

# Raewyn Connell

## Nordic feminist thought in the world gender order

In this address I discuss tensions and potentials of modern feminist thought and practice in the Nordic countries, via recent attempts to understand gender on a world scale. Though often rhetorically denounced as a Western or colonial import, feminist thought and action has arisen in many different social structures and at many times in history. Nevertheless colonialism is important in the story: it re-shaped gender orders across much of the world. Empire also created a highly unequal global economy of knowledge, in which contemporary gender studies is embedded. Nordic gender studies now has to deal with this economy, from an economically privileged but culturally marginalized position. Nordic feminism has much to offer, having created one of the most effective women's movements in any region, gained remarkable political influence, pioneered important strategies and developed valuable concepts. Yet the world from which this feminism emerged has been changing. The rise of neoliberal market ideology, the transnational revival of corporate power, the dismantling of public-sector welfare while state coercion and surveillance increase, the scale of global markets, the recent resurgence of authoritarian nationalisms, and the new anti-feminist and anti-gender campaigns, together amount to a re-structuring of patriarchy on a global scale. In these conditions, we need to re-think the mass base for political action, the changes in everyday life from which mass politics grows, and the future workforce for feminist theory and gender research. Since gender politics cannot avoid the global, these issues have to be considered on a world as well as a local scale; and here some of the distinctive strengths of Nordic feminism and gender research may be valuable far beyond this region.



### Bio

Raewyn Connell is Professor Emerita, University of Sydney, and Life Member of the National Tertiary Education Union. She has taught in several countries and is a widely-cited sociological researcher, the author of *Ruling Class Ruling Culture*, *Gender & Power*, *Masculinities*, and *Southern Theory*, and co-author of *Class Structure in Australian History* and *Making the Difference*. Her recent books include *The Good University* and the co-authored *Knowledge & Global Power*. Her work has been translated into twenty-two languages. Raewyn has been active in the labour movement, and in work for gender equality and peace. Details at [www.raewynconnell.net](http://www.raewynconnell.net) and Twitter @raewynconnell.