



Women & Environments

international
magazine

WOMEN AND URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Women and
UN-HABITAT
DIANA LEE-SMITH

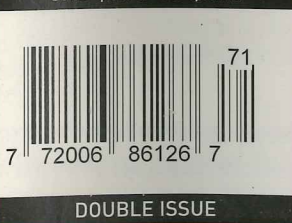
Reconstructing
Kosovo
KRYSTYNA GALEZIA

Climate
Protection:
What's Gender
Got to Do with It?
GOTELIND ALBER
AND ULRIKE ROEHR

Female
Migration,
Environment and
Quality of Life in
Mexico City
HAYDEA IZAZOLA
AND ALAN JOWETT



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DOUBLE ISSUE

Special 30th Anniversary Issue



Healthy Cities for Women Globally

from the National Network on Environments and Women's Health

The National Network on Environments and Women's Health (NNEWH) is one of four Health Canada Centres of Excellence for Women's Health mandated to "enhance the health system's understanding of and responsiveness to women's health." NNEWH is committed to improving women's health through support for and coordination of health research and policy initiatives in order to address inequity in health among Canadian women.

NNEWH is working with Women in Cities International, the Safer Cities Programme of UN Habitat, member Networks of the Huairou Commission and a range of local, national and international partners for the World Urban Forum III in Vancouver, Canada, June 19-23, 2006. Four networking events under the theme "Towards Women Inclusive Cities" will be part of the women's program at this event. Please join us for these sessions:

- * Gender Mainstreaming and Local Governance
- * Sustainable Partnerships with Local Governments on Women's Safety
- * Knowledge Networks for Women's Health and Safety
- * Developing a Template: Partnership Models for Big Cities.

These events are an excellent opportunity for women's organizations, local authorities, community-based organizations, academics, professionals, practitioners, and NGO's to link effectively with a range of international networks who are pursuing approaches in building partnerships between women's organizations and cities for safer, healthier cities.

You can become involved in the networking sessions. Please contact NNEWH for the event on Knowledge Networks for Women's Health and Safety at (nnewh@yorku.ca), and Women in Cities International for the 3 other sessions at (info@femmesetvilles.org).



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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 and anti-racist 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 and Gender Studies Institute at New College, University of Toronto.

Subscriptions: INDIVIDUALS — in Canada: 4 double issues (2 years) CAD 22.00; 8 double issues CAD 35.00; in the US and Overseas: 4 double issues USD 22.00 or CAD 33.00; 8 double issues USD 35.00 or CAD 52.50. INSTITUTIONS AND BUSINESSES — in Canada: 2 double issues CAD 35.00; in the US and Overseas: USD 35.00 or CAD 52.50. Bulk Orders for 10 copies and more: CAD 3.50 per copy plus postage.

Women & Environments International Magazine:

ISSN 1499-1993, publishes 2 double issues annually. It was founded as Women & Environments in 1976. From Fall 1997 to Summer 2001 it published under the title WE International. Women & Environments International Magazine is a member of Best of the Alternative Press and is indexed in Alternative Press Index, Canadian Periodical Index, Social Sciences Index and Women's Studies Abstracts.

Articles in Women & Environments International Magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board or Issue Editorial. Women & Environments International Magazine and its Editorial Board accept no responsibility for the intellectual integrity of submitted articles.

Women & Environments International Magazine occasionally shares the subscriber database with like-minded organizations. If you prefer that your name not be on shared lists, please send notification to we.mag@utoronto.ca.

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Upcoming Issues

Crossing Boundaries: Women, Art and Community Activism —

This issue explores the diverse artistic practices that women bring to social and environmental activism. We are particularly interested in feminist approaches that honour the process as well as the product.

Women & Climate Change — This issue will analyze how women and gender intersect with climate change and its related phenomena of droughts, floods, environmental vulnerabilities, livelihoods, and energy. It will explore the many impacts of climate change on women, and women's responses. Issues include International negotiations and the COP, energy policies, health, the impact on reproductive health and social reproduction responsibilities, livelihoods, transportation, biodiversity, natural resources management, consumption, production, and human settlements.

Women and Religious Fundamentalisms — What are the common elements in religious fundamentalisms? What is its role and effects on women? Further details on the theme and the Call for Submissions will be published in the "Write for WEI Mag" section of our website: www.weimag.com.

For Editorial Guidelines, Calls for Submissions and more visit the "Write for WEI Mag" section of our website: www.weimag.com.

Your participation in issue teams, ideas, articles, news and funds are critical to the survival of Women & Environments International Magazine.

Thank You

The Women & Environments International Magazine, Editorial Board and Issue Editorial Committee acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP) towards our mailing costs and the Canadian Secretariat for the World Urban Forum III for the production and distribution of this special issue. We also appreciate a special grant for this issue from International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa Canada and a special grant from UN Habitat's, Gender Mainstreaming Unit. Women & Environments International Magazine is grateful for the general support of the Women & Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto. Thanks also to Anne Michaud, Claire Major, Niloufer Moosa, Sean Roberts, Seanna Martin, Banu Raghuraman, Nikos and Emmanuel Evdemon for volunteering and working behind the scenes. A special hug to Alex Flores for her beautiful cover image.

Canada



Dedication

The Editorial Board dedicates this 30th Anniversary issue to Reggie Modlich who has provided inspirational commitment to WEI Magazine for the past 26 years. Without Reggie the Magazine would never have made it to its 30th year of publication!

WE Speak

Issue Editorial

This is a special issue of *Women and Environments International* magazine. It celebrates the 30th anniversary of the magazine, a remarkable achievement in the world of feminist publishing in Canada, especially for a volunteer editorial board. This special issue also takes us back to our roots in urban issues, women, and cities:

This year, 2006 also commemorates the founding of UN-HABITAT 30 years ago in Vancouver, BC. In recognition of this historic event, we also celebrate the UN-HABITAT's 30th anniversary as well as the World Urban Forum (WUF) III to be held in Vancouver in June 2006. With this issue we hope to bring a deeper understanding and focus to women's experience of urban centres.

Appropriately, we begin with a piece that assesses the relationship of UN-HABITAT to women and women's organizing on urban issues. In keeping with the theme of the WUF III, the contributors to this special edition focus on numerous key issues of urban sustainability as they impact and affect women. The authors assess, analyze, and bring insightful questions, conclusions and recommendations to the dilemmas of urban sustainability. The cities and towns of Burdwan, Eskisehir, Havana, Halifax, Kathmandu, London, Mexico, Montreal, Ottawa, Prishtina, Quito, Sydney, Taipei, and many others situate these key issues in women's daily living. Interestingly enough, the common thread through many of the articles is urban planning in its broadest and most critical aspects. These articles speak of the many dimensions of urban planning as they implicate women in reconstruction after war, climate change, air pollution, and environmental degradation, planning for diverse women's public spatial needs, women's safety in cities, affordable shelter, women and child-supportive housing and living design, transportation, solid waste management, and of course, women and governance at the municipal level.

The articles in this issue reflect some of the changes in urban priorities over the last 30 years. There is more of a focus on urban environmental issues and their impacts on women's health, women's unpaid work in the care economy, women's employment prospects, and on transportation, policy, and decision making. The other major change is in the area of urban governance and women's roles in municipal politics and decision making. An annotated list of resources provides an overview of how women's equality and gender parity is being addressed in/by some cities — by both women and men residents and by local governments.

Finally, the articles signal that if urban centres are to be sustainable, the wealth of women's perspectives, analysis, and knowledge will be indispensable in creating that possibility. ❧



ON THE COVER

Margarita Alex Flores is a Latin American eco-feminist and social justice activist as well as an independent visual artist and film-maker, born in Mexico. Alex has worked in a variety of mediums: acrylics, wood, mosaics, and recyclable objects. She graduated as a teacher in 1988. Alex

moved to Toronto, Canada in the spring of 2001. In 2003 she created the Gatuna Film & Video Collective, a collective of Hispanics that teach & produce films on social and cultural issues. She is the Artistic Director of the Gatuna Film & Video Collective. She writes, directs and edits film and also teaches workshops on how to make films. Alex's paintings have been shown in different galleries in Toronto and on various magazine covers.

The painting on the cover was especially created for the 30th Anniversary Issue of the Magazine.

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Putting This Issue Together

Prabha Khosta is an urban planner working on issues of urban sustainability. She works on planning, gender, local governance, and training and capacity building. She is advisor to the Gender and Water Alliance and a founding member of Toronto Women's Call to Action.

Roberta Hawkins is a Masters student studying Gender, Development and the Environment at York University.

Barbara Rahder is a Professor and Graduate Program Director in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. She uses participatory research to explore issues of equity and access to affordable housing and community services in the Toronto area.

Laura C. Johnson is an urban planner and a sociologist. She is on the faculty of the School of Planning, University of Waterloo, where she teaches social planning and housing. Her research is on telework and work-at-home. Telework is the subject of her recent book, *The Co-Workplace: Teleworking in the Neighbourhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

Reggie Modlich, MES, is a retired urban planner, a founder of Women Plan Toronto and Toronto Women Call for Action, board member of *WEI* Magazine since 1980 and currently its co-managing editor.

Lucia Kiwata is Chief of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit at UN-HABITAT.

Thirty Years of Women's Dedication

30 Years of Women & Environments International Magazine

Reggie Modlich

Thirty years — a labour of love. What is it that has kept *Women & Environments International* magazine, now (*WEI Mag*) alive all these years? It's the countless writers, the almost equally countless board members and volunteers, you our wonderfully loyal readers, and the occasional donation from government, an institution or a foundation. The magazine's survival also depended on a few key Board members who again and again simply refused to let the magazine die. This commitment to *WEI Mag* mirrors the solidarity and tenacity with which women everywhere are facing complex, diverse and ever evolving challenges.

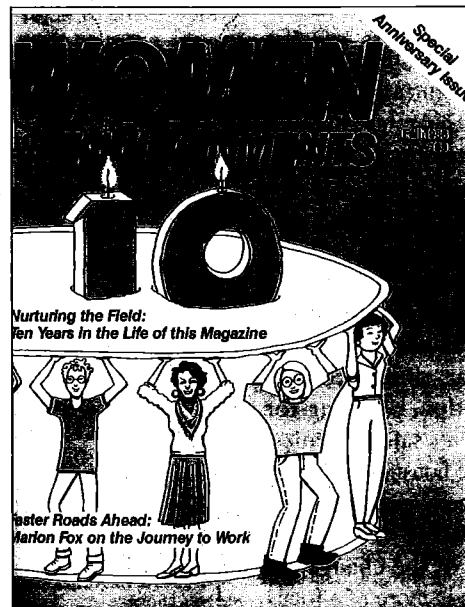
Women & Environments began in the heady years after Habitat's founding conference in Vancouver in 1976, where Gerda Wekerle, Rebecca Peterson and David Morley — professors in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University — organized a workshop on women and environments. The response was overwhelming. Women from around the world came to report on their research and activism, and — talk about the disconnect between their lives, their work and their built environments. Participants wanted to stay in touch, and so the *Women and Environments Newsletter* was born. Thirty years on, what was once a handful of mimeographed pages is now a glossy subscription-based magazine — *WEI Mag*.

As part of the second wave of feminism, women wrote, analyzed and organized around the conditions of their daily lives. *Women & Environments* magazine was a catalyst. Its accessible language and format helped reach grassroots women around the world. It provided us with an opportunity to learn and share information about the actions and thoughts of women from a broad variety of backgrounds and in a wide array of situations. This in turn inspired us to think globally and organize locally. Women Plan London in England, Women Plan Toronto in Canada, Comedores Populares Familiares (Communal Kitchens) in Lima, Peru, SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres) in Bombay, India, WEDO (Women & Environments Development Organization) in the USA, and METRAC (Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women & Children) Toronto, Canada are just a few of the women's groups whose work has appeared in the pages of *WEI Mag*. We argued for safer cities, better child care,

better public transit, more affordable housing, and more mixed land uses. And, at times, we saw changes taking place. Women's not-for-profit housing projects are sprinkled around the world — far too few but the result of enormous efforts yet a testimony to what women can achieve.

Women & Environments magazine expanded its focus during the 1980s to include women's relationships to natural and social, as well as built environments. We realized how linked these all were. Our view of women also changed, from thinking of ourselves as the "other half" of humanity to recognizing the almost infinite range of women's diverse realities and experiences constantly in motion in an ever more interdependent globe. The era culminated in women exploring the complex issues around the "nature versus nurture" debate, environmentalism and ecofeminism. In 1990 we organized an international conference on Women and Environments in Toronto. *WEI Mag* had effectively built a bridge between women's studies and environmental studies and initiated a whole new field of study. Women's demand for mixed land uses, more intensive housing development and better transit started to be echoed by environmentalists and eventually by the mainstream. Today, everyone appears to be pushing "Smart Growth" and "Sustainable Development." Yet, except for higher density — which yields immediate higher profits — little has actually changed in overall development patterns and the links to women's needs are ignored.

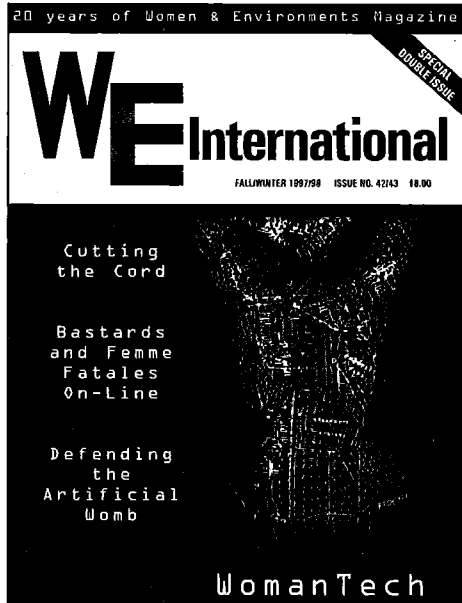
For eight years York University sheltered *Women & Environments* and provided its editors, Gerda Wekerle and Rebecca Peterson, with student assistants. In 1984 Judith Bell became editor and the magazine moved to the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies. The Secretary of State Women's Program granted some limited but critical project funding for about 10 years, and this allowed the volunteer Editorial Board to develop into an effective editorial collective that sometimes managed to produce four issues of the magazine a year. In 1987 the Board incorporated as *Women & Environments Educational and Development Foundation* (WEED) to support a broader range of activities and to raise funds. Yet, as activist women, we never were effective corporate



fund raisers. U of T support ended in 1992 and we moved to ever tighter and cheaper locations. Each move required a huge effort and tedious administrative hassle.

By 1999 *WEI Mag* could no longer afford to pay part-time help and the magazine might have died. Yet we had an issue team working on the "Community by Design" issue. We had an amazing interview with First Nations' Chief Lorraine McRae and received \$5,000 from the Bronfman Foundation. How could we let *WEI Mag* die? Picture a room in a church basement shared with other groups, two square feet of desk space, an Apple computer and a database that we didn't know how to access, files in shambles and two bushel baskets of unopened mail! Reggie Modlich, fortunate to be able to retire from her paid urban planning job, doggedly started taking on the administration. Together with a few other stalwart "wilting weeds" such as Gaye Alexander, Judith Bell and Barbara Rahder she continued churning out issues, and ensure *WEI Mag's* survival.

In 2000 the Women and Gender Studies Institute at University of Toronto gave *WEI Mag* space and access to some infrastructure that should keep us going at least until 2007. In 2004/5 we benefited from a Canada Magazines Fund grant to increase our subscribers and our advertising revenue so that we could, once again, pay part-time staff. What we did not realize is that these goals required ever more sophisticated and complex processes, difficult for volunteers to handle and entangled us ever more in the market economy. Nonetheless, *WEI Mag* restructured and reorganized and the Board and volunteers



continue publishing this important magazine. Asked for her perspectives, Becky Peterson, a founder of *WEI Mag*, commented:

"The credit goes to you and all the other board members who have kept this magazine alive for these thirty years of change and evolution. I have no doubt that the new leadership coupled with the experience of committed long-term supporters will ensure the long-term survival of this magazine that serves a community of women around the globe."

Where is the women's movement and *WEI Mag* now? Neither is secure. Patriarchal attitudes, coupled with transnational capitalism, continue to create particular hardships for women

world-wide. In many areas, women's needs, obscured by the term "gender," have fallen off the radar — yet our issues and demands are more urgent and valid than ever. We need structural change to reverse both the values and the processes of our institutions. That's much harder to win, and so much easier to co-opt. For the last three years, *WEI Mag* has been fortunate to benefit from the political astuteness, energy and commitment of our co-managing editor, Prabha Khosla. Her leadership, together with the ideas and energy of a younger generation of Board members and volunteers, will help make a better world for women with *WEI Mag* as one of their tools. Go for it! ✂

Reggie Modlich, MES, is a retired urban planner, a founder of Women Plan Toronto and Toronto Women Call for Action, board member of WEI Magazine since 1980 and is currently co-managing editor.

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NOTICE TO OUR READERS

The article, "Recasting the Diaspora Current — Transnational Adoption Flows" by Alexandria J. Johnstone, p. 28 to 30 in our Fall/Winter 2005 issue has been withdrawn from electronic circulation pending the outcome of an investigation. We apologize without prejudice for any inconvenience this may have caused or may cause. The article was published without intent or knowledge of malice.



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Features

Women and UN-HABITAT

A History

Diana Lee-Smith



Ferdinand Kiriana / Ise International / Nepal

“Over my dead body” scribbled a senior official of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the forwarding note when he received a document in 1976 suggesting that the environmental concerns and conditions of women receive attention from his agency. I know, because I had to process the note being a junior functionary of UNEP at the time. If the statute of limitations on this piece of internal UN bureaucratic information has not expired, I hope the relevant authorities feel free to sue me. As to whether the subsequent involvement of UNEP in women and environment matters, such as the massive Global Assembly on Women and Environment in 1991, actually took place over his dead body, I am not aware.

This article is about the evolution of women and habitat issues, based on my professional and personal experience. It includes an assessment of how well these are being addressed currently, in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (Habitat). It offers a history that covers the interaction between UN-Habitat and civil society, and some other UN events and agencies, especially UNEP.

Despite the negative atmosphere this opening anecdote portrays, there were other stirrings in 1976. The first United Nations Habitat Conference in Vancouver took place that year, and was famous for the vibrant civil society Forum which accompanied it. At one of the Forum workshops, the concerns of women were highlighted and Women and Environments journal (later magazine) was born as a direct result. Habitat issues concerning women found a place in this magazine over the following years. In SINA Newsletter in 1985 it described its

scope as a “feminist perspective on women and planning, design alternatives, urban projects, technology, space, non-traditional jobs, community development, nature and ecology.” Thus it was thinkers and planners who were then beginning to describe the content and agenda of “women and habitat.”

Indeed the debate about whether environment and habitat issues should be treated as one complex of ideas and policies has raged since that time. Not least, the debate among member states at the UN at the time of Vancouver 76 led to the creation of a separate agency from UNEP, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS). UNCHS later became the UN Habitat Programme and was located in the same place as UNEP, in Nairobi, Kenya. For many, the need for a specialized agency looking at conservation of the biosphere should not be separated from looking at the “habitat” of human beings, namely human settlements. But geopolitics of the time divided the former as the agenda of the North, looking at conservation, and the latter as the agenda of the South, focussing on poverty and urban growth.

Women’s issues were not a priority to either agency at that time. They remained a special interest that was pursued by civil society, academics and lobby groups, notwithstanding the UN Decade for Women, which started in 1975, and produced the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) among other major achievements.

When the Third UN Conference on Women was held in Nairobi 1985, some officials of the UNCHS (all women) actively participated with civil society

organizations in helping to articulate the issues of “women and habitat” through a series of workshops at the large NGO Forum. They were concerned that this had been a gap in the agency’s programme throughout the first UN Women’s Decade. A large “Women and Habitat” workshop was organized by Mazingira Institute of Nairobi, Habitat International Council (later Coalition, HIC) and the Netherlands Council of Women (part of the International Council of Women, ICW). Other workshops, out of the thousand or so held that addressed similar themes were organized by the National Council of Neighbourhood Women of USA and Match International of Canada.

Keynote papers articulating the women’s perspective on the themes of the 1976 Vancouver Habitat Conference led to the structuring of issues and the resolve to create an international network, starting with the workshop participants. Emerging themes were women’s particular housing and infrastructure needs (urban and rural), their relation to women’s income generation, legal constraints on women, and women’s participation in policy and planning. Women and Environments was one of the actors involved. The Netherlands Government funded UNCHS to hold a series of regional workshops on communication for women and habitat issues over the next few years, and these again drew in Forum participants as well as many other organizations.

International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH-87) marked further steps forward, with UNCHS itself finally putting women’s issues on the agenda of the Conference documents. More international workshops were held. “Women and Shelter” became the theme of an African

Declaration formulated for IYSH. Meanwhile HIC — now transformed into a Southern-led Coalition of many small NGOs — resolved to carry forward the 1985 resolution and set up a Women and Shelter Network, and this was implemented at a HIC-organized international meeting in India in 1988, presided over by the Executive Director of UNCHS. The network's founding members resolved to keep an open structure of grassroots women's organizations which would enable the issues to emerge and influence UNCHS and the policy agenda in general.

In probably its most adroit move, UNCHS convened a meeting in 1989 ostensibly to review the outcome of the communication workshops on women and habitat. It also brought together key civil society groups. This historic meeting produced a resolution calling for a women's programme in UNCHS, and for grassroots women's concerns to be brought to policy attention by "inviting governments and UNCHS (Habitat) to develop a closer cooperation with the Habitat International Coalition Women and Shelter Network and other similar NGOs at national, regional and international levels." In 1991, this same resolution made it to the UN General Assembly, where it was adopted as Resolution 13/13 of the GA's 8th Plenary session.

The nineteen-nineties was the decade of UN global conferences, and women and habitat issues were by now right up-front, thanks to all the preparatory organizing. Whether over anyone's dead body or not, UNEP led the Global Assembly on Women and Environment, using the energies of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) which held preliminary grassroots-dominated workshops of one and a half thousand women and produced the Women's Action Agenda 21. This document influenced the less radical UN Agenda 21 that emerged from the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, and women and habitat issues were included.

The International Research Seminar on Gender, Urbanization and Environment, organized by the International Sociological Association Research Committee 43 and

Mazingira Institute, produced a Research and Policy Agenda in 1994. Along with the regional and global meetings organized by HIC Women and Shelter Network (HIC-WAS) and other women's organizations, the women and habitat set of issues was beginning to develop more "bite" in terms of critical analysis, grounding in poor women's concerns, and influencing international meetings of governments through the UN. A key event took place when the leaders of HIC-WAS and GROOTS (Grassroots Women Organizing Together in Sisterhood — the international manifestation of "Neighbourhood Women" of the USA) decided to collaborate, and invited the International Council of Women (ICW), formed a hundred years earlier, to join in a new grouping dubbed the "Super-Coalition." Being grassroots-based, with



overlapping agendas but weak on resources, they hoped that there would be greater strength in collaborating. Resolution 13/13 was empowering the group as well, and it was able to start influencing international meetings in a big way.

Already, the "Women's Caucus," superbly organized by WEDO, was ever-present at UN meetings and systematically got its concerns on the main meeting agenda. The caucus always insisted on having its meetings in the main conference hall, half an hour before the official meeting, and it lobbied hard (and still does) to retain that slot in every meeting. It was a short step to invite WEDO into the Super-Coalition, along with others, including the Asia Women and Shelter Network, a breakaway faction of HIC-WAS.

The establishment of the UNCHS Women and Shelter Programme in 1991 further reinforced this powerful grouping. Although only a small unit, it managed to

mobilise donor resources. Collaboration with the women's movement, as mandated by the General Assembly, generated a large amount of noise at the preparatory meetings and UN Conferences themselves throughout the 1990s right into the new millennium. Grassroots women appearing in UN Conferences became the norm for UNCHS (Habitat). There was even a UN Expert Group Meeting of women slum dwellers from three continents of the South. They produced a set of Community Based Indicators of women's participation that became an official UN document.

Global organizing of grassroots women led to the numerous clauses on women and habitat that influenced the "Platform for Action" at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, including the notorious "inheritance clause." That clause held up negotiations for 24 hours, necessitating an extra day of the Conference and almost derailed it. Almost surprisingly, a deal was done on the meaning of equality as enshrined in the Qu'ran, and the historic clause was passed. It reappeared in the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul in 1996, and became part of the Habitat Agenda, the guiding document of the UNCHS programme.

It is worth reflecting at this point what hugely contentious issues the subject of women and habitat raises, targeting centuries of male power and supremacy. This "status quo" has meant that women:

- do not inherit property (land and housing);
- do not take part in government or even governance (meaning all the institutional structures that influence society);
- do not have much access to jobs, loans and other entitlements due to citizens.

Getting all this written down in UN agreements was not easy due to the predominance of male interests in most international gatherings and the general inertia of public opinion. Achieving it also meant there was bound to be a backlash. While the Women and Shelter (first called Human Settlements) Programme of UNCHS (Habitat) was going from strength to strength, resistance was also

building up, and this was evident both in international gatherings and within the UNCHS secretariat. Despite the enormous impact of the international documents which led governments to take significant steps in passing laws and implementing measures on women's property rights and participation in government and public life, the high profile of the women's movement created some nervousness.

At the Global Forum in Huairou, a suburb of Beijing, at the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Executive Director of UNCHS, being impressed by the achievements of the Super-Coalition, dubbed it the "Huairou Commission." He suggested it also include individual women who are important figures in public life across the globe. Subsequently, although several UNCHS programmes now worked actively with the Huairou Commission to achieve effective outreach in human settlements, UN officials at all levels and government delegations (not least that of China) began objecting to its role suggesting it was a biased interest group. The leadership and legal status of the Commission was, rightly, questioned. After all, it had simply come into being on a wave of enthusiasm of grassroots coalition-building and the ideology of "partnership" espoused by UNCHS following the successful Habitat II meeting of 1996, which broke new ground in UN — civil society relations.

Meanwhile, based on a commissioned gender policy analysis, UNCHS created a Gender Unit to execute mainstreaming in its work, in addition to the Women and Shelter Programme. This innovative, two-pronged approach to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, was unfortunately short-lived. With budget cut-backs and restructuring, as well as most senior UN officials not getting the hang of there being any difference between the two institutional functions, the two were merged again barely eighteen months after the Gender Unit was established.

But there were steps forward as well as backward. A Gender Task force set up in 1997, before the Gender Unit, enabled interested UNCHS staff to share gender work and methods informally. It had about

fifty-fifty men and women and grew to include about a quarter of all the Secretariat professionals. It established direction to gender mainstreaming the institution, and was formalised as an in-house Committee in 2000. Task Force members quickly and systematically incorporated gender into the two new "Campaigns" of UNCHS in 2000 — on Security of Tenure and Governance — and into the new five year plan and budget.

Several programmes and units of UNCHS, including the Governance Campaign, structured their gender and women's outreach work around the involvement and capacities of the Huairou Commission and its member organizations. With the merger of the women and gender programmes, this became a low-resource-use strategy for mainstreaming. The Gender Coordinator represented UNCHS in inter-agency matters. From this vantage point several joint workshops were organized during the UN Beijing +5 Forum in New York in 2000 and Istanbul +5 in 2001, to develop solidarity with FAO, UNDP, UNIFEM and other UN bodies on women and habitat issues, particularly women and secure tenure and women and governance.

UNCHS became a full-fledged programme of the United Nations in 2002, re-named UN-Habitat. Its Gender Unit continues, but the Gender Task Force no longer functions and the relationship with the main civil society bodies is somewhat weaker than in the hey-day of the nineteen nineties.

The right of women to own and control property, and in particular their right to inherit it from their parents, is now a widely publicized matter. Numerous campaigns at national and international levels have taken up the cry and developed methods of bringing about change. Unlike women's role in governance, especially urban governance, this is really a UN-Habitat issue; while governance is addressed by UNDP and UNIFEM as much as by UN-Habitat. Both have certainly had a wide impact. UN-Habitat has developed a joint programme with the UN High Commission on Human Rights around the issue of housing rights, including women's inheritance

rights. It carried out and published important research on the issue.

Yet ultimately, the driving force has been, and will probably remain, civil society organizations. The influence of civil society, including grassroots and slum women, on UN and international policies in UN-Habitat, presents a useful case study as the debates on global governance and broadening the base of the UN continue. ❧

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Reconstructing Kosovo

UN Habitat and Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning

Krystyna Galezia

The 1999 military conflict in Kosovo had a dramatic impact on women — on their social roles, health and economic security as well as on their participation in social and political life. It was another aspect of the war in former Yugoslavia. It led to the loss of lives, job opportunities and the damage of property and houses. The conflict left many families without husbands and fathers. Women had to become bread-earners as well caregivers for their families. This was the case in the village of Krushe, where almost all of the men were killed by Serbian troops in March of 1999, soon after the NATO bombing had begun. The women from Krushe village had to find a way to reconstruct their houses and make a living from what was left. These new responsibilities gave many women a greater sense of independence and self-reliance — new for a society that continues to be marked by a strong patriarchal family model.

UN-HABITAT has been working in Kosovo since 1999 with much of its focus on building capacities of municipal planners and civil society organizations to engage in local development planning. For cities and municipalities in Kosovo, local development planning has become one of the key priorities, as Kosovo has moved from the emergency into a transition phase. The involvement of civil society in creating and implementing their vision for the place where they live and work is the key element of the participatory approach to strategic development planning. It is the approach which UN-HABITAT promotes and assists to put into practice in Kosovo.

The weak economy of Kosovo and the lack of jobs have impoverished its people and lowered their standard of living. A polarization due to age, education and



Streets are very narrow and of poor quality.

JENNIPHER UWISHAKA, UN-HABITAT GDPP/MUSPP

place of residence is occurring. The World Bank's Poverty Assessment report on Kosovo indicates extreme poverty among women-headed households; double that of male-headed households. In cities, young, educated women have better chances of finding jobs than their peers in rural areas, where access to education and jobs is even worse. Boys have greater access to education than girls and these disparities increase with higher levels of education.

Post-war reconstruction and rapid development of urban areas throughout Kosovo has impacted on relations between men and women. A massive migration from rural areas to cities in search of better living conditions and job opportunities followed the conflict. This has put an additional strain on municipal infrastructure and services such as water, sewer systems, access roads and electricity. Power and water interruptions continue to be a daily reality in Kosovo and affect men and women differently. They put additional burdens on women who are still mainly responsible for nurturing their families and for household chores. Poverty and interruptions in power and water supply increase domestic tensions and violence and there are few services to assist women in such circumstances.

The lack of recreation facilities, youth clubs, cinemas, or public libraries leaves young people at loose ends and young women have even fewer opportunities

then men to spend free time outside their homes. Women participate very little in political life. Electoral quotas of 30% of seats in the Kosovo Assembly and municipal councils do not translate into an equal proportion of women being nominated for or elected as members of the government, municipal councils, or appointed as CEOs or in other decision-making positions.

Now, six years after the intervention of international forces has brought the conflict to an end and successfully established the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo, the focus has shifted from immediate humanitarian assistance to building foundations for sustainable development. The presence of international organizations, donors and specialised UN agencies has also had different effects on men and women in Kosovo, especially in large cities.

Gender Mainstreaming Governance and Planning

The gendered realities of post-war conditions especially in Kosovo's cities led the UN-HABITAT Governance and Development Planning Programme (GDPP) to incorporate gender equity in their training program for urban planners. A Gender and Civil Society Unit was set up to conduct activities targeting different beneficiaries of the Programme both at the local and Kosovo-wide (We cannot refer to Kosovo as a country as its status



Kosovo women develop a vision for their community.

has not yet been determined and officially it is still part of Serbia and Montenegro.) level and to include gender mainstreaming in the planning process.

Mainstreaming gender in field operations is a challenging endeavour. In the post-conflict context and after 30 years of neglect this becomes even more complex. The way in which men and women, girls and boys have been affected by the war differs. So do their needs, views and priorities in re-building their society after the war. It is therefore critical to recognize these differences and develop activities that will be able to effectively address these diverse realities.

The gender mainstreaming strategy focussed on two activities: (i) capacity building for municipal planners in participatory strategic municipal planning; and (ii) support to the Institute for Spatial Planning operating within the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning in developing a Kosovo-wide spatial plan. In line with planning laws, the Kosovo-wide plan as well as the municipal and urban plans should be developed in an inclusive, participatory manner and have a strategic character. The objective of gender mainstreaming is to ensure that men and

women will have equal roles, responsibilities, access and opportunities in the strategic urban planning process at all levels and that men and women will be able to benefit equally from the implementation and developments contained in such plans.

Meaningful participation of stakeholders requires pre-conditions such as political will, proper information distribution channels and opportunities for both men and women to voice their opinions. To create such a climate of cooperation it is necessary to work with local government officials, civil servants and with various civil society groups and organizations. It is necessary to create a common forum of understanding of local development issues and to make all stakeholders aware of different needs of men and women in the context of development and planning.

Discussions on the vision for a Kosovo-wide Master and Strategic Plan rallied a number of different stakeholders, including women's organizations. Women's organizations emphasized the need for women and girls to have access to education, healthcare, jobs and safe mobility. Better job opportunities can break women's dependence on external assistance or income generated by men.

Translating these demands into spatial and strategic priorities is the task of the planners. Yet this can only be done once such priorities and needs have been articulated.

An understanding of the importance of these issues prompted the international community to lobby for and assist in training Municipal Gender Officers. UN-HABITAT's capacity building activities encouraged the incorporation of Municipal Gender Officers into Municipal Planning Teams. These planning teams are multi-disciplinary planning bodies operating at the local level and are responsible for planning. In most of the municipalities of Kosovo, the process of developing municipal and urban plans has been started but their progress varies greatly. Understanding the needs and priorities of women in relation to public spaces, such as green areas, markets, parking lots, safety while walking on busy roads, public transit, and the use of streets as playgrounds by children is of critical importance for Municipal Planning Teams.

The development of gender-sensitive urban indicators and sex-disaggregated data is needed to measure change and the impact of urban decisions on men and women. Such indicators should be developed for solid waste collection, water and sanitation, and access to income generating activities such as urban or peri-urban agriculture. Similarly, comparing attendance rates of boys and girls in secondary and post-secondary education will show disparities in access to education and the need to rectify this problem which is critical for Kosovo where 75% of the population is under 35 years of age.

So far the work of Municipal Planning Teams has focussed on preparing initial documents for the urban consultation process so that municipalities can follow the UN-HABITAT's Urban Planning and Management Framework. It is a step-by-step methodology for municipal planners. Some Municipal Planning Teams are close to completing the process. They are closely cooperating with civil society organizations and gaining an understanding of the gender aspect in planning. UN-HABITAT also trains women, youth and other civil society organizations in strategic

local development planning and encourages them to effectively voice their concerns during urban consultation events. This reinforces the planning process. Below is an example of an organisation active in one of the informal settlements in Prishtina.

Women of Kalabria Lobby for Services

Kalabria is an informal settlement of some 10,000 inhabitants located on one of the hills surrounding Prishtina, the capital of Kosovo. Informal settlements are a common feature of the Balkans. This settlement started to develop in the late 1980's, but its rapid growth began after the military conflict in 1999 when Prishtina witnessed an unprecedented influx of people moving from rural areas to cities in search of better jobs, quality of life and services. Both the UN and Kosovo's Ministry of Environment and Planning prioritised bringing informal settlements up to standards and developing urban and municipal plans for them. Kosovo signed the Vienna Declaration

the area. Electricity cables hang low over the roofs, roads are narrow and winding, and they sometimes end suddenly — blocked by somebody's house. Water comes from drilled wells, sewage is diverted into shallow ditches and families are responsible for their own garbage disposal. Often they bring their garbage to the city in private cars and simply dump it in an empty lot, or if they are more responsible, they deposit it in a garbage container. In case of fire, the chances for a fire engine to arrive at the right time and at the right place are close to nil. Instead people 'knock on wood' and pray to be spared. It is evident that a detailed plan to regulate the space and access to services is badly needed and citizens realize this.

The women's organization, Kalabria, has been active in the area since the beginning. Its name indicates how strongly the group identifies itself with the inhabitants and their problems. The organization started with a literacy project, as many women who moved to the settlement from rural areas were illiterate. To

allow women to participate in the informal literacy classes Kalabria set up a children's club equipped with toys for children to play with while their mothers and sometimes grandmothers were learning to read and write. A health centre, a kindergarten and a school were some of their most immediate necessities. Activists of Kalabria took the initiative to organize neighbourhood meetings with women about these issues. All inhabitants — men and women — helped build the school. They raised the funds through donations. Volunteers then cleared the area around the finished school. A health centre is under construction but proper services are still pending.

UN-HABITAT invited Kalabria together with some 58 other civil society organizations from across Kosovo, to a series of workshops which covered issues such as a strategic approach to local development planning, advocacy, and par-

ticipatory budgeting. Kalabria is committed to lobbying to improve their quality of life. They understand the importance of civil society organizations to actively participate in the planning process. They also realize that a more innovative approach to distribute municipal budgets can help men and women, boys and girls in their area to have their needs addressed in the not too distant future.

"These workshops made us understand the need for active participation in municipal planning activities and gave us new ideas on how to approach local government officials more effectively. Following the workshop on advocacy, we took a leading role to prepare a petition to request the municipality to provide a plot where the kindergarten could be built. We are waiting for a response on this issue. Learning about participatory budgeting and how we can be part of decision-making processes and influence the distribution of public money, is a great and new idea for all of us. We are going to use it." said Ms. Sevdije Bunjaku, director of Kalabria. ❧

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Empty plots and local streams serve as garbage dumping sites.

committing the signatories to find solutions for Informal Settlements by 2015. The Ministry is taking an active part in the Stability Pact meetings devoted to achieve this goal.

The houses in Kalabria are usually well built, made of bricks, with roofs made of tin and with nice facades. But there is no access to services because the land was originally designated for agriculture and there was no master plan for

Further Reading:

UN-Habitat Debate, a publication of UN Habitat. You can download it from: www.unhabitat.org/hd/default.asp Or, write to habitat.debate@unhabitat.org or Info. Services Section (Habitat Debate), UN-Habitat, P.O. Box 30030 GPO, 00100 Nairobi, Kenya.

The Urban Management Programme — an Interactive CD-ROM 2005 is available from: hq.unhabitat.org/cdrom/ump/CD/movie.html. It contains publications, reports and information from the UMP Global and Regional Offices.

Cultural Collision

The Challenge of Planning for the Public Spatial Needs of Muslim Women

Susan Thompson and Carolyn Whitten

Australia is a multi-cultural nation. Immigration has been a significant contributor to the country's population growth since 1788 when the white colonists invaded the land. Since then some nine million people have settled in Australia. Muslims have been coming to Australia since the tenth century. However, it was not until after the Second World War and the demise of the White Australia Policy, that they arrived in large numbers. There are now well in excess of 280,000 Muslims in Australia, with people born in Lebanon accounting for most followers of Islam in the 2001 national census. The most populous states of Australia, New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, are home to the majority of Muslims. Islam is the third largest religion in Australia, after Christianity and Buddhism.

Despite being a culturally and religiously diverse nation, those of non-Christian faiths are often viewed with suspicion and outside mainstream Australia. Muslims have been targeted in this way both before September 11 and even more so since. There is a long history of community opposition to the establishment of non-Christian places of public worship, particularly Muslim Mosques. Racist abuse has also been reported against Muslims and the new 'anti-terrorist' federal legislation is putting the Islamic community under continuing scrutiny. Even more concerning are the recent race riots on Sydney's beaches, which have shocked and dismayed the entire community.

This is the backdrop to the research reported here.¹ Our study examines Muslim women's public spatial requirements in Sydney, focusing on localities where many Muslims have settled. The project relates to the broader concern of all contemporary urban planners in multi-cultural democracies — the increasingly

complex task of accommodating the needs of culturally diverse communities in respectful and appropriate ways.

The planner today works with two key assumptions: that every person should have equitable access to public spaces and that everyone should be able to maintain her/his cultural beliefs and practices. Our research indicates that these assumptions do not necessarily hold for all in the community, despite the multi-cultural rhetoric of equity and fairness. Further, this study exposes some important dilemmas for planners trying to create socially and culturally sustainable communities where everyone has a sense of belonging. Without this there is personal and group alienation, diminished physical and psychological well-being and a lack of social cohesion.

Public Space

Public space in Australia and other western countries is generally an area which is in public ownership and accessible by all. It is the space away from the home where we come into contact with people outside our family and friendship networks. However, in practice, public spaces are not accessible by everyone. Today more and more public spaces are being privatized and controlled so that only those considered to be 'acceptable' can enter and use the space. Retail malls are one such example of a pseudo public space where people are monitored and told to leave or prevented from entering if their behaviour is deemed unacceptable. Increasingly, in these spaces it is unlikely that a wide range of groups and individuals will interact.

Women have not always been accorded free access to the public realm, although today in theory, they have unrestricted access. In reality however, women across the globe experience inequality in accessing

public space. Women's fear of violence inhibits their use of public space, especially at night when there is a heightened perception that deserted and poorly lit spaces are dangerous and accordingly, must be avoided.

Muslims and Public Space

The way in which public and private space is understood in Islamic societies differs from western countries. Writers in this area tell us that public space is generally considered to be 'male space', and can be defined by the absence of women. The domestic environment is associated with females. The way in which public and private spaces are perceived is largely dependent on the Islamic notions of *mahran* and *na-mahran*. *Mahran* refers to a category of people of the opposite sex with whom marriage is explicitly forbidden. For a woman this includes her father and brothers and for a man, his mother and sisters. *Na-mahran* are those of the opposite sex whose kinship does not represent any impediment for marriage. For practicing Muslims, the sharing of space with people who are *na-mahran* is problematic. Spaces which are defined as restricted for both men and women are where one is likely to encounter, meet or interact with *na-mahran* people. These spaces can be located both within the home and neighbourhood.

Accordingly, for Muslims, spaces are not defined as 'public' or 'private'. Rather, they are differentiated on the basis of who is occupying the space at any particular time. What might be a private home can change to be a semi-public space when *na-mahran* guests arrive. Conversely, when women entertain their female friends, who are *na-mahran* to the males of the household, men are disallowed entry into the interior spaces of their own homes.

In spaces outside the home there is a much greater chance of meeting *na-mahran* and as a result, women must protect themselves from unwanted attention. In many Muslim countries women abide by *pardah*, which involves dressing modestly by covering the body. Movement in the public sphere can also be constrained for women who typically go about their business quickly and do not loiter in public places. Men tend to be the only users of major streets, open air squares and teashops, where they socialise and exchange information. Physical barriers designed into buildings segregate men and women thereby enabling these places to be used by everyone. Examples include mosques, restaurants, hospitals and shopping centers. Public transport can also have separate compartments for women and men.

The idea of public spaces being open to all is at odds with the notion of public space in Islamic societies. The street, square and park are not necessarily 'public'; nor is the home exclusively a 'private space'. While the female spends most of her time in the domestic environment with other women and children, males are denied this intimacy and are forbidden ready access to the homes of other men.

Muslim Women's Use of Public Space in Sydney

As planners working in multi-cultural and multi-faith communities, we wanted to understand the implications of these very different notions of public space. Interviews were conducted with Muslim women from the inner west region of Sydney where their community is concentrated. Discussions were also held with staff at local councils, migrant resource centres, mosques and local police stations. In all, 23 Muslim women from diverse backgrounds participated. They ranged in age from approximately 16 to 50 years. The women were born in or had lived in Australia, Afghanistan, England, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon and Turkey. Some wore the hijab, some did not, and they held varying interpretations of Islam in terms of how it played out in their lives.

Perceptual Comfort in the Use of Public Spaces

The women told us that they did not feel a sense of belonging to the broader Australian community, despite this country being their home. They linked this perception to individual experiences of discrimination, prejudice and abuse. Disturbing stories of being shoved while waiting on train platforms, told to go back to their own country, and having their hijab tugged and pulled off their bodies were relayed. The women also reported being affected by popular opinions expressed in the media that Muslims are to be feared and not trusted. This reinforced their feelings of otherness, discomfort and not belonging. Such feelings have magnified since the events of September 11 and more recently by terrorist attacks in Indonesia and London. The women's perception of otherness underpins a significant aspect of their behaviour in public space, as well as their attitudes towards it.

Younger women spoke of their reluctance to voice their spatial needs to local councils for fear of being negatively targeted. There was a feeling that whenever any service was made available for Muslim women it always gets taken away. Even when they created their own spaces, there were often many objections and complaints from the non-Muslim community. This has been reported by others around the issue of Muslim communities' attempts to construct mosques in Australia. All interviewees talked about men hanging around shopping centres and main streets as unsettling. In some cases, women curtailed their shopping activities, which in turn meant less time sharing female company outside the home. Women's concerns have been exacerbated by the growing trend of providing outdoor seating for cafés on public footpaths. Ironically, the provision of street cafés is

often initiated by planners to enliven a street and to enhance its safety. In this case it has served to render the public sphere much less useable and comfortable for Muslim women.

Use of Public Facilities to Achieve a Healthy Body

Islam encourages physical activity as an important part of the Muslim's responsibility in caring for the body and pursuing a healthy lifestyle. The women told us that they wanted to participate in physical exercise but Islamic rules for sex segregation and modest attire made this difficult in Australia. Gym activities and swimming were identified as particularly desirable recreational pursuits.



An Outdoor Eating Area in Auburn in Sydney's West. The presence of men on the street and in outdoor cafés is problematic for Muslim women.

Swimming facilities in Sydney are rarely suitable for Muslim women's physical exercise requirements. Swimming is part of the Australian psyche — the focus of family activities throughout the long hot summer and a skill that children routinely attain as part of their education. Despite lobbying by the Muslim Women's Association, there has been limited success in shifting government attitudes on this issue. Even in areas where there is a very high Muslim population there has been a strong reluctance to accommodate 'women only' use of public pools. The general community displays little tolerance of exclusive use of swimming pools by Muslim women despite water polo teams and elite sporting clubs being granted such privileges.

Gyms provide an opportunity for exer-

cise and unlike swimming pools a number of female only gyms are now available. This type of facility has met the needs of some of the Muslim women in this study. Nevertheless, these spaces can be problematic in that men are not always absent. To overcome this, a gym catering to the special needs of Muslim women was established in Sydney in 2002. However, like the issue of exclusive use of swimming facilities, this gym has been criticized publicly. This was in spite of the facility being granted an exemption under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act (1977). This was justified to help Arabic women get much needed exercise to combat high rates of diabetes, cholesterol and heart disease.

Recreational facilities can be adjusted with relatively minor modifications to accommodate the needs of Muslim women. The 1st Australian National Muslim Women's conference in 1992 recommended 'women-only' time and special programs in places screened from public viewing to enable Muslim women to participate in different physical exercise activities. The Association stressed the need for local authorities to respond to the needs of Islamic communities and to show good will and cooperation in providing for their requirements.

Muslim Women and Public Space: addressing needs and equity

This study presents some perplexing questions and dilemmas for urban planners working in multi-cultural and multi-faith communities. The ways in which cultural difference has traditionally been accommodated cannot sustain contemporary communities. As we show here, planning systems continue to struggle to respond appropriately to cultural diversity. The values and norms of the dominant culture are typically embedded in planning legislation, and sometimes in the attitudes of the planners themselves. And while it must be acknowledged that planning for pluralist, postmodern societies is difficult and complex, the task that presents itself to the planner today cannot be ignored. Long held assumptions which drove policy and practice have to be abandoned for new and innovative approaches.

Planners have to better appreciate the notion of 'multiple publics' and that not everyone has equivalent needs. In addition, planners must develop a more sophisticated understanding of public space. Western notions are clearly not universal and providing space for everyone's use all the time may need to be re-thought. Indeed, excluding some groups from selected spaces during particular periods may ensure a more inclusive and fairer society. The assumptions of community homogeneity, which typically underpin contemporary planning, can have negative effects on certain members of that community (in this case, Muslim women). Planners can adhere to the assumption which holds western (non-Muslim) culture as superior and claims that other cultures should adjust to western cultural norms. Alternatively, the planner can adopt a broader conceptualization of cultural difference, acknowledging that different civilizations have variant cultures which need to be understood within their own terms. So while in western ideology it may be judged as sexist and iniquitous to provide an exclusive space for Muslim women, it is not so in Islamic cultural terms. Accordingly, if planners reject the need for Muslim women to have their own spaces at any time, such a decision can harm Muslim women more than it is likely to benefit them. It will serve to prevent Muslim women from undertaking activities such as recreation, which is a right that the dominant community takes for granted. Rather than judging an approach as immediately unacceptable because it does not meet with long term practices, a more open process is warranted to address the variant needs that exist in contemporary multi-faith and multi-cultural societies. With understanding of very different cultural contexts, gestures of compromise which balance needs and preferences can be made to meet everyone's requirements in an equitable and sustainable way.

Conclusion

Planning for multi-cultural communities is a complex process requiring understanding and a willingness to consider innovative approaches to ensure that all citizens feel they belong. Built environment professionals, whether they are planners managing

existing spaces or designers shaping new ones, can initiate processes and strategies that help to accommodate many voices, thereby fostering the emergence of an inclusive and comfortable space. Modifications to existing facilities to accommodate diversity are often easy to implement if there is a coordination of providers together with good will to enact change. Just as Muslims are not likely to fully integrate into the dominant Australian Anglo-Celtic culture, others due to their age, gender or ability, are unable to participate in every aspect of city life. Nevertheless, they do not face the social and cultural discrimination which is the common experience of Muslims. Planning processes and practices in contemporary multi-cultural communities must be cognisant of these realities and open to innovative and creative ways of ensuring that spaces meet the needs of all citizens. ❧

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Carolyn Whitten is a Town Planner for North Lanarkshire Council, Scotland. Development Projects Team.

1 This study was undertaken in 2003 as a final year thesis project for the Bachelor of Town Planning degree at the University of NSW, Sydney, by then student, now town planner, Carolyn Whitten, supervised by Planning Program academic, Susan Thompson. A more academic presentation of this work was delivered at the Second State of Australian Cities Conference in December, 2005. The paper can be found at www.griffith.edu.au/conference/soac2005/.

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Climate Protection

What's Gender Got to Do with It?

Gotelind Alber and Ulrike Roehr

How is climate policy linked to gender justice? How can local governments promote equal participation of women and men in municipal climate protection? A recent project of the Climate Alliance of European Cities, a collaborative effort with 10 major cities from Germany, Italy, Sweden and Finland, funded by the European Commission and the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth addressed these questions.

Recent European studies on the perceptions of climate change suggest that women consider climate change impacts to be more severe, and they are more sceptical regarding the effectiveness of current climate policies in solving the problem. Therefore, women usually argue for more effective climate policy, and are more willing to change to a more climate-friendly lifestyle. In contrast, men tend to put their trust in scientific and technical solutions. This suggests that the gender dimension plays a role in climate change policy, and that women would set different priorities for climate protection. Moreover, there are strong indications that policies and measures to mitigate, and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, are not gender neutral.

For example, given that in the European Union, on average, women earn 25 per cent less than men, and 27 per cent of single mothers are living below poverty level, are these different preconditions taken into account in the design of policies and measures? Are circumstances of caregivers of children and the elderly, who are also employed, adequately reflected in the design of climate protection measures?

Climate protection policy areas (energy policy, transportation planning, urban planning) tend to be male-dominated. What is the effect on measures and policies if they are planned from the viewpoint of one gender?

The project "Climate for Change — Gender Equality and Climate Policy",

supported by the European Commission and the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, was the first attempt to link local climate policy and gender equality. The project focussed on assisting local authorities to promote equal participation of women and men in climate change decision-making, to achieve a balanced local climate policy.

Gender and climate policy in 10 cities: organisation of the project

Ten major cities in four European countries were partners in the project "Climate for Change": Berlin, Dresden,

Frankfurt am Main, Munich (Germany); Ferrara, Genoa, Naples, Venice (Italy); Lahti (Finland); and Malmö (Sweden). The project was supported by an expert on gender and climate change, Ulrike Roehr from LIFE e.V. / genanet. Regional coordinators were the Union of Baltic Cities for Scandinavia and the Alleanza per il Clima Italia for Italy. The lead partner, the Climate Alliance of European Cities (see box) whose Secretariat is located in Frankfurt (Germany), was responsible for the overall coordination.

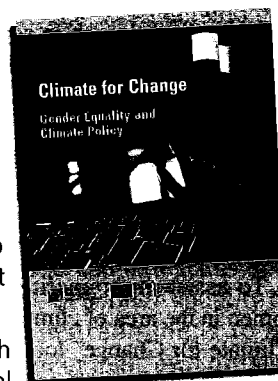
Data surveys of the gender balance in climate policy at local and national levels were prepared, and obstacles to women's

The Climate Alliance of European Cities

The Climate Alliance is a partnership of European local authorities with indigenous peoples of the tropical forest with the common goal of protecting the global climate. With some 1300 members, the Climate Alliance is the largest thematic city network. Membership involves entering a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, contribute to the preservation of tropical forests, and support indigenous rainforest peoples.

The Climate Alliance Secretariat works closely with the member municipalities as well as with national and regional co-ordinators and contact points, NGOs, local citizens' initiatives and other stakeholders.

The Climate Alliance strives for a comprehensive approach to climate change policy, and intends to work towards sustainable development. This involves more equitable relations between North and South, human rights, and social justice. Gender issues are increasingly taken into consideration in the work of the Climate Alliance.



participation were investigated. We looked at the priorities of local climate protection activities, and whether the prevalence of technological approaches were barriers to the participation of women. Would more emphasis on communication and collaboration affect the level of women's participation?

Specific project tasks were:

- To analyse the conditions for the participation of women in formal and informal decisions in the area of climate protection;
- To develop methods and instruments to improve the participation of women, examining experiences in various European countries;
- To sensitise local decision-makers in climate policy to a balanced participation of women;
- To instigate discussions on the issue, providing supporting materials and information resources;
- To enhance city networks' capacity to improve equality of opportunity, and to contribute to a "climate for change"

Findings and outcomes of the project

Data collection, interviews and discussions in the pilot cities during the course of the project inherently helped to raise awareness of gender and climate change policy. The data supported the assumptions: in all cities — women are underrepresented in areas of climate change policy, though in some cities, the proportion of women in the larger administration is greater than that of men. In all areas, women in decision-making positions is still substantially fewer. This is true even for Scandinavian cities which have already implemented equal opportunity policies and measures.

To assist municipalities to promote women in the area of climate protection, a "Climate for Change" tool kit was developed. It comprises a check list, an overview on relevant data, facts and arguments, and a guidebook describing relevant instruments and tools to promote a gender balance in decision-making positions. A leaflet and a poster help with awareness raising on gender and climate policy.

At the outset, a "gender check" is recommended. Questions such as "Do you

consider the gender balance for nominations for committees and other bodies?" and "Do you encourage male employees to use parental leave?" are not immedi-

ately connected with climate change; however, they are starting points for improvements in the participation of women in climate protection departments.

Gender Check for Executives

With this "Gender Check" we would like you entice you to take a look at your department through a pair of "gender spectacles." If the answers to the questions are genuinely honest, the check will indicate the successes and also the possible weaknesses in equality of gender in the department you head. For greater in-depth information to address the subject, we recommend you and your staff take a look at the materials of the tool kit "Climate for Change."

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Do you believe that women would set different priorities in climate protection than men?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the number of women in decision-making positions in your area count for at least 1/3?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you think that part-time employment for leading positions makes sense and is feasible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you encourage your male staff to take time out for child care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you encourage your female staff to take part in continuing education measures for executive assignments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your department implement "mentoring programmes" to support women in leading positions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you think that people in executive/ leadership positions should have to complete a course in "gender training"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you think women have to be better than men in order to be acknowledged in positions of leadership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In planning/hearings do you explicitly seek the advice of gender experts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you aim at gender parity with your various bodies or do you require other organisations to nominate women and men?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you ensure that plans and measures relating to climate protection are assessed for the possible differences in their impacts on men and women (gender analysis)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you make sure that all publications from your department are written in a language that is gender sensitive?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other questions more specifically relate to climate change policy, e.g. whether the impacts of policies and measures on men and women are analysed, and whether publications addressing consumers use gender-sensitive language.

Beyond reflections about structures, and approaches, the tool kit aims to inspire action. Numerous policies and instruments are explained and illustrated with case studies from authorities and corporations. More traditional measures to promote women are complemented by newer tools.

In the city of Malmoe, gender issues are a regular agenda item: Are gender experts to be involved during the preparation of the new climate policy action programme? How to formulate a job posting? How to design a new leaflet promoting energy saving in private households? — These measures can contribute to the inclusion of gender perspectives in climate change policy.

The city of Berlin is currently developing a standard approach to check draft decisions against gender equality criteria. Similar to the routine of checking draft decisions for their impacts on the budget, they are now assessed for their consequences for the gender equality policy of the city. To apply gender budgeting to the climate change departments would be even more progressive. In the cities of Munich and Genova, for instance, the municipal budget is assessed for benefits to women and men. However, this instrument has been mainly applied to areas such as youth or sports.

To communicate results to a wider audience and motivate others for action, award schemes can be useful. A more systematic approach would perhaps enhance and extend eco audits to achieve a sustainability audit. Social factors would necessarily be included in the awarding of a certificate as a "gender-equality-friendly" authority or company.

A change of climate in gender relationships?

The pilot cities expressed varying reactions to the linking of gender and climate protection. On a political level, the projects received strong support, and the results

were studied with great interest. Reactions were more hesitant on an administrative level, and administrators had more difficulty making the connection between gender equity and climate protection.

Nonetheless, people registered the small percentage of women participants and the bias in addressing target groups, and started to discuss these observations. Thereby, the project contributed to making the subject of gender and climate protection more widely known. It is questionable if it has also become more widely accepted. We need more results and insights from gender-aware climate pro-

Gender Impact Assessment Protection Measures/Activities

All planned measures and activities pertaining to climate protection are assessed to determine whether they will have a different impact on women and men in their social roles or whether they hinder or promote equal opportunity for women and men.

The gender impact assessment (or gender analysis) is usually carried out in several steps: in the first step, the gender relevance of a measure is determined. If the measure is not gender relevant, this is noted; if it is gender relevant or gender relevance cannot be conclusively determined, an in-depth analysis is conducted. In a third step, alternative proposals are developed.

The gender impact assessment leads to a qualitative improvement of environmental policy measures. However, in isolated cases, the objectives can be contradictory, and as a result, the environmental protection (or climate protection) and equal opportunity goals have to be weighed against each other. In all cases, the gender analysis/gender impact assessment aims to prevent measures from having an unintentional negative effect on gender parity.

tection research, as well as concrete examples and experience of practical implementation in climate protection politics at local and national levels.

The project partners voiced the clear expectation that the Climate Alliance would take further steps to implement gender mainstreaming in local-authority climate protection, and support local authorities in the implementation. Furthermore they expressed a wish that the city network should better integrate gender into its work. For example, in conferences there should be a gender balance in the composition of speakers and pan-

How to Link the Awarding of Subsidies to Gender Equality/ Mainstreaming

All subsidies awarded in the area of climate protection are bound to the commitment to

- a) implementing gender mainstreaming (gender equality) both in content and in personnel policies and
- b) gathering and evaluating all data on a gender-differentiated basis.

This instrument creates the groundwork for making the proportion of women in executive positions relevant to climate protection, an issue, even outside the municipal administration. In this respect, environmental associations do not normally prepare equal opportunity plans for women. By linking the awarding of funds to the existence of equal opportunity plans, the recipients of funds are forced to discuss how the objective of gender equality or gender mainstreaming is to be implemented in their own organisation or company.

At the same time the collection and evaluation of data on a gender-differentiated basis will help remedy the lack of data related to the situation of women and men in matters of climate protection.

els, and the issue of gender and climate change should be repeatedly put on the agenda. In a resolution, participants urged the Climate Alliance, and also all member municipalities, national governments and the European Commission, to mainstream gender into climate policy.

Does a higher participation of women lead to better climate policy?

At the beginning of the project the question was raised whether a larger number of women in decision-making positions in (municipal) climate protection would make a difference in the nature of climate policy. Because of the focus of the project's funding — the increase of women in decision-making positions — the answer to this question was beyond the scope of the project. However, both aspects are strongly connected. Beyond equal opportunities and gender equality as the underlying argument for the project, partners felt that the assumption that women would have a different approach to climate protection, would be important in arguing for an

increased percentage of women.

Because of their diverse social roles, needs, interests and responsibilities, women have other priorities than men, e.g. for health aspects of climate change, for a stronger regard for future generations. Women tend to believe that technology can deliver part, but not the sole solution for climate change.

Whether women would act differently in a decision-making position, still remained unknown at the end of the 15 month long project. However, project partners agreed that a balanced participation would lead to a more complete perspective, would better take into account the diversity of social groups (children, elderly, migrants etc.) and their life situations. This would consequently improve policies and measures and acceptance by citizens, an important aspect of climate change policy as one of humankind's biggest challenges!

Gotelind Alber is director of the Climate Alliance and has initiated the project "Climate for Change."

Ulrike Roehr is director of genanet — focal point gender, justice, sustainability, which aims to integrate gender justice within environmental and sustainability policies. Her primary areas of responsibility are gender issues in energy and climate change. She was involved in the project Climate for Change as a gender expert.

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Female Migration, Environment, and Quality of Life in Mexico City

Haydea Izazola and Alan Jowett

Mexico City is one of the most densely populated and polluted cities in the world. According to recent estimates, there are almost 20 million inhabitants within a 1,500 square kilometre area. Nearly 35 million tons of greenhouse gases and 3.5 million tons of pollutants are emitted every year from 3.5 million vehicles and 53,500 factories. Twenty thousand tons of waste is produced every day and management and recycling capacity is limited. In addition, Mexico City faces large challenges in the drinking water supply for the entire population — especially the poor.

Following World War II, industrialization through import substitution directed large flows of migrants from the rural areas to the nation's capital. Due to a demand for labour in the service sector, women — especially the young and unskilled — outnumbered males in this migration flow. Although they had played a key role in coping and survival strategies of peasant families who were affected by the limited resources for agricultural activity, women were considered to be passive agents who, due to their gender, had no voice in the family decisions.

Nevertheless, women in Mexico — particularly in urban areas — experienced important transformations in cultural, social, economic, and demographic trends, giving them a greater say in family decisions. Between 1970 and 2000, the mean female education increased from 3.1 to 7.3 years and women's participation in the labour force grew to 31 per cent from less than 20 per cent. The national fertility rate dropped to 2.4 children in 2000 from over seven children in 1960.

In light of a decline in the fertility rate, rural-urban migration played a key role in the growth of Mexico City until the mid-1980s, when the city experienced

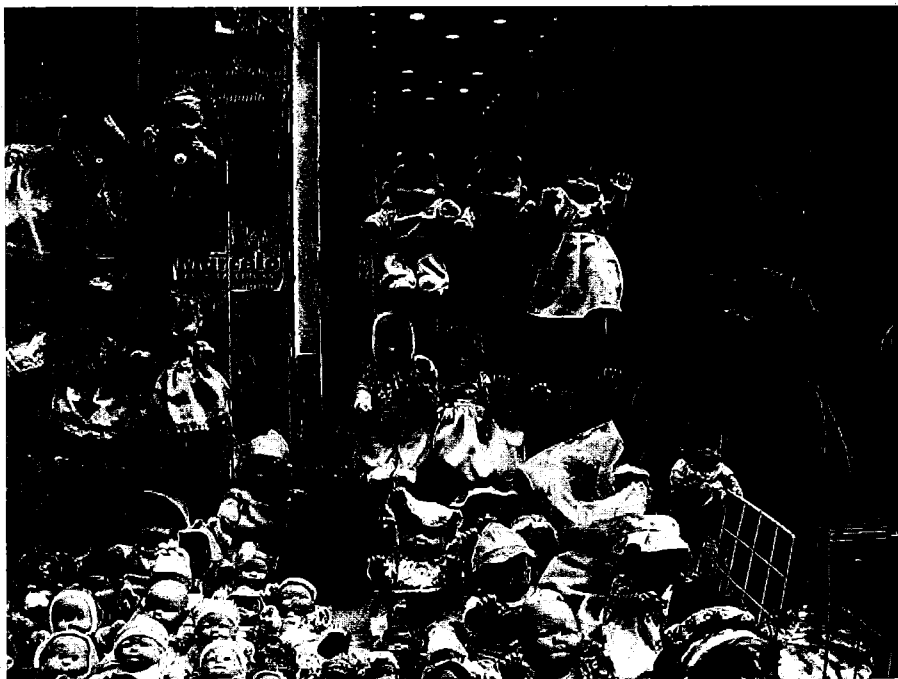
a negative net migration: more people left the city than those who immigrated. Several factors contributed to this situation: decentralization policies; the opening of the economy to international trade; growth of off-shore industries in smaller cities, especially near the U.S. border; the development of tourist cities in the south; and the poor environmental conditions in Mexico City caused by intensive industrialization and urbanization.

Despite the fact that, according to conventional parameters, Mexico City exhibits some of the better living conditions in the country, everyday conditions are far from ideal. In 2000, the Human Development Index (HDI), used as a measure of living conditions, was calculated for the 2,443 Mexican municipalities. The highest rank of 0.93 belongs to the Benito Juárez municipality in Mexico City, with a HDI similar to those of the most developed

countries in the world. Nevertheless, quality of life involves more than income, education, and life expectancy. Environmental factors, both physical and social, play an important role in shaping the perception of quality of life on a daily basis.

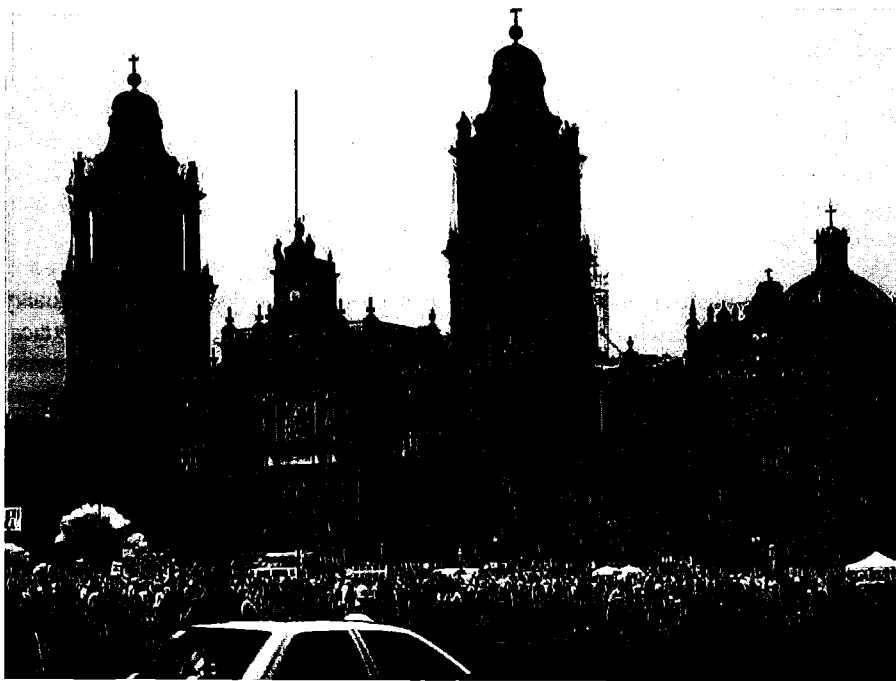
In addition to the ecological deterioration, recurring economic crises experienced over the last twenty years have aggravated structural problems such as unemployment, poverty, and crime. These social phenomena exacerbate the living conditions of the majority of the people and affect their perceptions of the quality of their lives, which vary according to their positions within their household and the socio-economic structure.

Children, elderly people, and pregnant women are most vulnerable to ecological deterioration. According to traditional gender roles, women are directly responsible for the well-being and health of their



Mexican migrant women working in the informal sector.

HAYDEA IZAZOLA



The cathedral in Mexico City reflects the colonial heritage.

families. As a result, the extra work load and the emotional and economic burden of having a sick family member affect the quality of life. The burden varies according to the family structure and the woman's role within it: being the head of the household is a greater strain than being in an extended household where the burdens can be shared.

Other social and economic factors have considerable effects too. The chaotic transit conditions in the city make transportation to and from school, work, and shopping difficult and stressful, especially for low-income families. The exposure to violent crime on public transportation, including rape, is much higher than in private vehicles, although recently many have died defending their cars from thieves. Kidnapping has become a common practice, affecting all sectors of society, not just affluent members.

In light of the harsh living conditions in Mexico City, women's role in the family has been transformed into a proactive and even reactive one, making some of them protagonists and leaders in designing coping strategies, including the very radical one of leaving the city. Out-migration to the smaller cities as a way of guarantee-

ing the well-being of their families is increasingly common, especially among middle-class families, in spite of coming at the expense of their personal and professional development.

Between 1995 and 2000, Mexico City experienced a migration balance which points out a contradictory situation: it continues to attract a poor, unskilled rural population where there is still a large proportion of young women, but some families in the initial stages of the life cycle, with higher education and income levels, have left in search of friendlier environments.

Qualitative research carried out in the 1990s showed that women react according to their priorities and their perception of their quality of life, as shaped by socialization processes and gender prescriptions. Different aspects assume varying degrees of importance when it comes to migration outcomes. For some — especially the poorest and least educated — their priority may be guaranteeing an income to sustain their families, while neglecting environmental deterioration. For more educated women, the goal in life may be professional development, and Mexico City favours highly skilled female labour. But this is not always the case.

Some women fitting the same profile will, in spite of or as a result of the empowerment process, decide to leave the city, but usually return to more traditional roles within the household.

All this in turn raises other questions. Do out-migration processes from Mexico City have an effect on the environmental conditions? In a sense, they do: upper- and middle-income families in developing countries have similar consumption patterns to their counterparts in the developed countries. These patterns are more resource-intensive, and their impact on the environment is greater than those of the low-income population. Water use, garbage, and air pollution emissions are higher among affluent households, whereas the use of limited assets among low-income families is far more efficient. Even more notable, larger households among the low-income population register economies of scale in both the use of space and natural resources, making marginal consumption less significant. The constant demand for air, water, and soil might slow down with the departure of middle-class families.

What might be the effect of out-migration on the destination areas? One might suggest that the arrival of better educated families, sensitive to the bad environmental conditions that led them to leave, might be a plus factor in preventing ecological deterioration in mid-sized cities. At the same time, it might also have a negative effect, as they carry with them unsustainable consumption patterns that could impose a heavier burden on the limited resources of these cities. The demand for spacious housing could also lead to unsustainable land use patterns, as has been the experience in some of the mid-sized cities to which Mexico City out-migrants have fled.

For women involved in the migratory flows to and from Mexico City, there is another contradictory situation: those who arrive in search of better incomes and jobs perceive a better quality of life than in their often pristine places of origin; on the other hand, those who do flee find the better quality of life they were looking for in their less populated and less stressful des-



Young rural women migrate in search of income to support their families.

tinations, even though crime or environmental conditions are often not that much better than in Mexico City.

These arguments are in no way conclusive. They simply illustrate the complexity of the relationship between migration, the environment, and sustainable development in Mexico City, as seen from a gender perspective. There is an urgent need to include gender constraints in future research, par-

ticularly those that make some women more likely to migrate to and from the large urban centres. There is an even greater need to design indicators of urban sustainability that reflect not only the broader economics and health of a city, but also the way in which women and men from different social and economic backgrounds experience everyday life. ☞

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Women and Community Safety

A Retrospect and Prospect

Carolyn Whitzman

In a Montreal hotel room in late 1989, a dozen women held an angry discussion. They were at the first UN-sponsored international conference on Local Governance and Crime Prevention, and gender was not an issue on the official agenda. There was a great deal of focus on young men at risk for committing 'crime', who were described as low income, often from visible minorities within their nation of settlement, with poor educational backgrounds and job prospects. But without any gender analysis, the crimes of violence in homes and within families were not being discussed. Violence was being treated as an abnormal act of a few deviant individuals, rather than a systemic aspect of every society. The financial and emotional needs of those who wish to escape violent situations were not being addressed as a solution.

The women at that meeting felt that the question of gender is central, not only to extend the public policy discussion on crime prevention and community safety to 'private space', but also to understand who feels comfortable using public space and resources, and who has the power to change public space and how. An analysis was being developed with several origins: Reclaim the Night marches and the development of battered women's shelters and rape crisis centres in relatively wealthy countries, but also experiences of community economic development and local political organizing in marginalized neighbourhoods within both rich and poor countries. People were using international networks, such as *Women and Environments International* magazine, to develop this analysis. The twelve women in that hotel room were all Canadian or European. But their discussion changed things, much as parallel discussions in Kampala and Bogota

would change the understanding of women and community safety around the world.

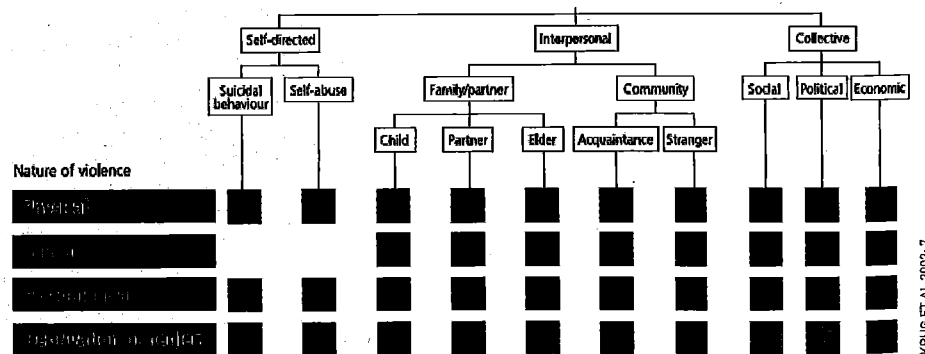
A Developing Analysis on Women and Community Safety

The analysis that was developing, in several different places at once, bore considerable resemblance to the one eventually disseminated through the World Health Organization's (WHO) *World Report on Violence and Health*. A typology of violence, ranging from self-directed and interpersonal acts such as suicide and rape, to collective acts such as racist stereotyping of certain ethnic groups as more likely to commit crime, encompasses both stranger violence 'in the street' and family/partner violence in private space. This violence can be physical and sexual, but can also be psychological (as in the case of harassment) or entail deprivation or neglect. Moreover, collective violence, whether deriving from war or political repression, cannot be separated from individual violence. This model does not create a simplistic division between victims and offenders. Rather, violence is treated as a normalized and systemic aspect of all societies, expressing itself in different contextual situations.

A second component to understanding violence was also well-expressed within the WHO report: an ecological model for understanding the causes of violence. Violence can arise because of individual factors, such as impulsivity, substance use, and a prior history of abuse. Relationship factors can be important, including difficulty in extracting oneself from a violent partner, parent, or caregiver, because of family or financial dependency ties. Peer pressure and norms are also important relationship factors. Violence can arise because of community-level factors, such as high unemployment and sense of marginalization, and widespread social isolation (people not knowing or distrusting their neighbours). Finally, there are societal factors, such as cultural norms that condone or promote violence, or gender or other systemic inequalities. Interventions can be aimed at any of these factors, but the local level of governance is often best suited to coordinate efforts in community settings. These settings can include schools, workplaces, the local police and justice systems, the physical and mental health sectors, employment and financial supports, and housing.

A third element in the analysis is a

Illustration 1. A typology of violence

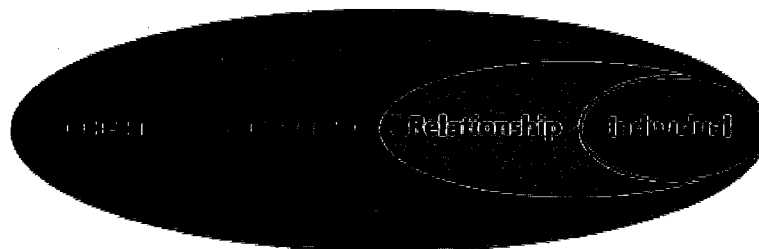


preference for autonomy-building strategies and resources, rather than those which depend on the state to 'protect' victims of violence. This principle is best expressed by one of the initiatives that indirectly arose from that meeting in the Montreal hotel: CAFSU (an acronym for a Montreal-based organization, the Women's Urban Safety Action Committee in English). The notion here is that the people who are most vulnerable to violence can become experts in what is needed to make their communities safer. They need to be listened to, given the resources to help themselves, and empowered to make positive decisions for themselves and the people they care for.

A Genealogy of Initiatives

By the 1980s, there were at least three streams of activity that flowed into the developing analysis on women and community safety. In the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, feminist planners were developing consultation tools, training materials, and guidelines to create safer urban space. The Greater London Council's early 1980s work influenced the development of similar consultation exercises in Toronto, which in turn led to METRAC (the Metro Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children) developing a women's safety audit guide. This guide was a simple tool to allow groups to identify places that seem unsafe and suggest ways to improve them. The guide was then disseminated to other Canadian cities and internationally. The UK-based Women's Design Service has recently used safety audits as a tool to involve local women in urban regeneration projects. Women in Petrovadosk Russia have used safety audits and other planning tools to empower women living in public housing estates to improve their living conditions and set up communal ownership. In Durban South Africa, safety audits have been used to identify places where local women can be hired to improve basic infrastructure needs like sewerage and street lighting. There have also been groups like the Cowichan Valley Safer Futures Project on the west coast of

Illustration 2. An ecological model for understanding violence

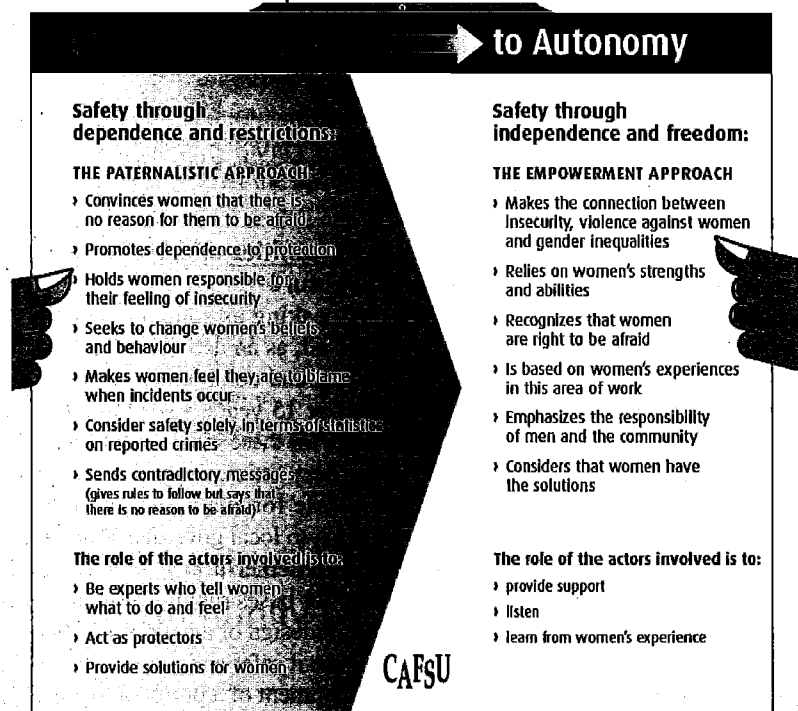


Canada which has extended this urban planning exercise to rural and remote communities. These resources work at the community and individual levels to improve spaces and to improve women's ability to influence local politics and planning issues. They work not only to make public spaces safer, but also to increase access to community spaces that might empower individual women (such as health centres, educational institutions, and employment).

A second stream focuses on community mobilization and advocacy, using a human rights framework. Women's struggles for an adequate livelihood and affordable housing, particularly amongst

women-led households, have been related to violence prevention within poor communities in the United States. These struggles have also influenced the direction of organizing in poor communities in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. For instance, EKTA, a training and resource centre in Tamil Nadu India, works to build women's capacities in local governance and employment programmes as a way to address community, while the City of Bogota has undertaken a broad social and economic development process that encompasses violence prevention. Here, the influence of the Huairou Commission, a coalition of grassroots women's groups set up after the Fourth World Conference

Illustration 3. A model of positive community safety initiatives (from a gendered perspective)



on Women in Beijing China in 1995, has been crucial, as has UNIFEM (the UN organization responsible for gender issues), UN-Habitat (the UN organization responsible for urban governance issues, including community safety), and the International Union of Local Authorities (which has taken on gender mainstreaming, or including gender in all aspects of policy, planning, and programs, at the local governance level). These initiatives work at both the individual and community level to develop greater power and autonomy. The empowerment of women is seen as an essential element of economic and social development, and of ecological sustainability.

A third stream focuses on educational programs and at the societal level, to change the values and laws that allow violence to be acceptable. Here, the links are with peace and anti-militarism movements in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. Raising Voices in Kampala Uganda have worked with legal services and religious leaders, local institutions such as the police and health care services, and media outlets to undertake a broad cross-sectoral attempt to make violence unacceptable. A number of self-protection and assertiveness workshops have been provided free of charge to women in different settings, including emergency housing and workplaces, from Canada to South Africa. There has also been an emphasis on what men can do to prevent violence, recognizing that both men and women can be simultaneously victims and perpetrators of violence. This stream provides an alternative to simplistic 'law and order' solutions, which further marginalize individuals and groups such as economically and culturally marginalized young men

These streams are not mutually exclusive. In fact, ideally, all of these initiatives would create a strong and unified violence prevention culture. In all these cases, ideas have been strengthened through international dissemination, which is a two-way process. Ideas start in one place, are modified in another place, and often return strengthened by these modifications. Increasingly, adoption of the internet as a communications tool has allowed

cross-cultural learning to blossom. Out of that meeting in a Montreal hotel room, women working in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver agreed to keep in touch. While Women and Cities International began as a group of Canadians working on women and community safety initiatives to learn from one another, it quickly evolved into an international initiative. A first conference on making cities and communities safer for women took place in Montreal in 2002, and was followed by a second conference in Bogota in 2004 (illustration 4). From June 19-23, 2006, there will be workshops on women and community safety as part of the Third World Urban Forum in Vancouver. As a preparatory exercise, thousands of people from all 191 countries participated in an internet 'Habitat Jam' from December 1-4, 2005, to exchange information on six priority topics, including safety and security (illustration 5).



Illustration 4. Second seminar on Women and Community Safety, Bogota 2004.

Opportunities and Challenges for the Future

Speaking as someone who has been involved, as an activist and researcher, in women and community safety initiatives for over 15 years, I see three main challenges for these initiatives. First, there has been very little money, interest, and skills available for evaluation, particularly in relation to local governance-related initiatives. Whether it is a 'request stop' program for buses running at night, an ambitious redesign of a park or neighbourhood to make it safer and more inclusive, or the development of a protocol to allow health

professionals to identify and provide better service to victims of violence in the home, there has been considerable success in developing gender-conscious initiatives to prevent violence. But a number of factors have prevented good evaluations from taking place:

- (i) The initial level of violence is difficult to assess at the community level, since police statistics only deal with the tip of the iceberg when it comes to violent incidents, and victimization surveys are infrequent.
- (ii) Cultures of violence are long-term and strongly entrenched in some families, communities, and societies. For instance, it may take a generation to measure the impact of initiatives aimed at parents of young children.
- (iii) There are a lot of intervening variables that prevent really knowing whether a particular program has decreased violence. Even with a 'control site' or population in place, the variables of

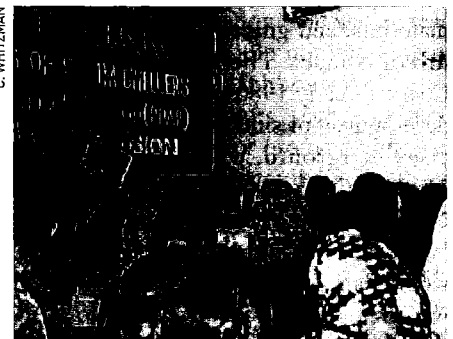


Illustration 5. Habitat Jam meeting, India 2005.

local economy or a particular violent individual or group over time may have huge impacts on a particular program;

- (iv) Perhaps most importantly, there is political resistance to measuring the impact of violence prevention policies at the local governance level, particularly since so many populist policies (from zero tolerance policing to neighbourhood watch to closed circuit television) have proven to be unsuccessful yet politically expedient. To give one example, a measure of success in terms of a domestic violence public education campaign

would be to increase reported crime, but this may have a negative impact on indicators that see 'decreased crime' as a goal.

Having said that, the question of indicators to measure violence across communities and over time is an important one, and evaluation of local governance programs will become a priority in coming years.

Second, many initiatives decline or disappear over time, and their materials and experience are lost to others. The City of Toronto Safe City Committee, with which I worked for over ten years, developed planning guidelines, a grants program, public education materials, conferences and research. However, after a municipal amalgamation and a resurgence of neo-liberalism, the committee was disbanded, the coordinator position lost, and many of the publications became unavailable to the public. A similar situation is now occurring in Montreal. It is difficult to maintain a gendered focus on community safety. Although gender is hardly the only vulnerability or difference factor to keep in mind when analyzing violence (income, ethnicity, proficiency in the majority culture or language, differing abilities, sexuality, and age are also important), it tends to become the 'canary in the coalmine' when it comes to difference. In other words, if an initiative does not consider gender, it usually will fail to consider other grounds of difference as well. There is also the issue of too much reliance on individuals, or individuals

taking too much on themselves. This is hardly unique to women and community safety initiatives, but the tension between 'doing' and 'recording what you are doing' needs to be recognized and addressed to avoid reinventing the wheel.

The third challenge is related to the second. It is the difficulty in establishing and maintaining a truly communicative global network of local initiatives. Much of the dialogue supported by international organizations such as Women in Cities International, the Huairou Commission, UN-Habitat, and the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, takes place in three languages (English, French, and Spanish). Not only is translation costly, but there are nuances of expression in each language that get lost. Also, people in many nations (such as four of the five most populous nations: China, India, Indonesia, Brazil) may be effectively excluded by being forced to operate in their second language. Then there is the difficulty of 'bridging discourses' between people who are passionate about gender and violence prevention, but do not know or care about local governance, or people who live with the daily threats involved in civil war and extreme poverty, and may not have thought about what can be done at the local level to prevent child abuse.

Even in an era of global exercises like Habitat Jam, nothing can replace face to face interaction in small groups. That is why the first and second seminars on Women and Community Safety were so important, and that is what the upcoming

World Urban Forum is all about. International conferences afford a tremendous opportunity to discuss grassroots and local governance initiatives across cultures, to learn from one another, and eventually to develop positive changes that will make this world a less violent and oppressive place. ❧

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Women and Public Facilities in Taiwan

Revising Policies on Public Spaces

Herng-Dar Bih, translated by Susanne Ganz

Space is socially constructed, just like language. The arrangement of space reflects and reinforces gender, ethnicity, and class relations in society. However, teachers and designers in the field have been utterly insensitive to gender. Only after the emergence of the women's movement and feminist thinking did people awaken from their 'gender-blind' consideration of public spaces.

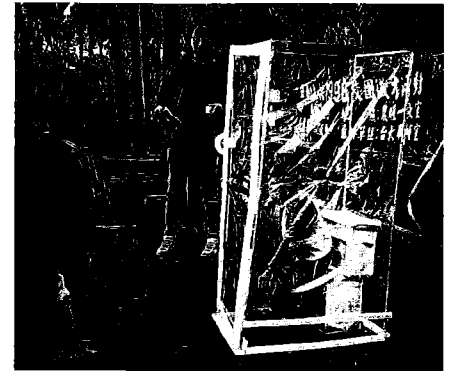
Awakening, the first feminist organization in Taiwan, was founded in 1982. Many other women's groups were formed after the abolishment of martial law in 1987. Since then, 'gender and space' policies were promoted in three ways:

- i) Legislation: for example, the Sexual Assault Prevention Act, the Sexual Harassment Prevention Act, the Gender Equality in Employment Act, and the Gender Equity Education Act were all passed within the last ten years.
- ii) Participation in a Government Committee: the Commission on Women's Rights Promotion issued the Women's Policy Guidelines in Taiwan with a chapter on women's safety in public spaces.
- iii) Social Movement: particularly the Women's Toilet Movement and the campaign for breastfeeding rooms, which I discuss in this article.

Although feminist thinking is still neglected in most educational settings within the fields of urban planning and architecture, the past decade has witnessed significant progress towards more gender-sensitive policies and their implementation in the areas of public restrooms and breastfeeding rooms. These are two factors which greatly affect women's ability to be mobile, to participate in the public domain and to engage in work outside their homes.

The Women's Toilet Movement: Demands for New Policies

In 1996, Wang Ching-ning, the head of the Women's Studies Club at National Taiwan University (NTU), was elected head of the National Taiwan University Student Association on a gender platform that included improving the women's toilets on campus. Also in 1996, Peng Yen-wen, a graduate student at the Graduate Institute of Building and Planning, took an elective independent studio course focusing on toilet planning and design. During the term, Peng, the NTU Student Association, and the university's Research Center for Gender and Space joined hands to conduct a comprehensive survey of the more than 100 campus toilets. They surveyed the number of female and male toilet stalls and the availability of urinals, in addition to assessing floor space, lighting, ventilation, location, flooring, washbasins, coat hooks, waiting space, doors, and barrier-free facilities. Seizing the opportunity of Women's Day on March 8, the student association released its inspection report on campus women's restrooms at the campus entrance. It was called 'The March 8 New Position on Women's Toilets Allows Me to Pee at Ease.' Aside from announcing the survey results, a piece of street theatre was performed which caught the eyes of various television stations and print media. A successful press conference greatly encouraged the survey organizers. On May 4, together with the Coalition of Female Students of Universities, the NTU Student Association and Research Centre for Gender and Space held another press conference in one of the men's rooms at the Taipei Railway Station with the slogan: 'Seizing the Men's Rooms.' On May 5, they held a male versus female urinating competition at Ta-An Forest Park to measure the average time



Taiwan's Women's Toilet Movement banner: "The March 8 New Position on Women's Toilets Allows Me to Pee at Ease."

men and women take at a urinal and water closet. These two events brought to public attention the unequal gender distribution of public restrooms.

The women's toilet movement continued to gain momentum. With strong public pressure, officials at all levels and people's representatives, one after the other, expressed their concern. They demanded that the Construction and Planning Agency, which oversees public restrooms, change the existing regulations. On October 21, 1996, the Ministry of the Interior amended the relevant section of the 'Technical Regulations for Buildings — Building Facilities' and markedly raised the number of women's restrooms in public buildings. Under the new regulations, elementary and junior high schools, for example, have to provide one toilet for every 50 males, one urinal for every 30 males, and one toilet for every 15 females. Under the old regulations the ratio was one toilet for every 35 females.

Since many public restrooms charged a fee to female users, while males did not have to pay anything, protests were held at the Taiwan Motor Transport Company's west-side bus terminal against regulations requir-

ing women users to pay. Soon, women's restrooms at highway rest stops no longer charged female travelers for toilet use.

As a result of the women's toilet movement of 1996, public restrooms and related gender issues received widespread attention from the general public and the government. Women were consulted in the formulation of laws, policies, planning, and design. The Taipei City Government designated 2001 the 'Year of the Public Toilet' and declared that making the necessary improvements was an important duty for the city's administration during that year. Public toilets were required to become 'not dirty', 'not smelly', and 'not wet.' Not only did the ratio of men's to women's restrooms reach the standard of one to three, but women's toilets in public spaces around Taiwan also started to improve in the following ways:

- Direct redesigning of men's rooms into women's rooms: for example, after the 'seizure of men's rooms' at the Taipei Railway Station, one men's toilet was redesigned into a women's toilet.
- Flexibly regulating use: during events, performances, or exhibitions in places such as the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall and the Taipei World Trade Center, certain men's restrooms are assigned for female use simply by hanging a sign on the doors.
- Switching the location of male and female restrooms: for security and privacy reasons, women's rooms were in the past often put in corners that were far away from the lines of movement. As a result, contrary to what was intended, they became dangerous spaces. Out of safety considerations, the New Student Building at National Taiwan University converted the men's rooms near lines of movement close to staircases into women's rooms. At the same time, women's rooms, which were hidden behind the staircases so that passers-by were not able to see them, were changed into men's rooms.
- Women's restrooms were fitted with alarm bells and other service equipment such as hooks, toilet paper, and liquid hand soap.
- The women's restrooms at highway rest stops no longer charge fees for use.

Although the Women's Toilet Movement has brought about some important changes, there is still a lot for us feminist activists to do. The new regulations for toilets in public buildings do not apply to existing, older buildings. Since most toilets are in existing buildings, women will have to continue lining up for quite some time. We need to persuade government, schools, and corporations to reconstruct, refurbish, and bring the toilets in their existing buildings up to new standards. We also need to propose unisex toilets. These will provide more choices for women, reduce time spent waiting in line-ups, and solve the obvious difficulties experienced by transgendered people. Thirdly, given the inequality between men's and women's toilets, we must encourage women to use men's toilets when there are no male users — provided they take their personal safety into account.

New Planning and Design Standards for Breastfeeding Spaces

The World Health Organization adopted an important resolution in 2002 declaring that receiving breast milk is an infant's basic right and suggesting that breastfeeding should continue until the child is more than two years old. Yet statistics show that Taiwan's breastfeeding rate gradually declined from 95 per cent in 1962 to 40 per cent in 1996. In 1999, the rate of women who breastfed during their stay at hospital maternity wards, rose again to 55 per cent, but only 20 per cent of these mothers continued to breastfeed six months after giving birth.

The Gender Equality in Employment Act, which was adopted in 2001 by the Legislative Yuan (the legislative assembly of Taiwan), stipulates in Article 23 that: 'An employer with more than 250 employees shall set up child care facilities where mothers can breastfeed and change babies.' However, even if breastfeeding rooms may be helpful to breastfeeding women at work and when they go out, the rooms exist only in name if they are set up in inappropriate locations or if they are not well maintained. A survey was recently conducted of 381 breastfeeding rooms, which had been set up by the private sector with subsidies from the Department of Health. The survey found

that the average user rate for such rooms in schools, public transit stations, and public office buildings stood at less than 20 visits per month. In three locations, the user rate for these breastfeeding rooms stood at zero, including the one at the Tataka Visitor Center in Yushan National Park. Seventeen breastfeeding rooms were transferred to other uses or closed after the government subsidies ran out. The survey also discovered that the design of some breastfeeding rooms was not discrete enough, that signs were not clear enough, and that some rooms were simply too small (only 1 ping or 3.3 square meters). Some breastfeeding rooms were even locked during business hours for more 'convenient' control. Often people did not know how to get the keys and gave up trying to use the rooms.

A survey by the Breastfeeding Association of Taiwan found that many breastfeeding women in Taiwan make do with whatever kind of room is available. The most common deficiency of breastfeeding rooms is that the place is only shielded with cloth curtains and thus lacks privacy. There is also too little space, tables and seats are often not strong enough, and there are no electrical outlets. Even if the user rate is low, we should not deny the need for breastfeeding rooms; instead we must enforce standards and improve their location and accessibility. For example, locating breastfeeding rooms in remote corners of public places gives the problematic message that breastfeeding is an activity that should be done clandestinely.

Nor are breastfeeding rooms well designed in public transportation systems. Only 19 of 105 railway stations have breastfeeding rooms. Only four express trains are equipped with a breastfeeding room. On long distance trips, breastfeeding mothers have to express their breast milk or breastfeed their babies in the toilet. Besides the discomfort and inconvenience for mothers, other passengers and cleaning staff complain about the toilets being occupied for too long. Last November one woman who breastfed her baby in the Taipei Story House was forced to leave the building because of her 'indecent' behaviour. After that, more than 30 members of the Breastfeeding Association of Taiwan

came to nurse their babies in the Taipei Story House to demand the right to breast-feed in public. In response, the Taipei City Government is now proposing to adopt the 'Taipei Public Space Breastfeeding Ordinance' which would include fines of NT\$30,000 (approx. US\$ 1,000) for anyone who interferes with or prevents mothers from breastfeeding their children.

Breastfeeding the next generation should be seen as a sacred task, but in many societies breastfeeding mothers are not given the respect they deserve. The Breastfeeding Association of Taiwan has therefore launched a movement for the improvement of breastfeeding rooms. The first location was set up in the A8 Building of Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Department Store in Taipei City's Sinyi District. The Association spent between NT\$20,000 and NT\$30,000 out of its own budget to create a breastfeeding room within a limited space. The room was designed to focus on the needs of mothers and infants so it is more frequently used. The seats, for instance, which originally faced curtains directly, were turned sideways so that a mother can conveniently draw the curtains to increase her sense of security. The Association asked specialists to create chairs

of different sizes and heights to accommodate mothers and children with different body shapes. This breastfeeding room also provides leg rests and folding tables for belongings.



Breastfeeding room designed by the Breastfeeding Association of Taiwan

Decision-Makers and Users: The Gender Gap Remains

Policies, plans, and the design of public places still do not reflect women's needs and often exacerbate discrimination against women. A very important reason remains that the majority of people who make decisions about policy, planning, and design in Taiwan are male. Rarely do these men recognize the value of consult-

Department	Number of female full-time teachers	Number of full-time teachers in total	Per cent of female full-time teachers
Grad. Inst. of Building and Planning, National Taiwan University	0	7	0%
Department of Urban Planning, National Cheng Kung University	1	14	7%
Department of Architecture National Cheng Kung University	1	24	4%
Department of Architecture Tamkang University's	2	19	11%
Department of Urban Planning, Feng Chia University's	1	13	8%
Department of Architecture Feng Chia University's	3	20	15%
Department of Architecture Chung Yuan Christian University's	1	12	8%
Dept. of Architecture and Urban Design Chinese Culture University	2	15	13%

ing citizens and users, especially when these citizens and users are women.

This problem may well stem from deeply entrenched inequalities within the space planning professions themselves. In the university programmes, which train the next generation of design professionals (e.g., architecture, planning, and landscape architecture), women teachers are vastly under-represented. Male-female teacher ratios in Taiwanese programmes are listed in Figure 1.

Moreover, women account for roughly 20 to 30 per cent of the students in planning and design professions and the share of licensed female architects is a mere three per cent. Outside the university environment, women are even more under-represented. The Taipei Urban Planning Committee has just four women among its 21 members. The same goes for the Taipei Urban Design, Land Use and Development Permit Review Committee.

Amazing changes reflecting women's needs have occurred over the past decade in Taiwan. However, much more remains to be

changed. More feminists need to participate in the planning and design of space and more planners and designers need to become feminists. More women are needed in powerful positions that enable them to make decisions about the built environment. And perhaps most importantly, gender mainstreaming is needed to bring about the kinds of systemic change that can contribute to the creation of more gender equitable cultures, values, processes, and decisions. ❧

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Women at the Crossroads with Transportation, the Environment and the Economy

Experiences and Challenges in Germany

Meike Spitzner translated by Regula Modlich

It started with Women's "Initiatives" (ed.: citizens' petitions) in Germany. "Women In Motion" was the name of a national network of women involved in transportation "initiatives," transportation policy, planning, research, administration, related organizations, and businesses. The network was founded in 1989. It grew out of protests against transport policies all over the country, which ignored everyday-needs and mobility patterns of all but able-bodied, employed men. The "rail-free inner city" program, in the 1980's, was such a case. The government wanted to get rid of streetcars in Frankfurt, as it had done in so many other cities. Based on intensive and meticulous research, the women confronted the male-centred transportation research community with the conditions they had been living under. Until then, the special needs of men prevailed in transportation research and contributed to present gender relations. After that, national politics in Germany were, for the first time, faced with the reality of "women in motion."

It finally dawned on those responsible for traffic conditions, laws and regulations in our communities that in a country with a high level of population density, urbanization, public transport and railways networks, "emancipation from the car" could be a thinkable prospect. "Emancipation from the car" was also the title of the first petition to parliament, in 1990. The petition addressed the gendered realities in the field of transportation. Men especially should take the prospect of "emancipation from the car" seriously. The car-based urban regions and their "suburbanizing"

rural periphery pose a tremendous environmental problem. Until now, shaping the politics and policies of German socio/economic reality, was not in women's hands; neither was running the economy, transportation or the protection of the environment. This article focuses therefore on how gender, environment, economy and transportation intersect.

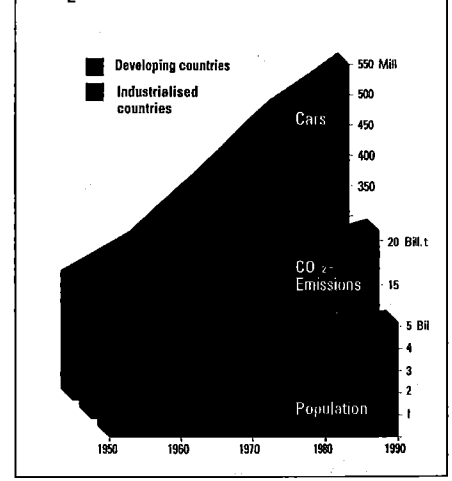
Gendered Transportation Reality and Rationality

Until now transportation science, planning and politics have always assumed responsibility for planning, financing and improving mobility for all. Yet, in the past, transportation professionals prioritized needs for the movement of both people and goods, based on their personal experiences and perspectives. Traditionally, transportation enjoyed large shares of public budgets, financing and bureaucracies at all levels of government to manage road construction, especially for long distance expressways, which would "boost the economy." Gradually however, this has proven to be at the expense of public transportation, especially non-motorized movement. The trend of the European Union to privatize public services jeopardizes the longstanding responsibility of the public transportation sector for long-term transportation needs of the whole society. Changing sections of the German constitution to allow for the privatization of the German railroads without ensuring basic levels of social or environmental services is a case in point. The first step of this transition was the division of the old non-transparent

public transport planning into a public "ordering" and a commercial "selling" section of public transportation services. The mandate for public decision making, offered a great opportunity for developing strict procedures for "ordering" which would ensure public transparency, participation and allow women's and gender initiatives including "zero-ordering." Thus the selling off of the longstanding public service railway maintenance, especially in the critical short-distance sector to ad hoc, for-profit and competitive contracts failed to ensure public services at environmentally and socially sustainable and gender equitable levels. European, national and local privatization policies only compound these infrastructure problems.

Transportation professionals have a mindset, which reduces human existence and actions to that of "clients" or "consumers," which are linguistically sub-

Growth of Population
CO₂-Emissions and Number of Cars



sumed under the male gender. Humans are considered neutral, without gender, age or ability constraints, without domestic or community context and without feelings. This reduces humans to a-social and a-sexual beings, that can then be selectively fitted to suit assumed social constructs and imagined gender roles. This is how in the industrial age, the notion of the stereotypical middle class household developed. It consisted of a bread-winning husband, full time housewife and children. Today, such households are no longer prevalent, nor socially desirable.

The ongoing fight of the women's movement, feminist research and policies to advance the status of women have lent valuable credibility and strength to women's efforts for change. The women's representations revealed that the entire transportation system including its management had turned a blind eye to and glossed over the reality and pervasiveness of the structural oppression of women. While this can be attributed to "being different," or the prevailing acceptance of male domination or to trivializing and rendering women invisible, it is a reality, with which women are all

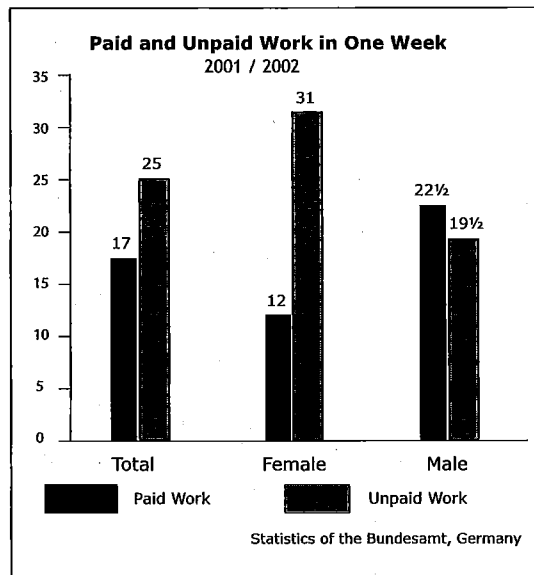
too familiar. How else can one explain the alienating subway stations? They stink of male urine, are built with coarse materials and painted in ugly colours. How else can one explain aligning walkways and bike lanes under highways ramps?

Women know that the "general" trend to fuel-based transportation is solely male, catering to middle-aged men, who do not share responsibility for care-giving work. People have very different transportation needs in regard to transportation mode, origin, destination, schedule, trip purpose, distance, speed etc. Instead of accepting this diversity of transportation requirements and ensuring democratic access to mobility for all groups, a marginal group of professional transportation experts reigns over the field. The risk is obvious and evaluations prove, that these experts serve and identify their own interests as those of their 'clients' and that they have

simply not bothered to correct their subjective outlook to become more objective.

In a democracy, it should be the responsibility of transportation professionals to safeguard the public interest. To start with, this could include:

- an end to the androcentric irrational affair with transportation technology;
- a minor symbolic surtax on "mobility" with cars which would allow drivers to compensate for their mobility advantages;
- a re-establishment of the priority of the "forgotten body and nature" over the



- scale, functions and design of the built environment, especially a return to walking;
- a scientific database of transportation decisions, which are not male-centred, but rooted in social and natural sciences; this would be an interdisciplinary database which would replace the current ones which are devoid of social references or objectives, yet are still used to determine road construction;
- a balanced representation of wo-manpower and of gender competence on transportation related committees.

No more women-only night taxis! We need a totally different concept of transportation infrastructure and policies. Such a concept would aim at minimizing traffic, respond to social needs, be fully accessible and effectively meet the requirements of caregivers. Such a transportation system would also make up for the socio-

economic problems caused by past development and planning mistakes. Women are aware of how urban planning has increased distances and encouraged ever more remote destinations, even for getting every day necessities. Transportation planning has caused a jump in the number of "mobility disadvantaged" people who need to be chauffeured. Flexibility for individual travelers and the transportation needs of private enterprise have received priority. These policies have been at the expense of social interaction. Fewer people mingle in public places and on transit. Speeding cars, narrow walkways, worries about the safety of children in their care, and pedestrian bridges or underpasses built without consideration for women's safety or structural male violence, all affect women while they walk or look after dependents. It's no wonder, that women want to adopt male patterns of mobility and travel by car. In this way the androcentrism of transport planning and politics is causing an enormous rise of — environmentally, economically and socially unsustainable car traffic.

Gendered Economic Reality and Rationality

At the root of this male oriented mindset is the denial of the existence of a whole sector of the economy, which until now has been sustained solely by women. The traditional gender hierarchy and the lack of men's participation, has kept the "domestic" economy from being validated socially or politically. The transportation system therefore considers the "domestic" economy with its social, bodily and natural elements and qualities as "non-economy" or "consumption" of the products of the "real economy." The whole complex and structural reality of women's lives as well as their issues are attributed to the "private," non-public or politically unaccountable sphere. The privatization of the old public enterprises — even if they were run with a patriarchal mindset — threatens to destroy the crucial concept of public interest which today should embody the interests of women i.e. the needs of the care-giving economy.

Practically all women have to deal with

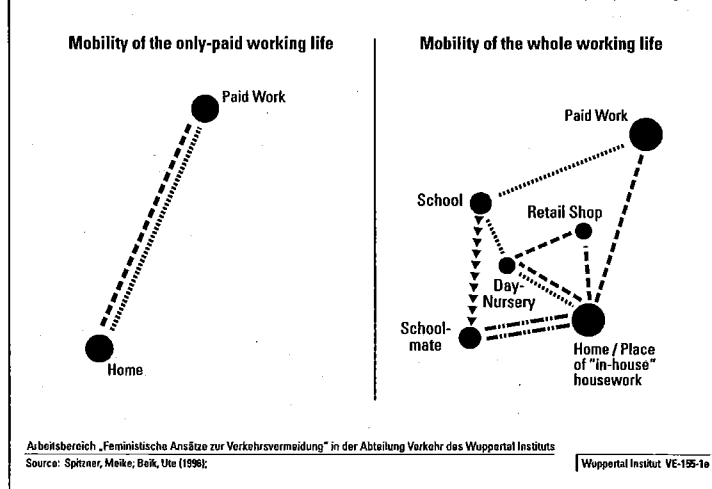
issues ranging from care giving, domestic chores, employment, community involvement to the risk of harassment and even male violence. Still, established wisdom considers social and care-giving activities as "individual" choices and as "non-structural" and "non-infrastructural" questions. Undervaluing the caring, domestic and public not-for-profit economies strengthens gender hierarchy and weakens environmental sustainability. The tension between freedom/

abandon and linkages/bonds, between independence and contextualized existence is mostly "solved" in a gender hierarchic way. The first values are socially masculine, the second set of values are attributed to the socially feminine. Androcentrism within the transport sector give priority to the first values, to "independence," a longing to get away, be alone, free of social constraints, excited by change and conquest of nature's limitations. Women's values are often considered "nature" or a "natural resource." They can sustain themselves at no or little economic cost: stability and security of social relations, feeding the body's needs, sustaining a good environment.

By following this androcentric vision and longing, the so-called "productive" sector of our economy encourages consumption and waste of renewable and non-renewable natural, human and social energy and strength. At the same time, this "productive" sector is jeopardizing the integrity of nature and physis, devaluing the social and natural integrity and destroying history as well as future opportunities. Transportation related to the "real economy" comes at the expense of the "non-production" or domestic economy. Public transportation ends up in crisis, because of this narrow understanding of "domestic" economy and the under valuing of caring within public economy. One can expect, therefore, that women, and the spheres for which they have been — and amazingly still are — responsible, and in which they still provide a quality safety net for society,

What is "Mobility"? What is the Object of "Transport Planning"?

Differences in the Understanding of "Mobility" by the background of different Every-day Working Life



will again suffer most, be that in private or public service sectors of the economy.

Environmentally Sustainable Transportation Planning and Gender

The commitments to reorient transportation research, planning and policies to become more sensitive to the environment, have not reduced androcentrism nor led to the integration of gender considerations because the same thinking reigned here also. Bureaucrats and officials selectively accepted and institutionalized some demands of the environmental movement and of citizens transportation "initiatives" in terms of two strategies: the so-called "efficiency" and the so-called "sufficiency" strategies.

Transportation officials define "efficiency" as striving to increase the effectiveness of applied energy/power, while they define "sufficiency" as reducing demands on social and natural resources. They keep these two components separate and attribute each through their gender hierarchy coloured lens and gender ranked economies, along the line of production and consumption. Efforts for efficiency are made for the production sector, while sufficiency and moderation is assigned to the so-called consumption, which is subsumed under the sphere of "domestic" economy.

Yet, there is no thought given to how more moderation, more sufficiency could be integrated in production. There is no consideration given to how the care givers' and consumers' power could be more efficient in getting environmentally

and socially more sustainable products. The production sector harvests unripe fruit, to better survive a lengthy transport; they then ripen it quickly with chemicals, totally disregarding the serious risks to health and the environment. Until now politics have turned a blind eye to the question of how to research, discuss and apply gains in science, awareness and efficiency within this conflicting context. In most economies the Gross

Domestic Product, counts the repair efforts of an environmental disaster such as an oil spill as "production," yet all unpaid domestic and nurturing work such as caring for a good environment, for partners, elderly, the ill or children — done until now almost completely by women — is excluded.

Moving Forward

Gender Mainstreaming can therefore be a meaningful tool for looking at transportation from a sustainability perspective. However, it has to be understood as a double strategy of "push and pull" or mainstreaming in the sense of reorienting sufficiency in terms of social masculinity and an efficiency revolution in terms of empowerment of women. It should, however, not be the kind of strategy, which experts from women's NGO's recently endured when the EU head office for the environments invited them on behalf of its male mid-management level. That was "gendermainstreaming" simply to co-opt women's "closeness to the grass roots," and let them "have their say," but not to bring about change and to adjust their mindset. "Closeness to the grass roots" seems to be an adaptation of the classic motherhood statement "closeness to life" or "closeness to nature."

Come on already! Even in the socially, financially and for the future of society so important field of transportation, there is finally some motion in the encrusted thinking along outdated male-dominated social constructs. This advance is happening

thanks to national obligation, flowing from international agreements. At the European level, Scandinavian states strengthened these agreements. At the global level, women of the South and East raised the level of negotiations of gender issues.

In Germany the federal government has finally taken the initiative. It was the result of years of stubborn efforts by a few women experts in gendered transportation research, of the commitment of the national Network of Women Inc., of the Taskforce on Environment and Development and of the specialized feminist expertise in the Office of the Secretary of State. The UN Commission's decisive preparations for the world summit on Environment and Development, "Rio+10" in 2002 in Capetown, S.A. reflected this progress. It included: women delegates from the North and South who brought their first studies conducted by themselves; face to face exchanges amongst experts and researched position papers on "Gender Perspectives on the Earth Summit 2002: Transport, Energy and Information for Decision Making." The German government had commissioned and submitted this document to the Commission on Sustainable Development and the UN.

The German government also instituted a regular national exchange between the Ministry for the Environment, representatives from environmental and women's organizations and experts on gender, environment and sustainability questions. Through "WAVE" (Women as the Voice for Environment), UNEP, at the UN's Global Conference on Women and the Environment in 2004 in Nairobi, enabled for the first time ever, a global focus on connections between problems with transportation policies and gender relations. This realization happened in the context of climate policy, the link between climate change and the transport sector of the North and the need for gender equity. Europe too, is making baby steps. In 2006, the European Parliament commissioned east and west European gender experts to cooperate on a first, though limited, investigation of "Women and Transport."

However, what is still missing today, on practically every level and in practically

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all countries, is the serious commitment and appropriate funding of gender focused reorientation in transportation research. This needs to include professionals in related departments such as ministries, commissions, public offices etc. and in the professional institutions and their branches throughout the country. It also needs the institutionalizing and anchoring of legal, procedural and professional practice of these responsibilities before unilateralism and injustice in gender relations can be eliminated, especially in the area of transportation. The demand for reorientation of the malestream and for strengthening of centres for the development of structural analysis, strategies, methods and

measurements for gender-sustainability can be interwoven. Yet this direction is still not covered by the appropriate commitment of resources. Such preconditions are necessary, to advance a care giving, community oriented economy, and a forward looking society which is committed to far reaching and long term socio/environmental harmony. These would truly advance the public interest. ❧

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Legitimate for Others, but not Us?

Policies for Sustainable Development and Household Work

Elin Wihlborg and Karin Skill

Social policies of equality and ecological sustainability have been expected to be integrated since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Summit resulted in the action plan for sustainable development called Agenda 21. The action plan equally emphasized social, economic and ecological sustainable development. However, the ecological has dominated the interpretations of the Agenda 21 and environmental concerns have been prioritized. In urban areas there is a potential to increase socio-technical system sustainability in transportation, sewage, water and energy. However, such changes are mainly motivated by environmental concerns and the complexity of everyday life and its social sustainability and gender equality is concealed.

The call for gender equality was emphasized at the World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, but Sweden put forward critique since the efforts to mainstream gender in various sectors "... are conspicuous by their absence in several areas." (Swedish Government Communication 2002/03:29, p. 3) In international comparisons of policies for environmental sustainability and gender equality Sweden usually ranks high on both dimensions. They are both broad policy areas supposed to be mainstreamed into all other Swedish policies. Thus we could expect Swedish policies to have an integrated and developed understanding of these two policy issues. Environmental policy has developed to cover our choices of lifestyle and consumption in the call for sustainable development and includes gender relations as a dimension of social sustainability. Even if many environmentally benign activities that are suggested in Swedish policies for sustainable development are expected to be carried out in the household (optional activities like recycling,



Women doing laundry in a river in India.

purchases of green labelled groceries and the use of public transportation), few policies emphasize the gendered character of these activities, and thereby the social dimension is neglected. The division between private and public is central, since it is both an important characteristic of politics as well as a way of defining and constructing gender and environmental matters.

While performing a study on gender mainstreaming of environmental policies, and sustainable consumption in 2004, we realised that connections between gender equality and ecologically sound activities are rare in the current political programs of the parties in the Swedish parliament at that time. The Green Party and the Left Party do however attempt to connect them. A curious aspect is that other parties, like the Liberal Party, connect these in their foreign aid policies. This analysis is based on the current party programs or equivalent document from the political parties in the Swedish parliament, and speeches by the Minister of Environment, professor Lena Sommestad. We searched for quotations where environmental concern and gender equality were integrated. We will relate the findings from

the Swedish policies to Agenda 21, since that is the Action program for sustainable development, and to gender studies.

The Social democratic party has dominated Swedish politics during the 20th century. They have been in office since 1998, but rely on the Left and Green Parties for majority in the parliament.

The Global Policies — Agenda 21

Through extensive lobbying women's participation was highlighted globally at the UN Conference in Rio in 1992, when Agenda 21 was formulated. The final document heavily emphasizes women, but the relations among men and women are very seldom recognized. The gender bias makes environmental concerns a female responsibility. Yet, increased representation is still a central goal in many countries. In Agenda 21 the domestic domain was highlighted, and households were mentioned as important actors to reach towards sustainable development.

Expectations on men and women according to the separation of male and female are central for how policies are formulated and also for possibilities to

participate and have a formal influence on decision-making. However, to be able to use and take advantage of such possibilities, activities occupying women's daily lives have to be done in other ways. Thus Agenda 21 notices that women's participation is not just an issue for formal political institutions but also other spheres in the society, and encourages all governments to create programmes to:

... promote the reduction of the heavy workload of women and girl children at home and outside /.../ and the sharing of household tasks by men and women on an equal basis, and to promote the provision of environmentally sound technologies which have been designed, developed and improved in consultation with women, accessible and clean water, an efficient fuel supply and adequate sanitation facilities.

(Agenda 21, 1993, Chapter 24.3. d)

This is one of the few statements in Agenda 21 combining and legitimating sustainability and gender issues. It is worth noticing that women's workload is seen in a broad meaning and related to the socio-technical context of their daily lives, simultaneously as it connotes to a rural rather than an urban context. We acknowledge that the complexity and variety of gender relations on a global level is very complicated to include in a single document, yet this is what Agenda 21 aims to do. Agenda 21 shows a distinct focus on women rather than the relation between men and women. The principle of division is obvious. The approach is also biased since differences among women as a group are neglected.

However, Agenda 21 cannot be considered gender blind since it does bring up women's situations, even if the roles and responsibilities of men are ignored. Thereby it could be considered gender equality blind. The problematic question of mainstreaming gender issues into sustainable development was handed over to states and local governments.

Swedish Policies on Gender in Sustainable Development

In several speeches and articles the Minister for the Environment Sommestad has pointed out the relation between environmental concerns and gender equality, for

example when linking economic growth, social justice and gender equality. She was also concerned by the low status given to gender equality issues at the Johannesburg meeting in 2002, and said that Sweden had taken a leading role in combining gender equality and ecological sustainability. In her opening speech at the Stockholm Water Symposium in 2003, she concluded that:

There is an urgent need to further mainstream a gender perspective in all water resource management, not only in water supply and sanitation projects. This implies giving adequate consideration to both women's and men's roles, needs, access, responsibility and control over water resources. Women and men have different interests and needs in relation to different water issues.

In spite of the norm of gender equality it is remarkable that the Minister could make such an essentialistic statement



Swedish woman doing laundry in her home.

claiming that men and women have different interests and needs. Postcolonial feminists who criticise how women in the Third world constantly are essentialized, even in feminist thoughts, have challenged this. They state that there is no homogeneity.

Since the Minister approaches an international audience she takes the opportunity to design policies. These public speeches and statements by the Minister indicate that she acknowledges gender issues as part of sustainable development. Still, she has not had the capacity or opportunity to integrate these discussions into the official party program of the Social democratic party. There are obvious differences in the arguments by the Party and those by the Minister. The lack of connection between ecological sustainability and gender equality are rare in the other political programs as well, but is most notable concerning the governing

Social democratic party. The absence of connection in the Swedish context can be viewed as an expression of lack of legitimacy. In Swedish foreign aid policies for developing countries there seems to be an acceptance for designing instruments regarding the private life. What is legitimate to talk about in international contexts is not realised in national policies.

Gender Divisions

Sustainable development is a broad concept attempting to grasp every aspect of our lifestyle and its impact on the environment. When considering that our private lifestyle choices have public, and even global, outcomes the common division between public and private is challenged. A simple model to analyse our indications is to apply the gender contract. Historian Yvonne Hirdman has developed a model of what she calls a gender contract to analyse relations between men and women on different societal levels. The gender contract is an implicit agreement between the sexes that structures negotiations, reconstructing the gender contract and thus the expectations of predictable actions. The concept of a contract is a metaphor. It should not be seen as a negotiation between two equal parts, which connects to power relations. Professor Robert Connell has constructed a similar theoretical gender model, but he highlights that "gender is a way of structuring social practice in general" in a dynamic process rather than a static structure (Connell 2000:29).

There are two main principles for maintaining and reconstructing gender contracts: apartness and the hierarchy. The principle of apartness implies that the male and the female should not be mixed and are thus defined in contrast to each other. The principle of hierarchy points at the main feminist criticism — that the male often is considered a norm in the patriarchal society. The principle of apartness creates a separation into public and private that is visible in most cultures and communicates to meaning of the male and female. The dichotomy is continually reconstructed by giving meaning to gender in daily practices. The division of private and public manifests the subordination of women and is almost universal. It is also used to define what politics are and

what is excluded from policy making.

Gender contracts are defined by their context and characterised by socialisation, affect major decisions, and are constructed and maintained even in single sex contexts. The process of gendering areas is complex and integrates activities, places, technologies and artefacts. Several studies have shown how both public and private spaces are gendered, when men and women have different access to and influence over what is done in different places. Western urbanisation challenged many places that were formally male and increased women's access to the public sphere. Especially in urban areas, ethnic aspects and class interact with gender and make it more complex. Accordingly politics of sustainable development might have a potential for gendering ecologically sustainable activities and artefacts. The discursive meanings of gender have been recognised as generally associating women to the domestic domain of social life. Thus women and female values are related to the private sphere. The household has been considered a private and female area in opposition to the public and male, both in theoretical and empirical research, as well as in policies. In feminist writings the call for considering the private as political has for long been made.

The household is an important site for socialization and negotiation concerning among other things activities for sustainable development, and many activities have public and environmental consequences. The localisation of households defines resources for the individuals and their organisation of everyday life. Urban social technical systems affect routines and habits and rely highly on the mutual interaction of the private and public. The interplay between individuals and organisations is more complex and packed in time-space in urban areas and thus the consequences for others of one's behaviour may be less visible. When someone chooses to take the car to work rather than walk, the exhausts affect others; just like consumption patterns in urban Swedish households might affect what is produced in distant rural places.

This relates to a theoretical discussion about what has been called ecological citizenship. Ecological citizenship concerns

duties as well as rights, and relates to the use of resources in other places, and how they affect fellow citizens, in urban as well as rural areas. The distinction between private and public also concerns the political legitimacy of governing the private. Ecological citizenship might legitimate (increased) political steering of everyday life.

The relation between women and the environment has been extensively elaborated on by the 'eco-feminists.' The fundamental connection between women and the private relies on what Anthropologist Henrietta Moore calls the:

"... theme in the 'anthropology of women' which links the nature/culture dichotomy to a corresponding division between the 'domestic' and the 'public' ... a universal model for explanation of women's subordination."

The argumentation emanates from an idea where women have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional and the particular; while men have been associated with culture, the rational and the abstract. However, gender relations are much more complex both in practice, policy and theory. The essentialism that ecofeminists express, where women and men are regarded to have natural ways to be and act connected to their biological sex, emphasizes and maintains the apartness principle. Thereby they are not promoting gender equality, even if they criticize the hierarchy of the gender contract. Yet, the idea of ecofeminists highlights the conceptual links between the environmental movement and women's movement.

There is an emerging policy area combining the fields of ecological sustainability and gender equality, which could be understood as a promising understanding of sustainable development. This is a process that might change our common understanding of ecological sustainability as well as gender relations. The speeches by the Minister of Environment indicate a creative but still tentative line of reasoning, probably showing her ambition to integrate the two policies. But she rarely highlights the Swedish context. Her examples mainly emanate from rural and foreign rather than urban settings. She thereby neglects the connection between gender (equality) and environmen-

tal aspects in Sweden, while enforcing others to implement the changes she considers necessary from a Western perspective. This is also reflected when political parties connect women and environment in their foreign aid policies. The apartness principle does therefore not just concern male and female, but has to acknowledge divisions like rural and urban, and Western and Third world countries, divisions that have been highlighted by postcolonial feminists and with concepts such as intersectionality. ❧

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The Crisis of Women's Homelessness in Canada

Summary of the CERA Report

Barbara Rahder

Canada was once a leader in developing some of the most innovative co-operative and non-profit housing for and by women anywhere in the world. Today, in contrast, there is a growing crisis of women's homelessness across Canada. The Canadian government has failed to address this crisis and has done little to explore the causes of women's homelessness. The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA) in Toronto analyzed this situation and recommended strategies to respond to some of the most pressing housing problems facing Canadian women. Below is a summary of their key findings and recommendations, followed by my own commentary about the prospects for change and the implications for urban sustainability.

Women and children are the fastest growing group of shelter users across the country. But even these numbers fail to document the full scope of this ongoing crisis because only a small fraction of the women experiencing housing crises and homelessness use shelters. For example, many women continue to live with violent partners and face daily threats and abuse because they can find no other housing options. Many women will go without adequate food, clothing or other necessities in order to make sure that they can pay their rent. Some women find themselves forced to move in with family or friends when they cannot make ends meet, adding to problems of overcrowding and stress. Most of these individual housing crises do not appear in reports and statistics on homelessness, they do not "count" as homelessness, but they increasingly define the lives of low-income women across Canada.

The homelessness crisis facing women is also a poverty crisis. Consequently, it is important to examine the scarcity of affordable housing within the larger context of social policies and programs needed to address issues of poverty, particularly the income policies and programs in which the federal government plays a key role. Many women's ability to access and maintain appropriate housing has been seriously undermined by dramatic changes to several federal programs. Among these are changes in eligibility criteria for Employment

The homeless crisis facing women is also a poverty crisis

Insurance that now reduces the benefits for many women and completely excludes others. The National Child Benefit Supplement, allows some provinces to "claw back" benefits from the poorest women — those in receipt of social assistance. Other changes, like the repeal of the Canada Assistance Plan and the introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer, have further eroded low-income women's supports and, as a result, their ability to cope in a tight housing market.

Most significantly, however, after the Canadian government stopped funding for the development of new co-operative and non-profit housing in 1993, it changed its focus to funding initiatives aimed at improving access to home ownership and programs to address the needs of the homeless. CERA's report zeroes in on the

changes since 1993 and examines the extent to which these new programs address (or fail to address) the housing needs of low-income women.

Key Findings

When the Canadian government stopped funding new urban social housing initiatives, it had a profoundly negative effect on women. Low-income women are among those most in need of housing subsidies. Without subsidies, women are compelled to rely on the private rental market, exposing them to systemic discrimination. Landlords across Canada deny thousands of women access to affordable apartments on the basis of arbitrary minimum income criteria (where a landlord refuses to rent to someone on the basis that they will be spending too much — more than 30% — of their income on rent). Banks and credit companies use similar policies to disqualify women from accessing mortgages. Human rights tribunals and courts have ruled that the use of minimum income criteria is discriminatory when used by landlords to disqualify single women, single mothers, social assistance recipients, Black women, newcomers and other equality seeking groups from renting apartments. At the same time, the federal government has frozen funding and downloaded the responsibility for social housing programs to the provinces.

Women do not benefit equally from Canadian government programs that promote access to affordable home ownership or that provide subsidies for the renovation and repair of owned homes. This is because income criteria-type policies exclude the majority of single mothers and low-income women from qualifying for

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's homeownership program, due to their low incomes. Because of this, many women are denied access to homeownership even though they will be paying more in rent than they would be paying for a mortgage and property taxes combined.

Women's poverty has also increased as a result of changes in the eligibility criteria for social assistance and the erosion of social assistance rates across Canada. Government dollars have been redirected to health funding, where national standards remain in place, while social assistance rates have become grossly inadequate to cover the cost of housing for women, especially in light of gross increases in average rents in major cities across Canada.

Aboriginal women, especially single mothers, have the highest incidence of poverty in Canada — more than twice the rate of non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women are thus uniquely vulnerable to all of the barriers in accessing housing that are experienced by other low-income women, while simultaneously confronting systemic discrimination particular to their position as racialized Aboriginal women.

In all provinces and territories, except New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Manitoba, the National Child Benefit Supplement is "clawed back" from social assistance recipients by an agreement with the federal government. Despite the fact that women on social assistance are often in dire need of this benefit and most unable to pay for housing and related expenses, they are routinely excluded from the federal government's only initiative to address child and family poverty.

The protection of income security resulting from unemployment, long term disability and pregnancy and parenting of infants is critical to security of tenure for women and to ensuring that women have an income with which to pay for housing during times of increased risk of homelessness. Changes to Employment Insurance eligibility have placed many women at increased risk of eviction when dealing with loss of a job, pregnancy or disability. This is an area of direct federal responsibility for protecting the needs of women for income and housing security.

Key Recommendations

CERA made several recommendations to the federal government of Canada in an effort to address women's needs for safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing. These are to:

- 1) Create a portable shelter subsidy that takes the form of a tax credit or direct cash payment to the individual. The portable subsidy should be based on eligibility criteria that better addresses the gap between women's incomes and the cost of appropriate housing;
- 2) Remove restrictions on mortgage insurance and regulate banks to ensure that women and low-income households are provided with alternative ways of demonstrating their credit worthiness;
- 3) Recognize and ensure the right of all Aboriginal peoples to adequate housing;
- 4) Broaden the approach to homelessness to better address the systemic causes of women's homelessness, and consider priority funding for community-based initiatives;
- 5) Renegotiate the agreement with the provinces and territories with respect to the National Child Benefit Supplement to eliminate any claw back of this critical benefit from social assistance recipients; and
- 6) Overhaul the Employment Insurance Program to ensure that women who are vulnerable to unexpected job loss or income reduction are adequately protected so they can continue to pay their rent or make their mortgage payments.

While these recommendations are modest and relatively easy to implement, it remains to be seen if the newly elected Conservative government will seriously consider any of them. In fact, all indications are that rather than putting the housing needs of low-income women at the top of their agenda, the Conservatives might cut back further on social policies and programs that benefit vulnerable populations. Urban sustainability depends on the health and security of all women, on their access to safe and affordable housing, on their ability to sustain healthy and equitable relationships with others, and on

their understanding and respect for the natural environment that sustains us all. As long as there is a crisis of homelessness among Canadian women, urban sustainability will be little more than a dream. The upcoming World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada in June provides the newly elected government an opportunity to demonstrate its understanding of urban sustainability by addressing low-income women's immediate and pressing housing needs. ❧

Barbara Rahder is a Professor and Graduate Program Director in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. She uses participatory research to explore issues of equity and access to affordable housing and community services in the Toronto area.

This summary is based on M. Callaghan, L. Farha, and B. Porter's (2002) "Women and Housing in Canada: Barriers to Equality." Toronto: Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation. It is available at: www.equalityrights.org/cera/index.cfm?nav=reso&sub=women The commentary following their key findings and recommendations is my own.

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Women at a Disadvantage

Pollution in Quito, Ecuador

Jackeline Contreras Díaz

A grandmother in Quito, Ecuador, who is a full-time caregiver to her grandchildren, believes that air pollution affects women much more than men. According to her, "The women of this neighbourhood are very much affected by air pollution. It is they who spend a great deal of time in the house, cleaning it, because of the dirtying influence of vehicle exhaust. Children often become ill and are at a disadvantage because of the low-quality housing in which they live, including with relatives who help out. There also exists an organizational problem in the neighbourhood — people are more worried about surviving and making a living. They are very poor."

Caring for those who are ill from pollution and cleaning furniture and maintaining households is labour that is left up to women, and the time they need to spend on these activities increases because of pollution.

Perception and Measurement of Air Pollution

In Quito, the capital of Ecuador, as in other urban centres throughout Latin America, constantly increasing vehicular traffic is the main cause of air pollution. A study was carried out in the neighbourhood

of Dos Puentes, whose principal streets connect the centre of Quito with the southern section of the city and where the topography rises and falls dramatically within short distances. The people who live and work there complained to the press and municipal authorities about the air pollution. Although they didn't have any quantitative evidence to back-up their complaints, there was obvious deterioration of the environment, as evidenced by the dark grey appearance of the air most of the day and the strong smell of exhaust, provoking itchy eyes, nose, and throat. Building exteriors and interior walls of houses were coated in dirt, windows were opaque, and there was a high noise level due to the traffic.

According to the women in Dos Puentes, they feel the pollution because "Things fill-up with smog, one has to clean more, smog sticks to furniture, walls are dirty, there is dust in the house, the house is soot-colored, and the white clothes hung up to dry get stained." According to the men in Dos Puentes, "The pollution is permanent, breathing is made difficult, the car exhaust causes nasal-itching, dirties the house, and the surroundings look grey." The perceptions of these women and men refer to visual impressions and daily chores affected by air pollution.

The study found that, of the 10,400 gas concentration samples taken each minute for seven days, 3 per cent exceeded 35 ppm (parts per million), the maximum limit to not endanger health, according to the standard set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Thirty-four per cent of the samples were above 17 ppm, the limit set for acceptable air quality levels. As a result, the neighbourhood's air quality was at a cautionary level, due to the permanent presence of pollution.

Different Effects for Men and Women

The poor air quality affects the health of the people of Dos Puentes, and it becomes more serious as the time exposed to air pollution increases. Workshop employees, as well as home workers who share their living-space with a workshop or store, are among those who spend the longest time in the area. Sixty-four per cent of people in the lowest income bracket stay in the area from 18 to 24 hours a day. Women make up 13 per cent more of this group than men do, meaning that the poorest women are exposed to air pollution for the longest time.

In 69 per cent of the homes in the study, at least one person was sick due to pollution; in 19 per cent, there were two



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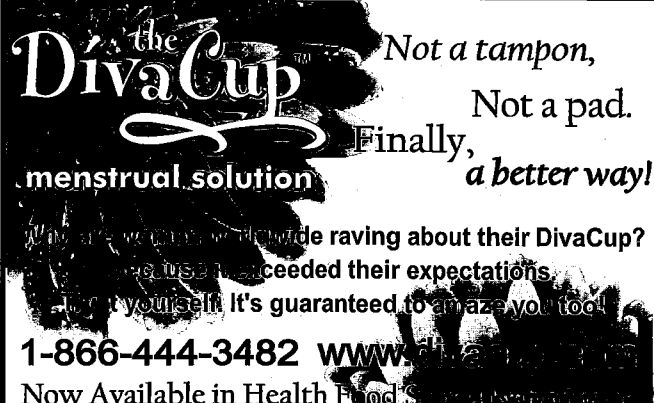
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sick people, and in the remaining 11 per cent, three or more people were ill. The ages of the affected people ranged from infancy to nine years old, and from 53 to 75 years old, which correspond to the age groups most vulnerable to the effects of pollution. Women, whether they were mothers, spouses, aunts, or grandmothers, cared for 71 per cent of the patients during their recuperation and treatment, while only 29 per cent were cared for by men. On the other hand, women in the poorest 25 per cent of the homes in the study dedicated more time to caring for the sick than was dedicated by women of the middle or upper socio-economic levels. The time spent caring for sick residents increased not only because more people became ill, but because, due to a lack of resources, they received less medical treatment during their convalescence.

Air Contamination Increases Gender Inequality

The domestic chores that result from air pollution, such as caring for the sick

and cleaning furniture and houses, are called reproductive chores. In studies done on the effects of air pollution, only the productive sphere has been considered — missed work and school days, maintenance and repainting costs — thereby neglecting the reproductive chores, which, as we saw above, have different and sustained effects for women. Because reproductive chores are neither socially nor monetarily rewarded, they have not been taken into account. These chores must be explicitly accounted for. Feminist political ecology writers Dianne Rocheleau, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari claim that there is an “apparent” separation between productive and reproductive science and technology, public and private domains, work and home. This separation is no stranger to the way in which the effects of air pollution have traditionally been treated. It is necessary to link productive to reproductive spaces in the analysis of urban environmental problems. Air pollution in Quito is a socio-environmental problem that directly increases the domes-

tic and reproductive chores relegated to women, and by extension, gender inequality, since it creates more undervalued and unpaid work for women. ❧

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Engendering Urban Environmental Management

A study of Women Councilors in Burdwan, India

Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, Gopa Samanta, Pallabi Sil and Chhanda Karfa

A range of literature portrays Indian women as a homogeneous group of resource users burdened by the subsistence needs of their families, as victims of degradation with little access to resources, and as the 'natural' conservators and nurturers of their local environments. It is true that gender inequalities are a reality of life across India, evidenced by almost every demographic indicator and a host of social and economic statistics. It is also generally true that throughout India women are burdened with the chores of collecting fuel and water, trying to help their families survive. The marginalization of women in post-colonial India has gradually driven many women into the most insecure and informal jobs. To empower women and to enhance their roles in local level decision-making, an extraordinary measure was taken by the Indian Government between 1992 and 1994. The Constitution of the country was changed to reserve 33 percent of seats in local municipal governments for women candidates. Known as the 73rd and 74th Amendments, the legislation attempted to usher in a new era of enhanced autonomy for marginalized groups such as women, dalits¹ and adivasis² who have remained largely voiceless and invisible. Described as 'ground-breaking' by some, the result has been that more than five million women having had some experience in local politics in the last ten years.

The Act, meant to empower women, among others, in the political and administrative domains, has had varying success depending on the specific characteristics of the area, for example whether urban or rural. Here we examine the specific case of a medium-sized town, Burdwan, in West Bengal, and ask what can be learned from



Burdwan's environmental problems are vastly different from those in industrialized countries.

its distinctive history, its local culture and economy, and its specific geography. In particular, we note that many of the women councilors in Burdwan are well educated and not necessarily new to politics.

Using local environmental resources to perform daily chores is a challenge for many women. Women act as informal but primary resource managers, carriers, end-users and family health educators. But women also play significant roles related to the protection of the environment. Through the roles they perform in these activities, women often develop considerable insights about the environment and knowledge about the availability, quality and reliability, restrictions, and acceptable storage of these resources. Feminists have

argued that women's knowledge is not utilized or given adequate priority when making resource management plans. Traditional gender identities often dictate the under-valuation of women's work, roles, contributions and knowledge, in both rural and urban India.

The view that all women are natural 'carers' of the environment, prone to conserving the natural elements, tends to ignore local social relations based on environmental resources in particular contexts, as well as the gendered attitudes, perceptions and constructions of the environment. Such a model also acts to further oppress women by putting the burden of care straightaway and informally again on women as a whole, undifferentiated cate-

gory. Consequently, strong objections have arisen against this view; many third-world feminists in particular object to being categorized en masse as a single category, as being the natural 'carers' of the environment, reinforcing conventional notions of their subordinate positions and lack of agency. This nature-nurture equation does not help change current power imbalances between women and men. It ascribes to women the additional responsibility of being caretakers of their local ecology without at the same time giving them access to and control over the resources, knowledge, information and decision-making systems necessary to make needed changes in the environment.

Women are a minority in urban governance and in decision-making bodies within the municipality, thus lacking the critical mass necessary to develop their own political agenda. Also, many of the women participating in urban governance are middle class and, as such, fit easily within a government dominated by the middle classes. Despite changes in the Constitution, the impacts are not straightforward. Just being 'a woman' does not mean one's perceptions of the environment are different from men; middle class Indian women in many cases do not reveal any particular awareness of gender concerns with respect to the environment. This leads us to the problematic of women's awareness of the environment and of environmental inequality.

Burdwan Town: The Context

Burdwan is a district headquarter town with a population of 285,000, ranking it thirteenth among the urban centres of the state of West Bengal in eastern Indiaⁱⁱⁱ. The well-connected town is located in the middle of a rich agricultural land that has been a Marxist stronghold since the 1950s as well as benefiting from irrigated farming technologies in 1960s. Due to the predominance of metropolitan Calcutta^{iv}, Burdwan has remained a mofussil^v town with poor civic amenities and a predominantly agriculture-based economy. Yet, the population of Burdwan has grown by leaps and bounds; attributed to several factors including its location between the Kolkata Metropolitan

District in the east and the industrialized Durgapur-Asansol-Raniganj colliery belt in the west. The agricultural change in the surrounding rural tracts with a consequent expansion of agro-processing and service sector activities has been very important. At present, the town is increasingly experiencing inner city congestion as well as a higher degree of sprawl at the periphery due to the expansion of residential areas.

Burdwan is a town of considerable antiquity, and has conducted a flourishing trade since ancient times. When the River Damodar (flowing just to the south) was still navigable, Burdwan used to export fine cotton and other textiles by sea to Europe and to West and Southeast Asia. The society of Burdwan, and its attitudes towards women, has been significantly influenced by historical and political factors. Two of the most important factors have been the north-Indian Burdwan Raj family and its pro-British politics. The Rajas were originally a merchant family from Kotli, near the city of Lahore in present-day Pakistan, arriving in early seventeenth century to gradually establish a Zamindari (revenue-generating land). Although they are credited with setting up girls' schools in modern Burdwan, they had also inculcated a deep spirit of conservative ideals with regard to gender codes.

In Burdwan town, the upper and middle classes are dominated by a land-owning caste called the aguris (a warrior caste) who are associated with the Raj family. This group traditionally acts as patrons of local art and culture and still holds the highest positions in the social and political life of the town. Women of this elite caste — the bhadramahilas — represent a large segment in the formal economic and administrative activities of the town, while the majority of upper and middle class women still do not appear much involved or interested in formal politics. However, after the 74th amendment, a number of educated and working women, primarily from the local elite castes, have been elected as councilors in the local municipality.

Environmental Problems of Burdwan

Urban growth is associated with a number of problems in India especially

the supply of food and water and of the disposal of waste. Burdwan's environmental problems are many and varied, but vastly different from those in industrialized countries or even the metropolitan areas of most developing countries. Environmental problems arising out of the local geography can be categorized in two broad ways: 1) general problems that could occur in any urban centre such as those involving water supply, traffic congestion, waste disposal, and filling in bodies of water to create more land; and 2) specific problems such as the pollution by agro-based industries and waterlogging.

General Problems

Municipal water supply is inadequate and particularly deficient in the wards situated in the southern part of the Banka (a small river flowing across the town). The ground water table is falling at a rapid rate with the increasing population and consequent consumption by the city. Neither the State Water Investigation Directorate nor the Municipality, however, has kept previous records of ground water table data within the urban region. The poor water supply causes enormous problems for women in low-income areas.

Narrow lanes and consequent traffic congestion is endemic in Burdwan town. Most of the streets are very narrow and join each other at acute angles. Therefore, traffic congestion and accidents are recurrent problems in this town, especially in the central business district. Accidents are most common where urban streets cross the National Highway or the railway line. Illegal occupation of the pavement by hawkers or petty traders further narrows the roads and adds to the crowding faced by pedestrians. Slums are increasing in size due to the migration of poor people from other parts of West Bengal and Bihar. Poverty and overcrowding pose serious threats to the management of the urban environment. Waste management has never been a priority for the municipality; accumulated waste heaps have become a part of the townscape. A large amount of bio-medical waste is generated every day by the mushrooming nursing homes and private clinics in the town. The

garbage endangers human health and further adds to traffic congestion.

Specific Problems

Land, water, and air pollution is caused by the agro-based industry around the town including rice mills, chira (pressed rice) mills, oil mills, cold storages and molasses factories, and small factories making lozenges and soap. These processing plants are concentrated in the southern part of Burdwan emitting thick black smoke containing toxic gases, foul odours, and high levels of ash and rice bran that block up earthen drains. The situation becomes worse during the monsoons when the blocked up drains spill over onto roads contaminating the land with toxic materials. Main drains release heavily polluted water from oil and rice mills into the Banka. The blocked up kancha drains become breeding grounds for mosquitoes and flies resulting in malaria raging throughout the region.

The consequences of these environmental problems, such as the increase in the incidence of bronchial diseases, stomach and liver problems and impairment of hearing, are borne by the entire communities living adjacent to the industrial plants, though the poorest and most marginalized residents suffer most. Labourers often attribute their high level of alcoholism to the difficulties encountered in their workplaces and residences. Women from lower economic classes, who work as daily wage labourers in the mills, suffer from poor health conditions and lack of sanitation both at work and at home.

Waterlogging is caused by the fact the northern part of the Banka slopes towards the north, away from the main drainage channel that receives the sewage as well as the rainwater. The low lying northern part of the town, therefore, suffers from the problem of waterlogging during the late monsoons, when the roads are knee-deep in stagnant water for days. Filling in wetlands, and other bodies of water, to make way for new residential areas has aggravated the problem of waterlogging over the last two decades. Waterlogging affects the communities from August through September by creating transport

Profile of women councilors					
Name	Caste	Age	Literacy Level	Economic Status	Source of Involvement in Politics
Dr. Tanushree Saha	General	44	MBBS	Doctor	Family
Pratima Bhattacharjee	General	45	10th level	ICDS worker	Personal
Reba Lahiri	General	72	10th level	Housewife	Personal
Tripti Tudu	Scheduled Tribe	24	12th level	Teacher	Family
Renu Bala Mondal	General	62	7th level	Housewife	Family
Usha Bhattacharjee	General	61	B.A.	Teacher	Personal
Iva Biswas	General	55	B.A.	Teacher	Personal
Najmoon Nahar Sayed	General	45	B.A.	Teacher	Family
Ava Dutta	General	54	M.A	Government employee	Personal
Anita Sarkar	Scheduled Caste	48	B.A.	Teacher	Family
Anjana Das	General	45	B.A.	Teacher	Family
Sumitra Koner	General	60	B.A.	Housewife	Family
Chandana Roy	General	40	B.A.	Housewife	Family

difficulties, again affecting those who are dependent on daily wages more than others. The rainwater is mixed with polluted sewerage from the blocked drains leading to enteric and water-borne diseases. Seepage of stagnant polluted water into the ground water table also contaminates the ground water that is the main source of drinking water for the town.

Feminising the Governance of Burdwan

Following the 74th amendment in 1994, women began taking part in the governance of Burdwan with 33 per cent of the seats in the Municipal Council being reserved for them. Currently the 13 women Councilors represent 37 percent of the

Council seats. Only one woman is from a lower caste and another from a tribal group (see Table.1). The terms are usually 5 years, and only two councilors have been elected for more than one term. The average woman councilor is educated, from the upper class and caste bracket, and has an occupation and associated income. She usually has a family background in politics; either her father, her grandfather or her husband having been actively involved in the party, which is the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M) for short. This party has controlled the municipal administration of Burdwan (as well as controlling the politics of the state of West Bengal) for over two decades. In most cases these women started their political careers to

accompany their husbands in politics. A few feel proud for joining their husbands and consider their husbands to be their political gurus (mentors).

Of all the women councilors, only Dr. Tanushree Saha has been included in the seven-member Chairman-in-Council, the core decision-making body of the Municipality. Tanushree is a medical doctor and comes from a renowned family with long involvement in the CPI(M). It is possibly her family background rather than her political stature that has facilitated her mobility into the upper hierarchy of the administration. She has been given the responsibility of looking after public health, sanitation and Indian Population Project (IPP)^{vi} schemes — all closely related to the environmental health of the town. Yet, during our conversations, she expressed her feeling that she is merely an implementer of the higher authorities' decision regarding environmental problems in her ward and does not have much voice in the decision making as a lone woman member of Chairman-in-Council. During informal discussions with women councilors, it became clear that they are aware that their selection by the party is only to meet the quota of reservation; rather than because they, as women, might have some special knowledge or skill that would improve municipal governance. Coming from families active in politics, they have been actively engaged in politics for some time, but without the reservation, it would not have been possible for them to be nominated by the party to stand in the elections. The one exception was Iva Biswas who has been in the municipal administration for 19 years. Women councilors noted that they are almost invariably offered the responsibilities most closely related to the development of women and children.^{vii}

Usha Bhattacharria prioritized her duty to represent the women of her ward as a councilor. *"I have become a councilor as a consequence of one-third reservation for women in local level governance. I should take special care for women in my area. Therefore, socio-economic development of poorer women and eradication of their poverty certainly would be prioritized."* But in other issues that are not so

clearly "women's issues," they are not empowered to do anything. In Usha's ward there are eight rice mills that are creating high levels of land, water, air and sound pollution. In dealing with these problems she admits, *"here we are helpless except checking their pollution control certificates from West Bengal Pollution Control Board."* Still, she was able to require one rice mill owner among eight to increase the height of his chimneys and to make a concrete sewerage system.

The awareness of urban environmental problems seems high among women councilors in Burdwan. They are well educated and knowledgeable about the specific environmental problems in their wards. They were able to pinpoint exactly which agro-processing plants are responsible for polluting the area, precisely where garbage is unlawfully dumped and not regularly cleared, the areas where municipal water supply is meager, and where slums are contributing to congestion. Like other councilors, they try to solve these local problems through routinely monitoring the work of paid employees of the municipality. However they regretted that they are not entrusted with adequate decision-making or budgetary powers to make specific plans to achieve permanent solutions. They are at best allowed to follow the centrally allotted duties but cannot take decisions on their own on local issues in their respective areas. They are only entrusted with the maintenance of basic amenities, not the installation of new projects for the betterment of the urban environment. For example, councilors can require renovations to the existing water supply but cannot take the decision to dig a new high capacity well. This is true for all councilors, women and men, but women— because of the gendered chores and roles they are required to perform— suffer more from inadequate and irregular water supply, narrow roads, and unsanitary conditions. Male councilors tend to ignore these inconveniences causing frustration to build up amongst the women councilors.

Sumitra Konar noted, *"my area constitutes the oldest part of the town which was built without any plan during the Raj tenure. It has narrow lanes and congested*

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houses. The roads need rebuilding but it is not my authority. I cannot take decisions on how the funds should be allocated for my area." Sumitra also knows that the narrowness of roads make her area vulnerable as the vans of the fire brigade cannot fit into the constricted residential streets.

Waste collection is another important area women councilors wanted to improve; some of them introduced door-to-door solid waste collection as a step towards urban environmental management. As well, they set up a number of garbage vats, with separate demarcation of vats and garbage trucks for bio-medical wastes. As we probed, it became apparent, however, that these provisions are inadequate without daily monitoring and councilors were clearly reluctant to regularly and personally monitor these operations once in place. Yet, the fact that they have initiated such measures is evidence of their interest in creating a pollution-free urban environment. The door-to-door collection of garbage reflects the priority of women in keeping their area clean and healthy.

Some Final Observations

This local study examines some of the procedural and substantive aspects of urban environmental decision-making in light of gender mainstreaming in municipal management in India. While drawing the links between environmental management and gender inclusive political practice, it also addresses the complicated nature of gendered identities and the important roles played by personal histories, both of individual women and their contexts.

Most women councilors in Burdwan

come from middle class backgrounds, and are entrusted by the municipal council with only those responsibilities deemed 'suitable' for their sex, such as overseeing women's and children's health programs. The fact, that only one woman has been accepted into the top decision-making body, clearly shows that the power imbalance has not changed much even after the 74th amendment. The new state provisions alone are not enough to make gender a meaningful consideration in a local system that remains unequal and divisive. While women councilors can pinpoint specific areas of the environment that need urgent attention, they do not seem to have the executive powers or influence to make needed change, yet. ❧

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i Literally meaning 'downtrodden', a term preferred by those officially known as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

ii Literally meaning 'indigenous populations', also called tribals.

iii In 1901, the population was 30 thousand which

increased to 75 thousand in 1951 and 285 thousand in 2001. The growth rate of the population was much higher in the post independence planned development period (1951 onwards) than that of the first half of the last century.

iv Now known as Kolkata.

v District headquarters.

vi IPP is a health scheme run with grants from WHO and UNICEF. This scheme provides medicines to patients of leprosy, tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS, and other epidemic diseases and also makes pregnant women aware of the need to care for their children. About two hundred health workers are working in this block level project that Tanushree runs single-handedly.

vii There are quite a few of these schemes that broadly follow Gender and Development principles, including women's Self-help Groups under the micro-credit scheme of Development of Women and Children in Urban Areas, child education centres and Integrated Child Development Schemes (ICDS), education of child labourers, improving the awareness of women's pre- and post-natal health and hygiene, and developing general awareness about health, education and sanitation among women.

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Mobilizing Women for Participating in Local Governance

A Case Study from Eskisehir, Turkey

Fatma Senol

In 2004 local elections in Turkey, KA-DER (*Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates*), a women's organization, encouraged women in 12 cities to run for elected seat of neighborhoods. I interviewed these women candidates in one city (Eskisehir) to examine how they became candidates and why nearly all women lost.

Local government's functions influence the quality of neighborhood life. Residents should therefore have a voice in local governance. Yet, individuals that are bound to neighborhoods because they are women, poor, young, old, or from an ethnic, racial or other minority groups are traditionally excluded from participating in governance. With their family and community care responsibilities, women are more likely concerned about decisions that affect their home environment, and thus engage in local politics via their volunteer work and support networks.

In all countries, however, women are less likely to run for and take elected office. Where decentralization of government-transfer of power from central to local government occurs, one should expect that it would improve access to elected offices for women. Yet such opportunities are not equally available across countries due to local differences in, for example, voting procedures, stereotyped notions of both gender and qualifications for office, or voter apathy.

In Turkey, women were only 1.6 % and 2 % of elected local officials in 1999 and 2004 respectively. Concerned with this inequality, branches of KA-DER for the first time mobilized women to run for the office of *muhtars* — neighborhood representative. In Turkey, residents of each neighborhood elect one *muhtar* for a

5-year term. *Muhtars* have neither any vote on a municipal council nor budget nor staff assigned by government. They inform local government about residents' need for public services, distribute governmental aid to poor residents, and, for a fee, manage paperwork for some government services such as getting copies of identification certificates. *Muhtar*-candidates must be literate Turkish citizens, over 24 years old, residing in their neighborhood more than 6 months, and run their candidacy supposedly independent of political parties. KA-DER considered

I interviewed these women candidates to examine how they became candidates and why nearly all women lost.

elections for this office as important in mobilizing local women for governance. In its campaign, KA-DER emphasized that neighborhood issues impact mostly women and only women *muhtars* would take these issues as public problems into the political arenas.

Turkish Women's Conditions in Running for a Local Office

Just before the 2004 elections, the city of Eskisehir had 60 neighborhoods, only one of which already had a woman *muhtar*. Eskisehir is a medium sized Turkish city with a population of 700,000 — that is, 1.05% of Turkey's population. It has a mixed economy based on indus-

trial and agricultural sectors, a military base and two large universities.

In this city, KA-DER supported 30 women as *muhtar*-candidates. Some of these candidates, however, ran against each other in their neighborhood, whereas some neighborhoods did not have any woman candidate at all. At the end, all but one lost.

Who were these women? I describe these women in respect to their family and child care and job responsibilities, financial status, history in voluntary work, and perception of "good *muhtar*." During their candidacy, most women were in their mid-40s. Parenting adolescents, most women were married, a few were single by divorce. Their education level was high school or below. Almost none had a job. The majority worked until they got married in their teens or early twenties. Only two single parents were employed. Husbands tended to be the only breadwinner in the family and held jobs in the service sector. Nearly all candidates and their families owned their own house. Their children were old enough to allow all candidates time for their candidacy.

All women candidates considered the office of *muhtar* as a job. They felt that as *muhtar* they would be an official and thus be in a "stronger" position to improve neighborhood life. However, in explaining their own situation and reasons for becoming a *muhtar*-candidate, two distinct groups of women emerge. One group of women was already involved either in voluntary organizations or political parties. These are also the women with relatives in political parties or elected offices. Women in the other group did not have such experiences. Some were recently

retired and joined voluntary organizations, whereas others in this group were seeking solutions for their family's financial problems. They considered running for office for *muhtar* — to pursue a political career or to have a job appropriate to a “woman at their age.”

Women in the first group consider this office as a chance to perform their voluntary work better by reaching out to more and especially “voiceless” residents and by getting more governmental resources for the neighborhood. They emphasize that their neighborhoods have longstanding problems despite the (male) *muhtar* being in charge for many terms. They often complain of male *muhtars* using the advantages of this seat — such as monetary benefits and of giving governmental aids only to their own supporters. Women in the second group became aware of these abuses during their candidacy.

All women candidates considered the office of *muhtar* as a bridge between residents and government. They felt that they had the qualifications for being a “good *muhtar*” — such as making a respectable and confident impression; listening especially to women and seniors patiently and kindly; working with officials persistently; and performing their job as an honest, just and hard-working public servant. Some felt that anyone with these qualifications could be a good *muhtar*. But drawing from their own experiences, especially with male *muhtars*, most women candidates felt that the skills of communicating patiently, kindly and persistently were women's skills. Male *muhtars* were short tempered with women residents' complaints and in governmental offices. Some suggested that male *muhtars* spent their work hours in tea-houses, at their own local stores, or with their male companions in the *muhtar's* office. This makes women visitors especially uncomfortable because it is mostly women residents who take problems to *muhtars*. Nearly all candidates felt women would be preferable as *muhtars*. Women *muhtars* can comfortably make home-visits to (mostly women) residents who are unable to leave their homes to come to *muhtar's* office. Sharing a common background in

gendered domestic responsibilities, women *muhtars* would sympathize with women's concerns and take them as neighborhood problems to officials.

What kind of support did women candidates get? The candidates' family, residents, and KA-DER were important sources of support but so too were differing perceptions of “*muhtar*,” “woman as *muhtar*,” and the role of voting in improving quality of neighborhood life. Getting spousal support is crucial to married candidates, before announcing their candida-

Turkish women who run to become their neighbourhood's official representative — *muhtar* — face different barriers at home, neighbourhood and the voting system

cy. Husbands agreed with or gave permission to their wives to be candidates, only if all their domestic work got done without affecting the husbands' own responsibilities.¹ KA-DER offered candidates weekly lectures for 3 months and introduced them to the local press. The lectures were about local governmental offices' and *muhtar's* responsibilities, gender differences, and how to talk and use body languages in public.

Meanwhile, each candidate ran her own campaign for 2 to 3 months. She visited residents of her neighborhood door-to-door. During that time, she gained a better understanding of her neighborhood and potential voters. In nearly all neighborhoods the incumbent *muhtar* had been a man elected for 2 to 8 terms. Some candidates felt that such stability results in residents' apathy about elections and about how elected offices impact their neighborhood life. It also entrenches social and economic relations between *muhtar* and most residents such that residents resist

change. In most candidates' experience, there appear two types of neighborhoods depending on their residents' awareness as voters. In poor neighborhoods, most residents' awareness of election issues was low. Candidates in inner-city neighborhoods with well-educated and better-off residents do not complain about that.

Also, some residents and friends of women candidates opposed the idea of a woman becoming *muhtar*. They argued that rather than dealing with strangers and challenges for 24 hours a day, women's main responsibilities should be family and child care. They also suggested that a woman *muhtar* might easily give up her office responsibilities if her domestic-work load increased. Thus, a *muhtar* should simply be male and old, that is, “wise.”

How did voting procedures impact women candidates' chances to win? Most candidates concluded that certain arrangements in polling stations allowed for the violation of voting regulations by some candidates, especially incumbent male *muhtars*. On election day all women candidates visited the polling stations in their neighborhood. Some had a team made up of friends and family members whereas incumbent *muhtars* had larger teams to “welcome and guide voters to ballot boxes.” Although influencing voters in polling stations is unconstitutional, most women candidates learned that it was a common practice in these elections. Candidates felt that the central government and its legislators show no political will to hold a genuinely fair election for the offices for *muhtar*. This becomes evident especially when only *muhtar*-candidates are required to bring their own ballots to polling stations; all *muhtar*-candidates' and their assistants' ballots to vote are squeezed on a small table next to tables with ballots for — “more important” — offices of local government and prepared by the state office. Staff monitoring polling tables sometimes push male candidates' ballots into voters' sight, whereas only candidates themselves are supposed to check these tables. Also, any individual can announce her/his candidacy for *muhtar* to election committee even on the last day before election. In some

neighborhoods, this resulted in multiple candidates on last days. This split the votes and benefited mostly the incumbent *muhtar* running for re-election. Some women themselves were late in announcing their candidacy; this made for a weak strategy against the current *muhtar's* embedded hold on power.

Turkish women who run to become their neighborhood's official representative — *muhtar* — face different barriers at home, neighborhood and the voting system. Spousal permission is a must and husbands only agree if their wife's candidacy doesn't pose any changes in domestic care responsibilities. Also, residents' ignorance of, or lack of interest in, and appreciation of voting and this office's significance for neighborhood life, their gendered stereotypes about qualifications for being *muhtar*, and the embedded social and economic relations of the current-male-*muhtar* are all barriers to women finding their voice in official politics. Finally, voting practices for this office are often violated because the significance of this office is underestimated

in the election system in Turkey. This results in conditions that jeopardize fair elections. ❧

Fatma Senol is on the faculty at Osmangazi University, Turkey. Her Ph.D. thesis examined residents' reasons and resources for participating in neighborhood organizations in Los Angeles (University of Southern California, 2004). Her research interests include diversity in civil society, urban design, and spatial practices of everyday life. She is reached at: fsenol@ogu.edu.tr

i If elected, meanwhile, most candidates were planning to rely on close proximity between *muhtar's* office and home, and get a domestic worker.
 ii Each candidate runs with a slate of six assistants, but their ballots are not linked; there are separate ballots for candidates and their assistants, without mentioning the candidate's name. It is not uncommon for a candidate to lose the election while his/her assistants win, in which case they become assistants to the newly elected (rival) *muhtar*.

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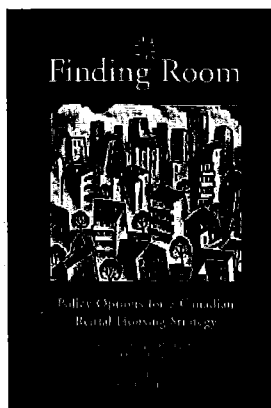
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— *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Summer 2005

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Gender Equity in Planning in the USA and UK

Apples and Oranges?

Pattsi Petrie and Dory Reeves

Comparisons between the USA and UK are valuable whether at a policy or professional level. Over the decades many policy interventions have transferred successfully from the USA to the UK, particularly in the housing field. In the reverse, the approach of Mainstreaming Equality could offer much to the development of equality in the USA — if the European Union and the UK specifically can get it right themselves. At the professional level, the study of respective professional profiles and career development barriers, skills and capacities to deliver equality, should bear fruit. From lessons on both sides of the Atlantic, we aim to make some serious suggestions about how the professions should be developing if planning is to deliver gender equality between women and men in our communities.

Planning, along with allied professions, shapes and creates communities, which can inhibit or facilitate gender equality. Planners can help communities make care giving and domestic work difficult or easy, through model trip-oriented transit and design compact communities for economic and time efficiencies for men or women. In this way, planners can effectively 'gender mainstream' their entire society. This in turn affects the ability of professionals, women as well as men, to access paid work and develop careers.

We can assume that many of the issues faced by women in the planning profession are universal. Anecdotal work by the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP) has recently found that:

- Glass ceilings mean that fewer women make it into the senior posts.
- Women have particular difficulties combining parenting and their career because of workplace obstacles such as

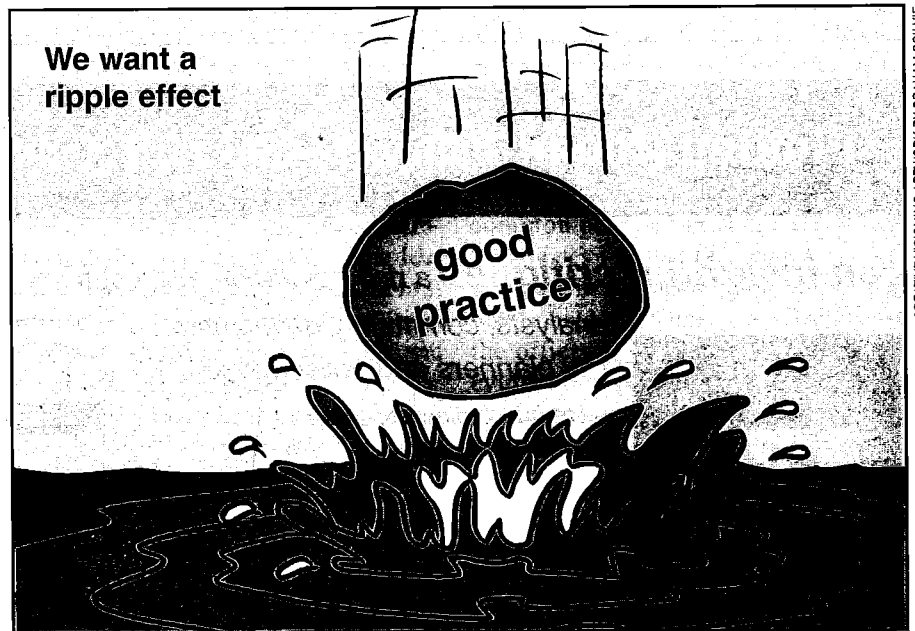
the lack of flexible working practices and family-friendly policies.

- At a policy level, there is a lack of recognition by those in planning and transport of the importance of the home. Women are still excluded from many development issues despite the expertise and local knowledge they can bring.

The online survey about the status of women and men in the planning profession, developed by Pattsi Petrie, which has now gone live in the USA, will aim to provide the largest ever survey of women and men in planning, both professional and academic. It will collect information on

are in positions to develop gender-neutral designs and policies, and to affect academic curricula. Following the USA launch, UK planners and allied practitioners will have a chance to complete the survey.

As well as providing an international comparison between planners in the USA and the UK, there is the prospect of the survey being opened up further to European networks, the Canadian Institute of Planners and planners from Iceland, Australia and New Zealand. It will provide the first benchmark survey for the 21st century and provide data to build comparisons with other allied professions. This really is a first.



CREATIVE VISIONING ARTWORK BY GRAHAM OGILVIE

the different experiences and the skills needed to address planning for diversity in the context of sustainable urbanization. It will measure discrimination in the workplace and will look at the size of the pay gap. It will try to assess whether planners

The URL for the survey is: www.urban.uiuc.edu/survey/usa.html

This survey is long overdue. There has been similar research in the architecture profession in the USA, on which this work draws. Kathryn Anthony's survey of

400 architects nationwide compared the experiences of white women and men, and racialized women and men. She showed among other things that:

"What often serve as gateways to the profession for white male architects can sometimes serve as roadblocks for those under-represented in the field. Those for whom the architectural internship was a dream-come-true usually moved on to satisfying professional careers. Yet those for whom the internship was a nightmare started off on the wrong foot, often feeling bewildered and depressed, not knowing where to turn. In the worst cases, negative internships drove young architects right out of the profession, never to return."

Along this context, researchers Ann deGraft-Johnson, Sandra Manley, Clara Greed all at University of West England, looked at why women left the profession of architecture.

Petrie and Reeves have observed that the planning profession in the UK and USA has continued to be very male dominated and it is not surprising that the way in which planning is defined reflects this. In the UK, the profession is still 75 per cent male; a more systemizing approach still predominates in the development control system in particular and also in transport.

Sandercock and Forsyth observed in their article, Gender Agenda, that in traditional planning theory:

"Women have scarcely even been seen as subjects of theory. The problem, however, is far more subtle and complex than a simple tradition of exclusion. The paradigms on which planning and theorizing about it have been based are informed by characteristics traditionally associated with the masculine in our society. There is a need to re-think the foundations of the discipline, its epistemology, and its various methodologies."

The surveys will offer a point of comparison with earlier work in the UK and the USA. For instance, in the 1980s, two women planners in Yorkshire, Gill Smith and Val Kirby, undertook one of the first surveys of women planners in the UK. Over one third said they had experienced discrimination at work and this took the

form of 'attitudes at work,' and 'sexist questions at interviews.' Services provided by the Royal Town Planning Institute such as continual professional development, were virtually inaccessible to those with caring responsibilities because of their timing, cost or availability. Women also found it difficult to participate in the governance of the Institute.

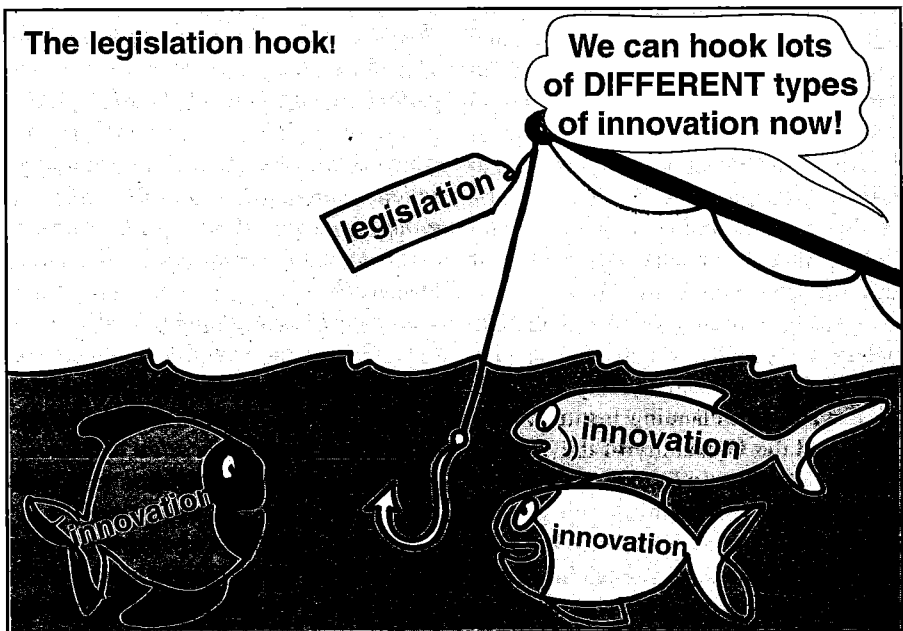
Pay gaps in the USA and UK are very similar and this despite the fact that legislation in the USA predates that in the UK by almost ten years. The United States Equal Pay Act was passed in 1963; yet the median earnings of women working full-time year-round were 77% of men's median earnings in 2003, the same as the wage gap in 2002. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, it will take another 50 years for women to reach wage parity.

Thirteen years after the Treaty of Rome (1957), the Equal Pay Act (1970) gave women in the UK the right to equal pay. This right covers not only women and men doing the same job, but also in the situation where men and women are

- Occupational segregation where women and men are concentrated in different jobs.
- The effect of caring responsibilities on women's working patterns.
- Pay discrimination where pay systems are unfair to women employees.

In the UK, the Equal Opportunities Commission is focusing on means to close the pay gap, as is the EU through the works council. Though far from perfect, this record is better than that of the US.

Gloria Steinem, founder of Ms Magazine, during a recent interview pointed out that the good news for women in the US is that things have improved; the bad news is that this improvement has come about because the barriers have been moved to the right. In other words, it takes longer for women to reach the proverbial 'glass ceiling.' The result is that younger women, just beginning a career or a combination of career and family, think there is no need for concerns about equity. Another un-doing is the erosion of aspects of USA Federal Laws prohibiting



doing work of 'equal value' but are being paid differently. But despite the law in the UK and Europe, women still face inequality. The pay gap across Europe is 15%. The gap in the UK is 18%. There are three main causes of the pay gap:

job discrimination. In the USA, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces these laws and the erosion is in the realm of sexual harassment. This is yet one more area where this baseline survey will bench mark changes.

What Can Mainstreaming Offer?

In the UK and EU, equality advocates see the mainstreaming approach as central to implementing equality of opportunity. This means building equality in to every aspect and phase of policy development and implementation as well as the way we work with each other. When the public sector duty to promote gender equality becomes statutory in the UK in 2007 and all public authorities are required to produce gender equality schemes, setting out what outcomes they aim to achieve to promote equality, mainstreaming will have the teeth it needs.

To be successful, mainstreaming relies on a commitment and leadership on the part of professionals at all levels. According to Ajzen and Fishbein, intent is the key variable for implementation. This leads to the question: is there a willingness to put in place the education to create an environment for this change to occur? The importance of this is so great that environments to avoid unsuccessful bureaucratic exercises will be created. Planners are not alone in wanting assurances that investing in mainstreaming equality will bring about real change and improved outcomes. Others interested in this range from business executives who focus primarily on effective programs that positively influence the bottom line to vulnerable populations, such as minorities, care givers, domestic workers who focus primarily on survival because of lack of effective programs.

Tools have been developed in the UK and are now readily available to help professionals mainstream equality. In 2001, the Royal Town Planning Institute commissioned the University of the West of England to undertake a study of the extent of gender mainstreaming and gender auditing in local authorities in the UK, and to produce a Gender Audit Toolkit to enable local authorities to carry out gender mainstreaming. This was published in 2003 and has been used by a number of public authorities in the UK, Canada, and mainland Europe. Oxfam has referred to it in their UK regeneration and poverty work; Glasgow City Council in their work on healthy cities; Birmingham in their

corporate strategy work and the Women's Design Service in their safety audit work. The Greater London Council staff had access to it when developing their equality materials. And the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's good practice guide on Diversity and Equality in Planning published in 2004 refers to it. The City of Vienna expressed a lot of interest in the toolkit. So word is spreading. What is less clear is the extent of the positive outcomes for women and women planners. What we want to see is the ripple effect.

Shirley Tilgham, President of Princeton, USA said she ignored discrimination early in her career. Does this have an effect on her approach to management and work with her colleagues? Nancy Hopkins, MIT professor of molecular biology, reflects on a lack of mainstreaming gender equity in this quote:

"Decades of effort have failed to produce any credible evidence for the notion that women are innately cognitively inferior to men in science, math, or any other intellectual endeavor.

Were the idea of women's inferiority not so deeply entrenched in our culture, this line of thinking would have been abandoned long ago. Meanwhile, compelling research in psychology has yielded extensive evidence for the damaging effects of such beliefs, which lower expectations among members of the affected group, can cause them to under perform, and lead to significant undervaluation of their work.

How will such attitudes finally be put to rest? The same way that sexual harassment has largely been eliminated from classrooms and workplaces: by the protracted process of education and understanding, combined with legal action and fewer women and men tolerating it."

A next step after analyzing the various data sets from the survey is to build on other complimentary research results to begin the process of building educational tools to enhance the environment toward mainstreaming. Equality needs to become integral to every aspect of professional work. There should be symmetry between how professionals interact amongst themselves and how they work within communities. In

the future, women and men need to feel comfortable raising equality issues. ❧

Dr. Patsi Petrie, Department of Urban and Regional Planning/DURP, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign/UIUC, chairs the Women's Planning Division in the American Planning Association which provides a platform to transmit ideas and career concerns of particular interest to women and to the general membership of the APA (patsi@uiuc.edu)

Dr. Dory Reeves specializes in planning for equality and diversity. She chaired the RTPI Equal Opportunities (women) panel; as an Executive Board member she chaired the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee. She stood 4 times as Junior Vice President of the RTPI on an equality platform and was Maude Clarke Visiting Professor at Queens University, Belfast. She published *Planning for Diversity* with Routledge in 2005 (see: www.reevesassociates.co.uk).

Further Reading

EU Making it Happen, effective gender mainstreaming in Ireland and the UK www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/resource/obj1-gendermainstream.pdf

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In the Field

Local Women Confronting Fears to Improve Neighbourhood Safety in the UK

Aziza Kapadia and Catherine Robertson

The Making Safer Places Project

Making Safer Places (MSP) is a community safety project that promotes and facilitates an effective consultation and participation process by engaging groups of local women to themselves identify problem design features and community safety issues in the area that they live or work and to suggest what improvements would reduce levels of fear and increase their sense of safety. The vision behind MSP is: 'Urban environments where women feel safe to go about their everyday lives without fear.'

Fear of Crime

The British Crime Survey shows, year upon year, that women feel more worried about personal safety than men, both in public spaces, and in the private sphere of their home. This has a particularly pronounced impact on the lives of older women, Black and minority ethnic women and disabled women. For example, 59% of women over 60 say they do not often use their local area after dark, and 19% say they never do, at least in part due to a fear of crime. Clearly then, fear of crime has an impact on the use of public spaces.

Women informed the MSP Project that they feel less safe at home, in public spaces and travelling through local areas compared to men that they know. Generally, women involved in the project do not feel they have the same access to or encouragement to use public spaces as men. Further they state that public transport does not necessarily meet their specific needs given that they largely use transport differently than men with more breaks in the journey due to multi tasking (shopping/working) and multi care responsibilities

(dropping off child at school/dropping in to see elderly relative.)

Project Ethos

MSP seeks to improve safety in the built environment in prioritised regeneration areas in the cities of Manchester, Bristol and London.

MSP firmly believes that it is the women who live or work in an area that are best placed to make recommendations on improved safety, that they should be recognised as a valuable resource of information, and actively encouraged to feed into and develop the community safety agenda in their area. MSP simply provides women with an opportunity to suggest improvements for safety in the area, along with a platform to directly present these suggestions to local decision makers for implementation.

In this respect, the Making Safer Places project is considered unique by the women participants and unlike previous experiences of consultation processes where their ideas may not necessarily have a direct impact on final outcomes. With MSP, the women's recommendations are realised and the women themselves credited for their work.

Diversity and Representation

Working in cities with a community make-up that is rich and diverse, MSP is committed to ensuring that publicity to recruit participants for each community safety audit actively targets participants that reflect the diverse views of the community. Of the 143 women who have participated in a community safety audit during the course of the 3-year pilot project, background information was successfully gathered from 127 women: 25% of the

women said they were from a Black Minority Ethnic group, 75% were over 40 and 25% identified as disabled.

Through successfully targeting women across diverse community groups, MSP is informed that there are some issues that are generally of concern to all women. An example of this are the nooks and crannies created by overgrown landscaping, poor lighting and hidden corners or remote corners. However, what also comes to light is that the same space may be used and perceived differently depending on a woman's socio/economic/financial/ethnic/religious identity and other experiences.

On one audit, the following comments were made about the same road:

'When it starts to get dark ... you get a lot of ... drugs and stuff ... sometimes I've had a couple of men shout over and follow me up the road in their cars ... so I don't feel safe here at all really.'

White woman in late teens

'Its [Percival Street] very busy, very big, very wide ... and just seems spooky to walk down at night ...'

White woman late 30's/early 40's

'Kids chuck eggs ... and cans on you ... even fireworks ... on Percival Street'

White woman late 20's

'You got kids hanging around and going up and down on the motorbike screaming abuse...'

Black woman of African/Caribbean descent, 30-40

In a comparative interview about the same space with a male pedestrian an MSP group member asked: 'Are there any times when you don't feel safe?'

Man: 'No, must admit there hasn't been. I saw a lot of police out here the other night but personally I don't have any problems....Should I be worried?' [Laughs]

The Community Safety Audit Process

The idea and concept of women's safety audits were first developed some 30 years ago in Toronto.

The audit tool described below shows the development undertaken in the UK by Women's Design Service on this idea.

Audit tool

1. Discussion
2. Mapping
3. Observation
4. Recording
5. Analysis
6. Presentation of recommendations
7. Implementation of recommendations

Discussion

By engaging in a Making Safer Places Community Safety Audit, women have the opportunity to discuss, in a safe space, places and spaces in their area where they do feel safe and are able to pinpoint areas that they don't feel safe and investigate why. The process involves at times sharing very personal experiences of direct crime (such as rape, sexual assault, muggings and homophobic/racist/other

abuse) as well as indirect experiences of crime (such as car theft and burglary). A number of times, women have spoken of their experiences for the very first time, having never previously been given or taken the space or opportunity to speak out before. These accounts have proved to be emotional and moving experience for the group as a whole.

Mapping

Women are encouraged to draw mind maps in relation to daily or regular journeys made to work, school, gym, shopping, visiting friends/relatives and so on. This helps the women to focus on inaccessible or uninviting pedestrian routes and unsafe hotspots in the built environment due to design or community safety issues. These are often areas that they avoid altogether, sometimes subconsciously, or cut through quickly when impossible to avoid.

Observations and Recording

Having identified the hotspots, the women agree, as a group, which are to be prioritised for closer observation. They then conduct a physical observation of these hotspots in order to collect more information on the area and its safety issues. Women have also commented that the very act of being at a hotspot en masse has felt hugely powerful and a step toward reclaiming the space.

Observations carried out by the MSP

project over the 3 years support the British Crime Statistics reports. Hotspots identified by the women as unsafe were observed in the morning, afternoon and evening. The ratio of men to women using the space changed during the day from women outnumbering men, to equal usage, to slightly more men than women. After dark, the ratio was often 5:1 (men: women) and, at times men outnumbered women by as much as 8:1.

Interviews with women using the space during the day clarified that the reason they were not there after dark was due to fear. *'I don't go out for fear. You don't know if you will get back in one piece,'* commented one woman. *'I don't come out at night ... I'm aware that something could happen ...'* another said. A common response was related to having access to private transport, *'I don't leave home at night and drive ... everywhere.'* The reputation of a place has an impact on whether women feel safe, *'I heard that 2 rapes took place on City Road a month ago; a young girl of 13 and an older woman... so you just don't come out ...'* This is a clear indication of the impact that fear of crime has on women's lives, in terms of limiting access to public spaces.

Implementation

Implementation has not been an easy or linear process in any of the audits. Working towards implementation has involved developing links with and under-



Women discussing safety implications with a health professional.



Sharing experiences and ideas about safety.



Women carrying out a safety audit.

standing of different local government and regeneration agencies. It has involved developing presentation and lobbying skills, as well as working with the local media. However, each of the six groups of women undertaking an audit have used their findings to influence local community safety practice and policy.

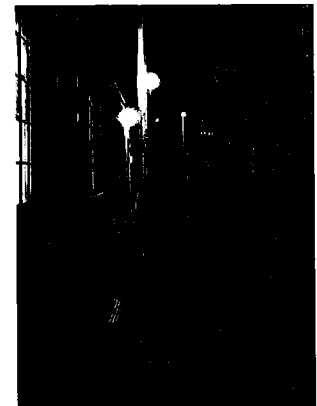
For example, one group in London identified a number of 'quick win' solutions to improve their estate. These included: improving the existing signage to add accessible maps at each entrance to the estate; cutting back overgrown shrubs to increase visibility; and getting lighting fixtures cleaned. They also developed several longer term recommendations around the design of the estate, for example: increasing play facilities and seating for adults; and increasing visibility around the area.

Of course, seeing physical changes come about as a result of the women's work is a hugely important part of the process. Consultation fatigue and cynicism about what could actually be achieved through the audits were common reactions from many women who felt their opinion was often requested, but rarely listened to. The longer-term outcome of the audits will be to establish if changing the physical environment increases feelings of safety for women

living in each locality.

The initial indications are positive. The process of auditing itself has brought together women who previously had not met. It has opened up questions in their minds as to why certain areas do not feel safe. Crucially, through developing their own recommendations to issues which are their own priorities, the women involved in the audits have established that something can be done, that women's safety is the concern and responsibility of society, and not just an individual burden. ❧

Aziza Kapadia is a training development worker. She has substantive experience in equalities work and has worked around the related issues of homelessness and community safety in the voluntary sector for 14 years. Most recently, before joining WDS, she worked as a Senior Worker for the Legal and Advice Services Team at the Nia Project in London. She also runs her own training and consultancy business.



Unevenly and inadequately lit alley, suggesting entrapment.

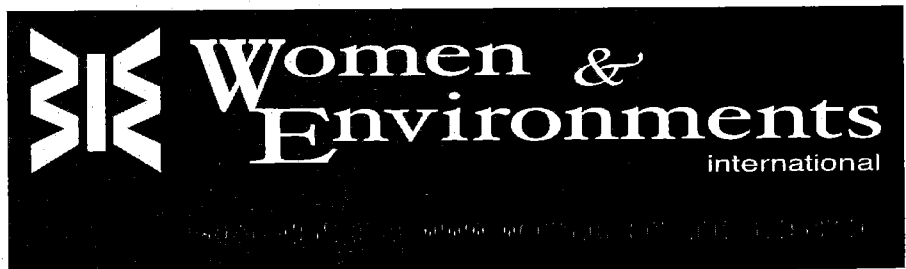
Catherine Robertson is a policy development worker. Before joining WDS, Catherine worked in education in a variety of roles, undertaking research in primary schools, working to support volunteers in adult and community education, and leading initiatives to widen participation in higher education. She has volunteered and worked on a range of community based projects, including a women's branch of the WEA and a fledgling credit union.

Further Reading

www.wds.org.uk — the website of Women's Design Service, for audit reports, conference report and further project information.

Making Safer Places (1998) — resource book published by WDS.

www.femmesetvilles.org includes a compendium of good practice on women's safety.



Cuba's Urban Agriculture: Food Security and Urban Sustainability

Sonja Killoran-McKibbin

América Alarcón was in Canada, on her first trip outside of Cuba, when we first met. I was working as the interpreter for a delegation of Cuban agricultural producers who had been sponsored to share their experiences in Canada and learn about Canadian agricultural practices. América was constantly noticing things I wouldn't have thought about twice: the amount of weeds in the fields, the wasted products in Canada, how much produce was left in the fields — even on an organic farm — because it wasn't deemed nice enough, too small or misshaped, for consumption. Acting as her English voice, I always felt somewhat compromised by her direct manner of speech and criticisms.

América's farming experience is linked to the food crisis that Cuba endured following the fall of the Soviet Union. Previously dependent on subsidized Soviet food imports, Cuba had developed a highly industrialized export agricultural model, producing cash crops of sugar, coffee, and tobacco in exchange for imports of staples from the U.S.S.R. When the Soviet system collapsed, Cuba was hung out to dry without the ability to produce enough foods for its own population. Without the agricultural inputs — chemical pesticides, fertilizers, fuel — on which Cuba had previously relied, and without even sufficient fuel to transport produce into the city, the daily caloric intake of Cubans dropped by approximately 30%.

Enter América and other urban farmers like her. Small farms and gardens cropped up throughout the city. The state strongly supported this movement, redistributed available plots and developed agriculture extension organizations. The food grown now represents an important



América's small farm, is an oasis of green space in the city.

source of the people's daily diet. Statistics show that urban agriculture produced 58% of the country's vegetables in 2000. Havana alone has over 37,000 acres in production yielding over 1.7 million tonnes of food. These are divided between small patio gardens, private plots, organiponicos (small-scale operations that employ intensive farming techniques), cooperatives and state farms with employees. On América's farm, about a half-hour from the centre of Havana, she produces an incredible diversity of vegetables, fruits, herbs and medicinal plants. She also raises chickens, goats, pigs, cows and even fish on her small farm.

Urban agriculture is often relatively informal. Growers produce on small garden plots and do the work in addition to regular employment. Some might consider it just a hobby. In many countries, although the traditional agricultural sector may be male dominated, women are primary urban producers. The informal

nature of urban agriculture often means that small-scale growing for family consumption falls into the world of household maintenance in line with childcare, cleaning and other tasks — seen as mostly women's tasks.

In Cuba this is far from the case. The density of the city, the scarcity of suitable land, and the gravity of the food crisis demanded a formalization of urban agriculture that is unparalleled in other countries. The system of land tenure is designed to ensure maximum production of the land available. Producers have to make a case for the expansion of their farm by demonstrating successful yields and plans for the land. Urban farmers typically undergo inspections of their properties by Ministry of Agriculture specialists who observe what farmers are growing, verify that they are selling at appropriate prices and identify challenges. The extensive infrastructure surrounding urban agriculture demonstrates the high social-

value placed on food security following the crisis.

With this formalization of urban agriculture, one can see a relative decrease in the percentage of women versus men. Urban agriculture is one of the few areas where private enterprise — and subsequent increased income opportunities — is available to ordinary people. Men appear more willing to take advantage of this than women. Although women represent 49.9% of the Cuban workforce, they only represent 20% of the workforce in the agricultural sector. It is difficult to obtain statistics on the number of women engaged specifically in urban agriculture, but their participation has been estimated to be as low as 15% of producers. In Havana, 55% of the employees in urban agriculture are women. Countrywide, they represent 70% of the technical force in grassroots government bodies of the Ministry of Agriculture, working as inspectors, extension agents, coordinators and educators. This means that women are the primary promoters and educators for urban agriculture.

Although women don't represent the majority of producers, urban agriculture has had a definite impact on the lives of women and their families. Women, as the traditional household food providers, felt the brunt of the food crisis as they struggled to provide for their families. Now, through state organization, women fulfil roles to promote food security at a societal rather than simply family level. The development of urban agriculture has increased food access and producers must fulfil social obligations. All producers must provide a portion of their produce to the state and its service providers. In América's case, this represents over 1000 pounds of fruit and vegetables provided to a local



América brings produce to the farm stand in a battered wheelbarrow.

daycare every month. The food she provides is used to prepare lunch and a snack for the children. This offers them vegetables they might not otherwise receive.

Vegetables are far from a staple in the Cuban diet and are often considered inaccessible or expensive at state markets. Through the provision of produce to schools, hospitals, daycares and other social service centres, urban agriculture has made a marked difference in the diets and health of some of the most vulnerable members of the population. Urban agriculture typically relies on a diversity of crops that allows for greater variety for consumers. The development of urban agriculture went hand in hand with the opening up of farmers markets throughout the city and allowed farmers to sell produce directly from their land. This provided urban dwellers with more options and more affordable access to fruits and vegetables. Prices of produce bought directly

at sale points on urban farms are typically 30-50% of the prices at state sponsored farmers' markets. This has had a significant impact on families' diets and the health of children. State programs and farmers markets have made vegetables more accessible — both financially and logistically.

While the urban agriculture program in Cuba is far from a feminist experiment, one can clearly see positive impacts on women and families. The importance placed on food provision by the state has shown a societal response to a food crisis rather than simply placing an additional burden on women, the traditional caregivers, to face their hungry families. It also has allowed many women to become urban farmers and support employment in urban agriculture. ❧

Sonja Killoran-McKibbin is a community worker and educator currently based in Havana.

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Seeds in the City — The Greening of Havana, a VHS, for copies email seeds@sounddevelopment.com

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 **Women &
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Meet the Neighbours

Building Understanding Through Participation¹

Patricia Manuel, Donna Durant, and Sheri Lecker

In September 2005, the women of Adsum Court in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia celebrated a victory. Through the efforts of their executive director, expertise from a planning consultant², and their own involvement in the planning process, they helped secure a municipal plan amendment and development agreement to expand their building and increase the availability of affordable housing for women. Significant for Adsum Court residents, participation in the process brought them more fully into the community and generated new ideas for neighbourhood involvement.

Adsum Court is comprised of sixteen studio apartments providing permanent, affordable housing for single women without children. Located in Dartmouth's socially diverse north-end, Adsum Court is managed by an executive director and support staff³. Built in 1987 as an affordable housing demonstration project, the Court has evolved into a financially and socially sustainable residential environment where women form a supportive community.⁴

The foray into municipal planning began late in 2003 when Adsum Court's Board of Directors secured federal funding to expand the building by eight units. However, the property fell within an area that had been rezoned from multi- to single-unit residential land use during a general Plan revision approved in 1991. As a non-conforming use, Adsum Court needed a zoning change for the expansion.

Moving from single family to multi-unit residential land use is a difficult change to bring about. Doing so to create affordable housing is even more challenging. The theme can ignite NIMBYism, and the formality, location, and timing of public meetings can inadvertently discourage the involvement of low-income women. Their voices may remain silent in



Adsum Court resident Donna Durant (left) with Rebekah Skeete, Program Officer at the Court.

debates that can become lop-sided and stigmatizing. The women of Adsum Court were determined to confront potential barriers and take risks in order to achieve their goal. Despite a bureaucratic process that was at times ponderous and frustrating, the public participation events held positive surprises and rewards.

Donna Durant is one of six residents from Adsum Court who participated in the public meetings. She relates the experience on behalf of those who participated.

When we first learned of the plan to expand Adsum Court some of us felt a bit apprehensive about eight new residents joining our established community, a normal enough reaction among people anywhere when faced with such a change. But, we also know how important it is to have a safe home and what that opportunity would mean to other women in need.

Adsum Court is very visible in the community but our neighbours seem to know little about us. Knowing that the public process would open discussion about our home, we knew we had to be

there to meet our neighbours, speak for ourselves, and respond to any negativity that might come out.

Five of us spoke at the two public information sessions. We described Adsum Court as a community of and for women, a safe, supportive and friendly place. We spoke about the continuing need among women for safe, permanent housing. It was an opportunity to educate our neighbours. For example, several people asked why we don't move on after a 'limited stay' at Adsum Court thereby giving other women a chance (instead of expanding the property). These persons did not understand that Adsum Court is permanent; it's our home. Some of us do and will move on, like anybody might. But as one of us put it, some residents may always need what Adsum Court offers — affordable rent and a supportive community. We explained that, just like our neighbours, we value and care about our home. Several people commented on the state of an undeveloped part of the property — the wooded backyard

between our building and the neighbours. "What about a garden?" responded one of the women in our group. As it turned out, two of our neighbours with landscaping experience came forward offering help if that is what we decide to do.

I spoke at the formal public hearing of Halifax Regional Municipal Council while other residents of Adsum Court attended to lend support. The Mayor was encouraging and friendly but the setting was intimidating, especially the TV camera. Other people who support Adsum Court and affordable housing in general did speak for the application but, by then, we felt we had succeeded in educating our neighbours and addressing their concerns. No one from the community spoke against the amendment and expansion. The application received unanimous approval.

We feel we created positive awareness of the Court among others in the area by participating in the public process. We also gained a new perspective for ourselves. We're looking forward to building that garden or park. It's an idea that came out of the public meetings and maybe it will be an ongoing link between our neighbours and us. For myself, joining the local District 9 residents' association is a possibility. And, as another resident said, "it's taking part in the democratic process. I enjoyed it and I want to participate in what happens in the community."

As we told others, Adsum Court is our home and a place we care greatly about. More will share it with us. We became involved and others learned. We definitely feel that we have built connections into the community. ❧

Patricia Manuel is an Associate Professor with the School of Planning, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS. She specializes in environmental planning with an emphasis on bringing nature into the built environment. Patricia can be reached at patricia.manuel@dal.ca.

Donna Durant is a resident of Adsum Court, Dartmouth, NS. Donna was a key participant in the public discussions of the Adsum Court application.

Sheri Lecker is the Executive Director of Adsum for Women & Children in Halifax, NS. She brings more than 10 years of experience with non-profit agencies in Canada and over-



New construction finally gets underway at Adsum Court (December, 2005).

seas to the Adsum programs and initiatives. Donna and Sheri can be reached at adsumex.ecdir@hfx.eastlink.ca.

1 'Meet the neighbours' is a prelude to the community garden project planned as a joint initiative of Adsum Court residents and management and Dalhousie University including Dr. Reg Urbanowski, School of Occupational Therapy; Dr. Patricia Manuel, School of Planning; Dr. Anita Unruh, School of Health and Human Performance; and Dr. Jeff Karabanow, School of Social Work.

2 Patricia Richards, Planning Consultant, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

3 Management of Adsum Court is limited to property management, once-weekly evening programs, social work support and other services as needed. Housing is permanent, the women are independent, and rent is geared to income. Women interested in living at the Court apply to Adsum's Executive Director. Apartments are compact (about 450 sq ft) and comfortably adequate for a single person.

4 Adsum Court now operates on self-generated income. Financial sustainability has proven key to the development and life span of affordable and supportive housing in Nova Scotia where the provincial government does not provide operating grants. Federal grants, such as the one obtained to expand the Court, are only available if an agency can prove that its project will be financially sustainable. Being financially self-reliant means the Court can provide housing security for tenants that, in turn helps to foster permanence and community. Community permanence encourages engagement in activities that assist the residents to become resources to each other and advocates for themselves in the greater community.

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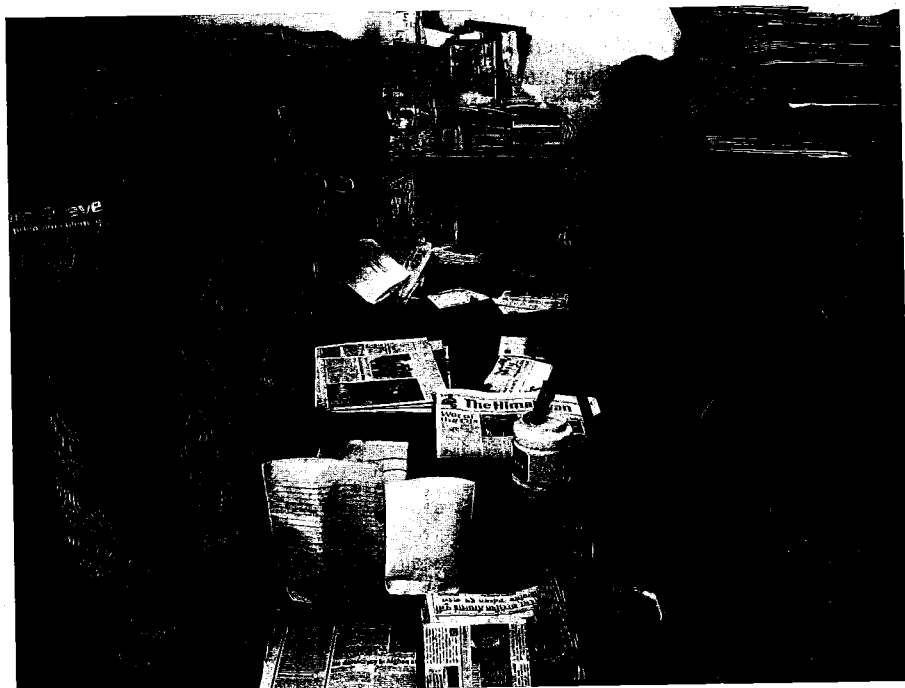
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Kathmandu: Women Tackle Solid Waste Management

Brenda Bushell and Masayuki Goto

In her professional life, Sarita Shrestha Maskey is an architect. In her private life she's an environmental activist, striving to support other women in achieving a clean and healthy environment in the suburban neighborhoods of Kathmandu, Nepal's capital city. Sarita and a group of concerned housewives founded the organization "Women in Sustainable Development" (WSD) in 2000, a small but mighty force aimed at giving women a voice and providing them with opportunities to make a difference in their city's environment. Building social capital and acceptance over the past six years, WSD has succeeded in creating an exemplary model for urban waste management that is making community leaders and government officials take notice.



MS. POOJA SHRESTHA

Staff making thunga (traditional paper bags) of recycled newspapers.

Motivation for Action

Reeling under the pressures of urban growth and poverty, many women in Kathmandu face a stark reality — overcrowded living space, unmanaged community resources and a growing mountain of waste.

In fact, it wasn't until the 1980s that waste began to be an issue. Before then, nearly 80% of household waste was organic, mostly kitchen waste, which was simply composted in pits between dwellings. Due to rapid and haphazard urbanization and a change in consumer purchasing, women now constantly struggle to manage a growing amount of both organic and inorganic waste in their homes and neighborhoods. A poorly managed city waste management system has resulted in garbage being dumped along roadsides, riverbanks and in vacant lots. This has led to land, water and air pollution and a subsequent rise in the spread of water and airborne diseases. Hardest hit are women. Marginalized by an

entrenched patriarchal system, they are expected to manage the household and the health and welfare of their families without education or knowledge of how these unhealthy waste practices can endanger their lives and the lives of their families. Extremely visible is the great need for new practices that both reduce the consumption of resources and lead to an improved quality of life.

No Work is Small, No Work is Big

Regarded as pioneers for their efforts in mobilizing women in the management of solid waste at the grassroots level, the members of WSD developed the project "Creation for the Environment" in 2002. Today their model, based on creating good practices for the environment, is spreading to other neighborhoods across the city. Focusing on the 3Rs — reduce, reuse and recycle — the project aims to enable families in Kathmandu to have a clean and healthy environment through

local initiatives. To meet this goal, WSD objectives include reducing solid waste at source, while empowering community members to be able to collect and manage solid waste through recycling. Their activities include:

- awareness-raising for waste management in local shops and households;
- door to door waste paper collection; and
- recycling of newspapers and waste paper into paper bags.

Their main objective is the reduction of small plastic bags at source and provision of an alternative to these bags.

Although small thin black plastic bags have been in circulation in Kathmandu since the early 1970s, the impact on the environment has become more visible over the past few years as shopkeepers have begun to pack items separately as a sign of courtesy for their customers. Now shoppers expect this service but seldom realize or consider the consequences to the environ-

ment and their own health when they discard them. Not only are the bags unsightly, but the plastic clogs up city drains causing stagnant pools of dirty water, impedes the flow of local rivers and victimizes cows and stray dogs and other animals roaming the streets looking for food.

To draw attention to the increase in plastic littering street gutters, the municipal government created a policy in 2002, banning the use of thin plastic bags under 20 microns in Kathmandu's retail shops. But this ban has not been well enforced, partly because of worries that it would result in a loss of revenue and employment. So, in an attempt to raise awareness among local shopkeepers and the community, WSD took action.

They surveyed approximately 110 shops in various districts of Kathmandu to determine the awareness of shopkeepers regarding the dangers of using plastic bags. Although many admitted that plastic was harmful for the environment, they voiced concern about the possible loss of customers without at least offering plastic bags. Armed with the findings, WSD decided to create a substitute to plastic bags. They recycled newspapers and other paper waste into a more traditional style of shopping bag known as the *thunga*, as an alternative for shop owners to offer their customers.

"Our primary aim is to convince the shopkeepers to cut down or eliminate plastic bags altogether", Sarita says. "At the very least we would like the shopkeepers to give their customers an option by offering to pack items in our paper bags instead of the thin plastic ones."

WSD members believe this is the first step in changing business practices and in raising awareness about the consumer's responsibility in reducing plastic waste in their city. To achieve this goal, WSD produces *thunga* in various sizes and shapes from newspapers and other used paper, offering to sell them to shopkeepers for 1 rupee. It costs WSD 15 rupees (22 cents) to make 100 bags. Currently, 46 shopkeepers are participating in the project and the small profit WSD makes allows them to hire three or four staff members to make the bags. Actively promoting

gender, caste and social equality within the organization, WSD encourages both men and women of differing ethnic groups and castes to apply as staff members. After several workshops, a team can produce nearly 150 *thungas* per day. Their motto — "No work is small work, no work is big" — captures perfectly their core philosophy.

Connected to this project, WSD is also making bags from stronger imported paper for the more upscale shops. These bags are colorful and have the shop's name printed on them along with environmental slogans such as "Protect Your Local Environment." Each bag produced from imported paper costs 7 rupees to make and is sold to shops for 9 rupees. WSD markets them to boutiques, department stores and bookshops as a way of advertising their shops, something not done in Nepal before.

Education, Not Profit

Unlike other recycling businesses run by men in the city, profit is not the goal of WSD. To the WSD their venture is to introduce consumers to the concept of the 3Rs. Their campaigns and community focus groups emphasize the importance of choosing, using and reusing the paper

thunga; taking it along on daily shopping trips to the fruit and vegetable shops. Although the activities are expanding, sustaining these two projects remains a concern. "How to sustain these projects is always a question for us. Still, through our small profits and our networking system with other women's groups we are hoping we can continue our work," Sarita says.

But even with their spirit and determination, they still question the best way to implement waste management in a city that is torn over the need for development and the need for conservation. "We all have to join hands if we want to limit the environmental and health impacts. On one level, we have to convince not only the shopkeepers of the need to eliminate plastic bags, but we also have to convince the families (primarily the women) to take their own paper or cloth shopping bags with them everyday. On another level, schools need to educate the next generation on best practices for cutting down on waste. On the ground level though, the government has to take an important role in this issue. They need to enforce policies strictly and support organizations like ours. The motive of our work is to make government policies a reality. The idea is to work in parallel. Right now though we



Staff members delivering an order of *thunga* to a local shopkeeper.

are challenging the government to implement the policies they have. Our efforts will be more clearly understood when the government takes action."

Sarita believes that without women's voices and contributions towards environmental management, sustainable development will remain an elusive dream in Kathmandu. "Nepali women have a lot of practical knowledge about environmental management and, with a little training they can acquire a lot of skills. It's important to have women's organizations like ours who will work in a pro-active way. In this male-dominated society, women are coming to the fore despite deep rooted cultural bias, values and traditions. It is our responsibility to support the women already out there and make the others confident to go out and make a difference." ❧

Brenda Bushell is an Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental and Information Studies at Musashi Institute of Technology, Yokohama, Japan. Her research focuses on women's roles related to environmental management. Related to this theme, she co-ordinates a collaborative environment project involving university students from Japan and Nepal.

Masayuki Goto is an Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental and Information Studies at Musashi Institute of Technology, Yokohama, Japan. His research focuses on industrial and information management with related management projects for various sectors of society in Japan and Nepal.

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Gender Equality and the New City of Montréal

Building on the Past and Consolidating the Future

Women and Cities International

In preparation for the World Urban Forum III, in December 2005 a group of Montréal women got together to join the Habitat Jam to share their experiences on-line with other participants in the world. *Women in Cities International*, based in Montréal, organized this meeting and took the opportunity to ask questions about the participation of women's groups in the new City of Montréal.

As part of the preparations for the third World Urban Forum, the Government of Canada, in partnership with UN-HABITAT organized a 72-hour Internet event. Tens of thousands of people from all countries of the world and walks of life participated in the 72-hour event. A specific effort was made to facilitate participation of women's groups. This dialogue will form a significant part of the discussions at the World Urban Forum III in Vancouver, Canada, in June 2006. For information about the Habitat JAM see: www.iamthejam.com/

In 2001 the Québec government legislated the amalgamation of municipal governments in urban areas. The new City of Montréal was created from the 29 former municipalities on the Island of Montréal and went from 9 to 27 boroughs (arrondissements). Of these 29 municipalities, only the former City of Montréal had a specific program related to gender equality and women's participation in local governance, the Programme *Femmes et ville*.¹

To ensure that the gains made through this program, which was based on a

model of partnership with women's groups would not be lost, a coalition of women's groups organized the conference 'Montréal Ville Nouv'ELLES'² in September 2001 to prepare for the creation of the new City and to enter into a dialogue with the City administration.

In 2002, the *Sommet de Montréal*, brought together stakeholders from all sectors of Montréal society. The Mayor officially named representatives of the different sectors and the first gain for gender equality was the recognition of women's issues through the appointment of a head of a women's delegation. The members of the women's delegation successfully lobbied and gained support from all partners for their demands. The Mayor and the new City administration were then bound by these agreements which became commitments and led to the implementation of specific activities related to the goal of gender equality. A committee, referred to as 'les Sommettes', was then created to ensure the follow up with the City administration. This committee was composed of representatives of a coalition of women's groups and representatives from the Conseil du statut de la femme, the Québec government's Status of Women Council. A budget was allocated by the City Summit, for implementation of a five year gender equality plan from 2002 to 2007. This plan aimed at integrating, into the regular operations of the City, permanent consultative and administrative structures related to gender equality:

- Creation of a consultative body on gender equality;
- Creation of a permanent and specific administrative office on gender equality (building on the existing Femmes et Ville program);

- Development and implementation of a gender equality policy;
- Development and implementation of a training program on gender mainstreaming for elected officials, managers, professionals and service providers; and
- Implementation of a policy on safety planning and design (building on the Guide d'aménagement sécuritaire, based on the concept of safety planning from women's perspective).

The first achievement was the creation of the « Conseil des Montréalaises » in September 2004. This consultative council is composed of 15 women nominated through a public process and ratified by the municipal council. A permanent budget line has been created to support the council's activities. Its mandate is to give advice to the city council and to the borough councils, on all issues regarding women's quality of life. It will also contribute to the development and implementation of a gender equality policy.³

Another element which has made progress is the development of a gender mainstreaming training program. The nomination in 2005 of a municipal councillor specifically dedicated to advancing the dossier of gender equality, helped to move things ahead.

Discussing the lessons learned during this process, Johanne Bouchard, Head of the Women's Delegation, stated that "the commitment of the representatives of the women's groups who sit on the committee, their persistence and vigilance, the credibility that they have gained from the City — these are all key elements in the progress we have made. But we cannot take anything for granted and we have to

pursue our engagement to ensure that the gains will not be lost. We particularly have to develop new strategies in order to work, at the borough level, with the elected officials and the civil servants as the boroughs now have complete autonomy in the delivery of services regarding social and community development, housing, safety, leisure, culture, etc."

In September 2005, a conference entitled 'Une ville à la mesure des femmes',⁴ reaffirmed the importance of developing and implementing a Municipal Gender Equality Policy and of creating a permanent administrative structure with adequate resources to ensure its capacity to follow up and to evaluate its activities. This is all the more important in the context of the re-configuration of the City of Montréal following the referenda that led to the dismantling of the newly amalgamated cities. As of January 2006, the City of Montréal is made up of 19 boroughs. The considerable autonomy given to the borough level of governance by the provincial government represents a huge challenge for the implementation of gender equality across the entire territory of the new City; as boroughs are not legally bound by most of the City of Montréal policies.

Women's mobilization strategy at the borough level: The Déclaration citoyenne des femmes de Ste-Marie

Given this new decentralization of responsibilities to the borough level, Women's Centers have taken initiatives to promote gender equality in local policies and programs. In the context of an urban renewal program in one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the City, the Centre d'éducation et d'action des femmes (CEAF) — a local Women's Centre, has

developed a series of initiatives. In order to answer the question "What are the elements of a neighbourhood that make it a good place for women to live?", the group held a series of meetings and cafés-rencontres with local women which led to the publication of the Déclaration citoyenne des femmes de Ste-Marie. Seven priority areas were outlined for action that would improve the quality of life for women: housing and planning, mobility, safety, social and economic development, community and quality of life, natural and historical resources, and culture.

The Declaration was distributed door to door, presented to the community in the form of theatre, and to the borough Mayor in a formal meeting. With the financial support of the Comité Femmes et développement régional,⁵ it then inspired four other Women's Centres to use the Declaration in their boroughs. Subsequently it was presented to the Mayor of Montréal in the fall of 2005. The Declaration has had considerable impact in showing the borough and central administrations that women citizens are deeply interested in urban issues and that they have specific needs to be met across a variety of areas of City services and programs. ❧

Femmes et villes international/Women in Cities International is an exchange network for gender equality issues and the status of women in cities around the world. www.femmesetvilles.org

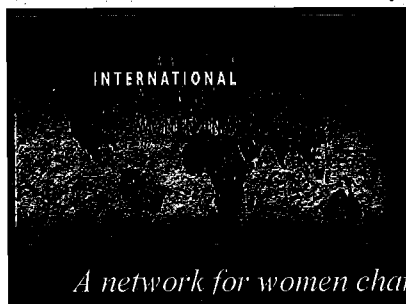
1 www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/femmesetville

2 See the report of this conference at www.femmesdemontreal.org

3 www.ville.montreal.qc.ca

4 This conference title refers to the publication of « A City Tailored to Women — the role of municipal governments in achieving Gender Equality », published by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in 1997 and 2004 (New Edition). www.icmd-cidm.ca

5 www.femmesdemontreal.org



A network for women changing their cities and communities

Designing a Safe Haven for Women

Interview with Architect Janna Levitt

Gail Lush

Anti-poverty and housing advocates indicate that women and children are the fastest growing group of homeless citizens in Canada's largest cities. Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, immigrant and refugee women, single mothers, and the elderly are at most risk of becoming homeless. Although the lack of affordable housing is cited as a main reason for homelessness in cities, women's housing needs are unique from those of men, originating from multiple factors related to unpaid care giving, poverty, assault and abuse and racial and gender inequalities.

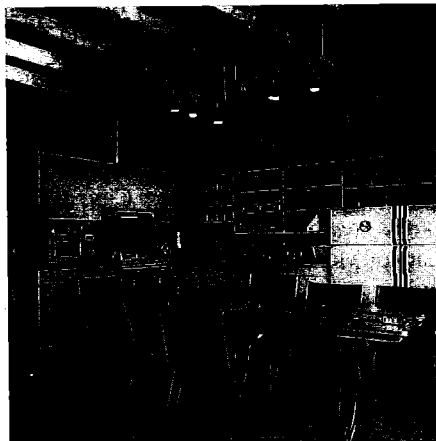
In March 2005 the National Network on Environments and Women's Health (NNEWH), one of four Centres of Excellence in Women's Health, held a bilingual national consultation entitled Healthy Cities for Canadian Women. The goal of the consultation was to create cross-sectoral opportunities for researchers, policy makers, community representatives, service providers, municipal planners and architects to identify key health research and policy priorities for women living in Canada's cities. One of the topics of discussion was the impact of homelessness on women's health.

At the inaugural reception, architect Janna Levitt presented her work on designing housing for homeless women. Levitt's sensitivity to design detail and the gendered environments in which we live has resulted in a number of innovative housing and drop-in centres relevant to men and women's experiences with homelessness. Gail Lush, the Communications Coordinator of NNEWH, had the opportunity to talk with Levitt about her commitment to serving the needs of women architecturally.

LUSH: Savards, built at the eastern end of a renovated, nineteenth-century warehouse, was designed specifically to house

women with a long history of living on the streets of Toronto? How did you become involved with this project?

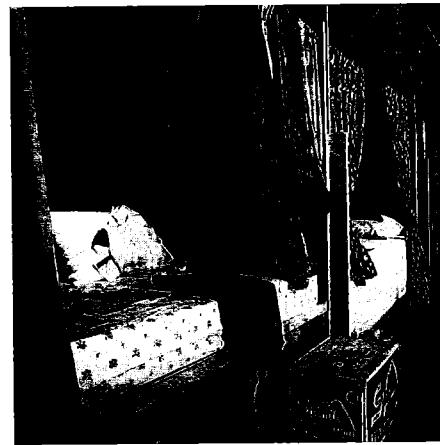
LEVITT: The relationship between women's health and housing has always been a personal and professional interest of mine as an architect. Levitt Goodman Architects was initially hired by Homes First Society to design Strachan House, an innovative shelter for men and women who were coming in and off the streets, but still able to live in a community setting. When we started this project in the



Savards kitchen.

frontline workers and homeless women? And, would you say this was crucial to the project?

LEVITT: Yes, we did consult others and it was absolutely crucial. In order to provide this unique housing, you really need to work with a range of people who will have an effect on the housing to understand what the issues are. Before we started the planning of Savards, Homes First Society hired a woman, with extensive experience working at a drop-in shelter, to organize a series of consultations with homeless



Savards bunky dressed.

mid 90s, an advisory resource team recognized that there was a group of women who could not even tolerate the model Strachan was going to provide. These women experienced multiple mental health issues, often as a result of chronic homelessness, and were banned from the other women's shelters due to what was referred to as their "anti-social" behaviour, such as stealing, starting fires, or prolonged screaming. Inspired to improve the lives of those who had fallen through the cracks of many social services, the team decided to respond with one house that could be designed specifically for this group of women.

LUSH: As an architect, did you consult

women. Sistering was also a great source. As a team, we traveled to shelters and drop-ins across the city, inviting women to describe what their surroundings would need to look or feel like in order for them to want to live there for a night or a couple of days. Sometimes we gained greater insight by asking women what they did not like about a particular shelter.

One thing we found common among the women, for example, was a ritualistic practice of pacing. Learning this, we designed a safe route that allowed women the freedom to move from the inside to the outside of the house, in a manner that would not compromise the safety of the other women and housing workers. This

kind of ritual is not allowed in other women's shelters because the doors to the outside are locked after a certain hour and the residents cannot go out after this time. The ability of this design to respond to the specific mental health needs of the women was a unique aspect of the design because this is precisely what was not happening in other shelters. Consequently, it was probably the single largest reason why many of the women had a long history of moving on or off the street to shelters or hospitals, because there were few places where their particular mental health needs were accommodated in the design.

LUSH: Given your experience on this project, do you think architectural design can make a difference in the lives of women experiencing homelessness?

LEVITT: I know it does because you can really create an environment that is flexible enough to allow homeless women to create a room of their own and when you can do this, they will not choose to live outdoors. Savards was a very experimental housing project. When you walked in the door you saw a very open kitchen, and one or two semi-enclosed spaces called nooks. A nook was an eight by eight area with a curtain that you could pull across your bed, like a train berth. We designed these as a result of what we learned: that some women could not spend any time in a traditional room. Enclosed spaces tended to bring back traumatic memories, such as sexual or physical abuse or even the loss of a child.

LUSH: The consultative and participatory design approach in developing Savards

seems to be an important aspect to the success of the project. Can you tell me how Savards is operating today?

LEVITT: Unfortunately, the space provided for the women at Savards was eventually integrated into the men and women's shelter of Strachan House due to a history of cutbacks in government funding. When we were designing Savards, it was anticipated that it would take up to six months for women to live there. When it opened, it was full in less than a month.

Staff at Homes First Society conducted a study tracking the cost of housing the women at Savards compared to the cost incurred by alternate living arrangements from going in and out of hospitals and shelters. Despite the high staff to resident ratio at Savards, the study found that its operation was significantly less expensive, and provided the women with a housing option that suited their needs and kept them safe. Despite this evidence, no other housing provider has taken up the challenge to provide more housing for the "hardest to house" women that provides this type of customized space and environment. This was and still is one of the most rewarding projects I have done. Savards was first of its kind in North America. I would love to do another to see how we could do it better.

Programs for subsidized housing, transitional housing, and shelters across Canada are severely under-resourced, but still expected to meet the growing needs of women in the community. While few would view a shelter as a home, it is an important infrastructure within the health system

that can help women move out of crisis situations. Cross-sectoral collaboration between architects, like Levitt and her associates, service providers, researchers and policy makers must continue in order to address the complex challenges faced by homeless women. ❖

Gail Lush is the Communications Coordinator of NNEWH, where she develops and implements communications plans based on the priorities of NNEWH. Lush recently moved to Toronto from St. John's, Newfoundland, where she spent two years as the Coordinator of the Women's Health Network, Newfoundland and Labrador.

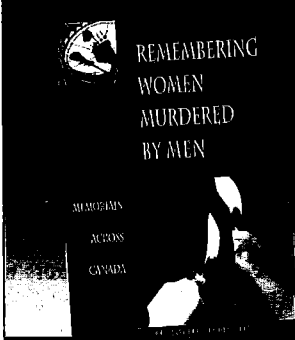
NNEWH is supported financially through a contribution agreement with the Bureau of Women's Health and Gender Analysis, Health Canada. The views herein do not necessarily represent the views or official policy of Health Canada. For further information about NNEWH and its initiatives please contact us at lushg@yorku.ca or call 416-736-2100 ext. 20713.

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Sistering A Woman's Place has been supporting homeless, under-housed and low-income women in the Toronto community since 1981. For more information about Sistering, please visit their website at www.sistering.org/aboutsistering.html



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New Voices: New Politics

Caroline Andrew and Fran Klodawsky

It is January 2005 in the Council Chambers of the City of Ottawa. It is budget time. All day the council has been listening to public delegations. The early evening has been taken up with a well organized series of presenters — both female and male — making arguments for cutting taxes and cutting services. All have been elderly, white and relatively well-off. One especially well-documented presentation was about dramatically raising public transit fares.

Then, up gets a group of twelve women. The contrast could not have been more striking. They were diverse women who spanned every dimension of visible difference. They brilliantly illustrated the diversity of Ottawa that is in the process of becoming more visible in all realms of community life but is as yet unrecognized in formal decision-making spheres. All were wearing peach coloured scarves as a symbol of their solidarity amidst differences. They began with a song:

*We've come to talk
To share our views
Cause when we vote, we'll think of you,
We are women across this city
We represent communities*

*Please take the time
To see our views
We are the city that cares, includes
Please bring alive the 20/20
In our budget Two thousand Five*

*Nous sommes les femmes
De toute la ville
We'll be happy if you will
20/20 will work just fine
In our budget Two thousand Five.*

The song was followed by two hard-hitting presentations: one, about the importance of grants to community groups, and the second, about the impor-

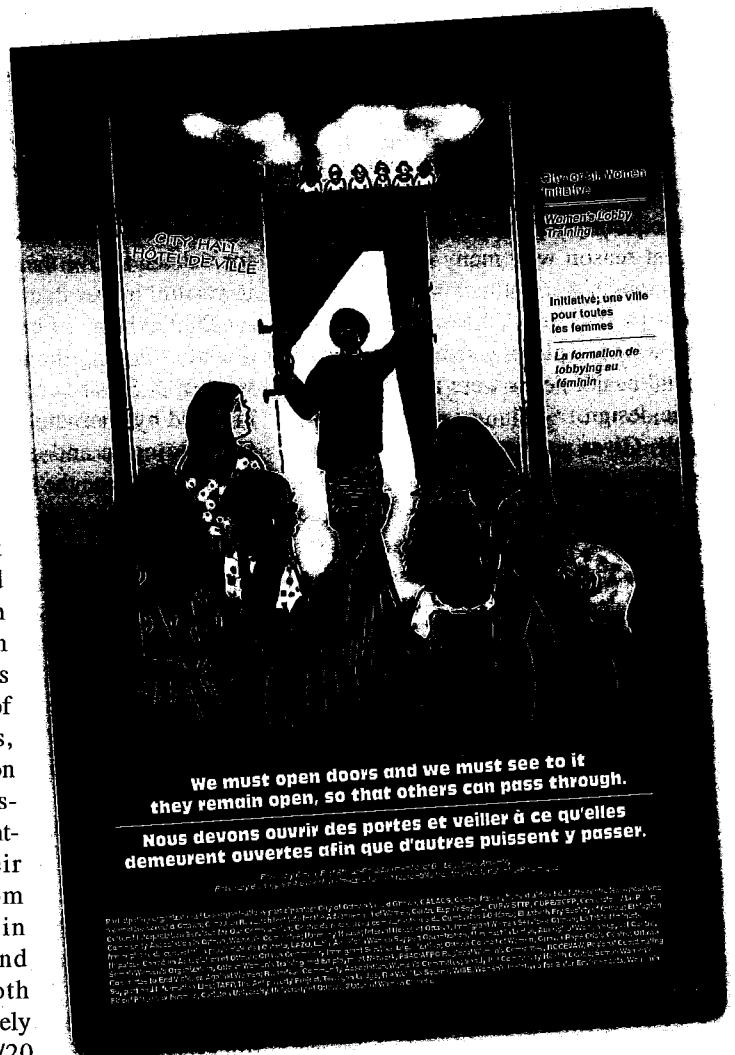
ance of good and accessible public transportation for the daily lives of women, their families and their communities living on low and fixed incomes. The presenters were eloquent about the isolation and marginalization imposed on them and their families when the costs of public services, such as recreation and public transportation, prevented them or their children from involvement in public life and activities. Both linked the relatively progressive 20/20 plan for Ottawa's development with its abandonment by the City Council in the light of their perceived budget crisis.

The impact of the presentation was palpable. The song had woken up those who were dozing, worried some that the rules of procedure were being broken, and energized others. The presenters had succeeded in making the point that this group was really speaking for many communities and families and women in Ottawa.

These women were all "graduates" of training organized by the City for All Women Initiative/ Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes (CAWI-IVTF), on how to influence decisions at City Hall. Representatives had been selected from

community-based women's groups and the training had included preparing meetings with individual councillors and making the budget presentation. CAWI-IVTF is the second phase of a Status of Women Canada funded project in Ottawa (the first phase was described in *Women and Environments* 62/63, pp.49-50) whose objective is to increase diverse women's access to municipal decision-making and to promote gender inclusive practices that are respectful of diversity in Ottawa.

Even while CAWI-IVTF projects a model of an alternative politics and a transformed city, it also works in collaboration with the City of Ottawa. As an organization, it argues for bread and roses;



**We must open doors and we must see to it
they remain open, so that others can pass through.
Nous devons ouvrir des portes et veiller à ce qu'elles
demeurent ouvertes afin que d'autres puissent y passer.**

bread in the sense of using municipal services to achieve greater re-distribution of resources to marginalized citizens/residents and roses as the recognition of the equality and the dignity of these citizens.

The CAWI-IVTF women had carefully thought out the budget. The song was intended to make the point that, although they knew the rules for public presentations, they did not intend to be constrained by them. They signalled that the standard approach to citizen consultation in the City of Ottawa could not capture what the women needed to convey: that cities profoundly affect lives, especially when the texture of those lives is 'different.' The women were keen to establish that life is also about singing and caring and recognizing that culture is an integral part of what a city should be about.

The presentation was oppositional both in content and in form. It argued for greater re-distribution of quality urban public services to equalize life chances for communities and individuals living on low and fixed incomes. And it acknowledged different dimensions of marginalization — ethno-cultural diversity, race, Aboriginality, women, disability, and Francophone status. It argued that the current budget proposals of the City of Ottawa were not working towards a more inclusive city and were not in the interests of the communities, families and women that CAWI-IVTF spoke for.

CAWI-IVTF is about the emerging script of municipal politics in Ottawa. It is about the recognition of diversity and particularly about the recognition of the multiple dimensions of diversity — about intersectionality. It is about women from new immigrant communities, about single mothers and about rural teenage women. It is about better services and about voices being heard and being recognized. It is about diverse women's involvement in decision making at the municipal level. ❧

Caroline Andrew is the Director of the Centre on Governance and Professor in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa. Her research areas include municipal government, urban politics and the role of community-based women's groups in the making of municipal social policy.

Fran Klodawsky is a Professor of Geography at Carleton University. She is currently doing research on homelessness. She is particularly interested in the intersections of homelessness with women and recent immigrants. She also does research on social housing, women and urban environments.

Further Reading

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Water for African Cities

Integrating a Pro-poor Gender Analysis in UN-HABITAT's Water for African Cities Programme Phase II

Prabha Khosla

Forty to 70 percent of urban Africans live in slums, informal settlements and peri-urban areas. Most of these settlements are not recognized by planning acts and laws and thus not provided with basic municipal services such as water, sanitation, solid waste removal, drainage, roads, schools and health clinics. Depending on the age, location, and population density of the slum, living conditions in informal settlements can honestly be called deplorable.

Slums are also where the urban poor live; and increasingly, the poor are overwhelmingly women and child-headed households. In the cities of Accra, Addis Ababa, Bamako, Dakar, Dire Dawa, Jos, Kampala, Kigali, Lusaka, and Ouagadougou all partners in UN-HABITAT's Water for African Cities (WAC) II Programme, recent research indicates that poor women and children are beginning to represent much larger proportions of the slum populations than previously thought. For women as managers of homes and domestic services, not having access to safe, affordable and accessible water and sanitary facilities close to their homes makes daily living even more arduous than it already is due to poverty and lack of income-generating options.

"My mother and I are having sleepless and uncomfortable night on Saturdays as we will be waiting for the pipe to be

opened so that we can store water for our family."

— a school girl in Teshie, Accra.

In this part of Teshie, water from the water main is only available on Saturday nights. There is no water nearby the rest of the week.

In a primary school in Cynafi, Kigali, 1500 children share 1 tap of water. There are very few toilets, and girls and boys have to use the same toilets.

In many slums, women have been attacked and sexually assaulted at night when they are out alone and away from their homes trying to relieve themselves.

In Uganda, as in many other countries, young girls of menstruation age drop out of school due to the un-affordability of sanitary pads, the lack of private and clean toilets and lack of water in schools. This has prompted the African Women Educationalists to launch a campaign to break the silence around menstruation and menstruation products and to organize for separate toilets in schools so girls can continue their education. Depriving much of the female half of the population from social, cultural, political and economic engagement due to lack of education is very costly for Uganda. To provide safe and affordable water and toilets would be much cheaper than the cost of ill health and the loss of girls' and women's rights



Children lining up for water in Kibuli Kampala.

to live to their full potential.

UN-HABITAT and the Gender and Water Alliance have come together in a partnership to develop a pro-poor gender mainstreaming strategy for the Water for African Cities (WAC) Programme. The WAC Programme is focused on six themes. These include: Pro-Poor Water Governance and Follow-Up Investments, Sanitation for the Urban Poor, Urban Catchment Management, Water Demand Management, Water Education in Schools and Communities, and Advocacy, Awareness-raising and Information Exchange. Seventeen cities on the continent along with their national governments and international donors are partners in this Programme.

Since January 2005, the UN-HABITAT and the GWA have been working together to gender mainstream the WAC II. The objectives of the gender mainstreaming initiative are to:

- Develop a gender mainstreaming strategy and operational action plans for the overall UN-HABITAT water and sanitation programme.
- Facilitate the “genderization” of water and sanitation utilities through the development of gender sensitive norms

and standards, as well as support for enhanced participation of women in water and sanitation utilities;

- Identify areas for capacity development and enhancement and the relevant capacity building programmes for these areas; and
- Inform and influence national economic development policies and sector reforms to make them more gender-sensitive.

Participatory Pro-Poor Rapid Gender Assessments

To give local meaning and value to the development of the gender mainstreaming strategy, the UN-HABITAT with the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) launched participatory and rapid pro-poor gender assessments in each of the 17 cities. The Rapid Gender Assessments (RGA) framework, developed by the Gender and Water Alliance, enables the gathering of baseline data through a participatory multi-stakeholder process. The RGA identifies gender mainstreaming priorities as well as areas and constituencies for capacity building. Involving key partners from local governments, relevant utilities, women’s groups, the health, education, and environmental sectors, and

poor women and men slum dwellers, most of the RGAs were conducted in a two month period.

The RGA method is premised on compiling and analyzing existing secondary data, plans, policies, studies, etc; key informant interviews, transect walks in informal settlements, separate focus groups with poor women, men, boys and girls, and wealth ranking. A GWA Facilitator in each of the cities guided and coordinated the assessment process. The gender mainstreaming priorities identified by the RGAs were developed into gender equity action plans which were then integrated into the implementation plans. For a more in-depth discussion of the RGA methodology see the reading identified at the end of the article.

Integrating the Results of the RGAs

With relevant national ministries and UN-HABITAT, each city in the Programme develops its own implementation plan based on the six thematic foci. Assessments were done in the beginning of the Programme. This enabled the integration of the gender equity action plans with the city implementation plans. Furthermore, since the WAC is a large programme with numerous partners and different thematic areas, integrating a pro-poor gender focus and implementation is an on-going process.

Gender Mainstreaming Priorities for the WAC II

Needless to say, not all the gender mainstreaming priorities for all the 17 cities can be identified here. Here is a sample of the recommendations from the RGA Reports. As managing water sustainably requires an integrated approach between different water sectors some of the same priorities appear in the different thematic areas of the WAC. Significantly, the repetitions detail the following areas:

- Enabling poor women and men in decision making at all levels;
- Training and hiring of poor women slum dwellers to develop and manage infrastructure and to enable them to generate income;
- Capacity-building of senior managers

and administrators in the water sectors and local governments on gender and gender mainstreaming;

- Involve poor women and men in designing appropriate infrastructure for water points, toilets, washing clothes and bathing; and
- Reforming planning acts to recognize slums and informal settlements as a legal and legitimate part of African cities.

Pro-Poor Governance and Follow-Up Investments

National and local governments need to reform planning acts and local by-laws to recognize slums and informal settlements as an integral part of the urban fabric and to start providing them with much needed basic services.

Financial resources have to be allocated to the training of management and staff in key water and sanitation institutions and to environmental agencies for the implementation of the gender-sensitive and pro-poor policy and legislative frameworks.

Governments must promote the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data for all institutions and utilities and strengthen the capacities of national statistical departments to do so. Governments must ensure that data collection covers all areas of livelihood, including productive and reproductive sectors and present analytical profiles of the situation of women and men on a regular basis for advocacy, policy re-formulation, and programming.

Decentralization needs to be made gender-inclusive.

All future water and sanitation infrastructure development should train and hire women and men from slums to engage in infrastructure expansion. Poor women and men, and especially women should be trained and hired for such construction. Poor women and men could be supported to create locally-based cooperatives to provide materials needed for water and sanitation infrastructure.

Sanitation for the Poor

Financial mechanisms are needed to

ensure that sanitation services are accessible to all in the community, particularly the poor, and specifically poor women. This may be in the form of cross-subsidies from industry and communities in the low-density areas etc. and must be in a manner that is transparent and well targeted.

There is need to explore potential areas of entrepreneurship in sanitation. This means promoting the creation of paying jobs for women such as constructing latrines, recycling and re-use of solid waste and use this as a revolving fund for innovative lending, savings and training, particularly for female-headed households.

Any new infrastructure construction or rehabilitation for water and sanitation services should be done in consultation with the women users. This is especially important for toilet design and siting. Poor women should be able to design and build their own toilets which will also include areas for washing clothes and bathing.

Sanitation policies need to mandate separation of toilet blocks in schools. Toilet blocks for girls and boys should be located away from each other.

Urban Catchment Management

Recognizing that alternative water sources will continue to be used until residents in peri-urban areas have access to affordable, convenient, and safe water sources, minimal improvements are needed to the traditional water sources with adequate and regular health and

hygiene education messages to ensure effective and hygienic use of water sources. Local women can be hired and trained to do this.

The environmental management legislation and framework should incorporate pro-poor perspectives and ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout.

Gender analysis skills training should be provided to urban planners to mainstream gender issues in the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and help incorporate poor women and men's needs into urban planning programmes.

The number of women extension agents in Urban Catchment Management should be increased. Poor unemployed girls and boys need to be trained and provided with micro-credit services to enable them to participate in solid waste management programs.

Water Demand Management

Water Demand Management (WDM) strategies should consider the actual interests of poor women and men. Gender-sensitive tariff structures should be formulated for different income groups in the city so that they take into account the ability to pay.

A human and basic rights approach has to consider providing free water to vulnerable populations such as elderly, women and men with disabilities, women and child-headed households, and other poor households.

It is necessary to mainstream gender and

pro-poor issues in the new Water Demand Management policies that are being developed. The relevant ministries need to advocate and implement gender training of policy formulators. Training is also needed for the various water boards and authorities so they can develop and implement gender-sensitive and pro-poor WDM strategies.



Gwarandok focus group members, Jos, Nigeria

Water Education in Schools and Communities

Illustrations and messages found in textbooks focus on the traditional roles of boys and girls and men and women perpetuating the gender roles that have kept women in poverty and relegated women and girls to the background. A deliberate effort will have to be made to change this in the areas of gender and text book writing and gender equity and the role of curriculum and teachers. Teaching aids and the curriculum should be reviewed to make them gender-sensitive.

Teachers invariably carry their gender perceptions to school and impart them to the children. To be effective, gender sensitization will therefore have to target the teachers first.

Training and educational material should address the reality of both genders. Where relevant, educational materials should provide information on the proper use of standpipes, water taps, water sources, and water pollution and conservation.

Advocacy, Awareness-raising and Information Exchange

Gender-focused information, education, communication materials and tools can increase the participation and representation of women and men from informal settlements and slums in public meetings.

Information exchange and dissemination should use different forms of media such as drama, games, and demonstrations to promote water and sanitation and enhance gender mainstreaming.

Strengthening government and communities through lobbying and advocacy helps provide strategic leadership in key areas such as human rights education and mainstreaming of a rights-based approach development.

Innumerable UN resolutions for women's rights, gender equality and equity, equitable access to water, poverty eradication, and sustainability have been adopted and re-adopted by national governments. The WAC II provides one opportunity for national and local governments, civil society organizations, organizations of poor women and men, and local private sectors to come together to

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UN-HABITAT, Water and Sanitation: www.unhabitat.org/programmes/water/.

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give meaning to the resolutions. More importantly, it is an opportunity to fundamentally change the living conditions of poor women and men in informal urban settlements. ❧

Prabha Khosla is the GWA Programme Manager for the Water for African Cities.



Women in Co-housing Communities

Megan Salhus

Exploring a long-standing fascination with alternative communities, ranging from early Owenite communities to counter cultural communes of the 1960s, I discovered a lack of women's voices in the accounts and histories of utopian communities, and a romanticised vision of nature. Now, as the question of how to live sustainably in the urban context becomes more pressing, a gendered examination of co-housing, as a viable urban housing alternative, seems to be timely.

Co-housing, a hybrid form of communal and private living, started in Denmark in the 1970s and was first brought to North America in the 1980s. Co-housing mixes private dwellings, which are individually owned, with a variety of common spaces. Common spaces typically include a communal kitchen, gathering rooms, craft and recreation facilities, and childcare spaces

— all of which are communally owned. Looking at two urban co-housing groups in Western Canada, I am particularly interested in the promise and the problems of gender roles in co-housing communities as these relate to the idea of community and the opportunity for networks and connections to be built within co-housing communities, as well as the issue of childcare.

Defining community is not easy. Despite much academic attention and deconstruction of the concept of "community," most people still see themselves as belonging to some kind of hybrid community, combining physical, genetic, spiritual or social elements. When speaking with co-housing residents, the opportunity for experiencing and creating community was commonly cited as a major motivation for joining co-housing. To most people, the word "community" meant social and

emotional networks linked to the physical space of the co-housing development and tied together by common ideals about the good life and eco-social sustainability. For women, especially those with young children and those in later life, the physical closeness of their urban co-housing communities facilitated their connections with others in positive ways. While the process to create successful co-housing communities can be stressful, time-consuming and difficult, there is a sense that co-housing vastly improves residents' quality of life once in operation.

This is not to suggest that co-housing is a panacea for the social ills that can manifest in the urban context. But for the people attracted to and able to invest in co-housing — so far, a largely white, well educated, well-off, and moderately politically progressive group — it offers promise and possibility. For many women, this promise takes the form of an active social life and engagement with people they may not have known otherwise. This has provided a sense of strength and a positive outlook for these women.

The physical layout of co-housing communities is important. The ones that I have visited have a plot of land with housing units around the edges of the plot, surrounding an open, common area. Mothers appreciate this community design as it invokes a sense of safety among them, particularly with regards to their children, as both outdoor green spaces and children's indoor play and craft rooms could be easily and actively used with relatively little supervision. Co-housing provides these parents with relief, too, enabling them to take some time out from childcare responsibilities when another parent, or other adult, supervises. Women I spoke with also felt confident about the social situations that their children might be exposed to, in marked contrast to their feelings about prior housing situations in suburbia or elsewhere.

Co-housing provides a site of support for mothers of young children both socially and in terms of time management and breaks. It is a site of social networking, especially for older women. And it is a site of connection to the heart and soul of community for most cohousers, something that many claimed was lacking in

their pre-co-housing lives. More research is needed to explore whether or not urban co-housing provides a space or place in which traditional Western gender roles related to women's care of the home and children are challenged. Co-housing, however, is worth considering as an alternative to current urban housing options as the sense of community and the social supports found among women within co-housing seem to enable them to balance their domestic responsibilities with other demands with greater ease than their more isolated suburban counterparts. ❧

Megan Salhus is a doctoral candidate at York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies. She studies co-housing as a locus for issues of gender and perceptions of the more than human world. She hopes to one day live in an intentional community. Megan can be reached at: msalhus@yorku.ca.

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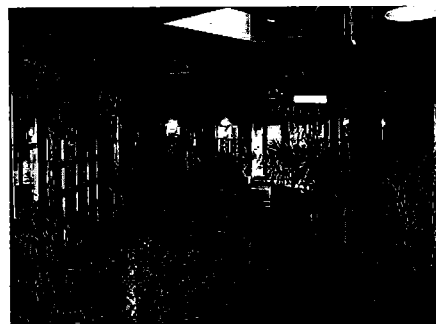
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Multi-family Housing

Gavin Blackstock

Building dense multi-family housing is the best policy for environmental sustainability. A large portion of single parent families reside in such multi-family housing settings. It is important to ask whether the goal of our housing is simply shelter, or if there are other needs that can be met within the housing setting. A recent study explored the various ways in which multi-family housing developments offer female-led single parent families social sustainability, through access to social support, such as shared childcare and camaraderie, and increased safety. Three housing governance models — non-profit rental, non-profit co-operative, and co-housing — were examined to examine how housing governance affects the level of social support available to residents. All developments shared similar design characteristics, such as a communal courtyard, an amenity room, and on-site children's play space.

The research revealed that supportive living is highly attractive to single parents and their children. However, not all devel-



Common spaces in multi-family housing.

opments studied were able to provide a supportive environment, despite the relative similarities in design. The inclusion of

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- home & garden supplies

grassrootsstore.com

shared areas was found to influence casual interactions between residents, increasing the likelihood of friendship and subsequent social support; however, housing governance was a greater determinant on the overall social structure and resultant support within a development.

Co-operative housing and co-housing were both reported to better offer residents an environment of support, and friendship for parents and children alike than non-profit housing. Their governance structures require resident participation in the management of the development, increasing contact between residents. Similarly, regular events and committees both contributed to the level of friendship and support within co-ops and co-housing. Tenant involvement is not mandatory in non-profit rental housing, as such, there was greater variation reported as to the degree of support and friendship available

within the development.

Female-led single parent families still face many struggles in Canada. A supportive, multifamily housing environment can facilitate the heavy demands placed on a single mother, allowing her friendship, the ability to alleviate some of her parenting demands, and a level of safety not available in a single family detached house. Sustainability does not mean simply building dense neighbourhoods: the housing we build can offer community and support not available in much of our current housing stock, especially to single parent families. With thoughtful physical design, inclusive governance models, and a healthy mix of families, our housing will be even closer to achieving sustainability. ❧

Gavin Blackstock recently completed his Master's in Planning from the University of Waterloo. He is currently working as a planner in Vancouver, B.C.

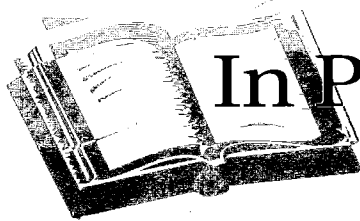


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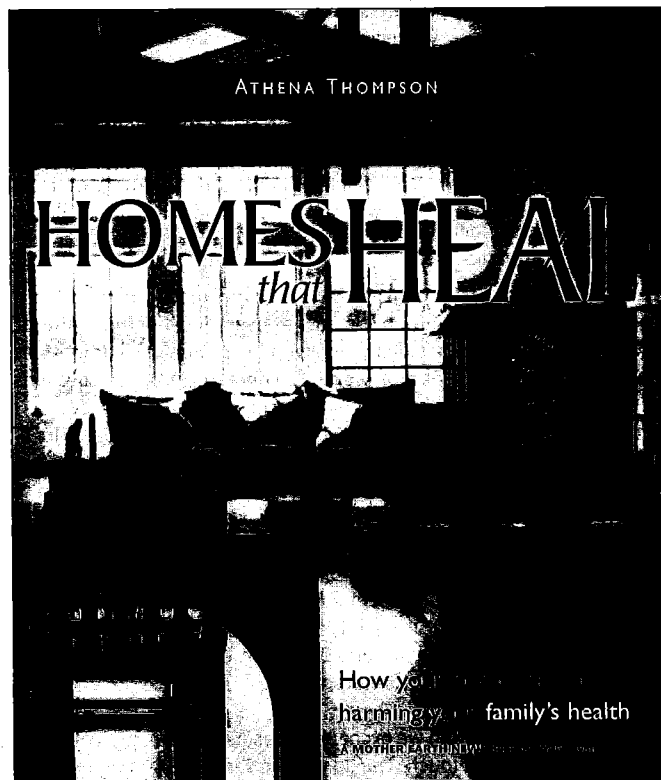
In Print

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

HOMES THAT HEAL AND THOSE THAT DON'T: HOW YOUR HOME MAY BE HARMING YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH

Athena Thompson
New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, 2004.
\$35.95/306 pages

Reviewed By: Marilyn Thorlakson



The title of this book captures Ms. Thompson's expertise in "Bau Biologie," building biology, and covers a quest to foster healthy environments in our built world. Many people are experiencing problems in their homes and work settings in a world of complex synthetic chemicals that interact in a synergistic fashion, which can result in

greater environmental effects than are seen in exposure to a single chemical. The concept of "total body burden" captures the effect of even low doses of exposure to toxins over a lengthy period. Thompson presents information on typical materials that are used in new construction or remodeling, and notes the types of products that may compromise health. There is also a comprehensive checklist to use in evaluating buildings for potential environmental problem areas.

Many people spend a large proportion of their lives indoors, and may be affected by pollution problems. There may also be a crossover of home and work as more people have home offices, making it necessary to select office equipment and supplies wisely to decrease the risk of health damage from these sources. Our home environment can also be threatened by the use of multiple chemicals for cleaning, pest control, garden care, and personal grooming. Women are particularly vulnerable when they spend prolonged periods doing childcare as well as paid and unpaid work at home, as the risk of problems can be proportionate to the total number of hours spent in the environment. Pregnancy is another vulnerable period, and the effects of toxic chemicals may be passed to the growing infant. Some of these chemicals may also harm children throughout their development, and it is especially important to make children's bedrooms as safe as possible. Vehicle exhausts also present dangers, and we need to be aware of the risk of pollutants in homes with attached garages. A boom in new construction, renovation, and redecorating means that many people may be exposed to chemicals in paints, fabrics, cabinetry, and flooring material. This book is useful in that it can guide the consumer in safer product choices.

Homes that Heal is valuable to a wide range of readers — from novices who are seeking optimal living environments, to those who are affected by environmental illnesses. There is also an underlying message in the book stressing that it is more important to create a healthy living space than to live in an over-sized home. **Homes That Heal** provides a lot of educational material in a digestible format, and women can benefit from this information in juggling multiple roles in homemaking, raising children, working in the community and as advocates for health. The principle of preventing health problems by the intelligent selection of materials is vital to decrease risks of illness from environmental toxins and is an urgent issue for women's advocacy.

Marilyn Thorlakson has worked in health care for over twenty years, and is currently pursuing distance education through Athabasca University while on medical leave for environmental illness.

Announcements

So Much Alike, So Far Apart — Chinese Women Local Leaders Exchange Realities with WEI Magazine Editors

Gaye Frances Alexander, Reggie Modlich, and Marg Anne Morrison

In December last year, sixteen women from the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) came to Toronto and met with some of the members of the editorial board of this magazine. These women are active in the federation locally and work with the Chinese government on policy and issues concerning women.

They wanted to know everything about women in Canada, from the role we play in our economy, to pollution and the environment, and about different lifestyles and children's health. Accompanying the women were two men, one of whom was the official translator for our meeting. Of course, such a one-time exchange, hampered by the need for translation, could only skim the surface of knowledge — and information-sharing. Yet we soon found ourselves nodding with understanding about our commonalities.

In both China and Canada, women have equal rights that are officially entrenched, in the Chinese constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights respectively. Women politicians still do not exceed one-third in number at the various levels of government. In both countries we have come to represent half the labour force over the past 50 years, yet there remains a persistent wage gap between men and women.

Chinese and Canadian women have been among the key players in establishing and implementing environmental protection and practices, such as composting, recycling, and community gardening. In China, as in Canada, women who are single parents and older women are more likely to be poor than men. And fewer older women are living in the households of their urban children. China also has laws making domestic violence a crime, and both countries have shelters and hotlines to support battered women.

Many of the poor women in China's larger cities are migrants from rural areas, where the land has been re-designated from farming to other purposes. They went to the city to find an alternative existence,

E. EYDEMON



All China Women's Federation Delegation on their visit with WEI Mag Editorial Board members, in Toronto.



WEI Mag's Gaye Frances Alexander receives a gift from ACWF members.

and for too many that was not successful.

In China today, there is a 30 per cent divorce rate. The custody of male children in these cases tends to be awarded to the fathers. In Canada today, with a divorce rate at 31%, custody is more often awarded to the mothers, regardless of the children's gender.

We were surprised to find that the ACWF is an officially funded, well-established voice for women's issues at every level of government. In some cities they work side by side with local women's committees. They investigate and report on women's concerns, propose solutions to problems, and are consulted by governments about policy proposals. Congresses and Plans take place every five years. In this country, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women is extremely weak for lack of funds and has never been able to muster the resources to establish a consistent presence at the provincial or municipal level.

When we asked about the acceptance of gays and lesbians in China, they answered that "in our society there is still little acceptance." They were very surprised at our suggestion that 13 per cent of Canada's population was not heterosexual.

At the end of our meeting we exchanged business cards, took photos, and pledged to stay in touch. The delegation very graciously gave us a copper reproduction of a magnificent, 2000-year-old horse-drawn carriage and a photograph of the ACWF's Beijing headquarters, which was built after the 1995 United Nations Women's Conference in that city. We gave them multiple copies of several issues of WEI Magazine. The ACWF obviously has the support and legitimacy of its government. They impressed us with their feistiness and commitment. Visit their website: www.woomen.org.cn/english or contact them at acwff@women.org.cn



The Women and Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto is proud to announce the upcoming publication of the following books by WSGI faculty:

Michelle Murphy, **Sick Building Syndrome and the Problem of Uncertainty: Environmental Politics, Technoscience and Women Workers**, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006

All at once about the feminism, women's labour, chemical exposures, and environmental health, this book uses Sick Building Syndrome to explore how pollution moved indoors and how the political production of uncertainty has come to plague environmental politics.

M. Jacqui Alexander, **Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred**, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006


In this landmark interdisciplinary volume, Alexander deftly unites large, often contradictory, historical processes over time and space while pointing to a number of critical imperatives made all the more urgent by contemporary manifestations neo-imperialism and neocolonialism. Among these are the need for North American feminism and queer studies to take up transnational frameworks that foreground questions of colonialism, political economy, and racial formation; for a thorough re-conceptualization of modernity to account for the heteronormative regulatory practices of modern state formations; and for feminists to wrestle with the spiritual dimensions of experience and the meaning of sacred subjectivity.

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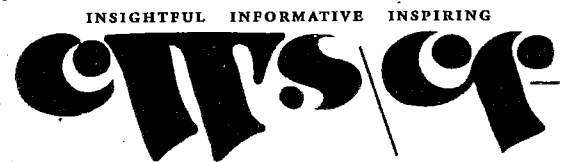
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Women, Equity and Cities — Key Resources

Monica Patel

The City of Vancouver recently adopted a gender equality policy, which consists of a vision for gender equality, principles, aims, and actions. The City of Vancouver previously adopted the **Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government**.

- Vancouver City Council (2004) **Report of the Women's Task Force Report**, vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/ccclerk/20041130/a14.htm
- City of Vancouver Women's Task Force (2005). **A Gender Equality Strategy for the City of Vancouver**.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) established a methodology towards achieving the "equality town." This virtual town will be used as a model enabling local governments to make improvements in terms of gender equality.

- **The Town for Equality: A Methodology and Good Practices for Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men**
www.ccre.org/bases/T_599_26_3524.pdf

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) completed a national project in 2004 on increasing the participation of women in municipal decision making.

- Final report: **Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Decision-making Processes: Strategies for More Inclusive Canadian Communities**
www.fcm.ca/english/policy/increase.pdf
- Resource kit: **Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Decision-making Processes: Strategies for More Inclusive Canadian Communities — A Resource Kit**
www.fcm.ca/english/policy/toolkit.pdf

FCM partnered with the City of Montreal's Femmes et villes Program in 2004 to produce a resource that municipal governments can use to assess the impact of all their decisions on the quality of life of women, and adjust their actions accordingly:

- **A City Tailored to Women: The Role of Local Governments in Achieving Gender Equality**
www.femmesetvilles.org/pdf-general/FCM_city_tailored_eng.pdf

Femmes et villes international (Women in Cities International) is an exchange network for partners concerned with gender equality issues and the place of women in cities on the five continents. Its main objectives are to: develop an international exchange network on women's participation in the development of cities and communities as well as the consideration of a gender-based approach in municipal planning and management; promote local exchanges on this topic within and between communities; encourage exchange among diverse actors who can play a role (women's groups, non-governmental organizations, cities and municipalities, researchers, the private sector, media, international agencies and so on); promote and organize expertise-sharing and training activities; the use of good practices as well as future international seminars and conferences; and advise local and national governments as well as international organizations on gender issues and the importance of mainstream-

ing gender in the management of cities and communities

- www.femmesetvilles.org
- Cities such as London, UK, are making substantial progress on gender equity. The Greater London Authority (GLA) is mandated under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 to systematically work towards the "equality of opportunity" in its functions and in the formulation of policies and proposals included in any of its strategies. The GLA's gender equality policy, the Gender Equality Scheme, identifies 15 specific expected outcomes, 10 high level gender equality priorities, an action plan, and information about consultation, impact assessment and monitoring.
- **Greater London Authority Gender Equality Scheme March 2003 (gender equity policy & action plan)**
www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/women/gender-equal03.pdf
 - **Gender Equality Scheme Review 2003-04** (progress report)
www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/women/ges_review.pdf

Other cities in the UK are making progress in advancing gender equity:

- **Birmingham City Council Corporate Gender Equality Strategy (2002-3)**
www.thewnc.org.uk/publications/21to34.pdf
- Equal Opportunities Committee (2002) **Literature Review of Research on Gender Inequality in Scotland**.
- **EU Making it Happen, effective gender mainstreaming in Ireland and the UK**
www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/resource/obj1-gendermainstream.pdf

International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (2004) **Developing Trust, International Approaches to Women's Safety**
www.crime-prevention-intl.org/publications/pub_118_1.pdf

The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) (now United Cities and Local Governments) launched the **Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government** in 1998, which has been ratified in over 28 countries, including 23 national associations who have ratified on behalf of all their member local governments. The Declaration's underlying principle is that gender equality is good for women, but that it is also good for men and for local government. Increasing the number of women in local government, and keeping the needs of women in mind when developing policies and services, is essential to achieving social and economic goals.
www.iula.org

Kirby, V. & Smith, G. (1986) **Report of a Questionnaire Survey of Women in Planning**. The Royal Town Planning Institute Yorkshire Branch.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) in the UK has produced a guide to help local planning authorities address diversity and equality issues in their policies and procedures. It advocates for planning that is more responsive, proactive, and inclusive. It argues that diversity should be in the mainstream of a planning

authority's day-to-day work, not an occasional afterthought or something of interest to one section of the department or a few members of the staff.

- **Diversity and Equality in Planning: A Good Practice Guide**
www.odpm.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=1144506

Oxfam UK Poverty Programme (2004) **Gender and the reality of regeneration: a tale of two cities — Conference report.**
oxfamgb.org/ukpp/resources/downloads/TOTC_report_download_version.pdf

Petrie, Patsi and Reeves, Dory. (2005) **Women in the Planning Profession Making the Built Environment Better** Paper presented at the 2005 Institute for Women's Policy Research International Conference.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) (2003) investigated Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Auditing within the planning profession and produced a practical Toolkit that would help Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) integrate gender issues into the plan-making processes.

- **Gender Equality and Plan Making — The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit**
www.rtpi.org.uk/resources/panels/equal-w/toolkit.html

Sandercock, Leonie & Forsyth, Ann. (2005) **A Gender Agenda. In Gender and Planning**, edited by Susan S. Fainstein and Lisa J. Servon. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ. P.80.

Toronto Women's Call to Action (TWCA) and The National Network on Environments and Women's Health (NNEWH) partnered in January 2005 to produce background papers for NNEWH's workshop entitled "Building Healthy Cities for Canadian Women: A National Consultation." All of the papers are available at www.twca.ca/documents.htm

- **Gendered Cities: Built and Physical Environments**
Provides a description of how the built and physical environment of cities are gendered and can impact women's opportunities and health.
- **Gender Mainstreaming in Local Governments**
Provides an explanation of the concept of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in local governments as tools of good governance.
- **Racialized and Immigrant Women in Cities**
Provides an overview of issues affecting racialized and immigrant women.
- **Women's Poverty in Cities**
Provides an overview of issues affecting women contending with poverty in urban environments.
- **Women with Disabilities in the Urban Environment**
Provides an overview of health issues affecting women with disabilities.

WEI magazine produced an issue in 2004 that allows readers to experience cities through women's perspectives from Bolivia to Britain and from Canada to Cuba. It includes stories, accounts, and

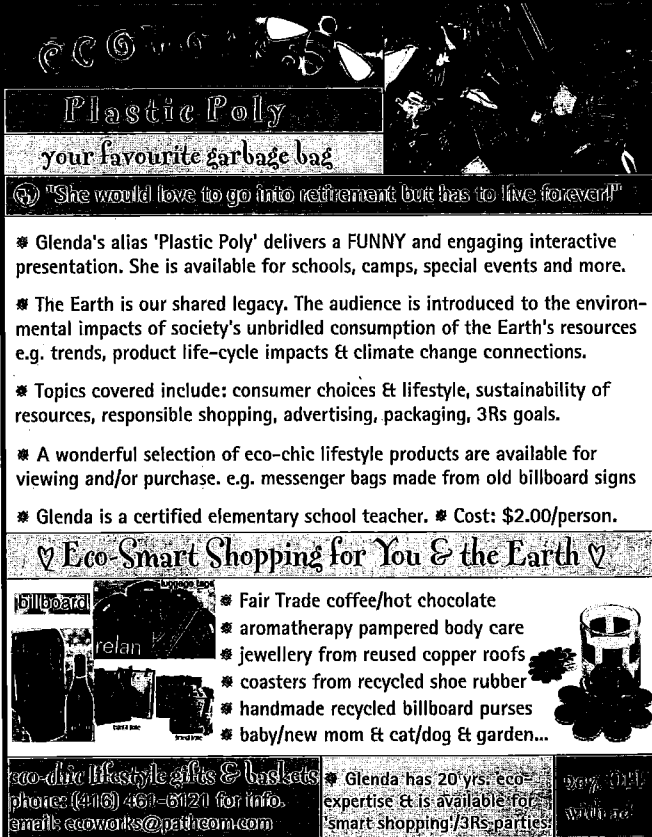
analyses of how cities around the world are failing and succeeding to meet women's needs and how women have come together to change their lives in their cities. Content areas include: Housing, Urban Design and Architecture, Planning and Safety, Transportation, Governance, and Sustainability.

- **Women & Environments International magazine "Cities for Women" No. 62/63 — Spring/Summer 2004**
www.weimag.com for more information

Women's Design Service (2004) **Evaluation of making safer places project**
www.wds.org.uk/www/download%20documents/MSP/MSP_Evaluation_Report_final.pdf

Womenstown.org is a new web space concerned with issues about gender, housing and built environments. It is a resource for teaching and learning about gender and built environments. The site's purpose is to collect and share resources exploring this interdisciplinary area. Their aim is to link people of diverse backgrounds, particularly from the grassroots. Site users come from various settings — students, educators, people from community-based organizations and policy makers, all working towards making built environments that are more suited to people's needs, and the needs of women in particular.

Monica Patel is a member of Toronto Women's Call to Action.
www.twca.ca



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Calendar

Women and Environments Magazine 30th Anniversary Event, May 18, 2006, 7-10 p.m. Toronto, Canada

Everyone is welcome when we celebrate three decades of WEI Magazine, upstairs at the Rivoli, 322 Queen St. West.
www.weimag.com

Federation of Canadian Municipalities Conference Montreal, Canada, June 2-5, 2006

The theme for this conference is "Building prosperity together"
www.fcm.ca

Research on Workplace Health & Safety: From the Core to the Margins St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, June 7-10, 2006

This unique event will highlight issues that have been at the core of OHS, as well as those that have tended to be marginalized in terms of research, policy and practice, beginning with a one-day workshop on women's occupational health.
www.med.mun.ca/ohs2006

Tending the Garden: From Grassroots to Green Roofs, Planners Network Conference Chicago, Illinois. June 8-11, 2006

This conference will be hosted by University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Urban Planning and Policy.
www.uic.edu/cuppa/upp/pn/index.html

The 2006 Canadian Association of Planning Students Conference — Planners for Tomorrow Vancouver, Canada, June 14-16, 2006

This conference will be taking place at UBC, in Vancouver. This exciting student conference will lead up to the 2006 World Planners Congress and UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum III, also being held in Vancouver in June, 2006. plannersfortomorrow.ca/

World Planners Congress Sustainable Urbanization: Turning Ideas Into Action Vancouver, Canada, June 17-20, 2006

The CIP-PIBC 2006 Annual Conference has as its theme: "Sustainable Urbanization: Turning Ideas into Action."
www.cip-icu.ca/English/outreach/wuf_2006.htm

World Urban Forum III Vancouver, Canada, June 19-23, 2006

The World Urban Forum was established by the United Nations to examine one of the most pressing issues facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies and policies. www.unhabitat.org/wuf/2006/default.asp

World Planning Schools Congress Mexico City, July 11-16, 2006

The Overall theme of the congress, "Diversity and Multiplicity, the new agenda of the world planning community" provides the opportunity to address a wide range of topics which will be faced by planning education, scholars and professionals the coming years.
wpsc-06.webstudio.com.mx/

Gender, Transport and Development Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, South Africa, August 27-30, 2006

This meeting provides an opportunity for researchers, policy makers and organizations worldwide to share global multidisciplinary perspectives on issues of gender, transport and development.
www.nra.co.za

The International Conference and Exhibition on Soilless Culture Singapore, September 5-8, 2006

The conference will cover hydroponics, aquaponics and urban agriculture. For more information or to register contact the organiser Dr Mallick Fazalur Rahman M, Email: hpci@singaporehydroponics.com.
www.cityfarmer.org/bulletin78.html

Cycling for Women Weekend in the UK (see website for dates in 2006)

The weekend includes a variety of activities created by women for women, because it has been proven that more cycle training with good accompanying publicity encourages women cyclists, and that women only activities can be a great place to start cycling.
www.ctc.org.uk

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Play

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 www.huairou.org

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