



Ineke Buskens

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Ineke Buskens is an independent gender research consultant. Trained as cultural anthropologist and research methodologist, she co-designed and -facilitated the first post-graduate curriculum in women studies in the Netherlands. From 1991 to 1996, Ineke headed the Centre for Research Methodology at the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa, where she conceptualized and facilitated the first experientially based qualitative research training in the country. After starting her consultancy Research For the Future in 1996, Ineke has directed several trans-national and trans-disciplinary research projects, of which the GRACE Network, which involved 35 research teams in 18 countries in Africa and the Middle East, was the latest (grace-network.net). On 7 October 2014, the GRACE Network received the sixth Artful Integrators' Award for having 'demonstrated its commitment to research-based intervention approaching gender-based injustice with the aim of prevention, attempting to engage root causes rather than only remediation'.

During her tenure as principal research fellow at the United Nations Institute on Computing and Society in Macau, SAR China, from September 2015 to December 2016, Ineke designed and facilitated the first Women IN ICT Workshop in East Asia, which may become the platform for a potential emergence of Women IN ICT East Asian Research Network. Ineke obtained her Drs. degree in Cultural Anthropology from the Rijks Universiteit Leiden in the Netherlands and has published on quality in qualitative and emancipatory research, women's health, research-with-women, gender and ICT, and Open Development. She has lived in the Netherlands, Ghana, India, Brazil, Macau (SAR China) and South Africa.

Thinking beyond gender equality: Exploring 'Agency as expression of purpose' and 'Transformation in connection' for women empowerment in the information age

The field of ICT and Gender, which focuses on the nexus between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) spaces and tools, and the project of gender equality and women empowerment, has shown the information age to be of both benefit and disadvantage to women. It can be argued that the concept of gender equality itself constitutes part of the reason why this is so, because it obfuscates the fact that women may have very different aspirations than what their communities suggest for either gender. How to envision the Unknown and how to manifest it, is a conundrum. A utopian projection of radically re-visioned gender relationships and societies could be a way to conceptually deal with it but raises the question as to who has the wisdom and *the right to envision ideal futures and formulate the strategies for change. An alternative approach is possible and viable.* The GRACE Network (grace-network.net), *designed to understand the nexus between women empowerment and ICT, supported women to construct their own understanding of their lived realities, become aware of their aspirations for personal and social change and where desirable, design interventions.*

Whilst this approach was grounded in the premise of the *epistemic sovereignty* of both researchers and research participants, *human relationality and connection* revealed to be another crucial element in the processes of both knowledge construction and transformation. *The concepts of 'Agency as expression of purpose' and 'transformation in connection' will be explored in this talk using examples from the research and intervention work of members of the GRACE Network from the period 2005 to 2013.*