was not a 'Golden Age' to which we should return. Depending on our social contexts, we view the past differently and must therefore interpret it together. When we dismiss or demean the past, we fuel defensive nostalgia among its bearers.

8. *Sustainable leadership must sustain the self.*
One of the most powerful resources we have is not financial, but human, our inner resources. It is the capacity and the power of people. Many truly heroic and courageous leaders achieve phenomenal success but often at enormous cost to their own health, to their own well-being, to their families, and their sanity. Sustainable leadership must be about transforming the notion of 'leadership' itself, so that the responsibilities (and pleasures) are spread and shared by many. In this way, the physical health, intellectual and emotional lives of all the leaders themselves will be sustained, so they can carry their work effectively and maintain their impact over long periods of time. Sharing responsibility, taking time out for reflection, investing in one's own life-long learning replenish the spirit and the soul of leaders. Sustainable leadership in turn creates sustainable organizations, sustaining our movements and transforming activism for social transformation.

Sustainable leadership requires leaders to focus on four critical dimensions of relationship[36]:

- **Personal:** attending to one's own psychological, emotional, spiritual and physical health, wellbeing and vitality. And interpersonally, attending to the relationships one develops with others based on clear, honest, and open communication.
- **Organisational:** attending to the conversations in organisations and how these influence cultural norms, the achievement of organsiational goals and peoples' experiences.
- **Societal:** recognising we are not separate from the society in which we live and work, we all shape society; we aim to create social value and well-being because we need a healthy, sustainable society in which to live.
- **Ecological:** protecting the environment and our eco-system, and minimizing the environmental impact of our organisations.

VII.   Feminist leadership that is transformative and sustainable in action – strategies and challenges

Partners within each IWE-WELDD component develop strategies specific to their context, making the conscious effort to practise intentionally feminist strategies to build leadership among their constituents:

Based on feminist values:
We start with feminist values of non-violence, solidarity, equality, human rights/women's rights, respect for every identity, power within, critical awareness, and wellbeing.

From the bottom up:
We strive to support women in communities towards feminist leadership, who are also aiming to create change structurally within their organizations and communities. We work with local partner organizations, and, building trust through processes of respectful consultation, we decide together what will be done in their communities. With the aim of promoting **feminist values in organizations,** we work in different kinds of organizations that may or may not identify as (or even agree with) feminist.

Respecting the knowledge and experience of the women involved:
Instead of starting or suggesting a new activity, we try to discover how we can add value to what is already happening in the partner organisation and to introduce feminist leadership to existing initiatives. We work with partner organizations to name and identify their understanding of leadership and the challenges they face. We see many common issues, across sectors, for example, a lack of effective (feminist) leadership, a big gap between seniors and juniors, ineffective capacity building to encourage committed women to step up and take responsibility for the organization's sustainability, a lack of attention to both personal and collective wellbeing and sustainability. We strategize together around these issues based on the specific contexts of partners.

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[36] Hargreaves, A. 'Welcome to Sustainable Leadership.' Power point presentation. Downloaded from: www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/saelp/ah-sustainlead.ppt

Inclusive and contextual:
We work with a broad range of organizations and groups, and start with groups where they are. With some groups, which have not approached the notion of gender, that is where we start. Other partner organizations are women's and feminist organizations and we work together in solidarity to deepen their feminist strategies and develop sustainability.

It is critical to find advocacy strategies that are relevant to the context while also pushing feminist values through on issues considered 'new' or 'taboo' like sexuality. For example, we have engaged in continuous discussions with groups to help to expand conversations on restrictions on sexuality, which start out primarily focused on violence, to also include the feminist values of autonomy and choice.

We bring the different project components together to learn and share with one another. These **partner consultations** have proven to be a critical way to build trust and solidarity across differences and to reinforce and share the successful feminist strategies that some partner groups utilize.

Transformative work begins with self-transformation:
We constantly reinforce the idea of and need for **personal, internal work and reflection** in both women's and mixed gendered organizations; as we reflect on the challenges of the Indonesian (and global) gender justice movements, we realise that the internal reflection/reflexivity aspect – personally and organizationally – has been a missing component in our global movements' work for social justice, leading to conflict, burnout, abuses of power, and an inability to make positive change.

Our introduction of the concepts and practices of Wellbeing, Self Care and Integrated Security (WeSIS) across our program has successfully built solidarity and synergized partners across components.

Each program component has developed specific strategies to promote FLTS most effectively in the given context.

A.   Peace and Pluralism Component
In the peace and pluralism component, the focus is on capacity strengthening to break down the external and internal barriers to women's leadership. External barriers include ever-growing fundamentalism and gender inequality in our communities. Internal barriers include both organizational and individual challenges of leadership and power relations. Feminism and pluralism share the value of respecting difference; solidarity arises not only from a starting point of commonality, but also across difference, and we aim to reinforce those values within all the communities in which we work.

One of our primary feminist change strategies is working with **people in positions of power to use their privilege to make change**. For example, over time, we have worked with male religious leaders, in ways that are not confrontational but persuasive. We also work with women in positions of power.

Siti Fatimah Tuzzahro , the daughter of a famous religious leader, has worked with us to inspire other leaders' daughters and wives to let their voices be heard. She has had

ideas of leadership for a long time, but she says that collaborating with us has given her the confidence she needs to take action. Attending a workshop with us helped her to name the injustice she felt in a context where only men's voices are valued. Siti Fatimah Tuzzahro subsequently established the first *Bahtsul Massail* forum[37] that is by and for female students in Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) Buntet, Cirebon. The process of advocating for, then organizing and implementing the *Bahtsul Massail* gave the female students more confidence and experience to speak out, share their opinions, and challenge patriarchal norms. They are now organizing to develop an exclusively women's *Bahtsul Massail* with a woman *mushohih* (judge/convenor), recognizing the importance of having women in decision-making roles where the power resides.

We work with women with some sources of power, (ie middle class, relatives of religious leaders, educated) and enable them to articulate the injustices they experience and to strategise how to address them.

We facilitate processes for internal reflection and analysis, starting with people wherever they are in their own feminist process.

The work in Aceh is particularly challenging as the government policy, sharia law, and the conservative perspectives lead to assumptions and general acceptance that women cannot be or become public leaders. In that context, we cannot talk about feminism: we talk about the values and principles we want to uphold and those we want to change. We work with progressive Ulamaas on strategies to interpret religious texts to challenge violence against women and other social issues.

Despite the challenges, women are emerging as powerful community leaders. Mukramati is an Acehnese woman who has attended IWE workshops. She became the chairwoman of her local village committee, which is responsible for water management in the village. She also established a neighbourhood health centre that acts as a resource centre and meeting point for women in the community. For Mukramati, leadership is not dependent on one's gender; she believes that although she is a woman, she is the right person with the capacities and experience needed for the job. Her emergence as a strong woman leader who supports other women and the welfare of the entire community is a powerful example of the practice of feminism, challenging societal norms through action which benefits the whole community.

B.   *Land Rights Component*

The Land Rights component works to improve women's access to livelihoods and to bring a feminist perspective to development issues, because women still don't have rights to own land in many communities. We work with two organizations, one is a women's organization and one is a national coalition for agrarian reform. Our approaches with the two organizations are different, yet complementary.

We have seen big changes in the agrarian reform organization. In collaboration with them, we have designed a module on gender, leadership and agrarian reform and trained 16 women in five provinces. Now every capacity building program they organise involves at least 50% women, and the agrarian reform movement has adopted

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[37] The *Bahtsul Massail* is a forum to discuss social issues and conflicts that arise within Islamic boarding schools. Traditionally, the *Bahtsul Massail* involves only men as both the participants and the *mushohih* (judge/convener), even when the issues concern women.

the ideas and values of gender justice and are integrating them into their strategies. Institutionally, they have remembered and revived a past (forgotten) resolution to involve women in the leadership of the organisation.

In Palembang Province, there are positive examples of FLTS in action. Women are making organic fertilizer, and improving damaged land. There are 10-15 women as members in the fertilizer group, and after they produced it, they developed an economic plan and generated other ideas to increase income. They developed fish farms, asking members to make fishing ponds in their house compounds. The fertilizer, in liquid form is also effective food for fish. Utilising the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) approach, projects are not just about production, but also the communal and collective efforts that have proven to be supportive of women's organizing. Women are taking the initiative, and organizing others in the village to participate.

Women took leadership in a land grab struggle to get back their land. They needed capacity building on advocacy to negotiate with stakeholders – state, head of village, police, and land authorities.

A primary strategy has been to learn from other villages about their strategies and best practices to get back their land. One village was successful, and one was not. There was no solidarity in the village that didn't succeed. In the village that succeeded, everyone worked together: there was one idea, one vision, one mission how to get back the land. Women pioneered the struggle to get back their land. Men joined in to support them.

Capacity building initiatives have included assessments, mapping each area, collecting data about land grabbing, which integrated a gender analysis. How many women can be involved in movement? What are women's roles? What kinds of livelihoods exist for women? Though we are not yet able to describe impact, there have been big changes in the approach to land rights activism that is including women's voices and perspectives.

C.   Informal Workers component
We work with organisations and communities of domestic workers, home-based workers and women porters, who are deemed 'informal workers' because they are not recognised under the labour law as 'workers', and so are unprotected and insecure. Informal workers are an extremely marginalized group. Our strategies are based on informal **workers' experiences**.

Many informal workers have internalized blame for the oppressive conditions they are living in. IWE contributes to develop critical feminist awareness of how our personal lives are all intricately related with social power structures and institutions. Once we can 'see' the structural oppression, we realize it is not our fault.

We supported the informal workers communities to develop a 'school,' with a curriculum that raises critical consciousness and awareness about gender, leadership and power. Based on the workers' lived context, everyone is encouraged to contribute and share. After "in-class" lessons, the women go home and back to work, and in "out-class" sessions, they practice the new skills and apply the knowledge they have learnt They feel supported by and support their friends and colleagues, building solidarity and moral support.

This school became the core of less structured and more localized women's learning circles sharing knowledge about their rights, capacity, analysing and strategizing on how to take action together, sharing resources to advocate for policies which will protect informal workers' precarious livelihoods.

There are many indicators of FLTS in action among the informal workers:
- **Mapping/analyzing power relations** as individuals and in the family, village, workplace.
- **Analyzing the injustice** of their situation – why they make lower salaries, why people don't recognize them as workers, why they lack education
- **Taking action in the family** –controlling resources in the household. Before, all their whole wages were spent on family needs, now many save some for themselves. Leadership starts with individual personal agency.
- **Taking action in the workplace** – speaking out to market authorities, advocating for themselves about problems in the workplace, and in the organization.
- **Speaking up and defending themselves when wrongly blamed.**
- **Organizing male activists** to support them

A particularly successful FLTS initiative is the porters community groups in the traditional markets in Jogjakarta. While they already existed as a group, they became more organized for collective action, after we started working with them. They share responsibilities among the organizers. They advocate for social services for themselves, like health care, even though they are not formalized as a union. They are able to resolve tensions and conflicts among themselves and strengthen their solidarity.

Economic insecurity is a fact when working with informal workers, and while we cannot solve the problems, we also cannot ignore them. So the strategies include **two parallel streams of struggling for rights and justice and also for a secure livelihood (and the intersections of the two).**

IWE's feminist strategy is based on the conviction that all women are leaders in their own right, needing only to access the needed knowledge and capacities to make their own decisions and to take action. Our capacity-building methodology focuses on enabling them to speak out and act for themselves, and further, to mobilise and lead their colleagues in solidarity, to meet ever increasing challenges .

D. The challenges in promoting FLTS with partner groups

With such diverse partners and strategies, IWE-WELDD faces many challenges in promoting FLTS with partner groups.

Conceptually**, FLTS** is new both for us and our partner organisations, and each aspect is full of connotations that are commonly misunderstood. Starting from the notion of leadership, issues of gender, feminism, power, patriarchy, deep structural change, and sustainability beyond the idea of funding need ample time for attitudes and perspectives to shift.

Building common understanding of FLTS with and among partner organizations, learning together to strategise and accomplish shifts in their internal ways of working

and also in the ways in which they work in their communities is necessarily a long process. We facilitate dialogue and interactions grounded on the values and practice of FLTS, yet the onus to change internal structures and relationships with the communities is theirs alone.

The work of FLTS is about changing power structures in organizations and other collectives, beginning with the transformation of the individuals within that collective. Most organizational structures are not based on feminist values, and organizational cultures, systems, and power relations are often hierarchical and patriarchal. We face resistance from "traditional" decision-makers because they feel that their authority is being threatened.   Organizational cultures and structures influence the people who work there, and influence the relationship the organizations build with the communities they work with. Often, even when staff and community members are aware of power issues in the organizations, they do not feel confident that they have the skills to challenge the structured power relations It is not easy to speak out to superiors, and on top of that, cultural norms, and in the case of Indonesia, traditional Javanese norms teach that respect for elders and people in authority is never questioned, and there is a strong cultural focus on 'harmony'.

People in traditional authority roles are often afraid to lose their power, and the status that comes with it. It is a long and sensitive process to deconstruct the systems of power within organizations to facilitate a process for leaders to see that sharing power is not a loss. Even leaders who acknowledge they are ready to step down may look to find someone who 'obeys' them to take over the role. The fear of losing power is so great, they seek ways to maintain it through a successor. There is a need to challenge, **deconstruct and dismantle the *ownership system*** built into many organizational leadership structures.

E.   Challenges to the practice of FLTS within IWE-WELDD

 Actualizing feminist theory and putting it into practice in organizations and movements is a challenge everywhere, and the IWE-WELDD team has our own struggles. As feminists in a feminist organization, we want to solve every problem of injustice and overturn every unequal power relationship. As a team, we are unanimously committed to the principles and practise of FLTS, and this requires us to challenge our own internalizations of what it means to be a feminist organization.

Reflexivity is a key piece of FLTS – bringing the process of analysis and reflection to our own ways of working and practice of what we profess to others. We encourage reflexivity within the organization among ourselves.   Like our partners, there are positive signs of how we are practising FLTS among ourselves , and there are also challenges that we are still working on.

We acknowledge the range of personal and professional experiences from each of us that inform our goals and strategies. We accept diverse ideas. We invest time, energy and resources into learning across components for strategies, best practices, and methodologies.

We actively try to share power, roles, duties and responsibilities, but an ever-present challenge is how to cultivate and maintain everyone's sense of holding responsibility in a

simple non-hierarchical structure. It doesn't always feel like everyone carries her own responsibilities or follows through on decisions that we have made.

Collective power requires constant negotiation and communication, as we each have our personal contexts and situations that we are balancing; in addition to our staff positions at IWE, we are mothers, partners, daughters, students, employees in other organizations, and activists in multiple movements. We have to create and maintain space for negotiation of time and experiences within the team because of our different ways of working and various external roles. Yet, in the rush of project activities and deadlines, that space can feel like it is shrinking and the negotiation becomes implicit (assumed) rather than explicitly discussed.

A critical piece of our sustainability is that there is space within the organization to practice self care and wellbeing. But how do we create the boundaries we need for our own personal and organizational wellbeing and sustainability? Is that kind of thinking even 'allowed' in a feminist organization?

We try to be sensitive to one another's needs and encourage each other's personal wellbeing strategies to take 'me time'. While we are firmly committed to wellbeing and self care for ourselves and as an organization, work pressure and deadlines still cause us to ignore the warnings of our own bodies and minds. In order to avoid sickness, burnout, exhaustion, resentment, and other unhealthy ways of being, we are challenged to create enough space within our team for everyone to share her own needs and to be sensitive to the needs of others for self care and wellbeing. The greater challenge is to find the balance between fulfilling our professional responsibilities and living a healthy personal life.

From the lessons learnt through our experiences, we recognise that we ourselves need to develop various capacities and skills to analyse and increase our sources of inner power so as to be more effective in addressing external power inequalities.

Being small and lacking sufficient personnel to fill all the differentiated roles necessary, IWE-WELDD maintains a simple non-formal structure, which allows everyone, regardless of age or background, to speak freely and directly to each other. We strive to create and practice ways of dealing with work responsibilities and accountabilities that will institutionalize open and democratic organizational processes and procedures that are mindful of and attentive to personal conditions. We have a system - though informal - to discuss problems openly: clarify, discuss, finish. Communication is dependent on trusting each other. We practice empathy, and we respect each other's choices.

Yet we are also aware that differences in seniority, experience and personal proficiency can inadvertently lead to inequalities in access to resources and decision-making, which, if not consciously addressed, will lay the foundations for an undesirable "deep structure" of power imbalances in the organisation.

VIII   Towards an FLTS Framework

"As we face the ever-present reality that our levels of consumption are not sustainable on a long-term basis … it is not a great leap to take in stating that our ways of working, too, are not sustainable. …The mechanistic… hierarchical
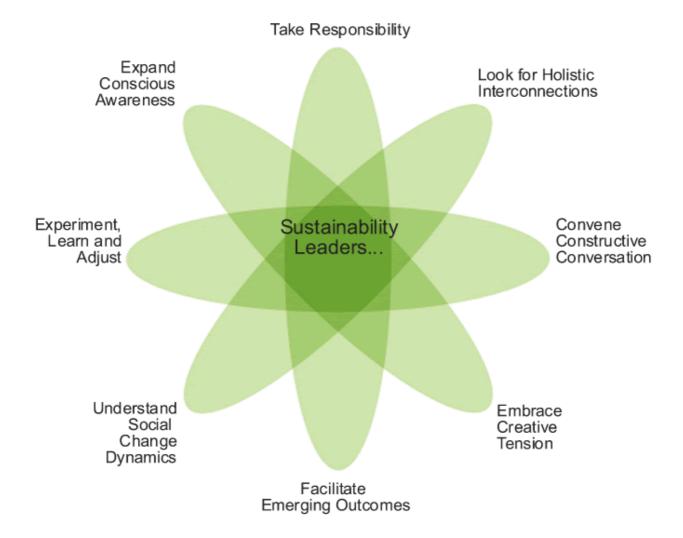
approaches to problem solving, innovation and communication simply are not enough to deal with the complexities we face in our lives today... We dissect, we analyse, we 'fix' problems. But living systems continually re-create themselves. They are not sets of parts that can be fixed, but are constantly changing and growing."[38]

Sustainability Leadership Relational Model[39]

Mary Ferdig of the Sustainability Leadership Institute has devised a relational model for sustainable leadership. While it is not explicitly feminist in its concept, the framework as laid out in the model integrates the critical components of the roles, responsibilities and qualities required of feminist leadership that is transformative *and sustainable*. We therefore include the language of her original model that in some cases add new dimensions to feminist discourse (ie, sustainability, holistic interconnection) and we apply a feminist lens to the explanations of each.

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38 Webster, T. (2006). "Sustainable Leadership: The Inner Side of Sustainability." The Edge Magazine. Downloaded from http://www.edgemagazine.net/2006/05/sustainable-leadership-the-inner-side-of-sustainability/

[39] Ferdig, M. PhD (2009), Sustainability Leadership Institute: http://www.sustainabilityleadershipinstitute.org/atomic.php#

A flower diagram with eight petals radiating from a center labeled "Sustainability Leaders...". The petals are labeled: Take Responsibility (top), Look for Holistic Interconnections, Convene Constructive Conversation, Embrace Creative Tension, Facilitate Emerging Outcomes (bottom), Understand Social Change Dynamics, Experiment, Learn and Adjust, Expand Conscious Awareness.

Take Collective Responsibility to:

- ***Make FLTS Relevant To Ourselves and to Others.*** Articulate the ways in which feminist leadership strategies are relevant and integral to the immediate and long-term sustainability, wellbeing and effectiveness of individuals, organizations, movements and communities; encourage daily practices for individuals and organisations that emphasize inner work and reflexivity as key to sustainability and wellbeing.

- ***Make Things Happen Collectively.***
  Collaboratively design, plan and implement strategic initiatives using power sharing and collective leadership; Engage in creative reflexive thinking and action to transform attitudes, behaviors, conditions, mechanisms and policies across organizations and movements; within organizations, develop techniques and procedures to hold self and others accountable for achieving agreed upon outcomes and for making power visible and shared.

- ***Sustain Energy and Momentum.*** Nurture one's own and others' energy, momentum and belief in what is possible in the face of daunting challenges as a key component to collective social change work (and not only one's own responsibility); eg, develop practitioner communities of reflection, learning and

development; promote and encourage self care individually and through policy and budgeting decisions.

- ***Catalyze a culture of spirited cooperation and sustainability***
Listen deeply to fully appreciate and understand the rich diversity of perspectives and motivation; show gratitude and encourage mutual appreciation for all ideas and contributions; communicate openly and clearly, and with honesty.

Look for Holistic Interconnections

- ***Think Holistically***
Build capacity for thinking holistically and recognizing intersectionality of identities and oppressions; evaluate challenges and progress as they relate to a whole system, be it the organization, movement or community and strategize actions accordingly.
- ***Develop and compile resources for optimal impact***.
Explore opportunities to acquire and leverage the impact of resources developed through strategic partnerships and networks across a diverse range of organizations, movements, and communities.

Convene Constructive Conversations

- ***Create Spaces for and participate in constructive conversations.***
Invite inquiry and reflection that stimulates one's own and others' thinking 'outside the box'; craft good questions and hold them open long enough to explore and discover perspectives and connections that might otherwise be overlooked
- ***Build Authentic Relationships.***
Build and expand long-term partnerships, inter-generational engagement, learning and supportive relationships across organizations and movements
- ***Engage 'experts' as collaborators, engage communities for their indigenous knowledge and lived wisdom***
Engage outside resource people who are willing to work as part of a team in ways that invite collaboration, collective discovery and the learning needed for power sharing leadership and the realization of feminist principles.

Embrace Creative Tension

- ***Include Diverse Voices and Perspectives***
Include and acknowledge diverse points of view, figuring out solutions for the collective good.
- ***Work with Relational Power Dynamics.***
Understand the various bases and types of power, complex nuances of dynamic power relationships, and associated creative tension
- ***Understand and Work with Contradictions, Ambiguity and Conflict/Tensions.***
Let go of the need for certainty in the face of contradictory "felt truths;" holding open the space for disagreement and conflict. Recognize that tension is a potent source of energy for generating creative shifts in understanding and direction.

Facilitate Emerging Outcomes

- ***Continually Assess Opportunities and Risks.***
Assess risks and opportunities across the whole system (which may not be immediately visible) as outcomes unfold over time
- ***Understand and Work with Paradox and Ambiguity***.

Let go of control, certainty and the need to predict outcomes. Engage with others to find solutions in the face of uncertainty and contradictions.
- ▪ ***Make Things Happen***.
  Achieve concrete results with and through others by co-creating and implementing within a flexible strategic framework.

Understand Social Change Dynamics
- ▪ ***Share and transform how power is used***
  Create space for others to step up and contribute; Embrace ambiguity and encourage experimentation and innovation; Develop enough group infrastructure to ensure power sharing and accountability mechanisms, effectively make collective decisions and keep everyone engaged in the process; Pay attention to possible conflicts in values and beliefs, and facilitate resolution
- • Encourage and prioritise critical inner reflection on internalized power relations and uses of power that limit transformation and sustainable leadership
- ▪ ***Notice and Make Sense of Emergent Patterns and Indications***
  Understand what people do and say, individually and collectively; analyse how power works within the system and evaluate deep structures that may need to be surfaced for power sharing to work

Experiment, Learn and Adjust
- ▪ ***Stay true to the long-term vision while navigating frequent twists and turns***
  Persistently hold a clear picture of the purpose for working together
  Help those inside and outside the collaborative effort understand the progress that is being made as well as the roots of that success.
  Continue to adapt in an effort to successfully achieve the long-term vision.
- ▪ ***Learn through Experimenting***.
  Be willing to learn new ways; take calculated risks to test emerging ideas; reflect on and learn from experiences of all kinds; look for unrealized potential through experimental thinking and doing with others.
- ▪ ***Sharing Information and Knowledge as it Unfolds.***
  Let others know the thinking behind decisions and action; invite others to learn with you in process of doing; strengthen the collective practice of experimentation, adaptation and learning.

Expand Conscious Awareness
- ▪ ***Ground Conversations and Action in Personal Integrity.***
  Be clear about one's own identity, principles and intentions before engaging others in the work of change.
- ▪ ***Reflexivity: Practice Self Awareness.***
  Continually notice self in relationship with others and the work; engage in authentic interaction, (words and actions); encourage joint reflection about what is happening, has happened, why, and what it means for future thinking and action, and how this has impacted on oneself.

IX   Conclusion

"A sustainable movement [feminist activist, leader, organization, community] is adaptable, not rigid. It is open to new ideas, new directions, new influences, new participants, new language, new relations, new structures."[40]

Sustainability *does not* mean 'holding on to past or present at all costs', but it means to really examine what is worthy of being 'sustained' and what needs to change, or even be abandoned. It also does not mean throwing away all the past, including what was good and should be preserved.

Sustainability that incorporates a truly transformative process requires a "regeneration "[41] to restore the goodness of the things we need, want and wish for, and to create new perspectives and resources.

Sustainability means we acknowledge that we, our organizations, movements, and communities are dynamic, living systems that recreate and adapt; and to do so in a healthy way, we live and work within the means of the system and the people involved. The foundation of sustainable leadership is weakened if the individual self is not sustainable because their health and wellbeing are being neglected.

Sustainable feminist leadership, grounded in a power analysis, emphasizes power within, and specifically sensitizes us towards how we use power, how we build resilience in ourselves and others, and how we create space to express our own needs and listen well enough to hear the needs of others. Promoting collectivity, self- care and women's visibility and making ourselves and our movements sustainable undermines patriarchal forces working to silence us. It makes us responsive to the systemic conditions of uncertainty and complexity that define today's contexts and nurtures the qualities of adaptability, creativity, self-reliance, hope and resilience.

A focus on sustainability encourages leaders to cooperate with change rather than holding the status quo.

Feminist leadership that is transformative and sustainable means working together to create internal and external change aimed towards a sustainable now and for the future: for oneself, our organizations, communities and social justice movements. Synthesising the learning from the other fields, to make feminist leadership sustainable requires a paradigm shift in our ways of working, thinking and being and relating to ourselves and one another, as necessary for true transformation and sustainability of living systems.

As Tricia Webster summarized of sustainable leadership:

 'It is whole life leadership, rather than just work-focused leadership, and recognizes and respects the full life of individuals.'[42]

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[40] Casper, M. (nd) 'Toward a Theory and Praxis of Sustainable Feminism.' Kore Press.
[41] Giardet, H. (2013). 'Sustainability is unhelpful: we need to think about regeneration.' http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/sustainability-unhelpful-think-regeneration
[42] Ibid.

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