

VOL 21

The Future We Want

A Feminist Perspective

By **Christa Wichterich**



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By Christa Wichterich

Edited by the Heinrich Böll Foundation

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CONTENTS

Foreword	7
1. Back on the Agenda: Gender and Ecology	9
2. The Chernobylian Turn and Global Governance through UNCED	13
3. Climate and Gender Justice	18
On polluters and victims	19
Gender mainstreaming	20
Gender in the negotiations	22
The population argument – a pitfall	23
4. Food and Agriculture	25
Who feeds the world?	27
From livelihood rights to food sovereignty	29
Who owns local biodiversity?	31
Who owns the land?	32
Urban agriculture	34
5. Multiple Crises, Green Economy, and a Critique of Growth	36
Care and precaution	40
The good life and <i>buen vivir</i>	44
6. Outlook: Occupy the Future	46

FOREWORD

The Future We Want – the motto chosen by the UN in the run-up to the June 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) – is certainly forward-looking. Expectations are higher than ever: Rio+20 is supposed to be *the* great historic opportunity to define routes towards a safer, fairer, greener, and cleaner world. The focus of the Rio de Janeiro conference is to be the principle of a “green economy” as a way out of the global crises of climate, food, and poverty.

Those who, like Christa Wichterich, the author of this essay, take a closer look at the preparations and blueprints for a green economy will discover that they are devoid of gender perspectives. The theoretical frameworks, practical knowledge, and experience of feminists and women’s networks play virtually no role in the debate around the “future we want.” Yet, for many decades, those women have been developing responses to local and global-level ecological and social crises. Twenty years ago, the most important document of the first Rio conference, *Agenda 21*, acknowledged that women are key actors in protecting the environment and combating poverty; however, by the time the preparations for Rio+20 began, the consensus that environmental justice, sustainability, and gender justice are inextricably linked and mutually dependent issues had been lost. Ecofeminist approaches that had their heyday in the 1980s and 1990s were now rarely to be heard, let alone influential. Many women advocating feminist points of view had withdrawn from global negotiations on the environment and from ecological activism.

As a result, gender is often sidelined in debates on growth and the environment. Yet, for some time now, women’s networks have been making their voices heard once again, calling for gender-equitable policies during climate negotiations. In local struggles against inequality and the destruction of the foundations of human life, women continue to hold an important position: Feminists and women’s networks are reclaiming spaces for action and thought. *Occupy Patriarchy*, for example, is a bid by US feminists to position themselves in society’s debates and struggles around inequality and privatization.

Feminist ecological and economic models and utopias are regaining ground. For the Heinrich Böll Foundation it is crucial to make these ideas heard and to give them greater prominence within the larger discourse on a post-growth, equitable world. Our perspective on the great transformations and the quest for a better life is critical of growth and, at the same time, gendered: The “future we want” is a future that thinks of gender justice as inseparable from ecological and social sustainability – one that discusses and strives for new models of prosperity,

quality of life, and the social dimension of global restructuring in terms that take account of gender.

Christa Wichterich's essay provides the analytical foundations for this vision. It points to spheres of political action that are especially interesting and relevant for contemporary ecofeminism. The essay is part of a series of publications on Rio+20, a series that intends to promote new emphases that are able to break down blockages in thought and action – and thus to create a space for social innovations, something we need much more urgently than technological ones.

For the Heinrich Böll Foundation the public interest in the 2012 Rio+20 conference is a starting point for a whole range of activities. To us the debate around a green economy, growth, and new models of prosperity is a great opportunity to draw more attention to feminist ecology and a gendered sustainability, and to bring such approaches back onto the global political agenda.

I would like to express my very sincere thanks to Christa Wichterich. More than almost any other, she has for many years rigorously united feminist critique with an outlook critical of capitalism; she has publicized, accompanied, and supported the emancipatory and utopian substance of the theoretical and practical models put forward by feminists and women's networks.

We welcome further ideas and comments from our readers.

Berlin, January 2012

Barbara Unmüßig
President, Heinrich Böll Foundation

1. Back on the Agenda: Gender and Ecology

The multiple crisis – the financial crash, hunger, climate change and resource scarcity – shows emphatically that neoliberal market globalization cannot fulfill its promises, namely to bring about the ideal allocation of worldwide resources and thus be a win-win game for all. This is also the reason why the growth-based concept of sustainability put forward at the 1992 *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro was doomed to fail, as it constituted an attempt to reconcile economic growth, protection of resources, and social justice. In an effort to salvage the concept of sustainability, which has lost credibility, the United Nations have proposed a *Global Green New Deal* based on a *Green Economy* as the new guiding principle for the Rio+20 Conference. The Green Economy seeks a way out of the financial, climate, and energy crisis and, at the same time, tries to make the connection to the *Millennium Development Goals* and poverty alleviation.

Taking a closer look from a feminist perspective at the papers on the *Green Economy*, one is struck by the fact how few gender aspects they contain. Twenty years after the Rio Conference they seem to be gender-blind. In 1992, the *Agenda 21*, the Rio Conference's final document, recognized women as key actors for environmental protection and poverty alleviation and granted them rights to shape development and environmental policy and make decisions in that area. On this basis, a broad consensus on gender policy came about in the 1990s, namely that

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

Two decades on, the Green Economy papers of the *United Nations Environment Programme*¹ (UNEP) lag behind the *Agenda 21*. Neither do their various topics

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

reflect gender mainstreaming nor is there an effort to take a feminist perspective into consideration.

Climate change has been at the top of the global environmental agenda for years and was, for a long time, treated as if it were a gender-neutral issue. If, in a sustained effort, international gender networks had not tenaciously introduced a gender perspective, the 1992 *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) would still be gender-blind. In 2008, and only after 14 rounds of negotiations, did the UNFCCC secretariat call on the parties to implement gender-sensitive measures. However, when UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon assembled an advisory group on *Climate Change Financing* in 2010, he appointed 19 men. Following vehement protests, the high-level body was expanded to include then French finance minister Christine Lagarde. Germany has not taken up the gender message of the 1992 Agenda 21 either. When, in 2011, German political parties nominated 17 experts to the study group “Growth, Prosperity, Quality of Life,” there was not a single woman among them.

These examples show that the glass ceiling is still very much in effect in the decision-making arenas of development and environment policy and that women’s expertise is largely being ignored, even though mainstreaming and participation are professed time and again.

What happened to the topics of “feminist ecology” and “women/gender and sustainability” after their boom, 20 years ago? Following the Rio Conference, both public attention and the focus of women’s networks shifted to core themes of upcoming major UN conferences: human rights, population, social issues, women, habitat, and food. “Women and the environment” was listed next-to-last among 12 critical areas of concerns in the *Platform for Action* passed at the *Fourth World Conference on Women* in Beijing in 1995, a document that, to this day, is considered to be an international catechism for women’s rights and gender equality. The topics disappeared from public view because women’s movements focused on protests against neoliberal globalization, trade liberalization, and the privatization of public goods, while expert professional and scientific elites continued to work on these issues. In the process, both the protest movements and the experts neglected, time and again, to recreate the linkages between the economy, ecology, and social concerns fundamental to the concept of sustainability. In no policy area did topics combining gender and environment take on a dynamic of their own. Although it was popular to treat the two topics as cross-cutting themes in development policy in the context of poverty alleviation, and although there was talk of “double mainstreaming” – of gender and environment, or gender and climate – gender aspects vanished from environmental and sustainability policy, just as they had from development policy. It is true that a gender perspective is mentioned more often at the programmatic level of environmental policies today than at the time of the Rio Conference. Mainstreaming as a technical procedure is more widespread. The proportion of women in specialist elites and political delegations has increased. Yet,

when references to gender at the programmatic level have to be broken down and operationalized, gaps in implementation arise and, strangely enough, the gender perspective “evaporates”.² In addition, awareness of the complex internal connections between gender, economic, and natural relations is still lacking.

Against this background, gender fatigue started to spread in the 2000s: Many women working in various institutions became more frustrated about the slow pace of progress and the tenacity of resistance. In contrast, institutions pointed to the progress that had been made and, viewing the topic of gender justice as accomplished, checked it off their lists. The more other topics such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, climate, and participation were declared to be crosscutting issues, the stronger the opposition to mainstreaming became – and often fatigue set in. Similar things happened in major environmental organizations and eco-movements – feminist approaches did not leave much of a footprint. In many debates surrounding ecological issues old stereotypes about the relationship between women and nature – simplifications of women as victims, as perpetrators of environmental damages or, on the other hand, as saviors – resurfaced. Time and again, the media take up populist arguments such as population growth as the root of all evil. In contrast, they fail to mention that women from Fukushima have called for a global shutdown of nuclear power. Overall, today, gender approaches are less politicized and discussed less as an emancipatory perspective for changing structures than they were in 1992.

Nonetheless, Rio+20, the *Green Economy*, and current discourses about new models of prosperity, growth, and the failure of the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) make these topics all the more current and controversial. For this reason, it is highly necessary to put feminist perspectives on ecology as well as a debate about gendered sustainability back on the agenda.

However, these topics will only be able to mobilize people, if they connect to the new social movements and their demands for public participation and direct democracy. Outmoded approaches to women’s rights and equality tend to be alien to young women and men. They have new ways of approaching gender issues and the relationship between humans and nature, namely by constructing gender identities and through everyday practices of lifestyle and consumption. Current examples include radicalized animal rights activism, veganism, and a critique of industrialized food production that are part of countless initiatives from urban gardening to reclaiming the commons. Many young people start out with aspects of their individual lifestyles, but as they transcend the question “What can I do, as an individual?” – a question that has been around for a long time – they begin to interfuse a system-wide focus with the most varied approaches to seeking a “good life” and alternative economies. This linkage of personal and political aspects is the most important prerequisite for the much-

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

needed transformation of subjectivities, of power relations, of economic structures, and of our relationship to nature.

2. The Chernobyl Turn and Global Governance through UNCED

The Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the *UN Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED) of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, marked the high point of the debates and of civil-society activism concerning women and ecology, or rather gender and sustainability. The cesium-contaminated rain pouring down on Western Europe after the nuclear catastrophe of Chernobyl in April of 1986 triggered an unprecedented wave of outrage against nuclear power, high-risk technologies, and the radioactive contamination of humans and nature. Women in particular articulated the concern that such an accident could be a threat to “life” as such, and in any case to nurture. The radioactive threat confronted them with additional challenges, as they were the ones responsible for handling everyday life in private households: Data about the contamination of mother’s milk, mushrooms, other foods, and the soil made mothers fearful for their children and their health. Women established self-help groups in order to tackle problems of everyday life, but also NGOs and international networks that studied the connections between technology, development, and the relationship between humans and nature more systematically. More than any other event before, Chernobyl made people aware of how closely linked the local was to the global. Acknowledging that “Chernobyl changed our lives,” women developed an ecofeminism with a personal edge and began looking for ways to drop out of the system.³

Ecofeminism – a brief history of ideas

Ecofeminism was the philosophical and theoretical background of women’s discourses and political actions from the 1980s onwards. Its most important theoretical reference point was Carolyn Merchant’s analysis and critique of the destruction of the organic conception of the world by the experimental science of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. Historically, this entailed the hierarchization of man=culture versus woman=nature as well as the perse-

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

cution of witches.⁴ At the same time, ecofeminist concepts were rooted in political experiences from social movements, such as the No Nukes and the peace movements, as well as in women's traditional and indigenous knowledge.

Premises of ecofeminism

- the assumption that women are particularly close to nature,
- a holistic view of the relationships between humans and nature, the “web of life,”
- an analogy between the violent subjugation of nature and of women (“rape of the wild”),
- a critique of the hierarchy and the dualism of woman/emotion/nature vs. man/rationality/culture/technology,
- a critique of modern natural sciences and technologies and their belief that everything is feasible and can be controlled,
- a positive revaluation of women's everyday and traditional knowledge.

“Cultural ecofeminism” was the subject of heated controversy. One sticking point was the ahistorical generalization of women's proximity to nature and of a violent patriarchy. Another was the anti-modernist position which became manifest both as technophobia and as an idealization of precolonial and precapitalist societies. As a result, ecofeminism was accused of having romantic tendencies and thus a proximity to conservative and nationalistic ideas.⁵

The main practical approach developed by ecofeminists was subsistence with a focus on self-provisioning and a “moral economy” based on cooperation and mutuality.⁶ The common goal of subsistence and sufficiency, or liberation from consumption, something addressed to the wealthy middle class, was to emancipate oneself from global capitalist markets and to opt out of the prevailing societal relationships with nature. Women wanted to withdraw their labor and purchasing power from a system that subjugated nature – and thus starve it.

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- 4 Merchant, Carolyn (1980): *The Death of Nature. Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, San Francisco.
 - 5 Agarwal, Bina (1992): *The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India*, in: *Feminist Studies* 18, No.1, 119-159; Nanda, Meera (2002): *Do the Marginalized Valorize the Margins? Exploring the Dangers of Difference*, in: Saunders, Kriemhild (ed.) (2002): *Feminist Post-Development Thought*, 212-225.
 - 6 Mies, Maria/Bennholdt-Thomsen, Veronika (1999): *The Subsistence Perspective*, London.

In contrast, many transnational women's networks wanted to intervene in the negotiations towards a new global governance regime that began with the Rio Conference in 1992 after the end of the bipolar global order. They constructed a "we women" identity as a targeted, strategic sisterhood in order to be capable of acting and intervening politically, despite all the existing differences and the plurality of approaches.⁷ In 1991, they developed a position paper, the "*Women's Action Agenda 21*,"⁸ whose key points are still relevant today. Starting from a critique of the development model of the "free market" and economic growth, the *Women's Action Agenda 21* argues for a new ethics regarding economic activity and the relationship with nature, for the preservation of biological and cultural diversity, for demilitarization, justice between the South and the North, as well as for empowering women by means of democratic, reproductive, and resource rights. The core concept of this 1991 manifesto is "sustained livelihood," meaning a nexus between the concept of safeguarding survival, whose starting point is the everyday practice of provisioning, care, and social reproduction on the local level, and resource justice – for women need property rights as well as powers in order to control and make decisions. The manifesto demands a remoralization of politics and the economy in light of the environmental and development crises, and equal participation in the process of policy-making.

The women's/human rights paradigm

Since the early 1990s, women's networks trying to involve themselves in international politics and global governance have worked with the United Nations' human rights paradigm. The emancipatory potential of this rights approach is that it overcomes the exclusion of women and recognizes them as different but equal legal subjects. This women's/human rights paradigm has provided diverse women's movements with a common frame of reference and a normative system connecting both topics and various levels of political action, from the local to the global. The principles of non-discrimination, non-violence, and equality determine whether women's/human rights are honored.

The rights approach changed women's political self-image, enabling them to claim fundamental rights and act as part of civil society and legal subjects, and no longer primarily as needy supplicants. In the context of development policy, this signaled a paradigm shift, as an orientation towards

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

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

basic rights and justice was given preference to basic needs and welfare.⁹ Now, practical approaches focused on the political implementation of legal rights as well as on demands to participate in politics and democracy, the economy, development, and peace. The obligations of states are threefold: They have to create conditions that respect, protect, and enforce women's/human rights.

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

In this context, women's networks adopted the main tenets of sustainability, which conceives of ecological, social, and economic conditions as one. This provides many starting points for holistic feminist approaches – from the level of "*Local Agenda 21*" up to international environmental agreements. Across all sectors, women's rights activists aimed to complement the generational contract of sustainability with a gender contract. Nevertheless, there were critical voices: The Southern women's network DAWN called sustainable development a contradiction in terms, as development that is defined by growth, trade liberalization, and efficiency – as is the case with the *Agenda 21* – compels people to sabotage resource preservation. DAWN linked the demand for gender-equitable development to a transformation of the market and its growth-based model of development.¹⁰

Following a liberal concept of equality, the women's lobby demanded the right to participate in international environmental governance and to make

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

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

decisions.¹¹ However, “lobby” is too narrow a term as it suggests that special interests of women are being pursued within the existing system when, in fact, the purpose of feminist advocacy is both to critique gender inequalities and shape political strategies and goals in the interest of social justice and the public good. In this vein, some protagonists such as Bella Abzug, spokeswoman of the *Global Women’s Lobby*, warned, “Women don’t want to be mainstreamed into a polluted stream.”

These political positions ranging, on the one hand, from livelihood approaches and a fundamental critique of economic and natural conditions, to more efficient environmental management and pro-growth sustainability, on the other, generated diverse fields of action in politics as well as in every day life. These political positions and their philosophical backgrounds led to highly diverse gender-political strategies – and they also created gender-specific stereotypes and notions concerning their relationship with nature. This resulted in a certain ambivalence between the goal of gender equality or empowerment of women on the one hand and, on the other, an exploitation of a gender-specific division of labor, that is, women’s care for and proximity to nature against men’s proximity to technology for dominating or preserving nature.

One example of this ambivalence is the concept of *Women, Environment and Development* (WED), an attempt, in the 1990s, to introduce a gender-and-environment perspective into all sectors of development policy.¹² If gender-specific differences are to be changed, the very first step is to call them by name. However, projects tended to instrumentalize women as unpaid guardians of biodiversity and protectors of resources without safeguarding their access to and property rights over resources.¹³ Thus women were used as a tireless protection and clean-up crew in degraded environments – as volunteers who plant trees and process waste water – yet environmental policies were not recast in a user- and gender-equitable manner.¹⁴

Below, we will discuss the tension between approaches to solve problems of ecological, economic, and social sustainability focusing on markets and approaches focusing on sustenance in regard to three current topics, namely climate, food, and alternative economies. The aim is to show that a gender perspective does in fact make an important difference regarding the economic and natural conditions of societies.

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- 11 Rodenberg, Birte (1998): Von der Mülltrennung zum Machtgewinn: Internationale Frauen-Umweltpolitik, in: Ruppert, Uta (ed.): Lokal bewegen – global verhandeln. Internationale Politik und Geschlecht, Frankfurt, 106-130
 - 12 Davidson, Joan/Dankelman, Irene (1988): *Women and the Environment in the Third World*, London; Rodda, Anabel (1991) *Women and the Environment*, London.
 - 13 Braidotti, Rose et. al. (1994): *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development. Towards a Theoretical Synthesis*, London; Harcourt, Wendy (ed.) (1994): *Feminist Perspectives on Sustainable Development*, London/New Jersey.
 - 14 Woroniuk, Beth/Hunt, Juliet/Tabeth, Matiyz Chiuta (1998): *Mainstreaming Gender. Equality Perspectives in Bilateral Development Cooperation Focused on the Environment*, no place given.

3. Climate and Gender Justice

Various gender stereotypes and references to gender will be found as prototypes within the discourse on climate change and the negotiations about the 1992 *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC): This ranges from a) ignoring the social category of gender when it comes to avoiding emissions or financing to b) mainstreaming approaches concerning adaptation to climate change, and c) focusing on women as victims and men as movers and shakers. The gender imbalance is greatest regarding access to and decision-making power in the areas of climate policy, climate finance, and technologies (from technological fixes such as offshore wind farms to geo-engineering such as carbon capture and storage, which have entirely masculine connotations, both scientifically and economically).

At the 1992 UNCED Conference, international women's networks had strongly favored restructuring the production and consumption patterns especially in the North in order to reduce resource consumption in general and the production of greenhouse gases in particular. This built upon the then-popular strategies of sufficiency and reducing consumption and was meant as a counterpoint to fantasies of feasibility propounded by the champions of efficiency who promoted technological solutions to climate issues.

The focus on climate justice, one of civil society's key concepts in recent years, continues to promote this perspective that demands a differentiated view of the production and reduction of greenhouse gases. However, in international negotiations, the discourse on justice deals primarily with the relationship between North and South and the historical debt of the economies of the North as emitters of greenhouse gases. The notion of "common but differentiated responsibilities" for climate protection takes this into account. However, this discourse about who caused climate change ignores social differences within societies, including gender. In contrast, civil-society organizations use the "polluter pays"-principle to challenge the global middle classes' patterns of energy- and resource-intensive production and consumption – their "imperial lifestyle"¹⁵ – something especially rampant in the North. Their approach is focused on "energy-democratic" decentralized solutions that also provide more access and participation for women than centralized solutions using large-scale technologies ever will.

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

Since the Rio Conference, a contrasting approach has been taken and, within the framework of a globalized model of efficiency, nature has been transformed into a subsystem of the market – supposedly with the aim of protecting it. To this end, nature has been quantified, priced, privatized, and traded. Kathrin McAfee calls this commodification that dominates climate negotiations “selling nature to save it.”¹⁶ It is an approach diametrically opposed to sufficiency and climate justice. Not only can the trade in emission rights not reduce CO₂ but market mechanisms such as *Payment for Ecosystem Services* (PES) and *Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation* (REDD) also exacerbate the unequal trade relations between the North and the South as well as those between different countries of the South.

On polluters and victims

Both climate change and the political approaches to solving it affect women and men differently. Climate change increases existing poverty and environmental problems; it makes ecosystems and livelihood resources in the high-risk countries more precarious. Everywhere, the poor are affected most because they lack the flexibility to protect themselves, lack options to avoid risks, and have no fallback positions. Wherever precipitation and seasons become unpredictable, the cycles of sowing and harvesting are disrupted, which compromises agricultural productivity and food security and makes adaptation necessary. Wherever, in the name of climate protection, industrial-scale monocultures of biofuels are being planted, for example palm oil plantations, small-scale, self-sufficient farmers – most of them women – are being displaced. Wherever, under the *Clean Development Mechanism* (CDM), emissions rights are traded as carbon credits between North and South, wherever forests are replanted and granted protected status as carbon sinks, local people are being prevented from using them, are displaced or resettled.¹⁷ This process makes survival in rural areas precarious, increases the risk of poverty, reinforces or widens social divisions, and triggers more migration to cities. The consequence is that those who have contributed

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

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

least to global climate change, those already exposed to multidimensional poverty, are most affected by its direct and indirect effects.¹⁸

The weakest members of society, those suffering socio-cultural discrimination, suffer the worst consequences of severe weather and climate disasters. Up to four times more women than men lost their lives in the areas of India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka worst hit by the 2004 tsunami.¹⁹ Women as a “vulnerable group,” as particularly affected by climate change and disasters, became the focus of attention once development, environmental, and climate policies turned to adaptation. Thus, from the point of view of impact assessment, women were once again stereotypically perceived of as victims.

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

- Negative impacts on agriculture and food because seasons, dry periods, and rainfall have become unpredictable, resulting in increased work, a slump in productivity, and crop failures,
- Changes in the water supply, rising sea levels, glacier melt, severe weather, more powerful storms, flooding,
- Loss of biological diversity, plant and animal species, and fish stocks due to global warming,
- Degradation of forests, loss of carbon sinks and of forests as resources and areas of silviculture,
- Loss of land and coasts, soil erosion, desertification,
- Violation of livelihood rights due to cultivation of agrofuels and conservation of forests as sinks,
- Health risks due to infections and climate disasters,
- Increased migration to cities due to poverty and climate change.

Gender mainstreaming

The *Framework Convention on Climate Change* did not display one iota of gender consciousness. Evidently, CO₂ emissions, that is, aggregate data at the center of scientific research and negotiations, have no gender. Climate change was viewed

¹⁸ The four studies in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, and Mozambique carried out by the Heinrich Böll Foundation since 2007, as well as a regional summary thereof, are available at www.boell.org.za; see also: Jenny Jungehülsing (2011): Women who go, women who stay: Reactions to Climate Change, Heinrich Böll Foundation North America, www.boell.org/web/52.html; Terry, Geraldine (ed.) (2009): Climate Change and Gender Justice, Oxfam; WEDO (2003): Common Ground. Women’s Access to Natural Resources and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, New York.

¹⁹ www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/0,1518,362711,00.html

primarily as a problem of global and local natural spaces, and little attention was paid to its social and economic dimensions.²⁰ However, if one takes the problem of greenhouse gases and climate change from the macro-political and technical levels to the micro-levels where local people are affected, highly differentiated perspectives will open up with regard to geographical, social, and gender-specific issues. They display a complex interweaving of ecology, economy, and justice between, on the one hand, highly industrialized countries, newly industrialized countries, and developing countries and, on the other, between genders, generations, and social classes in respective societies.

A gender-sensitive perspective is increasingly being included in climate-related environmental and development projects at the local level and in policy planning at the national level. More and more gender analyses are being conducted as part of projects and programs. The most recent studies, however, have determined that during the development of sectoral strategies gender disparities are not assessed systematically. Strangely enough, gender aspects evaporate during implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of environmental and climate-related projects, as they do when it comes to development projects.²¹ The narrow perception of women as victims prevents constructive reference to their traditional knowledge and their problem-solving capacities – to approaches, for example, small-scale women farmers began to develop long ago in order to adapt to climate change. Sectoral and empowerment strategies on the one hand and climate and gender justice on the other are not being linked coherently.

As gender continues to be a blind spot in the negotiations on emissions reductions, so-called mitigation, and in the corresponding *Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action* (NAMA) plans, women's organizations emphasize again and again gender-specific differences concerning the emission of greenhouse gases. A coherent energy and climate policy would entail applying the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" to social and gender-specific differences.²²

Using the slogan "No climate justice without gender justice", female development experts demand gender-equitable measures and gender-sensitive criteria for binding emissions reductions as well as for the provision of funds for adaptation to climate change, poverty alleviation, and the implementation of resource and development rights. To this end, it would be necessary to prepare a *Gender Plan of Action* for the global climate finance regime, including gender budgets for

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- 20** Rodenberg, Birte (2009): Climate Change Adaptation from a Gender perspective. A cross-cutting analysis of development policy instruments. DIE Discussion Paper No. 24, Bonn; Schalatak, Liane (2009): Gender and Climate Finance: Double Mainstreaming for Sustainable Development, Heimrich Böll Foundation, Washington DC.
- 21** Otzelberger, Agnes (2011) Gender-Responsive Strategies on Climate Change: Recent Progress and Ways Forward for Donors, IDS/BRIDGE.
- 22** Spitzner, Meike (2009): How Global Warming is Gendered, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.) (2009): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice. Women Write Political Ecology*, London/New York, 218-230; Terry, Geraldine (2009): No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues, in: *Gender and Development*, Vol. 17, 1, 5-18.

climate-related projects and programs, and gender audits of new climate finance mechanisms.²³ A gender approach that systematically builds on the paradigm of rights is indispensable in the area of climate finance and when designing new funds.

However, when it comes to the use of market-based instruments, a fundamental conflict of goals between gender equity and emissions reduction appears. The international network *GenderCC* rejects the inclusion of forest and agricultural certificates in international emissions trading and the financialization of nature, for example soils, that it entails. Consequently, *GenderCC* rejects gendered financial instruments. As a matter of principle, *GenderCC* holds that the problem of CO₂ and climate change cannot be resolved sustainably using the market or engineering mega-projects, and it will not support an approach it considers wrong just because it aims to promote gender equity. Instead, the organization demands an urgent reduction of emissions by means of a transformation of production and consumption patterns and decentralized, democratically controlled technology. Aspects of reproduction and everyday life seem to support the view that a decentralized energy supply could be an important step towards a climate-friendly energy democracy. This position corresponds to the struggle of the Ogoni women in Nigeria who spearheaded the resistance against Shell. They think that “[a]nother energy future” must be based on “[a]bandoning the belief in export-led growth in favour of servicing local (basic) needs.”²⁴

In contrast, the *Global Gender and Climate Alliance* (GGCA),²⁵ a coalition of civil-society and UN organizations, seeks to tap every potential advantage for women with the help of gender mainstreaming. It argues pragmatically for making all mechanisms gender-sensitive and hopes that women in the global South will, for instance, benefit in the short term by participating in REDD (the commercialization of forest protection), as women’s groups in southern India benefit from certificates on biogas plants.²⁶ By making gender equality its priority, the GGCA supports – at least implicitly – market-oriented paths whose effects are, thus far, not backed up by empirical evidence and that are politically and scientifically highly controversial.

Gender in the negotiations

The first references to gender in the Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the Kyoto Protocol pointed only to the participation of women in government delegations and to taking them into account in the *National Adaptation Plans of Action*

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

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

25 www.gender-climate.org

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

(NAPA). Only in 2008, at COP 13 in Bali, did the international women's lobby, represented by the networks GenderCC, GGCA, WEDO and WECF,²⁷ achieve a breakthrough. The UNFCCC secretariat appointed a Gender Coordinator and called on the parties to implement gender-inclusive measures. Since then, references to gender and recognition of women's rights are to be found in the negotiation documents – at least as far as language is concerned. At its meeting in New York in 2008, the *Commission on the Status of Women* (CSW) emphasized the necessity to, on the one hand, link gender systematically to adaptation and, on the other, the importance that women participate at all levels of planning, decision-making, and in the area of finance. In 2011, efforts to include references to gender throughout the *Global Climate Fund* were successful. Thus, climate change has taken on the normative framework of gender justice with its cornerstones of women's/human rights, political participation, and democratic governance.

According to the most recent information from the UN, however, only a small amount of the funding available for climate issues, that is, of the 6.5 billion dollars of the *Climate Investment Fund* underwritten by the World Bank, arrive at the grassroots and benefit those women who urgently need them to adapt to climate change.²⁸ Funds are channeled to large-scale projects – a prime example: Desertec in the Sahara – and technical and market-based approaches for increasing the efficiency of fossil fuels, exploiting renewable energy sources, and trading in pollution rights. Rarely are women the explicit target group; the “social dimension” ranks behind the ecological goals.

The population argument – a pitfall

The topic of population growth, always popular with the media, has seen a revival within the climate debate, yet it is a simplistic approach that diverts attention from the necessity of structural change. In the early decades of development policy, the specter of a “population bomb” stoked the myth that poverty and hunger were the results of population growth and that birth control was the most effective means to alleviate poverty in the South. In the 1990s, as a counterweight against Malthusian dogmas, women's networks developed the reference frame of sexual and reproductive rights in the context of social inequality and patriarchal power relations.

China and India, the new major powers, are now proving that a large number of young people – precisely those who, in the discourse of “overpopulation,” had been deemed expendable – are by no means an obstacle to growth and economic advancement. On the contrary, today sizable populations are seen as an economic advantage in global competition. However, poverty has been replaced

²⁷ www.genderCC.net; www.wedo.org/category/themes/sustainable-developmentthemes/climatechange/; www.wecf.eu/english/energy-climate/

²⁸ www.guardian.co.uk, June 28, 2011.

by ecological justifications that, once again, view population growth in the South as a threat – in spite of the serious demographic gap that has opened up in many societies in the North and South with their rapidly aging populations. Against the background of the lament over low birth rates in the North, it becomes apparent that the talk about “overpopulation” has a strongly racist slant.

The simplistic calculation that more people need more food, water, energy, and resources is deployed to argue that, in this case, the GDP and the depletion of nature must continue to grow as well. Accordingly, population growth is used as a reference point in the context of the climate debate with the aim of promoting the rapid implementation of technological and market-based solutions, as this presents, supposedly, the only way in which to deal with a growing world population that causes more emissions.²⁹ Such monocausal and linear calculations ignore that resource use and consumption differ tremendously both between various societies around the globe and within each society. Today, regions and population groups with high birth rates have a low per capita resource and energy use, as well as low emission levels.³⁰ From this perspective, satisfying the basic needs of a growing population seems to be purely a question of growth and increased productivity and efficiency, not a question of distribution, redistribution, and sufficiency in light of finite resources. The *Food and Agriculture Organization* (FAO) justifies its focus on productivity growth and global agricultural value chains with a future world population of nine billion people. Others take up the seasoned arguments about family planning and, in knee-jerk fashion, argue the need to fight climate change with contraceptives. In its *Green Economy* paper, the UNEP presents its advocacy for more contraceptives in the South as a “green” measure too.

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

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

4. Food and Agriculture

The historic scandal that, in 2007, global hunger increased exponentially because of dramatic price increases, although enough food was available for everyone, is a symptom of a food and agricultural policy that has been subordinated to the logic of the market. Industrial production in monocultures with high use of chemicals as well as global trade and the financialization of foods that does not stop short of speculating on yields and price trends show how this economy with its obsession with profits is undermining the most fundamental purpose of all economic activity, namely, to satisfy needs and sustain life. Betting on food prices is playing Russian roulette with the lives of the poor. It is a frightening example of the ruthless and destructive power of the capitalist economy. In addition, land grabbing in the South – the appropriation of wide swaths of land by large domestic and foreign investors – and the cultivation of agrofuels are dramatically exacerbating the issues of land ownership, resource use, and food security. Such capital investments and appropriations of land perpetuate the process of structural change in the economies, the environment, and the social relations of rural areas, as forms of using agricultural resources and cultivating them for regional cycles, domestic markets, and subsistence farming are being superseded and devalued by “green” revolutions, by privatization, and the patenting of local biodiversity, as well as by new real estate markets and the establishment of global value chains.

The gender-specific division of labor is a key for food security – but also for the dual system of land and resource use in which commercial, chemical-intensive, and export-led monocultures compete with mixed cultivation for local markets and subsistence farming.³¹ As preservers of seed and biodiversity, women are the backbone of food production. Within local communities they have to provide nutrition with the food crops they grow in their kitchen gardens. Cash crops and monetary income, in contrast, are thought of as male. Nonetheless, women also have to shoulder a large part of the regular work for growing cash crops, or they produce vegetables, fruit, or flowers for export as contract

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

farmers or day laborers; they are part of a transnational system of commercial agriculture and value chains.³²

Households are often riven by controversies concerning usage: Men argue for fast-growing varieties that promise income, women prefer low-risk ones that guarantee supply; men, favoring technology and modernization, are more easily won over than women for hybrid seeds sold by corporations or for drilling deep irrigation wells, despite their high cost. As a rule, these conflicts are decided on the basis of land rights: Men own the land, and they make the decisions – even if it is the women who do the work.³³ Even though women bear considerable responsibility in agriculture, they are denied property and usage rights to land and other productive resources, access to modern resources such as technology, credit, and training as well as decision-making power within the family.

Under the influence of local, regional, and global market forces the socio-cultural allocation of gender-specific tasks and skills is changing, and men are migrating to cities looking for wage labor, which, in turn, has resulted in a feminization of small-scale agriculture; cultural norms, for example, that women are proscribed to plow, are being softened; women's work load is increasing and the feminization of responsibility is on the rise as well.

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

The poor have no place to go when major infrastructure projects such as highways and dams displace them, or when industrialization and urbanization impair or destroy their livelihoods and result in a loss of biological diversity. The privatization of land and water resources, government bans on accessing forests, or concessions granted to companies pull the rug from under their feet. This structural transformation of resource management thus systematically

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

33 Sachs, Carolyn (1996): Gendered Fields, Boulder; Leach, Melissa (1991): Engendered Environments: Understanding Natural Resource Management in the West African Forest Zone, in: *IDS Bulletin* 22,4, 17-24; Lachenmann, Gudrun (2001): Die geschlechtsspezifische Konstruktion vom Umwelt in der Entwicklungspolitik, in: Nebelung, Andreas/ Angelika Proferl/ Irmgard Schultz (eds.) (2001): Geschlechterverhältnisse - Naturverhältnisse. Feministische Auseinandersetzungen und Perspektiven der Umweltsoziologie, Opladen, 247-269.

erodes the food security provided by small-scale farming, women's actions that are focused on sustenance, their livelihood rights, and their economy based on mutuality. In turn, this has disastrous socio-cultural consequences for the valuation of women's labor and their forms of economic activity in the local community.

Who feeds the world?

From the perspective of feminist economics, the market-based view of land and agriculture displays many similarities to the analysis of women's labor. Neoclassical economics bemoans the fact that both land and women are "under-utilized," lie fallow, and suffer from "underinvestment".³⁴ Land grabbing is justified by reason that the land is unused, namely "waste land." In the same vein, agricultural cultivation and women's labor for self-subsistence, not for the market, are not perceived as productive or adding value but as external to the economy. Therefore they do not appear in statistics and on balance sheets, even though they secure social reproduction and sometimes also the regeneration of nature, for example soil fertility.

Basic assumptions of feminist economics

Feminist economics analyzes the entire economy as gendered processes because the social category of gender is deeply inscribed in it as an organizing structure. The Archimedean point of feminist economics is care. Around the world, care is overwhelmingly provided by women, mostly unpaid.³⁵ Neoclassical economics separates unpaid and volunteer labor for care, subsistence, and reproduction from the economy, thus making it invisible and categorizing it as unproductive and extra-economic. In contrast, feminist economics considers production and the reproductive/care economy to be interlinked and views care as adding value. The capitalist market can function only because it constantly makes use of unpaid labor for caring and for the regeneration of nature, and exploits them as "endlessly expandable" resources. This capital- and market-based logic of growth, increasing efficiency, and monetary accumulation contradicts the logic of care, precaution, and social security, eroding it ever more.

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

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

The annual report of the *Food and Agriculture Organization* (FAO) 2010/11 and the World Bank's *World Development Report 2012*³⁶ take gender inequalities in agriculture, one of the most intensely mainstreamed sectors, as their points of departure. They present a broad kaleidoscope of gender gaps, including the division of labor, the size of areas under cultivation, the power over productive resources, finances and incomes, technology and knowledge. These empirical findings present many connecting factors to gender equality policy. In both reports the central frame of reference for closing the gender gap is, however, not the rights-based paradigm ranging from the right to food to women's right to inherit, but a market and business perspective oriented primarily towards increasing yields and profits. The FAO and the World Bank assume that, above all, it is access to modern agricultural "tools" such as chemical fertilizer and industrial seed that would empower women, make them "equal partners in sustainable development" (FAO), and thereby trigger substantial increases in productivity and a reduction in the numbers of the hungry by 100 to 150 million. As, after ten years, the *Millennium Development Goals* are largely considered a failure, the topos of women as rescuers who can "win, sustainably, the fight against hunger and extreme poverty" (FAO) is being revived and exploited. At the same time, this stance ignores the fact that world hunger is first and foremost a problem of distribution and not primarily a result of population growth or low productivity.³⁷

The FAO "makes [a] strong business case for investing in women." At the same time, integrating them in export-oriented industrial agricultural value chains, be it as independent entrepreneurs, via contract farming, or via wage labor on plantations and in industrial production, is alleged to offer women better opportunities than small-scale agriculture. Instead of recognizing and empowering them and supporting and improving their contribution to food security by employing redistributive measures, governments have cut subsidies and shifted their focus to the agricultural industries. Thus, the FAO's concept for gender equality is in line with the above-mentioned structural transformation of rural areas based on their integration in global markets. In addition, the FAO follows the World Bank's neoliberal gender policy that perceives of the market as an instrument to empower women to become a *homo economicus*, meaning self-reliant market actors with equal market opportunities and rights. This is considered "smart" and supportive of growth and greater efficiency. Here, the yardstick for gender inequalities as well as gender equality is economic costs or benefits. From the perspective of productivity and the market, the World Bank considers the skills, knowledge, and labor of small-scale women farmers as well as care and subsistence workers to be "underused," "wasted," or "misallocated."

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

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

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

For this reason – and going beyond the goal of equality immanent to the sector – one must ask one basic question: Which agricultural systems and paths of development are best suited to make the right to food and other human rights a reality? In any case, smallholder farming, often in the hands of women, still produces more than half the world's food and is the most important safety net for rural populations. Human rights, including women's rights, should be at the center of rural development, and agricultural production and distribution oriented on needs should form the core of food security. This approach is currently being pursued by Olivier de Schutter, the UN *Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food*. Small-scale farmers, both women and men, need support to make cultivation more eco-friendly, maintain the fertility of the soil, and prevent environmental degradation, but also to establish cooperatives for production and marketing that may ensure their livelihoods against the powerful monopolies of corporations.

From livelihood rights to food sovereignty

Since the early 1990s and the *Women's Action Agenda 21* (see above), women's networks have been using the idea of livelihood as the point of departure for their deliberations on food security, resource use, and agriculture. A conceptual alternative to the efficiency approach of the World Bank, the idea of livelihood is based on livelihood rights, local approaches, and everyday survival in the immediate natural and social environment.³⁸ The approach is also rooted specifically in the struggles of the resource-poor to defend their means of existence – an “environmentalism of the poor.” In resource conflicts taking place in the global South, women are often at the forefront when it comes to protecting the resources they need for survival, for example in India in the struggles against Coca-Cola's appro-

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

priation of groundwater or Monsanto's genetically engineered seed. The poor are concerned above all with the "defense of their livelihood rights" and less with the protection of nature per se.³⁹ In 2009, a "Global Network on Women and the Right to Livelihoods" was founded at the World Social Forum in Belem.⁴⁰

Key elements of the livelihood approach

- The integrated system of all material, social, and cultural resources for securing livelihoods,⁴¹
- self-determination and rights of co-determination on the part of local communities,
- decentralization, tying in with diverse local and regional conditions,
- biological and cultural diversity,
- collective rights of access to resources and their use,
- preservation of commons,
- local and regional circular economies and mixed economies,
- neighborhood economies based on mutuality, economic activity in solidarity,
- taking up indigenous local knowledge based on experience.

With its reference to local rights to self-determine development and low-resource and circular economies, the livelihood concept also presents an alternative to the universally prescribed development strategy with its focus on markets and growth – and to transnational markets shaped by global competition between production sites as well as by the ongoing formation of monopolies by major corporations.

In opposition to the tendency to industrialize and liberalize food production and trade as businesses controlled by a few large corporations, smallholders' organizations, especially *Via Campesina*, have developed the practice and the concept of food sovereignty. The definition of food sovereignty employed by these organizations revolves around a fundamental democratic right to shape agricultural and food policy from the bottom up. Thus, it transcends the FAO's definition of food security, which relies on global value chains in order to secure a right to food. Land, biodiversity, and water are the three key resources for achieving food sovereignty.

³⁹ Martinez-Alier, Joan (2002): *The Environmentalism of the Poor. A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*, Cheltenham; Sachs, Wolfgang (2003). *Ökologie und Menschenrechte*, Wuppertal Papier 131, Wuppertal.

⁴⁰ PWESCR (2009): *Women and the Right to Livelihoods*, New Delhi.

⁴¹ Chambers, Robert (1988): *Sustainable Livelihood, Environment and Development. Putting poor rural people first*. Brighton; Grown, Caren/Sebstad, Jennifer (1989): *To a Wider Perspective on Women's Employment*, in: *World Development* 17 (7), 37-952.

Building blocks of food sovereignty aiming at a post-fossil-fuel regional and circular economy include:

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

Everywhere, access to commons such as forests, community land, and water is a prerequisite for women to be able to supply private households with firewood, drinking water, and animal feed. In addition, the sale of firewood, medicinal herbs, and nuts, for example, is one of the few ways for poor women to make a living. When ponds, meadows, and forests, which were traditionally used as commons, are declared nature reserves or are privatized, or if they are degraded, a dramatic resource scarcity arises, especially for women in landless or land-poor households and indigenous peoples. For them, the preservation of commons and democratic access to its usage and maintenance are important pillars of food sovereignty.

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

Who owns local biodiversity?

Women play a central role in local food sovereignty. Their traditional knowledge about local biodiversity and seeds, about the nutritional value and healing properties of indigenous varieties is a central resource in these contexts of reproduction.⁴² The women farmers have both a practical and a strategic interest in preserving biodiversity as a commons and in their rights to it: It is the most important means of production for survival and guarantees that women are recognized within their communities as providers.

Seed banks and seed exchanges that small-scale women farmers have established in various regions to counteract the loss of varieties and knowledge are outposts of an alternative model of sovereign food supply and food security, one that develops available local resources and the indigenous knowledge connected

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

to it as a productive force independent of the market and that, at the same time, prevents them from being lost or overrun and appropriated by market forces.⁴³

For this reason, small-scale women farmers who secure their survival and food by using, adapting, and developing local biodiversity have been opposing the tendencies to commercialize agriculture that can be found in the 1992 *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD). This convention links the necessity to protect biodiversity with the logic of the market and seeks to market nature in order to protect it, calling this “ecosystem management.”⁴⁴

On the one hand, biological diversity is to become part of global value chains, on the other, it is to be protected by zoning it in nature reserves. Benefit sharing is supposed to mediate between the local owners of biodiversity and the private sector that desires to appropriate genetic resources and exploit them by means of patenting. Profit sharing serves as an incentive for indigenous and local communities to agree to the commercialization of their commons. Flanking the CBD, free trade agreements codify biodiversity protection as an environmental service with stipulations concerning intellectual property (TRIPS⁴⁵) as a liberalized sector.

Small-scale women farmers from various regions of the world are resisting the transformation of their biological diversity and their knowledge into goods traded by corporations; they do not want to be mainstreamed into commercial ventures that require their dispossession. Instead of the freedom of corporations and free trade, they demand the freedom to determine production themselves, independent of global markets, and to exchange seeds. They, too, desire gender democracy when it comes to deciding about and disposing of resources, yet the food sovereignty they demand goes beyond this, focusing on forms of resource use that are determined by the following key points: collective rights over local resources, preservation and further development of local species, and self-determined decisions about the path of development.

Who owns the land?

Land grabbing by wealthy domestic and international investors, which has seen a steep increase since prices for basic foods rose in 2007/8, shows once again how central the question of land is for development. Land enclosure and investments point to the progressive valorization and financialization of all natural

43 Wichterich, Christa (2009): Women peasants, food security and biodiversity in the crisis of neoliberalism, in: *development dialogue*, no.51, 133-142; P.V. Sateesh (2010) Gendering Agriculture: Putting Women First, in: Heinrich Böll Foundation/WIDE/Christa Wichterich (eds): *In Search of Economic Alternatives for Gender and Social Justice: Voices from India*, Brussels.

44 See McAfee above.

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

resources, that is, the subordination of all economic activity, including resources that are initially non-economic, to the financial markets – and their redistribution to financially powerful market actors. These processes serve to establish new global value chains that integrate resources, labor, and livelihoods or force people to adapt to the monetary and market regime. Often, local people place much hope in new income opportunities, yet, on the other hand, they also speak of this structural transformation as “being put in chains” by the market.

Without transparency and without consulting local populations, governments lease or sell land (usually categorized as waste land) to corporations, banks, funds, or other governments that in turn use the land for cultivating basic foods, agrofuels, or for raising livestock. The enclosure of large areas of land as a consequence of leases or purchases ignores local communities’ traditional usage rights, dispossesses and marginalizes them. The label “waste land” ignores the uses such land has for herders and for unpropertied women, be it for collecting firewood, animal feed, fruits and other plants for their own subsistence or for sale, be it for cultivating plants themselves. The investors’ market approach undermines women’s care rationale, in which production and reproduction are not perceived of as separate spheres. The monocultures in the fields and the monoculture of money destroy natural biodiversity as well as the diversity and morale of local economies. The livelihood rights of the poor in the global South are violated; they may even be robbed of their livelihoods, so that countries such as Saudi Arabia, which lack fertile soil and water, can achieve food security. The same may happen in order to push the shift from fossil to renewable fuel or to satisfy increased demand because of rising prosperity in emerging economies and the global North.⁴⁶

Indigenous people with traditional usage rights and women without land title deeds have no legal means to resist such displacement. Women own less than 3 % of the land in Bangladesh, 11 % in the Philippines, and 33 % in Botswana.⁴⁷ They have no negotiating or decision-making power, once village elders or their husbands, as landowners, agree to deals with investors, because the latter – like the World Bank and the FAO – promote such “investments in the agricultural sector” as win-win situations for local populations. Since, however, industrialized plantations offer few opportunities for women to earn an income, they are further displaced from the agricultural sector and forced into marginal service sector jobs. Just as in the cases of mining or construction, an informal sector of petty trading and food stalls as well as prostitution springs up close to plantations.

The FAO, the World Bank, and the *International Food Policy Research Institute* (IFPRI) call for good governance and the regulation of investors to limit the “risks”

⁴⁶ Behrman, Julia/Meinzen-Dick, Ruth/Quisumbing, Agnes (2011). The Gender Implications of Large-Scale Land Deals, IFPRI Discussion Paper 01056; Tandon, Nidhi (2010) New Agribusiness investments mean Wholesale Sell-Out for Women Farmers, in: *Gender & Development*, Vol 8, No 3, 503-515.

⁴⁷ FAO Gender and Land Rights Database 2010, <http://www.fao.org/gender/landrights>

to food security and to improve opportunities for women through gender equity concerning wage labor and access to agricultural “tools.” In contrast, a rights-based policy should first of all create the prerequisites for the local populations’ and women’s “land sovereignty” so that they themselves can decide about development and resources.⁴⁸ Comprehensively empowering women also serves to help them gain power to negotiate and shape decisions in families and communities so that they can pursue their rationale of caring and resist being subordinated both by the market and men’s power.

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

Urban agriculture

In the metropolises of the North, numerous food scandals, excesses of industrial livestock farming, and genetically modified organisms in the food chains have spurred the desire for organic, self-determined food production. This desire for the controlled quality of homegrown fruits and vegetables triggered a renaissance of allotment gardens. For decades, in the South, from Nairobi to Havana – and purely out of the necessity to cut on food expenses – roadsides have been turned into vegetable patches, balconies into chicken coops. Today, this has also become part of an urban culture in many cities of the North – from community gardens at the edges of New York or on Detroit’s industrial wastelands to guerilla gardening and intercultural gardens in Germany and direct marketing via farmers’ markets in US cities. What is new today is that community gardens featuring crop diversity and components of waste management and recycling have been designed as an explicitly alternative ecological-economic model of reproduction and as spaces free from dependence on outside supplies. This is a step on a path towards a local post-fossil-fuel economy, an effort to transform cities as in the case of Britain’s *Transition Town Movement*. Thus the concept of urban gardens as “spaces of resistance to the neoliberal order” and building blocks for a new neighborhood economy oscillates between romantic ideas about a community in harmony and spiritual renewal on the one hand and a political concept of gardening on the other, namely “We can plant another world!”⁴⁹

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

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

According to agricultural expert Jac Smit, urban agriculture was “overlooked, underestimated, and undervalued” for so long because the most important actors are women whose labor is simply not recognized and thus “remains invisible.” Both in the North and in the South, they are at the center of the care economy and food sovereignty. Like small-scale women farmers in the countryside, they need a right to use the land and also agricultural advice about, for example, what to do concerning lead pollution.

5. Multiple Crises, Green Economy, and a Critique of Growth

The market principles of growth and greater efficiency, of competition and the exploitation of natural and human resources lead to the multiple crisis – the financial crash, hunger, poverty, climate change, and resource scarcity. Efforts to decouple growth from GDP and material wealth from resource use through ecological modernization, greater efficiency, and technologies were not successful.⁵⁰ Social disparities between countries and regions and within individual societies increased as GDP grew; the crises of social reproduction intensified.

Governments and supranational governance quickly promoted growth as the way out of the crisis and for securing jobs and prosperity. The EU is seeking to expand its access to markets and raw materials by means of a new commodities and investment policy as well as through more trade liberalization. Incentives to revitalize consumption, such as cash-for-clunkers programs in Germany and China, were intended to stimulate the economy. In the global South, the development model based on growth, competitiveness, and global markets drives the increasing valorization of land and nature. In the process, the political class in the North and the South is negating the ecological insight that continuing economic growth as well as a globalized growth of production and consumption will exceed the carrying capacity of the biosphere and the atmosphere. That means the time is ripe for a fundamental transformation – the system with its contradictions and multiple crises has to be overhauled, a seminal change of direction is inevitable.

Following the critiques of growth from the 1960s and 1980s, this necessity is expressed in a third wave of discourses about the limits to growth and about a greening of the economy. New welfare indices and models, from the commission appointed in France, with Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi, to *Gross National Happiness* in Bhutan, from the *Genuine Progress Indicator* (GPI) developed by the NGO *Redefining Progress* to the indicators for the common good economy in Austria – they all depart from the unidimensionality of GDP, money, and the market, and they acknowledge the importance of immaterial goods and social reproduction.⁵¹

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

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

This signals a loosening of definitions and scales as they become more open towards a different understanding of well-being – one that is not just market-oriented and materialistic, and where the reproductive sector plays a role no less important than the market. Gender aspects also play a role as these models focus on human rights and non-market-based labor, such as care, housework, subsistence labor, and volunteering. The question is how such new methods of measurement and the happiness models for societies and policies can be translated into strategies guiding a socio-ecological transformation.

There are complex discourses in European civil society about Degrowth/*Decroissance*.⁵² More and more projects and initiatives are exploring practical alternative economic activities and a different relationship to nature. These practical experimental spaces try to tackle social reproduction, care, provisioning, and to separate themselves from the logic of capital, for example in self-organized community gardens and producer-consumer associations, for-free shops, local exchange trading systems (LETS), as well as through local currencies, rural communes, and squats⁵³ – and also in discussions about values and priorities. Starting out with everyday practices and the individuals involved is a response to the fact that the market-based growth paradigm determines not only our economic conditions and relations with nature, but has also created a value system that is deeply engrained in our social consciousness.⁵⁴ Under the extreme pressures of growth and competition, the economy and individuals too have lost their bearings and a sense of how much is enough. That is why a critique of growth aims both at material structures and at subjectivities, that is, at identity-forming value systems and individual behavior.

At the peak of the crisis, the *United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP) announced the initiative for a *Global Green New Deal* “to get the markets back to work.” In the meantime, the UNEP has developed the concept of a *Green Economy* to become the guiding principle of the Rio+20 Conference. From the *Green New Deal*, launched in Great Britain in 2008, to the OECD’s *Green Growth* concept, all models⁵⁵ of a *Green Economy* share a number of key ideas and principles. The basic assumption is that national and international governance regimes must change course and regulate the economy. This calls for the primacy of politics over the economy, in the hope that political will and governance may trump the markets. The triple crisis of finance, energy, and climate is to be overcome by changing course towards green investments, for example in renewable energy and

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

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

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

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

energy-efficient construction, in green innovation, green technologies, and green jobs. In addition, Britain's *Green New Deal* and the UN emphasize that a green economy creates the prerequisites for reducing social disparities and achieving the MDGs. The *Green New Deal* puts the greatest emphasis on regulating and limiting financial markets, investing in the public sector, and involving all social groups.

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

Each and every new model of prosperity and sustainability, in theory and in practice, and each and every social contract has to answer a few crucial questions regarding gender: How does it deal with making human rights, global social rights, and decision-making rights a reality for women, minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, etc.? Which concept of justice does the new model rely on? How does it respond to the asymmetries of power between the North and the South, between social classes, between men and women? How does it deal with the division between care economy and market economy as well as the gender-hierarchical division of labor? Which relationship to nature is it based upon?

For a long time, feminist sociologists and economists have been pointing out that the logic of the market with its focus on growth, efficiency gains, and returns on investment necessitates structural carelessness and ruthlessness towards the individual, social concerns, and nature. It undermines the living foundations of all economic activity and, by necessity, leads society into one crisis after another.⁵⁶ Presently, neoliberal globalization is governed by the following dynamics of growth and contraction: 1) an expansion of the logic of accumulation that valorizes and commodifies all resources while, at the same time, the common good, the public realm, the commons, and the rationale of care are being devalued and marginalized; 2) social and citizen's rights are curtailed while, at the same time, austerity and other neoliberal policies force individuals to take on greater responsibilities.

Feminist critiques focus, firstly, on the separation between care and gainful labor, between production and social reproduction or natural regeneration, secondly they focus on the crises in the realm of social reproduction, and thirdly, on the interlinkages of power and power structures in social and gender relations as well as in the economy and society's relations to nature. From this point of

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

view, the serial crises download costs, burdens, and risks to private households and nature.

Feminist and ecological critique of neoclassical economics

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

In its *Green Economy* concept, the UNEP takes up a key point of ecological economics, namely the assessment that natural capital and environmental services – which are not considered in macroeconomic calculations – create value and prosperity. Therefore, the UNEP concludes that, in keeping with the market and efficiency model, nature must be valorized, priced, and brought to market. In the process, nature is separated from the social realm. The privatization of the environment (as well as public services) is praised as an innovative measure for environmental protection and utilities. However, the UNEP ignores the analogous basic assumption of feminist economics, namely that social reproduction and care also have a role in creating value.

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

The UNEP's comprehensive *Green Economy* concept lacks a consistent human rights approach as well as a coherent concept of justice and social sustain-

ability. The driving force behind a greened economy is growth, not redistribution. Gender receives very little attention, power relationships are not examined; instead, large corporations are praised time and again for their pioneering role, as in the UN's *Global Compact*. This is no paradigm shift, as the green economy remains committed both to growth and to the capitalist principle of maximizing returns. Essentially, it is about shifting capital investments, jobs, and growth to green sectors, to make capitalism low-carbon and weatherize it; different economic conditions, a different relationship to nature is not on the table.

Initially, for many developing and newly industrialized countries of the South *Green Economy* was a motto imposed by the North – and they opposed it. In the run-up to the *People's Summit Rio+20*, civil-society groups criticized it as “recycling an unsustainable model ... and the classic modus operandi of capitalism, its modes of accumulation and dispossession.” Those groupings in Latin America would like to see Rio+20 as an “enormous movement for social transformation” based on rights and against “market environmentalism.” Pointing the path towards this transformation, they stated: “We don't have all the answers, but we have a responsibility, between the desirable and the possible, to search for them.”⁵⁷

Care and precaution

Feminist economists go against the grain. They identify the most fundamental principle of all economic activity as the point of departure for alternatives, namely to care for and satisfy needs and create well-being, while ensuring that this does not occur at the expense of others and of nature. If well-being and the reproduction of society and nature are given priority over growth and profit, then economic and financial policy, micro- and macroeconomies, but also our relations with nature must be reshaped – with a concept of care as the starting point. The idea of a caring economy, also referred to in the global South as a survival or livelihood economy, is to be found in a broad spectrum of feminist thinking, from the subsistence approaches of Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva, and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen to Genevieve Vaughan's “gift economy,” from anti-globalization positions to a queer perspective that transcends the dualism of capitalism versus anti-capitalism.⁵⁸ The cornerstones of these visionary concepts are “ecological integrity” and a critique of the profit- and money-oriented *homo*

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

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

*economicus*⁵⁹. The efficiency hype is contrasted with eco-sufficiency as a model of being content with less⁶⁰. Instead of a neoliberal concept of individual responsibility, our actions should be guided by principles such as sharing, redistributing, and revaluing labor, prosperity, as well as power; cooperation and solidarity should decrease social competitiveness. A caring economy means that the entire economy is to be turned right side up again, shifting from speculation to provision. The goal is to re-embed the economy in social and natural relationships, and to link global social justice with environmental and gender justice.

What are the first steps towards a caring economy? What transition strategies could create a nexus between *realpolitik* and alternative economies and relations to nature? As a consequence of the massive pressure exerted by the crisis and in light of the failure of the MDGs, it would make little sense to draw up a new catalog of desirables for Rio+20, especially as the conference's premises, as outlined in the *Green Economy* concept, are the market and financialization. Plenty of goals have been set and not achieved, including the *Agenda 21* of the 1992 Rio Conference. Today, it is more important to identify key demands for a social and ecological transformation, to open up new spaces for agency, and to develop strategies for a transition that breaks ranks with the functional logic of growth and maximizing returns.

Under the umbrella of the livelihood concept, international feminist discourses are linked by three key concepts: 1) redistribution and revaluing of labor, 2) reclaiming the public realm and the commons, and 3) exit options from the vicious cycle of growth created by resource extraction, production, and consumption.

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

- a redefinition of labor and value creation that goes beyond the market, efficiency, and remuneration,
- a re-evaluation of labor: end marginal labor, recognize care and labor for social reproduction and for the regeneration of nature,

⁵⁹ Mellor, Mary (2009): Ecofeminist Political Economy and the Politics of Money, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*. London/New York, 251-268; Salleh, Ariel (2009): *From Eco-Sufficiency to Global Justice*, in: Salleh (2009) *ibid.*, 291-313.

⁶⁰ Salleh, Ariel (2009): *From Eco-Sufficiency to Global Justice*, in: Salleh, Ariel (ed.): *Eco-Sufficiency & Global Justice*. London/New York, 291-313.

- a re-evaluation of labor by means of minimum and maximum wages,
- a redistribution of labor, thereby superseding gender stereotypes: part-time gainful employment and part-time care work for everybody, men and women,
- public infrastructure and public services to facilitate social reproduction,
- securing basic needs and a basic income by means of employment programs such as NREGA in India, cash transfers as in Namibia, *bolsa familia* in Brazil or an unconditional basic income in the West,
- precaution as protection from risks, from preventive medicine to the precautionary principle in trading with genetically engineered organisms.

As there is no panacea for all of this, transformative paths have to be explored locally, always depending on specific contexts. For example, it is hotly contested whether an unconditional basic income will be a beneficial prerequisite for restructuring. From a gender point of view, this should neither reproduce the old gender roles and division of labor nor be misused as a neoliberal form of cushioning the precarity of gainful employment. In addition, money alone does not secure one's existence. Securing basic social needs also includes security of access to commons and public infrastructure ranging from healthcare to public transport.

2) To counter the trend that austerity policies and public impoverishment go ahead while wealth is being privatized, commons, public services, and social infrastructure have to be reclaimed, strengthened, and expanded.⁶¹ That Elinor Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences has reinvigorated the debate about public goods and commons and their sustainable use by local communities beyond state and market. The weakest members of society, those without fallback positions, depend most on access to public care and social infrastructure. Sharing resources and commons benefits more people if access and rights are governed democratically and in a socially balanced way.⁶² Local public goods and commons can be an apt prerequisite for everyone being able to realize their global social rights. To this end, the following is necessary:

- A redefinition of the commons, for example security of supply, a social safety net, education, health, mobility, and a healthy environment,
- The commons are constituted by means of commoning, self-organization of local communities, and collective action; they are orientated towards the public good and pacts of solidarity,

⁶¹ Pati, Anuradha (2006): Development Paradigms, Feminist Perspectives and Commons. A Theoretical Intersection. Presentation http://www.indiana.edu/~iascp/bali/papers/Pati_Anuradha.pdf

⁶² Ostrom, Elinor et al. (eds.) (2002): *The Drama of the Commons*, Washington; Ostrom, Elinor (2009): *Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems*, www.uga.edu/pol-sci/courses/2010.pstrom.pdf

- Protecting the commons from privatization and financialization; otherwise, private capital owners and the rules of the market will decide about public goods, the enforcement of human rights, and global social rights,
- Public goods have no place in a casino! Regulation of the financial markets must prohibit speculation and other financial transactions with public goods and commons.

The new democracy movements and the *Occupy* movement have appropriated public spaces from Tahrir Square to Wall Street as commons for protests and debate. In decentralized, democratic forums, and using citizens' budgets and gender budgets, growth, prosperity, and distribution can be politicized anew in order to recast natural and economic relations. Such forums could be forms of a "real" and "direct" democracy as demanded by the new social movements and the "indignant." Here, practical political steps could be considered and organized, for example, how citizens may wrangle control over water and electricity systems from mighty corporations and monopolists. Principles and values would have to be discussed as well. What kind of growth do we want, what kind of wealth? How much consumption, how many resources do we need for a "good life"? What is the relationship between the emancipation of genders and sustainability – under current social and natural realities and in a different "good life"?

Nonetheless, it remains an open question how, taking the commons as a point of departure, power relations within local communities and societies and capitalist structures can be changed altogether – or whether the commons will simply remain islands within a capitalist mainstream.⁶³

3) While sectors such as public services, welfare, provisioning, nursing, and social safety nets that are currently being downsized, will definitely have to grow, the challenge is to downsize other sectors in a socially acceptable way. In order to weaken the logic of exploitation, structures of production, trade, and consumption must be dismantled with the goal of reducing resource extraction, the exploitation of the biosphere, and CO₂ emissions.

- downsizing the industries of the North such as the automotive sector that, through their overproduction, waste resources, energy, and cause dangerous emissions,
- converting destructive and superfluous industries such as arms manufacturing into low-resource, low-emissions factories or into recycling industries,
- turning away from exports and towards domestic markets instead, i.e. towards forms of economic activity based on solidarity and local and regional economic cycles,

⁶³ Federici, Silvia (2010): *Feminism and the Politics of Commons*, www.thecommoner.org

- dismantling overconsumption and the “imperial” lifestyle of the global middle classes and achieving sufficiency in the wasteful societies of the North,
- ending the neoliberal and neocolonial “social pact,” namely the compensation for the lowering of real wages in the North by means of importing cheap products based on the exploitation of human and natural resources in the global South,
- dismantling the liberalization of trade and investment as well as the global race for raw materials,
- dismantling financialization: no speculation with public goods, food, pensions, and currencies.

Because of the increasing complexity of the crisis, any single measure must necessarily fall short. If, for example, prices were calculated to include ecological costs, they would increase dramatically and many goods would become unaffordable for the poor, yet it would make little difference to the rich. Although the internalization of costs would lead to prices that were, ecologically speaking, more just, this would, without a simultaneous transformation of unjust social structures, result in a new dilemma.

This does confirm Adorno’s dictum that “wrong life cannot be lived rightly.” Nonetheless, something done right can open doors and create transitions towards a socio-ecological transformation at the micro-level of everyday life, the mezzo-level of the economy and our relations to nature, and on the political macro-level.

The good life and *buen vivir*

Paradigmatically, for Adelheid Biesecker a “precautionary economy” (“*vorsorgendes Wirtschaften*”) is “economic activity for a good life rather than for growth.”⁶⁴ She thus redefines prosperity as wealth in terms of time and care – and in contrast to wealth in terms of money and goods. The idea of the “good life” was developed in Western industrial societies as an alternative to the dogma of growth. To aim for a “good life” – a life not determined by money, material assets, and consumption – shifts the focus from societal wealth measured in goods and cash to the well-being and happiness of individuals.

Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen defined the good life as the free development of capabilities that help people shape their lives independently.⁶⁵ A crucial element is the decoupling of individual contentment from material prosperity. Happiness research has found that individual happiness is determined only up to a certain point by income, material assets, and consumption of resources.

⁶⁴ Biesecker, Adelheid (2011): *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften*, in: Rätz, Werner/Egan-Krieger, Tanja von et al. (2011): *Ausgewachsen!* Hamburg, 75-85.

⁶⁵ Nussbaum, Martha (2000): *Women and human development. The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge; Sen, Amartya (2009): *The idea of justice*, London.

Instead, equality in society plays a role for subjective contentment, especially for one's sense of justice.⁶⁶ Stress due to constantly increasing competition is one of the main causes of individual unhappiness.

The paradigm of *buen vivir* championed by indigenous people in Latin America differs from the individualistic approach of the good life; it is based on the community and on a different relationship to nature. The topos of *Pachamama*⁶⁷ encompasses veneration of Mother Earth, respect for nature's rights, and harmony between humans and nature – ideas also to be found in cultural ecofeminism. In Bolivia and Ecuador, the *buen vivir* concept has become part of the constitution and is meant to secure the right to autochthonous development critical of capitalism and colonialism, but also indigenous peoples' legal systems. This entails the recognition that cultures are plural, societies and developments diverse, and it explicitly values all forms of labor, be they productive or reproductive.⁶⁸ Here, the main point feminist approaches can draw on is the overarching goal to satisfy life's basic needs, which are perceived of as basic rights, and to view life holistically, without political compartmentalization. Using and maintaining the commons plays a key role; non-use of mineral resources, for example in the Yasuni National Park in Ecuador, is a tribute to the rights of nature, as well as banning the possible privatization of water and other resources.

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

⁶⁶ Wilkinson, Richard/Picket, Kate (2009): *The Spirit Level. Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, London.

⁶⁷ Critically on this: Lambert, Renaud (2011): *Pachamama. Wie eine Andengottheit zur Schutzheiligen der Umwelt wurde*, in: *Le Monde diplomatique*, Februar 2011, 3.

⁶⁸ Acosta, Alberto (2011=): *El Buen Vivir en el camión del post-desarrollo: Una lectura desde la Constitución de Montecristi*. www.Rebellion.org/docs/118561.pdf; Fatheuer, Thomas (2011): *Buen vivir: Latin America's new concepts for the good life and the rights of nature*, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin.

6. Outlook: Occupy the Future

After NGOs and World Social Forums have exhausted their possibilities, “occupy” has become the term to denote the quest for new political forms. Feminists in the US have claimed their place in the re-radicalized protest against growing inequalities, a lack of democracy, and the power of the financial sector with the slogan “occupy patriarchy.” “Occupy the future” could become the slogan for the quest for alternatives to the dominant forms of development that continue to be resource-intensive and driven by growth and free-market ideology. Today, the task is to invent, explore, and occupy new forms of development. First of all, the totalitarianism of the market and growth, which the West has globalized, must be pushed back in the West.

The massive crises of recent years have left all actors and societal groups at a crossroads: What next, if not business as usual? Through the crises, through conflicts over resources, and through political negotiations, struggles about our future are beginning to take shape.

Women’s networks and feminist experts – from both the grassroots and academia – have developed practical and conceptual responses to the climate, food, and growth crises. In this they point to the intrinsic contradictions inherent in the domination of nature and the destructive forces unleashed by capitalist economies as well as to the gender imbalances caused by the hegemonic model of development. The core of feminist analysis is that gender inequality is deeply inscribed in all economic and ecological thinking and agency, making it a constitutive element of this development model. Regarding alternative development and the “good life” this means that one cannot separate between the overthrow of masculine power structures and the promotion of alternative economic practices and relations to nature.

Socio-ecological and economic transformation requires a dual strategy, namely 1) that people change themselves, their thinking and actions, and that 2) structural and power relations in society must change. That in turn cannot come about without large coalitions and networking between all social groups that want to abandon current forms of development. Once again, however, when it comes to economies of solidarity, gender perspectives are usually sidelined, even though it is well known that gender justice is an important indicator for new models of prosperity.

Today the big moment for feminist and gender-democratic voices has come. The concrete utopias and plans for reshaping development and power relations in society are an asset when it comes to forming opposition or even counter-

power against the megatrend that everything – humans, the social sphere, and the biosphere – are subject to the functional logic of the market, a trend that manifests itself in the valorization and commercialization of all resources, in the dwindling away of the public sphere and commons, as well as in the reallocation of social and ecological risks, costs, and burdens from markets to individuals or nature.

Feminists should politicize ecological topics as “citizens” and emphasize the emancipatory potential of a caring economy, thus thwarting the market-driven logic of growth and profit in regard to economy and ecology, to individuals, and to the system as a whole. Instead of romanticizing women’s proximity to nature, let alone glorifying their caring impulses towards society and environment, it will be necessary to dismantle gender stereotypes that stubbornly resist change.⁶⁹ The emancipatory substance in terms of gender policy and the charm of the concrete utopias designed from the point of view of feminist economics and ecology are that they may liberate us from external constraints and intrinsic blocks in thinking and action. In this transformation – a milestone in the history of civilization and democracy – gender will remain an issue of central importance.

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



The focus of the Rio de Janeiro conference 2012 is to be the principle of a "green economy" as a way out of the global crises of climate, food, and poverty. Twenty years ago, women were acknowledged as key actors in protecting the environment and combating poverty. But then ecofeminist approaches were rarely to be heard. That could change. Feminist ecological and eco-

nomic models and utopias are regaining ground. In the essay by Christa Wichterich ideas are presented and reviewed that bring together gender justice and eco-social sustainability. The author ventures an outlook on how gender policy, emancipatory substance and the charm of concrete utopias can overcome the political stalemate.

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