

Foreword

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There are many reasons why this new edition of *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* is a welcome event. Already in the 1990s considered a classic of feminist literature and required reading for activists and scholars of the burgeoning anti-globalization movement, the book is not only as relevant today as when it was first published, but now addresses an audience even more ready to appreciate its content and methodology. Proposing a vision of world history centred on the 'production of life' and the struggle against its exploitation, this book speaks directly to the crisis that many are currently experiencing faced with the constant destruction of human lives and the environment, especially when the seeming inability of even powerful mass movements to bring about positive social change generates a quest for new paradigms.

Patriarchy and Accumulation recuperates, for a younger generation radicalized by the Occupy movement and the movements of the squares, the radical core of feminism, buried under years of institutional co-optation and postmodern denial of any ground of commonality among women. It recuperates the sense, so strong in the early phase of the feminist movement, that to speak of women is to touch something very fundamental in history and our everyday lives. For, as Mies puts it, women are not one particular group of human beings among others; they are those who, in every time and in every society, have produced life on this planet and on whose work, therefore, all other activities depend. Thus, tracing the origins of women's exploitation is to ask why and where history 'took a wrong turn', what are the real forces by which world history has been driven, and what is the truth of the capitalist system in which we live.

This is the task *Patriarchy and Accumulation* takes on, and the outcome is a historical and theoretical reconstruction whose scope has often been described as 'breathtaking'. Following the trail of centuries of male violence against women, and crossing space, time and disciplinary boundaries, it relates hunter/gatherer societies with the development of capitalism and colonialism, demonstrates the pitfalls of national liberation movements, shows the essential continuity between capitalism and socialism, all the while unearthing the material foundations of the hierarchies that have characterized the sexual division of labour and highlighting the principles by which a non-exploitative society should be governed.

There is, therefore, a great wealth of historical and political knowledge to be gained from the book. *Patriarchy and Accumulation* also teaches an important methodological lesson, as an excellent example of what constructing a theory requires. More important, combining the theories produced by the Wages for Housework movement, especially its identification of women's unpaid domestic labour as the pillar of capitalist accumulation, with the third-worldist analysis of peasant economies and colonization, the book develops a theoretical framework that enables us to think together different forms of exploitation and social movements, enables us to acknowledge what divides as well as unites women, and makes of feminism a probe to grasp the main trends in the restructuring of the world economy.

Inevitably, a work of such scope will pose many questions. Some may baulk at the thesis sustaining this effort: that at the beginning of history a sexual division of labour arose, whereby men specialized in the arts of violence and destruction while women specialized in the activities by which life is daily and generationally produced, and, in time, this division consolidated into a 'patriarchal' system in which men's violent appropriation of women's labour has become the dominant force of production.

This is a provocative contention, turning upside down the tales of civilization that we have been taught from the first days of school, and I imagine that a few anthropological research projects will be fuelled by the quest for evidence. But whether or not the empirical details of Mies's theory of the origin of patriarchy can all be verified, the logical power of her argument should not be missed, as it challenges us to account for the pervasive presence of male violence against women, and confronts even the 'gender sceptics' with an undeniable ground of commonality in their situation. It also demystifies the presumed innovative, creative character of capitalism, 'patriarchy's latest manifestation', highlighting its parasitic dependence on the free appropriation of nature and the body and work of women.

As Mies demonstrates, only with the advent of capitalism has the use of violence as an economic force been universalized and intensified beyond that exercised in any previous system. For, as she argues, the formation of a world-system has enabled capitalism to externalize exploitation, multiply its colonial divisions, and accelerate its destruction of the planet's natural wealth. In this context, one of the most powerful parts of *Patriarchy and Accumulation* is its analysis of the continuity between the processes that characterized the first phase of capitalist development – witch-hunts, the slave trade, colonization – and those that have characterized the restructuring of the world economy in our time, showing that 'development at one pole has always been underdevelopment at the other', and that 'primitive accumulation' cannot be confined to the origins of capitalist society, for it has been an essential aspect of every phase of capitalist development and has now become a permanent process.

This is a 'truth' that social and political developments since the first publication of *Patriarchy and Accumulation* have verified time and time again. So has the book's assertion of a direct causal connection between the global extension of capitalist relations and the escalation of violence against women, as the punishment against their resistance to the appropriation of their bodies and labour. Not only are thousands of women, as well as many young men, continuing to be enslaved and to die in 'free export zones', the workhouses of our time. Violence against women has so much increased in recent years that the term 'femicide' is now commonly used even in government reports; in Italy, in 2013, 'femicide' was introduced as a crime in the legal code. Meanwhile, across the world we have witnessed a resurgence of witch-hunts.

It is to Mies's credit that in describing the destructive forces that 'patriarchal capitalism' has unleashed, she does not soften her critique, nor offers quick solutions, but instead validates the growing realization that capitalism cannot be reformed. *Patriarchy and Accumulation*, however, is also an indictment of Marxism. Like Mariarosa Dalla Costa and other Wages for Housework activists and political theorists, Mies criticizes Marx's reductive concept of work, and goes even further in her rejection of the terminology Marx developed – arguing, for instance, that such concepts as 'productivity' and 'surplus labour', in Marx's interpretation, contribute to the mystification of what constitutes production.

This at present is easily granted, even by many Marxists, theoretically at least, as decades of feminist writing and campaigning have removed any doubt that producing human beings is work, and work that capitalism depends upon. More controversial, but especially important in the present social context, where the hold of technology on our lives has never been as strong, is Mies's rejection of the Marxian dream of a fully industrialized society, in which machines perform all the work, as a condition for human liberation. As she powerfully argues, such a dream ignores the fact that it is not work as such that is oppressive, but the social relations of exploitation that sustain it.

This is a crucial message for the many among us who, despite the growing refusal of capitalist society, are still enthralled by its technological production, often assuming that their powers have been acquired through Facebook or Twitter. For them, and indeed for all of us, *Patriarchy and Accumulation* is a necessary political guide. It does not allow us to forget at what cost the new technologies are produced, what violence they unleash, and how destructive the generalization of capitalist technologies would be for the productive powers of the earth.

Here, too, history is on the side of Mies's analysis – in the post-Fukushima world the Marxian dream of a continuous industrialization has become humanity's nightmare. More than that, people's response to the present capitalist crisis has vindicated Mies's view that the real

revolutionary subjects are not the computer programmers and other agents of mechanization, but the millions of women who on less than 'a dollar a day' have struggled to keep their communities alive, mostly through their subsistence work and the creation of more cooperative forms of social reproduction. It is their implicit presence, and the presence of the many who daily struggle to create forms of existence and social relations not governed by the logic of capitalist accumulation, that give power to Mies's work.

This is why, despite its uncompromising portrayal of the destructive powers of capitalism, *Patriarchy and Accumulation* does not encourage any form of historical pessimism, confident that capitalism so deeply threatens the reproduction of our life that our revolt against it cannot be tamed, but will resurface again and again on humanity's agenda until it has been ended.

Preface to the critique influence change edition

I am very glad that my book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, which was first published by Zed Books in 1986, is being published again. But I ask: is this book still relevant today and if so why? Are my analysis and my conclusions still the same in a world in which one crisis follows the other, and one war follows the other? And what has changed since 1986?

My first questions are these. Are the concepts of patriarchy and capitalism still valid in a world where free trade is dominating all economic, political and social life? And, as I wrote in 1986, are capitalism and patriarchy still interconnected? Is my analysis of women's labour under capitalist patriarchy still the same? Has violence against women, nature and other colonies not disappeared from our civilized society?

Before answering these questions I want to illustrate how I discovered concepts like patriarchy, capitalism, exploitation of women, nature and colonies. One thing was clear from the beginning: I did not gain my insights by sitting in the British Library, reading books on political economy; I did so by participating in a number of socio-political movements, particularly the feminist movement but also the student movement, the ecology movement, the peace movement and later the anti-globalization movement. In fact, writing and reading books came during and *after* these struggles. That means that practice came before theorizing. This was – and is – particularly true for the feminist movement, because no books were there to explain why women are still oppressed, exploited and do not get the same pay as men.

Patriarchy and Accumulation is the result of this interwoven process of action and reflection, of experience and theory. But it was also written in a particular historical moment when people from different parts of the world, particularly women, asked similar questions. And I was fortunate enough to meet the right people at the right time in the right place, people who saw the need to change the status quo and were confident that they could do so. Hence *Patriarchy and Accumulation* is the 'child' of the conjuncture of these different circumstances.

In the following I'll describe the main stages of this process when I discovered what patriarchy means, what capitalism is, why the two are necessarily connected and what the consequences of this 'marriage' are.

In 1963 I became a lecturer at the Goethe Institute (GI) in Pune in India. Our students, men and women, came from all over India. Why

men wanted to learn German was clear: they wanted to get a job in Germany, or to study physics or other sciences. But why did Indian women want to learn German? What use would German have for them? I made a small investigation, which was later published under the title 'Why German?' (Mies 1967).

My hypothesis regarding the men was correct. But the answers of the women were a surprise: they studied German because they wanted to postpone the 'marriage talk'. I wondered what that was. They told me that they all had to undergo an arranged marriage, in which their parents decided which man of what family their daughter would marry. In all upper-middle- and lower-middle-class families such an arranged marriage was the rule. Neither bridegroom nor bride had much of a say in these decisions. In more traditional families they were not even allowed to see each other. What was important was that caste, class, family status and financial status would fit. One of the gravest difficulties of these 'marriage talks' was and is the bargain about the dowry which the bride's family has to pay to the bridegroom's family. Many poorer families with a number of daughters would – and often still do – become deeply indebted in order to find bridegrooms for them. On the other hand, an unmarried daughter had no economic security or social status. She was a disgrace to her parents. This situation has changed today, but arranged marriages and high dowry demands are still common. In educated middle-class families, however, daughters could 'postpone' the marriage negotiations so long as they were still studying, since education has a high prestige for the Indian middle class, even for daughters. Thus parents would not start the 'marriage talk' as long as their daughter was studying for a B.A. or an M.A. For our female students, 'studying German' was therefore an excuse to postpone these marriage negotiations. But in the end they had to get married to a man they usually did not know.

I did not yet know what the concept 'patriarchy' really implied. But these talks with my students gave me the first experiential glimpse of what it means to be a woman in a patriarchal society. They opened my eyes to the social oppression of women and the patriarchal relations between men and women. But I did not yet understand that patriarchy is a system that does not exist only in India.

From Iravati Karve, a world-renowned anthropologist, I learned that what I had heard from my students was just one feature of an overall patriarchal social and family system which had existed in the Indian sub-continent for thousands of years. From then onwards I wanted to know more about this system. Therefore, when I returned to Germany in 1968 I wanted to research this question: why are modern Indian women still oppressed by a patriarchal family system? I went to the University of Cologne to meet professor René Koenig, the Dean of Sociology and an internationally known family sociologist. I told him about my experiences

in India and my interest in further study on modern Indian women. At that time there was no university in Germany where women's studies was taught, let alone studies on modern Indian women. Professor Koenig was fascinated by the topic and said: 'Why don't you do a Ph.D. on this subject?' I answered, 'If that's possible, then I'll do it.'

I went back to India and undertook empirical research on the dilemmas and conflicts of modern middle-class women. The results confirmed what I had already observed five years before, namely that patriarchy is an overall social, cultural and economic and political system which determines a woman's life from birth to death. Another lesson I learned was that patriarchy is not a thing of the past but is still flourishing today in spite of 'modernization and development'. I wrote my dissertation on the conflicts and dilemmas of modern Indian women. It was published in India under the title *Indian Women and Patriarchy* (Mies 1980).

Yet, while I studied the status of women in the Indian patriarchy I discovered the German patriarchy!

I had returned to Germany at the right historical moment. In Germany in 1968 two new and decisive socio-political movements had emerged: the student movement and the new feminist movement. Both movements attacked the social, economic and political foundations of society. The student movement started its 'anti-authoritarian' rebellion against established institutions like the family, the university, the Church and the state. Students began to study Marxism – which had been taboo since the end of World War II in Germany – and to read the main works of Marx and Engels and other socialists. Feminists attacked the family laws, particularly the prohibition on abortion and violence against women, wife-beating, rape and inequality between men and women. We did not begin to read fundamental books about women's oppression, because such books did not yet exist. But we started with actions to fight against the oppression of women. Through these struggles I discovered many parallels between the situation of Indian and German women. In both cultures women were inferior to men. In Germany, too, women depended economically on their parents or their husbands. There was no equality between men and women regarding education, jobs, pay and the de facto legal situation. A woman was only allowed to get a job if her husband agreed. A woman's 'normal' status was that of a dependent housewife. Moreover, women were victims of male violence in Germany too.

I was much older than most of the students I joined in the student movement. The students had formed 'Marxist study circles'. There I read for the first time what Marx and Engels had written about class, class struggle, labour, religion, the family and revolution. This all was a great eye-opener for me.

From the beginning, the feminist movement in Germany was part of the international women's movement. The issue that interested me most

was the question of the sexual division of labour between women and men. The debate on the role of domestic labour within the capitalist family and society was decisive for my understanding of capitalism. Around 1980 I became involved in this new debate and began to read Marx more carefully, in particular what he had to say about work, especially women's work in the household. For many years this debate was at the centre of the international feminist discourse. Marx called housewives' work 'reproductive labour', while the work of a man in the factory was 'productive labour'.

This was when I began writing 'Social Origins of the Sexual Division of Labour', an essay published in *Women: The Last Colony*, which was co-written with my friends Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof (Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen and von Werlhof 1988). This book was widely read and discussed by women all over the world. All three of us had worked and studied in 'Third World' countries – Veronika and Claudia in Latin America; I in India. Therefore we not only looked at the effect capitalism had on women in Europe and the United States but also asked what this meant for women in the so-called developing countries. We called them simply colonies. Veronika and Claudia both looked particularly at the similarity between the work of housewives and that of peasants in South America. I did the same for India. We understood that not only domestic labour of women all over the world was 'a free resource' for capital, but also the work of small peasants and that of slum dwellers in the cities. The same was/is true for colonies and particularly for nature. For capitalists all these are 'colonies' whose production can be appropriated almost free of costs.

We were not the only ones who tried to understand whether Marxian concepts like 'relations of production' or 'modes of production' made sense with regard to people who worked not directly for the market but for their sustenance from day to day – for their *subsistence*. Subsistence then became the main concept for us, to understand how capitalist accumulation really takes place. We understood immediately that unpaid housework was 'reproductive work', because a woman worked to 'reproduce' the male worker so that he could sell his labour for a wage at the factory door. Moreover, she would also 'reproduce' the next generation of workers, so that the process of capital accumulation could go on. Marx considered this daily and intergenerational 'reproduction of the working class' a matter of biology. Most feminists in the West criticized Marx for this overly biologicistic and sexist understanding of women's housework.

Veronika – who had studied Marx's as well as Rosa Luxemburg's work more thoroughly – told us that Luxemburg had also criticized Marx, not because he ignored women's unpaid work, but because he ignored peasants and other non-capitalist strata of non-waged labourers.

Rosa Luxemburg wrote that Marx's model of ongoing accumulation of capital was based on the assumption that capitalism was a closed system in which only wage labourers and capitalists existed. She wrote that capitalism always needed 'non-capitalist milieux and strata' for its extension. According to her thesis these strata were peasants, colonies and the imperialist system. Without the ongoing exploitation of non-waged workers and of natural resources, and a perpetual extension of markets, capitalism would not be able to continue its process of permanent 'primitive accumulation' (Luxemburg 1923). Luxemburg was not a feminist. But her analysis was crucial for us to understand why women as unpaid domestic workers, the colonies and finally nature's resources have to be exploited for the process of ongoing capital accumulation. This process is necessarily based on violence, and finally destroys the subsistence of people and nature.

To test our thesis about women's and peasant exploitation, we went back to the countries we had studied before – Veronika and Claudia to South America; I to India. In India, too, the new feminist movement had just begun. I met a group of young students in Hyderabad who had started a campaign to abolish the dowry system. I told them about my research project and asked them where I could find an area in which women were exploited as subsistence producers. I was told about Narsapur, a small town on the eastern coast in South India where poor women made lace for 'foreign lands'. One of the students, K. Lalitha, came along with me as my assistant and interpreter. I wanted to study the women and their work in such an archetypal home industry.

My study of the lace-making women in Narsapur was the most important lesson I learned as a sociologist and a feminist. These women made crocheted lace from morning to night, sitting in front of their mud huts until it was too dark to work. For their work they would get much less than the minimum wage of a seasonal female agricultural labourer.

The lace industry was organized according to the classic putting-out system. They had to buy the thread from the exporter, who then collected the lace goods and exported them to Australia and Europe. He had become a millionaire and owned a big house in Narsapur. Yet, apart from this 'wage labour', they had also to cook, clean the hut, wash the clothes, sleep with their husbands, give birth to their children, nurse them, take care of them and all the other 'unseen work' done by women the world over. Hence they had to combine 'reproductive work' with the lowest paid 'productive work'. Their 'products' were luxury items, which were exported to the rich countries – for women there. I called this combination of both types of work the 'houswifization of labour'. I published the results of my research in the book *The Lace Makers of Narsapur* (Mies 1982).

Today it is also men who have to sit 'at home' and work on a computer for the world market. Although they are not as poor as the lace makers

of Narsapur, structurally their work conditions are similar. But today one calls this 'precarious work'.

The next stage of my learning process about the interconnection between patriarchy and capitalism began in 1979, when I was invited by the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague to create an M.A. programme for women from developing countries. The title of this program was 'Women and Development', and it was sponsored by the Dutch government. This was when official institutions began to understand that the 'woman question' would be of importance for the future development of the industrialized world. I had no problem to find candidates for our programme. The women came from India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Sudan, Somalia, Trinidad and Tobago, the Philippines, Belize, South Africa, and there were also two Dutch women who were very keen to study the problems of Third World women.

Yet there was another problem, which I had to solve immediately. There was no curriculum for such an M.A. course, no books, no colleagues to consult. Therefore I had to develop such a programme myself. For that I needed the help of my students. I asked them to tell us what the main problems were that women had to face in their own countries. Their stories were fascinating and new to all of us, and we learned a great deal from each other. Despite all of the cultural differences, we learned that women in all countries of the world were treated similarly: that they were considered to be inferior to men, subordinated, oppressed, exploited and often had to face the violence of their husbands, his family and society. In short, they were all victims of patriarchy. In the Netherlands and Germany, too, violence against women was 'normal'.

This was the time when feminists began to study women's history, because this history had largely been erased in all countries. This new women's history was called 'her-story'. I wanted our students to find out in their respective countries about the her-story of their mothers and grandmothers. I asked the students whether there had been an earlier women's movement in their countries. We were surprised to find that such movements had existed earlier, but had been forgotten in the meantime.

When I asked myself what I knew of earlier women's movements in Germany, I realized that I really did not know much of that history myself. Therefore I had to do my own homework first. I began to study the social-democratic women's movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When I read about that history I learned that German socialist women had formed their own, separate all-women's organization where they could also discuss women's issues. The socialist men did not like these separate women's organizations. But when the Socialist Party was prohibited, the women could go on with their agitation, because they called it 'cultural work'. The state did not consider the women politically 'dangerous', so they were left alone. But after the

party was legalized again, the leaders dissolved the separate women's organizations and asked the women to join as individual members.

When I talked about this story in my seminar, most women in the course told of similar experiences, particularly during liberation struggles in the Third World. Our conclusion was that women are welcome to fight together with the men for the liberation from colonial, racist, imperialist and capitalist oppression, but when the war is over they are sent back home to resume their old role of being a mother and housewife.

Another problem was that there were no textbooks at the ISS on women generally, particularly not on Third World women. Therefore we had to write our own textbooks. With my colleague Kumari Jayawardena from Sri Lanka, who had joined me after a year, we began to write down what we knew about the earlier women's movements in our own countries, producing the book *National Liberation and Women's Liberation* (Jayawardena and Mies 1982). Kumari wrote about the earlier women's movement in Sri Lanka, I wrote about 'Marxist Socialism and Women's Emancipation: The Proletarian Women's Movement in Germany'.

We asked our students to write papers on what they knew of the history of women in their own countries. Later some of the students continued this research for their doctorates. For instance, Rhoda Reddock from Trinidad wrote her thesis on *Women, Slavery, Work and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago* (Reddock 1994). Through her study I learned that the slave trade was not a so-called 'pre-capitalist' mode of production, but was a direct result of global capitalism, where particularly women were traded as commodities. The slave traders calculated whether it was more profitable if slave women were allowed to 'breed' or to buy new slaves. They came to the conclusion that 'It is more profitable to purchase than to breed.' Therefore slave women were not allowed to have children. The insights that my friends and I had gained many years ago – namely that women were the cheapest labour force for capital and that they were treated like colonies and like nature – was confirmed by a number of such stories that our students told from their own countries.

But the students also did their own research on Dutch women. They could not understand why Dutch women or Western women needed a movement for emancipation. Didn't they have all they wanted? They could marry a man they loved. They had an education and could get a job. What else did they want? I said to them: 'Why don't you meet some of the feminist groups in Holland and find out?' We called this 'Fieldwork in Holland'. When they came back, I was flabbergasted by their reports. One woman from the Philippines wrote: 'I always thought that Western values are good for Western people and that Eastern values are good for Eastern people. Now I know that Western values are not even good for Western people.' An African woman wrote: 'I don't understand these Dutch women. All the time they talk of men. Whether

they are unmarried, married or divorced. Don't they have anything more important to do?'

For the students who came from around the world their experience at the ISS was crucial. They learned that women's problems all over the world were similar, in spite of differences of culture. But they also learned that patriarchy and capitalism are connected and that we have to fight against both. Therefore they invented the great slogan: 'Culture Divides Us; Struggle Unites Us.'

Violence, the secret of capitalist patriarchy

The main lesson we learned from the Third World women as well as from our European history was that direct violence was the means by which women, colonies and nature were compelled to serve the 'white man', and that without such violence the European Enlightenment, modernization and development would not have happened.

In Europe the epoch of Enlightenment began with the brutal persecution and killing of women as witches. Germany was one of the centres of witch-hunts. Feminists, in search of the roots of sexism, from 1976 to 1980 rediscovered the atrocities and crimes committed by Church, state and modern science against the mostly poor women who were denounced as witches. Witch-hunts began in the twelfth century and lasted until the seventeenth century. A great deal of historical research was done on witch-hunts in Europe; the findings were shocking in every respect. Not only were the forms of torture used to force a woman to confess that she had used magic spells to harm a neighbour or that she had cooperated or slept with the devil unbelievably cruel, but so was the joint labour between Church, state, law and 'modern science' in these witch trials.

Philosophers and political scientists tried to eradicate 'magic' and bring about the birth of the 'New Man' (Bacon) or to increase the birthrate in absolutist states such as the French one. Modern scientists and doctors managed to demonize the skills of midwives and women healers to steal their knowledge in order to develop the new, scientific medicine. The torture chambers were indeed laboratories to find out what could be done to a human body. In the same period our Mother Earth was tortured so that she would reveal her secrets to Man (Federici 2004). Although the witch-hunt is supposed to be over, the world-view of this epoch, of the Enlightenment and of rationality is still the same. It is based on the belief that the earth, nature and human beings are not good enough as they are. They must be improved, developed, made better to reach a 'higher stage' of civilization on earth. This 'higher stage' can only be reached through torture and violence. Since the Enlightenment the keywords for Western civilization are *rationality* and *progress*. In modern capitalist economics, rationality means nothing but unlimited capital accumulation.

The socialist utopia is also based on the same logic of rationality: on progress and the development of science and technology. And these need violence to analyse nature, to find out her secrets, including those of the human being. As it was with the witches: before rationality, science, technology and modern economics could be established, all wild, untamed, magic and backward-looking thinking had to be violently eliminated. Today it is no different: violence is needed to 'civilize', 'improve' the 'underdeveloped world' and 'wild nature'. Violence is therefore still the secret of modern capitalist-patriarchal civilization.

What is different today?

What comes first to my mind when I ask this question is that the general *mood* is different today. In 1968 many people were still full of hope that they could change things, that they could build a better world, that they could stop ecological destruction and the nuclear industry from poisoning the world. This optimism is no longer there. The general mood in Western societies is pessimistic – if not depressive. There are reasons for this change. The world has changed dramatically since I wrote my book. Here I want to mention only some of the most important changes.

From 1979 to 1980 Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan introduced neoliberalism as the new economic dogma in Britain and the USA. The main pillars of the free-market economy are globalization, liberalization, privatization and universal competition (GLPC). This free-market economy was quickly introduced into all countries of the world, promoted by the World Bank, the IMF and later the WTO. In the indebted countries of the South governments were forced to accept this model. But the rich countries of the North also quickly transformed their economies according to the principles of the free market. And finally, after the end of the 'cold war', erstwhile socialist or communist states like the former Soviet Union and China also adopted neoliberalism, because it promised quick wealth for everybody, more jobs, more democracy, lower prices for globally sourced goods, free movement of people and capital from one country to the other. Most governments believed these promises. But many people later realized that the costs of these changes were rising unemployment, a new wave of poverty, more exploitation of workers, more ecological destruction and a state which had given up its role of controlling the economy.

In the beginning there was strong international opposition from all over the world to this free-trade policy, from those who understood what this new economy really meant, particularly for poor countries. But in the long run this opposition became weaker, because the international corporations were able to throw more and cheaper commodities from 'low-wage countries' onto the global market. One of the countries with the lowest wages is Bangladesh; China also exports cheap consumer

goods to all countries of the world. The result is that more and more people in the erstwhile rich countries lose their jobs and face poverty.

Perhaps the most radical change in all spheres of life has come through the Internet. This new 'communications technology' is able to connect people instantly from one end of the world to the other. But the deepest and most far-reaching changes the Internet has brought is a totally new understanding of reality. Hitherto we had thought that reality is something one can see, touch, smell and that can be perceived by all our senses. In short, reality means that we live in a material world, where life has a beginning and an end. The Internet, however, creates a 'virtual world' in which everything is possible, in which all borders are eliminated and death no longer exists. The Internet is not a tool but a kind of surrogate religion. Yet people believe in it and that it will create a 'new world'. The far-reaching consequences of this faith are not yet known.

But other events in the real world changed the world so deeply that their consequences are felt everywhere. The first was the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001. George W. Bush blamed Islamist terrorists for this attack. From this date onwards not only the United States but also the world had a new enemy: terrorism and Islam. This new enemy had to be fought everywhere. Bush himself talked of the necessity of a new crusade. A wave of wars against this new enemy followed. It started with Iraq, followed by Afghanistan. The next candidate on the war list is Iran.

Today there are wars again all over the world. The hope that an era of peace would follow the end of the East-West confrontation has been disappointed. The wars in Iraq and in Afghanistan were legitimized by the argument that they would bring freedom, democracy and modernity. The most perverse of these promises is that these wars are necessary to 'emancipate' the women of these countries from their backward, medieval cultures and the violence of their men. All Western media were and are full of the propaganda that Muslim women have to be liberated from their 'patriarchal men'. When German NATO soldiers were asked why they were in Afghanistan, many answered: 'We have to fight that girls can go to school and that women are not forced to wear that full body veil.' Since when have wars ever been fought to liberate the women of the enemy from their violent men? Have wars ever 'liberated' women? Since time immemorial women have been the victims of wars. Rape of women has always been part of all wars. The worst part of all this is that most people believe this propaganda. There is no protest any more against these new wars.

For quite some time I thought that the real goal of these new wars was to get access to resources like oil and gas. But now I wonder: are these new wars not wars about women? To whom do the women of a land belong? To the men of that land or to the new invaders? Many

years ago I answered this question thus: 'He who owns the land owns the women of the land' (Mies et al. 1988). But today I would say: 'He who owns the women of the land owns the land.' This is the law of the old and the new patriarchs.

Another reason for the mood of pessimism today is the fact that the world economy is facing one crisis after another. This has created a tremendous sense of insecurity. After the USA, Europe, particularly the countries in southern Europe, have been victims of this continuous crisis. And there is no realistic hope that this situation of permanent crisis will end (Sarkar 2012). The crises are not only economic; they have psychological and sociological repercussions. But this situation has also led more and more people to question this whole system and to look for alternatives. They begin to ask: where is a new perspective, where is a new vision?

Many years ago I and my friends called this new perspective *The Subsistence Perspective* (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999). We understood quite early on that capitalist patriarchy will go on with its destruction of life as long as people believe that ever more money will bring a better life. The first requirement for a new perspective is that people give up their faith in money. The second is a new definition of the goal of the economy. The word 'economy' comes from the Greek word *oikonomia*, knowledge about the household. The goal of the *oikonomia* was not the accumulation of money but the satisfaction of the basic needs of all members of the household. This is what subsistence means.

In September 2003 I was invited to a women's conference in Trier. It was organized by the Catholic Rural Women's Association. The slogan of this conference was 'The World is Our Household'. I thought this could be the keyword for the new paradigm people were looking for. If everybody treated the whole world as their own household, the world would be a different place.

But today people in the North have different worries. For the first time, they realize that it is not only people in the poor South but they too who are threatened by poverty. After a long period of prosperity the Western countries have experienced one crisis after another. Economists once proclaimed that such crises were over for good in the developed countries. But now they are back, in the United States as well as in Europe. And the politicians do not know how to solve them. In fact the present crises are part and parcel of capitalism. Capitalism needs crises. The politicians are helpless vis-à-vis the huge banks and the all-powerful international corporations that are responsible for the present crises. Southern Europe is hit most by the present crisis, and Greece, Spain and Portugal in particular are now dependent on the richer countries of Northern Europe, particularly Germany, to save them from bankruptcy.

Yet the insecurity about the future of our economy has also created a new awareness about the causes of this new impoverishment and those who profit from it. For a long time the word 'capitalism' had been taboo. But now it is used again in public discourse. Today many people realize that the present crisis cannot be solved within the framework of capitalist patriarchy. They are looking for a new perspective, a new paradigm, a new civilization (von Werlhof 2011). Many new visions are discussed all over the world. Among them is the subsistence perspective. Today, the subsistence perspective is not only a romantic idea; it is a necessity.

In the twenty-eight years since this book was first published one thing has become clear to me. A new paradigm cannot be based on a violent revolution. None of the earlier revolutions has eliminated the interconnection of patriarchy and capitalism. Capitalism is just the latest avatar of patriarchy. If we want to overcome both, we have to take a different path. This is the path of sowing new seeds. My friend Farida Akhter from Bangladesh has described this path in her book *Seeds of Movements* (Akhter 2007).

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Cologne, March 2014

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