

UNVEILING THE (HETERONORMATIVE)
CONFLICT BETWEEN CAPITAL
ACCUMULATION AND LIFE SUSTAINABILITY

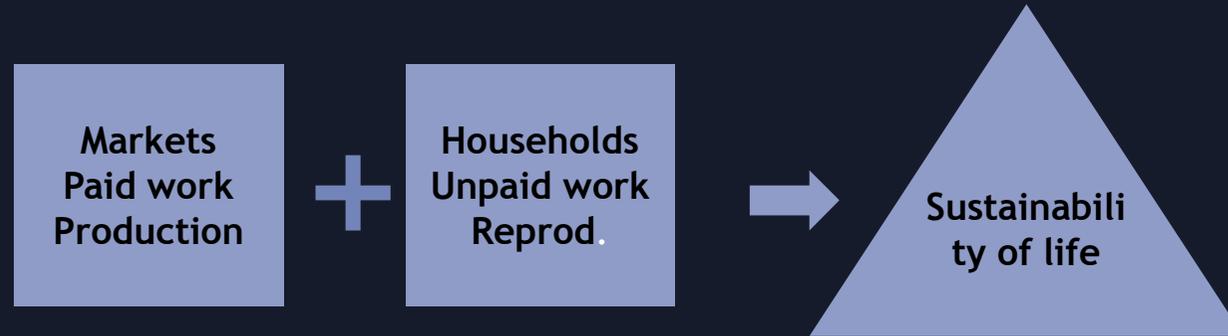
24th IAFFE Annual Conference

Advancing Feminist Theory

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Overview and outline

- Aim → To contribute to the formulation of an analytical framework based on the notion of sustainability of life



- Feminist Economics is diverse → decentre markets
- Outline:
 - Sustainability of life?
 - Capital accumulation-sustainability of life conflict
 - Care: the privatization, feminization and invisibilization of the responsibility to sustain life

Sustainability of life? The notion

- Focus on the processes that set up the conditions of possibility for a life that is worth living
- Conditions of possibility? Life is vulnerable
 - Need to take care of life together with others → interdependence
 - Need to inhabit an alive environment → ecodependence
- The economy is about taking care of vulnerability, managing interdependence and inhabiting a living surrounding → Direct antagonism with the homo economicus (self-sufficiency)

Sustainability of life? Analytical questions

WHAT LIFE?



What is a life worth living?

- A hegemonic notion? Does it recognize basic conditions of existence? Diverse disputing notions?
- What is the notion from which to build our feminist economics analysis?

HOW?



How can the conditions that allow it to happen be met?

- What spheres and agents? What driving forces? What responsibilities?
- Discover the diverse existing economy (beyond markets, the State and households)

Capital accumulation-sustainability of life conflict

- Reformulating the notion of a capital-wage labour conflict
- Introducing the notion of a conflict with the living environment
- A systemic contradiction with life understood in its most holistic sense:
 - All lives, all dimensions of life: surplus lives, surplus dimensions of life
 - No division between human and non-human life
- A hegemonic notion of the life worth living (self-sufficiency) that:
 - Violates basic conditions of existence
 - Is out of reach for all except the privileged subject at the cost of others' lives

Welfare State and markets at the epicentre

- Can the Welfare State solve the problem?
 - It can lessen the intensity of the conflict:
 - Restrain the functioning of the capital accumulation logic through market regulations
 - Redistribute from the privileged subject to others
 - Assume direct responsibilities on sustaining life
 - But cannot avoid the conflict → an illusory attempt at resolving an irreconcilable contradiction
- Therefore → What process receives priority?
- Capitalist markets at the epicentre:
 - Anthropocene (new geological epoch where human activity is the leading geomorphological force)
 - Social organization of time
- A collective responsibility on sustaining life is inhibited

Where is life being sustained?

- Invisibilized dimensions of the socioeconomic system
- CARE (drudgery?) → Leftover activities/flip-side of wage labour:
 - Provide everything else needed to sustain life that is not provided through markets and the State
 - Fix the damage done by capital accumulation processes on life
 - Do so under three conditions: privatized, feminized and invisibilized

Responsibility for life sustainability

1) It is privatised

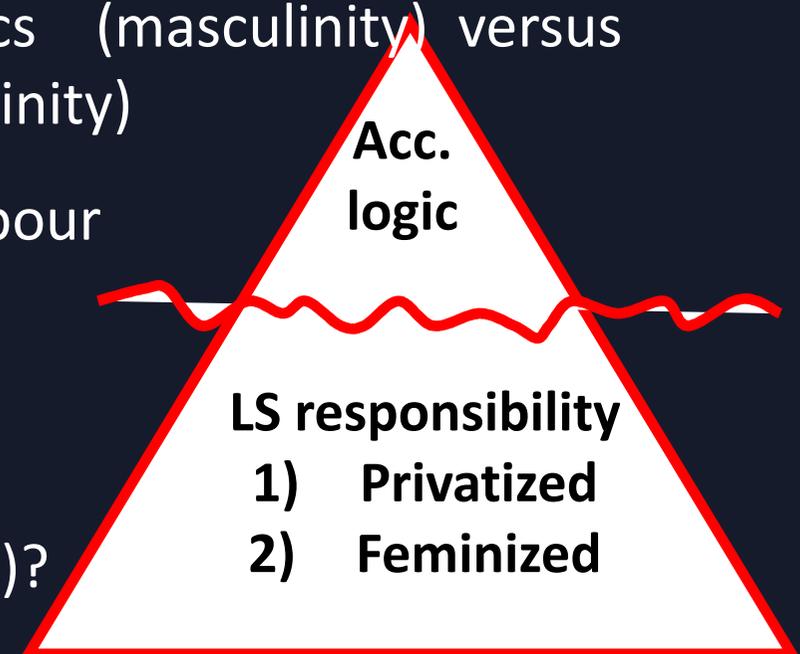
- a. Households as the basic unit of the economy (responsible for closing the economic cycle) → cooperative conflict; heteropatriarchal institutions

2) It is feminised

- a. Different construction of gendered economic subjectivities: productivist ethics (masculinity) versus reactionary ethics of care (femininity)
- b. Materiality: sexual division of labour
- c. Heteropatriarchal epistemology:

Production | **Reproduction**

Compulsory heterosexuality (A. Rich)?

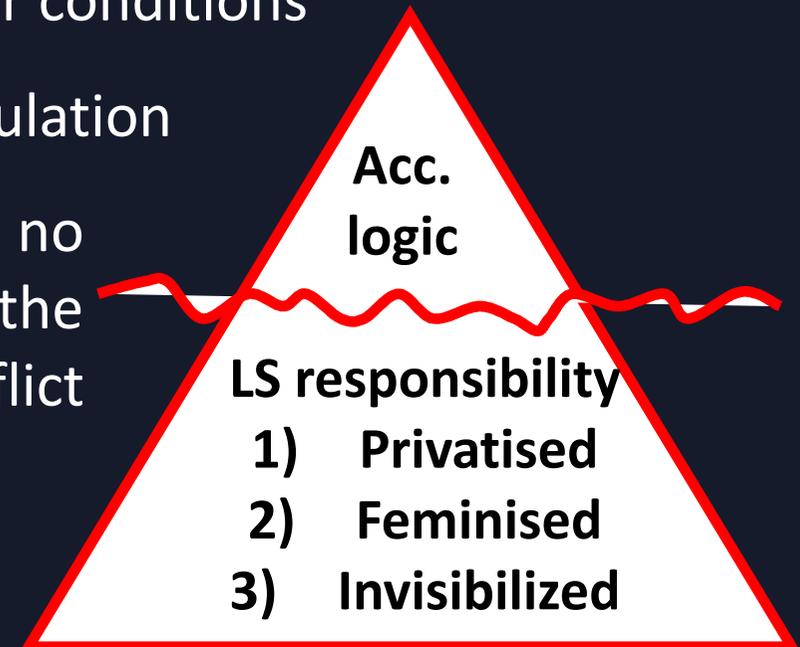


Responsibility for life sustainability

3) It is invisibilized →

- a. No words to name it, no data to capture it
- b. No compensation (remuneration, rights)
- c. No recognition of skills and experience
- d. No collective regulation of labour conditions
- e. No collective demands and articulation

No citizenship, no political subjects, no politics, no power to question the whole system. Capital-life conflict “disappears”



Unsustainable and unequal system

- Non sustainable at a multidimensional level → life is at risk
- Injustice and inequality
 - Power and resources are gathered around the only LIFE worth living, sustaining and rescuing: the Western, white self-made man
 - Interdependence is figured out in terms of inequality and exploitation
- Heteropatriarchy: provides subaltern spheres and subjects who assume the responsibility to take care for life in a system where life is under attack, even at the cost of their own lives

Weaknesses of the approach

- Too modern → In need of a rather queer/postmodern approach:
 - What life & how it is sustained → co-constitutive (material and symbolic structures)
 - Privatization and feminization → need of a performative approach to the household and to gendered economic subjectivities. Understanding the economic dimensions of the heterosexual matrix
 - Invisibilization → a complex approach to power
- Too Western → In need of a decolonial approach
 - Care not equal to Western urban women's unpaid tasks
 - Economic diversity beyond markets/State/household beyond the unpaid/paid divide
 - Popular economy, informal economy, peasant economy, community?? Other invisibilized spheres that sustain life?
 - Colonialist and racist character of the capital-life conflict