

Women of Europe



**Women and
sustainable development ...
shaping the quality of
our lives**



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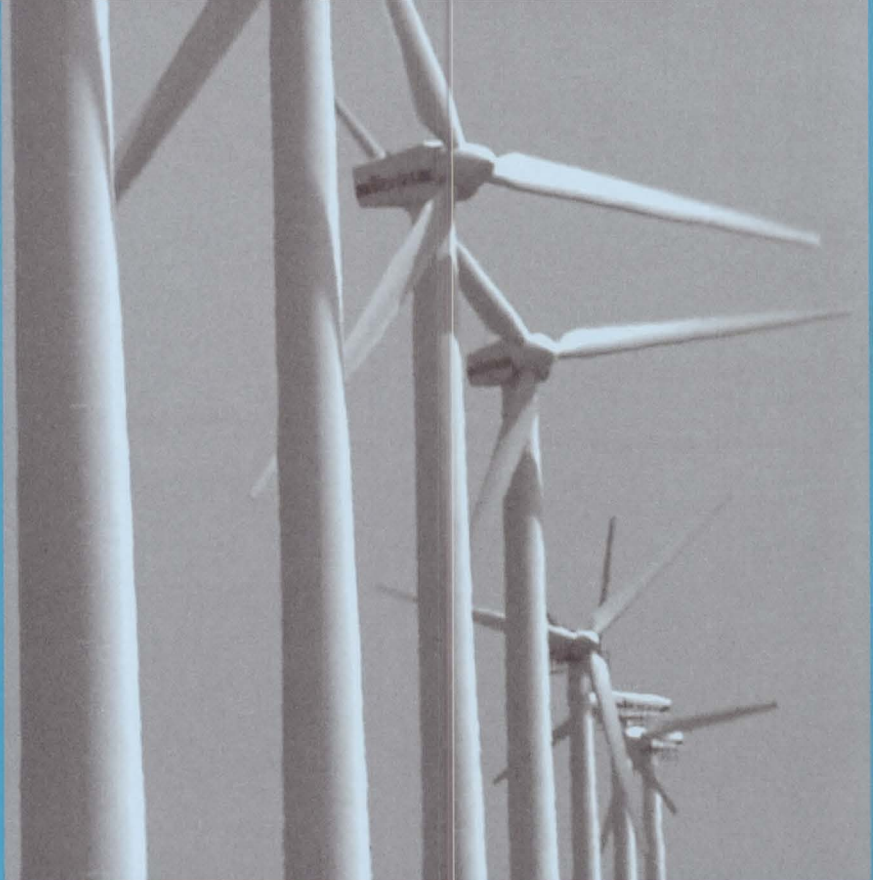


TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Foreword
3	Preface
4	From Global Village to Women's Planet by Monique Minaca
17	Women and the urban environment by Christine Booth
24	Sharing the responsibility for sustainable development by Thivsi Ekmetzoglou and Barbro Fransson
32	Women bringing a balance by Marijke van Schendelen
36	Useful addresses

FOREWORD

After several months' preparation, it has finally been possible to bring out this *Women of Europe Dossier*, thanks to the perseverance of a dedicated team who are convinced that women have an active voice in the choices which will affect the environmental future of our planet.

I should like to thank all the writers of the contributions – respected individuals with a full grasp of the issues, who, through their thinking, their studies and their analyses, both within the European Union and throughout the rest of the world, are playing a part in extending and strengthening individual and collective commitment, and in opening ways forward for generations with a greater awareness and greater respect for the environment.

I should also like to thank Lise-Anne Hondekyn, who got the project under way, and has followed it with much enthusiasm, almost to the end.

I trust you will gain much from reading this dossier, sometimes tightly-packed with detail, but always informative, and one which offers hope.

Ana Paula Laissy.

Ana Paula Laissy

Head of Section - Information for Women

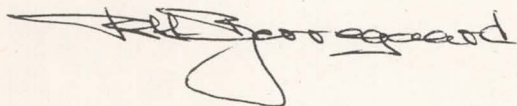
PREFACE

The importance of women in achieving sustainable development, and the contribution they have made so far, is often neglected. Women have a very distinct and important role to play in achieving sustainability – in both developing and developed countries. Not because they are innately more concerned about the environment than men, but because of the key role that they play in society – whether as educators, consumers, primary healthcare providers or managers of resources. At the European Commission, we are working to ensure that we better understand and reflect this role in our policies.

The need for increased recognition and participation of women in environmental policy-making and implementation is a fundamental part of Agenda 21, the sustainable development plan adopted at the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development in 1992. The commitment and genuine involvement of all social groups is critical to the effective implementation of the objectives, policies and mechanisms included in the Agenda 21 agreement.

I would like to see more women in decision-making positions, where they can better influence the sustainable management of our natural resources. It is clear that much remains to be done if we are to protect our environment now and for future generations. Recognising the role of women in sustainable development is an important step towards tackling issues such as poverty, overpopulation and gender inequality, that contribute to the degradation of the environment.

This dossier explores the relationship between women and the environment and shows what can be achieved through a greater awareness of their role. Women have a key part to play in achieving global sustainability and their voices must be heard. Only by integrating the economic, social and environmental components of sustainable development into a framework that respects and empowers all sectors of society, will it be possible to ensure a healthy development respecting the environment.



Ritt Bjerregaard

Ritt Bjerregaard

Member of the European
Commission - Responsible for
the Environment and Nuclear
Safety

From Global Village to Women's Planet

Monique Minaca

Association Groupe Cadre de Vie, Meudon (F)

An architect by training, Monique Minaca works in Paris as a university teacher, director of studies and research, and independent advisor on issues connected with developments in, and prospects for, jobs, techniques and lifestyles. She plays an active part in the association Groupe Cadre de Vie (created in Meudon in 1987,) the aim of which is to stimulate discussion, research and action regarding improving living conditions, and more specifically to ensure women's voices and objectives are heard at all levels of decision-making.

Introduction

A global issue

Having emerged at the end of the 60s, ecology was for a long time carried forward and sustained exclusively by civil society. This belated awareness of the impact of the economy on the deterioration in eco-systems, in short the breach of some of the planet's equilibria, eventually emerged in more clear-cut form in the 70s. Ecology claimed the interest of associations and scientists, led to the creation of environmental sciences, and lastly alerted nations, and made them become more aware and made them react. Departments or Ministries of the Environment were created.

The concept of sustainable development is subsequent to the concept of ecology. It emerged only at the time of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit, in 1992. Sustainable development involves a rethinking of the organisation of the economy, a

radical change in attitude for all of us, the adoption of new common provisions, and a sense of sharing responsibilities at world level. And yet this new concept still remains quite a minor preoccupation for governments, even though it concerns the future of the planet and the long term, in other words the inheritance of our children and generations to come, and therefore is a political objective of paramount importance.

The issues involved in sustainable development are distinctive in three ways: they do not stop at borders, they affect each person in his or her daily life, and they touch upon all economic fields, agriculture and industry alike, in an interdependence of cause and effect. Thus the problem of air quality or the hole in the ozone layer takes every continent into its scope and affects each individual in his or her everyday life. Once we have become aware of this, we become individually responsible for the choice of using or not using products or equipment which contain gases which harm the ozone layer. From this standpoint, the notion of the global village is a pertinent one, as it points to the interdependence in which we all find ourselves.

Another major realisation is that the global village is neither organised nor coherent in its objectives with regard to the alarm that has been so forcefully sounded on the dangers we risk on this planet, men and women alike, if we do not guard against them. Thus collectively, and also personally, we have the task, duty and responsibility to make good the damage caused to the planet during this

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Politics

A healthy planet for future generations

Corinne Lepage, former French environment minister and president of Cap 21, a think-tank on environmental and citizenship issues which she created, writes about her experiences and her work under the government led by Alain Juppé.

"There are many women ministers of the environment in the countries of the European Union. I have often wondered whether this is because this issue is considered less important politically and therefore encourages Prime Ministers who have to open their governments to women to give them this portfolio instead of others seen to be more important or if, on the other hand, women are more predisposed than men to become closely involved in sustainable development and the protection of the environment. The two approaches are not exclusive and I think women have undeniable resources to defend life in all its forms, to validate children's rights and therefore the rights of future generations and find concrete and immediate solutions to the many challenges facing us.

The fight against global warming and air pollution and the way which Angela Merkel, the German environment minister, conducted this fight in Germany and in Europe or the way I myself acted in France with the introduction of the law on air and the rational use of energy, illustrates this desire to link the immediate and the long term, concrete measures and principles. The French law of 30 December 1996 embraces a fundamental principle which I hold particularly dear but which I found very difficult to have voted through: the right to breathe air which is not harmful to health. This right illustrates both the application to air pollution of the general principle, which is not yet recognised, of a right to a healthy environment and the means given to the citizen to use this right to ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account. There are many concrete measures to be taken starting with a highly sophisticated organisation of control so that the pressure of public opinion on decision-makers is sufficient to make (or oblige?) them to act.

The French constitutional system limits the content of a law to general rules and refers the task of determining methods of control, standards and technical specifications to decrees on their application, which are slow to be introduced. However, I took two precautions: the possibility of introducing so-called alternating traffic measures for days when pollution is high and of ensuring that all movable and immovable goods, at all stages of production and consumption, including at the advertising stage, are targeted by the law so that both the restrictions imposed on producers and consumer habits can change. But concrete measures are not enough to change the logic of urban and transport policies. Subjecting urban development to the definition of different transport modes, reducing the space taken by cars in cities by means of intermodal transport systems and urban commuting plans, obliging the government, through pressure by citizens who are confronted with pollution in non-urban zones due to heavy motor traffic, to substitute rail for trucks, are the aims the law is pursuing through a series of provisions which fit together like jigsaw puzzle pieces.

Would a man have formulated the same legislation? Perhaps, but I am not sure that he would have followed the same strategy to get a very progressive text voted nor would he have faced the same obstacles to achieve this. Because there are fewer women in politics and we are less fond of power for the sake of it, we may appear more fragile. This is not at all the case. We are tenacious because of the deeply rooted conviction that we are fighting for what is most essential and vital. Like the sustainable development they convey, women are participating in an irresistible move towards another form of governance of the planet. It is therefore no accident that many of us have chosen to devote all or part of our lives to this struggle, which is that of life and therefore of intelligence."

devastating century, and we must now become parsimonious with and respectful of its resources, and protectors of its equilibria. Twentieth-century practices have led to an unprecedented waste of resources, as if they were inexhaustible and our planet infinite. Now we have to take the view that our resources are limited and our world is fragile and finite. This raft of constraints constitutes the major issues at stake in the 21st century.

Responsibilities are not yet shared

The most highly-developed countries have greater responsibilities than the so-called developing countries when it comes to the damage caused. Our quality of life in the future therefore depends on a new awareness of the phenomena of evolution, of an assessment of the risks and the policies that states will be capable of constructing together in terms of a reparative response. In principle the wealthy developed countries, such as those of the European Union, now in a post-industrial phase, should set an example, in other words, promote and support the best solutions. We do have to acknowledge that we have not yet achieved this. The issue of clean water is crucial for every population, and the climate changes currently under way to differing degrees are affecting everyone. By good fortune, a number of associations representing the civil society have on many occasions shown themselves more vigilant, more active and more responsible than their own governments, mainly where the risks incurred by nuclear energy are concerned. This is a major problem for Europeans.

In simple terms, the future of sustainable development and therefore that of the health of the planet and its inhabitants depends on our capacity act for shared long-term interests and against short-term private interests when these threaten the fundamental balances of the planet, destroying, exhausting or polluting vital and essential elements. Hitherto, the workings of the economy have taken little account of the long term, setting greater store by short-term interests.

The contribution of women

This major trend to plan the long term from the present time with a greater sense of responsibility, did not escape those women who mobilised forces at the Rio Conference, where they distributed the *Women's Action Agenda 21*⁽¹⁾ (see box on page 6 and list of references, page 16). This document was the best working document available at the time of that international conference; it pro-

vided an excellent report on the current situation, it identified and rejected the essential reasons for major disfunctionalities, way beyond the technical aspects discussed at Rio, and it developed solid and clear-cut proposals. It is still completely up-to-the-minute.

Role of NGOs

Women working for global sustainability

Susan Davis, Executive Director of WEDO, describes the activities of her organisation.

"The Women's Environment and Development Organization, popularly known as WEDO, brought its results-oriented advocacy skills into the United Nations in the early 1990s as governments were preparing the Earth Summit.

Some 1,500 women from 83 countries gathered in Miami in 1991 at the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet to formulate the *Women's Action Agenda for the 21st century*. WEDO moved much of this holistic agenda into official agreements through its highly effective Women's Caucus. From Rio through Rome, WEDO has facilitated a women's caucus, i.e. a common ground global advocacy process, at all the major UN summits in this decade and started the first caucus at the World Trade Organisation meeting.

Throughout this period, its network has grown to more than 20,000 activists from every region of the world. As part of a strategy to foster a culture of accountability, WEDO monitors government implementation of UN agreements, publishes periodic reports and organises a Women's Linkage Caucus at UN commission meetings.

WEDO now offers capacity-building services to women's groups seeking to form a caucus on a local, national or regional level. As part of its strategy to promote sustainable development and reduce poverty, WEDO co-chaired the Council of Advocates for the Microcredit Summit and serves on the World Bank's advisory group on gender.

To promote environmental health, WEDO carries out a global campaign on cancer prevention highlighting the destructive impact of the malignant development model on the health of women, communities and the planet."

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Women have rapidly perceived, understood and taken the measure of the close links between everyday-life attitudes and their consequences on the future of collective, vital and essential issues. In fact, water quality and food quality pick up on the concerns for which women take full responsibility for their families in daily life. The same goes for air quality and the consequences of the degradation in vital elements on the health of populations as they concern themselves to a great extent, almost exclusively, with children and older people who are more at risk from invasive toxic agents. Women, therefore, possess a form of direct and

constant expertise, and so were the first to draw the link between health and sustainable development. They clearly identified that a change of behaviour and attitude were therefore becoming unavoidable in all aspects of daily life. They understood the need to put pressure on decision-making bodies for it to be possible for these things to change. Women's function as educators within their families also gives them a crucial part to play in the necessary developments, and makes them the essential forerunners of social transformation.

The appearance of women ministers in charge of the environment gives new hope and shows that they are more forceful than their male counterparts. They dare to take on the powerful pro-nuclear lobbies and are capable of taking responsible decisions with regard to the future of populations. Take, for example, the two French women environment ministers, of differing political persuasions, Ms Corinne Lepage and Ms Dominique Voynet, the latter of whom quite recently took over from the former at the Ministry of the Environment and who have been working in the same direction - for the safety of populations and with exemplary responsibility. Likewise, women deputies and ministers in Sweden have passed laws to progressively reduce their country's military budgets

year on year, which allows financial resources to be redirected towards more constructive aims.

Two major trends have appeared at the same time during this century. When the concept of ecology was emerging, another concept was taking shape - that of feminism. Women have increasingly asserted themselves as partners in deciding the way forward for the world. Firstly, in order to improve their rights, with the result that almost everywhere in the world, over the course of this century, women have progressively won the right to vote. They now wish to take part in decision-making, to state and affirm their objectives, to promote a vision and an expertise of the world which is theirs alone by the fact, perhaps, of having been placed in a situation of the subservience of their roles within societies. Strengthened by their experiences, women today wish to make themselves heard, and to see a value placed upon their approach, and upon their experiences; they wish to develop and promote another philosophy for another organisation for the working of the world. Sustainable development cannot be ignored, and a number of women have already given it an integral place and made it a springboard for their discussions and also for their actions.

Women's Action Agenda 21 The Miami Conference, November 1991. Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet

The *Women's Action Agenda 21* was the outcome of two years' work carried out with minute attention to detail by an international collective, WEDO, which in 1991 organised the Miami Conference, the Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, with a view towards the preparations for the Earth Summit in Rio in June 1992. Nearly 1500 women from all continents and 83 countries were present at that conference. They came from agencies of the United Nations, militant organisations on the environment or on women's rights, but it included, too, grassroots groups, university lecturers, journalists, members of foundations, etc. In short, a very broad spectrum of women, very much aware of the problems, and highly motivated.

During the Miami Conference, women from all over the world took stock and issued a precise and detailed diagnostic appraisal of current damage to the planet in which populations are the victims, by drawing on their own accounts of concrete experiences in their daily lives and in the light of their inter-linked studies. They condemned the consequences of radioactivity on the bodies of women in the Marshall Islands who gave birth to grossly-deformed babies; with numerous



examples, they showed up the heedlessness of industrial groups which take no account of their harmful wastes and pollute land and water which then become unsuitable for producing healthy food. They enumerated many cases where companies in industrialised countries are criminally negligent through greed for profit and are selling toxic products without any precautions or guidance as to their use. Women have shown that children were the first to suffer and be poisoned by poor food and polluted air, and became prone to many diseases and disabilities caused by malnutrition, the lack of elementary hygiene or unhealthy accommodation. They condemned the many carcinogenic products resulting from the current system of production. They also highlighted the fact that ten million children can be saved from famine with merely the cost of five modern bombers, and emphasised the cynicism of states which can never find the money to combat poverty, but which still can find the resources with which to arm themselves to the teeth.⁽²⁾

Women's Action Agenda 21 - action programme

Women's Action Agenda 21 consists of some twenty pages; it is the very clearly-affirmed statement of a sharpened and well-informed political conscience. It contains the philosophy and the framework for what was subsequently to be used by women as a basis in other international conferences, in order to unite their energies and their thinking around unifying and empowering themes - thinking for future concerted action by women. This document is at one and the same time a lucid statement and a very constructive, responsible and innovative plan for society. It contains a foreword "For a healthy planet" and the following sections:

- Actions, democratic rights, diversity and solidarity;
- Ecological code of ethics and responsibility;
- Women, the war economy and the environment;
- Debt and trade;
- Women, poverty, rights to land, food security and credit;
- Women's rights, policies for population and health;
- Biotechnology and bio-diversity;
- Nuclear energy and alternative energy;
- Science and technology transfer;
- Women's consumer power;
- Information and education;

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Role of NGOs

Gender, humanity, environment and the 21st century

Angela Mawle describes her role in founding Gender 21, a UK non-governmental organisation (NGO) working towards a holistic, harmonious and humane form of sustainable development.

"Gender 21 was born out of the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995. I had been active throughout the Beijing preparatory conferences and in Beijing itself working with women from across the world to ensure that the Platform for Action and particularly Section K (Women and the Environment) retained and developed the commitments signed up to in *Agenda 21* by the world's governments at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. I was determined that the energy and creativity I experienced amongst the women of the world should be carried forward to inform and empower the 21st century.

Back in the UK, I networked with key women and established Gender 21 at the UNED (United Nations Environment and Development) offices in the UK. The organisation is based on the following principles:

- Working with the UN process to take forward the obligations undertaken by the world's governments in respect of women's role in achieving sustainable development.
- Working with national and local government to implement *Agenda 21* and *Local Agenda 21*, particularly in the promotion of the advancement of women's participation in the governmental processes and community development.
- Working with individuals, communities, business and industry to generate a commitment to holistic principles and sustainable practices of production and consumption.
- Identifying connecting groups of women actively engaged in working towards sustainable communities and developing awareness and understanding of the *Local Agenda 21* process and how this process can be used as a powerful medium for achieving environmental and social change.

Since June 1996, a major roundtable on women and sustainable development bringing together over 300 women's groups, was organised and managed by Gender 21, to work on a series of papers with which to lobby the UNGASS (United Nations General Assembly Special Session) Earth Summit II in June 1997. The final document focused on Women and Poverty, Women and *Local Agenda 21* and Women and the Planning Process and was used effectively to lobby politicians and interest groups in the run-up to UNGASS.

Gender 21 also undertook a national survey aimed at identifying the level of awareness that UK women have of *Local Agenda 21*. On the basis of this survey, a major conference is planned on World Environment Day in June 1998 focusing on women and sustainable development. Also planned is a national pilot project aimed at practically involving women's networks in developing, enhancing and growing the nation's *Local Agenda 21*."



Photo from "The Courier" No 159, September - October 1996

Development

Aid needed to transform women's lives

Eryl Margaret McNally, a Member of the European Parliament for Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes (UK), writes about the problems facing women in developing countries because of environmental and energy constraints. Ms McNally currently sits on the Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy.

"Women in developing countries don't usually have the time to attend demonstrations or the facilities to lobby politicians. Yet environmental problems are of far greater significance to them than to women elsewhere. Clean water, electricity, warmth, transport – all are there for the taking in the rich world, with a minimum of effort. Legislation and monitoring, although resisted by industry, nevertheless give reasonable protection against pollution. In the developing world, women's lives in particular are restricted and damaged because of environmental constraints.

Insufficient and poor quality water is a killer. The high time and energy costs of fetching water, which falls overwhelmingly on women, make it very difficult to guarantee hygiene standards, with the consequential risk of disease. Solar-powered water pumps are a simple way to cut down on distance and to obtain purer water. Most developing countries are not short of sunshine. This photovoltaic technology can provide access to fridges for vaccines, television for information and education, and lighting.

By far the most important energy source in the developing world is biomass, in the form of firewood or dung. Over 90% of total energy consumption in the poorest countries is in the household sector. Women are the main providers, again travelling long distances, especially as deforestation depletes the supply of wood. Without fuel, water cannot be boiled and cooked food is unavailable. Severe respiratory problems and eye infections are a frequent consequence of inefficient stoves or indoor burning with inadequate ventilation. Aid spent on efficient stoves could bring immediate benefits for women.

Sustainable development does not mean withholding basic requirements from women whose potential is currently stunted by drudgery. Technologies already exist which could transform their lives but which do not reach them because women are rarely able to influence the direction of funding. Huge power plants are usually inappropriate, built to make money for industries in the rich world, not to meet the needs of those on whom so much depends – women in the developing world."

- Recommendations to the United Nations;
- Recommendations to the UN⁽³⁾ conference on the environment and development.

The preamble rejects the predominant economic model provided by the northern countries and condemns the current world order, which is mainly responsible for the unfortunate deterioration of the planet and the perpetuation of inequalities and poverty. It calls for a radical transformation of the world and a reorientation towards peace and a recognition of all populations in order to construct the 21st century. Subsequently, the various sections describe the current context, and show the links and interconnections and points of contact which exist between ecological deterioration and living conditions, with reference to:

- inequalities in access to resources and wealth;
- the war economy and armed conflicts;
- the lack of moral and spiritual values amongst decision-makers, and of a sense of responsibility vis-à-vis future generations.

In particular, the document insists on the need for an equal sharing of power between women and men, at all stages and for all forms of decision-making, and in particular, in the section of recommendations to the UN, within the UN itself. The women insist on the reorientation of the priority aims for funding

and for UN programmes so that women may at last benefit from them as closely as possible to everyday life, and mainly in the direction of the poorest, and for UNIFEM, whose budget should with all legitimacy be considerably increased, as it is the collecting and redistributing body designated by the UN. Furthermore, the text urges all UN agencies to undertake to integrate women's viewpoints at all levels and into all programmes and strategies. Lastly, *Women's Action Agenda 21* proposes

a reallocation of military budgets to civilian projects and in particular to development and environmental protection programmes.

Concepts

Social ecology...

Although the concept of social ecology was not quoted in the text, *Women's Action Agenda 21* contains within its philosophy the beginnings of what might give flesh to this concept. In fact, after detecting what it is that creates the planet's disorders, societies' disfunctionalities and causes bad blood between people, this document proposes that we radically rethink forms of organisation to make them healthier. In short, it is a question of deconstructing unsatisfactory existing states of affairs to reconstruct them differently for the benefit of populations and to find personal transformation on the way.

The underlying question is what purpose current development serves, and what purpose should future development serve. A broad outline for work is therefore drawn, and women have been following it for a long time already: we need to make every effort to create a development and a world organisation which neither dominates nor excludes, which is no longer implemented to the detriment of populations, nor in a divisive and violent form, but inclusively, with a view to being able to develop the potential of all, **men and women alike**. The organisation of the various sections of *Women's Action Agenda 21* and the interrelationships which are brought to light within the body of the document show a genuine clarity of vision on the part of women.

... and eco-feminism

From this standpoint of social ecology, women are on the way to becoming, for posterity, a subject within an era. We might note that in the event, the subject also creates the theory, and women, drawing on their experience, are advancing and putting forward proposals, are creators of social evolution, and are the driving force for a new collective awareness. Societies are in an ongoing process of evolution for which women are becoming the main driving force, overturning and breaking habits, archaic practice and stereotypes. Women are increasingly taking a higher and clearer profile and their impact is becoming reactive. Within this movement, women are visibly gaining autonomy and strength. They are on the way to progressively recreating another balance within power systems and promoting other forceful ideas.

The major UN conferences

The challenges of the 21st century through the UN world conferences

The UN has markedly increased the number and frequency of its international conferences during the past decade as this century draws to a close, as if to bring home urgent priorities to us. To recapitulate, we might mention the Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, the Population and Development Conference in Cairo in 1994, the Copenhagen Social Summit in 1995, the Fourth Women's Conference in Beijing in September 1995, the Second Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II, in Istanbul in June 1996, and on hunger in Rome in September 1996, but also a Summit on Microcredit in New York in February 1997, the aim of which was the fight against hunger and poverty. This was a vigorous warning on the serious problems with which we are faced, and to which our governments have a duty to respond, at the risk of collective disaster, since at the turn of the century our planet is in dire straits, a prey to every ill.

Different plans of action have been outlined at these many international conferences, but everything remains to be done to genuinely implement them, especially where sustainable development is concerned. The civil society expects results, since everywhere in the world, people are worried about their children's future and health.

Partners or opponents? Women's action in the civil society

The UN conferences and their follow-up affect governments first and foremost, but NGO Forums⁶⁰ are organised parallel to the sessions of the UN's international conferences. They have consistently increased in importance and dynamism, and the number of those attending has gone up. Ever-better organised, they are being heard and growing attention is being paid by governments and the UN's international bodies alike. NGOs are now represented at the UN. This means that the civil society is playing a fundamental role in issuing warnings and permanently watching over major current problems, which are too often overlooked by governments or deliberately hidden from view.

The civil society also has the task of ensuring that governments put action plans into effect, or implement the commitments they have signed at the time of these conferences with full responsibility towards their populations. NGOs bring pressure to bear on governments. Another major fact to underline is that women are actively involved in greater numbers and appear increasingly organised and effective. They even succeed in having an impact on international official decisions and those of

government policy. The issues surrounding sustainable development are one example.

Rio de Janeiro

The Earth Summit, June 1992

At the time, this UN Conference represented the greatest assembly in the world of heads of state, an unprecedented degree of involvement by governments. For the first time, a clear and constant message about the deterioration of the planet was passed on and acknowledged by all the governments attending. The work of this conference culminated in the Final Declaration of Rio and in outcomes of three types:

- the need for each government to take sustainable development into account through an appropriate policy, and the drawing up of an *Agenda 21*;
- the signing of a convention on the climate;
- the signing of a convention on bio-diversity.

However, a clear-cut timetable was lacking for implementing these actions, as were the necessary financial resources to guarantee at least the real implementation and the monitoring of these various undertakings. Although the new awareness was real, the provisions set aside for achieving these firm objectives highlighted a great deal of reluctance on the part of governments, and a luke-warm approach to getting things done, despite the urgency of the planet's general situation.

The role of the Global Forum and women's action

In tandem with this United Nations Conference, a Global Forum was held, bringing together some 15,000 people, mostly NGO representatives, which drew up numerous papers on major themes not touched on by UNCED such as demographics, militarism, poverty, world hunger, trade and debt for poor countries, racism, etc. Most of these themes were carried forward by women who in this way promoted a whole new approach to the general issues of sustainable development, and highlighted other factors and mechanisms for responsible action. They also succeeded in bringing into perspective and clearly demonstrating both the main damage and also the real perpetrators of disorders and the principal victims.

This Forum did indeed show that civil society was keeping a vigilant watch on the role of governments and had the capacity to point up their shortcomings, and that women were acting in this direction.

Women had therefore organised to be highly conspicuous and active. They had the largest tent at the Global Forum: *Women's Planet*. There, they put on events, workshops, and above all, daily *caucuses* to analyse accurately the work of drawing up the official papers, in order to be able to act. Thus they

succeeded, by bringing pressure to bear on all the working parties, to make themselves a presence that could not be ignored, and to secure the inclusion in the official *Agenda 21*, signed by governments, of a short chapter no 24 (only six pages out of nine hundred) dedicated to women, the aim of which was for governments to support research and initiatives for women in order to prepare for the forthcoming Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. That was a first victory.

In closing the sessions at Rio, the *Declaration for Women of the Final Forum* focused on structural adjustment policies (SAPs). They showed that these policies were highly destructive of the living conditions of the world's poorest, and in particular for women. But the main women's contribution to the Rio Conference was the distribution of a very strong, constructive and innovative document *Women's Action Agenda 21* (see page 7).

The Super-Coalition of Women

At the conclusion of the Rio Global Forum, the women agreed to meet again at forthcoming UN conferences. At that time, the beginning of an international women's network was sketched out in the continuation of the work which got under way since the Miami Conference. This network was subsequently consolidated during various conferences. In fact, the women have been present at all the conferences, they have met regularly and their action has become increasingly visible. This network is now known as the *Super-Coalition of Women*.

The *Super-Coalition of Women* was set up both to prepare for international conferences, link together women's NGOs and to focus energies, develop strategies, ensure follow-up to conferences, keep a constant watch on the state of progress and ground lost by women in the area of Human Settlements.

Giving greater visibility to women and their aims

At the time of the Rio Conference, the active involvement of women had a strong and mathematical orientation: as women accounted for over 50% of the population, they ought to avail of at least 50% of the power, resources and funding. This was the first time that such a claim had been so clearly expressed and argued for at an international conference. Furthermore, women were developing their own proposals, staking claims and showing how they envisaged responsibility and a new way for the world to work, and were even taking the risk of acting as guarantors for the equilibrium of the planet, and the care to be taken with it to pre-

serve its essential features for the benefit of future generations. Objectively, it had to be acknowledged that women were all the more credible in this respect as they could not be held responsible for the current lack of equilibrium and disfunctionalities of the planet since they had never been associated with decision-making. QED[®].



Photo from "Le Courrier de l'Unesco" - September 1995

Beijing

Fourth Conference on Women, September 1995

At subsequent conferences, the active involvement of women was further accentuated and strengthened. Since the Conference on Development and Population in Cairo in 1994, and mainly the Fourth Conference on Women, "Peace, Equality and Development" in Beijing in September 1995, new strategies were implemented to bring progressive change to the situation of women.

The Beijing Conference at last officially recognised the rights of women as human rights. This Conference was a turning-point for all women, as they were acknowledged as a genuine force at work, and they clearly identified the whole range of obstacles to be overcome in becoming citizens with full rights throughout the world. New tools and concepts were put in place.

New tools and concepts: a differentiated approach based on gender and "mainstreaming"

At the time of the Beijing Conference, UN departments linked with women and NGOs changed the orientation of their work, sharpened up their arguments, and used new concepts. The concerns of a new approach, differentiated according to gender, were uppermost. In the jargon, "gender and development" (GAD) replaced the old term "women in development" (WID). This is very important, and the fundamentalists who were so furiously opposed to the advancement of women at the Cairo and Beijing Conferences were not mistaken about it. They bitterly fought against this new concept which overturned outmoded ways

and which had within its scope a thoroughgoing involvement of and consideration for women in all areas. We should also note that at Beijing they tried to transform equality into equity, and repeated their rearguard action at Habitat II in Istanbul, but women, ever-vigilant, kept up pressure on governments not to accept that modification in any circumstances.

Europeans brought in the concept of "mainstreaming", now taken up and incorporated by international NGOs. This was done only after the Habitat II Conference. Involving women systematically in each programme was an excellent way of making them highly visible and impossible to ignore. This was a strategic phase.

Numerous experiences of empowerment were organised so that women developed, became aware of their worth, and felt sure of themselves.

The Huairou Commission: a link between conferences

During the Beijing Conference, action of various kinds was taken to establish a connecting and monitoring link between these conferences. A special issue of the official publication of the UN on Human Settlements, *Countdown to Istanbul*¹⁰ was published to provide women who had attended Beijing with information about the importance of the forthcoming Habitat II Conference and to urge them to attend in large numbers.

The main theme of the special issue was taking on board the gender-related approach in every field of Human Settlements. At Huairou, where 35,000 women from all over the world had been actively involved, the *Super-Coalition of Women* had organised a daily caucus at the NGO forum. On 5 September, an official round table chaired by the Secretary General of the United Nations Habitat II, Mr Wally N'Dow, met women's representatives of the UN and the women's NGOs from every continent, motivated by the theme *men and women on route from Beijing to Istanbul*. The Huairou Commission came into existence that day.

The Huairou Commission (the name of the Chinese town where the NGO Forum was held) is an international commission of UN experts to work and prepare papers and follow-up for conferences. This commission was given official recognition at Istanbul, and now had to work to prepare for the future, above all maintaining close informative links and to ensuring that the *Women's Action Agendas* were given cohesive shape in the various countries, as was follow-up to Beijing, and more specifically the agendas for Habitat II. This commission of experts has worked in close collaboration with the *Super-Coalition of Women*.

Istanbul

Habitat II, "City Summit", June 1996

The first Habitat Conference took place in Vancouver in 1976, and introduced the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS). The aim of Habitat II was the development of Human Settlements in a world that was becoming urbanised and improving its living conditions. The underlying finding was that in the year 2000 half of the world's inhabitants will live in cities, and that 25 years later, the figure will be 75%. Cities are already turning out to be overcrowded with a deteriorating environment, they have serious social problems, major under-employment, and show a degree of mediocrity of housing, infrastructure and services. It is clear that the mix of problems is explosive. The aim is to make cities in the future healthier, safer, more equitable and sustainable. It is a huge challenge for the 21st century.

Habitat II turned out to be the most important of the conferences because it drew in all of the problems of the preceding conferences. Habitat II was greatly innovative in associating the whole range of players in the official proceedings, and involving them alongside governments. They included NGOs, local authorities, community associations, academics and companies which were all to become partners and to adhere to the major objectives, amongst which sustainable development was of paramount importance, as also was the involvement of local populations in decision-making in urban areas, the fight against poverty and the right to healthy housing.

At the conclusion of the official proceedings of the conference, the Istanbul Declaration was issued and the right to housing was won after a bitter battle but with one qualification: this right was not legal-

Role of NGOs Dutch plan for global sustainability

Maria Buitenkamp, leader of the Sustainable Development Team at the Milieudefensie (Friends of the Earth, the Netherlands), describes the Dutch action plan for sustainable development which was developed by her organisation and adopted by governments and NGOs worldwide.

"The Sustainable Development Team at Milieudefensie works at local, national, European and international level to promote sustainable development and to develop new approaches for making sustainability concrete and applicable.

In 1992, Friends of the Earth (FOE) Netherlands presented its 'Action Plan Sustainable Netherlands' as a concrete case for the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio. I coordinated the development of this report, which describes what production and consumption could look like in the Netherlands if that country took global sustainability as a pre-condition. The basis of this approach is the environmental space (or ecospace) concept, which seeks to define sustainable resource use. This means that all calculations and policy proposals are based on the assumption that resources (energy, land, non-renewable materials and water) are shared fairly between people all over the world.

The report received worldwide attention and FOE International started working with it. In Europe, some 30 national organisations joined the "Campaign for Sustainable Development in Europe," also coordinated by us.

In most European countries the environmental space approach is being further developed and applied to specific economic sectors, to government policies, to *Local Agenda 21* work or to consumers. An inspiring example can be found in Denmark where government and parliament adopted the "ecospace concept" as the basis for environmental and energy policies."

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ly enforceable. The involvement of inhabitants in decision-making was adopted as an imperative, and cities and local entities were recognised and were upheld as the acknowledged seats of decision-making in urban matters. Habitat II was also innovative in taking women into account officially, although at the outset in 1994, at the time of the preparatory work for the conference, they had been totally forgotten.

As a result of constant pressure and vigilance on the part of the *Super-Coalition of Women*, in close collaboration with UN departments with responsibilities for women, the official papers¹⁰ were progressively modified to the point where there were addenda to the already-printed brochures (unprecedented at the UN) so that:

- the conference's national preparatory committees were made up of men and women;
- assessments of the effectiveness of existing policies and the strategies of National Plans of Action should take into account the distinctive responsibilities and roles of men and women and gender differences in access to resources;
- that women were no longer classified with at-risk groups (but in actual equality with men).

The official information-pack for Habitat II, distributed to the 22,000 people attending the conference and the NGO Forums at Istanbul, included eight mini-packs, one of which concerned women, *Women, housing and the community*¹¹. This was a striking victory of their active involvement. For further information, the contribution of Europe was acknowledged in the *European Charter for Women in the City*¹² and was detailed in this official document, after having been the subject of four presentation workshops at the time of the last preparatory session for Habitat II in New York, in February 1996, at the request of the *Super-Coalition of Women*.

Developing strategies so that women are impossible to ignore, ever-present and active

At the Habitat II Conference, the *Super-Coalition of Women* had developed a precise strategy already tried and tested during all the preparatory sessions for Habitat II, and also at the various international conferences from Rio on. It consisted of occupying the terrain, holding daily caucuses, and taking a precise position on all the themes of the conference, watching vigilantly over the drawing-up of official papers, line by line, word by word, in order to advance the issues affecting women and their interests, bringing pressure to bear on the various governments in this direction, backed up by arguments.

At Habitat II in Istanbul, the vitality of the women, their organisation, the pressure they were able to bring to bear at every point in order to avoid losing ground and promoting advances were

remarked on by all those attending and the official delegations, to the point where some were saying that "this conference is only for women". But 50% of the population deserves unrelenting work, all the more so as the opponents of the advancement of the rights of women, who were already out in strength at the Cairo Conference, then at the Beijing Conference, redoubled their efforts either to try to cut back on what had been achieved at Cairo, or what had been won in Beijing by women.

This struggle was so fierce that the proceedings of the official Habitat II Conference had to be extended specifically on account of these hold-ups. The most advanced nations for women's rights had to threaten to withhold the resources for the follow-up to the Conference and the Plan of Action, in order to successfully bring these proceedings to a close. It was a form of horse-trading. The points at issue were the women's rights to housing, inheritance, land and credit, and, of course all the fundamental human rights, so fiercely fought for at Beijing, and above all the struggle against poverty, 80% of the victims of which worldwide are women.

At the conclusion of Habitat II, a line of action was taken by the *Super-Coalition* for a *Global Plan of Action* for women. Currently, work by the network concerns women's visibility, the development of best practice, known as "our practice", the communication and organisation of action, including the aim of creating Huairou Commissions at national level for ensuring a firm basis for the follow-up of the Habitat II Plan of Action, in particular where the gender approach is concerned.

At Habitat II, this concept made a remarkable breakthrough; it was put forward everywhere as a factor which could not be ignored. So much so that international texts are now very often in advance of actual practice in the countries. It must indeed be acknowledged that in the fields of regional and town planning and environmental sciences, some professionals and researchers do not even know what is being talked about by gender, and have never bothered with it.

Networks and projects

The international WOMEN AND CITIES network¹³

At Habitat II in Istanbul, NGOs and the cities worked together and set up the project for the International Network for Women and Cities. It was supported by the *Super-Coalition of Women*. To go further in this direction and take things forward, a working programme called URBANA¹⁴ is under way. Its aim is to build a dynamic with women in city neighbourhoods in the European Union with a view to improving the quality of life by acting on the principles of the *European Charter for Women in the City* as a working basis, and in particular on the five major themes in which concerns about gender

and sustainable development are at the heart of the document. We might note that here we have a rigorous example of "mainstreaming" and support for active development.

The ANTIGONE POLIS project ⁽¹²⁾

This project aims to create cities within a gender perspective when a city is partially or wholly destroyed by a natural disaster, or by war. It is then necessary to rethink the future city, and make it evolve positively vis-à-vis the population, i.e. women. This project also came into existence in Istanbul in June 1996, at the time of Habitat II.

The GENDER POLIS project ⁽¹³⁾

The project came into existence in Istanbul on 9 June 1996, at the time of Habitat II (9 June was officially declared World Cities Day by the UN). The idea is to organise on that date, at intervals to be determined, a world meeting to take stock of attempts that have been made to make cities "gender-friendly" and to exchange best practice.

International Action The immediate involvement of women in sustainable development

Women have spontaneously undertaken outstanding action for sustainable development well before the concern sparked by international conferences and before the term existed. They took early action and became involved on every continent, often in the poorest and most inaccessible places in the world.

Kenya

A group of women from Kenya set up the *Green Belt Movement*. Twenty years ago, just seven of them began planting trees. The group expanded, became organised, set up nurseries which gradually grew in number, and these women from the farming community have now, in 1997, planted 20 million trees. The women who plant and tend to these trees are paid Kenyan \$4. Men ask, "Why are you paying women for work that they are doing for themselves?" They reply, "Why are you paying forest rangers who are doing the same work as us?" But today the success of these women is disturbing the government, which would like to arrest the leaders because they are politically involved. The women have replied that they were not planting "for Wangari Mathari (the initiator of the project) but for themselves and future generations".

Nepal

Likewise in Nepal, women are replanting trees on a large scale against the erosion of the slopes of the Himalayas with their own resources and without any aid.

India

In the villages in the state of Uttar Pradesh, almost 30 years ago now, women set up the *Chipko*

Movement. They are combating deforestation projects, which take no account of the lives of local inhabitants and which ruin them financially. Since the 70s, the Chipko Movement has run eco-development camps in order to train peasants for the community upkeep of forests. This is how the country's largest reforestation project came about, with the result that the government has subsidised these camps and allocated funds to the non-governmental organisations involved. The Chipko women have also opposed speculative and industrial prawn farming in the Indian mangroves, which makes the water more saline, which would destroy a very fragile natural environment. Writer Vandana Shiva condemned the action of the pharmaceutical multinationals which are stealing their knowledge of the properties of the Nem tree, and also the fact that another very well-known food product multinational, based in Switzerland, has, without prior agreement, patented one of their ancestral recipes, "Pollao".

Senegal

In 1987, women set up the Popenguine nature reserve over 1009 hectares, 45 km to the south of Dakar. *The Popenguine women's group for the protection of nature* at that time brought together 129 women householders. They created a 6-metre-wide fire break on a grid pattern over a length of 12 km, and planted a protective hedge. For the first four years they possessed only one spade, one pick, two watering cans, a wheelbarrow and 25 m of hose, except that water was 1.5 km away. Then a nursery for native species was set up, and thousands of trees were reintroduced. Without financial resources, they have successfully met their challenge, since wildlife has gradually re-established itself. Today, they are assisted by a foundation, they have set up women's group in each village (the collective numbers 1173 women). They look after 100 km² of terrain which affects over 35,000 people. They have taken other initiatives. For instance, they have devised a comprehensive development aimed

Role of NGOs

Women working at grassroots level

Jennifer Wann describes the activities of the Irish Women's Environmental Network and how it seeks to influence women as consumers.

"The Irish Women's Environmental Network (IWEN) is a registered charity which aims to encourage women to live a sustainable lifestyle and work for the betterment of our environment. Founded in 1991, IWEN was born of a recognition that for the larger part, women are still the major consumers in our society and therefore can have a powerful role to play in purchasing decisions favouring the environment. Women also tend to be far-sighted so they can see the benefit for the future in actions taken now to protect our environment.

The Network provides information on environmental issues and gives talks to different groups and associations. Our particular areas of concern are consumerism and its effects on our environment and health, sanitary products and nappies, incineration and radiation (including nuclear power plants) excess packaging and genetically modified foodstuffs. For example, in 1997, we supported the work of a group called Genetic Concern which is raising awareness about the problems of genetically modified foodstuffs and the lack of labelling for such products.

In practical terms, IWEN organises the collection of recyclables twice a month on the north side of Dublin city in conjunction with a recyclables collection company called Kerbside. We also have an information pack which includes Environmental Action Leaflets with information on different ways to "green" the home and promoting some of the "greener" ways things were done in the past and IWEN publishes a bi-monthly newsletter. We have a stand at the Dublin Food Co-Op's market every Saturday at which we sell recycled paper products.

A representative of our organisation attended the major UN Conferences in Rio, Beijing and Istanbul and representatives of our organisation are members of the Irish Environmental Protection Agency Advisory Council and on the National Women's Council of Ireland."

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at the whole of the community and introduced a fuel distribution service to control wood-gathering. They put household waste to good use by making compost to increase market gardening production. They have introduced cereal banks and savings banks and have promoted improvements in villages.

Brazil

In Santo André, on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, women have set up an ecological "awareness" group⁽¹⁴⁾ to combat air pollution caused by 11 neighbouring factories belonging to multinationals. After a long consciousness-raising initiative, they succeeded in influencing opinion by putting out radio and even local television broadcasts to make the population aware. This brought pressure to bear on the local authorities and industrialists compelling them to make anti-pollution investments to be made, and to make pollution subject to monitoring measures. Along with other ecological associations in the region, they subsequently undertook a broader initiative and compelled other multinationals, which were polluting river water, to respect the environment. At the same time, they continued to inform the population about the risks of pollution and the need to draw up statement of ethics between local people and industries within a very broad vision, which was not only regional but also global in spirit.

Germany

At a conference Women in Science and Technology in 1990, a group of women initiated an alternative energy project. First of all they created an open information network, then visited a number of projects in Europe – these trips were open to students – and finally chose to set up a wind farm. This is how the *Energy and Women Co-operative* was set up in 1992 in Hamburg. The women undertook to find funding, designed and built a technically and aesthetically faultless and environmentally-friendly wind farm, which has been running at Hemme since 1994 and produces 450 kW. But the most positive effect is that they have introduced a new dynamic, demonstrated women's professional skills and set an example. Other projects are under consideration. Although it is impossible to talk about the whole range of projects that have been initiated and implemented by women, we might mention in closing that in the Scandinavian countries, women have been very vigilant. They have condemned poor building materials which are harmful to health, such as certain plastics and wood compounds, in which the glues emit toxic substances over the long term.

European Union

Where does Europe stand?

On the subject of sustainable development, the European Union, now made up of fifteen Member

States, presents a varied situation, but it has a number of strong achievements, as, by good fortune, Europeans have learned how to build peace among themselves, and so offer a wide range of cultures and limitless resources of inventiveness. They enjoy food security and self-sufficiency, they are already in overproduction and are even setting land aside. Demographic growth is satisfactory overall in renewing the population. These are post-industrial, developed countries. The Member States of the Union function as democracies.

Efforts undertaken to encourage the growing involvement of women – even equalling that of men – in political and civic life can only be a positive factor in social advancement, and one wholly beneficial to sustainable development in releasing creative potential. This is a particularly favourable general situation. It remains to be seen whether there genuinely is a differentiated approach by gender, as, to be realistic, the main decision-makers are not yet sufficiently receptive to apply this approach even though attempts are being made to introduce the principle of gender mainstreaming in all European Union programmes. And as far as sustainable development is concerned, political impetus is also a little slack.

However, most of the countries of the European Union have exhausted their main resources of fossil energy – gas and coal. Deeper reserves and sources of water are often polluted by pesticides and nitrates. Again, chemical waste is omnipresent. But the main problem remains that of military and civilian nuclear energy and its risks. We should, however, draw lessons from the sad experience of Chernobyl, as the incidence of cancer is growing among European populations. The problems of nuclear waste left for future generations to inherit, and remaining toxic for centuries, are the most serious.

Europe, despite some laudable efforts, has not yet adopted a firm and effective common policy which really takes sustainable development into account. We will venture that at forthcoming conferences, in particular the Kyoto Conference of December 1997 concerning undertakings made at Rio in keeping with the Convention on Climate, European positions will have moved forward. Furthermore, each nation, depending on commitments made in Rio has, over the last five years, put forward its *Agenda 21*, but some countries are more dutiful than others. The first assessment, made at Habitat II in 1996, showed that delays have set in.

Some European Union countries show notable contradictions; for example, they have passed strict internal laws, but allow their most dangerous waste to be exported to other countries, often the poorest on the planet.

However, within the Union, laws are gradually becoming uniform, beginning to bite and be implemented – for example, the directives on the

treatment of waste, which, by 2002 should resolve most of the problems of pollution, selective sorting and waste. But the production of CO₂ requires greater responsibility from the fifteen countries of the Union as the great numbers of motor vehicles of obsolete design continue unchecked. In principle the European Union is committed to reduce by 15% the emissions of a variety of gases (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) between now and 2010 and there is the Auto-Oil joint programme. This programme affects the reduction of gas emissions by motor vehicles and includes a programme on the electric car or combustion cells. But there is a need to accelerate the search for shared solutions. And it should be acknowledged that on the major points of a reorientation in development, nothing has really changed.

Sustainable development - an untapped source of employment

Sustainable development constitutes an untapped reservoir of work. People talk about 145,000 jobs between here and 2002, but these jobs have not yet assumed sufficient importance to be funded. And let us be quite lucid and clear: the main task of the 21st century will be to avoid continuing polluting, and to make good the many kinds of degradation produced by the 20th century. Future generations will have to discover the capacity to survive in good health despite the fact that life's vital elements will be in poor condition and scarce. They will as a matter of necessity have to find other forms of substitute energy, develop multiple resources from the bio-mass, show a new ingenuity in drawing upon existing resources, and discover new forms of transport in order to avoid CO₂ emissions, etc. In short, the first generation after the turn of the century will have to become wise in order to make up for the mistakes of the madness of the three preceding generations.

Certainly, there is room for the creation of new jobs in forest management and the improvement of open spaces, urban or rural. The same goes for the upkeep of canal banks and waterways, and coastlines, too. The cleaning from beaches of the many types of waste thrown up by the sea will, in fact, provide jobs for many people over a long period, so polluted are the seas and oceans! Investment must be made in these jobs, but our economies are not yet ready for this and governments are showing little political will. And yet human ingenuity knows no bounds, and is impressive in its capacity to adapt. But it is perhaps time, too, to learn from our recent mistakes.

Certainly, women will provide an impetus to the trend towards a new awareness in Europe as they have everywhere in the world. They have already shown that, from the Earth Summit in 1992 to the Cities Summit in 1996, they have been able together to build a lucid and positive *Women's Action Agenda 21*, and since then have become organised to act forcefully. They have been able to link up as

networks at world level in order to monitor the implementation of governments' *Agendas 21*, and also want to make an impact in the move towards a gender-based approach. Let us hope that they will be helped in their initiatives by decision-making bodies.

If Europeans were responsible, they would now provide the resources to enable future generations to act and react. But it seems that we are in crisis. In what kind of crisis? A new collective awareness is needed whereby social ecology may act as a guiding principle. The debate is open. The main elements are already there on the discussion table.

Conclusion

Some positive signs

It is now obvious that 50% of the world's population are women who possess limitless capacities and plans. Quite simply, the moment has come to listen and take note of them. And it seems that a dynamic is under way, since women throughout the world are rising up and standing on their own feet. Acting intelligently, given such a serious world situation, how could we manage without half of the potential of human creativity?

How can we think out and experience together the future of our planet? The two major ways forward for the 21st century will certainly be to take into account two paradigms which have become impossible to ignore: sustainable development and shared democracy, to which we should add one overriding aim: building peace at world level. Let us hope that the role of the European Union, which has an immense potential for reflection and competence, will become a driving force, all the more so as this building process will demand an ocean of utopia, huge creative energy, unprecedented co-operation of minds and undoubtedly endless wisdom.

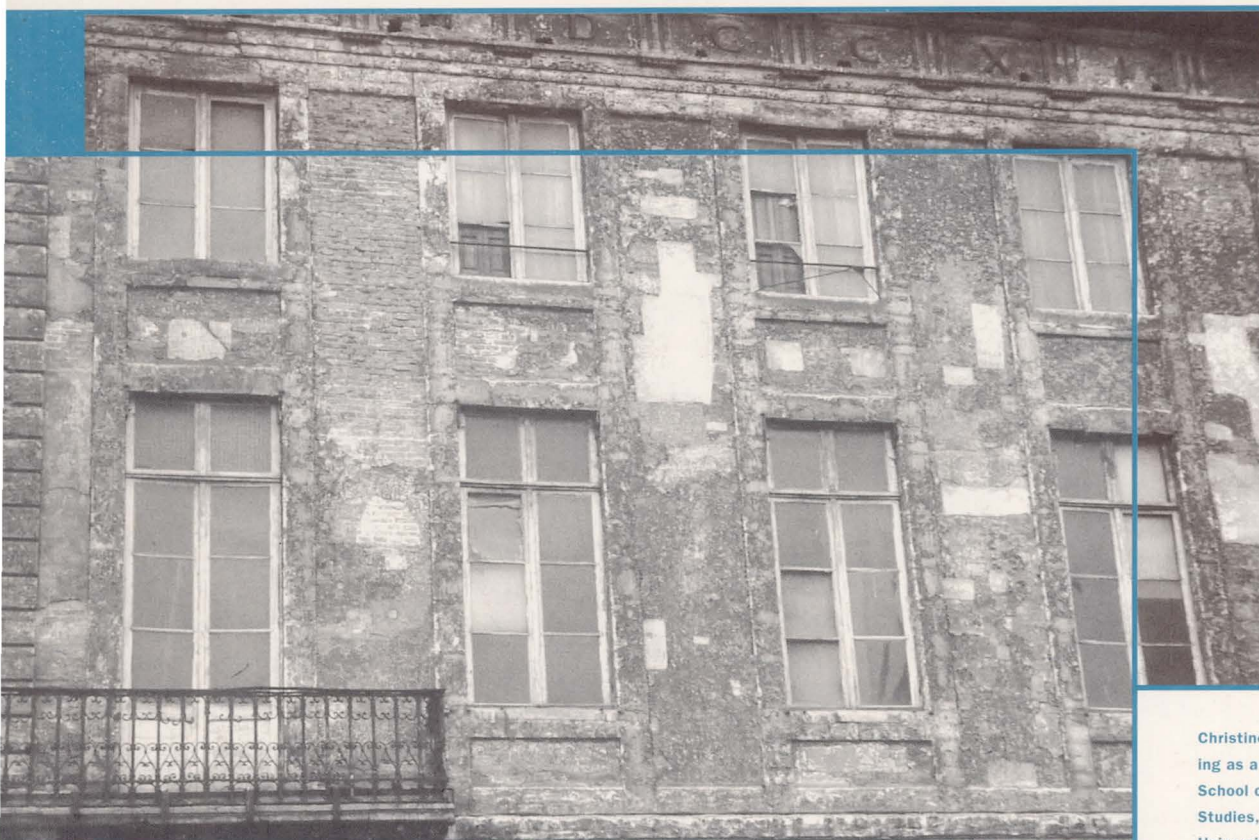
Already there are a number of indications showing a huge new awareness; on a symbolic level we might mention the great walk for peace in Japan, which recently brought together 2,000 people. For 22 days, they walked together to commemorate the 52nd anniversary of Hiroshima-Nagasaki, and made 200,000 origami birds as symbols of peace, which were sent to the *Ligue Internationale des Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté*.

As a positive sign of the times, some men are already feeling the wind of change, are beginning to relax and claim their femininity, as Groucho Marx said, *Aren't men women like everybody else.* ●

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Christine Booth has been working as a Senior Lecturer in the School of Urban and Regional Studies, at Sheffield Hallam University, since 1990. Prior to this she worked as a town planner in the public sector in the UK for over 17 years. She now teaches and writes on gender, planning and public consultation and is increasingly undertaking research in the wider European context at the Centre for regional economic and social research at Sheffield Hallam University. Recently she co-authored a book entitled *Changing Places* which provides a feminist perspective on women's experience of living in contemporary cities.

Women and the urban environment

Shaping our quality of life

The physical environment of our towns and cities has a profound effect on the way people lead their lives and can help determine people's health and well being. It also plays a key role in determining where, and how, people can live, work, shop and spend their leisure time. The way in which the urban environment is planned and managed can either help to create or to remove barriers to access in relation to jobs, shopping, housing, community, education and leisure facilities. The Royal Town Planning Institute in the UK recently produced an advice note on, *Planning for Women*. The advice note makes the point,

"the issues.....also affect some men and equally, people with disabilities, elderly people, the young, the less mobile and parents with children. Shaping towns and villages that meet women's needs can help create an environment that works better for everyone in society."⁽¹⁾ (See references page 22).

As more people move into Europe's towns and cities, the growth and expansion of urban areas produces ever-increasing demands for resources, energy and waste management. Developments

which accompany this growth and change also increase the risk of pollution. Pollution particularly affects the health of the most vulnerable groups in society, such as the young, the old, the poor and the sick. Mark Roseland writes:

"whenever roads are built or expanded, whenever a new shopping centre or subdivision is created, whenever an urban area is redeveloped - in short, whenever the natural environment or the built environment is changed through human action, the health of our communities is affected."⁽²⁾

Through the process of managing change in the physical environment, urban planners have the opportunity to play an important role in helping build sustainable communities, which create healthy, energy-efficient and liveable cities for everyone, including women and children.

Challenging assumptions

"Cities are literally concrete manifestations of ideas on how society was, is and should be."⁽³⁾

Traditionally, towns and cities have been shaped around the activity patterns of men. Women's and

Role of public authorities Involving women in urban planning

Beate Weber, the Mayor of Heidelberg in Germany, has initiated a series of workshops on urban planning specifically for women at local level.

"As in all other development processes at local level, the preconditions for an equal participation of women must be developed within the framework of a sustainable urban development. An urban development that does not take the creativity and competence of women or their needs reasonably into account, loses its claim to legitimacy and sustainability. Because women are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making in the political, economic and public spheres, new ways of participation were sought by the City of Heidelberg. This led to a new and interesting experience, the introduction Future Planning Workshops for Women in all the districts of the city.

These workshops offer women the possibility to examine their everyday lives and a framework to determine the conditions for their well-being in their areas. The workshops are limited to district level, keeping participation levels low, offer childcare and are timed to meet the needs of women with children or with limited time.

This form of participation has provided a better picture of the interests and concrete demands of women. Because of the discussions, women have begun to intervene at political level themselves and tackle deficiencies through their own initiatives. In concrete terms, this has resulted in two new weekly markets being opened, regional products being promoted, traffic and parking spaces being converted into playgrounds for children, measures being taken to facilitate cycle traffic and an increased sense of security in local neighbourhoods and districts.

By integrating this project into the overall concept of local planning for each Heidelberg district, we have succeeded in integrating women's interests into all fields of district development. This is an important development to ensure the systematic integration of women's demands in the future."

children's needs have been invisible. Over the last two decades, our towns and cities have become increasingly multicultural, yet little attention has been paid to

ning. *Eurofem* is a network of European women working in local and regional development and the environmental arena. They have come together, not only to exchange ideas and experiences, but also to develop a more holistic approach to urban planning. Women in *Eurofem* are critical of current approaches to urban planning, which they see as myopic, technocratic and expert-led.

Eurofem's approach embraces the concept of sustainability and echoes visions of the "eco-city", which begins to explore the inter-connectedness of issues, such as transport, mobility, health, affordable housing, energy conservation, pollution, waste management, local economies, social justice, diversity and public involvement in decision-making. This inter-connectedness also applies to the different elements of peoples' lives, which have traditionally been viewed as separate. The concept of single-use zoning has helped to reinforce the separation of home, work, leisure and social activities, which in the future will be unsustainable. Liisa Horelli and Kirsty Vepsa of Finland sum up *Eurofem's* vision:

*"a harmonious, creative and just society where the central motives of action are children's and women's needs, as well as the social reproduction of all people and nature. The goal is for wholeness and integration, both as personal experience and for the organisation of daily activities."*¹⁰

Eurofem also takes the thinking a stage further. Not only does the network argue for a more holistic and sustainable approach to urban planning, but also for planning to be based on the social reality of women's, children's and men's lives.

Planning for real lives

In every European state the social and economic position of women is generally less favourable than that of men in the same country. Women broadly report similar female experiences based on caring and domestic responsibilities combined with low-paid or part-time employment. Importantly, the details of these experiences differ between states, places and cultures and also in terms of class, ethnicity and income. Patterns of everyday life will also reflect the different traditions of state welfare and the relationship between the household, the state and the market.



the social and cultural diversity of urban dwellers. In 1994, at a Swedish conference on women and sustainability Dina Viaou from Greece made the point that:

*"after two decades of feminist writing on the urban question, it should be unnecessary to start by underlining the absence of women and gender from the analysis and understanding of urban development."*¹⁰

Today, women are playing an increasing role in the social and economic life of urban centres and yet decision-makers continue to adopt a gender-blind approach. During the 1990s, women across the European Union have started to come together to call for a new gender-sensitive approach to plan-

The lives of women, children and men are rapidly changing across all the nation states of the European Union. During the last two decades, European society has undergone a number of profound changes. Some of these are demographic, others relate to socio-economic changes. Changing values have made possible a greater plurality of family forms and ways of living (Flade, 1995)⁶⁰.

From northern to southern Europe more women are entering the labour market than ever before, though the levels vary from 35% in Spain to about 70% in Scandinavian countries (European Commission, 1996)⁶¹. More married women are working part-time; patterns of child-care are changing (Karsten, 1995)⁶²; and industrial restructuring has resulted in increasing male unemployment, the growth of the service sector and more flexible work patterns. Throughout Europe, there is an aging population as people live longer. In 1994, the average life expectancy for a woman in the EU topped 80 years compared to a man's 73 years. Consequently, there is a very elderly female population.

These socio-economic changes have important repercussions for the way in which households are managed, and the way that women and their families lead their everyday lives in the city. Urban planners have an increasing responsibility to shape and manage cities in a way that can take account of these changes. This will mean researching the fine grain of women's, children's and men lives.

Changing places

These everyday life experiences mean that women, children and men use the towns and cities in different ways, and thus face different problems in both using the city and their quality of life. Women's relationship with the urban environment is complex. They are at one and the same time, users, consumers, managers and important agents for change.

As users, a good quality environment for women should be attractive, easy to use, convenient and safe and meet their specific needs. Women are particularly concerned about issues of personal safety and security, the provision of facilities and the detailed design of buildings and spaces, particularly in residential areas, public buildings, shopping areas and city and town centres. Many women feel vulnerable in getting around, as users of public transport and as pedestrians, and their movement is often constrained by fear of attack. This is particularly true for older women and women and children travelling alone. Environments that work well during the day can feel hostile at night.

Access to services, or the lack of it, cuts across many areas of everyday life including transport, housing, employment, shopping and leisure and is concerned with the location and distribution of services and community and health facilities. As

women are more likely to spend more time in and around the home and the local community, and are less mobile, the provision of locally accessible services is particularly important.

The mobility of women is restricted by a wide variety of factors: low income, child-care responsibilities, dependants, lack of access to a car, inadequate public transport and fear of harassment or attack. Lack of mobility can restrict a woman's movements and those of her dependants to the area local to her home. The many different roles that women play lead to a wide distribution of trip patterns to different locations. The trip length for a woman is often shorter than for men. Walking has been the most common form of travel for women and children and the effect of the street environment on the personal safety and security of the walker is important, as well as the increased health risk from traffic pollution.

Women taking the initiative

During the 1990s, women across Europe have developed strategies and initiatives for changing an environment that has hindered them in fulfilling their multiple roles. Women have begun to experiment with gender sensitive planning and development. The Austrian *Frauen-Werk-Stadt* is one such project, set up in 1992 by the Municipal Department for the promotion and co-ordination of women's affairs, which initiated and built a new residential area in Vienna. The project set up an architectural competition with female architects. The brief was to design a women friendly public housing project of more than 350 housing units using women's everyday life as an essential criterion of design. The winning design incorporated children's play areas, neighbourly contact, support facilities such as doctor, kinder-

Local Agenda 21

Women test the living environment

Jacqueline Kuhn is a member of the "Women test the living environment" project group, started in 1994 as a commission of the Dutch Ministry for Public Housing, Physical Planning and Environment, aiming to stimulate women into influencing their living environment. She describes the success and some of the outcomes of this project.

"The main objective of the project was to develop material which would focus on helping women to influence policy-making. Over the past three years, the project group has developed working material to influence political decision-making on the environment and has resulted in about 30 "Women test the living environment" groups being set up in four Dutch provinces.

The experiences of these groups have been largely positive with members from almost all the groups crossing the threshold of their local town hall. The fact that environmental policy does not get radically and immediately changed is no surprise – this requires a lot more time and patience.

There are a number of concrete examples of successful results obtained by these groups at all levels. These include the creation at regional level of "Meldpunten" - regional offices where people can report, for example, illnesses linked to air pollution or high levels of noise around airports or factories or dead fish found floating in rivers near industrial sites. Where these offices exist, all the information reported is fed into a computer and the analyses and conclusions are passed on to the relevant regional politicians or authorities.

In cities, thanks to action by these groups, many neighbourhoods now avail of "waste islands" or places residents can put previously sorted waste that is then collected by the local "waste manager". The role of these managers is as much social and environmental with people reporting all kinds of neighbourhood problems to them.

An extension of the project, called "Testing the living environment", got under way in 1997. This new strand will expand on and renew the aims of original project. The target group now includes all citizens and the working material is being sent to other social organisations and municipalities to enable them work closer on *Local Agenda 21* issues and to become actively involved in discussions with "Testing the Living Environment Groups".

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garten, shops and police station, as well as addressing fears for personal safety.

The focus has not only been on changing the physical environment, but also on the reorganisation of daily life. In response to the changing position of women in Italian society over the last 15 years, Italian women have successfully spearheaded campaigns to reorganise time. Through the 1990s, a number of small, medium and large Italian cities have experimented with different ways of reconciling the demands of home and work. Part of this has involved changing opening hours of bureaucratic, cultural, social and commercial services, so that the tasks of shopping, visiting public services may be completed in the time before or after waged work. This has important implications for congestion and transport.

In other areas of life, women are challenging mainstream economic development through the development of women's resource centres for local job creation. In Kokkola, Finland, local women have set up a co-operative resource centre which aims to promote businesses run by women. The centre helps women to build plans and visions for themselves and their region. The centre started with three projects encouraging women to develop indigenous businesses, often operating from home and working with other women on a co-operative basis. There are now 30 such projects which have sprung up over the last three years.

Women as environmental managers

Women's relationship to the environment is complex. Women are more than users of the urban environment they are consumers and managers of resources. Work on women, sustainable development and *Agenda 21* makes the link between women's knowledge and experience in managing and conserving natural resources, which is derived

from their role within households, and the importance of involving women in the political and decision-making process. Sometimes women have been characterised as the natural guardians of the environment because their caring and nurturing role within the home could be perceived as extending to the care and conservation of the wider environment. These arguments are both problematic and simplistic. Women must be seen as both consumer and manager. Their role within the home means that women make most consumer, energy and waste related decisions in the home.

Undoubtedly, their role is ambiguous. Domestic energy consumption outstrips industrial consumption as more modern household appliances are introduced in the home. As more women go out to work, household management patterns are changing in the use of pre-packaged foods and labour-saving devices; the responsibility for recycling and waste minimisation largely falls on the shoulders of the main household manager, usually the woman. The majority of advertising imagery is directed at women to persuade them to purchase and consume. As more women begin to own cars they are increasingly seen as a major contributor to the problem of traffic congestion. Specifically, this has been raised as an issue in the Netherlands. However, little research has been undertaken to examine the gender implications of these issues and therefore it is far too easy to see women as both part of the problem and the solution.

Most importantly, *Local Agenda 21* initiatives are seeking to involve women in environmental issues in their neighbourhoods. In the Netherlands, a *Local Agenda 21* project has been established, which helps grassroots women to identify environmental issues in their neighbourhood. Often women report on recycling and waste management, the quality of their environments, litter, energy and housing. In the UK, the *Women's Design Service* is working with minority ethnic women in London to help them prepare health and safety audits of their neighbourhoods. Healthy cities projects have been springing up all over Europe. This was a pre-Rio World Health Organisation initiative. It was launched in 1986 to reduce inequalities in health and reduce morbidity and mortality. An example of this is the *Glasgow Healthy City Project* reported by Janet Brand in her article on Women and Sustainability in 1996. She describes the approach the project has adopted:

*"as intersectoral working towards a vision of a more equitable and sustainable community. Issues of poverty among women is an important issue for this project."*⁶⁰

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Urban planning Women and the City

Isabel Segura, responsible for "Women and the City", a project co-funded under the European Commission's Fourth Equal Opportunities Action Programme, describes how this transnational initiative seeks to adapt the way cities are planned, organised and run to the social reality of women's lives.

"Cities continue to be built and developed around the principle that men go out to work while women stay at home. But this model of society has changed radically with increasing numbers of women in paid employment. As a result, there is a gap between the city, its arrangement and organisation.

"Women and the City" hopes to narrow this gap by advising how urban policies can adjust to new social realities and by promoting women's participation in urban decision-making.

Coordinated by the organisation I work for, the Fundació Marià Aurelia Capmany, in Barcelona, the project has partners in Spain including a number of Spanish city councils and regional governments as well as partners in the Netherlands, France and Germany.

By creating local, national and transnational networks of women, we hope to identify women's needs in terms of the planning and design of boroughs and cities and their mobility, accessibility to services, security and participation in decision-making.

A series of recommendations will be published in a White Paper Women and the City, one of the expected outcomes of the project, as a result of this work."

In Germany, women transport planners have been building new alliances with the environmental movement to ensure that environmental traffic campaigners incorporate a gender perspective. Women at the Wuppertal Institute are developing an ecological feminist approach to traffic management. Similarly, in the Netherlands, women have been working on a gender and mobility project in an attempt to bend emerging environmental agendas.

Women as agents of change

Involving women in the development of a vision for their environments enables experts to better understand the social reality of peoples' lives, and at the same time engage those women in the process of change which is necessary to build sustainable communities. Using women's experience can help provide detailed knowledge of the daily patterns of women's lives, which in turn can produce more sensitive policies that keep pace with the socioeconomic change in society. Women's involvement can help environmental policies to better reflect the social and cultural diversity of society.

Involvement of women can also help evaluate the positive, negative and neutral impacts of environmental policies on different groups of women. The 1990s are beginning to witness the recognition of a plurality of interests in the management of the environment, and it is within this pluralist society that women have a role to play. Jean Augustine, speaking at the OECD conference in Paris, in 1994, argued that to date:

"the management of our towns, villages and cities has been done on behalf of women rather than with women. In the past, women have had very little say in the way that the environment has been managed, yet it is women who best know their areas, their needs, and the issues that concern themselves and their families." (10)

Many innovative initiatives concerned with consulting and involving women have been undertaken, such as work with women and safety (Leicester, UK) and the development of a women's advisory panel (Sheffield, UK) reported by Chris Booth in 1996 (11). Other projects include women's involvement in local planning in six municipalities in Norway, reported by Amdam in 1994. Norway has also been instrumental in setting up the Northern Feminist University, which specifically runs focuses on women, planning, development and the broader environmental context. Whilst many of these initiatives have been very successful, they are *ad-hoc* and rely on the initiative of committed individuals, both at the grassroots and among professionals.

However, times are changing and *Local Agenda 21* has done much to build up participatory and inclusive approaches to the involvement of women. The sustainability debate has done much to engage women in developing visions for their future. It

also offers a window of opportunity to make the connections, which hitherto have been missing, between the gender perspective on the urban environment and the wider environmental issues in the sustainability debate.

It is also important to recognise that women also have a role to play as professionals working in the environmental field. Traditionally, the wide range of professions concerned with the environment have been male-dominated. However, today, these professions are beginning to attract increasing numbers of women in all areas, but the closer one gets to the construction industry and the technical and scientific professions so the numbers begin to decrease. However, it would be simplistic to assume that increasing the numbers of women in the profession will result in the creation of a more gender-sensitive environment. Nevertheless, increasing the numbers of women in these professions will not only help challenge traditional female stereotypes and job stereotypes, it will also help the professions to better reflect the social and cultural diversity of the society they seek to serve. Ultimately, a broader based profession will encourage a cross fertilisation of ideas, which could help underpin a more sustainable approach to the management and development of our European towns and cities. ●

Mobility

Women and public transport - the Swedish 3K project

Using women's knowledge and skills to improve public transport for all was the aim of the Swedish project "Women - Competence - Public Transport" (3K for short in Swedish). Lise Warsen of the Swedish Transport Institute describes how this project influenced decision-making on transport issues in Sweden.

"The project started in 1995 under the auspices of the Federation of Swedish Country Councils, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and the Swedish Public Transport Association. It resulted from research into public transport which revealed that although women were the most frequent users of public transport, most of those responsible for taking decisions about the overall transport structure and infrastructure were men. Differences were also noted in the way women and men travelled and in the length and purposes of their journeys.

The research also revealed that fewer women than men owned cars but that women were generally more favourable to improving traffic safety and developing a more sustainable society.

Activities were initiated by the project to increase women's participation in public transport organisations. A network of 220 members was set up and further research carried out. A series of projects and activities within transport companies themselves were implemented and the results and further information disseminated through a newsletter, reports and seminars.

As a result of the project, the attention of public authorities has been drawn to the importance of including a gender perspective in public transport. A pioneering public transport policy document, incorporating the principle of mainstreaming, has been drawn up by the Swedish Transport Committee and an important research programme has been initiated at the request of the Swedish Transport and Communication Research Board covering areas such as resources and power-sharing, security and safety, the labour market and changes in journeys to the workplace."

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Architecture

The "Frauen-Werk-Stadt" Model Project

Ursula Bauer describes a unique urban development in the Vienna suburbs exclusively planned and designed by women.

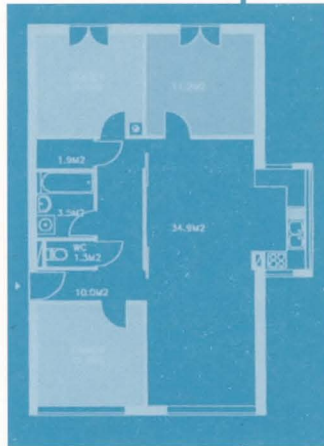
"The Viennese Municipal Department for Promotion and Coordination of Women's Affairs initiated the "Frauen-Werk-Stadt" project in 1992. The idea was that 360 apartments in the form of a subsidised, multi-storey development would be planned, designed and built exclusively by women experts. The aim was to make the many different facets of women's everyday life the essential criterion of design.

A competition was held for women architects and, in 1994, a project submitted by Franziska Ullmann, was accepted. The jury particularly appreciated the variety of units proposed and her sensitive solutions for open spaces (courtyards, a central square, a "village common", residential and play streets, a playground).

The City of Vienna and the building co-operative of the Trade Union of Clerical Employees - the only non-profit housing co-operative in Austria managed by a woman - were selected as the builders. The foundation stone was laid in 1995 and on 18 October 1997, "Frauen-Werk-Stadt" was inaugurated and the apartments handed over to future tenants.

Among the key woman-friendly features of the design are:

- storage areas for bicycles and prams in easily accessible ground-floor rooms
- laundry rooms at roof level with direct access to the roof terraces
- four units per storey to avoid anonymity and improve neighbourly relations
- bright and well-lit staircases and entrances, often anxiety inducing areas for women; staircases designed as meeting places for neighbours
- safe underground garages which are open-plan and lit by natural light
- in the apartments, kitchens are central and spacious, have natural light and overlook courtyards or play streets; all rooms are of the same quality to guarantee a degree of flexibility to suit changing family situations
- a day-care nursery, a kindergarten, a doctor's surgery, 600 square metres of shop space, a police station and a community centre are also part of the infrastructure and facilities."



© Frauen Büro (Elsa Prochazka)

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Housing An eco-friendly reconversion

Swedish architect and journalist Gunlaug Ostbye describes an unusual co-housing scheme she is actively involved in on the outskirts of Stockholm.

"EKBO is a project involving the reconversion/rebuilding of a convalescent home dating from about 1930 in an economic and ecologically sound way. When completed, it will house 30 families, or a total of 41 adults and 20 children. These are traditional nuclear families as well as single mothers of varying ages.

The idea is for everyone to build his or her own flat and to participate in the building of common areas. We have building groups of about 8 to 10 people helping one another and a building contractor is hired to do the big jobs.

Some residents have already moved in and we expect the house to be filled by the summer of 1998. Each family has their own apartment with a small kitchen. One of the features of the project is the communal dining room and kitchen where dinner is available for those who want it. Other than that, there is everyone's favourite, the sauna, as well as a built-in veranda overlooking the park and lake.

The building is being reconverted in an ecologically sound way meaning that the materials torn down have been re-used when possible. We were also able to re-use materials from other buildings. The heating system uses stones or water from the nearby lake and we are conscious of consuming less electricity.

Originally, we intended to build no more than we could afford and then build according to needs and available resources. However, current rules on loans have not allowed us to do this.

All work is done on a voluntary basis with women and men working in non-traditional ways and decisions taken by consensus, but this is not always easy. We have tried to have at least 50% of women and men at all stages in the process, whether leading the building project or maintaining the garden."

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© Gunlaug Ostbye

Thivsi Ekmetzoglou and Barbro Fransson

Thivsi Ekmetzoglou is an Attorney at Law specialised in EU environmental law and policy. She is a founding member, director and advisor to the European Environmental Policy and Law Institute (EEPALI) in Athens, Greece. She has worked extensively on EU environmental issues, notably at the European Commission on the preparation of a "White Paper for Civil Liability for Environmental Damage."

Barbro Fransson is an independent expert on energy and housing and has published a number of research papers on the electricity market and housing policy. She currently coordinates a Swedish network of EU-funded energy agencies.

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Sharing the responsibility for sustainable dev

"We cannot achieve human development without solving environmental problems and we cannot solve environmental problems without human rights, gender equity, social development, a fair distribution of resources and empowerment of people."⁽¹⁾ To this end, the contribution of women to economic and social development and environmental protection, which are the mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, should be recognised and supported as an integral part of society.

Solving environmental problems is a matter for each individual. This means that environmental responsibility is a burden that society as a whole has to share. The role of women, although significant, is not always apparent. Current trends show, however, that women are gradually taking up professional and decision-making positions enabling them to become involved in traditional male activities and

to change attitudes towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Just as women are integrating into traditionally male jobs in all activities and sectors, so the environment has to be integrated into all economic activities. But to integrate environmental policies and to mainstream gender in this way requires a new approach to decision-making and decision-making structures in which women at local level are empowered. This means changing the traditional top-down to a new bottom-up approach.

This is not a one-way process. It requires time and patience. This may be the last chance for society to change towards more sustainable development patterns. Women today have a unique opportunity to participate in this process and be a core part of it.

The empowerment of women is a positive factor for the achievement of sustainable development. Women are more conscious about the environment. Traditionally, women manage and use natural resources more than men and provide sustenance for their families and communities. Women are close to life as mothers and family carers. They have a profound feeling for sustainable development. In a biblical sense, women want to pass on a planet that is a good place to live for future generations.

The ways of achieving sustainable development in the EU vary according to different political systems and the degree of centralisation and decentralisation of political decision-making. In this chapter we look at how women can influence sustainable development in different industrial and social sectors.



Women's participation in political decision-making decisive

Public participation in the promotion of environmental protection is crucial but women are still absent at most levels of policy formulation and decision-making in the management of natural resources. The lack of adequate recognition and support for women's contribution to the conservation and management of natural resources will hinder sustainable development. Opportunities must therefore be provided to enable all women to participate in environmental decision-making at all levels.

It is a hopeful sign that the percentage of women on permanent committees of national parliamentary assemblies in EU Member States and in the European Parliament in sectors such as the environment, health, housing, and education is high. At 22.2%, Green parties in the EU have the highest overall percentage of women participating in national assemblies. The highest percentage of women in the European Parliament was found in the Green group (V) in 1995 with 52% of women MEPs.

These trends and developments are new, but there can be no room for complacency. A window of opportunity is opening to regenerate our economies in a sustainable way and women must be part of this process.

Industry and sustainable development: the role of women

The industrial sector is partly responsible for environmental degradation yet industry is vital to generating income. It is undeniable that if different ways of processing raw materials are designed to minimise emissions or emissions abatement technologies are more widely used, this degradation will stop.

To reduce harmful emissions that pollute the air, water and land, industry has been moving from a reactive and compulsory position in the 1980s and to a proactive stance in the late 1990s. Consumers and investors are also increasingly demanding production methods and products that are sustainable.

This is being achieved by the introduction of environmental management systems, Environmental Impact Assessment studies (EIAs), so called "eco-labelling" procedures introduced by the European Commission, as well as environmental codes of practice. The involvement of more women in decision-making bodies on eco-labelling and environmental management systems as well as the participation of women's organisations in the environ-

Public authorities

Woman mayor with "green" ambitions

Edite Estrela, Mayor of Sintra, a major municipality north of Lisbon (Portugal), outlines her environmental ambitions for the town.

"One of my major objectives is to make Sintra into an "Environmental Capital," a cause upon which I have been actively engaged since becoming mayor.

The Municipal District of Sintra has about 320,000 inhabitants, all of whom produce waste on a daily basis. Because it is necessary to make people more conscious about the environment, the Department of the Environment and Local Affairs is currently running an educational programme. There are a number of strands to this programme targeting schools and retail outlets.

Most of the effort has been targeted at schools because we recognise that it is easier to change patterns of behaviour before bad habits are acquired and ingrained. Environmental conservation is a problem of concern to us all and what we in Sintra are interested in is a change in attitudes.

In Sintra, a series of special measures are being taken, notably in the automobile field and free collection centres for used tyres, batteries and spent oil have been set up. For citizens in general, a pilot project in Algueirão to sort waste (both organic and inorganic) has had an 80% success rate and a special paper collection is organised within the Sintra Local Council itself.

Environmental policy has helped to improve living standards in Sintra. The protection of the air and water resources, waste management and the protection of biodiversity and the countryside are priority objectives. Sintra has a modern environment policy, both regarding the collection and selective processing of solid waste. Its entire fleet of collection vehicles has been upgraded and additional staff taken on. The results have been encouraging. Selective waste disposal increased threefold in 1996 compared to 1995 and we expect it to double again in 1997.

The total green space has increased within the 14 parishes of the municipal district from 555,000 to 1,100,000 square metres. The fact that Sintra has been classified as a world heritage site has made us redouble our efforts. Sintra is one of the main tourist venues in Portugal for all those who appreciate culture and the environment, which are its main attractions and we feel we have to live up to their expectations. With the active involvement of all citizens, it will be possible to improve the quality of life within this municipality ... something we would like all our visitors to share."

mental impact assessment of major public works would be a valuable asset.

The same can be said about implementing and evaluating environmental plans and projects. As awareness about the environmental impact of certain proposed industrial plants grows and the procedure for monitoring such plants is being set up, more women must be encouraged to participate in their evaluation.

Indeed, compulsory EIAs and GIAs (Gender Impact Assessments) should be included in all areas of decision-making and the distribution of resources to ensure that the environment and gender are taken into account in all analyses. This approach could change the current status where both women's and environmental issues are still consid-

ered to be of secondary importance in the present male-dominated mainstream.

Women consumers influence change

In industrialised countries, the major cause of a continued deterioration of the environment is an unsustainable pattern of consumption and production. Up until now, improvements in production processes were achieved through levying charges and banning certain practices or substances. When millions of consumers in the EU realised that they could influence the environment through their choices, fast shifts were noted in production.

The role of women in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound production and consumption patterns and approaches to natural resource management should not be underestimated. For example, developments in the paper and pulp industry and industries producing hygiene paper products at the end of the 1980s were a breakthrough. When large groups of consumers in Germany chose unbleached hygiene paper they influenced not only the whole paper and forest industry in Sweden and Finland to implement a more sustainable production but at the same time they set an example of consumer power. No industry ignores that today.

Women play an important role in this change of mentality. As the main purchasers of industrially produced consumer goods for the family and the household, they can demand products with a sustainable profile. According to a survey conducted by the European Environmental Policy and Law Institute (EEPALI), women are willing to pay more to buy a product that is produced in an environmentally safe way.

Women entrepreneurs can also influence the development of sustainable consumer goods in their businesses. One astonishing example of a woman at the head of a "green" enterprise is the UK Body Shop. This company, set up by Anita Roddick, operates under an environmental programme, applies an environmental manage-

ment system and invests in environmental and awareness-raising projects.

There is a crying need for EU policies aiming to promote the growth of women's enterprises in the field of sustainable development. The creation of programmes to encourage women (and men) to leave career jobs for entrepreneurship in development sectors such as green enterprises is one idea. Examples of US initiatives show that activities initiated by this type of programme at federal and municipal level have had a positive impact on employment and growth.

Women and the energy sector

While women play a minor role in industry, they are almost invisible in the energy sector. Consequently, there is a need to support the development of women's equal access to and participation in decision-making on sustainable and affordable energy technologies, such as wind, solar, biomass and other renewable sources, through their participation in needs assessments, energy planning and policy formulation at the local and national levels.

In many developing countries, women participate in the design of solar energy plans and their contribution is considered essential because of the influence they have on the environment. At the same time, women in industrialised countries are slowly taking the lead in promoting, for example, renewable energy sources. This means a new gender concept of sustainable development is now being formulated.

The main reason there are so few women in the traditional energy sector is the way this sector operates. Up until now, large power production plants with a considerable influence on the environment have been the norm. Both the production and distribution of electricity and other related services have been operated as vertically integrated monopolies often owned by the government or regional authorities. In this state monopoly system, women's voices were only heard through their political choices.

However, this system is now changing as the deregulation of the energy market gains ground. The first country to introduce deregulation was Great Britain, followed by Sweden and Finland. One of the features of a deregulated system is that competition is introduced in energy production and sales whereas in a monopoly system, electrical networks were strictly regulated. In a deregulated market, the consumer is free to choose where to buy electricity and the network owner is obliged to provide the service.

Customers choose if they want to buy electricity produced by nuclear power, coal or renewable en-

Industry Researcher at the service of industry and the environment

Professor Maria da Graça Martins da Silva Carvalho teaches at the Instituto Superior Técnico in Lisbon (Portugal) and coordinates the activities of the Research Centre of Heat and Mass Transfer in Radiating and Combustion Systems, a research sector of major importance to industry and the environment.

"I have a particular preference to look at the practical side of environmental issues. All dreams are welcome when thinking about the future, trying to overcome uncertainty, doubt and risk. But I want to understand attitudes, processes and above all, what to do, how to act and how to change things.

The activities of the research centre I coordinate have the main aim of developing concrete and precise tools for operation optimisation, design and control of full-scale industrial combustion equipment (fired by gas, oil, coal and fuel blends). These activities include basic research in different areas of major importance to the main environmental problems we face today. When we analyse the formation of pollutants in industrial equipment and processes, we contribute to a better understanding of what exactly needs to be done to significantly reduce pollutant emissions.

The main goal of the research is to make such industrial equipment more efficient and less pollutant for industrial sectors such as energy production, glass, cement, ceramics and the food industry not only in Portugal and the European Union but in the USA, Brazil, Mexico and Korea."

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ergy sources. They base their choice not only on the price and quantity but also on the environmental impact. In a deregulated system, charges can also be levied on the product in relation to its effects on the environment. The price of the product will then reflect the value placed on it by society, and its impact on the environment.

It is not yet known whether women consumers will make different choices than men when buying electricity. However, deregulated utilities companies appear to consider women as important targets for their marketing activities.

European Commission energy programmes with an effect on the environment and a distinct sustainable profile – i.e. the JOULE, THERMIE, ALTENER, SAVE II and SYNERGY programmes – have no specific women's angle. If the Commission wants women to be visible within this sector, special targets must be set for them in the same way as priority is being given to job-creation in this sector.

Renewable energies – a way forward for women

RES – renewable energy sources (solar and wind power, the use of biomass for the generation of energy) – are now being promoted by the European Union. Special networks and projects aiming to develop and promote these sources and special energy agencies have been set up.

These agencies work in non-traditional ways and are recruiting more women at managerial level than traditional energy companies. Whereas there was only one woman employed as a director in a mainstream energy company in Sweden, two years after the creation of these energy agencies, two out of the eight renewable energy agencies had a woman director.

Consumers have a vital role to play in the shift from the use of non-renewable energy sources to the use of renewable energy sources. This is another area in which women consumers can make their voices heard.

Towards an eco-friendly transport system

Modern society is largely dependent on well-functioning transport systems. But transport also has serious effects on health and the environment. The major environmental impact of transport are that road traffic accounts for 60% of the CO emissions, 25% of CO₂ emissions and over half the total NOX emissions. Pollution resulting from volatile

organic compounds (VOCs) and noise levels can be added to this.

Transport also uses up most of the planet's limited resources of fossil fuels. Because of carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel, efficient energy use should be one of the most critical factors in progress towards sustainable development in the transport sector. The ecological system, on which all human beings depend, can be upset by these emissions which can also affect climate change. If the use of fossil fuel is limited heavily per capita, future energy supplies will depend on the availability of renewable energy sources (ethyl alcohol and hydrogen).

The relationship between transport and air pollution is another crucial issue in progress towards sustainable development. As mentioned in Chapter 9 of *Agenda 21* on the *Protection of the Atmosphere*, there is a need for a more effective design and management of traffic and transport systems.

Researchers in Sweden have analysed the possibilities of reducing energy use in transport systems to a third of today's levels and concluded that this kind of change could lead to more sustainable patterns. They pointed out that one of the main obstacles for achieving a sustainable transport system is reticence by the car industry and the rail sector. Electric buses and other vehicles could be introduced if and when the transport and energy sector get together. Again, the attitude of users is of critical importance for the creation of an environmental-friendly transport sector. In this context, women as well as men can exercise their influence through their choices as consumers.

Statistics show that women are the most frequent users of public transport. In that respect, they have a positive impact on the environment. In the private sphere, when there is one car in the family it is

Rural life Combining ecology, farming and tourism

Laura Drighi runs a successful rural tourism business on her wine and olive oil producing estate, La Tenuta San Vito in Fior di Selva, in Tuscany (Italy).

The domain of San Vito is situated in Fior di Selva, in the Tuscan hills of the Chianti region, 15 kms from Florence. The estate comprises 126 hectares, including 30 hectares of olive trees and 35 hectares of vines. Since 1982, it has produced its own organically grown wine and oil guaranteed by the Italian Organic Farming Association.

Several years ago, a number of farm worker's homes belonging to the estate were converted into apartments for holiday makers. The complex includes a swimming pool and a restaurant and guests can benefit from weekly guided visits of the estate, its wine cellars and oil presses.

This venture is due to the conviction and determination of Laura Drighi, daughter of the estate's owner Roberto Drighi, who is particularly aware of environment issues. She has sought to manage the family holding in a way which interferes as little as possible with the natural environment and ecosystem in which the vines and olive trees are grown.

She is among a small group of pioneers in Italy who continue to persevere and insist on the need to farm the land without using chemical fertilisers, pesticides and weed-killers. She has encountered many difficulties, both at professional level because she works in an essentially masculine and traditional farming world and at commercial level because the Italian market is slow to appreciate organic products.

At European level, recognition for her products is high in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and the UK, where her bio-friendly "Chianti San Vito" is much appreciated.

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Natural & cultural heritage

Women, local development and sustainable development

Huguette Clignet describes an interesting development in an information technology training project run by the Belgian bureau of the WITEC (Women into Technology) Network and co-funded by the European Commission under its Leonardo da Vinci programme, taking account of the concept of sustainable development.

"The 3,000 inhabitants of Olne, a semi-rural district in the Belgian Walloon region, have become increasingly aware of the need to reconcile environmental protection and local economic development in order to maintain their quality of life. A survey carried out by a group of young women taking part in an information technology training project, helped identify the needs and expectations of local inhabitants, particularly in the environmental field.

The training project brought together young unemployed women with a previous qualification who were seeking to change career and obtain a qualification in new information technologies.

During the course, the trainees realised that pooled together, their different but complementary skills could be turned into employment opportunities and the idea of a new scheme combining new information technologies and local development came about. The sectors covered included horticulture, landscape gardening, the promotion of the environment, the promotion of local products, health and educational services, management and marketing.

As a result, the women are setting up an advisory service for the planning and development of parks, gardens and public walkways in the area, which respect the environment. They are producing a multimedia pack for this kind of service which will include plans of parks and gardens, proposals, an index of local and/or wild plant species. The multimedia pack is being designed with accessibility and conviviality in mind and will be targeted specifically at women.

A database of new sources of employment linked to the environment is also being created which includes information on training possibilities for the sector.

In collaboration with the regional authorities, the local training authority and WITEC, a further training session is planned for early 1998 with a view to helping them set up their own enterprise in the social economy sector."

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usually driven by the man. When there are two cars, women drive the smaller one which is more dangerous in traffic but kinder to the environment.

Women favour rail to road transport. Although railway links were shut down in the post-war period in northern densely populated countries, the trend today is to build new railway lines in the more populated areas. Competition and coordination between different modes of transport is a key issue for traffic planners, particularly in densely populated areas. Women must be encouraged to participate in decisions on transport and a gender perspective integrated into all new policies. Moving towards a new model of transport will require more attractive alternatives to road transport and a broader gender perspective in decision-making.

Agriculture and the environment

The relationship between agriculture and environmental issues is resulting in a growing need to integrate environmental parameters into agricultural policy and activities. The main environmental impacts caused by this sector are land-use, the use of fertilisers, pesticides, water resources, and additional feeds for livestock.

At EU level, agri-environmental measures are being adopted and incentive

schemes introduced to preserve the countryside, make production less intensive, protect biodiversity and encourage farmers to adopt environment-friendly practices.

In some Member States, the agricultural sector is a major source of employment whereas in others

only a small percent of the labour force works in the sector. Sweden is one extreme with only 2 to 3% of the labour force in farming whereas in the southern Member States this figure stands at about 30%.

In Sweden and Finland, farms are big and farming activities are often combined with forestry. In other parts of Europe with large agricultural sectors, farms are comparably smaller. In France and Spain, for example, agriculture is a dominant sector of the economy but the individual farm is often small.

There is a general assumption that small is sustainable. When it comes to the agricultural sector this might not necessarily be the case. The farming industry in northern countries is just as considerate to the environment as the small-scale farming in the south. To make the agricultural sector more considerate of the environment, the size of the farm must be taken into account when implementing sustainable policies.

Women's enterprises in the agricultural sector are often small and home-based (cottage industries, processing farm products or manufacturing) and depend on natural resources. Demands for increased production in past decades have sometimes forced women to use natural resources unsustainably, contributing to degradation.

This demonstrates a need for education and awareness-raising projects for women as in certain regions they safeguard the natural environment and ensure adequate and sustainable resource allocation within the household and the community.

Women tend to seek activities on a smaller scale and at local level because they are easier to achieve, more manageable, need less transportation and resources. The role of women in rural areas and in the agricultural sector is of vital importance. Improved access to training, land, natural and productive resources as well as development programmes and co-operative structures may help them increase their participation in sustainable development.

Some women have also set up cooperatives to run organic farms. But these techniques are not yet widespread and they account for less than 0.5% farming in the EU. Also labour costs tend to be high and the end product more expensive. Increasing the participation of women in decision-making about farming activities and in setting standards for the production and labelling of organic foodstuffs needs to be encouraged.

At EU level, the LEADER programme contributes to actions linked to the development of rural areas. Through this programme, local players acquire the relevant know-how and participate in

projects that take the environment into consideration. An example of this is a LEADER-funded project involving a cooperative of 34 women in Greece, called EKAVI, produces and sells agricultural produce made in a traditional and eco-friendly way.

Most shopping for groceries is done by women in the EU. They can use this purchasing power to encourage the agricultural sector to produce in a more sustainable way or to encourage the production of organically grown products and environmentally farming techniques.

Preserving Europe's unique natural heritage

Europe's natural heritage is rich. With enlargement in 1995, Sweden and Finland brought the last wilderness to the European Union which now includes within its borders both the Mediterranean and Arctic eco-systems. The great variety of flora and fauna found in both the Arctic and the Mediterranean offer the citizens of Europe a unique environment for their enjoyment. But both these eco-systems are fragile, requiring particular care by tourists.

Swedish membership of the EU means that a new and specific system for land-use was introduced into EU legislation. The Swedish "Allemansrätt" (legal right of access to private land and open countryside) gives all citizens the right to utilise nature. This system requires, however, that citizens make use of this right in a responsible way.

Tourism and sustainable development

Tourism contributes an appreciable percentage of the national income in most Member States and by the year 2000, the tourism industry is forecast to become the largest single economic activity in the EU.

The integration of environmental considerations into the tourism sector in the EU is illustrated in the Commission's Action Plan to Assist Tourism (1993-95), the creation of the "European Prize for Tourism and the Environment" and the Green Paper on the Role of the Union in the Field of Tourism (1995). In this paper the concept of sustainable tourism is explored. At Member State level, however, much remains for governments to do in order to promote sustainable tourism.

The role of women in tourism is increasingly important. Many women are entrepreneurs or employed as managers in tourism. Also surveys show that women are much more influential about choices about holiday destinations and restaurants than in the purchase of heavy capital goods.

Training & employment

Training women in environment & ecology

Barbara Schöler-Machler talks about the training organisation she runs in Berlin, which trains women for employment in the ecology and eco-technology fields.

"For the past 10 years, LIFE, a non-profit organisation located in Berlin, has been involved in vocational training and guidance activities specifically for women in the field of crafts, ecology and eco-technology.

Our objectives are threefold: to promote equal opportunities for women and men in vocational training and on the labour market, especially in non-traditional, male-dominated professions; to incorporate environmental issues into regular vocational training schemes and curricula and in doing this to help disseminate a better understanding and awareness of ecology; and to promote the involvement of women in public life in the field of environmental policies and local planning.

To achieve these aims, LIFE organises a wide range of courses. These include taster courses and pre-vocational training and orientation courses for young girls and young women school leavers to encourage them to choose non-traditional technical professions. By building eco-technological models, the young women learn basic crafts skills (using traditional tools, materials and processes) but also about environmental protection. They also lose their reluctance to take up training in technical and scientific fields.

LIFE also organises two initial vocational training schemes (plumbing and electrical installation) combining traditional skills with innovative, future-oriented techniques for using alternative energy sources and for saving resources. This new qualification profile together with work placements in firms during the training helps young women find jobs in the environmental sector.

Other programmes organised by LIFE address multipliers such as educationalists, trainers, teachers and social workers and cover methods of environmental education, eco-technology, environmental management systems and entrepreneurial skills for women seeking to set up their own businesses. For women already working in the environment sector, LIFE provides a range of advisory services and networking support, helps organise conferences and workshops and carries out research on gender and environment related issues.

The approach adopted by LIFE for its training activities is based on gender awareness and a specific understanding of the need for environmental protection. By integrating technical information and knowledge with questions relating to the ecological impact of technologies and materials, trainees have a better understanding of the need to save energy and change more easily their behaviour and attitudes towards the environment."

Women's interest in a sustainable tourism sector is flourishing. The quality of tourism services is now directly linked to sustainable development. For example, the International Hotel Environmental Initiative (IHEI), directed by a woman (Ms Karen Fletcher) and supported by the Prince of Wales Business Leaders' Forum in the UK, is carrying out research on environmental practices and information within hotels.

Many initiatives are being taken by women all over Europe. In Greece, the director of Grecotel has applied a pilot eco-audit scheme and the first environmental programme within the hotel. Among the improvements are efforts to achieve water conservation and water quality. For example, mild biodegradable cleaning agents have been introduced, gardens are now irrigated by automatic sprinkler systems and instructions are given to staff

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Renewable energy Woman heads major policy centre

Martha Simantoni has been President of the Board of Directors of the Centre of Renewable Energies (CRES) in Athens, Greece, since January 1997 and Vice-President of the Board of Directors of the Hellenic Forum for Renewable Energy Sources (ELFORES).

Martha Simantoni has a long experience working in the environmental field. Since studying Ecology and Environmental Protection at the University of Durham (UK), she has worked as a lecturer on Ecology, Eco-development and Eco-tourism at Athens University, the Institute for Continuous Training and the Tourist Guide School of the Hellenic Tourism Organisation.

As an executive until 1996 in the Ministry of the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works in the Department of Environmental Design, she was involved in the EU's Mediterranean Integration Programmes and in projects concerning the management and protection of the natural environment and in environmental impact assessment studies.

Martha Simantoni is convinced that renewable energy sources will gain a significant share of the energy market in the future.

As President of the CRES, Martha Simantoni said she intends to make significant efforts to design and implement policies to rationalise energy use in Greece, including increasing the contribution of renewable energy sources and rationalising existing energies that seriously affect the environment. She strongly believes that these energy choices are compatible with sustainable development in Greece, particularly because the national economy relies strongly on its unique natural and cultural environment.

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and guests about water conservation.

In waste management and purchasing policy, single use products are no longer bought, plastic laundry bags have been replaced with recycled paper sacks, waste paper is collected for re-use internally, kitchen waste is separated into organic and non organic categories, and leftover food is donated as animal feed. Water is now heated by solar panels and all hot water consumed during the summer months is heated this way.

Examples of this type are found in most Member States. When they are no longer isolated examples but established "natural behaviour," then we will be well on the way to sustainable development, not only in the tourism sector but also in all areas of life. ●

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Northern European countries are home to one of Europe's indigenous peoples, the Saami – "the people of sun and wind". The Saami are herders of semi-domesticated reindeer and tourism is an important means of revenue for them. The Saami have always welcomed tourists to their villages but insist that visitors show consideration for the herding of reindeer. Eco-tourism is not a concept the Saami use. They say that herding reindeer is in itself ecologically friendly.

But things are changing for the modern Saami who are faced with the challenges of developing reindeer farming in a sustainable way with the help of modern tools.

SME

Woman heads environment bureau

Greta Raum-Degraeve, managing director of Eureco, a Luxembourg-based environment and management advisory bureau, describes her company's activities. "Eureco is a very small company devoted to all aspects of the environment – energy, water, air, waste, etc – and related sectors such as transport and education. We have a permanent staff of five but we work with specialists, associations and major networks on specific themes".

"Eureco was founded in 1988 and was in fact the first small company in Luxembourg to receive funding from the European Commission as a women's employment creation initiative. It was a tiny subsidy, but at the time this support and recognition was very welcome.

One of our first activities with NGOs, right after the European Year of the Environment, was to try to develop better access to information and greater participation in environment issues and decisions. At the time, especially in view of the major environmental disasters such as Chernobyl, access to quality information was lacking. This kind of information was necessary to develop strategies, methodologies and policies and to see where action was needed. This was particularly important because at the time the first environmental tools were being developed such as environmental impact studies for major infrastructure projects. Access to existing information on the environment was important to evaluate the impact of such projects.

We also worked to promote greater cooperation and participation with the industrial, technological, academic and political worlds. Eureco tried to create a new interface between all these different fields and these links and activities continue at the same level today.

At EU-level, we worked for many years as partners to DG XI at the Commission and with the European Parliament preparing workshops and dossiers to inform Parliamentarians about the environment. We collaborated on specific projects with the German and Dutch governments in the preparation of the introduction of new environmental measures, informing them how other Member States had tackled these questions.

We provided technical and scientific assistance to the Luxembourg Presidency in 1991 on sustainable development and since then we have worked with the Luxembourg government on a wide range of issues such as eco-taxes and water management, always using the same methodology of looking at a particular area and all the other related fields, the basis of sustainable development, and integrating them.

We are currently working in Eastern Europe, notably on a pre-accession project on water management involving partners in the Czech Republic and Denmark. This involves us organising workshops bringing together the project partners on the technical, financial and institutional aspects of the project."

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Women bringing a balance

Marijke van Schendelen

Marijke van Schendelen is a lecturer in the Department of Urban Planning and Demography, the Faculty of Environmental Sciences, at the University of Amsterdam where she also carries out government research in the field of housing, urban planning, traffic and transport, particularly from a gender perspective. From 1988 to 1992, she chaired the University's Department of Women's Studies and from 1992-1994 the Department of Urban Planning and Demography. Ms van Schendelen has participated in the organisation of international conferences and in publications on gender-related environment and urban planning issues.

In many European countries, the issue of the quality of life has rightly been receiving the attention it deserves. The needs of both women and men are used as the basis for this debate, although the position of women in particular is still often a topic of discussion.

Women have political responsibilities of their own when it comes to improving the quality of life. As far as this is concerned, the attention currently being paid to sustainable development signifies a fundamental broadening in two respects.

Firstly, not only is our living environment increasingly regarded as an essential source for the prosperity of humanity – so that the scarcity of raw materials and space in which to live is widely discussed – but there is also an increasing awareness of the intrinsic value of the diversity of flora and fauna and of areas of natural beauty.

Secondly, a sustainable society may be thought of as one in which material and non-material sources are dealt with carefully. This requires the existence of a democratic society centred on the participa-

tion of all citizens. It is women, and women's groups in particular, who are bringing this second view to attention. It is interesting to note that in this Dossier the link between these two interpretations of sustainable living is made.

The importance of sustainable development within the framework of a democratic society may be approached at various levels: from activities in and around the home to those undertaken at a global level. In this respect, the slogan "think global, act local" applies just as much as "think local, act global".

To an important extent, the involvement of women at various UN and NGO conferences, which has led to interesting actions such as URBANA, ANTIGONE PLUS and Green Belt Movements, is being fed by the experiences

women have gained locally, in cities and rural areas both inside the European Union and beyond.

In any event, the developments presented here, and the many initiatives taken by women's groups at local and regional level within the framework of sustainable development, may be regarded as being useful building blocks for a European policy, and as contributions towards a sustainable future.

Prospects of sustainability for European women

Political stability in Europe has led to great prosperity, good health and a high level of education. At an individual level, the many public sector care arrangements have contributed to widespread self-sufficiency among the people of Europe.

Women have been able to benefit from this. They are well educated and increasingly make up a significant portion of the working population. One drawback, however, is that it is still difficult for women to combine their careers with their caring activities looking after children, family members or their homes. These activities are still considered as typically feminine tasks and, because of the absence of any proper policy on this issue, many women have to tackle them alone.

The outcome is often that women postpone or put off having children altogether. Women who combine having children with a career, whether or not they live alone, often find themselves overburdened. In pursuing sustainable development, it is of vital importance that this destabilising factor is obviated by a policy in which the caring activities carried out within the home are valued on an equal footing with the paid work done outside the home, so that time and space is provided for the private caring sphere.

To achieve this, it is of utmost importance that more European men, for instance, become involved in caring tasks in their home lives through the introduction of a general right to part-time work. In addition, it is vital that public sector care arrangements for children, the sick and older people in need of care, either at home or in institutions, are expanded.

Finally, attention needs to be paid to environmental planning programmes in cities and regions so that they are implemented in such a way that it is possible to combine professional and family responsibilities through creating fast and efficient links between places of work and residential districts.

Energy and raw materials: the outlook for sustainable consumption

More adequate attention needs to be given to the fair and efficient consumption of energy and raw materials to ensure minimum waste and pollution. This means that production, transport and consumption processes, as well as the possible re-use of energy and raw materials, need to be regularly tested for sustainability.

Since the 1970s, the green movement in particular has been demanding that attention be paid to this. Questions have been raised about such issues as the development of nuclear power stations and increasing CO₂ emissions. More and more women are becoming involved in these issues, although up until now this involvement has mainly been limited to concern for the consumer aspects of energy and raw material chains or with small-scale production processes.

When searching for a good environmental balance, it is important to pay attention to the whole chain – including aspects of production and the possible re-use of energy – if a fair and efficient consumption of energy and raw materials is to be achieved.

An important area of discussion regarding the development and management of production chains, is the scale of these chains or, in other words, their extent, complexity and size. The popularity of the "small is beautiful" motto within the green movement betrays the sympathy of this movement for small-scale operations.

It is with good reason that in Chapter 3 a question mark has been placed against this concept in terms of the agricultural sector. However, in other sectors of the economy, this question mark seems appropriate, and more detailed research on this point is necessary.

The degree of complexity of these chains is another subject for debate. On this issue too, there is a predilection for simplicity and convenient arrangements. Yet from the sustainability point of view, just as much environmental benefit may be gained by a more complex approach.

The "tradability" of emission rights is another topic that merits discussion. Briefly summarised, this involves the possibility of trading off surplus emissions of harmful gases in a particular region against investments made in production technologies or in forestry, for absorbing CO₂.

Although, at first sight, this seems a good idea, two important points need to be made. Firstly, this

does not directly encourage research into production technologies that are cleaner than those currently used. And secondly, the development of this form of forestry appears to take little or no account of the interests of the local population living in the regions set aside for this purpose.

So, in these areas, it seems important to make a distinction between the nature of the process, on the one hand, and the ownership and management of the process and the power over it, on the other. We need to recognise that women's political power regarding production processes has mainly developed at the small-scale and rather simple level of the household, the family business and the neighbourhood and even then it has been geared more to the consumerism than to production. This also applies to much of the green movement.

In the pursuit of a sustainable society, more women should gain political power in association with sections of the green movement so that together they can provide guidance on the larger-scale and more complex issues linked to energy and raw material chains.

These industries are increasingly characterised by their strongly monopolistic nature. As a result, there is little room for discussion or for new developments such as the application of wind and solar energy or the use of biomass. And, as has been pointed out in Chapter 3, the transport industry also deserves special attention.

Now, more than ever before, all these areas require some form of political guidance within the framework of the European Union beyond the level of stimulation through programmes.

Prospects for sustainable land use

Land use is another important element for a sustainable society. The surface area of land built on for urban development, infrastructure and tourism has increased enormously over the past decade, as has the area of land used for intensive agriculture.

Combined with the extraction of raw materials and the harmful gas emissions, this has caused huge environmental damage to our flora and fauna, both in terms of quality and quantity. Areas of natural beauty have been greatly reduced, if not lost completely.

The importance of sustainable land use can be gauged by the many discussions on the subject and developments in this area. But in terms of environmental planning, many European countries may congratulate themselves on the planning systems they have developed.

On the one hand, this means that processes which result in a huge spread of urban and suburban activities, like those taking place in the United States, are being curbed in Europe. It also means that public transport is reasonably able to pay its way, not only in urban areas but also nationally and internationally.

On the other hand, it is equally unlikely that in Europe we will experience the gigantic concentrations of populations currently developing in South-East Asia, because in Europe we feel that an urban society needs to have more to offer than just a place to live and work. The urban spaces in and around many European cities taken up by parks, green spaces and private gardens are greatly valued and this contributes to the sustainable character of our urban regions.

The importance of the quality of life in cities is now recognised in European policy. Projects such as the URBAN Initiative, which tries to eliminate exclusion mechanisms based on income or education, are invaluable. However, a city offering a good quality of life also needs to offer all its inhabitants, young or old, women or men, the right kind of spatial framework in which to carry out day-to-day or weekly activities which are necessary but which can also be pleasurable and agreeable.

This means paying much more attention to the daily living environment in neighbourhoods and suburbs. It also means that places of work and social, cultural and medical centres need to be easily accessible.

Cities in which the quality of life is good also leave space for agricultural land and sites of natural beauty, and these are valuable from a financial and economic as well as from an ecological point of view. This is even more important in terms of elements of infrastructure such as roads, cables and pipes which should, as far as possible, be planned and built together to combat the fragmentation of land use.

The importance of sustainability for the countryside is also topical. The drawbacks associated with the enormous growth in intensive agriculture may not only lead to environmental damage to areas of natural beauty, but also, in the long term, may interfere with soil structure and upset the water balance in many areas.

The solution sometimes put forward to this is to turn towards smaller-scale exploitation and simpler cycles. The question remains, however, of whether the future of the European countryside lies in past production processes.

The powers that the European institutions have managed to obtain in the field of agriculture need

to be used now more than ever to steer this sector towards sustainable production and consumption processes by means of technological measures linked to the environment. This applies equally to the maintenance and development of areas of natural beauty on a large scale, especially those which span frontiers.

For all of this, it is certainly worth taking the trouble to investigate areas where hybrids may exist such as ecological agriculture or the agricultural management of nature. This is particularly true in view of the fact that a combination of agriculture and nature is also attractive to many city dwellers who are only too happy to visit natural areas that have been cultivated by farmers. An additional advantage is that this might provide a degree of diversification in the rural employment market.

Women creating a balance

It scarcely warrants argument that in order to achieve a sustainable society, women need to enter into strategic alliances.

The value attached to sustainability is increased by women's involvement because of the important emphasis women place on the informal sector and private life as an essential part of life as a whole.

The building blocks that women have already put in place are of great value, particularly when they form part of a sustainable development which seeks to create a balance between large-scale and small-scale operations and a link between production and consumption processes.

Achieving political power and influence in the various economic sectors will play at least as great a part in determining sustainability as increasing knowledge and understanding about the process of a sustainable development. ●

USEFUL ADDRESSES

EUROPEAN UNION

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 Fax: (32.2) 295 01 38
 Internet:
<http://www.europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg11/dg11home.html>
<http://www.europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg17home.html>

European Environment Agency
 Kongens Nytorv 6
 DK-1050 Copenhagen
 Tel.: (45) 33 36 71 00
 Fax: (45) 33 36 71 99
 Internet: <http://www.eea.dk>

EU Environmental Legislation
 For an overview of EU environmental legislation, the latest publications and policy decisions in the field, consult the homepage of Directorate-General XI (Environment, Nuclear Safety, Civil Protection):
<http://www.europa.eu.int/en/dg11/dg11home.html>

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

International Energy Agency (IEA)
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Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD)
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 F-75775 Paris Cedex 16
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United Nations Conference for Human Settlements
 PO Box 30030, Nairobi, Kenya
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 Fax: (254.2) 62 42 65

United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
 Regional Office for Europe
 15 Chemin des Anémones
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 Fax: (41.22) 797 34 64
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 1, Rue Miollis
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World Health Organisation (WHO)
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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

BEUC (European Bureau of Consumer Unions)
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