

Department of Politics: Philosophy and Economics
Chair of Political Sociology

Gender equality and sustainable development

THESIS SUPERVISOR

Prof. Michele Sorice

CANDIDATE

Mathilde Villeveille Bideri

092352

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Introduction

Climate change is one of the most striking problems of our time. One way or another, we'll all be affected by its impact. An impact which is unequal, tending to affect specific individuals and zone of the globe more acutely than others. Often these individuals are ones which have to cope with disproportionate economic, social and cultural levels, living in poor regions, and much more at risk of being affected by environmental disasters. Unfortunately, these population groups find themselves facing these disasters without the necessary tools, left alone in managing their own fate. One of the areas most impacted by these inequalities is gender. Although it seems that the experiences are similar between men and women, the latter face a completely different treatment when it comes to climate change.

The gender issue connected to sustainable development makes us comprehend not only the differences related to the vulnerability of each gender, but what, when confronted to these vulnerabilities, are the responses of the women more at risk. Faced with the threat of climate change, women will adapt differently, trying to mitigate to the greatest extent the consequences of these disasters.

This study will allow to understand what links sustainable development to gender equality. How two topics that seem so far apart are not so very distant. An attempt will be made to acknowledge the different definitions related to the concept of gender and how it has evolved over the years. Throughout this analysis it will become clearer how, climate change despite seemingly affecting everyone equally regardless of gender, it is the trigger of increasingly striking gender-related inequalities. It is thus a phenomenon that is not gender-neutral, but whose repercussions bring to the surface all the fallacies of centuries of marginalisation that cause women to be globally more vulnerable today. The way in which the different sexes have been perpetually socialised to certain types of behaviour and attitudes leads to repercussions that can be seen in the way the climate crisis and its possible solutions are addressed. It is no coincidence that women are the most affected by the environmental issue but at the same time being those who would adopt more sustainable behaviours.

This analysis will therefore look at how women manage the risks of climate change, focusing on what resources are essential to enable them to withstand it by giving each and every one the proper tools to do so.

CHAPTER 1

Gender, Climate and Sustainability

“If women, subjected to a work of socialization that tends to diminish them and to deny them, learn the negative virtues of self-denial, resignation and silence, men are also prisoners and victims of the dominant representation.”

- P. Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 1998

Gender, sex, sexuality

To define the concept of gender, it is important to highlight the difference between two terms which are perceived as interchangeable but that describe different concepts: gender and sex.

According to the World Health Organisation¹, the term sex refers to characteristics that are biologically defined while gender refers to socially constructed features. Talking about sex, means all the physical and physiological attributes that concern animals and humans which are defined by the chromosome, the genes, the sexual anatomy and so forth. Sexuality too must be separated from sex. In common language, the word ‘sex’ is commonly used to describe sexual behaviour, as in the phrase ‘having sex’. In sociology, sexual behaviours are described through the term «sexuality», which is not just a description of his or her sexual practices. While the term ‘gender’ refers to socially constructed characteristics, from the roles individuals take on in society, to physical attributes that affirm notions of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’. While not immutable nor universal, gender shapes the expectations, attributes, roles, capacities and rights of individuals around the

¹ World Health Organisation. 2002a. “Gender: Definitions.”

world (Bridget Burnes, 2018). Gender, therefore, refers to how societies and specific cultures assign roles and ascribe characteristics to men and women on the basis of their sex. Although biological characteristics exist, social and cultural processes have the capability to shape them. It has an impact on the way people perceive themselves and others, it is linked to the opportunities and responsibilities which are associated with men and women². So, sex is considered binary, fixed and categoric while gender, fluid and relational. An important distinction that needs to be done is to not mistake gender and women or the analysis of gender as one based solely on women. It all depends on the rights and roles of individuals in a given context facing class, race, religion, sexuality and gender.

Gender equality, therefore, refers to the objective when all men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, discrimination and prejudices, when they exhaustively appreciate their human rights.

The two-sex model

The two-sex model is the idea that two sexes exist, that these are male and female sexes and that they are related to biological differences. Thomas Laqueur (1990) argued that historically speaking, this is quite a recent way of thinking. From the time of the ancient Greeks to the eighteenth century, a 'one-sex model' dominated ways of thinking about men and women. Women and men represented two different forms of one essential sex, but women were a «less developed» version of men³. The 'two-sex model' that is now dominant came into existence only during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries due to several social changes. In this period, organs that previously shared the same name, occupying the same bodies were assigned their own names, such as 'vagina'. "It was not until the 1750s in England, France and Germany that genuine sex differences were discovered in every bone, muscle, nerve and cell of the human body and a specifically female skeleton emerged."⁴ According to Laqueur, passages from the one-sex model to two sex-model

² Canadian Institutes of Health Research. 2020. Review of *What Is Gender? What Is Sex?* Edited by Government of Canada. April 28, 2020.

³ Stolberg M. A woman down to her bones. The anatomy of sexual difference in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. *Isis*. 2003 Jun;94(2):274-99. doi: 10.1086/379387. PMID: 12879558.

⁴ Londa Schiebinger, 'Skeletons in the closet: the first illustrations of the female skeleton in eighteenth-century anatomy', in: C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur (edd.), *The making of the modern body: sexuality and society in the nineteenth century*, Berkeley 1987, pp. 42-82

were not fostered by more scientific knowledge (i.e. developments in anatomy), but by social changes to which a biological explanation was attached. The two-sex model crystallized social inequalities into biological differences, placing emphasis on these. “Both men and women were created as ‘naturally’ and biologically sexed [...]. What occurred was not a liberation. For women, it heralded a period of intense patriarchal oppression, but for men as well, it reflected an increasingly restrictive form of masculinity.”⁵ The idea that women and men are inherently different and the idea that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural sexuality.⁶

Gender and gender norms

It is in examining the difference between sex and gender that one can understand how sex-related inequalities, are not the result of anatomical differences between men and women, but instead are linked to how society perceives them and the unequal treatment it reserves to the latter.

The notion of gender makes us understand how gender norms and prejudices linked to it, impact women's lives in most countries. According to Oxfam⁷, the impact of gender inequalities can be seen through several factors:

- According to the best available data, approximately 70% of those who live on less than a dollar a day are women.
- Women work two-thirds of the world’s working hours yet receive only 10% of the world’s income.
- Women own only 1% of the world’s property.
- Women members of parliament globally average only 17% of all seats.
- Only 8% of the world’s cabinet ministers are women.
- Seventy-five per cent of the world’s 876 million illiterate adults are women.

⁵ Hitchcock T. Redefining sex in eighteenth-century England. *Hist Workshop*. 1996 Spring;(41):73-90. PMID: 11609132.

⁶ “Discuss the Change from the ‘One Sex’ Model to the ‘Two Sex’ Model and the Effect This Had on Sexuality throughout the 18th and 19th Century? - GCSE Sociology -

⁷ Social Watch, 2007 and 2008; Oxfam, 2007; Neumayer and Plümper, 2007; and ILO, 2008

- Worldwide women received 78% of the wages received by men for the same work, although in some regions, they have a better educational background. In some parts of the world, the wage gap between women and men is close to 40%.
- Of the 550 million low-paid workers in the world, 330 million or 60% are women.
- In a sample of 141 countries over the period 1981–2002, it was found that natural disasters (and their subsequent impact) on average kill more women than men or kill women at an earlier age than men.

Climate and Sustainability

1.1 Climate change: definition and consequences

As its name suggests, climate change is a long-term shift in weather and temperatures. According to the United Nations⁸, those weather shifts which were thought to be naturally driven started to emerge as induced by human activities. Some of the effects of hyper-consumption, population growth, and land exploitation has led to severe transnational pollution, putting all sort of human lives at great risk. In the 1800s, due to the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas, which generate greenhouse gas emissions that encircle the Earth's surface confining the sun's heat and therefore rising the temperatures, people started to realize that those changes in climate were the results of human activities.

Some examples of greenhouse emissions provided by the UN include carbon dioxide and methane which come from using gasoline for driving a car or coal for heating a building, for example. Clearing land and forests can also release carbon dioxide. Landfills for garbage are a major source of methane emissions. Energy, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture and land use are among the main emitters.

The effects of climate change are becoming more and more evident and striking. The United Nations report is increasingly drastic about the effects of climate change and the urgency to act quickly. For some animals and vegetation, consequences without any return have already begun. If the temperatures will rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the ability of humans and animals to adapt will strongly diminish getting closer and closer to dangerous verges. The heatwaves in the Pacific

⁸ United Nations. 2020. "What Is Climate Change?" United Nations. United Nations. 2020.

Northwest and in British Columbia⁹ in 2021, have led the mercury to rise to 110 degrees causing several deaths. According to Marcene Mitchell, the senior vice president of climate change at WWF; “This is not a 50-year issue, this is not a 20-year issue, it’s not even a five-year issue. We need to do everything possible to limit the impacts described in the report and start making the changes necessary to prepare for the ones that are inevitable at this point.”

The emissions causing climate change come from every part of the globe but making it evident that some countries are undoubtedly more responsible for the current situation. The 100 least-emitting countries generate 3% of total emissions. The 10 countries with the largest emissions contribute to 68%.¹⁰

Climate change can affect people’s health, work, their ability to grow food and nourish themselves as well as their safety. Floods, global warming, inability to cultivate; these are some of the events that these countries have found themselves facing. From this problem, a new one was born, the one of climate migrants. With environmental catastrophes, territories become uninhabitable, leading entire populations to leave their homes in search of shelter elsewhere. The people most affected by this situation are the lowest classes, women, children and ethnic minorities. These data show the importance of protecting and helping these categories, because although they are the least responsible for climate change, they will be the most affected by it.

1.2 Sustainability: meaning and goals

The term sustainability has been widely used for years, it appears everywhere and started to be a common word in our language. But what does it actually mean? The Oxford English Dictionary defines sustainability as the “The property of being environmentally sustainable; the degree to which a process or enterprise is able to be maintained or continued while avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources”¹¹

Sustainability therefore suggests a continuity of society over time. The term sustainability contains the word “sustain” which means supporting from below. Sustainability is therefore the ability to

⁹ “New UN Climate Report Predicts a Dangerous Future Unless We Act Now.” 2022. n.d. World Wildlife Fund.

¹⁰ United Nations. 2020. “What Is Climate Change?” United Nations. United Nations. 2020.

¹¹

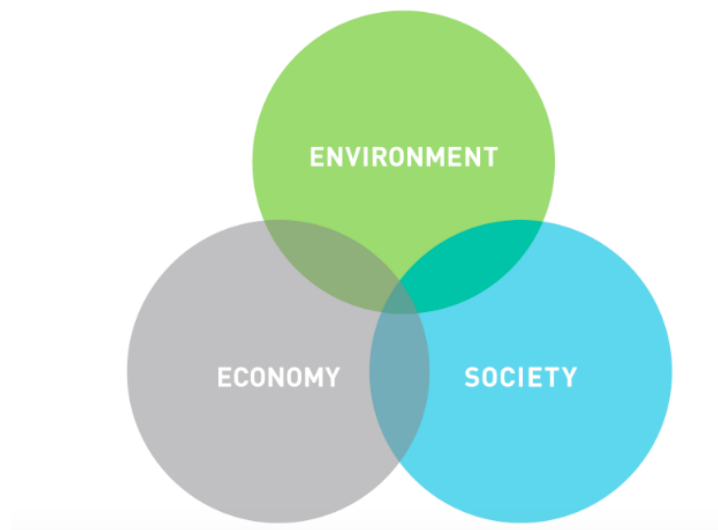
Halliday, Mike. 2016. “How Sustainable Is Sustainability?” Oxford College of Procurement and Supply. November 21, 2016.

sustain a society from falling apart. In recent years the term has been used in the environmental fight as a term aimed to generate attention to our everyday practice which are contributing to the pollution of the Earth. Sustainable practices can be circumscribed to taking the bus instead of the car or even opting for plastic-free packages at the supermarket, all these choices which one can make in our daily life to contribute to the preserving of the Earth. In today's times, this term has been overused and has become almost an indispensable element to be included in order to sell products. From clothing made from sustainable materials to the concept of 'zero waste', it almost seems as if in order to make a product profitable you have to include the word sustainable, thus moving a world away from its original meaning, on which most of the battles of the environmental movement are based. As Marx said, capitalism is destined to collapse and this globalized world will eventually exhaust its supplies of cheap resources, therefore making a continuous search for profit impossible because resources are not inexhaustible¹².

The idea of sustainable development bases itself on three main pillars: environment, economy and society.

¹² Marx, Karl. (1867) 2013. *Capital*. The classics Us.

What would a sustainable world look like?



McGill University

The first pillar of sustainability is *environmental sustainability*, in which ecological integrity is supported where the earth's environmental system is maintained and the natural resources within it are utilised by human according to a certain rate which will allow them to replenish themselves.

The second pillar is the *economic sustainability*. Its main purpose is that human communities will be able to maintain their independence and will have access to whichever resources to meet their needs. According to this pillar, economic systems are intact, making activities available to everyone.

The last pillar is the *social sustainability*. According to this pillar, people all round the world are able to attain universal human rights which will make them able to have enough resources to maintain their family and communities safe and healthy, making them protected from discrimination.¹³

Climate and Gender

At the core of climate change, there is the belief that it affects women and men without a difference. The most widespread thought is that climate has no preferred gender, a natural disaster does not decide whom to affect, it just strikes. Even though climate change is non-discriminatory, and supposedly affects everyone, because of the social roles assigned to both men and women, the latter face the impact of climate change differently from men and are often adversely affected. Women often feel they have limited access to different types of resources, such as access to justice, different

¹³ University of Alberta. 2013. "What Is Sustainability?" McGill. University of Alberta.

infrastructures and the ability to be heard in contexts where laws are created, and important decisions made.

The urgency of making women not only part of the change but also heard, acknowledged, supported and empowered, could lead to the resolution of several climate change problems. These two domains, even though they seem miles apart, are complementary, and in trying to tackle one, we are also tackling the other.

The 2016 report by the Global Gender and Climate Alliance named *Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence*¹⁴, illustrates many examples in which gender and climate have interfered with each other:

- Only 12% of federal environment ministries globally are headed by women, as of 2015.
- At the World Energy Council, each National Member Committee has a chair and a secretary to represent national interests. The Environment and Gender Index study of 92 national committees found that only 4% of chairs and 18% of secretaries are female, or put differently, 96% of the leading voices on national energy needs are men.
- Women on average make up 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, and around 50% in sub-Saharan Africa. However, as of 2010, only 15% of land in sub-Saharan Africa is owned or managed by women. Rates are generally worse in Asia – only 13% of landholders in India are women, dropping to 11% in the Philippines and 9% in Indonesia.
- In Burkina Faso, migration is significantly associated with rainfall variability, particularly for men, who are likely to move from areas with poor rainfall to other rural areas that are wetter.
- An electrification project in Laos that adopted gender-mainstreaming practices increased the number of female-headed households electrified by 43%, nearly twice the rate of increase as compared to other households.
- Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper “The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy (1981–2002)”¹⁵ suggests that females are more likely to be killed by natural disasters and/or are systematically killed at younger ages than males.

¹⁴ *Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence*. 2016.

¹⁵ Neumayer, Eric, and Thomas Plümper. 2007. “The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981–2002.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97 (3): 551–66.

After having given a definition of gender and sustainability and having highlighted their relationship, the research will proceed by analysing in-depth the idea that climate change is not gender-neutral and the factors that make women more vulnerable.

CHAPTER 2

"Climate change is not a fight for power, it's a fight for survival."

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim

Climate change is not gender-neutral

Gender mainstreaming in building responses to climate change

2.1. Gender mainstreaming

In 1994 Beck, Giddens, Lash and other contemporary social theorists, recognized the environmental concern as one of the major factors reshaping nation-states during the past century.¹⁶ The modernization which led to the development of ecological rationality and the rise of “post material” values were considered as some of the factors which led to this rise in environmental concern. Absent from the debate was the importance that gender equality plays in the rise of environmentalism.

Gender inequalities are so glaring and widespread that a new social justice and human rights approach is being used: gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is thus the brainchild of initiatives that try to address these gender inequalities. In 1997, the UN Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc) reports gender mainstreaming as “...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an

¹⁶Norgaard, Kari, and Richard York. 2005. “Gender Equality and State Environmentalism.” *Gender & Society* 19 (4): 506–22.

integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality”¹⁷. Gender mainstreaming, therefore, does not only look at women as an isolated process but treats both men and women as actors and beneficiaries of this development process.

Gender mainstreaming, therefore, requires a rigorous analysis of the development situation, as it cannot be based solely on a priori assumptions about the role of women and the problems they face. Gender mainstreaming is based on the knowledge that gender issues change and evolve according to the country and context, based on the different roles and responsibilities, needs and visions of both men and women.

It is in applying a gender perspective that one becomes aware of the special attention that needs to be paid to the "special condition" of women, i.e. the social, economic and cultural conditions that place women in a situation of subordination to men.

The United Agency of International Development defined “the special condition” as the “social, economic and cultural factors and mechanisms that maintain women in a situation of disadvantage and subordination with regard to men. Such subordination is expressed in varying manners depending on the historical and cultural context. Women’s condition as a conceptual and operational tool for analysis entails consideration of material status or the level to which their “practical needs” are met, such as access to water, electricity, housing, health care, employment and income-generating services. This concept connects women’s material wellbeing to the specific circumstances surrounding her social environment and the roles and responsibilities that society accords to women.”¹⁸

2.2 Why is it important?

During an interview for Daniel Shaw in 2011, Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Laureate and founder of the Green Belt Movement (GBM) talked about the importance of gender mainstreaming in achieving sustainable use of green resources and forest conservation. He said that “In the poorer parts of the world, women continue to be very dependent on forest goods and services – whether

¹⁷ ECOSOC. (1997). Annual Report. USA: United Nations

¹⁸ USAID. (2007). Glosario de género y salud. Centro Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Mujer y la Familia.

these are firewood, fodder, soil and water protection, or regulation of the climate for their agricultural activities. It is primarily the women who work with these resources and depend on them for the well-being of their families. So, it is vital that women are put at the centre of whatever decisions are being made about how to manage these resources. It is increasingly evident that women living close to forests should become co-managers and co-protectors of forests, along with governments and other bodies.”¹⁹

In order to fight and tackle the issue of climate change, it is important to understand in which ways gender inequalities affect decisions making processes, social structures and resources. Policies and programs which do not give space to a gender perspective have resulted in uneven outcomes, while the integration of gender mainstreaming into climate policies allowed climate approaches that will be more effective in providing more benefits when women and men are included in compensation and shared benefits, equal access to resources and opportunities resulting from climate action and responses and a climate action which addresses the different needs, rights and opportunities of people depending on their global context. In trying to resolve the issue of climate change, gender mainstreaming will allow women's and men's knowledge and concerns to be taken into consideration.

Causes of vulnerability, what makes women more vulnerable to climate change

Feminists' theories had a huge impact in denouncing the existing understanding of the State. Some feminist theorists have described state formation as a gendered process (Cravey 1998)²⁰ and how gender is a category of social regulations in state policy (Randall and Waylen 1998)²¹. Gender is implied in many features of the state, “Gender relations, embodied in the sexual division of labour, compulsory heterosexuality, discourses and ideologies of citizenship, motherhood, masculinity and femininity, and the like, profoundly shape the character of welfare states” (Orloff, 1996) ²².

¹⁹ “Forests Gender &.”

²⁰ Engendering the Latin American state, Altha J. Cravey, First Published August 1, 1998

²¹ Vicky Randall & Georgina Waylen, Gender, Politics and the State ; Edition 1st Edition ; First Published 1998

²² Ann Orloff, Gender in the Welfare State, Annual Review of Sociology 1996 22:1, 51-78

Gender-related vulnerability is not confined by a single determining factor but is a reflection of several social and historical factors that create patterns of relationships within and across cultures, institutions and individuals' private lives. As Enarson (1998) was saying “the intersection of these factors with caste, racial and other inequalities, creates hazardous social conditions that place different groups of women at risk.”²³

However, it is necessary to abandon the simplistic notion that women are more vulnerable simply because they are women, and thus not only remain confined to their sex but also considered solely as victims. Women are not more vulnerable to climate change because they are less strong and powerful by nature, but instead consider the social and cultural dynamics that lead them, despite their will, to be more affected and thus more vulnerable.

An essential factor in women's vulnerability is accessibility, the ability of a social group to adapt and change based on the resources available to it. Elements such as technology, knowledge, power, decision-making capacity, education, health and accessibility to food are considered essential resources in determining vulnerability factors as well as adaptability factors. The more assets people can benefit from, the less vulnerable they will be. Thus, the fewer resources they have, the greater the uncertainty and subsequently the vulnerability (Moser and Satterthwaite, 2008)²⁴.

It is, therefore, crucial to understand how climate change will have much more radical and major impacts on women than on men. Both direct and indirect risks of climate change can affect women's daily lives, but also their life expectancy.

²³ Enarson, E. (1998). “Through Women’s Eyes: A Gendered Research Agenda for Disaster Social Science”. *Disasters* 22(2): 157–173

²⁴ Moser, C. and Satterthwaite, D. (2008). *Pre-poor Climate Change Adaptation in the Urban Centres of Low-and Middle-Income Countries*. Workshop on Social Dimension of Climate Change. USA: World Bank.

Table 1. Direct and indirect risks of climate change and their potential effect on women

<u>Climate change</u>	<u>Potential risks</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Potential effects on women effects</u>
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Direct

Increased ocean temperatures	Rising incidence of coral bleaching due to thermal stress.	Loss of coral reefs can damage the tourism industry, a sector in which women comprise 46% of the workforce
Increased drought and water shortage	Morocco had 10 years of drought from 1984 to 2000; northern Kenya experienced four severe droughts between 1983 and 2001	Women and girls in developing countries are often the primary collectors, users and managers of water. Decreases in water availability will jeopardize their families' livelihoods and increase their workloads and may have secondary effects such as lower school enrolment figures for girls or less opportunity for women to engage in income-generating activities.
Increased extreme weather events	Greater intensity and quantity of cyclones, hurricanes, floods and heat waves.	In a sample of 141 countries over the period 1981–2002, it was found that natural disasters (and their subsequent impact) on average kill more women than men or kill women at an earlier age than men.

<p>Increased epidemics</p>	<p>Climate variability played a critical role in malaria epidemics in the East African highlands and accounted for an estimated 70% of variation in recent Cholera series in Bangladesh</p>	<p>Women have less access to medical services than men, and their workloads increase when they have to spend more time caring for the sick.</p> <p>Poorer households affected by HIV/Aids have fewer resources to adapt to climate change impacts. Adopting new strategies for crop production or mobilizing livestock is harder for female-headed and infected households.</p>
<p>Loss of species</p>	<p>By 2050, climate change could result in species extinctions ranging from 18–35%.</p>	<p>Women often rely on crop diversity to accommodate climatic variability, but permanent temperature change will reduce agro-biodiversity and traditional medicine options, creating potential impacts on food security and health.</p>
<p>Decreased crop production</p>	<p>In Africa, crop production is expected to decline 20–50% in response to extreme El Niño-like conditions.</p>	<p>Rural women in particular are responsible for half of the world’s food production and produce between 60-80% of the food in most developing countries. In Africa, the share of women affected by climate-related crop changes could range from 48% in Burkina Faso to 73% in the Congo.</p>

Source: Undp 2010a.

Women's condition of vulnerability, therefore, depends on social, cultural and economic factors. According to the United Nations, seventy per cent of the 1.3 billion people living in conditions of extreme poverty are women, and in urban areas, forty per cent of the poorest households are headed by women.²⁵

Most notably, Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümpe, found out that what matters the most is the everyday socio-economic status of women. They examined catastrophic events in a sample of up to 141 different countries, in a period between 1981 and 2002, and found that natural disasters lowered the life expectancy of women more than that of men. A natural disaster would in some countries even go as far as lowering the gender gap in life expectancy, since normally females live longer than men. Secondly, they have discovered that the major calamity was, that when women's social and economic rights are not protected, more women than men die from environmental disasters. In contrast, in countries where both genders have the same rights, disasters of the same magnitude affect men and women similarly²⁶.

The 2015 Paris Agreement has made a specific provision for the empowerment of women, acknowledging the fact that they are disproportionately impacted. But a lot has to be done yet.

How toxic masculinity contributes to climate change

According to the Oxford Dictionary, toxic masculinity refers to “a set of attitudes and ways of behaving stereotypically associated with or expected of men, regarded as having a negative impact on men and on society as a whole”²⁷.

²⁵ Osman-Elasha, Balgis. n.d. “Women...In the Shadow of Climate Change.” United Nations.

²⁶ Neumayer, E. and Plümper, T. (2007). The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981–2002.

²⁷

“TOXIC MASCULINITY | Meaning & Definition for UK English | Lexico.com.” n.d. Lexico Dictionaries | English.

The New York Times identified it as what can come out of teaching boys that they can't express emotion openly, that they have to be "tough all the time" and that anything other than that makes them "feminine" or weak.²⁸ The term toxic masculinity, however, does not derive from feminist movements, but rather from a reaction to the second feminist wave from a mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s and 1990s. Through various activities such as workshops or retreats, the movement sought to advance an ideal of 'deep masculinity', a warrior masculinity that protected men. According to the movement, what led men to be considered toxic was not a certain type of socialisation, but rather the result of a society that feminised men, impeding them from developing as real men through rituals and retreats, thus making them aggressive and frustrated.

In the 1980s, sociologist Raewyn Connell gave another definition of toxic masculinity as the idea that certain masculine ideals such as physical strength, respect in the social sphere, and sexual potency become a problem when they touch on standards that are impossible to achieve. Thus, male violence does not stem from a toxic factor that has become part of a man's nature, but rather from men's political and social settings that make them more prone to conflict due to social expectations and their own right as men to behave in such a manner.²⁹

But how does this relate to climate justice?

Research carried out to verify the impact of the green-feminine stereotype on green consumption found that a mental association exists among both men and women between the concept of greenness and femininity (Aaron R. Brough, James E. B. Wilkie, Jingjing Ma, Mathew S. Isaac, David Gal)³⁰. The study collected data from 127 university students (52.0% male; mean age = 21.42) with the aim of measuring the implicit attitudes of people towards the greenness of products and its gendered association. They discovered that this mental association exists based on stereotypes, which are not only perpetrated by men but also by women, that target green consumers as more feminine than non-green consumers. This will encourage men to carry out fewer green behaviours.

There are several other examples that underline how an object can have two completely different perceptions. Research conducted by Brought Et Al (2016) found that both male and female

²⁸ Salam, Maya. 2019. "What Is Toxic Masculinity?" The New York Times, January 22, 2019.

²⁹ Salter, Michael. 2019. "The Problem with the Term 'Toxic Masculinity.'" The Atlantic. The Atlantic. February 27, 2019.

³⁰ Aaron R. Brough, James E. B. Wilkie, Jingjing Ma, Mathew S. Isaac, David Gal, Is Eco-Friendly Unmanly? The Green-Feminine Stereotype and Its Effect on Sustainable Consumption, Journal of Consumer Research, Volume 43, Issue 4, December 2016, Pages 567–582

participants considered using a reusable shopping bag as feminine behaviour and conversely using a disposable one as something masculine and manly³¹. This is also seen in the proportion of men compared to women who are vegetarian or vegan. A survey carried out by the Human Research Council ³² in 2014 found that in the US only 24% of vegans are men. Trivially, the term “soy boys” is used to describe males who completely and utterly lack all necessary masculine qualities, based on supposed scientific research associating the use of soya as harmful to the male’s libido and physique (research that has never been substantiated). This trend also affects animal welfare where women are the main members of animal protection associations (75%).³³

In this chapter we have understood how climate change is not gender-neutral and mainly affects women, who become the most vulnerable subjects of these climate disasters. This is the result of a certain type of socialization that contributes to an increase in these disparities. In the next chapter, the idea of women's care and the socialisation that leads women to be associated as caregivers will be examined more in-depth.

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Wilkie, Aaron R. Brough, James E. B. 2017. “Men Resist Green Behavior as Unmanly.” *Scientific American*. December 26, 2017

³² Humane Research Council. 2014. “Study of Current and Former Vegetarians and Vegans Initial Findings December 2014.”

³³ Dowsett E, Semmler C, Bray H, Ankeny RA, Chur-Hansen A. Neutralising the meat paradox: Cognitive dissonance, gender, and eating animals. *Appetite*. 2018 Apr 1;123:280-288.

CHAPTER 3

The idea of Care

"Care is the most radical concept and practice available to us today".

Naomi Klein

Women socialised as caregivers

The idea of care has long been underestimated, as it has always been associated with a feminine ideal, with a concept of women and of "unproductive" activity. One of the reasons behind this, is the importance that the North has historically attached to autonomy and independence, which have always been associated with masculinity (The Care Collective). Notions such as autonomy or independence are still connected with symbols of masculinity, which contrast sharply with the care, tenderness and dependence that characterise domesticity.

Since time immemorial, the pressure put on men has made them exhibit authoritative and decisive masculinities. In the United States, most massacres are carried out by men, often white, many with a history of violence against women.

In his book *Crime and Disrepute* (1994), J. Hagan argues that in order to understand the phenomenon of deviance, both for men and women, it is necessary to bear in mind that there are two types of control exercised over the individual: formal control (that of laws and the social contract) and informal control (that of the family). The author argues that the greater the informal control of the family group, the less control is exerted by society, Hagan concludes that it is the family that modulates relationships, including class and gender relationships which, in turn, influence the social distribution of delinquency. Thus, "the social reproduction of gender relations refers to those activities, institutions, and relations involved in the maintenance and renewal of gender roles, both within the family and elsewhere. These activities include the task of caring for,

protecting and socialising children into the roles they will play as adults. According to power control theory, the class structure of the family shapes the social reproduction of gender relations and, in turn, the social distribution of delinquency".³⁴

Consequently, the idea of care has been devalued because it is associated with something feminine, work carried out by women and therefore linked to a domestic sphere.

This belief is one that has endured over the years. Indeed, in the 1950s and 1960s, women were bombarded with images of 'happy' housewives. Women, once married, became full-time housewives, thus predisposed to taking care of others. Now times have changed, women are present in the working sphere, but often with longer working hours than men, in order to provide not only for themselves but also for their families. Often these women will go on to employ other women from poorer backgrounds, often involving immigration from the South to the North, where they will take on care work, often domestic work. This creates a chain, where women migrate to take up care work, leaving their children and families in the hands of other women who will take care of them. According to Istat data from 2016, it is estimated that only 20% of men in Italy devote part of their daily time to housework and caring for dependent family members. The enormous and heterogeneous burden of unpaid care work continues to fall on women, increasing their vulnerability within the couple.³⁵

From a strictly legal point of view, the traditional view of family law has meant that, in the intra-family sphere, caring is considered as non-work: legally obligatory and ontologically free. This is also and above all in the light of the principle of solidarity, which has led to domestic work carried out within the family unit being considered as a task *due affectionis vel benevolentiae causa*, for reasons of affection and goodwill (Maria Rosaria Marella, Sveva Stancati)³⁶.

According to Habermas, in capitalist societies, the activities and practices that constitute the sphere of paid work are to be regarded as material reproductive activities because they are, in his view, 'social work' and perform the function of material reproduction. On the other hand, childcare activities and activities that are performed by women in our society without remuneration in the domestic sphere - let us call them 'unpaid childcare work of women' - are considered symbolic reproduction activities because, in Habermas' view, they serve the socialisation and symbolic

³⁴Hagan, J. (1994). *Crime and disrepute*. SAGE Publications, Inc.,

³⁵ ISTAT, "The Life of Women and Men in Europe - Childcare and Housework." n.d. *The Life of Women and Men in Europe*. 2016.

³⁶ Maria Rosaria Marella, Sveva Stancati. *Donne e Migrazioni: Il nodo del lavoro di cura*. *Rivista di studi giuridici sull'orientamento sessuale e l'identità di genere*. 2020.

reproduction function. Childcare practices are, in themselves, oriented simply towards symbolic reproduction, whereas the practices that produce food and objects are, by their intrinsic nature, related to material reproduction.³⁷

The example of motherhood is in fact by definition one of the most thought of when thinking of caring relationships. In Western Christian culture, the Virgin Mary embodies the ideal of the devoted mother. The woman has always been associated with caring for the child, beginning with the birth. But there are other examples of motherhood that always see the woman as a central pillar in the care of the child. Patricia Hill Collins shows how in African American communities, the idea of caring for one's children has been divided into two different categories, namely 'blood mothers' and 'other mothers'. The first defines the biological mothers, while the other defines the network of women to whom the mother can entrust her children, which can include not only family members such as grandmothers and sisters but also friends or neighbours.³⁸

However, it is essential to underline that women's care work is a complex reality, not without contradictions. Within it, there are different levels of vulnerability that cannot be ignored. Care has long been devalued and associated with a feminine ideal. The idea of care as a single individual does not allow for the recognition of our common and interconnected vulnerabilities, creating a climate of indifference. Judith Butler in "The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethical-Political Bind", points out that only by recognising the conflictuality of our bonds, the awareness of the vulnerability that we share, we can begin to develop the perspective of care on a global scale.³⁹ Care is therefore essential to create transnational relationships between individuals and different demographics. Care must not remain confined to the feminine perspective of caring for the family or household but must be extended as care for others, for civilisation and for the planet. Only by extracting care from the feminine conception we can reach a global conception of care for the planet.

³⁷ Fraser, Nancy. 2013. *FORTUNES of FEMINISM : From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. S.L.: Verso Books.

³⁸ Patricia Hill Collins. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

³⁹ Butler, Judith. 2021. *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethical-Political Bind*.

Gender values and eco-friendliness

After analysing how from childhood onwards women are socialised as the main caregivers, we need to understand how these gender values impact climate and sustainability values. Schultz (2001) shows how there is a correlation between the values one possesses and environmental concerns. He highlighted how there is evidence for the distinction between egoistic, altruistic, and biospheric environmental concerns.⁴⁰

When discussing values such as vulnerability, it must be emphasised that men and women have two different starting positions with respect to their relationship with environmental resources. This is due to several factors such as the level of dependence one has on the resources and the unequal not only access to but also control over those. Another essential factor is knowledge, i.e. the level of information one has about climate problems.

According to FAO, in rural areas, women are the main producers of staple foods, with agricultural production essential for families, not only in terms of nutrition but also as a primary source of income. Unfortunately, these women are not taken into account by policymakers when it comes to creating policies on agriculture and climate strategies. In their imagination, the agricultural sector is almost exclusively made up of men, the main providers of agricultural services (FAO, 2007)⁴¹.

It is therefore essential to understand how the values everyone has are important in the way one relates to the environment and sustainability. Research shows that every object is imbued with gender associations. The association of colours has always been linked to a certain gender. Objects in shades of pink are considered feminine, while those in shades of blue are seen as masculine. Counihan and Kaplan (2004)⁴², analyse how femininity and masculinity are associated in different cultures with specific foods and rules controlling their consumption. But not only that, also the shape of objects also has a gender connotation. Indeed, objects with rounder shapes will often be seen as feminine, while those with more angular shapes are associated with men and masculinity

⁴⁰ Schultz, P. W. (2001). The structure of environmental concern: Concern for self, other people, and the biosphere. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.

⁴¹ FAO. (2007). *Gender and Food Security: Agriculture*.

⁴² Counihan, Carole, and Steven L Kaplan. 2004. *Food and Gender : Identity and Power*. London: Routledge.

(e.g., Franck & Rosen, 1949; Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Harkey, 1982; Van Rompay, Pruyn, & Tieke, 2009)⁴³.

These associations, being present in everyday life, are also reflected in the climate choices one makes.

A number of past research studies shed light on some of the reasons why women are more likely to be eco-friendly than men. Thomas Dietz, Linda Kalof and Paul C. Stern in 1994 in the US carried out a research on telephone basis to examine the "differences in the factor structure of values for a group of 145 white men and 200 white women using confirmatory factor analysis and differences in mean value scores using multivariate analysis of variance". They started from the principle that the two genders obviously have differences in the priorities and meaning of their values. At the end of their research, they found that the differences were not in the value structure that each gender has but rather in the priorities of their values. Women place altruism, for example, as a more important value than men. These results, also highlight the importance of gender differences in altruism as a basis for gender differences in environmentalism.⁴⁴

Some research carried out in 2003 illustrated how most of the women's beliefs and behaviours concern the social context. Traditionally, women take more responsibility for the social context for social needs, therefore, are directed more towards the everyday social and physical environment. While women are more conscious of environmental problems because of future perspectives, men instead are more likely to take risks, which will be seen in their evaluation of environmental risk factors (Anna D Eisler & Hannes Eisler & Mitsuo Yoshida)⁴⁵.

A crucial element in researching gender values related to climate change concerns the role that empathy might play. The presence or absence of empathy could explain part of the gender differences in how they deal with climate change. According to Cambridge Dictionary, empathy is "the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be

⁴³ Franck, K., Rosen, E. (1949). A projective test of masculinity-femininity. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 13, 247–256.

⁴⁴ Dietz, Thomas, Linda Kalof, and Paul C. Stern. 2002. "Gender, Values, and Environmentalism." *Social Science Quarterly* 83 (1): 353–64.

⁴⁵ Eisler, Anna D, Hannes Eisler, and Mitsuo Yoshida. 2003. "Perception of Human Ecology: Cross-Cultural and Gender Comparisons." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 23 (1): 89–101

in that person's situation"⁴⁶. Empathy allows a response to the emotional state perceived by others. The Empathizing-Systemizing Theory suggests that it is an important aspect of social functioning based on socialization and biological structure, and importantly, is expressed more often by women than men. Empathy has often been associated with a heightened capacity to be altruistic, a necessary element of eco-friendliness.

Several types of research conducted by Steven Arnocky of McMaster University and Mirella L Stroink of Lakehead University examine the relationship between empathy and care for the environment.⁴⁷ 6 out of 9 studies show the gulf between men and women in terms of environmental concern, with women more implicated than men. Values pertaining to the self, others and the biosphere, affect the expression of environmental concern for living things beyond the individual. Therefore, the priority of environmental concern is suggested as being a derivation of value orientation. The elements that could account for gender differences are the differences in values or the experience of empathy towards other living things. "Women expressed greater levels of altruistic concern and cooperation for the sake of the ecosystem, while men expressed more competitiveness for resources" (Steven Arnocky & Mirella L Stroink). Emotional empathy has been essential to the stereotypical role of women. In fact, women have been socialized since a young age in a different way towards emotions, compared to men. "Young boys and girls are exposed to different socialization experiences, with girls' oriented toward an ethic of caring as opposed to an ethic of justice, with the ethic of caring promoting empathic concern" (Gilligan & Wiggins, 1988). That is why women tend to behave more in a compassionate and nurturing way, it is because they have been socialized in that way, to better understand the needs of others. This will lead them to easily experience environmental concerns which extend beyond themselves. But as environmental issues become more localized, and therefore specific to the individual this will make empathy less and less relevant in making predictions about a concern.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Steven Arnocky and Mirella L Stroink discovered that these differences disappear when controlling the levels of empathy. Therefore, when men are empathic, they will express the same level of concern for the environment that women do. This is essential in understanding that the relationship of men with the environment is not due because they are built in that way, or because they think they are too thought to care about the

⁴⁶ Dictionary, Cambridge. 2019. "EMPATHY | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Cambridge.org. 2019.

⁴⁷ Steven Arnocky, Mirella Stroink (2010). Gender differences in environmentalism: The mediating role of emotional empathy

planet, but it is more the result of long-lasting socialization toward certain behaviour and attitudes that are deemed acceptable for a man and others which are not. It is the result of socialization which makes them act in ways which are considered masculine and thus distancing themselves from sustainable acts and behaviours that are considered more feminine.

This chapter highlighted the predominant role that socialization plays in the future behaviours of men and women towards the environment. Women are socialised as caregivers, making them socially more prone to feel emotions such as empathy and therefore concerned for the overall state of the world. Men instead, due to enduring socialization, detach themselves from behaviours such as eco-solidarity or eco-friendliness which are considered women's behaviours.

Due to the increased vulnerability of women when facing climate change, the next chapter will be dedicated to analysing this vulnerability and how to challenge it in order to make women adapt to climate change.

CHAPTER 4

Women's adaptation to climate change

Gender vulnerability and risk management

When analysing the relationship between gender and risk management it is necessary to take into account the concept of vulnerability. According to the IPCC, vulnerability is “the degree to which a system is susceptible to and unable to cope with adverse effects of climate change including climate variability and extremes. Vulnerability is a function of the character, magnitude and rate of climate change and the variation to which a system is exposed, its sensitivity and its adaptive capacity” (IPCC, 2007)⁴⁸.

Vulnerability is therefore the condition in which a population is confronted with danger, it is dynamic and changes over time, place, social and economic conditions (Wilches-Chaux, 1998). In analysing the relationship between the population and its habitat, it is possible to understand how factors such as vulnerability and risk are actually social constructs. Recent environmental impacts and climate change make it clear that such phenomena are not due to a natural evolution of events but are the result of decisions taken by people at a social, economic and political level. As phenomena of social origin, it is evident how gender issues play an essential role in shaping the risks and vulnerability of these events.

According to The Human Development Record of 2007 and 2008⁴⁹, women are more vulnerable to the risks of climate change and its impacts because they are historically disadvantaged, have had limited access to resources, and have played almost no role in decision-making.

⁴⁸ IPCC. (2007). Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Solomon, S., Qin, D., Manning, M., Chen, Z., Marquis, M., Averyt, K.B., Tignor, M. and Miller, H.L. (eds.)). Cambridge, UK and New York, USA: Cambridge University Press

⁴⁹ Watkins, Kevin, Cecilia Ugaz, Liliana Carvajal, Daniel Coppard, Ricardo Fuentes Nieva, Amie Gaye, Wei Ha, et al. n.d. “Production and Translation Team for the Preparation of the Human Development Report 2007/2008.”

To understand how women cope with the risks imposed by climate change, we need to understand the origins of their vulnerabilities.

According to Wilches-Chaux, the factors that influence people's vulnerability are political, ideological, cultural, institutional, organisational and educational.

The first factor concerns physical location. According to ActionAid, it is the poor who are most affected by the climate crisis, with women making up the largest number. Climate disasters are mainly concentrated in the poorest countries. 262 million people were affected annually between 2000 and 2004 by climate disasters, 98% of whom were in developing areas (UNDP, 2007)⁵⁰. High levels of poverty combined with very low human development mean that the poorest people are the most affected by the environmental disruption. Poor households are confronted with inadequate housing (slums), limited access to formal insurance and low incomes which make them more affected by disasters. If we look at the rural areas, depending on the physical location (for example hillsides or river embankments), a farmer could experience soil erosion, floods or fires which could endanger their only resource of livelihood. A striking example is that of the urban women living in the city of Haina in the Dominican Republic or on the island of St Lucia in the Caribbean. These women are confronted with risks due to toxins released by industrial waste from the pharmaceutical industries installed in the cities, but also from landfills and industrial warehouses containing hazardous and harmful materials (Meyreles, 2003)⁵¹.

The second element of vulnerability is related to the social aspect. This refers to all the elements that enable the well-being of individuals and communities. Access to these essential resources for a dignified life is often denied to women. For example, nutritional needs differ between men and women, with women needing different foods and supplements than men. "Women are more prone to nutritional deficiencies because they have unique nutritional needs (especially when they are pregnant or breastfeeding); in the south and south-east Asia, 45-60% of women of reproductive age are underweight and 80% of pregnant women have iron deficiencies" (FAO, 2000)⁵².

⁵⁰ "UNDP Support to the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 13 Taking Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts United Nations Development Programme."

⁵¹ Enarson, Elaine, Lourdes Meyreles, Marta Gonzalez, Betty Hearn Morrow, Audrey Mullings, and Judith Soares. 2003. *Working with Women at Risk : Practical Guidelines for Assessing Local Disaster Risk*. Miami, Fla.: International Hurricane Center, Florida International University.

⁵² FAO. (2000). *Gender and nutrition*.

A third vulnerability factor is economic. Women earn less than men, are more susceptible to economic dependency, and in the agro-food sector have limited access to land and thus to control and production of resources, making them often underpaid. According to the FAO, in India, Nepal and Thailand for example less than 10% of women farmers own land.

The fourth factor concerns access to education and information. There are 781 million illiterate adults, and almost two-thirds of them are women, and in sub-Saharan Africa, half of the women are illiterate (UNESCO, 2015)⁵³. It has also been analysed that in difficult and stressful periods or after the occurrence of disasters, girls are more likely to be forced to leave school and stay at home to help with household chores, allowing families to save money (Davis et al., 2005)⁵⁴. Limited access to educational institutions, as well as a lack of education also means that women have less access to information, making them more vulnerable because in the event of an environmental disaster they will be the last to find out, and due to a lack of education they are unable to participate in decision making and less representation in disaster response organisations and training. One example is access to the Internet. In fact, only 48% of women have access to the internet, compared to 58% of men. This is mainly due to the fact that women do not have access to the internet in schools or workplaces, partly due to the over-representation of women in the care sector and the informal economy. The reasons may also be cultural. In Asia and the Middle East, men are more mobile and thus have greater access to public spaces such as internet cafes. In contrast, women are often forced to stay at home, where access to the internet is limited.⁵⁵

After analysing the different types of vulnerability that would put women more at risk during environmental disasters, we need to explore how women manage the risks caused by environmental disasters.

"Risk management is a process whose ultimate aim, as part of a sustainable development proposal in the social, economic and territorial spheres, is the permanent reduction and control of disasters in society" (Burón, 2007)⁵⁶. Risk management is thus the set of methods that help to prevent, reduce or

⁵³ "There Are Still 781 Million Illiterate Adults | Global Education Monitoring Report."

⁵⁴ Davis, I., Peiris De Costa, K., Alam, K., Ariyabandu, M.M., Bhatt, M.R., Schneider-Sliwa, R. and Balsari, S. (2005). Tsunami, Gender, and Recovery: Special Issue for International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction. South Asia Disasters

⁵⁵ "Bridging the Gender Divide."

⁵⁶ Burón, C. (2007). Gestión de riesgo: Una nueva visión de los desastres.

mitigate the occurrence of catastrophic events. The Oslo Policy Forum Report acknowledges disaster risk management as a fundamental element in achieving climate change adaptation. It allows for a connection between planning, decision-making and implementation of proposals that would allow both women and men to reduce or prevent risks, which, if not managed properly would turn into disasters.

This was seen in disasters such as the cyclone in Bangladesh in 1991. The pre-disaster warning signs, which should have alerted the population, did not reach many women. Information about the cyclone's arrival was passed around markets or squares, but as Bangladesh is very segregated with respect to the sex of people, many women did not have access to the places where the information was passed around. It was thought that men would warn their families (including their wives, sisters, etc.) but this did not happen, leaving them unprepared for the event. Of the 1400 victims of the cyclone, 90% were women (Ikeda, 1995)⁵⁷.

Neumayer and Plümper in 2007 analysed disasters in 141 countries worldwide. They found that women's causes of death were often linked to both economic and women's rights factors. Indeed, in countries where both men and women have equal rights, the number of deaths related to environmental disasters was the same between the two sexes. During their research, they also discovered how men were given preferential treatment during rescue missions⁵⁸. This was the case in Sri Lanka, where, according to Oxfam (2005)⁵⁹, during tsunamis, men are more likely to survive because they have been taught from an early age how to swim or climb trees. Due to social prejudices, women have not been educated to do these activities, thus making them vulnerable and unlikely to survive in the event of environmental disasters in the country.

The Gender and Disaster Network has put in place seven principles to keep in mind in order to include a gender perspective in the reconstruction after an environmental disaster.

1. Think big: gender equality and the principles of risk reduction must guide all disaster mitigation aspects, responses to disasters and reconstruction. The window of opportunity is quick to close.
2. Know the facts: gender analysis is not an option, but it is imperative to direct help and plan an equitable recovery.

⁵⁷ Ikeda, K. (1995). "Gender Differences in Human Loss and Vulnerability in Natural Disasters: A Case Study from Bangladesh". *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol.2, No. 2, 171-193 New Delhi, India: Sage Publications.

⁵⁸Neumayer, E. and Plümper, T. (2007). *The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981-2002*.

⁵⁹ Oxfam. (2005). *The tsunami's impact on women*.

3. Work with women in base organizations: in communities, the women's organizations have information, knowledge, experiences, networks and resources that are vital to increasing resilience when faced with disasters
4. Work with and build the capacities of existing women's groups.
5. Resist stereotypes: base all initiatives on knowledge of the specific contexts and differences of each culture, economic situation, as well as political and sexual differences, and not on false generalizations
6. Use a human rights approach: democratic and participatory initiatives are of more help to women and girls. Both men and women have a right to the conditions they need to enjoy their fundamental human rights, as well as simply to survive
7. Respect and build women's capacities. Avoid overburdening women who already have a very heavy workload and many family responsibilities.

Source: Gender and Disasters Network, 2005.

Women are often perceived as the victims of climate change. Making them part of the change could help create adaptation strategies. Enarson reverses the common idea expressed so far and sees natural disasters as being able to "provide women with a unique chance to challenge and change gender roles in their society"⁶⁰. In 1998, in the Masica community in Honduras, gender-sensitive community training was implemented, focusing on how to deal with the warning signs. Women in the community were trained and educated on risk management and warning signs so that they could deal with an impending environmental disaster. This is what happened after only six months, when Hurricane Mitch hit the Masica community, the entire population was saved because they had been evacuated in time. This also happened with the help of the community's women, who took important actions in areas previously reserved to men (Sánchez del Valle, 2000)⁶¹.

⁶⁰ Enarson, E. (2000). Gender and Natural Disasters. IPCRR Working Paper no.1. International Labour Organization.

⁶¹ Sánchez del Valle, R. (2000). Local risk management in Central America. Lessons learnt from the FEMID project.

The equitable access to resources

Access to resources is an essential issue when it comes to climate change and sustainable development. Natural resources, for example, are necessary for the livelihoods of a large part of the world's population, and the driving force behind many economic developments. To understand these dynamics, it is important to keep gender in mind. Both men and women tend to enjoy and use the benefits of resources in different ways. This is determined by the roles and responsibilities associated with gender, and the economic status of each.

One of the most important natural resources is water. Necessary for human life, it is becoming increasingly sought after. Due to climate change, water availability has increased in areas such as the humid tropics, considered to be high latitudes, while it has decreased (and is increasingly sought due to major droughts) in low and mid-latitudes⁶². This means that more than 1,000 million people in the least developed countries do not have access to water and 2,400 million do not have access to adequate sanitation (WHO, 2019)⁶³. In both urban and rural areas, women and girls are often the ones responsible for collecting water, which is used for cleaning, cooking and even farming. Poor access to these resources, diminishing and increasingly contaminated water, means that more and more women find themselves with poor services, limited supplies and a livelihood jeopardised for them and their families.

Another essential natural resource is biodiversity and ecosystems. According to a study carried out by several ecologists and put forward by Thullier in 2007, between 15% and 37% of natural species could become extinct by 2050 due to climate change⁶⁴. Rising temperatures are causing several species to migrate up to 160 km away from their home areas. Climate change is such a rapid process that it will test the resilience of socio-economic systems and not allow species to adapt to new habitats. Climate change leads to shifts in rainfall, melting ice and consequently affecting the level of seas, rivers and lakes, causing limited access to drinking water. This will lead to irreparable damage to one-sixth of the world's population, who live on melting snow and ice to provide

⁶² Lorena Aguilar. 2009. Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change. Eric Hidalgo Valverde Publishing.

⁶³ World Health Organization. 2019. "1 in 3 People Globally Do Not Have Access to Safe Drinking Water – UNICEF, WHO."

⁶⁴ Thullier, W. (2007). "Climate Change and the Ecologist", in: Nature 448/2: 550-552. USA

hydration. A first possible consequence is an increase in migration flows, with 200 million climate migrants expected by 2050⁶⁵. Another could be the human response to rising temperatures and droughts with increased exploitation of water resources for both agricultural and urban needs. Rising temperatures result in increased evapotranspiration, reduced runoff and infiltration leading to decreased availability of freshwater and soil moisture.

Men and women play different roles in conserving biodiversity. Research carried out by FAO in 1999 shows that women in communities have a deep knowledge of the fauna and flora of their environment, often assuming important roles in seed conservation and selection. Through the use of indigenous resources for food, medicine and energy, women make their place in the community. Mostly, women have been found to invest between 90 and 95 per cent of the money they receive in something related to the environment to improve their family's quality of life. Biodiversity management, therefore, relies heavily on women's skills, expertise and work. Unfortunately, even though they are essential to the maintenance of fauna and flora, they are often excluded from any kind of decision-making process concerning the latter.

Another essential element concerns the food and agricultural sector. This sector is among the most affected by climate change, mainly affecting small-scale producers. When the practice of agriculture began, more than 7,000 plants were cultivated for food. Now, 90% of the food we consume comes from only 15 different plant species and 8 animal species. However, many of these products and plants are not meant to survive. For example, it is predicted that a quarter of wild potatoes will disappear by 2050 (CBD, 2007)⁶⁶. In the agricultural sector, especially in less developed countries, women are the main producers of food. Yet they are faced with major droughts and possible changes in rainfall. Women are therefore placed at a disadvantage with regard to the repercussions of climate change on agriculture (Oslo Policy Forum Report, 2008)⁶⁷.

When talking about climate change one cannot avoid talking about rising seas. The erosion of coastal areas and the melting of ice, which leads to a rise in sea level, have various side effects. These include the flooding of coastal areas and the invasion of freshwater reserves such as aquifers

⁶⁵ IOM International Organization for Migration. "Migration and Climate Change."

⁶⁶ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). (2007). International Day for Biological Diversity: Climate Change and Biological Diversity. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁶⁷ Oslo Policy Forum Report. (2008). Changing the Way We Develop: Dealing with Disasters and Climate Change. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prevention Consortium and UNDP. Norway

by saltwater. According to the IPCC, coastal areas are the most vulnerable to these environmental phenomena, with around 30% of coastal areas likely to disappear. In these areas, it is women who are mainly involved in the fisheries sector. They process the fish and prepare it for the market, always very close to the shore⁶⁸. But inequality is also felt in this situation, as women's roles in the fisheries sector have not, according to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), been taken into account in economic analyses or in the investment of resources, resulting in women's interests not being addressed in the drafting of coastal plans. This is because women often carry out activities at the margins of the harvest.

Shorter rainy seasons and higher temperatures and consequently drought led to soil erosion and increasingly infertile soils. Declining vegetation cover not only threatens the food and water security of populations but also leads entire communities to migrate to more habitable areas. In Africa, drought has led to a food crisis that causes 60% of food emergencies (GTZ and OSS, 2007)⁶⁹. In agricultural areas, especially in Africa, women are the main victims of soil erosion. Although they are essential in the preservation of food and water and the management of natural reserves, they find themselves with limited access to services and decision-making processes as they are often illiterate, have no land ownership and are subject to cultural restrictions.

The last factor to keep in mind when analysing access to resources is the global health factor. Many of the consequences of climate change will primarily affect the health of individuals. According to the World Health Organization, it was responsible for 6% of malaria cases in 2000 alone. Climate change will have three types of health effects. The first is a direct effect caused by extreme weather events, the second is the health consequences of environmental disturbances resulting from climate change. The third effect takes into account all other health consequences such as trauma, infections and adverse effects on food security caused by population displacement, environmental degradation and possible armed conflicts caused by climate change (World Health Organization, 2003)⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ IPCC. (2001). Summary for Policymakers. Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Report of Working Group II of the International Panel on Climate Change. Switzerland: IPCC.

⁶⁹ GTZ and OSS. (2007). Climate change adaptation and fight against desertification. Introductory note No.1. Tunis

⁷⁰ "WORLD MALARIA REPORT 2020."

Climate change will thus impact populations with an increase in malnutrition and gastrointestinal, respiratory and infectious diseases. Health services will be affected by an increase in the number of patients, with children, especially girls, and the elderly mainly affected by these events, as they are more vulnerable. According to Samuel D Brody (2008)⁷¹ professor and director of the Institute for Sustainable Coastal Communities, women and girls will be forced to take care of sick family members, which will prevent them from attending school or even working. Women and girls may face difficulties in accessing health services due to increased costs or cultural restrictions.

This chapter analysed how women are more vulnerable to risks related to climate change, and which are the main ones responsible for causing their vulnerability.

But faced with those impacts, women tend to react, and many are the example which have highlighted, how in situations of possible climate disasters, women have managed the risks and resolved the situation.

⁷¹ Brody, J., Demetriades, J. and Esplen, E. (2008). Gender and climate change: mapping the linkages. A scoping study on knowledge and gaps. UK: Prepared for the UK Department for International Development by BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to understand the link between sustainable development and gender equality. How two concepts that seemed so distant and impossible to associate, are instead interconnected.

Starting from the assumption that the climate crisis will affect the entire global population indirectly or directly, it seemed almost surrealistic to think how this event could have a preponderant effect on women. How can something seemingly as neutral as climate could affect one sex more than the other?

In the course of the research, it has been highlighted how climate change does not consciously decide whom to affect, but how, its repercussions on a system already so fragile, will make some categories more vulnerable than others.

Even if one does not want to accept it, climate change is not gender-neutral. Women's vulnerability to the environmental crisis is evident, it is not only a facet that makes them more susceptible to these dynamics but a combination of social, cultural and economic factors, which create relationships within and between cultures, institutions and private lives of individuals. Women are therefore not biologically more vulnerable, but they are vulnerable because they face a disparity in accessibility.

This research focused on several elements of contrast between men and women, which, however, if harnessed in the right way, could be beneficial to the fight against climate change. It was acknowledged how the role played by the values associated with each gender was elementary in understanding the problem.

Women socialised as the main caregivers not only in the family sphere, become almost predisposed to carry values such as empathy, scientifically considered to be one of the essential emotions that enable people to empathise with causes such as the environmental one as well as bearing eco-supportive activities. However, these values considered feminine and often disavowed by men due to the same social factors that lead women to possess them, are essential elements in the fight against climate change: women recycle more, consume less meat globally, and spend more money on protecting the environment and the planet. This is why they are necessary to be taken into

account when drafting new environmental laws, as they are crucial to sustainable development. We cannot have climate justice without gender justice.

Climate change has brought to light the vulnerability of gender to environmental risks, but at the same time, it has made it possible to understand how, if given the right resources, they are able to manage risks in a way that reduces and sometimes even prevents the chances of environmental disasters.

It is difficult to give a single, precise solution to a problem of such magnitude, which is intertwined with our values and the way we have been educated and socialised for generations.

A possible future vision, however, is set out by Anne-Marie Slaughter, the first woman to hold the post of director of policy planning at the US State Department, who in her article entitled '*Why women still can't have it all*', published in *The Atlantic* in 2012 highlights how “the best hope for improving the lot of all women, and for closing what Wolfers and Stevenson call a “new gender gap”—measured by well-being rather than wages—is to close the leadership gap: to elect a woman president and 50 women senators; to ensure that women are equally represented in the ranks of corporate executives and judicial leaders. Only when women wield power in sufficient numbers will we create a society that genuinely works for all women. That will be a society that works for everyone.”⁷²

⁷² Slaughter, Anne-Marie. 2012. “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All.” *The Atlantic*. *The Atlantic*. June 13, 2012. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>.

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Riassunto

Lo scopo di questo elaborato è stato quello di analizzare la correlazione tra la parità di genere e lo sviluppo sostenibile, due elementi a prescindere così distanti, che si intrecciano sin da subito.

L'aspetto primario su cui si basa l'analisi è innanzitutto una distinzione di termini ossia genere e sesso. Il genere, quindi, si riferisce al modo in cui le società e le culture specifiche assegnano ruoli e attribuiscono caratteristiche a uomini e donne sulla base del loro sesso. Ha un impatto sul modo in cui le persone percepiscono se stesse e gli altri, è legato alle opportunità e alle responsabilità che sono associate agli uomini e alle donne. Invece il sesso, si riconnette ad un concetto binario, fisso, si riferisce a caratteristiche definite biologicamente, mentre il genere si rapporta a caratteristiche costruite socialmente.

Dopo aver definito i termini che costituiscono i pilastri della ricerca, essa prosegue con il capire quali siano gli elementi che connettono queste due tematiche.

Il pensiero più diffuso, infatti, è che il clima non ha un genere prescelto, un disastro naturale non decide chi colpire, colpisce e basta. Anche se il cambiamento climatico non è discriminatorio e si suppone che riguardi tutti, a causa dei ruoli sociali assegnati a uomini e donne, queste ultime affrontano l'impatto del cambiamento climatico in modo diverso dal sesso opposto e vengono spesso colpite negativamente.

Un fattore importante analizzato nel corso della ricerca è quello della vulnerabilità. Le donne non sono più vulnerabili ai cambiamenti climatici in quanto meno forti e potenti per natura, ma piuttosto per le dinamiche sociali e culturali che le portano, malgrado la loro volontà, a essere più colpite e quindi più vulnerabili.

Un fattore essenziale della vulnerabilità delle donne è l'accessibilità, ovvero la capacità di un gruppo sociale di adattarsi e cambiare in base alle risorse di cui dispone. Elementi come la tecnologia, la conoscenza, il potere, la capacità decisionale, l'istruzione, la salute e l'accessibilità al cibo sono considerati risorse essenziali per determinare i fattori di vulnerabilità e di adattabilità. Più le persone possono beneficiare di tali risorse, meno saranno vulnerabili. Quindi, meno risorse hanno, maggiore è l'incertezza e di conseguenza la vulnerabilità.

Questo è il risultato di un certo tipo di socializzazione che contribuisce ad aumentare queste disparità. Da una parte le donne sono state sin da sempre socializzate come le principali portatrici di cura. L'idea della cura è stata a lungo sottovalutata, in quanto da sempre associata a un ideale femminile, a un concetto di donna e di attività "improduttiva". Una delle ragioni è l'importanza che il Nord ha storicamente attribuito all'autonomia e all'indipendenza, da sempre associate alla mascolinità. La cura è quindi essenziale per creare relazioni transnazionali tra individui e demografie diverse. Questo elaborato ha sottolineato come la cura non deve rimanere confinata alla prospettiva femminile della cura della famiglia o del nucleo familiare, ma deve essere estesa come cura per gli altri, per la civiltà e per il pianeta. Solo estraendo la cura dalla concezione femminile possiamo arrivare a una concezione globale della cura per il pianeta.

Per capire come questi valori di genere influenzano i valori del clima e della sostenibilità, la ricerca si è soffermata sul rapporto che i valori di genere hanno con l'eco-compatibilità. Un elemento cruciale nella ricerca legata al cambiamento climatico riguarda il ruolo che potrebbe svolgere l'empatia. La presenza o l'assenza di empatia potrebbe spiegare parte delle differenze di genere nel modo in cui affrontiamo il cambiamento climatico. Diverse ricerche analizzate nel corso della stesura della tesi, hanno evidenziato come la priorità dell'interesse per l'ambiente viene suggerita come una derivazione dell'orientamento valoriale. Gli elementi che potrebbero spiegare le differenze di genere sono le diversità di valori o l'esperienza di empatia verso gli altri esseri viventi. L'empatia emotiva è stata essenziale nel creare il ruolo stereotipato della donna. Infatti, le donne sono state socializzate fin da piccole in modo diverso nei confronti delle emozioni rispetto agli uomini. Queste differenze però scompaiono quando si controllano i livelli di empatia. Pertanto, quando gli uomini sono empatici, esprimeranno lo stesso livello di preoccupazione per l'ambiente che hanno le donne. Questo è risultato fondamentale nel capire che il rapporto degli uomini con l'ambiente non è dovuto al fatto che sono nati in un certo modo o che pensano di essere troppo superiori per preoccuparsi del pianeta, ma è piuttosto il risultato di una socializzazione duratura verso certi comportamenti e atteggiamenti che sono considerati accettabili per un uomo e altri che non lo sono. È il risultato di una socializzazione che li porta ad agire in modi considerati maschili, allontanandosi così da atti e comportamenti sostenibili considerati più femminili.

La ricerca si conclude con il quarto capitolo che si concentra sull'adattamento delle donne ai cambiamenti climatici. Nell'analizzare il rapporto tra la popolazione e il suo habitat è stato possibile comprendere come fattori quali la vulnerabilità e rischio siano in realtà costrutti sociali. I recenti impatti ambientali e i cambiamenti climatici hanno reso evidente che tali fenomeni non sono dovuti a un'evoluzione naturale degli eventi, ma sono il risultato di decisioni prese dalle persone a livello

sociale, economico e politico. Le donne sono spesso percepite come vittime del cambiamento climatico, così che renderle parte del cambiamento potrebbe aiutare a creare strategie di adattamento.

L'ultimo fattore analizzato è stato quello dell'accesso alle risorse. Quest'ultimo si è dimostrato una questione essenziale quando si parla di cambiamenti climatici e sviluppo sostenibile. Le risorse naturali, ad esempio, sono necessarie per il sostentamento di gran parte della popolazione mondiale e sono il motore di molti sviluppi economici. Sia gli uomini che le donne tendono a godere e a utilizzare i benefici delle risorse in modi diversi. Ciò è determinato dai ruoli e dalle responsabilità associate al genere e dallo status economico di ciascuno.

L'elaborato si è concluso mostrando in quale modo il cambiamento climatico ha portato alla luce la vulnerabilità dei generi ai rischi ambientali, ma allo stesso tempo ha permesso di capire come, se dotati delle giuste risorse, le donne siano in grado di gestire i rischi in modo da ridurre e talvolta addirittura a prevenire le possibilità di disastri ambientali permettendo persino uno sviluppo sostenibile.