



Women & Environments international

CITIES FOR WOMEN

**Pay the Rent or Feed
the Kids —**

Tough Choices

ROSELLE MIKO AND
SHIRLEY THOMPSON

**Why Women Leave
Architecture**

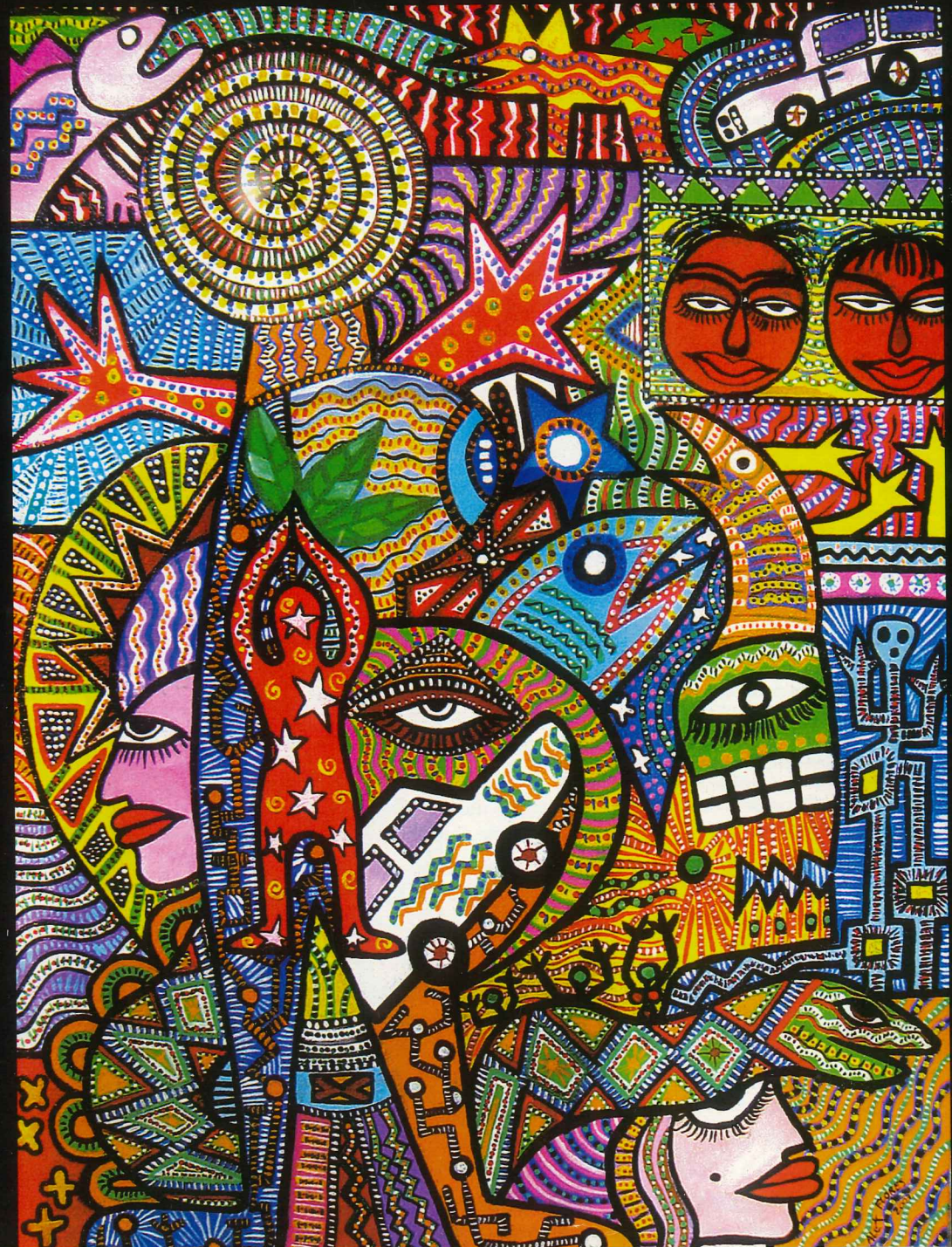
SANDRA MANLEY AND
ANN DEGRAFT-JOHNSON

**Ni putes ni soumises
— Neither Whores Nor
Submissives!**

CHARISSA N. TERRANOVA

**Engendering Local
Government — The
Namibian Women's
50/50 Campaign**

DORIS MPOUMU AND
LIZ FRANK



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Upcoming Issues

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Mission Statement

Women & Environments International is a unique Canadian magazine, which examines women's multiple relations to their environments — natural, built and social — from feminist perspectives. It has provided a forum for academic research and theory, professional practice and community experience, since 1976. Produced by a volunteer Editorial Board the magazine contributes to feminist social change. The magazine is associated with the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies at New College, University of Toronto.

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We are working on the following issue themes:

Women, Globalization and Activism — the feminist and environmental politics of women, North and South, in the anti-globalization movement. How is that movement reflecting feminist and environmental/feminist positions?

Young Women Working in Local and Global Environments — The impacts of globalization on young women appear contradictory at best. Young women in the North have made advances in education and professions. Yet, they have still not achieved equality in the workplace, and continue to bear main responsibility for unpaid, caring work. They also are increasingly pitched against their even more exploited sisters of the South.

Earth Based Spiritualities, Community and Feminism — exploring diverse traditions that foster healthy communities and organize for social change.

Your participation in issue teams, ideas, articles, news and funds are a critical to the survival of Women & Environments International Magazine. For Editorial Guidelines, Calls for Papers and more visit our website: www.weimag.com

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ON THE COVER

"Community" by Alex Flores

Margarita Alex Flores was born and raised in Mexico City. She moved to San Francisco California in 1989, and has been an artist for the last fourteen years. In San Francisco, she started working with recycled woods, building beautiful pieces of furniture. She has experimented with acrylic painting techniques and different styles, including figurative, abstract, found-object art amongst others. She uses acrylics on canvas, wood or tin, in traditional Mexican style. She moved to Canada in the spring of 2001.

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Cities for Women

The military and corporate agendas are ruthlessly rolling back the gains and services women in the North have won with such effort in the 1970's and 80's. At that time women were discovering the gender imbalance reflected in our cities and communities. Women created *Women and Environments Magazine* to help analyze this imbalance and mobilize women to gain their rightful voices and achieve communities that reflect their needs. Communities in North America are getting polarized into a few super-rich and ever more very poor, as has been the reality in much of the South. Meanwhile, women of the South suffer from the dismantling and privatization of public infrastructure and social commitments in their communities.

These initial two decades of concrete, yet localized successes in the north, and several inspiring international conferences and proclamations have underlined the importance and validity of women's demands. Women are bearing the brunt of this and are realizing that real change needs to be systemic. We need to change the ways governments at all levels operate, how they relate to their diverse constituencies, make decisions, tax and prepare budgets. It is indeed in several countries of the South and in Europe that such progress is being made.

Women have to renew their struggle to win public understanding and support to ensure that all municipal decisions including budgets

- are made transparently and equally by women, men and the full spectrum of our diverse communities on councils, at public meetings and in committee rooms;
- implement "housing as a human right" by providing an adequate supply of decent and affordable housing;
- bring about services, transportation, urban design and planning which address the quadruple roles of women — wage earner, nurturer, domestic and active citizen — as well as the special needs of our diverse communities;
- take into account safety needs of women and other vulnerable groups;
- stop unsustainable development which jeopardizes communities, cities and nature.

"Cities for women" will be cities that are better cities for all everywhere.

Many marginalized groups cross gender lines — the old, the very young, people with disabilities, racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. They too are suffering under the military and corporate agendas in the North and the South. Still, women are 51% of the population and as such represent the strongest sector

amongst these groups with the strongest vested interest in changing this reality.

The issue lets readers experience cities through women's perspectives from Bolivia to Britain and from Canada to Cuba. We include stories, accounts, analyses of how cities around the world are failing and succeeding to meet women's needs and how women have come together to change their lives in their cities. We have grouped the contents under Housing, Urban Design and Architecture, Planning and Safety, Transportation, Governance and Sustainability.

With increasing corporate globalization, women around the world are being pitched against each other. Only in solidarity can we overcome the powerful corporate driven agendas and create socially and environmentally just communities embracing the voices and needs of the full spectrum of their constituencies. To that end, this issue aims to inspire all our readers to action within our neighbourhoods, villages, towns and cities. ✎

Editorial Committee:

Alli Grant, PhD is a feminist geographer at UBC and thrilled to be part of the editorial team for this issue. She is a community development and research consultant in British Columbia, Canada.

Priyanka Khosla is a planner and researcher and consults internationally on issues of urban sustainability, gender and community development and planning. She is a member of the Gender & Water Alliance and the Women & Environments International Magazine Editorial Board.

Reggie Modlich, MES, a retired urban planner, founder of Women Plan Toronto and managing editor of *Women & Environments International Magazine* had a doubly vested interest in editing this issue committee.

Sylvia Novac is a research consultant specialising in housing, gender and equity issues, and a research associate at the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.

Charissa Terranova, PhD (1992), is an adjunct Assistant Professor of Art History at SMU in Dallas, Texas. As a single woman trotting the globe, she sees herself as both woman and cosmopolitan, a gendered citizen of the world.

Mae-Lan Wong is a former urban planning graduate from Hong Kong. Currently, she is a Master's student in Environmental Studies at York University, Toronto. Her research interests are energy and sustainable transportation.

Sue Zelnick, MES, is a former board member and Director of Moving the Economy. A public sector advocate, she promotes New Mobility, industry development and innovation. She has worked for over 12 years on sustainable transportation and mobility at the City of Toronto and advised on transit and a wide range of international sustainable transportation and more.



JANICE KUN

Housing

Under One Roof

Homes as Productive Assets

Bipasha Baruah

Both in rural and urban areas of South Asia, women's ownership of land and property means security against poverty and an associated economic and social status that other forms of income do not provide. Property ownership also strongly influences gender relationships both within and outside the household and women's struggles for a legitimate share in landed property have become critical for women's overall empowerment. Scholars, based on their research, and practitioners working in development organizations have established this in recent years. Despite such compelling evidence, South Asian governments have responded to women's needs almost exclusively with health, nutrition and poverty alleviation schemes. They refuse to introduce gender-focused reform of landed property rights and political equality. Barring some notable exceptions, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) in the region have also been reluctant to involve themselves in land tenure and property ownership for women.

These are controversial issues in any country but especially in a country like India with her strong patriarchal culture and religious or cultural laws that influence and "normalize" inequalities. Most gender-related research on land and property in South Asia has focused on rural women and their unmet needs for access to, control over, and use of agricultural land. It has stressed the need for gender-focused agrarian reform. Yet local community and the State have been legitimizing oppressive male-biased arrangements through legislation and policies of various kinds.

Urban Housing

The land and housing requirements of urban women are more complex. They relate to financial services, tenure, planning and design of living space, physical comfort, sanitation, space for income-generating activities, and access to public services. Neither research nor policy formulation have paid attention to urban women's needs. This neglect mirrors a parallel gap within academic scholarship and theory.

Housing is an extremely visible dimension of poverty and vulnerability. Quality low-cost housing and housing infrastructure services are extremely difficult to deliver. That is why so few organizations are involved in this sector compared to women's health and micro-credit.

Financial institutions show little enthusiasm to provide credit for purposes other than income generation. Few understand that housing loans for women are indeed productive loans. The home plays a central role in the economic activities of women be they cultivators, vendors, artisans or rag pickers. Homes are also workshops, warehouses, stores and place for getting water and electricity for their production processes. This is especially true for low-income self-employed women. For them a home is very frequently not only the locus of domestic and parental responsibilities but also of economic activities.

Living in cramped surroundings of South Asia's under-serviced slums and shanties is a bigger burden for women than for men. Women have no privacy and no san-



BIPASHA BARUAH

Many women in slums operate small stores out of their homes to supplement their incomes.



Vegetable vendors frequently use their homes as storehouses for their wares.

Courtyards are used to dry and process spices and condiments for sale.

itation facilities and are constantly struggling to procure water, a task seen primarily as women's work. Lack of toilet facilities is especially demeaning for women. It is quite acceptable, for Indian men to relieve themselves in public spaces. Yet, women are forced to either control their natural urges and risk gastrointestinal and bladder problems or to seek out places like railway tracks and riverbeds to relieve themselves. The latter option exposes women to humiliation, sexual harassment and, very frequently, to sexual assault. Therefore, well-serviced homes are productive, wealth-creating, health and dignity-sustaining assets for poor people and especially poor women.

A handful of organizations in the region are beginning to demonstrate that housing is a factor in the economic survival of the self-employed poor. These NGO's are starting to mainstream poor people's access to urban land, housing and housing infrastructure. The *Gujarat Mahila Housing SEWA Trust* (MHT) and the SEWA Bank are two such organizations. They are both sister organization of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union and membership organization. Founded in 1972, SEWA organizes women in the informal sector in the western Indian state of Gujarat. SEWA Bank was established in 1974 to promote economic activities and improve the conditions of self-employed women. It established its own bank to provide financial services to women without

assets or collateral have no access to loans from mainstream financial institutions. The women are forced to borrow money from moneylenders at exploitative interest rates that keep them mired in a vicious circle of poverty, hardship and indebtedness. With over 175,000 depositors, today it is SEWA's largest cooperative.

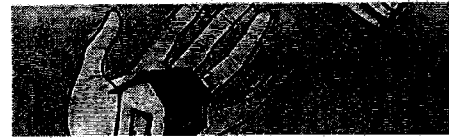
MHT was incepted in 1994 to improve housing and infrastructure of poor women in the informal sector. MHT facilitates access to services such as shelter finance, legal advice, technical assistance, information on the housing market and shelter related income opportunities for poor working women. MHT also attempts to influence housing and infrastructure-related urban and rural development policies and programs which could meet the needs of its membership.

MHT, SEWA Bank and the Parivartan Slum Upgradation Project

Much of SEWA's urban membership lives in slum areas in the city of Ahmedabad. A survey conducted by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in the mid-1990s revealed that 42% of the population of the city, or approximately 1.2 million people, live in slums that lack the most basic amenities. The Ahmedabad Parivartan (Hindi and Gujarati for Transformation) Project seeks to improve the physical environment of slum dwellers by provid-

ing a package of seven infrastructure services. The services include individual water supply, underground sewerage, solid waste disposal service, storm water drains, internal roads and paving, street lighting and landscaping. A unique partnership of the public sector represented by the municipal corporation, the private sector represented by local industries and the people's sector represented by the community residents is providing this package on an equitable cost-sharing basis. Each of them pays one-third of the total on-site capital cost of service provision. MHT mobilizes the slum communities to participate in the upgradation process and to "buy in" to the project by paying their portion of the total cost. MHT also encourages community women to form registered Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to represent residents' interests, engage in dialogue with the municipal corporation and to help them build internal capacity to utilize and maintain the newly acquired infrastructure. SEWA Bank acts as a financial intermediary providing loans to each family, if they require it, to meet their cash contribution.

MHT and other outside agencies evaluated the Parivartan program and found that slum upgrading is indeed effective in improving the quality of life of slum residents. Development of infrastructure and the provision of basic amenities have a positive influence not only on health, education and income but also the social life, sense of confidence and empowerment of




the urban poor. Women are spared the humiliation of morning rituals of defecating in the open or collecting water from private bungalows and housing societies. Available water saves women and children time and effort. Water-related conflicts have considerably reduced; incomes have gone up, as has school attendance. Reliable water supply in upgraded slums relieves women and children from the drudgery of procuring water. Through their participation in the CBOs, women have become much more vocal about their problems. They have acquired the skills and confidence to interact with government authorities. Women in post-*Parivartan* slums are even giving information and guidance to women from other slums to join the project. While formal land titles and sale deeds are still not available to slum dwellers due to the 'illegal' status of most slums, MHT has intervened to ensure that documents like electricity, water and rent bills are issued in the names of women. People who have lived on the margins of society all their lives are eager to buy into the symbols of recognition, acknowledging their very existence. Women perceive such documents as empowering because they strengthen their right to residence and elevate their status within their homes and communities.

Through its advocacy work, MHT has also been able to influence policy changes at several levels. The organization was instrumental in pressurizing the government for a state level policy on slums. The final draft of the Gujarat State Urban Slum Policy was recently completed and contains several groundbreaking policy recommendations that MHT strongly supports. These include recommendations to secure legal tenure and guarantees of non-eviction for slum dwellers, transfer of formal sale titles and deeds to slum dwellers, implementation of joint land and property titles in the names of women, and provisions for more affordable group tenure, collective tenure and cooperative tenure for slum residents.

The experience of SEWA Bank demonstrates financing women for housing is profitable for both the borrower and the lender. Increased members' incomes due to improved housing and productivity boost repayment and savings thereby bringing more capital to the bank. The increased assets give the bank the security and capacity to provide its members with additional loans and in larger amounts. While repayment rates are extremely high for all categories of loans they stand at almost 100 percent for housing and housing infrastructure loans.

The successes of MHT and SEWA Bank in delivering housing infrastructure, micro-finance and influencing policy to meet the needs of urban women are indeed inspiring. Funding agencies, governments and civil society organizations need to recognize and prioritize support for such housing and infrastructure programs. They help recognize women's role and rights as primary agents in the ownership of land and housing. They enable women to become economically productive, raising their own, their children's and their communities' quality of life. ✽

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Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids?

Tough Choices

Roselle Miko and Shirley Thompson

If you had to choose between paying the rent or feeding the kids, what would you choose? For Louise and Charmaine, two Aboriginal women living in poverty and poor housing in Winnipeg, Manitoba, these are their daily life choices (names, locations, and personal identifying information have been removed to protect the identities of the women.). Both women ranked affordable housing as their main priority, closely followed by food for their children. For these women, everything, including access to services such as affordable food and transportation, community, and maintaining some control over their lives revolves around affordable housing. Their stories are those of many Aboriginal women throughout Canada and especially in Manitoba.

Poverty and Housing

In Canada, poverty is often viewed as gender neutral. Consequently, policies do not reflect "the feminization of poverty." Statistics Canada indicates that 17.56% of Canadian women as opposed to 13.27% of Canadian men are impoverished. Canadian women work more and receive less, undertaking the majority of unpaid work, including caring for children and people who are sick, averaging only 63% of Canadian men's wages.

Aboriginal families led by single mothers fare the worst. The income of female, one-parent, no-earner families on government assistance fell from \$15,408 in 1993 to \$13,373 in 1997 with the deterioration of the "social safety net." Manitoba has the highest female poverty rates in Canada, with 40% of the general female population on government assistance. The link between poverty and being Aboriginal is clear.



Examples of housing in disrepair in areas termed inner city neighborhoods.

women are more likely to live in poverty than non-Aboriginal women or Aboriginal men. Statistics Canada figures from 1995 indicate that 43% of Aboriginal women lived in poverty compared to 35% of Aboriginal men, 27% of non-Aboriginal women and 16% of non-Aboriginal men.

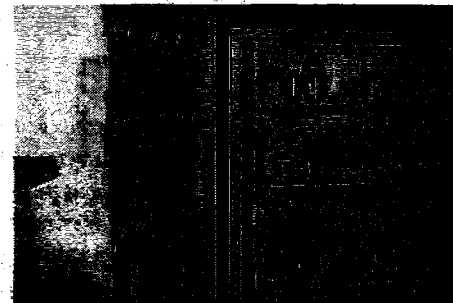
Aboriginal families and their children tend to be over-represented among the poor. Winnipeg has the largest proportion of Aboriginal people of any urban centre in Canada. In 1991, 35% of Winnipeg's Aboriginal households with children lived in poverty. Winnipeg's housing situation is critical. Currently, Manitoba Housing Authority has more than 3,000 people on waiting lists for its 8,000 rent subsidized housing units. Where are the poor to go for housing?

Louise's Story

Moving three times in the last year, Louise and her three small children have been unable to find stable, safe, and affordable housing. Before being homeless for two weeks, Louise was living in a house that was eventually condemned, a place that lacked heat and was full of rodents. "Even the toilet bowl in our place had ice frozen

over it... and I was getting sick of living like that...being cold and running away from mice..." For this house, lacking in basic sanitation and heat, Louise paid \$500 per month, \$70 over her rent budget, with the extra money extracted from her food money. "I was living on \$225 [for food] with 3 kids and 2 adults." When the Public Health Authority condemned this privately owned house, Louise was terrified because she had to leave immediately: "I was so scared, I was crying to my worker...where the hell am I supposed to go? It was stressful. I wouldn't wish that on anybody, especially with children." Thus began two long weeks of living in a shelter. Louise spent the days at her casual job and her evenings searching in Winnipeg's subzero February weather for accommodations that fit her 430 dollars a month housing allowance. "When I was homeless, my worker wanted me to take anything. I'd rather be homeless than to live over there [north end]. I fear for myself to step out the door and for my children, mostly for my son."

In her current home of six months, Louise looks back on the effects unstable housing had on her children, "often the children ask me, 'mommy is this our home?' I think it is traumatizing for them because they don't know where they are going to wake up." Louise looks out over the tiny front yard of her home and wishes there



Scarcity of food, especially vegetables and proteins and need for medication are a sign of poverty.



were playgrounds nearby. Even though this house is no dream house, she says, "I like it compared to the other houses. We have a private entrance...."

Charmaine's Story

Charmaine has also moved several times during the past year, including moving out of a housing co-op. They would not renew her term because she is Indian. She felt uncomfortable living in the co-op because of the discrimination she faced and the lack of other low-income earners. Her next move was to a less desirable situation where she stayed only a short time, "that was awful... unsafe... I wouldn't wish anybody to live there.... Some people tried to kick our door in. I didn't want my son walking to school." It was also infested with mice and was too small for four children and two adults.

Escaping from an abusive relationship, Charmaine had to relocate again, saying that while Manitoba Housing kept her next home well maintained, it was in "a bad area...lots of noise, people that are drunk,...and someone tried to crawl through my living room window..." For a woman overcoming a history of alcohol and physical abuse, the situation was unbearable and she was quickly relocated because of her abusive ex-partner.

Both Charmaine and Louise agree that finding affordable housing in Winnipeg is a struggle, particularly when you have large families. According to Louise, "There is not enough housing, especially for big families. There are no 4 or 5-bedroom houses. When there are 4 or 5-bedroom rooms, it's in the roughest neighbourhood. I wouldn't even dream of living there."

The Hard Truth

Housing costs are a large portion of household budgets and housing is a factor that influences health. Maximum allowable rent rates, as set by Manitoba Family Services, are as follows:

According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's October 2003 figures, the average cost of a 2-bedroom

Household	Basic Rent	Rent Including Utilities
2 people	\$285	\$387
3 people	\$310	\$430
4 people	\$351	\$471

apartment in Winnipeg was \$645. When compared to the set allowances above, rents are unaffordable for all families on assistance. These high rents cause instability. Families are always searching for cheaper housing and have to pay for moving. Children have to switch schools often — sometimes in mid-year. This hurts their social and academic development. The children and their families lose their community support systems when they move too far from their networks. While the "new" accommodation may be cheaper, it may also be more crowded or less safe in more run down neighbourhoods. Cheaper housing is often further from services such as laundromats and grocery stores. This increases transportation costs. The constant moving and searching for cheaper housing is emotionally draining and stressful. Together, these impacts are a result of the lack of affordable, healthy housing and contribute to the deterioration in women and children's health.

Households in core need of social housing are households who pay more than 30% of their household income for shelter and utilities. In Manitoba, approximately 32% or 36,000 households spend more than 30% on housing and utilities. According to the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, on average, these households are using 42.3% of their incomes on housing. As more Manitoba families fall into poverty, the need for adequate, affordable housing will increase. The long-term costs of not providing enough, affordable housing will reflect itself in higher health care usage and more demands on all social services. Therefore, the provincial and federal governments need to get back into building alternative housing such as co-op housing, and investing to renovate and revitalize neighbourhoods.

Louise and Charmaine's lives clearly show the close relation between poor

housing and low incomes. In turn research has clearly established the close correlation between low income and poor health. Thus Aboriginal women, living in poor housing — which in itself carries certain health risks (inadequate heat, drafts, humidity, molds, potentially hazardous construction defects) — and being low income earners puts them at risk of TB, diabetes, obesity. This increases the amount of health services required by them and their children.

Safe and affordable housing is a basic human right. Why aren't Manitoba and Canada giving poor women, particularly Aboriginal women, and the country's children a chance for a secure and healthy life? ❖

Roselle Miko is a Master's Candidate at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Roselle's research interest's include sustainable building design, energy efficiency, women's issues, affordable housing,, and environmental justice. She may be reached at rmikoa@hotmail.com.

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Further Reading and Resources

Prairie Women's Centre of Excellence, <http://www.pwccc.ca/> and the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative <http://www.gov.mb.ca/s6/housing/winnipeg/>

Roselle would like to thank Louise and Charmaine for letting her tell their stories and letting her share them with a wider audience.



Where's the Old Dykes' Home?

City Planners Leave Older Lesbians Out in the Cold

Emilie K. Adin

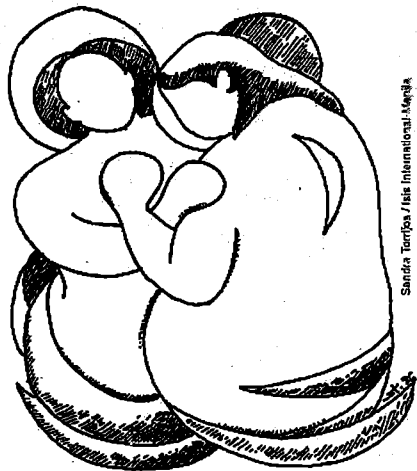
Increasingly, municipalities agree that they have an important role to play in social planning and a civic duty to ensure that there are adequate services and affordable housing for our society's most marginalized. Some Canadian provinces are actively involved in boosting our stock of non-profit and multi-income housing developments. The new Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin, is promising new injections of funding into Canada's infrastructure. And yet, older lesbians continue to be left out in the cold, despite the fact that several studies have suggested that older lesbians tend to be poorer than both older heterosexual women and gay men. While there have been some for-profit housing responses to gay seniors seeking gay-friendly services and accommodations, few women can afford these market-driven solutions. As a result, some older lesbians fear their old age; others are coming together to find solutions to their common concerns.

A group of older lesbians in the Greater Vancouver area, calling themselves "CHARIS — In Support of Older Lesbians," acquired my help in 1999. As a community planning student, and a younger ally, I too wished to address the woeful lack of planning consideration given to older lesbians in Canada. Together, we set out to learn more about the situation of older lesbians, in order to use the knowledge gained from this project to plan for the future.

How did we get there?

One of the first things we did was to put together a comprehensive survey to help us determine the needs of Vancouver lesbians aged 50 years and over. We then got the word out — by newspaper, radio and

poster campaign — about our research project. By the end of our advertising blitz, the survey had been completed by a self-selected group of 85 women; survey results were then compiled, and further clarification on the issues was gained from six in-depth interviews of survey participants.



Efforts were made to have equitable representation by Aboriginal women, lesbians of colour, women over 70, and lesbians who lived in the outskirts of Vancouver. Yet, the average woman in this group of 85 participants tended to live centrally, to be in her mid-50s, to identify as middle class, and to be European-Canadian. She had a higher chance of having a university degree than the average (non-lesbian) woman of the same age from Vancouver — and yet she also tended to have a lower income!

The study found that the greatest areas of concern for older lesbians were

- their invisibility as a group when they are overlooked by the rest of society
- their safety as individuals when they are not;
- the financial and physical inaccessibility

of current housing options open to them; and

- their isolation as lesbians among seniors groups, and as older lesbians within gay organizations.

A couple of our survey findings stood out for us. The women we had surveyed had a significantly lower rate of home ownership, and a considerably higher rate of reported chronic health problems, than the general population of older women in Greater Vancouver. Both of these trends, when viewed in conjunction with the lower income of the average older lesbian, were red flags to CHARIS. How would older lesbians afford the supportive services that they would need in order to continue living in their own communities? Would chronic health conditions force them to rely on government-run care institutions in old age? Could they afford (both financially and emotionally) to be visible as older lesbians in these environments?

It wasn't all bad news, though. While only 10% of participants said that they received support from the seniors' community, participants listed neighbours (33%), the lesbian community (54%) and friends (99%) as central to their social support networks. CHARIS hopes that there is an opportunity for the lesbian community to use its internal "social capital" and networks to support elder community members who prefer to "age in place." This is a community planning concept that refers to most seniors' wish to continue living on their own — in their own communities, if not their own homes — instead of facing premature (and costly) institutionalization. CHARIS has struggled — as have many other groups trying to organize among older lesbians, throughout North America and beyond — with the sort of problems

one might expect within a marginalized group. They have slowed down their group work of late due to illness, chronic health problems, grieving, and overwork among participants. But the social networks and connections are there, and the foundations for action have been built. One day, when a woman asks herself in

jest, "Now, where is that Old Dykes' Home?" Someone might respond, "Why, come this way." ❧

Emilie K. Adin is a graduate of the School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, and has recently completed an Urban Design

Certificate Program from Simon Fraser University. This article is based on her master's thesis, completed in 2000 and available from the University of British Columbia library. She works as a self-employed planning consultant. Her current research focuses on urban design "best practices" in Europe. She can be reached at plangirl2004@lycos.com



The Maria Auxiliadora Community

Solving Housing Problems With And For Women

Rosemary Irusta and Maria Eugenia Torrico

The Maria Auxiliadora Community is not an urban development nor a settlement. It is, as its name indicates, a community, where land and housing title deeds for women are recognized. It is located in Cochabamba, Bolivia, a multi-ethnic and multicultural country of eight million and the poorest in Latin America.

"If I had a shelter"

The Community originated from a local committee of women neighbourhood leaders who were searching for a solution to domestic violence. The residents were double victims of violence — on one side from their husbands and on the other side from their landlords. These were the catalyzing factors that led the women to address their housing problems by themselves, without waiting for or depending on any possible outside help.

Maria Auxiliadora has been in existence for four years. It occupies 16 hectares and unites 350 low-income families, with an average of five members per family. There are many women-headed households.

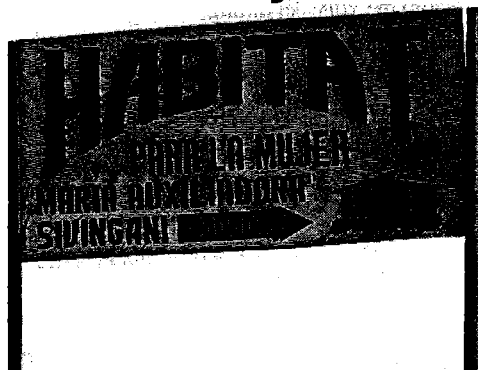
Since the beginning, mutual support, and pooled personal savings have been the key factors in consolidating the Maria Auxiliadora Community. Pasanaku is a savings co-operative. Money is collected

among small, organized groups and redistributed to the member who needs it most, until everyone has had a turn. In this way the groups built 55 houses between 1999 to 2003. They consider it as the first stage of the Community's life. In the second stage, from 2003 to 2004, the groups built 22 more new houses and repaired another 12. With their accumulated experiences with micro credit and mutual technical assistance in Maria Auxiliadora and with the help of three non-government organizations, Prohabitat, Procasha, and CIPRODE, the groups even installed a piped water and sewer system.

In this short but dynamic period they achieved much because of the strength of their network. The partners and their families formed four groups. They met every Sunday to carry out work in the community, to make decisions and attend to problems affecting the lives of their children, young people, and women.

Innovative Aspects in the Community

Without doubt, the leadership role of the women in developing and consolidating the Community has been fundamental in solving their housing problems and in successfully moving from an individual to a collective vision.



Sign directing to Women's Housing in the Maria Auxiliadora Community

Drawing on our traditional culture, Maria Auxiliadora has developed a collective, community-based financial system relying on mutual support and Pasanaku. This form of organization is not limited to housing issues, but also allows us to tackle other problems that affect our families.

Belonging to the Community is a personal or life choice. Transfers of membership are not accepted, nor is the sale or rental of the houses. These rights are inherited, and the houses have use value only. This progressive arrangement has several impacts: first, it challenges the way that the younger generation thinks and acts; second, it questions the current norms of individualism; and third, it sets down a solid process for local economic development. An additional benefit is the consolidation of the partnership experience. The NGOs facilitated the Community by mobilizing technical, economic, and human resources. This provided another example of how collective approaches are necessary and fruitful.

And the future?

Within Maria Auxiliadora, there remain many challenges, such as the creation of a collective fund to address the problem of unemployment; the gathering and dissemination of the accumulated knowledge of house-building and the development of collective services. Yet, it is important not to neglect the activities which foster community development and social integration. Only by working together towards a common objective will everyone come to know, exercise, and claim their rights.

From the very beginning, there was a vision of a brighter future. Yet development is the



Women about to participate in a design workshop

task of everyone. The Community will be sustainable when it talks less and does more, when it recognizes its advances and reduces its criticisms, when people value

each other and respect their differences, when researchers and university students move from theory to practice, when the municipality lets go of sanction and looks for a solution, and finally, when the State assumes that housing is a human right and not merchandise. ✽

Rosemany Irusta, Leader of the Community, works to promote both women and housing rights at the local and national level.

Maria Eugenia Torrico is a sociologist specializing in urban management and community participation and a consultant on housing issues. She served as facilitator.

From Homeless to Entrepreneur

The Story of the Mbare Federation Business Initiative

Beth Chitekewe and Joyce Brown

The Zimbabwe Federation of Homeless People (the Federation) is a women-led people's movement — a nationwide organization of approximately 20,000 squatter settlers who survive in extremely substandard living conditions in the towns and cities of Zimbabwe. Groups in the Federation operate small savings and loan schemes, making loans available for small income generating projects or for emergency purposes. There is also a special fund (the Gungano Fund), which is used to buy land or build houses. The savings also demonstrate to government that the poor can and do save and that if provided with affordable land they can build their own houses.

During the past four years, Zimbabwe has experienced extreme political and economic crisis. President Mugabe instituted a hotly contested system of land reform to take over approximately 4,500 white-owned commercial farms. Although land reform was long overdue, violence and intimidation have permeated the process. Many government ministers have acquired land while opposition members have been targeted in politically related violence. Numerous people have been killed or tortured. The operations of the press and the judicial system have been severely restricted.

This is the story of one of the groups in the Federation and their efforts to support their families and build businesses in spite of the daily stress they face.

Zimbabwe's current economic and political woes continue to escalate. A year ago it was impossible to imagine that things could get any worse. Now, inflation is officially pegged at 600% and expected to reach 1000% within the next few months. The fuel shortage is endemic and queues stretch for blocks when there is fuel to be found. There is a critical shortage of almost all-basic foodstuffs: cooking oil, maize meal, salt, bread and sugar. To make things worse, inflation has contributed to a cash shortage and

banks severely limit the amount that people can withdraw from their accounts (sometimes only the equivalent of \$30).

The crisis has resulted in increased hardships for the poor as a result of rising prices for food, shelter, education, transport, and health care. The country continues to be hard hit by the AIDS pandemic — the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe is estimated to be at approximately 35% of the adult population. Government sponsored terror and a blatant disregard for human rights and the rule of

law is the order of the day. It is often difficult to see anything positive in our current situation. Yet, there are signs of hope.

Mbare, a high-density suburb in the capital Harare, has the reputation of being a place where you are likely to get mugged. When the Federation began working there in 1998, people in Mbare did not think that they could trust each other and it was difficult to convince members to offer each other small emergency loans. Over the last three years the Mbare groups have not only dispelled the myths about Mbare, but

the neighbourhood has become a learning centre for others who want to find out more about small business enterprise.

One scheme, Tatambura, began with Z\$40,000 (\$1,600 Cdn), offering small loans of Z\$2000 (\$80 Cdn). This group of twenty women worked together to order dry goods and produce for resale in the local market (the largest informal market in the country). The group repaid the loan with interest and used their profits collectively to purchase more goods. Now, three years later, the Mbare project has established a wholesale outlet, buying directly from suppliers and selling to other market traders. In the past four months they have had a turnover of Z\$120 million (approx. \$12,000 Cdn, with inflation). During the recent cash crisis sale, the Mbare group was able to meet the cash needs of the whole Zimbabwe Federation.

The Mbare initiative has been a success because of its location near a national bus terminus and close to an industrial area and because of the capacity of its members to work together, seize an opportunity, and take risks. Prior to taking the loan, many of the Federation members were involved in individual small-scale business activities. A co-operative approach has allowed them to succeed far beyond their initial expectations. The Mbare group has also demonstrated a model of community cohesion and collective



Women of the Federation working together

responsibility that other groups in the country have been emulating.

Although the Mbare women are concentrating on their collective trading for now, housing is their long-term goal. Through negotiations with local authorities, the Federation has obtained land in a six municipalities and Federation members are building small houses in Harare, Victoria Falls and Beitbridge. Using the Federation strategy, connections are made between savings and loans, community economic development, housing needs, and political organizing. ❖

Beth Chitekwe is Executive Director of Dialogue on Shelter for the Homeless in Zimbabwe (Dialogue), an NGO that works in partnership with the Federation. Dialogue supports the work of the Federation by funding exchanges and peer learning processes. The Federation and Dialogue also work to initiate dialogue with municipalities in order to access land. Over the past six years, Beth has worked with people in the squatter settlements of Zimbabwe to build a strong poor people's movement.

Joyce Maureen Brown is a Toronto researcher who volunteered with the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation.



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Osaka Women's Chat Group

A Homeless Women's Support Group

Sylvia Novac

In a formal, well-manicured park, on a small island created by the fork of the Tosabori River in Osaka, Japan, the Women's Chat Group meets monthly, near encampments of about 100 homeless people, mostly men. The location is quite convenient for half of the group because they, too, live in the park. The others are students, unemployed, or work in women's services.

Shimada Mika and Yamashita Mirsuru are the founders of the group that evolved from a discussion in the park between a housed and an unhoused woman more than one year earlier. Material and non-material support is shared within the group of about ten women. For example, the housed women store pooled cash from those without a bank account, to be drawn out when needed.

For three weeks, I've joined a Japanese team to learn about women's homelessness. We're being hosted by the Chat Group to exchange information. As we sit on blankets on the grass, wet from the recent winter rain, I notice the glass-enclosed tour boats that glide past the grand City Hall and Public Library buildings. As the only foreigner present, I'm interested in understanding their situation, and they're interested in knowing about women in Canada. They seem surprised, perhaps dismayed, to hear that our social programs do not prevent homelessness, but are intrigued that our pension programs more effectively buffer the elderly against homelessness.

Only rough sleepers are considered homeless in Japan — a very narrow definition. In western countries, those staying in shelters are also considered homeless. In Japan, the vast majority of rough sleepers are middle aged and elderly men — about



MICHIKO BANDO, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, TOKYO

3% are women. In Canada, it is disproportionately the young who are homeless (i.e., shelter users), and about one-third of shelter users are women.

After our 'chat,' we move to an area hidden from view by trees and bushes, and the Chat Group women prepare a very tasty *nabe* (a sort of hot pot) dish of several courses for all of us to share (the housed women have contributed money for the food). It feels like we're camping, except for the fact that only some of us will return to warm, dry bedrooms for the night.

According to a government survey, there are an estimated 25,000 people sleeping rough in Japan, 5000 in Tokyo alone. They're not hard to spot. In parks, under bridges, and along the rivers, I saw many blue plastic tarps, seemingly standard issue for homeless people to cover their makeshift homes. Some of these 'home-

less' homes look quite domestic, with lines of laundry, bicycles parked near the door, and tidily arranged goods for recycling, such as magazines, cans and bottles, and even clothing. No one panhandles in Japan. Yet, there seems to be very limited public sympathy for, or understanding of, those who are homeless. Government action is meager.

Judging by a newly opened shelter I saw — 600 close-set bunk beds, with no storage space, separated only by cubicle walls off a very long hall — I know that, if necessary, I would rather put up a tent or shack to maintain my privacy, belongings, and sanity. To me, it feels just like home. ❖

Sylvia Novac, PhD, is a research consultant specializing in housing, gender and equity issues, and a research associate at the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto



No Place Like Home

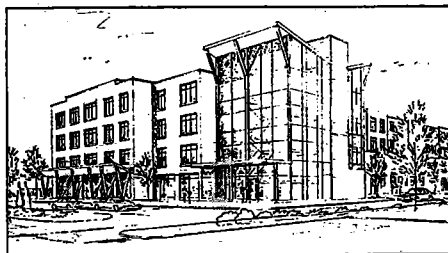
Women's Housing Advocacy Rebirth in Toronto

Amanda Dale

Hope is in the air for women in Toronto. New governments and leaders at all levels have reinvigorated women's efforts to have gender taken seriously. Women are working their way back to the tables to talk about housing.

YWCA Toronto is hosting a group of women housing advocates who want to put gender back into the picture of affordable housing design, development, and management. The Women's Housing Advocacy Group (WHAG) is a network of service providers, researchers, activists, and consumers providing a gender analysis of housing and homeless issues. They have identified a lack of women's perspective in current housing development, design, policy, research, activism, and media coverage, and seek to remedy this. WHAG advocates safe, affordable and permanent housing that is woman-centred and meets the specific needs of women and women-led families. "We understand that women's homelessness and housing needs are distinct from those of men, and are imbedded within the context of poverty, social, racial and gender inequalities, and violence against women," reads the platform.

Toronto has a history of being an affordable housing champion. Women's housing advocacy played a strong and effective role in addressing the gender inequities built into "gender-neutral" design and development. Alternative affordable housing once flourished. Several women's cooperative housing projects were built in the 1980s. In 1990, a group of women's housing advocates, the Women's Services Network, collaborated with The City of Toronto Housing Department to create a Women's Community Mental Health and Housing Worker. This worker was supporting the growing number of women



Architect's rendering of YWCA Toronto's planned 69-unit housing project for women — led households with a 62 space childcare center scheduled for 2005.

who were becoming homeless, and provide feedback and input to municipal housing policy from this real life base.

At the provincial level, the network negotiated funding from the Ministry of Housing for a seminal report on the limitations of alternative housing development. *Borderlands of Homelessness: women's views on alternative housing* (May 1996) was the first research to evaluate how the not-for-profit sector did in serving low income and formally homeless women. It was a powerful critique and a tool for a gender analysis of housing. Then the chill on the development of affordable housing hit and there was no one left to listen.

In the era of no new affordable housing, demanding a gender analysis had given way to a generalist call for any housing. Housing activists focused on making the case for any affordable housing. Direct action reclaimed abandoned buildings where the safety concerns of women had no place. Intensive lobbying to jump-start political will and activate a national housing agenda was the order of the day. Traditional faith groups who had little interest in gender analysis tended to be the only players big enough to tackle development of social housing without

the appropriate funding from the federal or provincial levels.

Now, a housing agenda can be imagined again. Some of the original women's housing advocates have reconvened and been reinvigorated by a new generation of women with roots in labour, the shelter movement, and ethno/racial activism and service provision.

WHAG has already lobbied the municipal and provincial levels, taken its platform into elections and held a mayoral candidates meeting during the mayoral race in Toronto. The group has also begun to link with media, researchers, and national women's housing advocates. WHAG is part of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation's (CERA) national working group on women and housing. With funding from the Status of Women Canada, CERA is advocating for a national housing policy that specifically incorporates women's housing needs. Women housing activists' work is finally beginning to pay off. ❧

Amanda Dale is the Director of Advocacy & Communications at YWCA Toronto, and is the Acting Chair of the Women's Housing Advocacy Group. The YWCA in Toronto has been a developer and manager of a varied range of low-income women's housing since 1873.

Further Reading and Resources:

For the specific platforms developed by WHAG, log onto www.ywcator.org, and follow the links to Women's Housing Advocacy Group.

S. Novac, J. Brown, A. Bayton and M. A. Quance, *Borderlands of Homelessness: Women's views on alternative housing* (May 1996) (out of print).

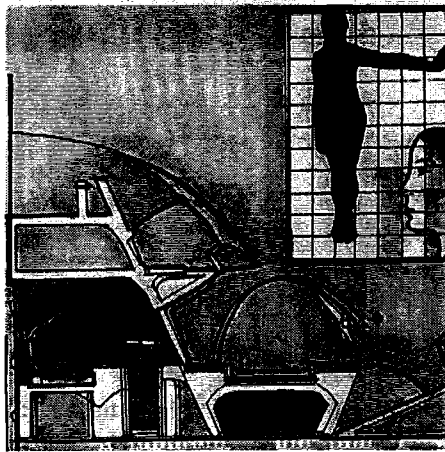
YWCA TORONTO FILE PHOTO

Urban Design

Her Havana

Cuban Women Writers Imagining a City of Their Own

Jana Gutierrez



JANICE KUN

Havana beckons writers. For some it serves as an enchanting and exotic urban background; for others it is a touchstone, a place to center one's creative universe and to call home. The Cuban capital is so entrenched upon the literary landscape that, over time, it has taken on a personality of its own. Most readers have a predetermined image in mind when they pick up a book about Havana. Too often they are unaware of the role gender has played in the construction of that urban metaphor. They may not want to deviate from the expected route — a saucy romp through a hedonistic urban paradise — that Havana, no matter how stereotypical, recurs as a familiar fantasy. But there exists another Havana. It belongs to a legacy of Cuban women writers looking to their tropical urban muse not just for a sexy backdrop, but rather for inspiration and meaning. The reader who enters this Cuban capital — Her Havana — will experience a personal and intimate, highly artistic and sometimes mystical tour. This journey of female introspection reveals that many Cuban women writers envision in Havana a sisterly soul mate. The city becomes for them a prism reflecting a multitude of womanly possibilities.

Women writers have discovered Havana's inclination towards female subjectivity. She opts semantically for womanhood. Though baptized male in 1514, as San Cristóbal de la Habana, common parlance prefers the womanly alternative in the female gendered term "La Habana." Cuban women's literature builds on the collective construction of a feminine Havana. The

heroine of Zoé Valdés's, *I Gave You All I Had*, recalls the first documented poem composed by a Cuban woman:

"In order to face my monsters . . . I turn to my only weapon. I look in a book of Cuban history . . . and I read these lines written by Beatriz de Jústiz y Zayas, Marquise of Jústiz de Santa Ana, in 1762:

*You Havana, capitulated?
You in lament? And ruination?
You under foreign domination?
The pain of it, beloved homeland,
the pain!"*

The British invasion of Havana initiated a literary journey that continues today. The Marquise's "her" story of a city under siege

sparked in Cuban women a desire to preserve and protect their cherished landscape through the written word. More importantly, the Marquise signed her manifest collectively on behalf of one hundred of the city's most prestigious women. Valdés's heroine arms herself with this past, Havana as the ultimate feminicity.

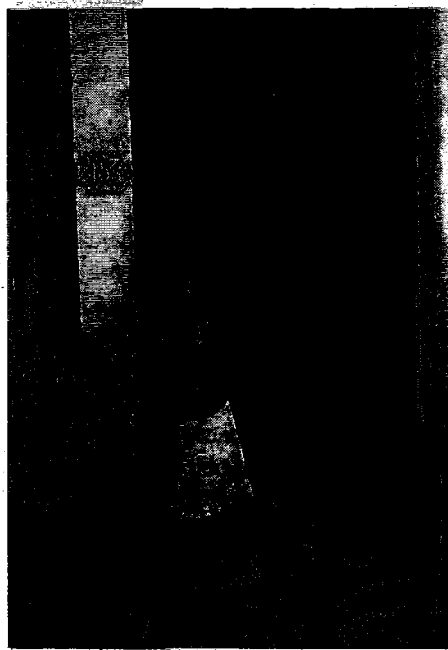
A famous Havana ceiba tree motivates Cristina García's, *Dreaming in Cuban*, protagonist:

"After her sleepless night in the house on Palmas Street, Celia wanders to the ceiba tree in the corner of the Plaza de Armas. Fruit and coins are strewn by its trunk and the ground around the tree bulges with buried offerings. Celia knows that good charms and bad are hidden in the stirred earth near its sacred roots. Tía Alicia told her once that the ceiba tree is a saint, female and maternal."

Celia's wandering symbolizes an ontological quest that concludes upon encountering her identity as a hearty "habanera" at the root of the ceiba tree.

La Giraldilla landmark also attracts women writers. García deviates from plot to explain its meaning:

"Celia rests in the interior of the plaza, where the royal palms dwarf a marble statue of Christopher Columbus. Inside the museum there's a bronze weathervane of Don_a Inés de Bobadilla, Cuba's first woman governor, holding the Cross of Calatrava. She became governor of the island after her husband, Hernando de Soto, left to conquer Florida."



HAVANA/THE CITY/THE PEOPLE

A hearty "habanera"

This narrative sojourn provides more insight into Celia's importance as a courageous and powerful Havana woman.

La Giraldilla figurine also crests the Castillo de la Fuerza (Fortress of Strength). Fina García Marruz personifies "Noble Havana," borrowing the statue's epithet for her poem's title:

*"Why, Madam,
the airs, the bravado,
robust leg, treasure,
and dovelike breast?
Why, Conquistador Matron,
above the strange glimmering
of unequal angles
do you rise disdainful
the murky light of the waters below?
Fortress of Strength,
Giraldilla,
Poise and Victory."*

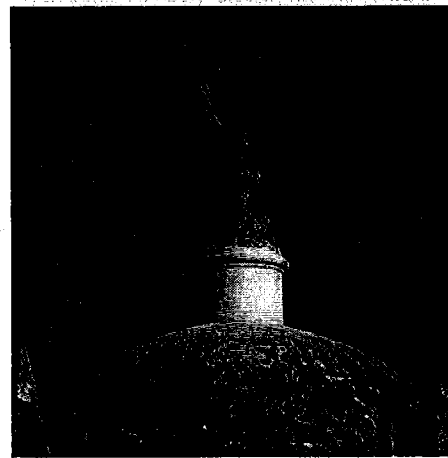
The lady warrior combines fortitude and grace. As a voluptuous, towering beauty, she watches over the most valuable port in the New World and provides an example for all Cuban women.

When approaching fictional cities, readers must take into account the effect of gender on the urban metaphor. Feminist literary theory can help unlock that trope, especially with respect to Havana, which has historically taken on a female identity. Women stake a claim to the city when they mine it for their art; they write themselves onto the urban landscape as main characters, metropolitan subjects who play a major role in the construction of the modern environment. They respond to Virginia Woolf's plea for spatial equality and autonomy. Numerous Cuban women writers imagine a Havana of their own. And although recognizable as the capital, their creations differ so as to reflect the individual personality and artistic philosophy of each designer. There exists for these artists not one Havana but rather many distinct Havanas, all infused with a woman's sense of being.

Cuban women writers assure their place within their national history both by focusing on women's participation in the country's capital, but perhaps more importantly, by emphasizing that city's female gender. A line from a poem by exile poet Ana



La Fuente de al India



La Giraldilla



HAVANA/THE CITY THE PEOPLE

Ornate traditional building in Havana

Rosa Núñez perfectly encapsulates the motivation for Cuban women writers to take on Havana. She communicates with a female embodiment of her native city in "La Fuente de la India," a lyrical portrait of a famous Havana fountain by the same name. Also nicknamed "Noble Havana," the monument of an indigenous woman cradling the city's coat of arms and surrounded by island elements like dolphins and tropical fruits represents the ultimate in urban feminine might and magnificence, all with a definite Cuban flair. Núñez intuitively captures Havana's figurative wealth and writes, "Accept her, understand her, rise and fall with her." The poet thus speaks on behalf of a sisterhood of Cuban women writers bonded by and devoted to the city, both real and imagined. They urge us as readers to embrace women's art as a vehicle for greater understanding of the modern "Cubana" experience and they do so by inviting us to explore a diverse fictional metropolis called "Her Havana." ❧

Jana Gutiérrez, PhD., is Assistant Professor of Spanish at Auburn University. Gutiérrez specializes in Spanish American poetry, particularly in literature written by women. At present, she is completing a manuscript on the image of Havana in twentieth-century poetry written by Cuban women. Gutiérrez has also investigated Hispanic AIDS and cancer poetry, the AfroCuban experience, as well as Latino immigrant and exile literature.

Further Reading and Resources

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A Weird Woman in a Weird City

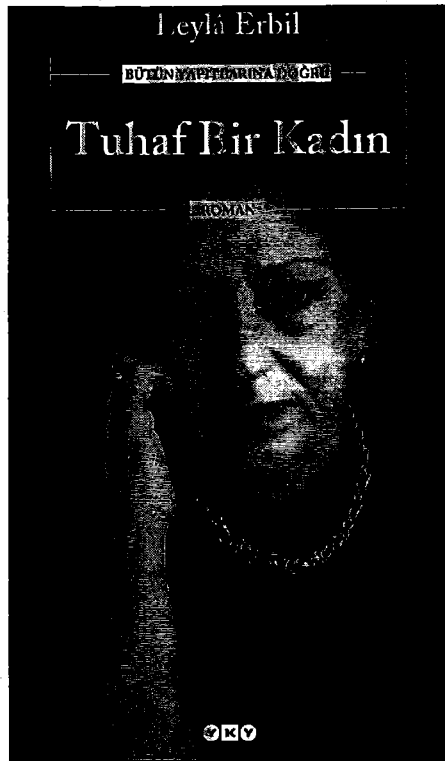
Leyla Erbil's Istanbul

Günil Özlem Ayaydın-Cebe

What does it mean to be a modern woman in Istanbul? Is it cause for an arduous confrontation between socially enforced stereotypes? Does it challenge culturally enshrined opposites between the domestic and the public? Or, is it a means of liberation from the bondage of the natural and the familial? While all difficult and pressing questions, the Turkish writer Leyla Erbil poses them in her novel *A Weird Woman* [1971], using the protagonist's perception of the city as a filter for cultural negotiation.

One of the most important authors of Turkish modern literature, Leyla Erbil (b.1931), deals with political and feminist issues. In *A Weird Woman*, she is primarily concerned with depicting the identity struggle of a young woman, Nermin, a socialist. The reader is exposed to the cultural, political and literary life of Istanbul over a twenty-year period, from the 1950s to 1970s. Rather than reproducing conventional dichotomies, such as the rural and the urban, the natural and the civilized, or the male and the female, Erbil bids the reader to question the interaction between them. Erbil uses the life of Nermin as the protagonist of the novel, as the ground on which such opposites and norms intermingle and play.

While Nermin, also a budding poet, benefits from the cultural promises of the city, she simultaneously experiences the psychological threats of its oppressive environment. Her individual transformation goes hand in hand with a discovery of the city's "other face" that, while located "half an hour away from her home," is unknown territory to her. Her obsessive mother's authority governs Nermin's home. According to her mother's values, Nermin should remain "chaste" until marriage and assume the role of a "good wife and a good mother" afterwards. The mother sees the city as a potential threat to her daughter's chastity and summons a neurotic "guardian angel" to protect Nermin. At home, Nermin has a "room of her own:" a private "rescued



Leyla Erbil on the cover of her book *Tuhaf Bir Kadın* *A Weird Woman*

territory" where she can read her books and write her letters. Yet, with her mother's impromptu if not forceful, visits into her private sanctum, Nermin continues to be the subject of her mother's "gaze."

Ultimately, Nermin resists this traditional family order. Her rebellion against the oppression of her family forms her perception of the city. In her search for a liberated life, Istanbul is stimulating and open, providing her a passage of escape from what has been a life ruled by restrictive middle-class ethics. In contrast to her mother's view, Nermin sees the city as a diverse setting where she believes she can find the ideal relationship between a man and woman. In ridding herself of the shackles of her family and tradition, Nermin pursues intellectual development — an education of the mind and body located in the bohemian lifestyle of Istanbul during this period.

In *A Weird Woman*, as in other works, Leyla Erbil presents the cult of place singular to the Istanbul of this period. In reconstructing this cult textually, Erbil stages the events of

Nermin's liberating urban experience in the actual spaces of bohemian Istanbul. *Lambo's*, a tavern in the *Fishmarket* is an important site of the book. Nermin frequents this place, a center for poets and writers. She meets her friends at *Baylan*, a café, and *Czardas* and *Dégustation*, two other taverns. At these places, well known to the young people and famous artists of the period, Nermin finds opportunities to discuss literature and partake of socialist activism. She values the social atmosphere of these public places over the education of the university. While she may question her instructors at school, she yields to the "public authorities" without any reservations.

However, Nermin meets only male poets and writers in these places. Through her maturation, Nermin comes to understand the true face of this social medium she has idealized beforehand. When her attempts to be accepted as a "sister" fail, she becomes disillusioned and begins criticizing the male frequenters of the places. Ironically, her fight for women's liberation is thwarted by the prejudices of the male intellectuals. Nermin encounters a dreaded but all too familiar experience: "the male gaze" as substitute for "the mother's gaze" that she had earlier attempted to escape.

However distressing this realization might be for Nermin, she nevertheless does not lose her hope in a utopian community. She distracts herself from the bohemian setting and finds another environment for the medium of her struggle: the suburbs. In her new life in the periphery, the city continues to offer nurture and obstacles for her. Here again, Erbil employs a critical eye, concluding her novel with a question rather than a statement. Nermin asks herself if she truly ever loved "the people." This is a question directed to the city as well.

Istanbul, in *A Weird Woman*, is actually a "weird" place to love and hate at the same time because of the conflicts it stages for her women. In the city, Nermin confronts the socially imposed gender roles and challenges them determinedly. Whether she achieves a thorough liberation is another question but we can assert that she obviously finds what she seeks for: adventure, intellectual achieve-

ment, and an autonomous identity. ❧

Günül Özlem Ayaydın-Cebe is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Turkish Literature in Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey where she was born in 1978. Her studies focus on eco-criticism, eco-feminism, and eco-psychology. She has a two-year-old daughter.

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Why Women Still Leave Architecture

A Research Report

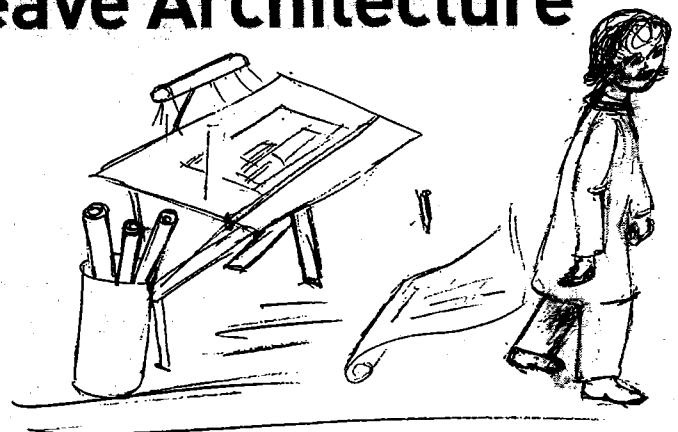
Sandra Manley and Ann de Graft-Johnson

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that men tend to have more spatial skills, and women more intuitive and language skills" (Phillips, 2003). The publication of the research report, "Why women leave architecture" provoked Philips' response in *Building Design Magazine* and sparked a heated debate in the architectural press in the UK. The implication behind Philips' remark is that women are not as well equipped to be architects as men and that is why women are underrepresented in the architectural profession.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) commissioned the research in October 2002, and the RIBA and the University of the West of England in Bristol jointly funded it. The RIBA statis-

tics (Mirza and Nacey, 2001) demonstrate that although 37% of students embarking on architectural studies in the UK are female, the overall percentage of women in the profession stands at only 13%. Further statistical analysis revealed that following qualification a significant number of women must have been leaving the profession, as without this attrition, the percentage of women in the profession would be noticeably increasing. The RIBA wanted to find out why women were leaving.

Successive generations of commentators have raised concerns about the lack of diversity in the profession and expressed the belief that the built environment can be enriched by including amongst its members both men and women and a diverse range of people of different races, cultures, abilities and backgrounds (MATRIX, 1984, Preiser and Ostroff, 2000, Anthony, 2001). Increasingly, clients and users are demanding diversity in the profession in the quest to meet their needs (Grant et al, 1996, de





Graft-Johnson, 1999). New research carried out for the Housing Corporation, found that new neighbourhoods in the UK often fail to meet the needs of the people who live there (Andrews, Reardon-Smith, and Townsend, 2002). This added to the belief that investigation of the decline of female representation in the profession was timely.

The UWE research team recognised that it was essential to ask the women who had left the profession the reasons for their decision. Using the media and adopting an information-cascading approach to reach these women was central to the research methodology. Articles invited women who had left the profession or who were considering leaving to complete an online questionnaire giving the reasons for their decision. Reactions to the media coverage were mixed. A number of hostile responses ran along similar lines to that of Philips, and discussions ranging around the basic premise that women may not have appropriate brains for the practice of architecture were common. Conversely, many people welcomed the study, especially women, who had invested both considerable amounts of money and seven years of their time training as architects only to leave the profession. They welcomed the opportunity to comment on the reason for their decision and appreciated the anonymity of an online questionnaire.

Over 170 women completed the questionnaire in a relatively short period and 14 other women participated in a series of in-depth interviews. Some of the findings were a cause for concern. For example, some employers were flouting the employment rights of women in relation to contracts of employment and maternity leave. Women cited a form of unwitting discrimination where a well intentioned desire to protect women from awkward or unpleasant tasks such as dealing with difficult clients or contractors was preventing personal growth and the development of skills. In these situations of misguided paternalism, it was difficult for a woman to gain confidence and skills and thus gain promotion and recognition. The result was a sense of frustration, limited scope for creativity, and a lack of job satisfaction.

The extent to which the profession is sexist and macho was inevitably a subject for dis-

ussion by respondents. Interviewees seemed to be surprisingly tolerant of behaviour that would not be acceptable amongst other professional communities, but the macho attitude towards working long hours, which seemed to be an accepted part of the working culture, was a cause for great concern. For women with family responsibilities this culture proved particularly problematic even when the woman concerned had opted for a reduced working week. Women commented that after having a family they were not taken seriously, were sometimes demoted, passed over for promotion or were seen to have failed to give the art of architecture the full attention it deserved. Few women cited motherhood as the reason why they had left the profession as most felt competent to organize their personal lives to combine work and home responsibilities. They did regret the fact that their motherhood had diminished their status as architects in the eyes of their employers.

In summary, the UWE team found that there was no single definitive answer to the central question. A pattern emerged that indicated that a woman's decision to leave was likely to be a build up of a number of factors rather than one particular matter, although in some cases a relatively trivial issue may have triggered the final decision. UWE produced recommendations that embraced not only workplace culture, the professional institutions, but also addressed the educational profile as an important starting point for change. The full report, which can be accessed via the RIBA website (www.architecture.com) gives more details of the findings and the full set of over 150 recommendations for action. The RIBA accepted many of the recommendations as a framework for change. Of course, only time will tell if this action is successful in contributing to greater diversity in the profession.

A final matter that emerged from the study is the extent to which the loss of female talent in the architectural profession is an international issue. Responses have been received from the United States, Japan, Canada, Hong Kong, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as European countries. The presentation of the findings at the Build Boston Diversity Conference also seemed to strike a chord with the 40 or more people

who attended the session in November 2003. The RIBA DiverseCity Exhibition that champions the importance of diversity within the architectural profession and includes details of the research project has already been displayed in Luxembourg, London, and Boston and after a tour of cities in the United States will visit Australia, New Zealand, and China (www.DiverseCity-architects.com). This international interest seems to indicate that the need to promote diversity in the architectural profession is part of a move towards creating an environment that responds to the broad diversity of the human population. If this is the case, the final question to ask is how will this collaboration take place and what form will it take. ❧

Ann de Graft-Johnson is an architect formerly from Matrix Architects Feminist Co-operative who has substantial experience in addressing gender, culture, and equal opportunities issues. She is currently a lecturer at the University of the West of England (UWE) and is involved in research relating to equal opportunities issues. She promotes greater diversity and inclusion in the process of developing the built environment and education. Ann also is an architectural consultant.

Sandra Manley is a Principal Lecturer at the School of Planning and Architecture at UWE in Bristol where she teaches, researches, and writes on urban design. She promotes the importance of equality of opportunity and diversity in the professions as an essential step towards the development of a high quality built environment and a more inclusive society. She recently joined the board of the new online publication: "Design for Diversity" to be published by the University of Buffalo.

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Women and Spatial Speculation

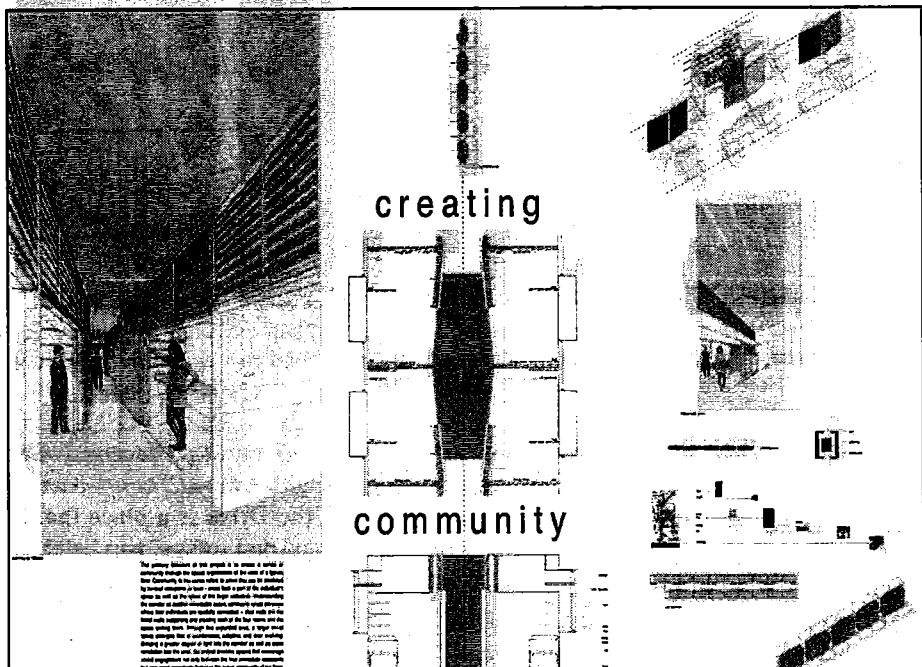
Creating a Sense of Community

Lori A. Brown

Motivating Ideas:

There were two major influences in this project. One is my ongoing interest in gender and space and the effect each has on the way I design and make, and two, I realized, from the information gathered for this competition, men typically resided in temporary shelters in lower Manhattan far more often than women. Because of this, I was interested in seeing how a space for women would inform the design process from the one extreme of the body's dimensions informing spatial relationships to another extreme of how gendered space is understood and inhabited. ✂

Lori Brown has been an assistant professor at the Syracuse University School of Architecture since 2001. Prior to teaching, Brown was working as an architect in New York City where she worked on project such as the Buck Center for Aging, several private residences and the Museum of Natural History. While working in New York City, she designed and painted murals and directed ArtStart, a pro-



Temporary Shelter, architectural drawings

gram teaching art to elementary and high school students. Her work is inherently connected to domestic space. Through collage, speculative design work, and collaborations

with other artists and academics, Brown is examining how gender and space affect one another. She has several scheduled exhibitions of her current work in 2004.

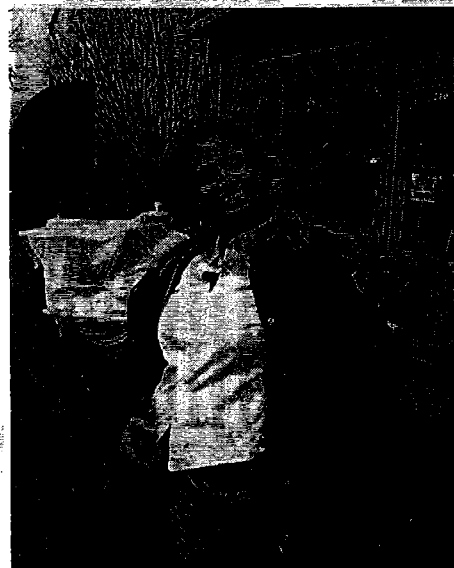
LORI BROWN

Everywhere and Nowhere

Dykes on the Drive

Ali Grant

Check out the tourist books on Vancouver and you'll most likely find Commercial Drive on Vancouver's east side described as a happening neighbourhood, where traditional meets trendy, as old Italian espresso bars sit side by side with funky fusion restaurants in a mosaic of cultures. But don't expect a mention of the fact that the neighbourhood in which it's located has one of the highest



Kate Walch: "the Drive has soul, it has character and it has lots of eye candy"

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: ALI GRANT



Fatima Jaffer: "Here on the Drive, it always feels like coming home: class intersects with race and sexuality, so I can be an Indian and be a lesbian too. Here I feel like I can be most of who I am"

Chris Morrissey: "on the Drive there's that real sense of community and within that a diversity and amongst that diversity there's lots and lots of lesbians; there's a sense of belonging that I really value".

concentrations of lesbians to be found in any North American city.

Lesbian geographers have called for a more nuanced, more sophisticated analysis of the meaning of place for lesbians, of the mutual constitution of sexuality and space and its multiple articulations in the everyday lives of this marginalized sub-culture (Lo and Healy, 2000; Podmore, 2001). The Drive provides the perfect

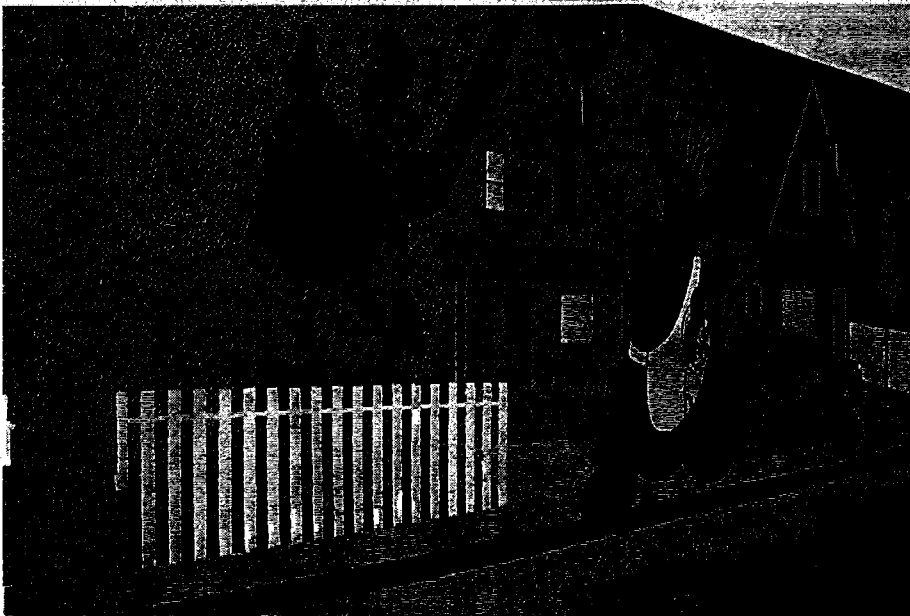
locale for this — variably conceived of as "a lesbian neighbourhood," or a "space of difference," the Drive is a place that is part mythology, part refuge, part celebration. Undoubtedly, it is a place imbued with meaning for the lesbians who live, work, and play there. ✱

Ali Grant, PhD, is a community development and research consultant.

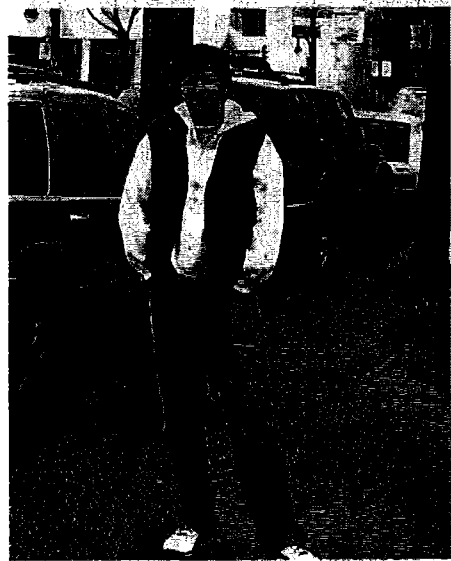
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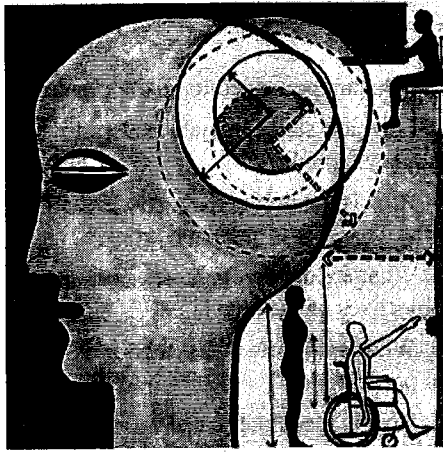
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Womynsware: the happy woman on the mural outside Womynsware reflects the happy lesbians within: this extremely user-friendly sex shop on the Drive



Jeanne Fong: "on the Drive you can forget that everyone's not gay, it's a place where you can be what you want to be".



Planning and Safety

Gender Mainstreaming

More Women Might Be Better

Clara Greed

“Gender mainstreaming is the systematic integration of gender into all systems and structures [of government], policies, programmes, personnel, processes and projects, into ways of seeing and doing, into cultures and organisations.” (Dobbie and Purcell, 2002)

A New Solution to Any Old Problem

We have recently been working on a research project for the RTPI (Royal Town Planning Institute) to produce a ‘Toolkit’ to enable local planning departments to mainstream gender issues into plan-making, plus a report on the extent to which Gender Mainstreaming (GM) was already happening in the EU and UK. Both the toolkit and research report have been made available by the RTPI for use by planning authorities. GM is often promoted as being more effective than previous strategies that have sought to solve ‘the problem’ which the ‘women and planning’ movement has failed to resolve, namely the lack of adequate consideration of women’s needs in the plan-making process. As will be seen GM is a mixed blessing, as it has the potential to detract from women’s issues if applied too generally amongst a miasma of other generic diversity concerns, but nevertheless it is to be welcomed.

Origins and Mandate

The concept of gender mainstreaming was first developed at the UN Third World Conference for Women in Nairobi in 1985 and versions of GM are now to be found in all parts of the world. The Beijing

International Women’s Conference in 1995 identified the following areas as subject of gender mainstreaming: poverty, education, training, health, violence, armed conflicts, economy, power and decision making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, the media, the environment, and the girl-child.

Parallel mainstreaming initiatives have been developing in North America, often jointly dealing with gender and race. Eurofem, a pan-European women planners group founded in Scandinavia, along with the Spanish based network, *generourban*, have popularised GM in Europe. Significantly, and miraculously, it is now a European Union requirement that GM takes place in all aspects of governmental policy making within the member states. **Article 2 and 3, section E, Clause 2, of the Amsterdam Treaty 1997 requires Europe-wide horizontal priority to integrate equality objectives throughout programming process, in relation to policy setting, resource allocation, and implementation.** Thus there is a requirement that all local authorities, and therefore all planning departments within the EU member countries take on board gender mainstreaming. In other words, GM has now the same status as EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment), and

should be taken as seriously as sustainability considerations. Thus, GM constitutes a major challenge to planning. But, curiously, it appears many LPAs (Local Planning Authorities) are ignoring it, hoping it will simply go away — a stark contrast to the rapturous reception that environmental sustainability has received.

Research Findings: Generic or Gendered Approaches

We found that few local authorities, let alone spatial planning departments, in the UK seem to realise the full implications of these EU requirements. The research team investigated all possible leads; undertook literature reviews, web searches, telephone surveys; and contacted RTPI branches, LPAs, professional bodies, women’s groups, and equalities organisations. The core of the research was based upon the detailed investigation of 15 case studies, which covered a representative range of planning departments in the United Kingdom. Following this we developed a Toolkit and tested it on 5 pilot authorities to see how it would work in practice.

We found a paucity of gender examples and so we decided to include examples of planning authorities where generic mainstreaming was being undertaken. A generic rather



than gendered approach to mainstreaming was more acceptable within local government and official guidance already existed. But the emphasis was mainly upon personnel and procedural matters rather than substantive spatial policy. Often the people undertaking such gender auditing did not understand the issues and only the most foolhardy would reply 'No' in these Politically Correct times, to questions along the lines, 'have you considered the equalities implications of this policy?' Some LPAs, in spite of assertions that they were aware of gender issues and were giving them 'special' priority, seem puzzled when we asked for details of how gender impacted upon specific planning policies. Presumably, they imagined gender was only a personnel matter, or it was already covered by the authority's vague and generalised statement. In fact, many LPAs seemed surprised we were doing the survey at all. They assumed that 'women' had been 'done' some time in the past and it was no longer a matter of concern.

Gender can easily get lost within the current diversity agenda. In seeking to take on all the minority issues, such as race, disability, class, sexuality, age, religion, class, culture, some local authorities had 37 minority categories! A superficial 'tick box' approach can result, as local planning departments struggle to keep all the balls in the air at once. It seems that some planners have great difficulty dealing with more than one minority issue at once. For example, respondents in the London boroughs planning departments told us how black women's needs were often marginalized, as planners assumed that if the needs of 'the young black male' were addressed, the 'race problem' was solved (in other words 'sport' rather than 'childcare'). Within individuals' lives and within communities a whole kaleidoscope of diversity characteristics is manifest in everyday life. Yet the ponderous nature of much urban planning is ill suited to capturing such vivacity within the plan-making process. Clearly, LPAs need to operate at a more sophisticated level. Acknowledging the complexity of so-called minority issues, LPAs have to develop skills to deal with several minority issues at the same time. In



fact, gender cross cuts and overarches all these issues, as women comprise the majority of most minorities, including for example the elderly and disabled.

GM Methodologies

We only found a few LPAs, which were undertaking effective gender mainstreaming. A matrix structure is a popular means of making the link between policy topics and gender considerations. It is important to develop methods that draw out the unexpected consequences of neutral or ostensibly irrelevant policies and to look at traditional women's policies like childcare provision. In evaluating different policies against gender criteria, many GM methodologies recommend looking at whether the effects are positive, negative or inconsequential.

Minimum Checklist for the Toolkit

As a result of the research studies we eventually developed a minimum checklist as the basis of our Toolkit that would enable planners to mainstream gender into their work — whether they believed in gender or not. We also recommended that LPAs develop a matrix system best suited to their policy priorities. In summary, drawing on the various methods to ensure 'gender proofing' of policies and the integration of GM into the planning process the following questions should be asked:

1. Who is doing the planning?

2. Who are perceived to be the planned?
3. How are statistics gathered and whom do they include?
4. How is the policy team chosen and is it representative of men and women?
5. What are the key values, priorities, and objectives of the plan?
6. Who is consulted and who is involved in participation?
7. How is it evaluated and by whom?
8. Does Gender auditing reinforce 'plait with' other key policies to create better planning?
9. How is the policy implemented, monitored, and managed?
10. Are adequate resources, time, money, 'man' power, and priority given to the process?

In this process, two key stages came out as the most problematic. First, there is the collection of gender-differentiated statistics (question 3), which few LPAs possess, but which are vital to assessing 'who' (male or female) is the 'subject' of policies on employment, transportation, and leisure policy (etc) and subsequently to assess the differential effects of policy initiatives on women and men. Second, there is much disquiet about the levels of consultation and public participation (question 6) with leave many women out. Recommendations include offering workplace-based public participation meetings, providing childcare for evening meeting and offering training to members of the public unfamiliar with the planning system. In this way, the public might participate in a more informed manner, in contrast to the current 'hit and run' approach to asking the public their views on planning matters.

Many planning departments have written policies and forward planning objectives that can readily be the subject of gender proofing. More technical departments, however, whose work affects the quality of the built environment, may not have written policies that can be checked for gender bias. But such departments make major decisions affecting thousands of people, often on a reactive 'fire fighting basis' as they rush from one crisis to



another, as is the case with some public works, highways, building control, planning enforcement, sanitation and engineering departments. For example poor street lighting, closure of public toilets, barriers to access, dangerous parking lots can undermine women friendly policies promoted by the LPA. This poses a major problem. Indeed LPAs cannot take the full burden of GM on their own, without corporate overarching support from the local authority as a whole.

For a LPA to do justice to each of the stages indicated, there is a need for political will at national and local level, senior managerial support, adequate resources, 'man'power, proper timescales and achievable targets. Otherwise it will be left to 'the new girl in the corner' and everybody else will ignore it. We are conscious that some consider mainstreaming to be a form of collaboration, as 'mainstreams are often malestreams' and polluted by sexism at that. Nevertheless, because GM is now a requirement of government policy making within the EU we are very concerned to ensure that gender is prioritised and not lost in a miasma of other diversity issues, and that the spatial, land-use policy aspect is stressed. But to do so there is a need for a major restructuring of departmental organisation to ensure that all the issues that are relevant to women are brought together in the same department and

to avoid the fragmentation, chaos and confusion, that works against the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. If the requirements of the Amsterdam Treaty were taken seriously, we would see a much more proactive form of gender mainstreaming. Gender would be taken as a key consideration from the start of policy making, rather than the reactive 'gender proofing' type of tick-box activity that takes place in many departments at the end, after policies have been decided. To make GM work properly there needs to be massive retraining of

planners to operate the system. After all, the majority of planners and other built environment professionals are still overwhelming male, and so it is they who will be doing the gender mainstreaming! ❧

Dr Clara Greed is Professor of Inclusive Urban Planning at the School of Architecture and Planning, University of the West of England. She has been a pioneer in gender issues and planning and authored textbooks and several more specific books on urban design and gender.

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generourban, a Spanish based network popularising GM in Europe <http://www.generourban.org>.

Ni putes ni soumises! Neither Whores Nor Submissives!

An Emergent Body Politic and its Freedom

Charissa N. Terranova

Amid flattering images of French suburban high rise housing, a caption at a French website tells us "*arrêtons de critiquer les banlieues!*" (stop criticizing the suburbs!) The author of the website is anonymous. However, one might guess that the writer's voice is

a woman's since on the home page one is prominently directed to another site, namely that of a rising women's movement in France called *Ni putes ni soumises* (Neither Whores nor Submissives).

In connecting to the home page of this emer-

gent body politic one promptly enters the fray of politics in action: a vibrant discussion on the rights and empowerment of young women living in the French *banlieues*. Marked by a several-day march through peripheral Parisian suburbs to the city center, the movement coalesced in the spring of



2003 in response to the murder of a seventeen-year-old woman, Sohane Benziane, who was doused with gasoline and lit afire. The murderer told the police that he had killed her because she had ignored his overtures, in particular his invitations to join him in a nearby garbage dump where she was likely to become the victim of *une tournante*, a term literally translated as “a pass-round.” This banal term has been coined to designate gang rape committed by teenage boys against teenage girls in often ghettoized French suburban housing estates. Most victims of *une tournante* are first, second or third generation French with parents or grand parents who came to France from Africa. The question of women’s rights and feminine empowerment are therefore just two forces at issue when confronted with the circumstances of such an atrocious event.

Ni putes ni soumises finds itself at the heady juncture of many issues: gender agency, economic depravation, nationalism, French citizenship, Islam, secularism, and life in a post-colonial world. The force of urgent need coupled with such inherent political complexity has garnered for the group official State recognition and support. Yet the group’s legitimacy arises not so much from this, but from its manner of employing freedom. Following from the group’s collective demand “for rights to liberty and emancipation” and its generation of debate on-line and beyond one gathers that, because of *Ni putes ni soumises*, freedom flourishes both in real and virtual space — in so much as we correlate freedom with active and lived political discourse.

This is far different from the abstract notion of freedom often wielded by present day pundits, big power holders and heads of superpower states. The freedom being waged and won through the auspices of *Ni putes ni soumises* is that which the German political philosopher Hannah Arendt would describe in terms of a “field of experience which is action.” Arendt was pointedly committed to distancing herself from the metaphysics of freedom anointed by earlier thinkers. Arendt took a vivid stance against the empty brandishing of “freedom” as a means to manipulate a mass audience. Her thinking was molded in response to and by the rise of various fascisms across Europe in



Ni putes ni soumises, Demonstration of women against ghettos and for equality

the 1930s. Her pointed care with the idea of “freedom” rings also true in our present moment. Such a “freedom” is abstract and purely theoretical, propounded by way of one’s romantic sense of personal will and the self and perhaps most egregious of all, formed by what she called the “liberum arbitrium:” a seeming “freedom of choice that arbitrates and decides between two given things, one good and one evil, and whose choice is predetermined by motive which has only to be argued to start its operation.”

We might look upon the diversity of women and political subject matter of *Ni putes ni soumises* as an inherent check on its sense of freedom, always keeping it from becoming abstract and a force of the will to power, like the freedom discussed above. Yet it is not only the peculiar sense of heterogeneity characteristic of *Ni putes ni soumises*, its position within a hotbed of present political questions and conundrums, but its quality of principle — to invoke another idea of Arendt’s — that makes its freedom full rather than empty, meaningful and directed rather than mendacious and distracting. Through the force of principle, Arendt would inject her idea of freedom with a sense of transparent purpose driven not by the subtleties of other-handed and friends’ monetary gain but by the activity of political discourse and law that is at once immaterial in its necessary disinterestedness and apparent in its effects. The rights and protection



Typical suburban housing estate

that the women of *Ni putes ni soumises* seek have nothing to do with the profit of power and everything with being full citizens and free women in French society. In making political discourse, *Ni putes ni soumises* aims at full political engagement. The women of this French body politic seek to be recognized as full and equal participants within French society.

In democratic fashion, the group’s activity reflects upon the status of the French State, revealing its deficiencies and, more precisely, its need to further modernize. *Ni*

WEBSITE OF NI PUTES NI SOUMISES

WEBSITE OF AL-HAMDULILAH.MONSIEUR.WANADOO.FR

putes ni soumises thus acts upon the State as a force of reform. In the present moment, one cannot discuss the existence of this particular French women's movement without also addressing the decision on November 28, 2003 made by the French Premier Jean-Pierre Raffarin to pass a bill banning the hijab, the Muslim headscarf, in public schools. That the two issues are interwoven — women's rights and the Muslim hijab — goes without question. That said, *Ni putes ni soumises* does not uncritically bring to the table the necessity of modernization, but questions the term's very definition. Should we not understand that being modern, like being democratic, means to be tolerant as well as transparent? Do not recognition and tolerance of difference constitute the idea and fact of diversity that is fundamental to democracy past and present? Looking beyond government, the tentacles of group reform in this particular instance reach the realm of religion as well, since their call for support, security and equity presses Islam to similarly modernize.

Whether viewed from the perspective of the State or from that of religion, the women of *Ni putes ni soumises* make clear



Ni putes ni soumises participate in a demonstration

that womanhood and the female subject and citizen are not determinable solely by her role within the family structure as mother and a bearer of children. *Ni putes ni soumises* confronts the State and Islam with the most difficult question of all: how to recognize difference without reducing someone to it. While perhaps driven by Arendt's rather universalist notion of principle, gender empowerment hits the ground in different ways, often according to local custom. The challenge at hand forces us to scrutinize with great care the relatedness of custom and universal human rights, women wearing the hijab within a culture formed and informed by empowering feminist practices. Responding with

full body commitment, the answer to this question of difference and recognition lies within the freedom of the group: the continued and substantial action, dialectic and change brought about by this emergent body politic, *Ni putes ni soumises*. ❧

Charissa N. Terranova is Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Division of Art History at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. She is an Active art critic in Dallas and is working on a manuscript on the subject of the history of "le grand ensemble," a French housing type. She will graduate with a Ph.D. in Architectural History and Theory from Harvard University in June 2004.

Further Reading and Resources:

- Arendt, Hannah. "What is Freedom?" *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2000.
- www.alhamdulillah.monsite.wanadoo.fr — website of "arrêtons de critiquer les banlieues!" (Stop criticizing the suburbs!)
- www.niutesnisoumises.com — website of *Ni putes ni soumises* (Neither whores nor submissives)

WEBSITE OF NI PUTES NI SOUMISES

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www.womensbookstore.com



Not the Chicken, Not the Egg, But the Nest!



Monika Jaeckel and Marieke van Geldermalsen

A common criticism of newly built settlements is that they are beautiful, but dead. Residents often invest little more than their money in their surroundings. They tend to be double earners spending a lot of time outside the neighborhood. In order for neighborhoods to be safe and lively, they depend on people who are able and willing to invest their time, presence, energy, creativity and social networks locally.

With subsidy from the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Planning and Environment, the Mother Center International Network for Empowerment (MINE) is currently conducting a feasibility study at the town-extension project Schuytgraaf in Arnhem, The Netherlands, on how to place social cohesion and community building in the center of urban planning. With this study we intend to provide a new framework of thinking on how to build cities, based on our experiences of grassroots women's involvement in revitalizing local neighborhoods.

The solution we suggest is to integrate temporary settlements as an integral part of urban planning. This is done by creatively using the time and space slots available when new settlements are being developed. Temporary settlements in locations where agricultural use has ended, but building has not yet started, can be attractive for a wide range of groups looking for cheap accommodation as well as experimental space. In our pioneer interviews we have identified students, artists, refugees, as well as starter families and seniors, as interested in living full or part-time in a temporary settlement for a period of time in their lives. Their motives are to save money, try out skills, build a future for themselves, take part in neighborhood networks, access services, or be "where the action is."



Lunch time in the Mother Center in Munich.

Different kinds of people in different phases of their lives have different things to offer each other and their neighborhoods. Students, seniors and housewives, refugees, artists and creative people, often have a rich reservoir of time as well as social, cultural and educational capital. Urban planning in this approach focuses on providing structures and opportunities for local exchange of different forms of capital in settlements; thus, creating win/win situations for all involved.

The temporary settlement offers room to develop entrepreneurial skills by providing services and cultural events for the newly developed settlement from the start. Very often, in newly built settlements services are the last to be developed, and cultural events tend to be far away in the inner city. In the 5 - 10 years, that the temporary settlement is in place, some of these services can develop into permanence.

The "heart" of the temporary settlement is the Mother Center, where neighborhood activities, social and cultural events, information switchboards, as well as small scale services and care provisions are provided

and coordinated. The Mother Center is always open. You can go there to get a cup of coffee, to experience a 'cozy' atmosphere, to develop ideas and projects or to have a chat with your next-door neighbor. It is also a place to access flexible child or elder care, or other close to home services.

The temporary settlement responds simultaneously to many current issues and needs. It:

- brings life, social cohesion, diversity and cultural richness to newly built neighborhoods;
- offers a way for the social structure of a neighborhood to precede the physical structure, so that people can find and build on a community when they settle in a new neighborhood;
- offers a wide range of services that contribute to the compatibility of work and family life;
- creates new jobs and businesses, and
- offers experimental space, in which innovations can develop. ☘

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Monika Jaeckel is sociologist at the German Youth Institute (DJI) in Munich, Germany, currently on sabbatical to work on the Arnhem project. She is founder of the Mother Center Movement, which consists of more than 750 centers in 15 countries worldwide.

Women And Safer Community Planning on The Ground

Are We Getting Anywhere?

Terri Dame

In the Cowichan Valley of Vancouver Island on Canada's west coast, the Safer Futures Program (Cowichan Women Against Violence Society) has been working with local governments since 1996 to research women's safety issues and develop planning policies that acknowledge these issues and encourage the use of women's safety audits as a tool for assessing proposed developments.

In response to inquiries that began to come from around the province, we developed a project to share this model with ten communities through a training and development initiative. *Women and Community Safety: a training and development package for small, rural and/or isolated communities* (2000 - 2002) developed and produced an accessible training and resource manual on Women and Community Safety, and provided training-workshops to local women's groups and local governments in nine small, rural, and/or isolated communities around BC. The project addressed all aspects of violence against women including domestic, public, racial, and systemic.

While the information and training was successful, and participating communities gained knowledge and skills to carry out women's safety audits and integrated community development initiatives, what emerged was a lack of institutional capacity to sustain the work. It became clear that, there is a need for an *integrated* approach to women's safety in each community — i.e. one that addresses physical, social, and institutional factors that contribute to or detract from women's safety and participation in community life — so there is a need for an integrated approach at a broader level (beyond the community).

An integrated strategy — one that includes the critical components of research and evaluation, policy and program development, education, and the exchange of best practices — offers the greatest potential for change. We need planners and elected officials that are knowledgeable about women's safety issues, women's safety activists that are knowledgeable about community planning issues, and crime prevention practitioners that are knowledgeable about both. We need those organizations that small, rural and/or isolated municipalities belong to and listen to, to be encouraging their members to do this work, and to be providing them with some of the tools they need. And, underlying all of this, we need a solid foundation of research, and strength in numbers.

Women and Community: an integrated strategy, 2002-2005, was thus developed as a three-year initiative to address this need for research and information, networking and communications, broad-based education for stakeholders, and integrated policy and programming at the provincial level. We are doing this through:

- conducting research on issues of women and community safety in small, rural and isolated communities in Canada and beyond, in order to have a solid foundation of knowledge from which to develop an integrated strategy for change.
- the formation of a provincial working group to begin to address the need for provincial policy and programming on women and community safety issues in small, rural and isolated communities.
- working with provincial institutions to develop an educational framework
- fostering a network of individuals/

groups/projects involved in women and community safety initiatives in all BC communities, with an emphasis on small, rural and isolated communities.

Can we make a difference? Like many other things, change is relative, and is played out on the ground, day to day, one step at a time, sometimes in surprising ways. Three years ago, in the Cowichan Valley, in a committee discussion about what to do about issues in a local park, participants ran the gamut of ideas around fencing, enforcing, and even paving. At one point, someone said, "But doesn't all that fly in the face of what we know about women's safety?" That comment shifted the direction of planning, and today, we have a community safety plan for the neighbourhood and that park, endorsed by a local Council, supported by staff and embraced by the community. The community is implementing strategies that focus on women's ability to use the park and be involved in its development: a community garden, new play equipment, accessible washrooms, a boardwalk, drama productions and events, to name a few.

It is critical to remember and understand that change is not final, and that it can (and does) move backward, sometimes more quickly than it was moved forward. The work is generational: it must be approached slowly and gradually; it needs to be built on solid ground of information and evidence; it needs to be approached through relationship building; and it needs to be sustained over time, to avoid the "been there done that" mindset and to weather the ups and downs of political change.

The goal is to create a new lens through which to see the community, and to enable politicians, staff and the community to





integrate those thoughts in practical ways. And, the important thing to remember is that like all good things, change comes in small packages. It can be as small as a woman calling back to say that the safety audit was an incredible experience, or a planner commenting that of course, this is just good planning. It can be as big as an elected official's public declaration of support, a major policy adopted, or a developer's invitation to help design a mall. To find out more about these and other changes, visit us at www.saferfutures.org

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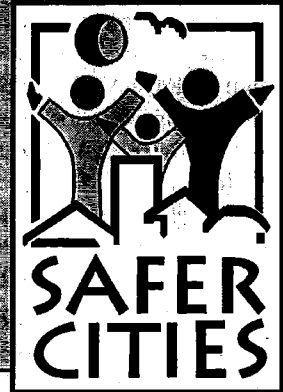
Terri Dame developed and manages the Safer Futures Program, and is a co-coordinator of the Women and Community Safety Project.

UN Habitat Safer Cities Programme

The Safer Cities Programme <http://www.unhcr.org/programmes/safercities> was launched in 1996 at the request of African mayors who wanted to address urban violence by developing a prevention strategy at city level. The programme supports the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, which acknowledges the responsibility of local authorities in crime prevention. The main objectives of the programme are to:

- (1) Build capacities at city level to adequately address urban insecurity, and thereby
- (2) Contribute to the establishment of a culture of prevention.

Tackling crime and insecurity are issues of good urban governance. Successful experiences in urban crime prevention improve governance. Good governance and safe cities are reciprocal: where inhabitants are free from fear, and where safety is improved for citizens and neighbourhoods, interaction among people, among groups and with the public institutions becomes possible. This in turn creates an enabling environment for the inhabitants in the city, for the quality of their life and for economic development.



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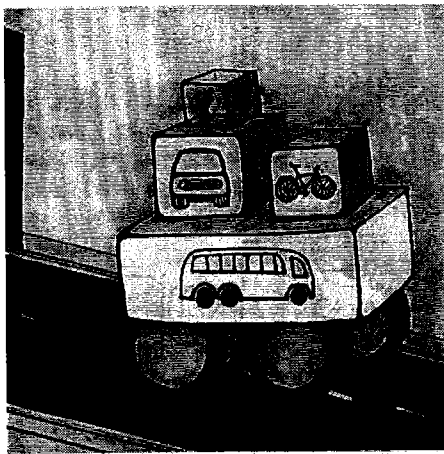
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Transportation

What Will Move Us?

An Emerging Future For Urban Transportation

Sue Zielinski

In ecological terms, it should come as no revelation that as cities grow and become more complex and diverse, they begin to create more efficiencies. Ecosystems grow from simple systems with a few pioneering species to more mature ecosystems with diversity and interconnection. Thus, after a fire or flood or some other disturbance, a cleared piece of land will begin developing the structure of its ecosystem with an emphasis on rapid simple growth. After a period it becomes more diverse and more efficient as it establishes a more complex network of interactions.

Peter Newman, in Sustainable Cities

Amongst the underbrush of unabated car production and use, particularly in growing cities of the developing world, a new and more sophisticated way of thinking about and doing urban transportation is emerging. It is called New Mobility, and it is finding its way to the sun.

What is New Mobility like? Generally it aims to be, safer, healthier, more equitable, more affordable, cleaner and greener, more convenient, and more aesthetically pleasing. It is dynamic and customized to each person's needs and connects a range of doable, sustainable options, door to door. It is enhanced technologically not only by alternative fuels, but by telecommunications technologies that connect many different modes, services and environments, and that provide information in a variety of ways to help with urban trip planning. It is supported physically by smart urban planning and design.

All these potential benefits could greatly enhance the lives of women who have traditionally been "transportation disadvantaged." Fewer women than men can afford cars. The design, routing, pricing and scheduling of public transit seldom recognizes the special needs of women. Women's traditional multiple and coinciding roles result in fragmented and overlapping multi-tasking, that is reflected in their travels. More women than men travel off rush hour, often with several interruptions, shopping bags and dependents in strollers or walkers. On top of all that, cold and car dominated environments limit cycling especially with more than one dependent. Walking in communities not planned for it can be both scary and unpleasant, especially when it is cold, dark, with no sign of life in sight.

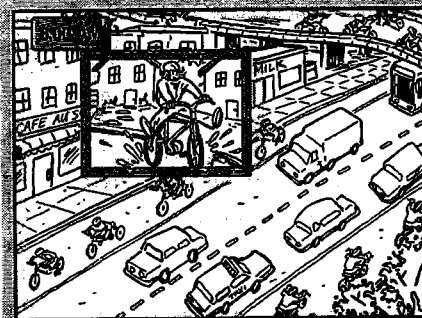
New Mobility's evolution is not only responding to congestion, sprawl, and climate change. It is evolving to address people's many and changing daily travel patterns and needs. It is moving beyond the traditional "silver bullet" approach that alternative fuels can solve everything, to a more sophisticated approach. It applies emerging communications technologies, new services, connections, physical arrangements, and financial and political/institutional arrangements to support seamless door-to-door transportation for everyone.

Of course as with any evolution, especially such a complex one, it is fragile, and faced with some powerful counteracting forces. It is could stray too far in any one direction. This means that women's involvement is crucial to balance a potentially hyper-tech future or any other set of innovations that might not result in the quality of life

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF NEW MOBILITY (excerpt(s))

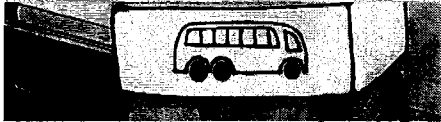
7:00 AM

A beautiful June day dawns in Mistersauga. As Dave and Jane Martin awaken, the fuel-efficient hybrid ultra-minivan from ProducePathway delivers the groceries they ordered online last night. It came from a local depot that gets regular deliveries from nearby farmers and also houses local businesses like bakeries and cafes. Onboard route optimization software means a timely and efficient delivery schedule.



Jerry, Dave and Jane's 14-year-old daughter, hops on her bike and cycles to school. Kids can now cycle safely on the bike lanes that criss-cross the city, created by the municipal government with its dedicated share of the gas tax.





The doorbell rings for 7-year old Bobby. It's a neighbour, today's supervisor for the parent-run Walking School Bus. Dave and Jane volunteer to walk neighbourhood children to school safely one day a month. Today, they wave good-bye, secure in the knowledge that caring parents will make sure Bobby and the other kids get to school safely — and happy to have some precious time alone this morning.

8:15 AM

Jane checks the Net for real-time traveler information at Get-There.ca. Seconds later, she learns that using the seamlessly connected regional RT in combination with a station car on the other end is the fastest way to get to where she's going today. Global Positioning System-enabled real-time transportation information also tells her the next RT will arrive at the local station in 16 minutes. Jane quickly books the entire trip in advance as a Mobility Service Package, kisses Dave goodbye, and heads out the door to begin the 15-minute walk to the station.

8:20 AM

Jane walks along the broad sidewalks. Above, community-run rooftop gardens are in bloom and commuters pass by on foot, on scooters, and on roller blades as the shops begin to open. As foot traffic has increased, small businesses have emerged to fill local niches and needs — everything from pedestrian and cycle-based courier services to Internet cafes with high-speed connections and a video-conferencing suite for teleconferencing. For some reason... it's also quieter.

8:25 AM

On an adjacent street a fuel-efficient truck breezes by, heading back to the regional freight campus from the last of its morning deliveries. With more people using other modes, there's more space to move goods efficiently, and trucks don't waste as much time in traffic jams. New municipal policies also make it quicker and more efficient to load and unload merchandise.



and community that we envision and need. New Mobility is not only about moving people. It is also about moving goods — one of the fastest growing areas in transportation planning and vastly under-recognized as such. And it is about moving less, or at least replacing unnecessary trips with the help of smart urban planning and design, and by using telecommuting, teleconferencing, tele-banking, tele-medicine, tele-shopping, and tele-education. Moving money, or finding innovative financing partnerships and arrangements is also key to helping New Mobility happen. Almost as important as moving minds of users and creators of transportation, is shifting the paradigm to a connected, sophisticated, and sustainable vision.

Overall, New Mobility represents a new role for sustainable transportation in cities — or perhaps an old role re-cycled. It sees transportation as

- a framework for city-building, not an afterthought in the planning process,
- a positive, dynamic, exciting way forward, not a sacrifice or a source of fear and confusion,
- an investment, not a cost, and
- a connected, collaborative, ongoing project involving businesses, governments, labour, communities, and educational institutions.

To bring these qualities down to earth, Moving The Economy and its wide-ranging partners and colleagues collaboratively developed a scenario of "A day in the life of New Mobility." It paints one picture of a New Mobility future in a suburb of any North American city. Bringing together actual examples from around the world, New Mobility provides a starting point for understanding, discussion, and action by depicting a realistic future scenario of an integrated, sustainable, door-to-door transportation system.

Several very specific innovations in this particular scenario would benefit women. These include internet and inter-modal travel information and booking, contactless, multi-mode travel passes, dedicated transit and cycling paths, minibus taxis, teleconferencing and greater acceptance

Jane pauses to direct a tourist to the traveler information kiosk near the RT station. It allows commuters and tourists to use interactive web mapping to plan their journeys and activities.



Jane gets on the RT. She pays for the ride with her contactless smart card, not even having to take it out of her purse to brush it by the reader. She smiles — now she's earned enough incentive points to supply her next cappuccino fix.

8:36 AM

Jane sits down. Her cellphone rings, confirming her booking for the station car that she'll pick up at the Auto Access depot at the end of the line. She'll need it to get to her morning meeting in Goshawa.

Jane looks out the window at the cars stuck in gridlock, and thinks, "I wonder what time the drivers are getting to work today?"

8:45 AM

Dave has an office across town, but today he's staying home to meet with the carpenter. He decides to use the opportunity before she arrives to read the reports and case studies he downloaded from Trans-Portal.com, an online one-stop shop for professionals like himself who work in New Mobility.

9:30 AM

The carpenter arrives on her work bike, with heavier gear in the attached cargo trailer. Travelling by bike (and is quicker and healthier, and helps her to avoid road tolls, so it's better for her bottom line AND her waistline).

11:00 AM

Dave uses a webcam on loan from his employer to teleconference with his counterparts in Singapore, Rome and Bogota. They're discussing plans to make their smart card mobility service programs seamlessly integrated. The main goal is more convenient travel that will also support urban eco-tourism.

12:37 PM

After her meeting, Jane's next stop is her office back in Mistersauga. She drops her

station car off at the Auto Access depot, and heads towards the RT stop. Her cell phone rings. An automated message from Tripartico.ca tells her the RT is ten minutes away and is running on time. The station is less than a five minute walk away, and Jane decides to use the extra time to grab a latte/cappuccino from the station cafe.

5:04 PM

Jane finishes work for the day. On nice days like this, she often walks home, but Dave's parents are in town tonight, and she wants extra time to get the guest room ready. Fortunately, convenient, speedy, and comfortable Bus Service will take her home in minutes, zipping down the street on transit-only lanes. When it's finished, the new regional RT network that's being built will be even faster.



Dave decides to put his work away and start dinner for the family. He loves to cook and appreciates the extra time with his family that regional telework provides.

7:00 PM

Jane emails the local taxi/bus company, booking a pickup for the whole family so they can share an evening out together at a musical in downtown Toronto.



7:12 PM (gradual instead of RT) The taxi-bus, a hybrid minibus, arrives at the door, one of several stops making in the neighbourhood before heading to the common destination, a Toronto transit hub. Jane pays for the whole family's ride on her smart card, earning enough in

of flex-time and working from home.

A similar door-to-door visioning process can happen for any city region or community around the globe, by matching its particular resources, actors, needs and preferences, and connecting the sustainable transportation dots. The key is to start with what you have, add what could be possible in your situation, and then connect the dots in a narrative way. It gets creators and users on the same page, and is a starting point for an action plan.

What might New Mobility mean for women generally? It should mean a wider range of feasible, affordable, safe, connected, customized and sustainable options for moving around cities. These are benefits to everyone, but particularly to women. At the very least it should mean greater involvement by women in creating transportation systems that really move us.

Contact:
Moving the Economy's website is at www.movingtheeconomy.ca

Sue Zielinski, MES, R.P.P. R.C.I.P. is co-founder and Director of Moving the Economy, a Canada-wide partnership that promotes New Mobility industry development and innovation (www.movingtheeconomy.ca) She has worked for over 12 years on sustainable transportation and clean air at the City of Toronto and advises on a wide range of local and international sustainable transportation initiatives.



7:45 PM

With fifteen minutes until the show starts, the family decides to walk to the theatre. They haven't been there before, but it's easy to find their way with the new signage and electronic way finding systems that the City government installed in partnership with major downtown destinations.

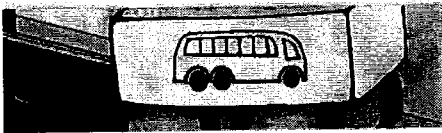
The walk is a pleasant one. There's less smog since several major downtown roads were made transit and bikes only and the downtown is more alive with a sort of friendly buzz that boosts pedestrian traffic, tourism, and local businesses.

10:47 PM

Home again! Dave and Jane say goodnight to the kids, then take a few minutes to go online to pay some bills. Living along a sustainable transportation corridor means they save enough money on their insurance and property tax bills to rent a van for their weekend trip to the cottage. A few clicks of the mouse, and the van is booked.

11:00 PM

Dave and Jane and the gang turn in at the end of a typical day in their lives. As New Mobility has been evolving, their whole family can accomplish more over the day in ways that are more economical and planet-friendly. New Mobility means that the seamless transportation web they use is integrated, clean, smart, service-oriented, safe and user-focused -- and profitable.



Cycling Freedom for Women

Barriers for Women Cyclists Around the World

Sylvia Welke and Jennifer Allen

"I stand and rejoice every time
I see a woman on a wheel"

(Susan B. Anthony, famed suffragette)



Women can ride!

With a briefcase strapped to her bicycle rack, a woman in high heels and a skirt cycles past a line of stopped cars through one of Ottawa's busiest downtown intersections. In Zambesia, Mozambique, a health care worker threads her way through traffic to the local clinic with medical supplies. Although continents apart, both cyclists share similar experiences. For one, they both receive stares from motorists and pedestrian onlookers. It seems that women cyclist commuters are still an unusual sight in some parts of the world.

In Ottawa, Ontario, the high-heeled woman commuting to work on her bicycle is only one of a small number of city residents that choose this mode of transportation. And while she is one of an increasing number of women cyclists in this city, male cyclists still far outnumber their female counterparts. A cyclist profile survey in the City of Ottawa indicated that 50% fewer women cycle to work or school, compared to men (0.7% vs. 1.6%). In Mozambique, the number of women choosing to cycle in order to complete their day's work is even smaller, both relative to men and in absolute numbers. Neither Canada nor Mozambique is unique, though, with similarly few women cyclists in Mali, Bangladesh, Peru, India and Turkmenistan. In Continental Europe, the picture is somewhat different with closer to 10-23 % of cyclists being female, particularly in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. In China and Vietnam the percentage leaps to 50%.

Why this difference in the number of women cyclists among countries? Certainly there are some overriding geographic and economic factors at work that have led to more women cycling in say, Asia, than in Africa. For instance, China — a major manufacturer of bicycles — offers affordable bicycles to even those on low incomes whilst bicycles are neither readily available nor affordable in some parts of Africa. Differences in numbers of women cyclists between North America and the Netherlands can partly be explained by higher population densities, higher fuel costs and air pollution concerns, as well as a long history and social acceptance of utilitarian cycling.

But there is more to it than that. Women, particularly in the South, face profound cultural and societal barriers to utilitarian cycling. Back in the Mozambican village of Zambesia, the woman cycling to the clinic faced both physical and verbal abuse from a crowd of young men only a few

weeks earlier on her same route to work. These men were suspicious of and felt threatened by the new found freedom the bicycle afforded the health care worker — such attitudes are not uncommon in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Iran, the situation for women cyclists is extreme with a recent ban on women cyclists in public citing the undue attraction of strangers' attention.

Cultural norms and men's perception of women's roles aside, there are also restrictions that women's traditional dress places on cycling. In Mozambique, India and Indonesia, women's long traditional dresses or wraps are hardly conducive to cycling. In some countries, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, female modesty is a concern and works against the popularization of cycling among women.

Where women cyclists across the globe converge is on the issue of traffic safety. Surveys of cyclists in Ontario confirm that traffic safety is perceived as a major obstacle to cycling and significantly more women (65% of those surveyed) hold this opinion than men. Cyclists, particularly women cyclists, in Accra, Ghana and in Mexico City also face traffic fears with not only motorized traffic and pedestrians to deal with but also poor road conditions. In Africa, roads are notoriously dangerous with a 60 times higher traffic death toll (of which 75% are pedestrians and bicyclists) than in industrialized countries. In concert with this is the lack of bicycle facilities such as bicycle lanes and pathways, a problem across the hemispheres.



Berlin, German Railway offers these attractive bikes near stations. They are GPS monitored and can be picked up and left anywhere; users can unlock and get charged with a code.

Women who wish to cycle have other worries too. Some do not yet know how to bike while others lack the confidence to deal with possible bicycle breakdown (a techno-intimidation of sorts). And as a young girl interviewed in Nima, Ghana, said: "I see them [adult female cyclists] as role models and a source of encouragement to develop and advance cycling..." Role models are lacking in most countries for young women who dream of cycling.

Overcoming some of the key barriers to cycling that women in the North or the South face could do much to address the socio-economic status, health, and empowerment of women, not to mention the positive effects on the environment. While this is no small task, some projects aimed at promoting cycling to women both in North America and Africa have met with success. For example, one Mozambican woman who delivered coal for a living could do so much faster on a bike and therefore increased her profits. Tunisian women cyclists are promoting cycling as a high status activity with their "Bicycle for a Healthier Environment" project.

In Canada and the United States, bicycle advocacy and safety promotion groups are doing their bit to get more women on bicycles through traffic safety courses and awareness campaigns. For instance, "Learn to Ride" programs, such as the ones offered by Citizens for Safe Cycling in Ottawa, attract women (among them immigrant women) who have experienced barriers and consequently never learned to cycle. As one Learn to Ride instructor comments, "women coming from cultures where women cyclists are rare, are very keen to ride a bike and dream about it." Most Learn to Ride participants are thrilled with their newfound freedom after the lesson. There are also Cycling Freedom for Women courses offered through the CAN-BIKE program, taught exclusively by women cyclists. Workplace cycle commuting seminars are also offered year round giving women an opportunity to gain information in an informal, relatively familiar environment. Bicycle maintenance workshops for women also go some distance to remov-



The ITDP Afribike project has provided hundreds of African women with bikes. For these women cycling means increased access to markets, health services, education, income generation and a saving of about 2h/day.

INSTITUTE FOR TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY



When a Woman Becomes a Wench

Wenches With Wrenches is not just another pretty name. And it's not only a bike repair workshop run by women for women. There's even more than the access to industry tools and work stands. Sure, it's in a funky space of Community Bicycle Network, but that's not all.

Above everything, perhaps the mentor philosophy behind the program is the most valuable.

A woman becomes a Wench when she signs up for the course: six sessions that take place in the evening one day a week, with three courses run each year.

Upon completing the course, the wenches are invited to take it further by becoming an instructor for the program. Those that do are making the first step in an empowering, fulfilling journey as their skills and knowledge continue to grow.

Since the first Wenches With Wrenches course in fall 2001, the group of instructors has grown to a considerable number. Different instructors teach different sessions in the course depending on their expertise while other instructors assist and provide support.

This is a program of the Community Bicycle Network (CBN) successfully run by volunteers. One of these volunteers, CBN board member and Wenches

Instructor Lisa McLean provided some background on how this fabulous program came to be:

"Generally, guys are encouraged from a young age to tinker, fix and build. Girls, not so. It wasn't until my 20s that I even knew how to change a bike tire.

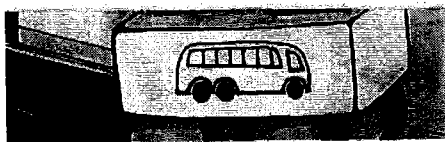
"A bunch of volunteers decided it was time to reduce the intimidation that so many women feel when it comes to bike repairs."

With the Wenches program, women can learn about their bike so that they can make a good bike buy, feel comfortable taking it into a shop for repairs or even fix problems themselves.

Any woman of any persuasion is welcomed at the Wenches With Wrenches bike repair workshops. Wanna join the club? Call CBN at (416) 504-2918.



COMMUNITY BICYCLE NETWORK



ing barriers and are offered in many cities. Furthermore, efforts are being made to provide information to families about cycling safely with children, and transporting children by bicycle. Thus, a tradition of cycling can be instilled early on. Yet while these efforts help to break some of the barriers faced by women, it would be great to accomplish even more such as improved bicycle infrastructure and awareness of cyclists by other road users. More women are getting into 'the saddle' worldwide thanks to innovative and often simple programs. Increasing women's mobility in southern countries can have tremendous impacts on their lives and that of the community in which they live. And while the perception is that North American women face few barriers to cycling, they do as well. Here and in the South barriers need to be addressed in order to give women the freedom to choose one of the most freeing, environmental and healthy transportation modes. ❧

Sylvia Welke is an avid cyclist and 'green' transportation advocate. She writes for magazines and works as a consultant when she is not out cycling.

Jennifer Allen has been appreciating the joys of cycling for 29 years. She currently owns 4 bicycles. She commutes by bike, enjoys cycle touring and has worked as a cycling promoter and educator.

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Hong Kong vs Toronto

Getting Around Without a Car

Mee Lan Wong

"Something momentous and rather sinister happened ... we transformed our lovely New World landscape, and virtually all our townscapes, into an immense, uniform automobile slum, from sea to shining sea. In the process, we created an everyday environment that is ecologically catastrophic, economically futureless, socially poisonous, and spiritually degrading.... We didn't mean it to work that way — but then the law of unintended consequences is always cruelest to the well intentioned."

James Howard Kunstler, 2000

It was a familiar immigrant experience to begin with. Like all other newcomers to Toronto, we began our new chapter by finding a place to live, finding a job, settling the kids in school and most importantly obtaining a driver's license.

In 1999, Stanley and I moved from Hong Kong to Canada with our kids. We chose to 'settle' ourselves in a suburb called Markham in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) because we believed that it was an ideal place for raising kids and our friends were nearby.

Obtaining a driver's license was not as easy as I would have thought. Some peo-

ple say that women 'suck' at driving. I think it applies to me. I got my license after three attempts. Stanley was the lucky one. He got it on his first attempt. Anyway, we bought a family car eight months after we landed in Canada. After that, our lives changed. We scheduled all our activities according to its availability. Every day, after Stanley had driven to work, I 'had' to stay at home. We could only do our shopping, medical appointments and extra-curricular activities over weekends when the car was available. Mobility was a more serious problem during summer holidays when kids have a lot more spare time.



A car dependent neighbourhood in Markham, Ontario

MEE LAN WONG

CAROL CHEUNG



Signalized junction at Mong Kok, Hong Kong

I remember on one hot, sunny summer day in 2000, Samson, Jamee and I were 'stuck' at home as usual after Stanley had left for work. At that time, Samson and Jamee were only five and six years old and had endless energy. They pleaded with me to go swimming with them. Not to let them down, I decided to walk the kids to the nearest community centre with a pool and to regain our freedom from the tyranny of auto-dependency. We put on hats, sunglasses, sun block and set off into the sun shine. It took us 45 minutes to get there because we had to spend quite some time at intersections waiting for the 'walking man' and getting through the parking lots. By the time we got there, we were exhausted.

Every time when I walk somewhere, I cannot help contrasting life in Hong Kong with that in Toronto. I have this strong feeling that Toronto has given too much priority to cars and has imposed an unfair environment on pedestrians and those who do not drive.

In Hong Kong, there are metros, railways, buses, taxis, minibuses, trams, light rail, services, deliveries to residents, ferries and automobiles for people to choose

from. About 90% of all passenger journeys are made on the public transport system. Only 46 in 1000 persons own cars. Public transit is superior to the automobile for almost all trips in terms of journey time, price, and accessibility. The system is integrated and easy to use by people of all ages, including women with strollers and persons on wheelchairs. Bus stops are just minutes away. Bus rides are smooth because the busses are new and spacious. Taxis are everywhere and there is no need for pre-booking. Kids are free to go out on their own and use public transportation to meet their friends. They do not have to rely on their parents for rides. Pedestrian and vehicle movements enjoy equal rights at intersections. The limited number of parking spaces and the high parking charges inconvenience the car user. All this does not come by chance but by a committed transportation policy that gives priority to public transit and pedestrians in the use of road space.

In the Greater Toronto Area, public transport services are inadequate, especially outside commuting hours. Car oriented development has suppressed the provision of alternative transport services. It is

indeed tragic to find that most people simply fit into this auto-centred living instead of challenging it. The car ownership rate has reached 457 cars per 1000 persons. Less than 20% of the passenger trips are on public transit. Suburbs are even worse. Walking by choice is out of the question because suburbs are not designed for pedestrians with their curving roads, many with sidewalks only on one side. Just to get to transit means a lengthy walk. You risk your life trying to cross major arterial roads because walk cycles are often too short, especially for the aged and children; intersections are so far apart that one is tempted jaywalk and risk hefty fines. Priority at intersections is given to vehicles. Even though the "walking man" is on, vehicles can make turns from all directions. The conflicts between traffic and pedestrians are apparent, dangerous and intense.

In my view, it is time for us to oppose automobile-centred living. It is both an unfair and unhealthy system. As for us, after two years of car dependent living in Markham, we decided to live differently. In 2002, we moved to the inner City of Toronto, a place close to a subway station and school. ❧

"Personally, I feel that the future is going to require us to live differently, whether we like automobile-centred living or not, and that economic, political, and ecological forces are already underway that will compel us to change our behaviour."

James Howard Kunstler, 2000

Mee Lan Wong practiced transportation planning in Hong Kong. Currently, she is a Master student in Environmental Studies. Her research interest is energy and sustainable transportation.

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Sustainability

Women Shifting Power

Energy and Sustainable Communities

Wendy Milne

Energy is linked to many of the most serious environmental and social problems of our times. The gravity and extent of the crises is evident in everyday headlines: fossil fuel use causing climate change; disasters and extreme weather symptoms of climate change; wars fought over oil interests; energy development in ecologically sensitive areas; pollution levels threaten human health; massive electricity blackout makes citizens vulnerable.

Despite the growing evidence of the folly of unfettered fossil fuel use the practice remains firmly in place. Dependence on prevailing energy systems is particularly evident in the landscape of cities around the world. Vast quantities of energy is vital to fuel the economy, drive transportation, deliver food from rural areas, run water and sewage systems, power machinery for air-conditioning and heating, and keep the lights on.

There are no simple solutions for changing unsustainable energy practices.

Sustainable energy requires democratically determined social structures and standards of living that will support protecting local environments, preventing global pollution and ensuring economic equity to alleviate poverty. However, in the current reality the business of fueling cities in the nations of the world is left largely to relations of power between corporations and governments.

To counter dominant practices a growing network of non-governmental and community organizations are engaging in sustainable energy research, education, pro-

ject implementation and policy development. Integral to this network is a significant women's movement addressing the gender dimensions of energy and equitable sustainable communities.

Gender and Energy

Energy is largely viewed as gender neutral. However, many of women's culturally shaped roles and responsibilities are directly linked to energy. Gender analysis is important to sustainable energy because women and men have different roles, knowledge and experience in relation to energy. According to *Energia*, the international network for gender and sustainable energy, energy is essential to women's basic needs and income security as well as to health, peace and environmental issues. Strengthening women's role in energy is equally essential for promoting sustainable energy.

For the majority of woman in the South having access to energy is essential for everyday survival. Women carry the main burden of providing household energy often under conditions of fuel scarcity, and detrimental health and safety conditions. Women use their physical labour to compensate for the lack of modern energy sources and technologies that would improve quality of life both within and outside the home. Women have less access to financial credit and education that would improve access to energy and support income generation activities. Despite these inequities, policy development and new technology applications do not reflect women's gendered experience

of poverty and limited access to energy.

At first glance the situation looks very different for many women living in the North. While energy is vital for everyday life, it is readily accessible and mostly involves flicking a switch, turning a dial, and paying a bill. The invisibility of energy in the North is reflected in its virtual omission from the extensive literature on gender, science, and technology. Learning from the gender and energy work in the South is slowly increasing awareness about the gender and energy dimensions in the North.

Preliminary observations suggest that like women in the South women in the North experience poverty more than men, carry the bulk of the responsibilities for the household, are underrepresented as professionals in the energy sector, and have less influence in setting the political and policy agenda on energy issues. However,



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there is still a lack of in-depth analysis of gender differences in energy use, access to energy, attitudes to conservation, educational and employment opportunities, and policy implications.

Women Building Sustainable Energy Communities

Emerging alongside the theoretical understanding of the relationship between gender, energy, and environment are women's initiatives to create sustainable energy communities. Women are contributing to technological innovations, creative forms of business and social practices. They are advocating the harnessing of new energy systems that benefit women, children, families and societies at large. *Energia* and *Windfang* are two examples of women organizing to advance energy sustainably in a way that reflects women's roles and responsibilities without recreating existing power structures.

Energia, formed in 1995 with 1500 members worldwide, presents a successful model of women linking local initiatives for change to larger networks of action. Focused primarily on the South the network's mission is to engender energy and empower women through the promotion of information exchange, research, advocacy, and political action. All aim at strengthening the role of women in sustainable energy development. *Energia*, in strategic alliances with other organizations and individuals, has gained political momentum to the point of influencing policy development, funding mechanisms, community project development, technical innovation, environmental assessment, resource management, education and labour studies.

Windfang in Germany is one of a few examples of women in a Northern context building community-based sustainable energy projects. *Windfang*, formed in 1995, is a collective venture of over 200 women from all walks of life and professions. The collective finances build and operate solar and wind electricity plants. *Windfang* was the vision of three women who had become frustrated with the male-



Grace de Jesus-Silverio/His International Manila

dominated working environment in the energy sector. To ensure *Windfang* did not recreate the hierarchical structure of other energy sector businesses, the members chose a cooperative structure to facilitate democratic decision-making on all issues.

The philosophy that guides *Windfang* is that if you consume energy you should be responsible for its environmentally benign generation. This approach has led the group to build and operate three wind turbine and one photovoltaic plant. *Windfang* contributes to raising awareness in the women's community of the possibilities of renewable energy. It also provides empirical evidence of a successful feminist oriented democracy in the highly competitive and profitable energy sector.

To affect fundamental change toward sustainable communities, particularly ones that are accountable to women, it is imperative that energy issues are integrated into the larger women's movement. This is crucial in the North, particularly in North America, where people consume significantly more energy per capita than people in the South and where the issue of energy is largely neglected in feminist theory and action.

Clearly, women in the North engaged in the creation of sustainable communities will need to become individually and collectively aware of energy issues. One possible way to raise awareness of energy is to learn from *Windfang's* approach and begin

critiquing everyday energy use, asking who benefits from current energy practices, and considering alternatives. Adopting a feminist perspective on energy such as on nuclear energy and urban transport advances a critical analysis of how excessive energy consumption inextricably links to a dominant ideology that shapes desires, values, and an expected standard of living. In the process, one must not blame women for consuming energy but to recognize the gendered pressures and the seeming lack of environmentally benign choices inherent in a consumer society.

But, there are some choices we can make. All we need to do is look to women around the world who are working to shift power toward gender sensitive, community-based and environmentally benign energy sources. Making choices for energy conservation and renewable energy sources is imperative for equitable social and economic development, gender justice and environmental protection. ❧

Wendy Milne has a Ph.D. in Rural Studies from the University of Guelph. Her thesis *Transforming Power in Rural Communities: Possibilities for Energy Literacy* explores sustainable communities and transformative learning from the local lived and gendered experiences of renewable energy users.

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Energia (2001). *Gender Perspectives on Energy for CSD-7* a paper prepared for the 7th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

DeHts, Christine (2000). *Case Study of Women Producing Electricity from Renewables: From Project to Market. The Windfang Project in Germany*. *ENERGIA News*, 3(1), 9-11.



From Environmental Ill to Environmental Health

Women Activists Taking Care of Halifax Nova Scotia

Shirley Thompson

"We are concerned about the fate of the planet, and some of us believe that living simply is part of revolutionary political practice. We have a sense of the sacred. The ground we stand on is shifting, fragile, and unstable." bell hooks, *Yearning*

Women in the grass roots environmental health movement deserve most of the credit for transforming Halifax, Nova Scotia, from the environmental ill capital of Canada to a leader in environmental health. Halifax became infamous after hundreds of people became ill, en masse, from indoor air pollution at Camp Hill Medical Centre in Halifax. This set the stage for grassroots activists to lobby for a healthy environment, indoors and out, and for environmental health treatments for those made ill by unhealthy environments. Women's leadership in environmental health was critical to obtaining a pesticide by-law to restrict cosmetic pesticides, scent-free policies in public buildings, a government-funded environmental health clinic, a "state of the art" \$26 million healthy school, and a curb-side compost pick-up program that diverts 68% of organic material from the landfill. Rallying against a proposed municipal incinerator in 1994, on environmental health grounds, was also a rally for a composting program.

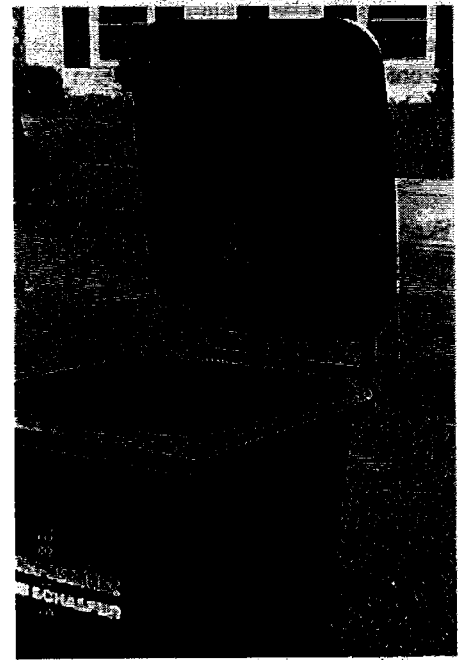
At the oldest Farmers' Market in North America, amidst an abundance of organic fruit and vegetable, free-range chicken and organic beef stands, activists network with local residents and farmers. Donna, struggles to reduce pesticide-use, and

Rhonda, labours for healthy schools. Both started their discussions with how much they learned from the Camp Hill workers.

Camp Hill and Toxic Exposures

When high profile health professionals as well as kitchen staff, nurses and janitors at Camp Hill became ill, the dangers of unrestricted toxic chemical use, and the importance of ventilating with fresh air, rather than recycled or contaminated air became a health issue in Halifax. Seven hundred of 1250 workers at Camp Hill had work-related illnesses. Three hundred workers required long-term leave and 100, mostly women, were deemed permanently disabled. Neurological testing of workers identified exposure to solvents, while hygiene testing showed how contamination from the parking garage and other departments, created a toxic soup of exposures from 1989 to 1993.

Many Camp Hill victims call their condition multiple chemical sensitivity. Cynthia, a dishwasher at Camp Hill, attributes her breast cancer and environmental illness to caustic sodium hydroxide re-circulated from the exhaust through the air intake. More than ten years later, Cynthia is only able to cope with her chemical sensitivities by strictly controlling exposures to



"Saying No to Incineration" resulted in State of the Art Composting program which diverted 68% of organic wastes from curbside collection

toxic chemicals to prevent triggering her illness. Thus, everyday living presents challenges and requires spending money she does not have to filter her air, drinking and bath water, eat organic food, and renovate her house to be mould and toxic-free in a toxic world where petrochemicals and organochlorine chemicals are replacing many natural products.

Cynthia and other Camp Hill victims are not unique. According to several surveys, one-third of the North American population reports feeling ill from chemical odours. The vantage point of chemically sensitive persons, who report strong reactions at levels hundreds or thousands of times lower than allowable occupational exposures, turns the government regulatory framework of a tolerable dose upside down. Governments permit exposure to carcinogens, neurotoxins, and other toxic chemicals in the workplace and consumer market that are at dangerous levels for people's health. Governments take a risk analysis approach sanctioning, for example, an excess rate of one in a million getting cancer, without asking whether a technological or chemical risk is neces-

sary. Although four million chemical mixtures remain untested, research links more than a thousand chemical mixtures to fertility and pregnancy abnormalities. For example, of the 34 most common lawn chemicals, 29% cause cancer, 35% cause birth defects, 21% interfere with reproduction, 59% are neurotoxic, 38% cause kidney or liver damage, and 85% are sensitizers according to the US Environmental Protection Agency and the National Toxicology Program toxicological references. In addition to being human health threats, these pesticides cause environmental impacts, as 32% are toxic to birds, 62% to fish, and 35% to bees, while 35% have been detected in groundwater. For the cosmetic need of achieving the perfect green lawn, homeowners apply 5.5 to 12.5 kg of pesticides annually per hectare of lawn, which is five times the level used in agriculture.

Restricting Pesticide Use

Donna considers herself to be a canary in the coalmine, warning of toxic exposures to pesticides. She is an elderly woman, who had a stroke and several epilepsy attacks after different exposures to pesticides. She showed me her three doctors' letters stating that minute pesticide exposures could kill her. Donna dedicates all her time and energy to phasing out pesticides. Co-leading the group, Real Alternatives to Toxins in the Environment (RATE), she says, "I try to tell people about pesticides and I feel that if I tell enough people I may save one child from leukemia. I'd do an awful lot to save one child's life."

RATE with 5,000 letters of support and 600 people signed up to testify, demanded a task force on pesticide-use in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Hundreds of doctors wrote letters to support the phasing out of the cosmetic use of pesticides after RATE circulated a 300+ page binder to each doctor containing medical and scientific journal articles on pesticide health risks.

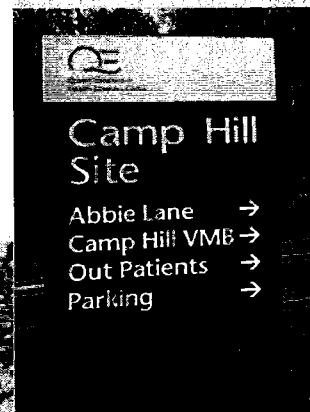
In 2000, the Halifax Regional Municipality passed a by-law restricting pesticide use around schools, parks, and 50 metres around the homes of chemical-

ly sensitive people. City council also approved funding for educating people on the many alternatives to toxic chemicals for healthy lawns. And what a difference it's making! A 2002 survey found Halifax is an anomaly in pesticide use across Canada, having only 7% of households using pesticides compared to 31% for the rest of Canada. RATE also works to reduce other toxic chemical-use, particularly those that expose children to risks.

Improving Air Quality in Schools

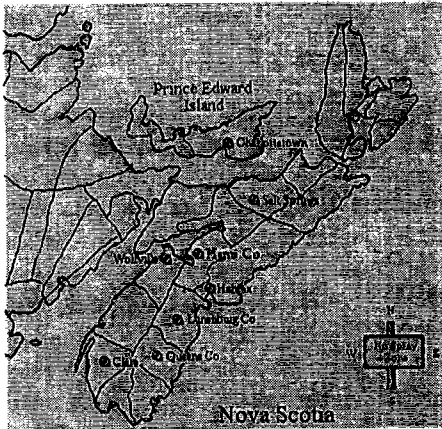
Concerned about their children going to school healthy but coming home sick, Rhonda and a few other mothers, formed Citizens for A Safe Learning Environment (CASLE) in 1994. Deferred maintenance and poor indoor air quality are widespread in Canadian schools, according to a national survey. Indoor air quality is compromised by mould, asbestos, overcrowding and lead paint. When Rhonda discovered friable asbestos in her child's classroom, the school board did not even have an asbestos protocol. She went to the press with a groundswell of support from teachers and parents. CASLE organized a joint meeting with all ministries impacting health in schools — Education, Labour and

Environment — demanding, "Tell us what you can do to make children's health better in this Province." To keep public services in public hands and to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations, parents and workers were instrumental in breaking up large private contracts. One such contract was with Servicemaster for maintenance and repairs others were with private contractors that build and lease schools. To convince the school board of the dangers, Rhonda explains how they linked health risks to cost-cutting measures, through meticulous documentation of hazards. "We brought in the cleaning materials they were using and showed the chemicals on the list...that included carcinogens, teratogens and mutagens, as well as accounts from workers about using those materials and what it did to them. Accounts of cost cutting on maintenance were recorded. Instead of removing the mouldy ceiling in the gymnasium, they just built a false ceiling below it so you couldn't



Camp Hill Medical Centre (incl. Abby Lane, Camp Hill and Veterans Memorial buildings) were the site of largest indoor air quality disaster in world.

S. THOMPSON



After Halifax passed its anti-pesticide by-law, Pesticide Action Campaigns have sprung up across the Maritimes

see it but it still made you sick. We cancelled the P3 (Public-Private Partnership) schools and the government took over.”

Media savvy and resourceful, Rhonda and other CASLE women used legal mechanisms of the Freedom of Information Act and Occupational Health and Safety Act, press conferences and strategic partner-

ships. To assist CASLE in protecting at-risk workers and students, unions provided financial support to hire experts to provide scientific evidence. When CASLE insisted that experts from University of Alberta analyze Halifax West Secondary School, it was found to be both a fire and mould trap, wicking water up the 48 year old building that had no insulation or vapour barrier. Condemning the school spawned a healthy school design and construction guide and a “state of the art” \$26 million school. It’s a showpiece merging sustainable and healthy building design. Unions also supported the no-fragrance policy for public places, and helped CASLE fly in two experts from other parts of North America to counter all the claims by the fragrance industry. The experts explained the neurotoxic effect of many synthetic fragrances. CASLE credits its success to its informed co-operative approach and the groundswell of parents, teachers and unions demanding healthy workplaces and schools.

Rhonda and Donna are heroic in their

struggle to make Halifax a healthier, more sustainable place to live. Excluded from positions of power in government and corporations, but responsible for childcare and family health, they leveraged authority over public health through organized resistance, volunteer labour, and the institution of motherhood. ❧

Shirley Thompson is an Assistant Professor at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba. Her doctoral thesis on environmental justice involved ethnographic work with activists in Nova Scotia. She is a member of the Resource Conservation Manitoba board and Winnipeg’s Social Planning Council’s Environment Committee.

Further Reading and Resources

For more information on school health:
<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Education/CASLE/casle.html>

For more information on pesticide reduction:
<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Environment/RATE/>

Are Media Putting Infants at Risk?

Environmental Risks, Breast Feeding and the Media

Penny Van Esterik

Breastfeeding as a media subject is both sexy and emotional. Sometimes the media extols the many, well-documented benefits of breastfeeding. But on the subject of environmental toxins in mother’s milk, newspapers and television frequently sensationalize the degree of threat. “Babies in Poison Peril from Breastfeeding,” “Scientists Find Deadly Toxins in Mothers’ Milk” are typical headlines on the subject. Media reports seldom stress that it is not mothers who are poisoning their babies, but chemical

companies and identifiable industrial processes. Rarely cited are studies that indicate the levels of toxins found in breast milk are in fact falling.

Media reports may have a direct impact on policy and on breastfeeding women. An article in the *Bangladesh Observer* stated, “with new information on the hazards of breastfeeding and the link between dioxins and cancer, it may be necessary to review our position on advocating breast milk.” Bangladesh has an infant mortality rate of 69.68 per 1000 live births; any decline in

breastfeeding would significantly increase that rate. Reports about toxins in the breast milk of Inuit women in Canada left some women frightened and desperate. One Inuit mother decided to stop nursing in an effort to protect her new baby. After several weeks of being bottle-fed a mixture of water and Coffee-mate, the baby was hospitalized.

The media rarely publicizes hazards in infant formula, which is marketed as the best alternative to breast milk. Clinical evidence shows that there is cause to be concerned about the dangers of nitrates in water used to

reconstitute infant formula, to cite only one example among many. In the face of commercial interests that benefit from casting doubts on breastfeeding, it is essential that there be accurate reporting about the risks and benefits of all forms of infant feeding.

It is necessary to determine what the accumulating, and often contradictory, evidence concerning breastfeeding and environmental toxins tells us and to consider what messages should be communicated to women about this evidence. I therefore reviewed the medical, social science, and advocacy literature on the topic. The scientific research indicates that, first of all, everyone, not only breastfeeding women, carries a body burden of toxic chemicals. All babies, not just breastfed ones, are exposed pre- and post-natally. Medical researchers often use breast milk as a gauge of human exposure to environmental toxins. This is not because it is "more toxic" than other substances such as urine or blood, but because breast milk fat is more easily and cheaply obtained for testing. Fat-soluble pollutants are also likely to be found in higher concentrations in milk than in blood or urine.

Some of the most exhaustive studies of toxic contaminants in breast milk have been done in the Netherlands where the population has been exposed to the heaviest industrial pollution in Europe. The work of Rogan and associates in North Carolina represents a second cluster of exhaustive studies. PCBs, dioxins, pesticides, phthalates, and heavy metals have been found in samples of breast milk from some women. The long-term effects of contamination are not yet known. The evidence suggests that no adverse effects on growth or occurrences of illnesses in the first year of life are attributable to the presence of these chemicals in human milk, except in the case of extreme levels of contamination as in accidental industrial spills. One of the most authoritative reference texts on this subject, *Chemical Compounds in Human Milk*, concludes: "Virtually all national and international expert committees have hitherto concluded—on the basis of available information—that the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh the possible risks from contaminants present in human milk at normal levels."



Penny Van Esterik addressing the International Women and Health Meeting in Toronto, 2002

Media reports seldom stress that it is not mothers who are poisoning their babies, but chemical companies and identifiable industrial processes.

How can accurate information about risks and infant feeding be communicated to the media and to breastfeeding women? By placing the issue in a broader environmental health context. The following principles might serve as guidelines for coalitions of breastfeeding advocates, health advocates, and environmentalists who want to work together to send clear and accurate messages to the public:

- Acknowledge what is known about contaminants in breast milk.
- Stress prenatal exposure as contributing to the body burden of all babies, not just breastfed babies.
- Identify the source of the pollution (chemical industries), not the source of evidence (breast milk).
- Stress the risks associated with artificial breast milk substitutes and the risks of not breastfeeding.
- Draw attention to alternatives to toxic products not alternatives to breast milk.



Women have the right to know the milk they produce is as pure as it can be. Only by reducing environmental pollution can this right become a reality. ❖

Penny Van Esterik, Professor, Department of Anthropology, York University, World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), National Network on Environments and Women's Health (NNEWH). She is author of *Risks, Rights and Regulation: Communicating about Risks and Infant Feeding* (2002)

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Our Apologies to the Author:

The article above should have been included in our previous "Women's Health and Environments" issue, and was omitted due to human error. We are including it in this section of this issue, because cities, due to higher densities of economic activities and consumption are sites of concentrated toxics both indoors and outdoors. Creating sustainable cities would address women's concerns about toxics.



For the Greater Good

Rosette Miko

Neither for the greater good, nor the logic of the commons does society work, but only hopes to take what is yours and mine by birth's first breath and make it theirs by power's gnarled hand, that they might sell what is yours and mine back to us again, so that few will stew when pressed to gain over the other and all will take what lies beneath the Commons. What is left?

What lies beneath the Commons? Naught but the Earth (which is everything and all) where yours & mine mingles, co-joined, that both us do use & both must Steward — if yours & mine are to survive.

When prospects were first granted, this blue-green globe was for all, & all were for it. For what is yours & mine is only a scrap of what belongs tenfold to all that fly, walk, & swim.

For those flying, walking, swimming demigods who do not value as we value, — in singular, linear simplicity which ignores that which it cannot understand, — we assigned worth, portioned the globe in ever smaller increments, circling always to the smallest denominator, leaving the feast into famine for the multitude, reducing complexity to them and us.

With systems ingeniously ignorant of finite capacity, sharing, empathy, goodness, etc., we have tried to mold a million years into a single species serving purpose.

Neglecting complexities:

That air moves round & above, but never grows, that land does crumble/stand agam, but never reproduces/replicates,

That all growth does die in cycles, ever large, ever small, never will there be a circle so large we are not a part of,

That either this or that generation will be face to face with our follies.

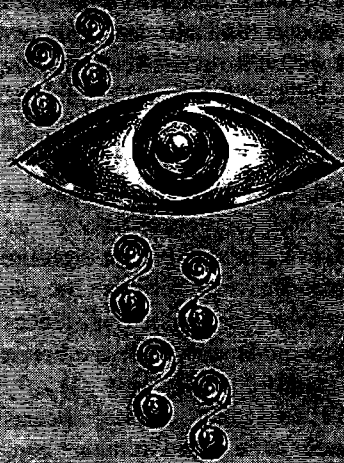
That Earth, freely providing food, health, shelter, is not ordered by what human values encompass,

that human values, like a second rate portraitist, do not capture the smile of nature, but strive to simplify.

spider-woven interconnectedness into rudimentary circuits of supply and demand.

That the tragedy of the commons is a tragedy born of one species,

That the light of reason is lost and that the greater good serves so few.



Governance

Engendering Local Government

The Namibian Women's 50/50 Campaign

Doris Mpoumou and Liz Frank



JANICE KUN

After a long history of oppression under colonialism, the people of Namibia have a Constitution based on the fundamental values of equality and human dignity for all. And Namibian women are well on their way to claiming an equal place at the table of local government. Namibia became independent in 1990 from the Apartheid regime of South Africa. The same year, a Constitution was adopted granting all citizens the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, and to vote in and be eligible to run for elections. In 1992, the Namibian Parliament passed affirmative action legislation aimed at redressing racial and sexual discrimination. Article 23 states: "... it shall be permissible to have regard to the fact that women in Namibia have traditionally suffered special discrimination and that they need to be encouraged to play a full, equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation."

As a result of affirmative action policies that have guided local authority elections since 1992, the representation of women in local government has risen steadily in the past decade. Women make up 45 percent of elected officials at the local authority level, and 40 percent of mayors are women. The current president of the Association of Local Authorities in Namibia is a woman who has stepped into the footsteps of two women presidents before her. But the move toward gender balance in government has not been easy. It has been and continues to be the goal of organizing and lobbying efforts of Namibian Women's Manifesto Network and their 50/50 Campaign:

The Namibian Women's Manifesto and the 50/50 Campaign

Namibia is one of the sixteen countries with a national 50/50 campaign. The others are Albania, Argentina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Japan, Namibia, Nigeria, Philippines, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, South Africa, and Zambia. It is part of the "Global 50/50 Get the Balance Right in Government" campaign launched by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) during the five-year review of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. The global campaign aims to raise awareness about women's under-representation in political decision-making as well as the policy difference women can make when they are

present in critical numbers. It forms a network of more than 300 organizations in some 72 countries to catalyze women's movements around the world to organize national campaigns for gender equality in decision-making.

The Namibian national campaign is about citizenship for and by women. It was launched in 1999 with the aim of achieving gender balance at all three levels of government and "engendering" the policies of political parties and the government. The campaign is led by Sister Namibia, a women's human rights organization that brings women together across party lines and other historical divides. The Namibian Women's Manifesto, the outcome of this extraordinary networking effort, was first used as a tool for lobbying



Women activists in Sister Namibia

WEDO



political parties running in the 1999 National Assembly elections. The Manifesto also became the basis for developing the Namibian Women's Manifesto Network (NWMN), a network of mobilizers and facilitators from women's groups across the country. In 2000, posters and a pamphlet were developed to publicize demands for gender balance in government. In 2001 the Network commissioned a lawyer to draft the "50/50 Bill" which is still before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Petitions.

Understanding local government from a gender perspective

Elections for local councils will be held in May 2004. In July 2003, on the same day that voter registration for the upcoming election began, women leaders from towns and villages across Namibia gathered in Windhoek to develop strategies for increasing women's participation in the local government elections. This event marked an important phase of the NWMN's 50/50 Campaign.

Two national 'train the trainer' workshops were conducted for NWMN facilitators from more than 30 towns and villages around the country. These were followed by two rounds of local workshops conducted by the facilitators in their own communities. At one workshop for members of NGOs who support the work of the NWMN, Faeza Kahn of the Gender Advocacy Project (GAP) in Cape Town was invited to share the South African women's experiences of engendering local government. GAP is the leading organization of the Global 50/50 Campaign in South Africa.

In the workshops, women looked at the workings of local government from a gender perspective in order to understand why women should register and vote in the forthcoming elections. They began with the belief that the problem of voter apathy, which is commonly lamented in Namibia, was actually due to the fact that elections have not been contested around the real issues facing local communities. One key issue was provision of basic services. The women were critical of the fact

that there are still villages and marginalized areas in towns that do not have access to clean water, electricity and sanitation. Many argued that even where these services are provided, poor women couldn't afford them.

By sharing their dreams for how their own communities should be developed over the next five to ten years, participants understood that local government has an important role to play in the implementation of programs that improve women's quality of life. Suggestions were made that local councils should:

- provide more facilities for childcare in order to enable women to work outside the home;
- educate men to be more responsible fathers and share in the household duties;
- provide information on the Domestic Violence Act and establish shelters for women and children seeking protection from violence;
- inform communities about the roll-out of treatment for HIV and AIDS and encourage people to go for voluntary testing and treatment; and
- provide support to orphans.

The women agreed that, as the level of government closest to the people, local government is also an important site of struggle for women's political equality. But local governments need active encouragement to implement policies promoting gender balance, including the National Gender Policy adopted in 1998. Women should therefore be mobilized to register and vote in the forthcoming elections. According to reports from the Electoral Commission of Namibia, 97 percent of all eligible voters registered during July and August 2003. The Namibian Women's Manifesto Network can surely claim some responsibility for this success.

Motivating women to stand as candidates

The Namibian Women's Manifesto Network's 50/50 Campaign aims to mobilize women not only to register as voters for the local government elections but also



A woman leader from Kunene Region in the far northwest of Namibia receives posters of the 50/50 campaign.

to come forward as candidates. One topic of the national and local workshop discussions was the skills women would need to do the work of local councilors. Participants agreed that, in their everyday work in households and communities, women already have many of the skills needed for local government. The facilitators realized that through their leadership training in the Network, they have become skilled at running successful workshops, public speaking and media relations, financial management, and report writing. Many members of NWMN have years of experience in community mobilization and in lobbying different stakeholders including government officials, party leaders and civil society organizations.

Women at the workshops strongly challenged the common refrain that "women are not ready and not educated enough" to be elected into government. "There is no special university where men are trained for politics, so women should go for it and learn through experience just like men do" was the unanimous view. Thanks to the training of thousands of women through the NWMN, one could say that the 50/50 Campaign itself has been "a special university for women." Realizing that they are well prepared to do the job, many of the facilitators decided to stand

for election as local councilors and that their platform would be the National Gender Policy.

However, participants also agreed that increasing the number of women elected isn't enough. Even where individual women are present in government, the structures are still dominated by a patriarchal culture, which sets priorities that are not necessarily in the interests of women as a group. The NWMN therefore also called on local councils to establish gender committees and to work together with women's organizations in their local communities to bring about meaningful change. Two other important activities are calling for an electoral system based on 50/50 gender balance and lobbying for changes at the party level.

Retaining the party list system

Women participating in the workshops were surprised to learn that the Namibian government has already included the goal of gender balance in all elected positions of government in the National Gender Policy. They naturally wanted to know why this goal has not yet been achieved. Experience of past local elections suggests that it would already have been achieved if political parties had alternated women and men candidates "zebra-style" on their party lists instead of putting more men at the top of their lists and more women at the bottom.

This "zebra-style" party list system has made it possible for more women to be elected. The local authority elections of 1992 and 1998 were conducted using the party list system, resulting in an increase in women's representation to 37 percent and 41 percent respectively. After the 1998 elections, however, the Local Authorities Act stipulated that future elections would be conducted instead on a constituency-based system and stopped referring to affirmative action provisions. At the regional level the constituency-based electoral system has not been good for gender parity: women make up just four percent of elected representatives.

Fearing a drastic drop in women's numerical representation, the 50/50 Campaign

lobbied the government to retain the party list system. Fortunately women succeeded in convincing a number of MPs about the benefits for women of the party list system, and in November 2002 the Local Authorities Act was amended to retain it.

Lobbying political parties to 'engender' their party constitutions

In 2003, the NWMN organized two panel discussions with political parties as part of the 50/50 Campaign. These panels gave political parties the opportunity to present and discuss their views on the need for engendering local government. Only two parties sent representatives.

The Secretary General of the Congress of Democrats (CoD) said that since women form the majority of Namibian citizens, it is time to overcome "minority rule" by men. He said he is proud that the CoD signed the Namibian Women's Manifesto out of commitment to the principle of gender equality rather than simply to improve public relations. The CoD is the only party with a constitutional provision for a quota system in leadership structures. The Secretary General Ignatius Shixwameni, said that the party has decided that candidate lists put forward for the upcoming local elections will not be accepted if either of the sexes constitutes less than 40 percent of the list.

Richard Kamburona, Administrative Secretary of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), the second major opposition party, said that his party is proud to have signed the Namibian Women's Manifesto in 1999. He emphasized that the DTA leadership are "firm believers" in women's equality. He said that women already make up 46 percent of the DTA local councillors. He was less optimistic, however, about the possibility of bringing about gender balance in the party structures. In his view, the predominance of patriarchal culture creates a situation where even women tend not to vote for women because politics is perceived as "men's business."

It is true that although the National Gender Policy adopted in 1998 aims to achieve

gender balance in all elected positions of government, this goal has not yet been achieved. But much more can and must be done. The NWMN believes that the time has come for all political parties to go beyond the affirmative action requirements of the Local Authorities Act and make a commitment to achieving 50/50 gender balance. Members are therefore lobbying party leaders to include specific and time-bound gender policies in their party platforms. In preparation for the May 2004 elections, the NWMN (and members of the 40 NGOs who support the Manifesto) are using 50/50 Campaign pamphlets and posters to mobilize all voters — women, men and young people — to vote for political parties with gender balanced party lists and which seriously promote gender equality in their party constitutions.

Namibian women believe it is the duty of political parties to implement the National Gender Policy and all the international instruments promoting gender equality that the Namibian government has signed. Implementation needs to happen at all three levels of government. As citizens, women have the right and the duty to equal political participation. We have the right and the duty to hold the government and all political parties accountable to the affirmative action laws, policies for social and economic development and to the fundamental values entrenched in the Constitution. The process of engendering government requires a principled commitment to gender equality as a matter of justice and human rights. ❧

Liz Frank is director of Sister Namibia, a women's human rights organization based in Windhoek, Namibia. She also edits the bi-monthly Sister Namibia magazine. Frank's 1998 study on women's political participation in Namibia led to the development of the national 50/50 Campaign. In 2002 she conducted action research on the first three phases of the campaign.

Doris Mpoumou has a Master's degree in Linguistics. She coordinates WEDO's "Global 50/50 Campaign Get the Balance Right in Government." Doris researched women's representation in global Economic Decision Making and developed advocacy materials for using the International Women's Treaty (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol to advance women's political rights locally and nationally.





Poor Women in Power Sharing and Decision Making

Just an Opening

Prabha Khosla

Women around the world are organizing for greater representation in political office. To that end they are using international and regional instruments to pressure governments for gender parity and national and international accountability. Constitutional amendments in numerous countries have instituted quotas to enable women's election to political office. While the debate to have quotas or not will continue for a long time to come, for many poor women there can sometimes be some immediate gains from having themselves and their sisters in local government.

According to the Beijing Platform of Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, Section G states:

Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in government policy-making is feasible. In this respect, women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of

equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

Strategic objectives G.1 and G.2 of the Platform of Action outline steps to be taken by governments, political parties, civil society organizations, international bodies and the United Nations to achieve equal participation of women in decision-making.

In the last ten to fifteen years, millions of women have been elected to political office at the local and district level. At the same time, there has been a corresponding increase in decentralization and devolution of national government functions to lower tiers of government and legal requirements for more residents' participation in issues of local governance. There is now a growing body of data demonstrating the different issues and priorities that women bring to the table and how women in politics can bring about changes for gender equity and equality. Here is a small sample of that experience.

West Bengal, India

According to Naila Kabeer, a study comparing budgetary allocations in village councils in West Bengal, India found that councils led by women were more likely to invest in public goods that had practical relevance to the needs of rural women (water, fuel and roads) while male-led councils were more likely to invest in education. These gender differences also expressed themselves in policy priorities. However, women's main preoccupations were also important issues for men. If male and the expressed preferences of men and women were combined, drinking water and roads were the most important issues. While female village leaders were



Sandra Tortigós/ Isis Internacional/ Manija

more likely to requisition health workers, male leaders invested more in informal education centres and expressed greater concern about teacher absenteeism.

When women led local councils, other women too were more likely to participate in local councils, more likely to ask a question and significantly more likely to have made a request or complaint in the past six months. Moreover, the fact that women in the reserved seats came from poorer backgrounds and smaller villages than men, suggests that such efforts at the local level can help to change the gender and class/caste composition of key policy-making bodies.

El Hormiguero, Colombia

In a case study on women's participation in water services management in [by a similar experience from] El Hormiguero on the outskirts of Cali, Colombia, Mariela V. Garcia and Sandra Bastidas reported similar experiences. They underlined the different and positive impact that poor women in political office can have on the lives of poor women in the community. The women in El Hormiguero decided to organize to address the poor quality of their living environment and

the lack of services in their community. In an organizing and community building process of many years, the women later decided to join the Community Action Board (legally constituted community governance structures) and proposed Nelly Guapacha as a candidate. Nelly began as the secretary of the Board. She was president for several terms and currently is also the president of the Local Administration Board, (a district governance structure) which represents the centre and the zones. Of this new situation, Nelly comments: "We thought that if I was on the Community Board, we could have more support, and we got more involved in it. At that time, the Community Board was in the hands of men but the community's flag had been lost; the Board's books had been carried away by the river; materials arrived to build dressing rooms at the football field, but they disappeared. People saw cement arrive but it was never seen again; the toilets came but never appeared." Men showed little ability to manage and carry out projects.

Women joining the Community Action Board marked the beginning of a different management style. Nelly comments that, "Before, the little money that came was divided into some for Cauca Viejo, some for Cascajal, some for El Hormiguero [three different settlements]; instead we decided to reach an agreement and see where the work was most necessary." In this manner, a significant amount of cash was allocated where it could make a real difference rather than disbursing funds to scattered little projects.

Steinkopf, South Africa

Women in South Africa present yet another reality that speaks to the importance of women in local political decision making, according to Matilda Smith's research. It's best summed up by this woman from Steinkopf who said:

"We are better placed than the men to deal with local government problems. After all, during the week it is the women who manage and solve the daily problems,



such as no electricity and the consequent problems of feeding the family and children. All that the men do, on being informed of the many problems when they come home from the mines for the weekend is to ask: 'En toe? Wat het jy gedoen?' (What did you do?). And on hearing our strategies and solutions for dealing with the problems, they respond: 'Dis slim!' (That's clever) ❧

Prabha Khosla is a planner and researcher; consulting internationally on urban sustainability issues, gender mainstreaming and participatory planning. She is a member of the Gender & Water Alliance and the Women & Environments International Magazine, Editorial Board.



Accessing City Hall

The Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services in Ottawa

Caroline Andrew, Pat Harewood, Fran Klodawsky, and Alette Willis

The reporter caught both the diversity of women and their desire for full participation in municipal affairs in the description of our forum. This forum was part of a project to examine women's access to municipal services in Ottawa.

In 1998 the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) had issued a declaration on Women and Local Government. Montreal had endorsed this declaration and so had the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). Diane Holmes, who was then a regional councillor and has since come back to the amalgamated City Council, felt that we could use the IULA

"They are an unlikely group of warriors: pregnant women, disabled, elderly and teens, black and white, homeless, rich, Anglophone, Francophone. But they are all women, and they are crying out to City Council to acknowledge them."

The Ottawa Citizen (September 30, 2001)

Declaration to advance women's issues in Ottawa. So the regional government adopted a resolution agreeing to set up a Working Group to study the current situation of women's access to services. **Lesson No. 1: use the global to advance the local.**



We were successful in getting support from Status of Women Canada to do focus groups with diverse groups of women. We wanted the focus groups to represent the rapidly increasing ethno-cultural diversity of Ottawa and they did. Our success was due in part to our clear objectives and theoretical focus, and in part because the staff worked really hard, through good community contacts to put into practice what we had agreed to in theory. The focus group kit by David Morgan (Sage Publications, 1998) was a great resource. It gave us legitimacy in arguing for the need for there to be "within group similarity" and "between group diversity." *Lesson No. 2: both theory and practice are important in terms of integrating diversity.*

We held 20 focus groups, including about 160 women from very different perspectives. They discussed their experiences with municipal services; what had been frustrating, what had facilitated their access and what could make their lives easier.

We then held the community forum, captured in the *Citizen* article quoted above. The forum was a wonderful example of reaching across differences to establish shared objectives. With the help of simultaneous interpretation, sign interpretation, cultural interpretation and the ability to cover childcare and transportation, we succeeded in bringing together a wide diversity of women and achieved agreement on the recommendations to be made to the City. *Lesson No. 3: taking account of diversity requires resources, as well as careful planning.*

The recommendations that came out of the Forum were as follows:

1. Develop a City communications strategy that is built on an understanding of the diversity of women and on the ways in which diverse groups of women get information;
2. Ensure the equitable provision of services. This entails better information to people using services and strategies to reduce cost as a barrier to equitable access;
3. Consider the diverse needs of women in making program decisions, including

consideration of co-location, relation to OC Transpo service, physical accessibility, cultural interpretation, short-term child-minding, and accessibility in terms of time; and

4. Develop policies for engendering governance, including specific participation policies, cultural awareness training for staff, etc.

The forum provided eloquent evidence of the importance of inclusive social services as a component of social citizenship. It also highlighted some of the contradictory pressures on women's lives in Canada at the present time — between roles as citizens and roles as mothers, between policies directed to women as a generic category and policies relating to the intersections of gender, race, immigration status, age and class (not to mention sexual orientation, disability, language, etc, etc, etc).

We also asked the City Manager's office to review our study and its recommendations and to report back. This was done and the City's review included descriptions of initiatives that existed. The Working Group evaluation of the City's report concluded that there was no comprehensive gender analysis as the basis for making policy decisions, nor in evaluating programs and activities, nor in decision-making processes. However, by the time the City's report had come out, the Working Group had spent its budget and could no longer pay staff to support and facilitate the on-going involvement of the focus group participants. *Lesson No. 4: similar to Lesson No. 3: resources are necessary to ensure organizational support for participation from marginalized groups.*

We are in fact now beginning a follow-up project, entitled City for All Women Initiative, to look at good practices for the engendering municipal practices, through a partnership of community-based women's groups and municipal staff and politicians. It is a one-year project to identify ways of ensuring that women and men in Ottawa have equal opportunity to make and influence decisions about our city.

What did the Working Group achieve? And, particularly, what were our success-

es in increasing the City's sensitivity to the diversity of women? This is obviously not an easy question to answer. On the positive side, the Working Group's findings were cited in the Human Service Plan, adopted by the City in the summer of 2003. Clearly the report resonated with People Services staff at the City. On the less positive side, the City is currently in a huge budget debate about whether to cut services or raise taxes, or some combination of the two. Clearly cuts to services would limit the capacity of the City to be more inclusive.

Perhaps most importantly, the project did prove the importance of municipal policy and inclusive urban services. Such services are a vital component of citizenship by recognizing that diversity is a valuable contribution to citizenship. Urban services that facilitate the full participation of all women in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the City of Ottawa would make an enormous difference. The Working Group's report presented the vision — it remains to make it a reality.

The inclusion of diversity requires commitment — and resources. It requires the head, the heart and the feet. ❧

Caroline Andrew is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Ottawa. She does research on women and local politics and on municipal government.

Pat Harewood is a Law Student at the University of Ottawa and a community developer with the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre.

Fran Klodawsky is a Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University. She works on issues of homelessness, marginalization and rescaling.

Alette Willis is a PhD candidate in the department of Geography at Carleton University. Her interests concern public health, environmental change and justice issues.

Strengthening Women's Voices in Municipal Processes

Canada Still at the Consultation Stage

Colleen Purdon

Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Consultation Processes is an exciting new project that involves women across the country in participatory research. It is poised to increase women's participation in municipal processes by bringing new information, insights, action plans and practical tools to Canadian women, women's organizations, and municipal governments. With funding from the Status of Women, Canada, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) launched this one-year project in June 2003.

Municipal government is often described as the level of government that is closest to people. The activities of local governments affect both women and men in satisfying basic needs and that have a significant impact on quality of life. Yet women continue to be significantly under-represented in municipal decision-making roles. All indications are that women are also under-represented in the public participation processes that inform and influence the decision-makers. As the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government states, *municipalities are therefore in the best position both to involve women in the making of decisions concerning their living conditions, and to make use of their knowledge and capabilities in the promotion of sustainable development.*

The project aims to change municipal consultation practices and policies so that all Canadian women have a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect their daily lives. It grew out of a workshop on gender equity and local governance in



Project National Steering Committee with Minister Jean Augustine (center), October 2003, Ottawa

September 2002 organized by FCM's International Centre for Municipal Development (ICMD). The workshop brought together Canadian and international municipal officials and highlighted the need for more work at home to include the full diversity of Canadian women in municipal affairs.

The FCM's Canadian Women in Municipal Government Committee is sponsoring the project. An 18 member National Steering Committee is in place to guide and support the research. A final report with recommendations for action and a Tool Kit for municipalities and women's organizations will be presented to the FCM at their annual meeting in Edmonton in June 2004.

The FCM Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Consultation Processes project has six key strategies:

- 1. Building and strengthening partnerships:** The 18-member National Steering Committee brings together women from every region of Canada. Women from national, provincial and community women's organizations, elected municipal officials and the FCM are looking at new ways for women's groups and municipalities to work together. In addition, interviews are underway with over 20 women's organizations across the country to look at examples of successful partnerships, barriers women's organizations face with municipal consultation processes, and the benefits of part-



nerships for Canadian women in their communities. Consultations and workshops with women's organizations will be conducted to speak directly with women about their experiences and hopes for partnerships.

2. Research into the "state of the art" of gender-inclusive public participation processes in Canadian municipalities:

A national survey of over 1,000 municipalities in Canada was conducted in November 2003 to collect information on women's present involvement in municipal processes, barriers they experience, ways to increase participation, and examples of best practices. A workshop with the FCM Canadian Women in Municipal Government Committee explored how elected women can increase the full participation of women at the community level. Board and staff members of FCM will take part in Key Informant interviews in February 2004 to examine the preliminary findings from this research and to discuss action to increase women's involvement.

3. Participatory action research in six Canadian municipalities:

Local participatory action research is underway in Montreal, Quebec, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Saskatoon Saskatchewan, Cowichan Valley, British Columbia, Iqaluit,

Nunavut and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Local Advisory Committees at each site are tailoring the national research framework for their community. They will reach out to women, women's organizations, and municipal officials through surveys, focus groups, workshops, and interviews to look at barriers to participation and recommendations for change. The local projects will invite women who are marginalized because of race, economic status, disability, ethnicity or language to speak about their experiences with municipal processes. Recommendations from the community sites will be presented to the National Steering Committee in March 2004.

4. Action plans at each of the six community sites will be completed in March 2004. Community action plans are an opportunity to integrate the experiences of women living in the municipality with community organizations' understanding of change strategies and the knowledge of municipal representatives in relation to existing policies and structures. The National Steering Committee and the FCM Women's Committee will develop national action plans that incorporate the findings of the community-based and national research.

5. A tool-kit of public participation

methods that can effectively involve diverse women in municipal processes and decisions will be produced in June 2004. The tool-kit will include case studies and best practices from the national and community-based research.

6. A strategic plan for the FCM Canadian Women in Municipal Government Committee is under development to strengthen the capacity of FCM to support the implementation of the project recommendations.

The final report and tool kit for municipalities and women's organizations will be available at the project website at www.icmd-cidm.ca in June 2004. For more information, please visit the website or contact the Project Coordinator at (519) 376-7145. ❧

Colleen Purdon is the Project Coordinator for the FCM Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Consultation Processes project. For the past eight years she has worked on national, provincial and community research and development projects dealing with women and families, Aboriginal women, poverty, rural issues, and violence against women. She lives with her partner and four children in Owen Sound Ontario.

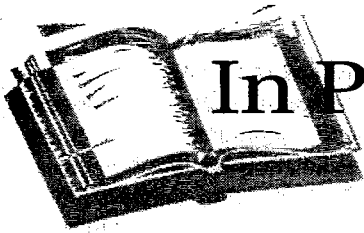
Toronto Women Mobilize to Gender Mainstream Their City

After initial gains in the 80's, women in Toronto have seen cutbacks and erosion of their hard won services and structures. This is all the more disturbing, as Canada has endorsed and adopted UN and other international declarations to empower women. When, for example, will Canada fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action? Women in cities of the South and Europe have made considerable

strides in gender mainstreaming, while Canadian cities are far behind their international counterparts.

At a recent meeting, concerned Toronto women decided to draft a "Call for Action" demanding gender mainstreaming at City Hall. This concept will establish processes and structures to ensure women's voices are heard and their needs are met in budget discussions, public meetings, committee assignments, staffing and decision-making at all levels. A listserv to enable the women

to communicate and work together to achieve their goals has been set up: torontowomen@yahoogroups.ca. To join the listserv send an email to torontowomen-subscribe@yahoogroups.com, with the word 'subscribe' in the subject line. Include your name and affiliation (if any). ❧



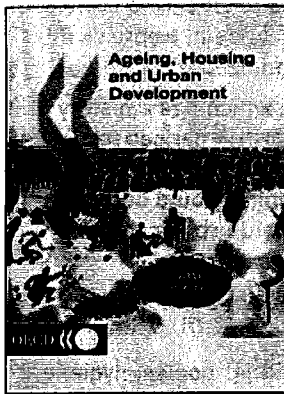
InPrint

All books reviewed below are available at the Toronto Women's Bookstore, advertised in this issue.

AGEING, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT OECD Report on June 2000 Conference, Oslo, Norway

Available free on-line from OECD web site:
www.sourceOECD.org

Reviewed by Regula Modlich, MES, MCIP ret.



"By 2025 the number of people world wide aged 60 and over is expected to rise to 1.4 billion, an increase of 240 per cent from 1980. In the OECD countries, over the next 25 years around 70 million people will retire to be replaced by just 5 million new workers." This brought urgency to the 2000 Oslo conference and squarely put ageing on the list of key issues facing humankind. Meanwhile, India, China, Africa and Latin America do not even belong to OECD.

The report effectively shows how complex an issue aging is: it looks at income maintenance, care, housing, services, urban and rural structures, administration, governance and respective policies and experiments. It also acknowledges how differently humans today age, each in his/her own way, and how different countries have been dealing with the issue of ageing.

"Ageing in Place," and "Active Aging" emerges as the rallying concepts from the Conference. In most surveys, elderly state their clear preference to retire within their own homes and communities, while remaining useful, active and self-determining participants as long as possible. Several European countries are actively de-institutionalizing ageing by replacing nursing homes with smaller community based housing with flexible services. "Lifestyle" communities for the elderly in the US and Canada were viewed as too financially and socially exclusive. Interestingly, elderly felt less lonely in countries where they tend to live in one-person households (Scandinavian countries), than in countries where they tend to live with their children (Greece, Portugal). The demographics and the sheer cost of alternatives, place further urgency on ensur-

ing that the elderly can indeed live economically, physically and socially independent as long as possible.

Several countries are providing incentives for housing design and urban development to ensure "life-long" accessibility. Barrier free housing projects in the UK and Finland ensure level access, toilets and space for a bed at ground level, doors wide enough for wheelchairs, windows low enough for and openable from wheelchairs. The potential of new electronic technology to ease maintaining a household, provide security and communicate with others needs to be more standardized to become widely accessible.

Urban planning needs to ensure pedestrian and wheelchair access to all areas of the community with small scale or fine grained mixed uses to reduce distances and help make public transit viable. Car dependent single use areas such as ex-urban "box" store centers are beyond most elderly's mobility capacity. Special designs can assist the cognitively impaired. Protected sitting and socializing opportunities are important. Besides, any person without access to a car, youth, disabled (even only temporarily) or poor will benefit from all these design and planning approaches.

Even the urban/rural interface is affected. Some elderly trade their larger more valuable city properties for smaller homes in rural or smaller communities. The financial surplus can supplement the elderly's incomes. Yet younger family members, services and public transit, which all elderly eventually need, are missing and hard to provide in such areas.

The report's economic proposals range from postponing the retirement age, to elderly themselves providing some of their own services. Several schemes are offered to enable "income poor, yet house rich" elderly to convert some of their assets into income.

It is the care giving/service component that is of concern in the "Ageing in Place" concept. Comprehensive, integrated, decentralized services, flexibly tuned to meet individual needs are needed for the ageing society. What about the frighteningly increasing cases of dementia, who in their later stages require immense and intense heavy care? The conference recommends that private-public partnerships deliver these. In many countries there is already a great reduction, and privatization of support services to disabled, sick or frail persons. Since the care of the mentally ill was de-institutionalized under similar policies, we have thousands destitute, living and dying on the pavements. Is this what "Ageing in Place" will come to mean? In most countries there is neither service network nor housing in place fitting those recommended in the report. What about the lack of decent health care in the US where the sickness of a member can mean economic ruin for the family, sometimes driving the elderly to commit suicide to avoid this burden on their children?

The fact that women in families have been the main care givers everywhere and throughout history is acknowledged, as is the burden care giving places on women who are

increasingly employed, and singly responsible for households often with children — the sandwich generation. Women will again be expected to pick up the slack by default, often at the risk of their and their immediate households' physical, social and economic well-being. "Families should be supported, not forced to care for their elders because of lack of alternatives," is about as clear and specific as the report gets. Even the fact that women still represent the majority of elderly— albeit a decreasing one — is not examined for its implications. In this sense there is not sufficient attention paid to gender.

One very fundamental aspect of ageing is completely left out in the report, possibly in the conference. Whose responsibility is the care of the elderly — the community's, the family's or the elderly person's him/herself? If eldercare is a shared responsibility, who shares what? And what if one party is not there, or is unable to provide their share? Yet, the report is worth reading. Mostly accessibly written/edited it does convey the complexity of ageing and provides information on many interesting projects and policies. Some actual photos of these projects would have been nice.

Regula Modlich is a retired urban planner, founder of Women Plan Toronto and editorial board member of Women & Environments International Magazine

INCLUSIVE URBAN DESIGN: PUBLIC TOILETS

Clara Greed

Architectural Press, Oxford, UK, 2003. pp361 Price: 34.99 English Pounds

Reviewed by Prabha Khosla



The time for "potty parity" between men and women is long overdue. Or, as we would say in Canada, equitable and inclusive access to public toilets, if we had any. We have to go to malls, and fast food outlets and generally out of our way to find a toilet. Greed's new book on public toilets is an important contribution to urban planning and design for breaking the silence around bodily functions such as

defecation and menstruation and public spaces and services. While we all need to "go", no matter if we are women, men, differently abled, young or old, or of diverse cultures and different hygiene traditions — how easily we can "go" when we are out and about in our daily lives. This basic issue is rarely a topic of planning concern or public discussion in terms of municipal services provision.

Public Toilets is not a technical "how-to" book on toilets,

but rather a well argued case for the recognition and provision of public toilets as a planning and urban design necessity. The book presents a compelling gender analysis of public toilets provision — or rather, the lack of them. (In Britain, on average, there are twice as many toilets for men compared to women.) Greed argues for their necessity in the creation of sustainable cities. She also devotes a chapter to the needs of people with disabilities and those in ill health. Greed points out that if indeed we are arguing for pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, mixed-use, public transit driven cities, then public toilets are a critical component of making this a reality. And in the era of the 24-hour city, the need is greater. Additionally, she underscores what at least women know — that due to the biological differences and social roles of women we need public toilets. While men can and do pee almost anywhere in public — lanes, fences, flower beds, against walls, public parks, etc. — women do not have that social sanction. Greed argues that women as mothers, care givers, part-time and shift workers, and as the majority of the people on foot and in public transit, need public toilets. Because planning and engineering professions have been male dominated, yet again, women's different realities in cities are not recognized.

The book is primarily about Britain, which has a history of public toilet provision while most North American towns and cities do not. However, the need to integrate public toilets into strategic urban policy and planning would benefit residents of both First and Third World urban centres.

The benefits are many:

- economic gains — from tourism for businesses and shoppers;
- social benefits — in terms of healthier bodies, hygiene, and essential services for the needs of all citizens; and
- environmental — in terms of a cleaner city that facilitates organized disposal of human wastes and does not stink.

Written in a non-academic style, it is easy to read and accessible. The first half of the book briefly covers the arguments for public toilets as a planning priority, the history of public toilets in Britain, and the cultural, medical and environmental aspects of sanitation services. Illuminating here is the architectural wealth in public toilet history which serves to underscore the importance of toilet design to the urban fabric.

The second half of the book focuses on "The Solutions" with chapters that situate the importance of public toilet provision in the context of macro city-wide planning, secondary plans and transportation plans as well as micro-planning in the context of specific design issues for safe, inclusive and accessible public toilet blocks. This last section on design specifications is particularly useful in demonstrating the need and possibility of design features that can be inclusive of gender, age, health, ability and cultural considerations. It includes discussions and illustrations about cubicle size, spacing of sanitary disposal units in relation to the toilet (so that our legs do not rub against

the container), the space in toilet stalls, the flushing levers, the arc of door clearance, the locks, the height, number and placement of sinks, the size and location of taps, hand drying options, location of diaper change tables, etc. An innovative idea in toilet block design is the inclusion of uni-sex toilet spaces to accommodate caregivers of the opposite sex and if I may add, even for different genders. Of notable mention is the design work of Women's Design Services ideal Toilet Block. And finally, Greed calls for the provision of twice as many toilets for women as for men preferably with toilet attendants.

However, there remains a question in terms of sustainability that is not really addressed by the book. What options are there for the provision of environmentally sustainable public toilets in high-density urban settlements? That is, public toilets that are not going to flush away gallons and gallons of quality drinking water.

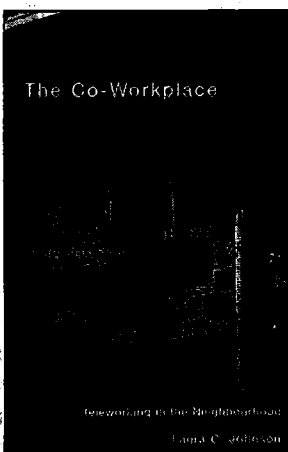
So, who comes close to the provision of safe, clean, accessible, equitable, user-friendly and ecologically and technically savvy public toilets? Japan! Maybe it is time for some development assistance from Japan to the world.

Prabha Khosla is a planner and researcher consulting internationally on sustainable development, gender mainstreaming and participatory planning. She serves as a member of the Gender & Water Alliance and the Women & Environments International Magazine Editorial Board.

THE CO-WORKPLACE Teleworking in the Neighbourhood

By Laura C. Johnson, UBC Press, 2003, Pp 144; CAD \$24.95 (paperback)

Reviewed by Regula Modlich



The Co-Workplace presents a well-reasoned case for shared working spaces located independently from an employer and closer to, sometimes even in the same building where workers live. Johnson received the American Planning Association's 2004 National Women in Planning Award for her book.

The Co-Workplace offers an important concept for reintegrating the work and home. Since the 1930's planners and architects around the world

have strained to keep these functions apart through by-laws, Official Plans and Codes. Yet only slowly does society realize the concomitant stresses on humans and the environment. Such compartmentalized, wasteful and outdated

zoning and planning around the globe needs to be thrown out. The planet and its human beings desperately need community planning based on environmental and social equity, fine-tuned on the basis of scale/intensity. Johnson provides the examples, a full range of variables and feasibility test for co-workplaces.

Co-workplace participants enjoy sharing costly facilities such as hi-tech equipment, meeting spaces or administrative staff, while eliminating most commuting time and costs, and giving scheduling flexibility, while suffering less isolation than in a home workplace. Johnson also includes extensive gender implications. Co-workplaces are of special interest to women who still are the main caregivers in our society. Caregiving requires flexible time schedules. As more men become caregivers, they too will appreciate this advantage. Most significant, however, are the creativity, productivity and companionship that blossom in the synergy of such a working environment.

The mix of all factors, including the financial, has to be right to make any given co-workplace a success for all participants. A few photos of co-workplaces in actual use could have further strengthened the book. I wonder how the co-workplace deals with "dirty cups in the sink" and technology breakdowns? Imagine receiving a letter from your municipality offering co-workplace facilities in your neighbourhood community center, next to fitness programs and the

Canadian Woman Studies les cahiers de la femme

Women, Globalization and International Trade

Guest Editors: Peggy Antrobus, Brenda Cronley, Ana Isla, Angela Miles, Patricia E. (Ellie) Perlman, Linda Christensen-Ruffman, Nandita Sharma, Shannon Storey, and Roshni Soodhidasilp

school your children attend! Or will a creative Internet café owner read the book and market the idea into an economically successful model? There is place and need for many models.

Are We There Yet? — asks one chapter. No, but it's an enticing step in the right direction — towards reintegrating and re-connecting our lives personally and globally. Thanks Laura you have made a good case for the co-workplace, an idea that will make life easier and richer for people and the planet.

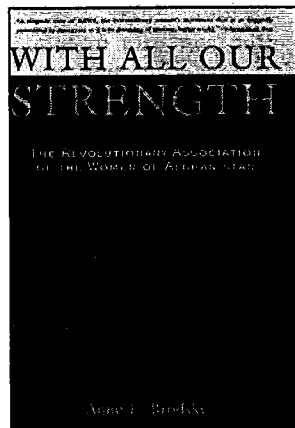
Reggie Modlich is a retired urban planner and founder of Women Plan Toronto

WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH: The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan

Anne E. Brodsky

Routledge Press, 2003. 318 pages \$38.00

Reviewed by Prabha Khosla



Ever wondered what a biography of an independent and autonomous women's liberation movement would look like? If so, that would be but one reason for reading this book about the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). There are others.

By interviewing over 100 RAWA members and supporters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and through her own experience and analysis of RAWA, Brodsky, a community psychologist, has produced a fascinating and intimate look at the incredible organizing of Afghan women against odds that many of us cannot imagine and few have experienced. And I am not only speaking about the recent Taliban tyranny.

Since 1977, when RAWA was founded, by a 20-year old student activist and her 5 friends, the women of Afghanistan have had to defend themselves and fight for their rights through years of male warfare and social disruption from the pro- and anti-Soviet left, the Russian occupiers, the puppet government of Najibullah and the U.S. sponsored mujahideen, the four years of the jihadis — the various Afghan warlords, and then, five year of the Taliban. And, it is still not over. Due to U.S. bullying and imperialist designs, some of the worst misogynist and anti-democratic jihadis, are now part of the Karzai administration. Did someone say that women in Afghanistan were now liberated? Free?

RAWA has organized and survived for over 26 years. Their

success and resilience is obviously due to the astuteness of their analysis of political developments in Afghanistan, the relevance of their priorities to the lives of Afghan girls and boys and women and men, and also to their difficult but necessary strategy of underground organizing.

From the founding of RAWA by a small group of educated women in Kabul, to its transformation to a key force for the liberation of a pro-women and girls and pro-human rights secular and democratic Afghanistan, Brodsky traces the evolution of this movement of women operating in two countries. With *All Our Strength* documents the struggles of RAWA. They supported some of the mujahideen against the Soviet occupation while disagreeing with others who espoused religious fundamentalism. After the shock and loss of Meena — the revered founder of RAWA who was assassinated in 1987, the movement required organizational transformation. The book documents the extensive infrastructure of services RAWA provides and how they are provided. This includes schools, and literacy classes — both underground and in refugee camps in Pakistan; the network for aid and food distribution in Afghanistan and Pakistan; the creation of income generating projects for Afghan refugees and especially poor widows with children; and the publication and distribution of their policies and analysis of Afghanistan politics.

Significantly, a large chapter is devoted to the meaning and importance of education as revolution to RAWA and its members. "...education without consciousness is insufficient to protect women or promote individual and societal improvement."

Another chapter focuses on male supporters of RAWA and their critical role in the movement. Due to the particular nature of patriarchy in Afghan society, men are often the entry point for women's involvement in RAWA. Men function as "arbiters of women's activities and have strong control over the family." Such absolute control over the movement of women makes male supporters critical as "drivers, guides, for security, as bodyguards, and mahram" (a close male relative without whom women cannot go outside their home). However, "men are not involved in decisions, policy making or other major issues." RAWA has a large network of male supporters many of whom feel that RAWA offers a more human alternative for a free Afghanistan than other forces.

If you were part of supporting women in liberation movements in the second half of the 20th century, you will especially appreciate reading this book. Women in many liberation movements felt or were forced to concede the "women's question" as secondary to the "national question". Women had to say, independence first and women's rights later. Or, yes, independence for the country is also independence for women. By now we are all familiar with the failure of many liberation movements to uphold and fight for equal rights for women after "liberation". Well, welcome to RAWA. For RAWA there is no national question without women's rights, without human rights, without secular democracy. Lets hope their vision prevails and brings

other Afghans to their point of view.

With All Our Strength is a tribute to RAWA and the women of Afghanistan and an invaluable experience of feminist, anti-fundamentalist and democratic organizing for the rest of us.

Prabha Khosla works on issues of urban sustainability. In another life she spent many years in support of African liberation movements.

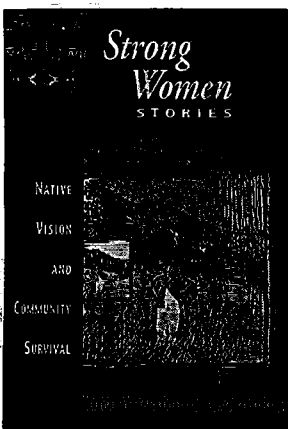
STRONG WOMEN STORIES

Native Vision and Community Survival

Edited by Kim Anderson & Bonita Lawrence

Published by Sumach Press, 264 pp, CAD \$26.95

Reviewed by Viola Thomas



The power of words shared within this anthology, *Strong Women Stories*, reminds me of being in a women's lodge and having access to many teachers. This book chronicles stories of the strong role Aboriginal women played in the leadership and decision making process. Each woman's experiences articulate a holistic vision in the context of community development and advocate Aboriginal women to reclaim their power.

Strong Women Stories contains stimulating stories that challenge the colonial thinking and patriarchal policies faced by Aboriginal women in Canada today. Each story is filled with dramatic experiences that, once discerned, leave you emotionally charged by the continued displacement and relocation of Aboriginal women from their territories, through the many forms of Canadian assimilation policies and legislation.

The stories take a hard look at the misinterpretation of cultural traditions through the neo-colonial process and reveal how many of these attitudes are now deeply embedded in the psyche of some Aboriginal societies and individuals. It examines the impact of racism on Aboriginal women and the resulting internalization by both Aboriginal men and women. *Strong Women Voices* provides a glimpse of possibilities to eradicate racism by building a strong cultural foundation that truly honours Aboriginal women and children. It challenges politicians and sociologists to acknowledge truthfully how much they do not know about our people or what is good for our people. The stories are presented in a fashion that embraces the values of Aboriginal women moving into the 21st century. It suggests that we rely less on force and return to more culturally democratic principles and procedures.

Sylvia Maracle's essay "The Eagle Has Landed & Native women, Leadership and Community Development" reminds

us of the necessity to actively engage our young men into "undoing" some of the gender stereotypes regarding Aboriginal women.

Shandra Spears has learned that patriarchy is only one of the colonizers' social organizations, and eventually their policies will stop dividing our women as their ideologies lose ground in Aboriginal country.

The stories reveal that more and more Aboriginal women are connecting with ancient traditional teachings that value equality, cooperation with nature and one another. Our women are refusing to get caught up in blaming our men and we start realizing that this is one of the key characteristics in a system that keeps people stuck.

Another resounding strength emanating from within the book is the diversity of Aboriginal women's voices. Obviously a very conscious effort was made to provide a more worldly view rather than the usual homogenizing of all Aboriginal societies.

It was reaffirming to read how the multi-layered forms of oppression experienced by Aboriginal women is no match for their cultural resilience and innovative spirit to rejuvenate their world from a community context that encourages holistic strategies and mutual responsibilities.

In Chapter 7, Dawn Martin-Hill describes another colonial construct in "The Traditional Women." It really struck a chord with me because of the struggles within my own community around traditionalism and the role of women. Her focus on fundamentalism and "the severity of the state's response" exemplifies "the repression we have experienced at the hands of the state."

By integrating personal stories from Aboriginal women, this anthology moves ahead of your typical academic political or sociological analysis because you feel and hear Aboriginal women speaking from the heart — gracefully and eloquently. *Strong Women Stories* is valuable reading for anyone who wants to understand the complexities of how colonialism affects Aboriginal women in today's world and what role Aboriginal women have in forging change for the betterment of Aboriginal and Canadian societies.

Viola Thomas is from the Secwepemec Nation. She is a member of the Quebec Native Women's Association and now resides in Gatineau, Quebec, where she continues her pursuit of knowledge and political activism.

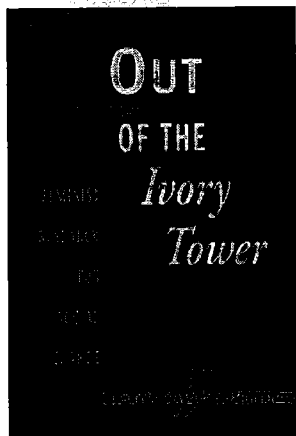
WOMEN NEED SAFE, STABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING A Study of Social, Private and Co-op Housing

By Molly McCracken of the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) and Mail Watson of the Women's Health Clinic (WHC) in Winnipeg, Feb. 2004.

The study can be found on www.pwhce.ca or www.womenshealthclinic.org

OUT OF THE IVORY TOWER Feminist Research for Social Change

Edited by Andrea Martinez and Meryn Stuart
Sumach Press, 312pp, CAD \$26.95 paperback
Reviewed by Reggie Modlich



"Women in the Urban Landscape" by Caroline Andrew alone makes this book worth getting, especially in the context of this issue of Women & Environments. Andrew's contribution provides an analysis of feminist urban research in Canada. She helps make sense of the many bewildering experiences women have in today's cities: amalgamations, women's safety, sub and exurbia, urban planning, and diversity. Hers is one of 14 feminist research con-

tributions from the University of Ottawa under the cover of "Out of the Ivory Tower."

This wildly diverse collection ranges from "Feminist Bioethics and Empirical Research: The Abortion and FTT (Fetal Tissue Treatment) Debates" by Michelle Mullen to "The Community Owns You: Experiences of Female Chiefs in Canada" by Cora J. Voyageur to "Challenging Representation of the Female Victim in Contemporary Austrian Fiction" by Agatha Schwartz. Presumably it reflects the wide range of feminist research going on at this time. Unfortunately not one contribution deals with the corporate reality that upholds patriarchy and keeps rolling back so many of the gains and services women had struggled for so hard. Nor does the book's style and lack of illustrations help in the important task of taking the message out of the ivory tower to the grassroots activists without whom social change cannot happen.

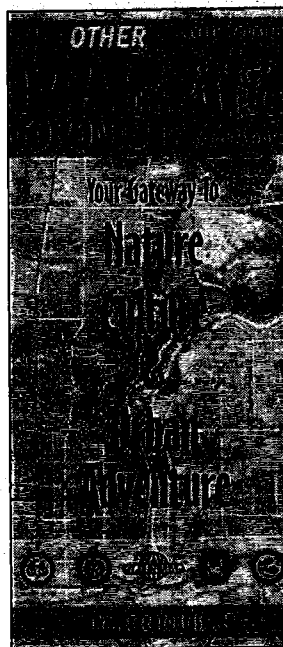
Reggie Modlich is a retired urban planner and founder of Women Plan Toronto.

COMMON OCCURRENCE, RESEARCH ACTION REPORT The Impact of Homelessness on Women's Health

The report finds that the full extent of women's visible and invisible homelessness is severely underestimated. Visible homelessness includes women in emergency hostels and shelters and those who sleep "rough" such as in parks, doorways, abandoned vehicles and buildings. Hidden homelessness includes women who are temporarily staying with friends, family or a man to obtain shelter, which they can not afford on their own. The study finds that social and medical

services are not fully responsive to homeless women's health needs. It includes a number of recommendations. This study was commissioned by and is available from Sistering 523 College St, Toronto ON, M6G 1A8, www.sistering.org

THE OTHER MAP OF TORONTO Your Gateway to Nature, Culture & Urban Adventure



Supported by the City of Toronto, the Green Tourism Association has produced "The Other Map of Toronto." The lovely 100 x 60 cm colour map indicates transit, bike and walking routes, parks, camp sites, community gardens, restaurants serving organic and vegetarian food and more. Elderly women and single mothers will particularly benefit from this resource, as they live on lower incomes and fewer of them have cars than their male counterparts. Of course, it's a welcome guide for every environmentalist.

The Association is a broad coalition of businesses and groups who also help organize special events and research in support of sustainable development. For

more information contact: Green Tourism Association, 590 Jarvis St., 4th floor, Toronto, ON M4Y 2J4, e-mail: green-to@city.toronto.on.ca, website: www.greentourism.on.ca

A CITY TAILORED TO WOMEN

Updated edition due out May 2004

A new updated and revised edition of A City Tailored to Women — the role of municipal government in achieving gender equality. The publication is a co-production of the International Centre for Municipal Development (Federation of Canadian municipalities) and the programme Femmes et Ville of the City of Montréal.

The Content will include:

- A local and worldwide issue
- Women in cities: Networks for creating awareness and sharing information
- Elected representatives and managers: Women on an equal footing
- Women as full-fledged citizens
- The Ideal city tailored to women: Creating structures and mechanisms

- Tools for equality: A gender-based perspective for the City
- Cities initiatives: Examples of good practices

The publication will be available in English, French and Spanish. Contact Catherine Seaborn at cseaborn@fcm.ca for a copy. An electronic version will also be available later in 2004 on the ICMD web site <http://www.icmd-cidm.ca/>

DETOUR'S URBAN SOURCE Your Not-For-Profit Bookstore!

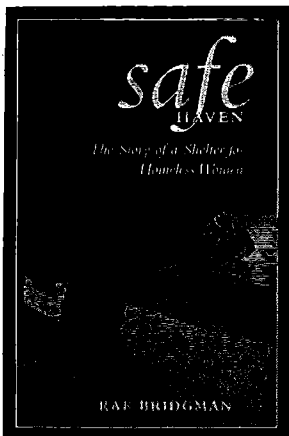
Since 1995, Detour's Urban Source (formerly Detour Publications) has been working to promote cutting edge information related to sustainable transportation and urban planning. www.detourpublications.com

SAFE HAVEN The Story of a Woman's Shelter

Rae Bridgman

University of Toronto Press, 160pp, CAD \$21.95 paperback

Reviewed by Sylvia Novac



This ethnographic account by Rae Bridgman is a vivid description of the conception, birth, and early life of an "experimental alternative to the street or traditional hostel or shelter models" for chronically homeless women in Toronto, Canada. Based on years of painstaking participant observation, interviews and staff records, Bridgman unfolds the unique story of how the Women's Street Survivor Project responded to a gap in services for the most forgotten, if not forsaken, women

— those living on the street.

A group of front-line workers formed the Women's Street Survivor Project to devise a solution that would respect these women's experiences, coping techniques, and preferences. Determined to create and maintain a non-institutional, flexible shelter service, the project's initiators assiduously avoided preconceived assumptions about what homeless women needed and wanted. The project would have few rules or sanctions, no limits on length of stay, and no expectations of change.

Once opened, ten women settled into the project that came to be called Savard's. Within a large communal space that included a kitchen, bath facilities, and a staff room, the residents slept and stored their belongings in three-sided 'nooks' whose design accommodated their need for privacy

and their fear of enclosed spaces. Architect's drawings and photos, such as that on the book cover, show how the nook design evolved and give the reader a visual sense of the building and space in which Savard's was developed.

Throughout the book, fundamental dilemmas are explored by the author and highlighted by the use of quotes from staff and residents. The primary thread is the tension over faithful adherence to the original ideal of "non-intervention" and zero eviction versus staff desires to improve the women's health and quality of life, and to balance the interests of the individual and the group in a communal setting, within a context of organizational restructuring and insecure funding. A related theme is the "fluid" nature of Savard's as a hostel, transitional housing, or permanent home in the perceptions of residents, staff, and founders.

In a chapter entitled "Come Inside," a compilation of staff log notes offers a compelling 'fly on the wall' record of daily life at Savard's. Snatches of the daily doings of each of the residents and their interactions with each other and with the staff evolve into a dramatic narrative.

Bridgman's analysis shows how various factors affect a project such as this: "the political, economic, and policy contexts in which the service arises, the perspectives of the actors engaged in developing the service, the specific group [of service users], and the fact that those using the service can equally well transform [it]" (p. 127).

Bridgman masterfully reveals the complexity of translating a feminist service philosophy into a reality and documents the pressures and shifts that tempered the service during its first few years of existence. Her use of ethnographic techniques provides the reader with a sense of immediacy, of almost being there oneself to experience critical and revealing moments as she witnessed them.

HABITAT DEBATE The electronic Newsletter of the UN Human Settlements Programme

www.unhabitat.org/hd/hd/asp



Vol 8 No 4 www.unhabitat.org/hd/hdv8n4/default.asp focuses on Women-friendly Cities and a full range of women's issues in cities around the world with many interesting and illustrated articles. Unfortunately a gender analysis or perspective is missing as a consistent component in every issue. Yet, it does present an excellent resource for urbanists around the world; it's a pity that no hard copy is available.

Updates

HUAIROU UPDATE, NEWS YOU CAN USE: DOING DIALOGUES



A year ago on these pages, the Huairou Commission reported on the successes of **Local to Local Dialogues** in six communities around the world. The long-term goal of each "Local to Local" was to create lasting, mutually productive relationships between local authorities and grassroots women's organizations. In that earlier article, we offered thumbnail sketches of alliances in Argentina, the Czech Republic, Kenya, Russia, Tanzania and Uganda.

Now, from these real life, on-the-ground experiences comes **Local to Local Dialogue: A Guide to Grounding Good Governance in Women's Realities**, a toolkit that explains the practicalities of "doing" the dialogues — with real life examples.

THREE IDEAS

A Local to Local Dialogue is a persistent and grounded strategy, which deepens indigenous democracy. Based on a participatory model, it transforms the relationship between the governors and the governed. In the process, grassroots women are changed:

From Beneficiaries to Citizens

Grassroots women find solutions to problems of housing, healthcare, childcare, education, livelihoods, water supply and sanitation. Through **Local to Local**, they bring their expertise to the local governance table and help design solutions which square with local realities.

From Adversaries to Allies

Because it's uncommon for governing authorities to share decision making with marginalized groups, those left out resort to protests to advance their causes. "**Local to Local**" makes mutual, peaceful problem solving possible.

From Marginalized to Empowered

By acquiring skills, knowledge and assets, creating collectives, and building alliances, women not only begin to act differently but to perceive themselves differently; the effect is contagious and contributes to shifts in the balance of power.

FOUR PRINCIPLES

How to make these transformations happen? The toolkit tells. Each of the following principles is broken down and detailed with examples.

Collective Action

Grassroots women have learned that they rarely gain from individual negotiations. Collective efforts to influence state actors have been far more successful than individual ones. Components of developing an effective collective action include achieving critical mass, finding consensus and setting priorities.

Capacity Building

To strengthen their position in negotiations with authorities, increase their leverage and make a protracted process a worthwhile investment, women's groups must build their capacities. Given the facts of their lives, they are likely to acquire these capacities through hands-on experience. Thus the dialogue process is itself a learning site.

Demonstrating Capacities

Women demonstrate their value to government officials by demonstrating the size of their constituency, supporting women in elected office, mobilizing their networks, developing pilot projects, and managing resources.

Building Alliances

Grassroots women's groups strengthen alliances by initiating mutual visits, identifying allies within the system, monitoring government services, and planning with government officials.

ALL EIGHT MDGS

Grassroots women's goals are no different than the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); they work on them everyday. Thus Local to Local Dialogues are a quiet, legitimate and powerful tool to propel achievement of the MDGs.

Further Reading and Resources:

Local to Local Dialogue: A Guide to Grounding Good Governance in Women's Realities, published by UN-Habitat (www.unhabitat.org). is available on the Huairou Commission website: www.huairou.org.



Since 1997, the Huairou Commission has been supporting grassroots women's efforts to become more powerful and effective members of their local, national and international communities. For more information:

Jan Peterson, Chair of the Secretariat
The Huairou commission
249 Manhattan Ave,
Brooklyn, New York 11211 USA
P: 1-718-388-8915
F: 1-718-388-0285
E: huairou@earthlink.net

Sheryl Feldman is a freelance writer who focuses on grassroots women and globalization. She is based in Seattle, Washington, USA and can be reached by e-mail at sfeldman2@mindspring.com

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

"We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women, and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected."



United Nations Millennium Declaration — September 2000

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2 Achieve universal primary education
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4 Reduce child mortality
- 5 Improve maternal health
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development

IWSGS VISITING SCHOLAR PROGRAM 2005-06

The Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies (IWSGS) at the University of Toronto invites applications for our Visiting Scholar Program. IWSGS offers a thriving and intellectually stimulating environment for scholars to work.

The IWSGS will provide a shared office space with access to a computer (including internet and email), as well as access to other University of Toronto resources through the vast library system including access to the New College Library special collection on Women's Studies.

Visiting Scholars are encouraged to spend one or two academic terms at the IWSGS, attend the IWSGS Speakers Series and numerous other events being organized by the IWSGS. Visiting scholars will be expected to engage with the intellectual community of the IWSGS, give a public lecture and be available for a class presentation.

Recent doctoral graduates, independent scholars and both tenured and untenured faculty members who are engaged in critical work on gender and/or women are encouraged to apply.

Limited research funding of \$1000.00 is available from the IWSGS that can be used to develop a new research area, enhance an ongoing research program or to disseminate research findings. The University's academic year runs from September to April; therefore applicants are encouraged to schedule their time at the IWSGS during these months.

Applications must include:

- Curriculum vitae
- A one page research project description
- The length of stay proposed and the dates

Interested applicants should send a copy of their application to the following address:

Visiting Scholar Program
c/o Angela Fleury
Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies
40 Willcocks Street
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON M5S 1C6

The closing date for receipt of applications is December 1, 2004. Late applications will not be considered.

McGill 2004-2005 VISITING SCHOLAR POSITIONS MCGILL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING ON WOMEN

The McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women invites applications for the position of Visiting Scholar with the Centre. These positions are open to any scholar who wishes to spend one or two academic terms in a university environment in order to carry out research in Women's Studies. The Centre offers office space and support, an ongoing seminar program, contact with other Women's Studies scholars within McGill and in neighbouring universities — all this located at the centre of a stimulating, bilingual, urban environment. Scholars may wish to apply for external grants; limited research funding of \$1,000 is available from the Centre.

If interested, please write, with a copy of your curriculum vitae, a brief outline of the research to be undertaken, copies of two recent short publications, and the names of two referees to:

Dr. Shree Mulay, Director,
McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women,
3487 Peel Street, 2nd floor,
Montreal, QC H3A 1W7
Phone: (514) 398-3911
Fax: (514) 398-3986
e-mail: info.mcrtw@mcgill.ca

CLOSING DATE: November 14th 2004.

Candidates requiring assurance of a position in order to obtain funding elsewhere are invited to apply one year in advance.

Blossom Shaffer
McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women
3487 Peel Street 2nd floor
Montreal QC, Canada H3A 1W7
Tel: 514-398-3911
fax: 514-398-3986
e-mail: blossom.shaffer@mcgill.ca

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Registration \$100 - 400; for more info: www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/housingconference.html

IWSGS UPDATE

IWSGS COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE

An Annual Program of Knowledge Exchange Between the Institute of Women's Studies and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto and the Wider Community

Shahrazad Mojab

PURPOSE

The Institute of Women's Studies and Gender Studies (IWSGS) at the University of Toronto is committed to fostering links with community groups, organizations, and practitioners who are engaged in gender applied service, advocacy, and policy. The institutional location of the IWSGS within the New College further reinforces its commitment to strengthening ties with the wider community. As is stated in the "Statement of Purpose," New College is committed to promoting and fostering "diversity and equity for all students, faculty, staff and alumni of New College within and beyond the University of Toronto."

A unique and academically challenging feature of IWSGS is its interdisciplinary links with the field of gender practice. It is the day and night struggle of women in the diverse settings of home, work, learning institutions, and communities in a national and international context which informs women's studies analysis and theorization of gender inequality and structures of power. The **Community-University Knowledge Alliance** is an initiative of IWSGS, which is aimed at strengthening the intellectual and practical ties between the communities of feminist scholars and feminist practitioners.

Calendar

PLAN OF ACTION

The IWSGS will commit itself to four annual events, to be developed in consultation with students, faculty, and staff, to involve communities with a specific gender agenda. Priorities will be given to communities which traditionally have been excluded, from access to, and participation in, university-based activities. These include, among others, communities working with or representing Aboriginal women, women of colour, working class women, women with disabilities, refugee and immigrant women, lesbians, queer women and transgendered people.

Interested partners from IWSGS will pair with a community of their choice and create a **Knowledge Alliance**. This alliance will plan an event within IWSGS in the form of a presentation (seminar, panel, or lecture), a workshop, an audio-visual presentation, or by using any other artistic and creative methods. Similarly, the participating members of IWSGS in this alliance will deliver an event in the community.

The four annual events should be divided among the three women's studies programs on campuses of the University of Toronto at St. George, the University of Toronto at Mississauga, and the University of Toronto at Scarborough as a way of enhancing collaboration among them. Two events are to be organized at UT-St. George and one at each of the two other campuses.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Respect and dignity for all participants.
- Ethical approach to all aspects of Knowledge Alliance, in particular, representing women's studies at the University of Toronto.
- Inclusion of all, in particular students, in Knowledge Alliance as a pedagogical, theoretical and methodological tool.
- Promoting equity and excellence.

WALLS OR BRIDGES? Strategies for Rebuilding Communities

**PLANNERS NETWORK CONFERENCE
JUNE 25-27, 2004 NEW YORK CITY**

The quality of urban life is undermined by inequality, poverty, violence and war. Cities are divided into enclaves by walls that segregate by privilege, race and ethnicity. These divisions are increasingly evident in the Middle East and South Asia, but are growing throughout the world and in North America as well. At the same time communities are struggling to rebuild bridges and networks that unite people.

In New York City, the 9/11 disaster prompted many proposals for rebuilding Ground Zero and lower Manhattan, but the rebuilding process has been dominated by powerful interests that have turned their backs on the communities that were most seriously affected. Civil rights and access to public spaces are being curtailed. The "war on terrorism" throughout the world is destroying many bridges and erecting new walls. Globalization is increasing economic inequalities, racism, and political repression.

Community-based planning offers inclusive, democratic models for urban planning based on social, economic and environmental justice. The Planners Network conference seeks to engage dis-

June 10-13, 2004 – The Institute for Community Research (ICR) in Hartford, CT is sponsoring "Crossroads: Critical Issues in Community-Based Research Partnerships;" for info: www.incommunityresearch.org/news/CrossroadsConf/presentapps.htm

September 13 - 17, 2004 – World Urban Forum 2004, Barcelona, Spain, Theme: Cities — Crossroads of cultures, inclusiveness and integration; for info: www.unhabitat.org

September 16-18, 2004 – Conference on Race/Ethnicity and Place, Washington D.C. Binghamton University, Howard University, and the Association of American Geographers invite paper and poster presentations; for info: www.aag.org/meetings/place.html.

September 21 - 25, 2004 – IAHS World Congress on Housing, University of Trento, Trento, Italy, Theme: Sustainability of the Housing Projects, for info: ural@itu.edu.tr

September 26 - October 2, 2004 – International DCOMOMO (Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement) Conference, New York, USA, theme: "Import-Export: Postwar Modernism in an Expanding World, 1945-1975" for info: www.docomomo-us.org

October 22 - 24, 2004 – The 8th Mothering and Feminism Conference, York University, Toronto; Centre for Research on Mothering, for info: www.yorku.ca/crm; arm@yorku.ca

cussions about these experiences and help develop progressive planning strategies for the future. How can planning help build secure and sustainable cities? How can planners oppose the destruction of war and natural disasters and strengthen networks leading to peace?

For more information: www.plannersnetwork.org or Planners Network, 379 De Kalb Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11205

**Walls
or Bridges?**

June 24th – June 27th
Planners Network Conference
New York City, New York

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Free Fish:

"I guess I did this painting because of the fish farms. There are very few fish left in the ocean, and farms are just terrible for fish. They need to be free."



Alex Flores' current focus is on painting her community, scenes with animals and humans around the city, jungles and forests. She finds painting these as primary subjects, is an exciting and revealing experience for her. Her previous work has included elements of nature, but mostly as a counterpoint to other subjects in the paintings. Because she grew up in Mexico City, the beauty of urban Mexican culture, its people, colourful traditional designs, buildings and architecture have influenced her work, although urban-raised and urban-influenced, she has always loved the natural world.

"As a painter, I express my feelings and my dreams in order to give something to this world. It is important for me to paint with my heart and my mind to create a message. My paintings represent the beauty of nature, people and cities on the earth. I try to describe the magical scenes with rich colours that my culture had offered me. By painting nature and people in cities in magical ways, I try to show that the family of humans, animals, and the natural world are all connected and all rely on one another for survival and growth."