

The Future We Want

A Feminist Perspective

DRAFT

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1. Back on the Agenda: Gender and Ecology

The multiple crises – the financial crash, hunger, climate change and resource scarcity – demonstrate emphatically that neoliberal market globalization cannot fulfill its promises: namely to bring about the optimal allocation of resources on the entire planet and thus be a win-win game for all. This also implies the failure of the concept of sustainability put forward at the 1992 *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)* in Rio de Janeiro. That concept was optimistic about the compatibility of economic growth, resource protection and social justice. The United Nations has proposed a *Global Green New Deal* based on a *Green Economy*, as the new guiding principle for the Rio+20 Conference. This is its effort to salvage the concept of sustainability, which has lost credibility. The *Green Economy* seeks to point a way out of the financial, climate and energy crisis and simultaneously make the connection to the *Millennium Development Goals* and poverty alleviation.

Taking a closer look at the papers on the *Green Economy* from a feminist perspective, one can find only a few gender aspects – with miniscule exceptions. Twenty years after the Rio Conference, gender issues are barely acknowledged. In 1992, *Agenda 21*, the Rio Conference's final document, recognized women as key actors for environmental protection and poverty alleviation and granted them rights to shape development and environmental policy and make decisions about such policies. On this basis, a broad gender-policy consensus was formed in the 1990s, namely that

- ecology and sustainability are not gender-neutral,
- the analysis of gender relations is vital for understanding societal relations with nature as well as resource management and for overcoming environmental crises,
- without gender justice, there will be no environmental justice, no sustainability and no good life for all.

Two decades on, the *Green Economy* papers of the *United Nations Environment Programme*² (UNEP) lag behind the *Agenda 21*. The various issue areas reflect neither gender mainstreaming nor a feminist perspective.

For a long time, climate change, which has been at the top of the global environmental agenda for years, was also treated and negotiated as a gender-neutral issue. If international gender networks had not tenaciously introduced a gender perspective in a sustained way, the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* of 1992 would still

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² UNEP (2011): *Towards a Green Economy. Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*, UNEP (2011): Brief for Policy-makers on the Green Economy and the MDGs; www.unep.org/greeneconomy

be gender-blind today. Only after 14 rounds of negotiations, did the UNFCCC secretariat finally call on the parties to carry out gender-sensitive measures in 2008. When UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon assembled an advisory group on *Climate Change Financing* in 2010, however, he appointed 19 men. Following vehement protests, the high-level body was expanded to include then French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde. Germany has not taken up the gender message of the 1992 Agenda 21, either: in 2011, the German parties nominated 17 experts to the Study Commission “Growth, Prosperity, Quality of Life” – but not a single woman.

These examples show how strong and enduring effects of the glass ceiling are in the decision-making arenas of development and environment policy and how weak the recognition of feminine expertise is, even though mainstreaming and participation are professed time and again.

What happened to the topics of feminist ecology and women/gender and sustainability after the “boom” 20 years ago? Following the Rio Conference, both public attention and the interest of women’s networks shifted to the core themes of the upcoming major UN conferences: human rights, population, social issues, women, habitat, and food. The topic “women and the environment” was included as the next-to-last of 12 critical areas of concerns in the *Platform for Action* of the *Fourth World Conference on Women* in Beijing in 1995, a document that is considered to be an international catechism for women’s rights and gender equality to this day.

The topics disappeared from public view because women’s movements focused on protests against neoliberal globalization, trade liberalization and privatization of public goods, while expert professional and scientific elites continued to work on these issues. In the process, both the protest movements and the circles of experts neglected the need to recreate the linkages between the economy, ecology and social concerns, which are fundamental to the concept of sustainability. In no policy arena did gender-and-environment topics take on a dynamic of their own. Although it was popular to treat the two topics as cross-cutting themes in development policy in the context of poverty alleviation, and although there was talk of “double mainstreaming” – of gender and environment, or gender and climate – gender aspects evaporated in environmental and sustainability policy, just as they had in development policy.

It is true that a gender perspective is mentioned more often at the programmatic level of environmental policies today than at the time of the Rio Conference. Mainstreaming as a technical procedure is more widespread. The proportion of women in specialist elites and political delegations has increased. Yet when references to gender at the programmatic level are broken down and operationalized, gaps in implementation arise, and strangely enough, the gender perspective disappears.³ In addition, awareness of the complex internal connections between gender, the economy and nature is still lacking.

Against this background, gender fatigue started to spread in the 2000s: many women working in various institutions became increasingly frustrated about the slow pace of progress and the tenacity of resistance. In contrast, the institutions pointed to progress;

³ Schultz, Irmgard/Hummel, Diana, Padmanabhan, Martina (2010): Feministische Perspektiven auf Nachhaltigkeitspolitik, in: *Femina Politica* 01/2010, pages 9-22.

viewing the topic of gender justice as accomplished, they checked it off the list. And the more topics were declared to be cross-cutting – poverty, HIV/AIDS, climate, participation – the stronger mainstreaming fatigue or outright opposition to it became. The same situation could be observed in the major environmental organizations and eco-movements: the feminist approaches did not leave much of a footprint. In many eco-debates, we find the old stereotypes about the relationship between women and nature or simplifications of women as victims, as the cause of environmental damage or, on the other hand, as rescuers. Time and again, the media take up populist arguments, such as the one that names population growth as the root of all evil. In contrast, the media fails to mention the role of women – for instance, that women from Fukushima have called for a global shutdown of nuclear power. Overall, compared to 1992, gender approaches are less politicized and discussed less from an emancipatory perspective for changing structures.

Nonetheless, Rio+20, the *Green Economy* and current discourses about new models of prosperity, growth and the failure of the MDGs make these topics all the more relevant and controversial. For this reason, it is politically necessary to put approaches to feminist ecology as well as a debate about sustainability from a gender perspective back on the agenda again.

But these topics can mobilize people only if they link up to the new social movements and their demands for public participation and direct democracy. Outmoded approaches to women's rights and equality tend to alienate young women and men. They have new ways of approaching gender issues and the relationship between humans and nature, namely by the construction of gender identities, and the everyday practices relating to lifestyle and consumption. Current examples of this include radicalized animal rights activism, veganism and a critique of industrialized food production accompanied by countless initiatives from urban gardening to reclaiming the commons. Many young people start out with questions relating to individual lifestyles, but, critical of the system. They transcend the question "What can I do, as an individual?" a question that has been asked for a long time in different efforts to seek a "good life" and to promote alternative economic concepts. This linkage between the personal and the political is the most important prerequisite for the urgently required transformation of the subjective understanding of power relations as well as economic structures and relationships to nature.

2. The Chernobyl Turn and Global Governance through UNCED

Activism concerning women and ecology, or rather gender and sustainability, peaked in relation to two disparate events -- the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the *UN Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED) of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In April 1986, the cesium-contaminated rain pouring down on Western Europe after the nuclear catastrophe of Chernobyl triggered an unprecedented wave of outrage against atomic power, high-risk technologies and the radioactive contamination of humans and nature. Women in particular articulated the concern that such an accident could be a threat to “life” as such, but in any case to food and agriculture. The radioactive threat confronted them with additional problems, as they were the ones responsible for handling everyday life in private households: data about the contamination of mother’s milk, mushrooms and other foods or soil made mothers fearful for their children and their health. Women established self-help groups in order to manage current problems of everyday life as well as NGOs and international networks to study and articulate the linkages between technology, development and the relationship between humans and nature more systematically. Chernobyl made people aware of local-global links more than any other event before it. Acknowledging that “Chernobyl changed our lives,” women developed an ecofeminism as a consequence of being personally affected and searched for ways to drop out of the system.⁴

Background in terms of the history of ideas: Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism was the philosophical and theoretical background of women’s discourses and political actions from the 1980s onward. Its most important theoretical reference point was Carolyn Merchant’s analysis and critique of the destruction of the organic conception of the world by the experimental science of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. Historically speaking, the “science” entailed creation of a hierarchy of man=culture versus woman=nature as well as the persecution of witches⁵. At the same time, ecofeminist concepts were rooted in political experiences from social movements, such as the “no nukes” and the peace movements, as well as in women’s traditional and indigenous knowledge.

Basic assumptions of ecofeminism

- Presumption that women are particularly close to nature
- Holistic view of the relationships between humans and nature: the “web of life”
- An analogy between the violent subjugation of nature and of women (“rape of the wild”)
- Critique of the hierarchy and the dualism of woman/emotion/nature – man/rationality/culture/technology
- Critique of modern natural sciences and technologies as well as of the belief that technology made feasible by advances in natural sciences were also controllable.
- Increasing appreciation of women’s everyday and traditional knowledge

“Cultural ecofeminism” was the subject of heated controversy. One sticking point was the ahistorical generalization of women’s proximity to nature and of a violent patriarchy.

⁴ Gambaroff, Martina et al. (ed.) (1996): *Tschernobyl hat unser Leben verändert. Vom Ausstieg der Frauen*, Reinbek

⁵ Merchant, Carolyn (1980): *The Death of Nature. Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, San Francisco

Another was the antimodernist position which became manifest both as technophobia and as an idealization of precolonial and precapitalist societies. As a result, ecofeminism was confronted with the accusation of romanticism, and of proximity to conservative and nationalistic thinking.⁶

The central, practical perspective developed by ecofeminists was the subsistence approach, with a focus on self-provisioning and on a “moral economy” based on cooperation and mutuality.⁷ The common goal of the subsistence approach and the strategy of sufficiency, or liberation from consumption, which was addressed to the middle class, was to decouple oneself from the global capitalist markets and to opt out of the prevailing societal relationships with nature: Women wanted to withdraw their labor and their purchasing power from the system that subjugated nature and thereby contribute to running the system dry.

In contrast, many transnational women’s networks wanted to intervene in the negotiations relating to a new global governance regime that began with the Rio Conference in 1992 after the end of the bipolar (U.S. vs U.S.S.R.) global order. They constructed a “we women” identity as a targeted, strategic sisterhood in order to be capable of acting and intervening politically, despite all the existing differences and the plurality of approaches.⁸ In 1991, they developed a position paper, the “*Women’s Action Agenda 21*,”⁹ which includes key points which are still current today. Beginning with a critique of the development model of the “free market” and economic growth, the *Women’s Action Agenda 21* argues for a new ethics of economic activity and of the relationship with nature, for the preservation of biological and cultural diversity, for demilitarization, justice between the South and the North as well as for empowering women by means of democratic, reproductive and resource rights. The core concept of this 1991 manifesto is “sustained livelihood.” Women linked the concept of securing survival, whose starting point is the everyday practice of provisioning, care and social reproduction on the local level, with resource justice, for they need property rights as well as powers to control and make decisions. They demanded a new effort aimed at imposing a moral framework on politics and the economy in light of the environmental and development crises and stressed the need for equal participation rights in the process of influencing policy.

⁶ Agarwal, Bina (1992): The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India, in: *Feminist Studies* 18, No.1, 119-159; Nanda, Meera (2002): Do the Marginalized Valorize the Margins? Exploring the Dangers of Difference, in: Saunders, Kriemhild (ed.) (2002): *Feminist Post-Development Thought*, 212-225

⁷ Mies, Maria/Bennholdt-Thomsen, Veronika (1999): *The Subsistence Perspective*, London

⁸ Wichterich, Christa (1992) *Die Erde bemuttern. Frauen und Ökologie nach dem Erdgipfel in Rio*, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Cologne

⁹ <http://www.iisd.org/women/action21.htm>

The women's/human rights paradigm

Since the early 1990s, the women's networks that wanted to get involved in international politics and global governance have referred to the human rights paradigm of the United Nations. The emancipatory potential of this rights-based approach lies in overcoming the exclusion of women and in recognizing them as equal legal subjects. This approach functions as a common frame of reference and a normative system connecting the diverse women's movements, linking both topics and various levels of political action, from the local to the global. The principles of non-discrimination, non-violence and equality determine whether women's/human rights are honored.

The rights-based approach changed women's political self-understanding. Now, they appeared as carriers of basic rights, as civil-society actors and legal subjects, and no longer primarily as supplicants and people in need as they had before. In the development policy context, this signaled a paradigm shift from a basic needs approach oriented towards welfare to a basic rights approach oriented towards justice.¹⁰ Concepts of agency now stressed claims for legal rights as well as demands for participation in politics and democracy, the economy, development and peace. States have a threefold obligation: they are required to create conditions that respect, protect and enforce women's/human rights.

At the UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the women's networks established a new culture of civil society participation with constructive negotiation strategies towards governments and were the largest group present at the NGO Forum taking place simultaneously. For the first time, they came out of the women's niche as the "*Global Women's Lobby*" and attempted to intervene systematically in all development and environmental policy sectors by means of lobbying for the mainstreaming of women's perspectives. The historic success of this dual strategy of autonomous and government-oriented civil society action was that the *Agenda 21*, the final document of the conference, recognized women as important actors in the realms of development and the environment and accorded them an important role for environmental protection and poverty alleviation. The core points of the women's manifesto – a structural critique of development and the resource-greedy growth economy on the one hand and the orientation towards the livelihood approach on the other – are not to be found in the *Agenda 21*, however. On the contrary: it is characterized by optimism about markets, efficiency and technology.

In this context, the women's networks then took on the task of providing the main orientation for sustainability, which conceives of ecological, social and economic conditions as one. It provides many points for holistic feminist approaches to link up with different levels of governance, from the level of "*Local Agendas 21*" up to international environmental agreements. Across all sectors, women's rights activists aimed to complement the generational contract brought about by sustainability with a gender contract. Yet there were also critical voices: the Southern women's network DAWN called sustainable development a contradiction in terms, because development that is defined by growth, trade liberalization and efficiency – as in *Agenda 21* – compels people to undermine

¹⁰ Butegwa, Florence (1995): International Human Rights Law and Practice: Implications for Women, in: Schuler, Margaret (ed.), From Basic Needs to Basic Rights: Women's Claim to Human Rights, Washington, 27-39

resource preservation and economical use. DAWN linked the demand for gender-just development with one for transformation of the development model based on the global market and growth.¹¹

Adopting a liberal concept of equality, the women's lobby demanded participation and decision-making power in international environmental governance.¹² Nonetheless, the term "lobby" is too narrow here inasmuch as it suggests that special interests of women are being pursued only within the existing system. Yet, in fact, the purpose of feminist advocacy is both criticism and shaping of political strategies and goals in the interest of social justice and the public good. In this vein, some protagonists such as Bella Abzug, spokeswoman of the *Global Women's Lobby*, warned, "Women don't want to be mainstreamed into a polluted stream."

These political positions as well as their backgrounds in philosophy and the history of ideas generated different gender-related policy strategies, but also gender-specific stereotypes about the roles of actors and their patterns of connection to nature. A certain ambivalence developed between the goal of equality or empowerment of women on the one hand and on the other an approach that exploits the gender-specific division of labor. The latter is based on a women's ethics of care and their proximity to nature for environmental preservation as contrasted with men's proximity to technology for dominating nature.

One example of this ambivalence is the concept of *Women, Environment and Development* (WED) that attempted to introduce a gender-and-environment perspective into all sectors of development policy in the 1990s.¹³ If gender-specific differences are to be changed, calling them by name is the very first step. However, projects tended to instrumentalize women as unpaid guardians of biodiversity and as economical resource users without guaranteeing them access to and property rights over resources.¹⁴ It was easier to mobilize women as a tireless protection and cleaning crew in the degraded environment – e.g. to plant trees and to process wastewater – than to recast policy in an environmentally, user- and gender-just manner.¹⁵

In the following, the tension between market-oriented and care-oriented approaches to solving problems of ecological, economic and social sustainability will be discussed along the three most current topics, namely climate, food and economic alternatives. This is to demonstrate that a gender perspective does in fact make an important difference for economic and natural systems and their interrelationship.

¹¹ DAWN (1992): *Environment and Development: Grass Roots Women's Perspective*, Barbados

¹² Rodenberg, Birte (1998): *Von der Mülltrennung zum Machtgewinn: Internationale Frauen-Umweltpolitik*, in: Ruppert, Uta (ed.): *Lokal bewegen – global verhandeln. Internationale Politik und Geschlecht*, Frankfurt, 106-130

¹³ Davidson, Joan/Dankelman, Irene (1988): *Women and the Environment in the Third World*, London; Rodda, Anabel (1991) *Women and the Environment*, London

¹⁴ Braidotti, Rose et. al. (1994): *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development. Towards a Theoretical Synthesis*, London; Harcourt, Wendy (ed.) (1994): *Feminist Perspectives on Sustainable Development*, London/New Jersey

¹⁵ Woroniuk, Beth/Hunt, Juliet/Tabeth, Matiyz Chiuta (1998): *Mainstreaming Gender. Equality Perspectives in Bilateral Development Cooperation Focused on the Environment*, no place given

3. Climate and Gender Justice

Various prototypical gender stereotypes and references in the discourse on climate change and the negotiations about the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) of 1992 can be discerned. These range from a) ignoring the social category of gender when it comes to reducing emissions as well as financing to b) mainstreaming approaches concerning adaptation to climate change, and c) focusing on women as victims and men as doers. The gender imbalance is greatest regarding access to and decision-making power in the areas of climate policy, climate finance and technology -- from technological fixes such as offshore wind farms to geo-engineering such as carbon capture and storage, which, as feminists would argue, have entirely masculine connotations, both scientifically and economically .

International women's networks had argued strongly at the UNCED Conference in 1992 for restructuring the production and consumption patterns especially in the North in order to reduce resource consumption in general and the production of greenhouse gases in particular. This was linked to the then-widespread strategies focusing on sufficiency and reducing consumption. It was a counterpoint to the euphoria propounded by champions of efficiency who felt it was feasible and enough to relying solely on technological solutions to the climate problem.

The orientation towards climate justice, which civil society was the first to take on as its key concept, has continued to employ this perspective. It requires a differentiated view of the production and minimization of greenhouse gases detrimental to the climate. However, the discourse on justice in the international negotiations refers primarily to the relationship between the North and the South and centers around the historically accumulated debt of the economies of the North as those producing greenhouse gases and causing climate change. The notion of "common but differentiated responsibilities" for climate protection takes this into account. However, this discourse about who caused climate change ignores social differences within societies, including gender differences. In contrast, civil society organizations employ the "polluter pays" principle to question the global middle classes' energy- and resource-intensive patterns of production and consumption, the "imperial lifestyle"¹⁶ especially in the North. Their orientation is towards "energy-democratic," decentralized solutions that also provide better opportunities for women's access and participation than centralized solutions using large-scale technologies.

Since the Rio Conference, a contrasting approach has been taken. Within the framework of a globalized model of efficiency; nature has been transformed into a subsystem of the market - supposedly with the aim of protecting it. To this end, nature has been quantified, priced, privatized and traded. Kathrin McAfee calls this the "commodification strategy" which dominates climate negotiations on the premise of "selling nature to save it."¹⁷ In contrast to concepts of sufficiency and climate justice, trade in emission rights cannot reduce the

¹⁶ Brand, Ulrich/Wissen, Markus (2011): Sozial-ökologische Krise und imperiale Lebensweise, in: Demirovic, Alex et al. (eds.): *Vielfachkrise*, Hamburg, 79-95

¹⁷ McAfee, Kathrin (2011): *Nature in the Market-World: Social and Development Consequences and Alternatives*; UNRISD, [http://www.unrisd.org/80256B42004CCC77/\(httpInfoFiles\)/3F9726366CFA71A6C12579210032B07B/\\$file/1-2%20McAfee.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B42004CCC77/(httpInfoFiles)/3F9726366CFA71A6C12579210032B07B/$file/1-2%20McAfee.pdf); Stern, Nicholas (2006): *Report on the Economics of Climate Change* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

production of CO₂. Additionally, market mechanisms such as *Payment for Ecosystem Services* (PES) and *Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation* (REDD) exacerbate the unequal trade relations between the North and the South as well as those between different countries of the South.

On polluters and victims

Women and men are affected differently both by climate change and the political approaches to curbing it. Climate change increases existing poverty and environmental problems; it makes ecosystems and livelihood resources in “high risk” countries more precarious. Everywhere, poor population groups are affected disproportionately because they lack the flexibility to protect themselves -- that is, they lack options to avoid risks or to take fall back positions. Wherever rainfall and seasons become unpredictable, the cycles of sowing and harvesting are disrupted, which compromises agricultural productivity and food security and requires adaptation efforts.

Wherever biofuels are planted as industrial-scale monocultures in the name of climate protection, e.g. palm oil plantations, it is one more example of displacing small-scale farming, for self-sufficiency and local markets, which is predominantly in the hands of women. Wherever emissions rights are traded in the form of carbon credits between the North and the South under the *Clean Development Mechanism* (CDM), wherever forests are planted and granted protected status as sinks, the local people are prevented from using the forests, displaced or resettled.¹⁸ This process makes survival in rural areas more precarious, increases the risk of poverty, reinforces social differences and triggers additional migration to the cities. But it also means that the people who have contributed least to global climate change and are already stressed by multidimensional poverty suffer most from its direct and indirect effects.¹⁹

Climate disasters also disproportionately affect the weakest members of society and those who are discriminated against in socio-cultural terms. Up to four times as many women as men lost their lives in the areas in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka hardest hit by the tsunami in 2004.²⁰ When development and environmental policy as well as climate negotiations focused on adaptation to climate change, attention turned to women as a “vulnerable group,” particularly affected by climate changes and disasters. For this reason, women as a group appeared in the discourse at first in the stereotypical position of victims.

¹⁸ Isla, Ana (2009): Who pays for the Kyoto Protocol? in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.) (2009): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*. Women Write Political Ecology, London/New York, 199-218

¹⁹ The four studies in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique carried out by the Heinrich Böll Foundation since 2007 and a regional summary are available at <http://www.boell.org.za>; see also: Jenny Jungehülsing (2011): *Women who go, women who stay: Reactions to Climate Change*, Heinrich Böll Foundation North America, <http://www.boell.org/web/52.html>; Terry, Geraldine (ed.) (2009): *Climate Change and Gender Justice*, Oxfam; WEDO (2003): *Common Ground. Women's Access to Natural Resources and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals*, New York

²⁰ <http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/0,1518,362711,00.html>

Regional consequences of climate change and effects on women's strategies for survival

- Negative impacts on agriculture and food because seasons, dry periods and rainfall have become unpredictable, resulting in increased work as well as productivity and harvest losses,
- Changes in the water supply, sea level rise, increased melting of glaciers, more frequent and stronger storms, heavy rains and flooding,
- Loss of biological diversity, plant and animal species as well as fish stocks due to global warming,
- Degradation of forests, loss of carbon sinks as well as of forests as basis for the utilization of resources and land,
- Loss of land and coasts, soil erosion, desertification,
- Violation of livelihood rights due to cultivation of biofuels and conservation of forests as sinks,
- Health risks due to infections and climate disasters,
- Increased migration to cities due to poverty and climate change.

Gender mainstreaming

The *Framework Convention on Climate Change* did not contain the slightest mention of gender issues. Evidently, CO₂ emissions, aggregate data at the center of scientific research and all political negotiations, have no gender. Climate change was viewed primarily as a problem of global and local natural spaces. Less attention was paid to its social and economic dimensions.²¹ However, if one breaks down the problem of greenhouse gases and climate changes from the macro-political and technical levels to the micro-levels of local actors and people affected, highly differentiated perspectives open up in geographical, social and gender-specific terms. They display a complex interweaving of ecology, economy and questions of justice, on the one hand, between highly industrialized countries, newly industrialized countries and developing countries, and on the other hand within all societies, between genders, generations and social classes.

A gender-sensitive perspective is increasingly being included in climate-related environmental and development projects at the local level and in policy planning at the national level. More and more gender analyses are being conducted on the levels of projects and programs. The most recent studies, however, have determined that gender disparities are not assessed systematically during the development of sectoral strategies. Strangely enough, gender aspects evaporate during implementation, monitoring and evaluation of environmental and climate-related projects, as they do when it comes to development projects.²² The narrowed perception of women as victims prevents constructive reference to

²¹ Rodenberg, Birte (2009): Climate Change Adaptation from a Gender perspective. A cross-cutting analysis of development policy instruments. DIE Discussion Paper No. 24, Bonn; Schalatek, Liane (2009): Gender and Climate Finance: Double Mainstreaming for Sustainable Development, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Washington DC

²² Otzelberger, Agnes (2011) Gender-Responsive Strategies on Climate Change: Recent Progress and Ways Forward for Donors, IDS/BRIDGE

their traditional knowledge and their problem-solving capacities, such as the ones that small-scale women farmers, for example, began to develop long ago to adapt to climate changes. Sectoral and empowerment strategies on the one hand and climate and gender justice on the other are not linked coherently.

As gender continues to be a blind spot in the negotiations on emissions reductions, or mitigation, and in the corresponding *Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA)*, women's organizations emphasize gender-specific differences in causing greenhouse gases time and again. Energy and climate policy coherence would mean always reflecting on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in terms of social and gender-specific differences as well.²³

"No climate justice without gender justice" is the slogan used by female development experts to call for gender-equitable measures and gender-sensitive criteria for binding emissions reductions as well as for the provision of funds for adaptation to climate change, poverty alleviation and the implementation of resource and development rights. To this end, it would be necessary to prepare a *Gender Plan of Action* for the global climate finance regime, including gender budgets for climate-related projects and programs, and gender audits of new climate finance mechanisms.²⁴ A gender approach that systematically builds on the paradigm of rights is indispensable in the area of climate finance and in designing ever more funds.

However, a fundamental conflict of goals between gender equity and emissions reduction becomes apparent when it comes to the use of market-based instruments. The international network *GenderCC* rejects the inclusion of forest and agricultural certificates in international emissions trading and the financialization of nature, for example soils, that it entails. Therefore *GenderCC* does not advocate for engendering such financial instruments. As a matter of principle, *GenderCC* does not consider market mechanisms and large technical projects to be sustainable solutions to the problem of CO₂ and climate change and does not want to agree to a path it considers wrong. Instead, the organization demands, as the most urgent measure, a reduction of emissions by means of a transformation of production and consumption patterns and decentralized, democratically-controlled technology. From a perspective of reproduction and everyday life, setting up a decentralized energy supply could be an important step towards an energy democracy which does justice to the climate. This position corresponds to the struggle of the Ogoni women in Nigeria who spearheaded the resistance against Shell: they think that "[a]nother energy future" must be based on "[a]bandoning the belief in export-led growth in favour of servicing local (basic) needs."²⁵

In contrast, the *Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA)*,²⁶ a coalition of civil society and UN organizations, seeks to tap every potential advantage for women with the help of gender mainstreaming. It argues pragmatically for making all mechanisms gender-sensitive and hopes that women in the global South will benefit economically in the short term by

²³ Spitzner, Meike (2009): How Global Warming is Gendered, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.) (2009): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice. Women Write Political Ecology*, London/New York, 218-230; Terry, Geraldine (2009): No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues, in: *Gender and Development*, Vol. 17, 1, 5-18

²⁴ Schalatek, Liane (2010): *A Matter of Principle(s). A Normative Framework for a Global Compact on Public Climate Finance*, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Washington DC

²⁵ Brownhill, Leigh/Turner, Terisa (2009): Women and the Abuja Declaration for Energy Sovereignty, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*, London/New York, 243

²⁶ www.gender-climate.org

participating in REDD, which commercializes forest protection with benefits to women's groups in southern India with certificates on biogas plants²⁷. By making gender equality the priority, the GGCA supports – at least implicitly – market-oriented paths with claims to sustainability which are not supported by empirical evidence and that are highly contested politically and scientifically.

Gender in the negotiations

The first references to gender in the Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the Kyoto Protocol pointed only to the participation of women in the government delegations and to taking them into account in the *National Adaptation Plans of Action* (NAPA). Only in 2008, at COP 13 in Bali, did the international women's lobby, represented by the networks GenderCC, GGCA, WEDO and WECF,²⁸ achieve a breakthrough. The UNFCCC secretariat appointed a Gender Coordinator and called on the parties to implement gender-inclusive measures. Since then, gender references and the recognition of women's rights are to be found in the negotiation documents – at least at the level of language. At its 2008 meeting in New York, the *Commission on the Status of Women* (CSW) emphasized the necessity of a systematic link between gender and adaptation measures to climate change on the one hand and systematic participation of women at all levels of planning and decision-making and in the field of finance on the other. In 2011, efforts to include references to gender throughout the *Global Climate Fund* were successful. Thus, climate change has arrived firmly in the normative frame of reference of gender justice, which is delineated by the cornerstones of women's/human rights, political participation and democratic governance.

According to the most recent information from the UN, however, only a small amount of the funding available for climate, e.g., US\$6.5 billion of the World Bank-financed *Climate Investment Funds* arrive at the grassroots and benefit those women who urgently need it to adapt to climate changes.²⁹ Funds are channeled to large-scale projects – a prime example: Desertec in the Sahara – and in technical and market-based approaches for increasing the efficiency of fossil fuels, exploiting renewable energy sources and trading in pollution rights. Women as a direct target group seldom receive funding, since the “social dimension” is deemed less important than the ecological goals.

The population argument – a pitfall

The topic of population growth, which is simple and popular with the media, has been revived in the discourse on climate change. It diverts attention from the necessity of structural changes. In the early decades of development, the specter of the “population explosion” stoked the myth that poverty and hunger were the result of population growth and that birth control in the South was the most effective means of poverty alleviation. Women's networks developed the concept of sexual and reproductive rights as a normative

²⁷ On the controversial discussion about REDD see Heinrich Böll Foundation: Dollars, hopes and controversies – REDD in the Amazon <http://www.fairclimate.com/ngos/adats.aspx>

²⁸ www.genderCC.net; <http://www.wedo.org/category/themes/sustainable-developmentthemes/climatechange>; <http://www.wecf.eu/english/energy-climate/>

²⁹ www.guardian.co.uk, 28 June 2011

reference point in the 1990s to counter Malthusian thinking in the context of social inequality and patriarchal power relations.

China and India, the new superpowers, are now proving that a large number of young people – precisely those who had been deemed a surplus in the discourse of “overpopulation” – is by no means an obstacle to growth and economic advancement, on the contrary: it is now considered an economic advantage in global competition. Instead of the topic of poverty, it is now an ecological justification that again defines population growth in the South as a threat and that disregards the serious demographic problem of many societies in the North and South -- namely, rapid aging of the population. When, at the same time, people lament the exceedingly low birth rates in the North, it becomes apparent once again how loaded the talk of “overpopulation” is in racist terms.

The simple calculation that more people need more food, water, energy and resources is used to derive the principle that the gross domestic product (GDP) and the consumption of nature must grow as well as a matter of necessity. In this way, people resort to population growth as a reference point in the context of climate when they aim to push through technical and market-based solutions quickly with the argument that a growing world population causes more emissions³⁰. Such monocausal and linear calculations ignore that resource use and consumption differ tremendously both between various societies around the globe and within each society. Regions and population groups with high birth rates today have low per capita resource and energy uses, as well as low emissions³¹. Satisfying the basic needs of a larger population seems to be only a question of growth, increasing productivity and efficiency, and not a question of distribution, redistribution and sufficiency in light of finite resources. The *Food and Agriculture Organization* (FAO) legitimizes its focus on productivity growth and global agricultural value chains by means of a forecast of a world population reaching nine billion people by 2050. Others take up the well-known line of argument concerning family planning again and, in a knee-jerk reaction, call for contraceptives to combat climate change. In its *Green Economy* paper, UNEP argues for more widespread distribution of contraceptives in the countries of the South as a “green” measure as well.

³⁰ Röhr, Ulrike (2010): No Gender. Der Klimagipfel versagte auch bei der Geschlechtergerechtigkeit, in: iz3w 317, 8f

³¹ Wangari, Esther (2002): Reproductive Technologies. A Third World Feminist Perspective, in: Saunders, Kriemhild (ed.): *Feminist Post-Development Thought*, London/New York, 298-313

4. Food and Agriculture

It is an historic scandal that global hunger increased exponentially in 2007 because of dramatic price increases, even though sufficient food was available for everyone. This phenomenon is an outgrowth of a food and agricultural policy that has been subordinated to the capitalist market's logic of efficiency and rates of return. Industrial production in monocultures with intensive chemical use as well as global trade and the financialization of agriculture does not stop short of speculating on yields and price trends. Excessive speculation demonstrates how this economy and its obsession with profits is undermining the most fundamental purpose of all economic activity, namely to satisfy needs and sustain life. Gambling with food markets is equivalent to playing Russian roulette with the lives of the poor. This is a frightening example of the unscrupulousness and the destructive power of the capitalist economy gone awry. In addition, "land grabbing" in the South – the appropriation of wide swaths of land by large domestic and foreign investors – and the cultivation of biofuels are dramatically exacerbating the issues of land ownership, resource use and threats to food security. These capital investments and appropriations of land perpetuate the process of structural change in the economies, the environment and the social relations of rural areas. Forms of agricultural resource use and cultivation for regional cycles, domestic markets and private households' self-provisioning are being superseded and devalued by "green" revolutions, by privatization and the patenting of local biodiversity, by new markets for arable land and by the establishment of global value chains.

The gender-specific division of labor is key for food security, but also for the dual system of land and resource use in which commercial chemical-intensive, export-led monocultures are juxtaposed with mixed cultivation for local markets and self-sufficiency.³² As preservers of seed and biodiversity, women are the backbone of food production. Local communities consider them responsible for securing nutrition with the food crops from their kitchen gardens. Cash crops and monetary income, in contrast, are thought of as part of the male domain. Nonetheless, women do a large part of the work in the fields where the men grow cash crops. Women also produce vegetables, fruit or flowers for export as contract farmers or day laborers, which means that they are involved in the transnational systems of commercial agriculture and value chains.³³

Family controversies are frequent. Men argue for fast-growing varieties that promise monetary income, women prefer low-risk ones that guarantee security of supply. Technology- and modernization-oriented men are more easily won over than women in favor of hybrid seeds sold by corporations or for drilling deep irrigation wells, despite their high cost. As a rule, these conflicts are decided on the basis of land rights: men own the land, and they decide – even if it is the women who do the work.³⁴ Even though women

³² Krishna, Sumi (ed.) (2004): *Livelihood and Gender: Gender in Community Resource Management*, New Delhi; Rupp, Helen (2007): *Von 'Ernährerinnen der Welt' und flexiblen Arbeitskräften im Agro-Exportsektor*. In: *Reader des Aktionsbündnisses globale Landwirtschaft zu G8*, Frankfurt, 42-45

³³ Wichterich, Christa (2004): *Überlebenssicherung, Gender und Globalisierung. Soziale Reproduktion und Livelihood-Rechte in der neoliberalen Globalisierung*, Wuppertal Papers zur Globalisierung, Wuppertal

³⁴ Sachs, Carolyn (1996): *Gendered Fields*, Boulder; Leach, Melissa (1991): *Engendered Environments: Understanding Natural Resource Management in the West African Forest Zone*, in: *IDS Bulletin* 22,4, 17-24; Lachenmann, Gudrun (2001): *Die geschlechtsspezifische Konstruktion vom Umwelt in der Entwicklungspolitik*, in: *Nebelung*, Andreas/ Angelika Proferl/

bear a large part of the responsibility in agriculture, they are still largely denied property and usage rights to land and other productive resources, access to modern resources such as technology, credit and further training as well as decision-making power within the family.

The socio-cultural allocation of gender-specific tasks and skills is changing under the influence of local, regional and global market forces, and as a result of men migrating to cities to look for work. This in turn has resulted in a feminization of agriculture; cultural norms, such as prohibiting women from plowing, are being softened; women's work load is increasing; and the feminization of responsibility is on the rise as well.

Complex connections between market-based interventions in nature and the commercialization of resources, environmental changes and climate disasters such as droughts or floods make it more difficult for women, especially poorer women, to access resources essential for life and survival, and this increases their everyday workload. While it is true that women in the landowning classes usually do not have land rights, wealthy farming families can meet their requirements for energy and animal feed with their own biomass or have the financial means to purchase the energy they need. This means that women's access to resources and the effects of environmental crises are significantly determined by their social class or ethnic group as well as by ownership rights.

The poor have no place to go when major infrastructure projects such as highways and dams displace them or when industrialization and urbanization impair or destroy their livelihoods and result in a loss of biological diversity. The privatization of land and water resources and government bans on accessing forests or concessions granted to private businesses pull the "rug from under their feet." That means that the structural transformation of resource management systematically undermines food security through small-scale farming, women's care logic, livelihood rights and economics based on mutuality. And this in turn has disastrous socio-cultural consequences for the valuation of women's labor and their economic activity in the local community.

Who feeds the world?

From the perspective of feminist economics, the market-based view of land and agriculture displays many parallels to the analysis of women's labor. Neoclassical economics bemoans the fact that both land and women are "underutilized," lie fallow and suffer from "underinvestment"³⁵. Land grabbing is justified by the argument that the land is unused, namely "waste land". In the same vein, agricultural cultivation and women's labor for self-provisioning, not for the market, are not counted as productive and as adding value. They are considered as "externalities" to the economy; they remain invisible in statistics and on balance sheets, even though they secure social reproduction and partly also the regeneration of nature, e.g. soil fertility.

Irmgard Schultz (eds.) (2001): Geschlechterverhältnisse - Naturverhältnisse. Feministische Auseinandersetzungen und Perspektiven der Umweltsoziologie, Opladen, 247-269

³⁵ Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (2010): Gender and Agriculture. Platform Policy Brief No. 3, Dec 2010.

Basic assumptions of feminist economics

Feminist economics analyzes the entire economy as gendered processes because the social category of gender is deeply inscribed in it as an organizing structure. The Archimedean point of feminist economics is care. Around the world, care work is overwhelmingly carried out by women, mostly unpaid.³⁶ Neoclassical economics does not take into account unpaid and volunteer labor for care, subsistence and reproduction, making them invisible and devalued as unproductive and non-economic. In contrast, feminist economics considers production and the reproductive/caring economy as interlinked and acknowledges care as adding value. The capitalist market can function only because it constantly makes use of unpaid labor for caring and for the regeneration of nature, and exploits them as “endlessly elastic and expandable” resources. This capital- and market-based logic of growth, increasing efficiency and monetary accumulation contradicts the logic of care, precaution and social security and continuously erodes these values.

The annual report of the *Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2010/11* and the World Bank's *World Development Report 2012*³⁷ take gender inequalities in agriculture, one of the most intensely mainstreamed sectors, as their points of departure. They open up a broad kaleidoscope of gender gaps, including the division of labor, the size of areas under cultivation and power over productive resources, finances and incomes, technology and knowledge. This empirical finding offers many points for connecting with policies relating to gender equality. However, in both reports, the central frame of reference employed for closing the gender gap is not the rights-based paradigm ranging from the right to food to women's rights to inherit, but a market and business perspective oriented primarily towards increasing yields and profits. The FAO and the World Bank assume that, above all, it is access to modern agricultural inputs such as chemical fertilizer and industrial seeds that would empower women, make them “equal partners in sustainable development” (FAO) and thereby trigger substantial increases in productivity and a reduction in the numbers of the hungry by 100 to 150 million. As the *Millennium Development Goals* are considered largely failed after ten years, the topic of women as rescuers who can “win, sustainably, the fight against hunger and extreme poverty” (FAO) is being revived and exploited. At the same time, this stance ignores the fact that the world's hunger is first and foremost a problem of distribution and not primarily a result of population growth or low productivity.³⁸

The FAO “makes [a] strong business case for investing in women.” At the same time, the agency integrates them in export-oriented industrial agricultural value chains, be it as independent entrepreneurs, via contract farming or via wage labor on plantations and in industrial production. These roles are alleged to offer women better opportunities than small-scale agriculture. Instead of recognizing and empowering women and supporting and

³⁶ Ferber, Marianne/Nelson, Julie (eds.) (1993): *Beyond Economic Man*, Chicago; Elson, Diane/Cagatay, Nilufer (2000): *The Social Content of Macroeconomic Policies*, in: *World Development*, Vol.26, No.7, 1347-1365; Bakker, Isabella/Silvey, Rachel (2009): *Beyond States and markets. The Challenges of Social Reproduction*, London; Bezanson, Kate/Lucton, Meg (eds.) (2006): *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-Liberalism*, Montreal/Kingston

³⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011): *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010/11*, Rome; The World Bank (2011): *World Development Report 2012. Gender Equality and Development*, Washington DC

³⁸ see also: WWF/Heinrich Böll Foundation (2011): *How to feed the world's growing billions. Understanding FAO world food projections and their implications*, Berlin

improving their contribution to food security by employing redistributive measures, governments have cut subsidies and shifted their focus to the agricultural industries. Thus, the FAO's concept of gender equality is in line with the above-mentioned structural transformation of rural areas based on integration in the global market.

In addition, the FAO follows the neoliberal market-instrumental gender policy of the World Bank that wants to empower women as *homo economicus*, meaning self-reliant market actors with equal market opportunities and rights, because this is considered "smart" economics, supportive of increases in growth and efficiency. The central yardstick for gender equality and inequality relates to economic costs and benefits. From the perspective of productivity and the market, the World Bank considers the skills, knowledge and labor of small-scale women farmers as well as care and subsistence workers to be "underused," "wasted" or "misallocated".

There is no doubt that measures to support women and gender equality in markets are urgently needed to ensure that the global value chains do not further disadvantage and marginalize women. For example, the contracts in contract farming are executed with male land owners while, as a rule, the women do most of the labor in the fields. Both in land-intensive and technology-intensive monocultures such as sugarcane and soy and in the new structures in international trade and retailing, few jobs are created and those on the plantations are mostly for men. In Vietnam, a ton of vegetables is sold by 18 women street vendors, while a supermarket employs only about four people to sell the same amount of product. Supermarkets as well as free trade agreements set high hygiene standards that small farmers, both men and women, cannot meet. In other words, those standards function as mechanisms for market exclusion. Because of these standards, corporations do not purchase goods at local wholesale markets, but build up their own supply chains which can be monitored.

For this reason, one must ask the basic question beyond the sector-implicit goal of equality: which agricultural systems and development paths can best make the human rights, including the right to food, a reality? In any case, smallholder farming, often in the hands of women, still produces more than half of the world's food and is the most important safety net for the rural population. Human rights, including women's rights, should be placed at the center of planning for rural development, and needs-oriented agricultural production and distribution should form the core of food security. This approach is currently being pursued prominently by Olivier de Schutter, the UN *Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food*. Small-scale farmers, both women and men, need support in order to secure ecologically-sound cultivation, maintain soil fertility and stem environmental degradation, while also establishing cooperatives for production and marketing and ensuring their livelihood alongside the monopoly power of the corporations.

From livelihood rights to food sovereignty

Since the early 1990s and the *Women's Action Agenda 21* (see above), women's networks have been using the livelihood concept in particular as the point of departure for their deliberations on food security, resource use and agriculture. A conceptual alternative to the efficiency approach of the World Bank, the livelihood concept first takes up livelihood rights and local issues, everyday survival and social reproduction in the immediate natural and

social environment.³⁹ The approach is also rooted in the specific struggles of the resource-poor for the bases of their existence, the “environmentalism of the poor.” Women are often at the forefront in the resource conflicts in the global South to protect the resources they need for survival, for example in India in the struggles against Coca-Cola’s appropriation of groundwater or Monsanto’s genetically engineered seed. The poor are concerned above all with the “defense of their livelihood rights” and less with the protection of nature per se.⁴⁰ In 2009, a “Global Network on Women and the Right to Livelihoods” was founded at the World Social Forum in Belem.⁴¹

Key elements of the livelihood approach

- The integrated system of all material, social and cultural resources for securing livelihoods,⁴²
- self-determination and rights of co-determination on the part of local communities,
- decentralization, connecting with locally and regionally different conditions,
- biological and cultural diversity,
- collective rights of access to resources and their use,
- preservation of commons,
- local and regional circular economies and mixed economies,
- neighborhood economies based on mutuality, economic activity in solidarity,
- reference to indigenous local knowledge generated through experience.

With its reference to local rights of self-determination, including about the appropriate development path, and its resource-sparing and circular economies, the livelihood concept is also an alternative concept to the universally prescribed development strategy focused on markets and growth. The latter relies on transnational markets that are determined by the global competition between locations for industrial development and also by the ongoing formation of monopolies by major corporations.

Smallholders’ organizations, especially *Via Campesina*, developed the practice and the concept of food sovereignty in opposition to the tendencies of industrialization and liberalization of food production and trade as a business controlled by just a few large corporations. The definition of food sovereignty employed by these organizations centers around a fundamental democratic right to shape agricultural and food policy from the bottom up. Thus, it transcends the FAO’s definition of food security, which focuses heavily

³⁹ Heinrich Böll Foundation (2002): Jo`burg-Memo. Fairness in a Fragile World, Berlin; SID (2010): Development. Sustaining local economies, Vol.53, no 3, Sept 2010

⁴⁰ Martinez-Alier, Joan (2002): The Environmentalism of the Poor. A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation, Cheltenham; Sachs, Wolfgang (2003). Ökologie und Menschenrechte, Wuppertal Papier 131, Wuppertal

⁴¹ pwescr (2009): Women and the Right to Livelihoods, New Delhi

⁴² Chambers, Robert (1988): Sustainable Livelihood, Environment and Development. Putting poor rural people first. Brighton; Grown, Caren/Sebstad, Jennifer (1989): To a Wider Perspective on Women’s Employment, in: World Development 17 (7), 37-952;

on the global value chains in order to secure a right to food. Land, biodiversity and water are the three key resources for achieving food sovereignty.

Building blocks of food sovereignty on the path to a post-fossil-fuel regional circular economy include:

- decentralized water and energy supply, water and energy sovereignty,
- access resource rights and land rights,
- organic farming based on local biodiversity,
- protection of biodiversity and local knowledge as productive forces against piracy on the part of corporations, privatization and patenting,
- prevention of land grabbing for the purpose of “imperial” food security and the cultivation of biofuels,
- bans on speculation on yields and food prices via regulation of the financial markets.

Access to commons such as forests, community land and rivers is a prerequisite everywhere for women to be able to meet their responsibility for supplying private households with firewood, drinking water and animal feed. In addition, the sale of firewood, medicinal herbs and nuts, for example, is one of the few ways for poor women to make a living. When ponds, meadows and forests, which were traditionally used as commons, are declared nature reserves or are privatized, or if they are degraded, a dramatic resource scarcity arises, especially for women in landless or land-poor households and indigenous peoples. For them, preserving and maintaining commons by the community as well as democratic regulation of access and use are important pillars of food sovereignty.

Macroeconomic policy, namely regulation of the financial markets, must secure regional food sovereignty as well: food has no place in a casino.

Who owns local biodiversity?

Women play a central role in food sovereignty, which starts at the local level. Their traditional knowledge about local biodiversity and seeds and about the nutritional value and healing properties of indigenous varieties is a central resource in the context of reproduction.⁴³ The women farmers have both a practical and a strategic interest in preserving biodiversity as a commons and in their rights to it: it is the most important means of production for survival and guarantees the recognition of women in the community as providers.

The seed banks and seed exchanges that small-scale women farmers have established in various regions to counteract the loss of varieties and knowledge are the outposts of an alternative model of sovereign food supply and food security. This model develops available local resources and the related indigenous knowledge as a productive force independent of the market, which prevents the resources from being lost or overrun and appropriated by market forces.⁴⁴

⁴³ Kuppe, Rene (2002): Indigene Völker, Ressourcen und traditionelles Wissen, in: Ulrich Brand/ Monika Kalcsics (eds.): Wem gehört die Natur? Konflikte um genetische Ressourcen in Lateinamerika, Frankfurt, 112-134

⁴⁴ Wichterich, Christa (2009): Women peasants, food security and biodiversity in the crisis of neoliberalism, in: development dialogue, no.51, 133-142; P.V. Sateesh (2010) Gendering Agriculture: Putting Women First, in: Heinrich Böll

For this reason, small-scale women farmers who secure their survival and their food by using, adapting and developing local biodiversity have been opposing commercialization tendencies in the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), which was opened for signature at the UNCED Conference in 1992. The convention links the necessity to protect biodiversity with the logic of the market. It, too, seeks to market nature in order to protect it, calling this “ecosystem management.”⁴⁵ On the one hand, biological diversity is to be included in the global value chains, on the other, it is to be protected by creating nature conservation zones and reserves.. “Benefit sharing” processes are supposed to involve mediation between the local owners of biodiversity and the private sector that seeks to appropriate genetic resources and exploit them by means of patenting. Profit-sharing serves as an incentive for indigenous and local communities to agree to the commercialization of their commons. Flanking the CBD, free trade agreements codify biodiversity protection as an environmental service with stipulations concerning intellectual property (TRIPS⁴⁶) as a liberalized sector.

Small-scale women farmers from various regions of the world are resisting the transformation of their biological diversity and their knowledge into goods traded by corporations and do not want to be mainstreamed into commercial activities that entail their own dispossession. They demand the freedom to produce in a self-determined manner (independent of global markets) and to exchange seeds – in place of the freedom of the corporations and free trade. They, too, desire gender democracy when it comes to deciding about and disposing of resources. Yet their food sovereignty approach goes beyond this and focuses on its own forms of resource use that are determined by the following key points: collective rights over local resource, preservation and further development of local species, and self-determined decisions about the path of development.

Who owns the land?

Land grabbing on the part of well-funded domestic and international investors, which has increased by leaps and bounds since the price increases for basic foods in 2007/8, demonstrates once again how central the question of land is for development. Land enclosure and investments are an expression of the processes of valuing and financializing natural resources, which subordinate all fields of economic activity, including resources that are initially non-economic, to the financial market and facilitate their redistribution to financially powerful market actors. These processes serve to establish new global value chains that integrate resources, labor and livelihoods or force people to adapt to the money and market regime. Often, local people place great hope in new opportunities for jobs and income, but this type of structural transformation can also be viewed as “being put in chains” by the market.

Foundation/WIDE/Christa Wichterich (eds): *In Search of Economic Alternatives for Gender and Social Justice: Voices from India*, Brussels

⁴⁵ See McAfee above

⁴⁶ The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights was added to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1994 at the urging of US industry. It requires all members of the World Trade Organization WTO to transpose the strict rules of the industrialized countries’ patent laws into national law.

Without transparency, and without consulting the local population, governments lease or sell land usually categorized as waste land to corporations, banks, funds or other governments that in turn use the land for cultivating basic foods, agrofuels or for livestock. Enclosing large areas of land by these leasing or purchasing contracts ignores local communities' traditional usage rights and dispossesses and marginalizes them. The categorization of "waste land" ignores the utility that such land has for people keeping animals and for land-poor women, which use it for collecting firewood and producing animal feed, fruits and other plants for their own subsistence or for sale. The investors' market logic undermines women's care logic, in which production and reproduction are not separate spheres. The monocultures in the fields and the monoculture of money destroy natural biodiversity as well as the diversity and morals of the local economies. The livelihood rights of the poor in the global South are violated, so that countries such as Saudi Arabia (which lack fertile soil and water) can achieve food security. Such violations are also justified by facilitating a shift from fossil to renewable biofuel or in order to satisfy increased demand because of rising prosperity in emerging economies and the global North.⁴⁷

Indigenous people with traditional usage rights and women without land title deeds have no legal means to resist such displacement. Women own less than 3% of the land in Bangladesh, 11% in the Philippines and 33% in Botswana.⁴⁸ They have no negotiating or decision-making power if the village elders or their husbands, as landowners, agree to deals with investors, because the latter – like the World Bank and the FAO – promote such "investments in the agricultural sector" as win-win situations for the local population. Since, however, industrialized plantations offer few opportunities for women to earn an income, they are further displaced from the agricultural sector and forced into the service sector at the margins of the global value chains. Just as in the cases of mining or infrastructure construction, informal sector activities, such as petty trading and food stalls as well as prostitution, spring up near plantations.

The FAO, the World Bank and the *International Food Policy Research Institute* (IFPRI) call for good governance and regulation of investors to limit the "risks" to food security and to improve women's win-win opportunities by means of equitable wages and access to inputs for agriculture, with the goal of getting the problem of land grabbing under control politically. In contrast, a rights-based policy should first of all create the prerequisites for the local population's and women's "land sovereignty" so that they can decide themselves about development paths and resource use.⁴⁹ Comprehensively empowering women also helps them gain power to negotiate and shape decisions in families and communities so that they can pursue their caring needs while resisting being subordinated by the power of markets or men.

⁴⁷ Behrman, Julia/Meinzen-Dick, Ruth/Quisumbing, Agnes (2011). The Gender Implications of Large-Scale Land Deals, IFPRI Discussion Paper 01056; Tandon, Nidhi (2010) New Agribusiness investments mean Wholesale Sell-Out for Women Farmers.

⁴⁸ FAO Gender and Land Rights Database 2010, <http://www.fao.org/gender/landrights>

⁴⁹ Borras, Saturnino/Franco, Jennifer (2010): Towards a Broader View of the Politics of Global Land Grab: Rethinking Land Issues, Reframing Resistance, TNI, <http://www.tni.org/work-area/agrarian-justice>; Federici, Silvia (2011): Women, Land Struggles, and the Reconstruction of the Commons, in: WorkingUSA: the Journal of Labor and Society, Vol 14, March 2011, 41-56

Power over resources, especially land, is a tool both of empowerment of women and of food and care security. For this reason, and at the urging of the women's organization Shirkat Ghah, the government of Pakistan allocated land in the villages of Sindh to women for the first time ever in 2009, based on the assumption that land ownership gives women decision-making power and that this ensures greater food security.

Urban agriculture

In Northern cities, a series of food scandals, excesses of industrial livestock and genetically modified organisms entering the food chains spurred the desire for regaining self-determination over food as well as organic food products. This desire to control the quality of home-grown fruits and vegetables triggered a renaissance of community gardens. Purely out of necessity, reducing high food expenses by transforming roadsides into vegetable patches or balconies into chicken cages has been a matter of course for decades in the South, from Nairobi to Havana. Now it has become a part of urban culture in many cities of the North, from the community gardens at the edges of New York or on Detroit's industrial wastelands to multicultural gardens in Germany and direct marketing via farmers' markets in US cities. What is new is that community gardens feature crop diversity and components of waste management and a recycling are now being designed explicitly as an alternative ecological-economic model of reproduction and as spaces free from dependence on outside supply. They are a step on the path towards a post-fossil fuel local economy, which can transform cities as is the case in the transition town movement in Great Britain. Thus the concept of urban gardens as "spaces of resistance to the neoliberal order" and building blocks for a new neighborhood economy oscillates between romantic ideas about a community in harmony and spiritual renewal on the one hand and a political concept of gardening on the other, namely "We can plant another world!"⁵⁰

According to agricultural expert Jac Smit, urban agriculture was "overlooked, underestimated and undervalued" for so long because the most important actors are women whose labor is simply not perceived and "remains invisible." Both in the North and in the South, they are at the center of the caring economy and food sovereignty. As with small-scale women farmers in the countryside, they need a secure right to use the land and also to obtain agricultural advice (for example, what they can do to combat lead pollution).

⁵⁰ Reynolds, Richard (2009): *On Guerrilla Gardening: A handbook for gardening without boundaries*, London

5. Multiple Crises, *Green Economy* and Growth Critique

The market principles of growth, efficiency, competition and the exploitation of natural and human resources resulted in the multiple crises of the financial crash, hunger, poverty, climate change and resource scarcity. Efforts to decouple growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) and material wealth from resource use failed. It was not enough to increase efficiency exponentially, trust in the potential of new technologies and just attempt to make modernization practices more ecological.⁵¹ The social disparities between countries and regions and within individual societies increased as GDP grew; the crises of social reproduction intensified.

Governments and supranational governance structures quickly promoted growth as the path leading out of the crisis and securing jobs and prosperity. The EU is seeking to expand its access to markets and raw materials by means of a new commodities and investment policy as well as through accelerated trade liberalization. Incentives to revitalize consumption, such as “cash-for-clunkers” programs for the purchase of new cars in Germany and China, were intended to stimulate the economy.

In the global South, the development model founded on growth, competitiveness and the global market is driving the increasing economic valorization of land and nature. In the process, the political communities in the North and South are fundamentally contradicting the ecological insight that continuing economic growth of production and consumption will exceed the carrying capacity of the biosphere. But that means that the time is ripe for a basic transformation, as is the system with its contradictions and multiple crises. A fundamental change of direction is inevitable.

This necessity can be seen in a third wave of discourse about the limits to growth and about an ecological economy following the critique of growth in the 1960s and 1980s. New welfare indices and models are proliferating, from the commission appointed in France, with Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi to *Gross National Happiness* in Bhutan, from the *Genuine Progress Indicator* (GPI) developed by the NGO *Redefining Progress* to the indicators for the common good economy in Austria. They all depart from the unidimensional measures of GDP, money and the market, and incorporate immaterial goods and social reproduction.⁵² This signals an opening at the level of definitions and of measuring a different understanding of well-being that is not exclusively market- and materially-oriented and where the reproductive sector plays a role no less important than that of the market. Gender aspects are touched upon in these models where they focus on human rights or non-market-based labor, such as care, housework, subsistence labor and volunteerism. The question is how the new measurement methods and the happiness models for societies and policies can be translated into strategies that provide direction for social-ecological transformation.

⁵¹ Jackson, Tim (2009): *Prosperity without Growth. Economics for a Finite Planet*, London; Sachs, Wolfgang (2000): *Wie zukunftsfähig ist die Globalisierung? Über ökonomische Entgrenzung und ökologische Begrenzung*. Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin

⁵² Waring, Marilyn (2009): *Policy and the Measure of Woman*, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*. London/New York, 166-180

Civil society in Europe is conducting complex discourses about Degrowth/*Decroissance*.⁵³ In everyday practice, more and more projects and initiatives are exploring alternative economic activities and a different relationship to nature. In these practical, experimental spaces, attention is focused on social reproduction, care, provisioning and separation from the logic of capital, for example in self-organized community gardening and producer-consumer associations, for-free shops, local exchange trading systems (LETS) and local currencies, rural communes and squats,⁵⁴ but also in discussions about values and priorities. The people involved and their practices represent growing resistance to the market-based growth paradigm which determines not only the economic conditions and relations with nature, but also a value system in everyday life that is etched deep into the societal consciousness.⁵⁵ Not only the economy, but also individuals, have lost perspective under the extreme pressure of growth and competition and no longer know “how much is enough.” That is why a critique of growth aims both at material structures and at subjectivities, identity-forming value systems and individual behavior.

At the peak of the crisis, the *United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP) announced the initiative for a *Global Green New Deal* “to get the markets back to work.” In the meantime, UNEP has developed the concept of a *Green Economy* to become the guiding principle of the Rio+20 Conference. From the *Green New Deal* launched in Great Britain in 2008 to the OECD’s *Green Growth* concept, all models⁵⁶ of a *Green Economy* share a number of key concepts and principles. The basic assumption is that national and international governance regimes must change course and regulate the economy. This calls for the primacy of politics over the economy, hoping for political will and governance and regulatory capacities. The triple crisis of finance, energy and climate is to be overcome by changing course towards green investments, for example, in renewable energy and energy-efficient construction, in green innovation, green technologies and green jobs. In addition, Britain’s *Green New Deal* and the UN emphasize that a green economy creates the prerequisites for reducing social disparities and achieving the MDGs. The *Green New Deal* is the one that places greatest emphasis on regulating and confining the financial market, on investments in the public sector and on involving all social groups.

Though UNEP considers the green economy to be a “fundamental rethinking of our approach to the economy,” it seeks to be a new “green” strategy for growth. The OECD is clear about calling its policy “green growth,” and argues that ecologization is politically wise, even inevitable, for maximizing growth. At UNEP, the goal is a strategic transition from a brown to a green economy by means of the “power of the market,” supported by regulatory policy. This transition is intertwined with the concept of public-private partnerships because private capital is more important for green investments than public funds.

Each and every new model of prosperity and sustainability, in theory and in practice, each and every social contract must be prepared to respond to a few crucial questions from a

⁵³ Rätz, Werner/Egan-Krieger, Tanja von et al. (2011): *Ausgewachsen! Ökologische Gerechtigkeit. Soziale Rechte. Gutes Leben*, Hamburg

⁵⁴ Habermann, Friederike (2009): *Halbinseln gegen den Strom. Anders leben und wirtschaften im Alltag*, Sulzbach/Taunus

⁵⁵ Welzer, Harald (2011): *Mental Infrastructures. How Growth Entered the World and our Souls*, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin

⁵⁶ <http://www.unep.org/documents.multilingual/default.asp?documentid=548&articleid=5957&l=en>; www.unep.org/greeneconomy; Green New Deal Group (2008): *Green New Deal*. New Economic Foundation. London; http://www.oecd.org/document/10/0,3746,en_2649_37465_44076170_1_1_1_37465,00.html

gender perspective: How does it deal with putting human rights, global social rights, and decision-making rights into practice for women, minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, etc.? Which concept of justice does the new model rely on? How does it respond to the asymmetries of power between the North and the South, between social classes, between men and women? How does it refer to the division between the caring economy and the market economy as well as the gender hierarchy in the division of labor? Upon which relationship to nature is it based?

For a long time, feminist sociologists and economists have been criticizing a market logic focused on growth, efficiency gains and returns on investment, which necessitates structural carelessness and ruthlessness towards the individual, social concerns and nature. It undermines the living foundations of all economic activity and necessarily leads society into one crisis after another.⁵⁷ Presently, neoliberal globalization is governed by the following dynamics of growth and contraction: 1) an expansion of the logic of accumulation while all resources are valorized and commodified while at the same time the common good, the public realm and the commons contract; and the logic of care is devalued and marginalized; 2) social and citizen`s rights are violated while at the same time, austerity and other neoliberal policies force individuals to take on more responsibility for their own and others` livelihoods. Feminist critiques of the market and growth system focus firstly, on the separation between care and gainful labor, between production and social reproduction or natural regeneration, secondly on the crises in the realm of social reproduction, and thirdly, on the inter-linkages of power and power structures in social and gender relations as well as in the economy and in society`s relationship to nature. From this point of view, **a key mechanism in the serial crises is to collectively shift costs, burdens and risks to private households and nature.**

Feminist and ecological critique of neoclassical economics

- Permanent growth of the markets results in constantly intensifying use of human, social and natural resources, despite increases in efficiency.
- The capitalist market economy attempts to keep the social and ecological costs low and to externalize them.
- In order to increase profits, it shifts social and ecological costs to private households and local communities or to nature.
- The neoliberal economy is intrinsically unsustainable because it ignores social and ecological limits to growth and thereby destroys its own living foundations – humans and nature – through overexploitation.

In its *Green Economy* concept, UNEP takes up a key point of ecological economics, namely the assessment that natural capital and environmental services – which are not counted in macroeconomic calculations – create value and prosperity. Therefore, UNEP concludes that nature must be have an economic and financial value attached, be priced by the markets and sold, in keeping with the model of the market and efficiency. In the process, nature is

⁵⁷ Brennan, Teresa (2003): *Globalization and its Terrors. Daily Life in the West*, London

separated from the social realm. The privatization of the environment (as well as public services) is praised as an innovative measure for environmental protection and for the supply of services such as water and electricity. However, UNEP ignores the analogous basic assumption of feminist economics, namely that social reproduction and care also have a role in creating value.

There is currently an intense debate about whether *Green Economy* can be utilized as a transitional strategy towards a sustainable economic system beyond the logic of growth and returns or for a transformation of societal power relationships. Will a greening of capitalism, a green industrial revolution and a turnaround in energy policy suffice to bring about a turnaround concerning sustainability and justice? When UNEP carried out a consultation with major groups from Latin America and the Caribbean on the *Green Economy* concept in September 2011, women's organizations rejected it as a motto for Rio+20 because they considered the concept "more business than people driven" and as a "new form of colonization and appropriation of the natural resources of the South." Instead they "embrace the concept of sustainable livelihoods"; they demand political and legal measures to empower women to attain ownership rights as well as access and control over natural and modern resources. As central themes for Rio+20, they suggest policies of redistribution to replace growth, restructuring of production and consumption patterns and the concept of sufficiency.

UNEP's comprehensive *Green Economy* concept lacks a consistent human rights approach as well as a coherent concept of equity and social sustainability. The driving force of the green economy is growth, not redistribution. Gender receives hardly any attention at all and power relationships go unexamined; instead, large corporations are praised time and again for their pioneering role, as in the UN's *Global Compact*. One cannot speak of a paradigm shift because the green economy remains committed both to growth and to the capitalist principle of maximizing returns. Essentially, it is about moving capital investments, jobs and growth to green sectors, i.e., a low-carbon and "thermally insulated" or slightly less destructive capitalism, not about different economic conditions and not about different relationships to nature.

Most of the developing and newly industrialized countries of the South – with a few exceptions, such as Colombia and Guatemala – are skeptical about the *Green Economy* concept or reject it altogether, considering it a Northern-imposed motto for Rio+20. In the run-up to the *People's Summit Rio+20*, civil-society groups criticized it as "recycling an unsustainable model ... and the classic *modus operandi* of capitalism with its modes of accumulation and dispossession." Those groupings in Latin America would like to see Rio+20 as an "enormous movement for social transformation" based on rights and resisting "market environmentalism." Pointing towards this transformation, they say that they "don't have all the answers, but we have a responsibility to, between the desirable and the possible, search for them."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ <http://rio20.net/en/documentos/rio-20-resisting-market-environmentalism>

Care and precaution

Feminist economists think against the grain. They identify the most fundamental principle of all economic activity – to care for and satisfy needs and create well-being, while ensuring that this does not occur at the expense of others and of nature – as the point of departure for alternatives. If well-being and the reproduction of society and nature are granted priority over growth and profit, then economic and financial policy, micro- and macroeconomies, but also relations with nature must be reshaped, with a care concept as starting point. The idea of a caring economy, also referred to in the global South as a survival or livelihood economy, is to be found in a broad spectrum of feminist thinking, from the subsistence approaches of Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen to Genevieve Vaughan’s “gift economy,” from anti-globalization positions to a “queer perspective”, all of which transcend the dualism of capitalism versus anti-capitalism.⁵⁹ The cornerstones of these visionary concepts are “ecological integrity” and a critique of the profit- and money-oriented *homo economicus*⁶⁰. The efficiency hype is contrasted with eco-sufficiency as a model of being content with less.⁶¹ Principles like sharing, redistributing and revaluing of labor, prosperity as well as of power should guide actions instead of a concept of neoliberal individual responsibility; cooperation and solidarity should weaken social relations of competitiveness. A caring economy means that the entire economy is to be turned right-side up again, shifting from speculation to provision. The goal is to re-embed the economy in social and natural relationships, and to link global social justice with environmental and gender justice.

But what are the first steps towards a caring economy or transition strategies that connect politically realistic measures with alternative economic activities and relations to nature? Because of the urgent need for a transformation, as a consequence of the massive pressure due to the crisis and in light of the failure of the MDGs, it would make little sense to draw up a new catalog of desirables for Rio+20, especially as the conference is being placed under the premise of the market and financialization, as per the *Green Economy* concept. Plenty of goals have been formulated and not been achieved, including the *Agenda 21* of the Rio Conference 1992. Now it is more important to identify key demands for moving towards a social-ecological transformation, to open up new spaces and capacities to act and to develop strategies for transition that break ranks with the functional logic of growth and maximizing returns.

Under the umbrella of the livelihood concept, international feminist discourses attempt to link three key concepts of the recent past: 1) redistributing and revaluing of labor, 2) reclaiming the public realm and the commons, and 3) identifying exit options from the vicious cycle of growth where resource extraction, production and consumption reinforce each other.

⁵⁹ Mies, Maria/Shiva, Vandana (1993): *Ecofeminism*, Halifax/London; Mies, Maria/Bennholdt-Thomsen, Veronika (1999): *The Subsistence Perspective*, London; Eisler, Riane (2007): *The Real Wealth of Nations. Creating Caring Economies*, San Francisco; Vaughan, Genevieve (ed.) (2007): *Women and the Gift Economy*, Toronto; Mellor, Mary (2009): *Ecofeminist Political Economy and the Politics of Money*, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*. London/New York, 251-268; Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2006): *A Postcapitalist Politics*, Minneapolis, MN

⁶⁰ Mellor, Mary (2009): *Ecofeminist Political Economy and the Politics of Money*, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*. London/New York, 251-268; Salleh, Ariel (2009): *From Eco-Sufficiency to Global Justice*, in: Salleh (2009) *ibid.*, 291-313

⁶¹ Salleh, Ariel (2009): *From Eco-Sufficiency to Global Justice*, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*. London/New York, 291-313

1) Labor is an everyday practice to secure one's livelihood in exchange with nature and also a mode of socialization. In light of the fact that gainful employment is constantly becoming more informal and more precarious, society needs a new concept of labor and a new model of securing basic needs and a basic income. The highest goal of all labor in society is care, precaution and existential security. Because of the crises of reproduction in many societies – from the educational and employment crises for young people to the care crisis for senior citizens – this will not be possible without a reorganization of care and social reproduction. The following are required for revaluing and redistributing labor:

- a redefinition of labor and value creation beyond the market, efficiency and remuneration,
- recognition and upgrading, and making less precarious care work and work for social reproduction and for the regeneration of nature,
- revaluation of labor by means of minimum and maximum wages,
- redistribution of labor functions, thereby breaking up gender stereotypes: part-time gainful employment and part-time care work for everybody, men and women,
- public infrastructure and public services to facilitate livelihood provision and social reproduction,
- securing basic needs and a basic income by means of employment programs such as NREGA in India, cash transfers as in Namibia, *bolsa familia* in Brazil or an unconditional basic income in the West,
- use of “precaution” as the normative guide to secure protection from risks with actions that range from the application of preventive medicine to the application of the precautionary principle in trading genetically engineered organisms.

As there is no panacea or universal recipe that would lead in the right direction, transformative paths must be embarked on and explored at the local level, depending on the context in question. For example, it is hotly contested whether an unconditional basic income can be a beneficial prerequisite for all restructuring plans. From a gender point of view, this should neither reproduce the old gender roles and division of labor nor be misused as a neoliberal form of cushioning precarious gainful employment. In addition, money alone does not secure one's existence. Securing basic social needs also includes security of access to commons and public infrastructure, from health care to public transportation.

2) To counter the current trend of austerity policies and public impoverishment against the background of the private appropriation of wealth, commons, public services and social infrastructure have to be reclaimed, strengthened and expanded.⁶² When Elinor Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, it stimulated new debates about public goods and commons and their sustainable use by local communities beyond the state and

⁶² Pati, Anuradha (2006): Development Paradigms, Feminist Perspectives and Commons. A Theoretical Intersection. Presentation http://www.indiana.edu/~iascp/bali/papers/Pati_Anuradha.pdf

the market. The weakest members of society, who have no fall-back positions, depend the most on secure access to public care facilities, social infrastructure as well as to commons in order to make their social rights a reality. Sharing resources and commons benefits more people if access and rights are governed democratically and in a socially balanced way.⁶³ Securing local public goods and commons can be a good prerequisite for everyone being able to realize their global social rights. To this end, the following is required:

- A redefinition of commons, e.g. security of care and a social safety net, education, health, mobility and a healthy environment,
- Commons are constituted by means of commoning, self-organization of local communities and collective action, by means of an orientation towards the public good and pacts of solidarity vis-à-vis the commons,
- Protection of commons from privatization and financialization; otherwise, private capital owners and the rules of the market decide about public goods and the enforcement of human rights and global social rights,
- Public goods have no place in a casino! Regulation of the financial markets must prohibit speculation and other financial business with public goods and commons.

The new democratization movements and the *Occupy* movement have appropriated public spaces from Tahrir Square in Cairo to Wall Street as commons for protests and discussions. Decentralized, democratic forums and public participation (e.g., through citizens' budgets and gender budgets) can help to repoliticize discourse about growth, prosperity and distribution and reconceptualize relations between society, nature, and the economy. Such forums should be forms of "real" and "direct" democracy as demanded, especially by the new social movements and the "indignant." Practical political steps could be reflected on and organized there, including questions such as how citizens could take over control of water and electricity supply systems from mighty corporations and monopolists. Principles and values would have to be discussed there as well. What kind of growth do we want? What kind of wealth? How much consumption? How many resources do we need for a "good life"? What is the relationship between gender emancipation and sustainability – in the current relationships between society and nature and in a different "good life"?

Nonetheless, it remains an open question how, taking the commons as a point of departure, power relations within local communities and societies and capitalist structures can be changed or whether commons will simply remain islands in the capitalist mainstream.⁶⁴

3) While care sectors such as public services, welfare, securing livelihoods, nursing and social safety nets are currently shrinking, they must ultimately grow. The challenge is to downsize other sectors in a socially acceptable way. In order to weaken the logic of exploitation, structures of production, trade and consumption must be dismantled with the goal of reducing resource extraction and the exploitation of the biosphere as well as CO₂ emissions.

⁶³ Ostrom, Elinor et al. (eds.) (2002): *The Drama of the Commons*, Washington; Ostrom, Elinor (2009): *Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems*, www.uga.edu/pol-sci/courses/2010.pstrom.pdf

⁶⁴ Federici, Silvia (2010): *Feminism and the Politics of Commons*, www.thecommoner.org

- Downsizing the resource-, energy- and emissions-intensive overproducing industries in the global North, e.g. the automotive industry,
- Conversion of destructive and superfluous industries such as arms production into resource-sparing, low-emissions production or recycling industries,
- Turnaround from export orientation to the domestic market, to forms of economic activity in solidarity, local and regional economic cycles,
- Sufficiency and dismantling of overconsumption in the throwaway societies of the North and the “imperial” lifestyle of the global middle classes,
- Termination of the neoliberal and neocolonial “social pact,” namely compensating for the lowering of real wages in the North by means of importing cheap products based on the exploitation of human and natural resources in the global South,
- Dismantling the liberalization of trade and investment as well as the global race for raw materials,
- Dismantling financialization: no speculation with public goods, food, pensions, and currencies.

Because of the increasing complexity of the crises, any single measure must necessarily fall short. If, for example, prices included ecological costs, they would increase drastically: many goods would become unaffordable for the poor, but it would not make much difference to the rich. Although the internalization of costs would lead to prices that were more just ecologically speaking, it would result in a new dilemma of justice in the absence of a simultaneous transformation of social structures of injustice.

This does confirm Adorno’s dictum that there is no right life in the wrong one. Nonetheless, some actions in the right directions can open doors and create transitions to social-ecological transformation at the micro-level of everyday life, the mezzo-level of the economy and relations to nature, and the political macro-level.

The good life and *buen vivir*

Adelheid Biesecker understands the concept of “precautionary economy” (“*vorsorgendes Wirtschaften*”) as a new paradigm of “economic activity for a good life rather than for growth.”⁶⁵ In so doing, she redefines prosperity as wealth in terms of time and being cared for, in contrast to wealth in terms of money and goods. The concept of the “good life” was developed in the Western industrial societies as an alternative concept to the dogma of growth. Formulating the “good life” as a goal, determined not only by money, material assets and consumption, shifts the focus from the wealth of a nation measured in goods and finances to the well-being and happiness of the individuals.

Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen defined the “good life” as the free development of capabilities with which people can shape their lives independently.⁶⁶ A crucial element of

⁶⁵ Biesecker, Adelheid (2011): *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften*, in: Rätz, Werner/Egan-Krieger, Tanja von et al. (2011): *Ausgewachsen!* Hamburg, 75-85

⁶⁶ Nussbaum, Martha (2000): *Women and human development. The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge; Sen, Amartya (2009): *The idea of justice*, London

this concept is the decoupling of individual contentment from material prosperity. Happiness research, too, has found out that individual happiness is determined only up to a certain point by income, material assets and consumption of resources. Instead, equality in society plays a role in subjective contentment, especially in one's sense of justice.⁶⁷ Stress due to constantly increasing competition is one of the main causes of individual unhappiness.

In contrast to the individualistic approach of the good life, the paradigm of *buen vivir* of indigenous people in Latin America is based on the social community and on a different relationship to nature. The topic of *Pachamama*⁶⁸ encompasses veneration of Mother Earth, respect for nature's own rights and harmony between humans and nature - ideas also to be found in cultural ecofeminism. In Bolivia and Ecuador, the *buen vivir* concept has been included in the constitution in order to secure the right to autochthonous development paths critical of capitalism and colonialism, but also to ensure receptivity to the indigenous peoples' own legal systems. This also recognizes a plurality of cultures, diversity of society and development paths, and explicitly values all productive and reproductive forms of labor.⁶⁹ The central point where feminist approaches can connect to these ideas is the overarching goal of satisfying life's basic needs, which are formulated as basic rights, and considering life in a holistic way without political compartmentalization. Using and maintaining commons plays a key role here; non-use of mineral resources, e.g. in the Yasuni National Park in Ecuador, is a tribute to the rights of nature; the struggle against privatization of water supply is a way of reclaiming a common good.

While on the one hand "indigenous traditions" are to be revitalized, there is at the same time an awareness that patriarchal structures in the indigenous cultures must be broken open. In Bolivia, the ministry of culture is commissioned with the definitely contradictory task of revitalizing indigenous traditions and "deconstructing" patriarchy. There can be no "good life" without freedom from violence against women, without dignity and recognition of all genders – a debate that women in Bolivia are conducting now, as they do not want to be instrumentalized for the "buen vivir" concept while they are exposed to domestic violence.

⁶⁷ Wilkinson, Richard/Pickett, Kate (2009): *The Spirit Level. Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, London

⁶⁸ Critically on this: Lambert, Renaud (2011): *Pachamama. Wie eine Andengottheit zur Schutzheiligen der Umwelt wurde*, in: *Le Monde diplomatique*, Februar 2011, 3

⁶⁹ Acosta, Alberto (2011): *El Buen Vivir en el camino del post-desarrollo: Una lectura desde la Constitución de Montecristi*. www.Rebellion.org/docs/118561.pdf; Fatheuer, Thomas (2011): *Buen vivir: Latin America's new concepts for the good life and the rights of nature*, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin

6. Outlook: Occupy the Future

“Occupy” has become the term to denote the quest for new political forms after efforts of ever more non-governmental organizations, but also the World Social Forum and other social forums have run their course. Feminists in the US have claimed their place in the re-radicalized protest against growing inequalities, a lack of democracy and the power of the financial sector with the slogan “occupy patriarchy.” “Occupy the future” could become the slogan for the quest for alternatives to the dominant path of development that continues to be resource-intensive, driven by growth and the free-market ideology. The task is now to invent, explore and occupy new development paths. The totalitarianism of the market and growth, which has been globalized by the West, must first be pushed back in the West.

The simultaneous crises have catapulted all actors and societal groups to a crossroads: what next, if not business as usual? In the crises, in resource conflicts as well as political negotiations, struggles are forming around the shaping of the future.

Women’s networks and feminist experts – from both the grassroots and academia – have recently developed practical and conceptual responses to the climate, food and growth crises. In this process, they demonstrate the scandalousness of the intrinsic contradictions and destructive forces of the domination of nature by societies and the capitalist economy. At the same time and interlinked, they also critically articulate the gender implications and injustices of the hegemonic development model. The core of feminist analysis is that gender inequality is deeply inscribed in all economic and ecological thinking and action and is therefore a constitutive element of this development model. For the quest for alternative development paths and the “good life,” this means that overcoming masculine power structures is inseparable from the process of designing alternative economic practices and relations to nature.

Socio-ecological and economic transformation requires a dual strategy, namely that 1) people change themselves, their thinking and actions, and 2) structural and power relations in society must change. These strategies in turn cannot come about without large coalitions and networking of all social groups seeking ways to exit from the unidimensional development path. Once again, however, gender perspectives are usually sidelined in debates and initiatives concerned with economies of solidarity, critiques of capitalism and in ecological schools of thought, even though it is widely acknowledged that gender justice is an intrinsic indicator for new models of prosperity.

This is the big moment for feminist and gender democratic voices. The concrete utopias and plans for reshaping development and power relations in society designed from a care perspective are an asset when it comes to building opposing views or even countering the megatrend that subjects everything – humans, the social sphere and the biosphere – to the functional logic of the market. This manifests itself in the valorization and commercialization of all resources, in the shrinking of the public sphere and the commons as well as in the shifting of social and ecological risks, costs and burdens from the markets to individual responsibility or to nature.

As citizens, feminists should politicize ecological topics and highlight the emancipatory potential of the caring economy in order to break open the market’s logic of growth and

profit in economy and ecology. Instead of romanticizing the proximity of women to nature, let alone of glorifying the responsibility for care and the environment, it is necessary to dismantle gender stereotypes that stubbornly resist change.⁷⁰ The emancipatory potential of gender policy and the charm of the concrete utopias which are the result of a perspective of feminist economics and ecology consist of their ability to address external constraints and intrinsic blocks in predominant current thinking and actions. Feminist utopias and emancipatory gender policy provide the leverage for the necessary transformation of civilization and democracy at this point in history.

⁷⁰ MacGregor, Sherilyn (2010): Earthcare or Feminist Ecological Citizenship? In: *Femina Politica* 01/2010, 22-21