

# A Caring and Sustainable Economy

## A Concept Note from a Feminist Perspective

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- The concept of a green economy as proposed at the Rio+20 Conference has been rejected by a broad range of civil society organizations, including feminist movements because they believe that such a »green economy« will not achieve the drastic decline in resource use that is required to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or stop the loss of biodiversity and the overall destruction of our eco-system.
- Furthermore, the concept is criticized for being largely gender-blind with a strong reliance on green technologies and market mechanisms, while the economic model continues to rely on unpaid and underpaid care work, primarily performed by women.
- Hence, the multifaceted debates on care and sustainability have not yet succeeded in building a bridge between these two topics. In contrast to a greener economy that maintains the economic structure and profit-making capitalist logic of the existing system, feminists are stressing the need for structural changes in the economic system with an emphasis on integrative and distributional aspects of sustainable development.
- The main argument is that the sustainability of a new economic system will depend on converting the whole realm of reproductive forces into central pillars of economic thinking and acting.



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With this concept note we would like to stimulate a debate on how to link care and sustainability in order to develop ideas and policies to guide the transition to a more gender-just and sustainable economy. As it is still a draft which needs to be further developed and improved, we invite you to comment and join us in this discussion.

## Introduction

At the Rio+20 Conference the concept of a Green Economy was presented as a positive response to the multiple crises being faced. The objective was to show that economic growth could be reconciled with a low-carbon society through the convergence of economic and environmental policies. The focus of the proposed »green economy« was on increasing the energy and resource efficiency of production and consumption patterns together with programmes for reducing poverty and improving food security in developing countries. Most civil society organizations, including feminist movements, have rejected the proposed concept because they believe that such a »green economy« will not achieve the drastic decline in resource use that is required to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or stop the loss of biodiversity or the overall destruction of our eco-system. Furthermore, a green economy so defined does little to promote gender-just and socially inclusive sustainable development. The concept is criticized for being largely gender-blind with a strong reliance on green technologies and market mechanisms to reach the goal of a greener economy. It is also gender-blind because the underlying economy continues to rely on unpaid and underpaid care work, primarily performed by women, to provide for basic needs and support to dependent adults, children and non-human beings. In contrast to a greener economy that preserves the economic structure and the profit-making capitalist logic of the existing system, feminists are stressing the need for structural changes in the economic system with an emphasis on integrative and distributional aspects of sustainable development.

Structural changes are necessary to break up the dualistic structure of modern capitalistic economies seeking complete integration of unpaid labour and nature into the economy. In the current system, only market transactions and paid labour are considered productive. Care work, mostly performed by women and girls in the realm of the household, and their communities, is outside the market. Nature is likewise excluded from the market. But both reproductive work and natural resources are essential to the proper functioning of market economies. They are inherent to the operation of the economic system, but are not acknowledged as such. Markets are therefore not concerned with the conservation and regeneration of those vital resources. The contrary is the case. On the one hand, we are witnessing the exhaustion of natu-

ral resources, the destruction of biodiversity, and mounting greenhouse gas emissions. On the other, the need for care is increasing with demographic change in high and middle-income countries and cuts in social services while the supply of care is diminishing. This economic system produces its wealth and growth by continually destroying the living basis of every economy: care and nature. Consequently it cannot be sustainable; it cannot be caring.

The multifaceted debates on care and sustainability have not succeeded in building a bridge between these two topics so far. Nevertheless, the sustainability of the new economic system will depend on converting the whole realm of reproductive forces into central pillars of economic thinking and acting. This concept note therefore argues that there is a need for a sustainable AND caring economy, where society recognizes caring activities as valuable and, as a result, organizes, rewards, and distributes these activities in a just manner. Nature is likewise included as a cooperative actor in economic processes as well as a partner in human endeavors, but with capacity limits that should be respected.

Based on this critical analysis, this concept note seeks to explain, firstly, our shared understanding of a sustainable economy in which the principles of care are integrated with the principles of sustainability, and secondly, our views on an agenda for change. It should be seen as work in progress. Thus we invite everybody to use it, to contribute regional perspectives to it, and to expand it by practical experience, etc.

We are aware that the understanding of care as well as concrete care work is context-specific. It means something different in rural or urban areas, in low-income or high-income countries. Thus our concept (and (or) our understanding) has to be adapted to specific regional or local situations. On the other hand, care work has a common ground all over the world: it is mainly attributed to and performed by women; it is often invisible and not recognized.

Therefore, it is important for us to mention that although the concept note refers to research and scholars, it also draws on the work and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as on women's initiatives and their struggles for food sovereignty and sustainable livelihoods.

## 1. Enabling a Good Life for All

It is our understanding that a socially and environmentally just society entails the underlying economic system operating with the purpose of facilitating a good life with dignity for all while respecting nature as an integral part of life. To achieve this, a fundamental shift in economic rationality is required. We need a new economic and social system where the normative notions of substantive freedoms, the expansion of human capabilities, caring, gender and social equity, are just as much the main pillars as environmental sustainability. These notions are an integral part of our framework that integrates SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY, LIVELIHOODS and THE PRINCIPLES AND ETHICS OF a CULTURE of CARE. This understanding »contrasts with the marginalization of care as a societal value (caring) and as a form of work (care), even in the discourse on sustainability itself.« (genanet/Gottschlich 2012). It also contrasts with a view of nature only as an object of domination, as a resource to be exploited, and as a site place for waste. The Capabilities Approach according to Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which aims at facilitating a good life for every individual, is a concrete step towards a rights-based approach to sustainable development upholding human rights and ensuring the integrity and productivity of nature (see Box I).

### Box I: The Capabilities Approach according to A. Sen and M. Nussbaum

The Capabilities Approach can be defined as an approach to a comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorizing about freedom, equality and justice. The approach takes each person as an end, asking not just about overall or average well-being, but about the opportunities available to each person. It is focused on choice or freedom, holding that the crucial good which societies should be promoting for their people is a set of opportunities, or substantial freedoms. It thus commits itself to respect for people's powers of self-definition and autonomy and their ability to participate in political decision-making processes. It sets out an urgent task for State and policy makers to improve the quality of life for all people as defined by their capabilities (Nussbaum/Sen 1993).

### Ten Central Capabilities

1. LIFE. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

2. BODILY HEALTH. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

3. BODILY INTEGRITY. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

4. SENSES, IMAGINATION, AND THOUGHT. Being able to use the senses; being able to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a »truly human« way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education [...].

5. EMOTIONS. Being able [...] to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.

6. PRACTICAL REASON. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.

7. AFFILIATION. (A) Being able to live with and towards others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; [...] to have the capability for both justice and friendship. (Protecting this capability means, once again, protecting institutions that constitute such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedoms of assembly and political speech.) (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails the assurance of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, ethnicity, caste, religion, and national origin.

8. OTHER SPECIES. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. PLAY. Being able to laugh, to play, and to enjoy recreational activities.

10. CONTROL OVER ONE'S ENVIRONMENT. (A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods) ...; having the right to seek employment ...; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure.«

(Nussbaum 2011: 33-34)

Our concept of a sustainable and caring economy demands a change in perspective. In a sustainable and caring economy, economic actions do not seek just to maximize individual profits, but are oriented towards the conservation and regeneration of the living basis of societies today and for the future (Biesecker/Hofmeister 2010). In such an economic system, growth is not an end in itself, but a means for a »good life« for all human beings and for the preservation of nature's regenerative capabilities. This new perspective puts two hidden components of the economy at the forefront of social, political and economic thinking and acting: unpaid care work and natural resources. The inclusion of the care economy is intended to expose hierarchical gender relations hidden in all spheres of market production and exchange (hierarchical relations which need to be transformed), while elevating principles of ethics in care in order to help transform prevailing principles of the market economy.

A sustainable and caring economy is guided by the rationality of care (Waerness 1984). This concept of rationality is based on the notion of human beings not as isolated individual utility maximizers, but as living and acting beings in a social context who are capable of caring for other beings, including the natural assets of future generations.

In this sustainable and caring economy, economic activities are seen as manifold processes of interaction between labour and nature in such a way that social and natural regeneration is assured. This proposed economic system is based on the conceptualization of nature as an actor fully involved in economic processes (and not as an object of human economic activities – as a source of resources and a sink for emissions). Nature is not (only) a means for human life, but a cooperative partner with equal value as well as an end in itself. All economic processes and products have to be designed in a form which helps to strengthen the regenerative forces of nature. Such an economic system is also based on an expanded concept of labour which integrates different forms of work that have not been recognised until today. This integration not only calls for a new societal value of caring activities. It also calls for recognition and reduction of time burden and redistribution of the whole set of socially important work activities within households, communities and in the marketplace. Such redistribution would convert everybody into caregivers – women as well as men. The State together with civil society<sup>1</sup> should strengthen and develop organizations, institutions and social policies that ensure that the combination of income-earning and caregiving roles is not divided along gender, class or »ethnicity«/»race«/nationality or age lines (see Chapter 6). On the other hand the private sector has to move beyond the opportunities of corporate social responsibility to an approach that considers workers' rights and needs.

## 2. Sustainable Economy and Sustainable Livelihood

In 1987, the Brundtland Commission of Environment and Development introduced the term »sustainable livelihood« to articulate »the provision for all of an adequate livelihood and equitable access to resources with the purpose of a sustainable development«. The notion was later expanded in Agenda 21 of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 with the recognition that poverty is a complex multidimensional problem. The goal of poverty eradication was broad-

1. The term »civil society« is used in a broad sense, including trade unions as well as all kinds of social actors and movements. Beside the state and civil society, the private sector has crucial responsibilities in ensuring ways and means for the transformation of the current economy into a caring and sustainable economy.

ened to include »the long-term objective of enabling all people to achieve sustainable livelihoods (...) as an integrating factor that allows policies to address issues of development, sustainable resource management and poverty eradication simultaneously« (Agenda 21, chapter 3.4). Furthermore, the concept of Sustainable Economy in Agenda 21 implied the recognition of connections between economic, social and environmental considerations in a policy-relevant and cohesive manner.

In other words, the international consensus that was reached to the effect that poverty eradication was an indispensable requirement for sustainable development was followed by an understanding that the means of living and sustenance of individual persons have to be taken into account by policy-makers in designing and implementing environmental policies. According to Chambers and Conway (1991: i) a »livelihood comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including, food, income and assets.« Therefore, sustainable development is a development which ensures livelihoods today and in the future. A sustainable and caring economy is an important means to meet the goal of sustainable development.

Such a focus on livelihood rather than on incomes to address poverty eradication was an important step forward. Poverty can be better defined as the deprivation of capabilities. In a sustainable and caring economy sustainability should include life-sustaining contributions by the care economy, which still defines and constrains women's identities, expectations and actions.

The realm of care has to be totally integrated with the concept and practice of sustainable economy if policy-makers want to enable all men and women to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Concerns with sustainable development should render visible »the feminised spheres of reproductive work that support activities at every node of production chains« (Harcourt and Stremmelaar 2012).

The concept of sustainability as elaborated in the human rights framework (1999)<sup>2</sup> is linked to the notion of adequacy and also implies availability in the present and for future generations. Furthermore, the expansion of substantive freedoms and capabilities of women and

men is central to the construction of sustainable livelihoods subject, however, to the limited capacity of the ecosystem to absorb the impact of human activities (Sen 1999). Caring activities are means and ends for sustainability. They are indispensable to the social, economic and environmental reproduction of livelihoods. Dilemmas involving the provision of care have a bearing on the expansion and enhancement of women's and men's, girls' and boys' capabilities and real freedoms.

Hence, in a sustainable and caring society, the economy should be perceived as an instrument for assuring the development of human capabilities and the expansion of real freedoms, while preserving and protecting life support systems of the Planet's Commons (Ventura-Dias 2013). It is an economic system in which formal and informal activities in caring for dependent adults, children as well as for non-human beings and the environment are adequately valued and remunerated.

### 3. The Culture of Care

Feminist scholars have recognized the multidimensional, complex and contradictory nature of care for women's identity and gender equity. On the one hand, care is an essential part of social life, a category relevant to the individual and global society and indispensable to human existence. On the other hand, there is hardly any area as important as care (work) that is subject to so much degradation and marginalisation (unfortunately in the discourse on sustainability as well).

Increasing demands from ageing post-industrial societies have transformed care »from a private concern to a public issue« (Fine 2007). As women have escaped the limits of the domestic sphere, care has become a matter of widespread public and private interest. Care is not just an activity (caring for) but also a practice that encompasses an ethical, emotional and relational dimension (caring about) and an activity (caring for) (Tronto 1993). Therefore care is both, a set of values and a series of concrete practices.

A caring society – from a global to a local level – should be one in which care penetrates all major societal institutions because care/caring is not just an activity or a form of work, but in a deeper sense, it is a system of social relations that recognizes not only the interdependence

2. See: United Nations Committee on Economic, Social Cultural Rights, 1999: General Comment 12, The Right to Adequate Food (Article 11), para 6-7.

between human beings but also their vulnerabilities. A caring society urges people to be aware of asymmetrical relations and dependencies that shape both individuals' lives and society (Schnabl 2005; genanet/Gottschlich 2012). »Marginalizing care into the private sphere reinforces the myth that our successes are achieved as autonomous individuals, and as such, we have no responsibility to share the fruits of our success with others or to dedicate public resources to the work of care« (Lawson 2009:210). Based on the experience of everyday life and the care economy, feminist approaches have described the special quality of caring. This quality is expressed in shouldering responsibility for others and making a conscious commitment to other people, to society at large, and to nature (Gottschlich 2014). In this sense caring implies »reaching out to something other than the self – implying a deep empathy with other human and non-human persons« (Tronto 1993: 102).

The current distribution of care responsibility in private and public spheres raises equity questions, however. Consequently, feminist scientists call for an equitable gender distribution of work rather than delegating care (almost exclusively) to women. They also advocate a new balance between individuals, families, the state and the market when it comes to assuming responsibility for care provision rather than merely promoting the privatisation of care services (Gottschlich 2014). The assumption of abundant domestic support in the family cannot be sustained in modern societies. A caring society is a society that values caring and care work. It follows that in a caring society, persons who engage in care activities are rewarded properly, and those who need care are recognized as full citizens with a voice (Glenn 2000; Sen 2009).

There is an urgent need for a process of re-thinking and re-shaping responsibility for caring due to the fact that at the most general level caring can be perceived as a group of activities that includes »everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ›world‹ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web« (Tronto 1993: 103 original emphasis).

Therefore it is necessary to promote »the ethics and attitude(s) of care in our whole societies, so that care-giving/care-receiving becomes not only a remedy for those who tend to fall out of the system, but that our society,

economies, politics, governance systems [...] become intrinsically caring. For that we need a CULTURE OF CARE, and in that context also education and civil society play a crucial role« (Dankelmann 2014).

Based on this understanding the following principles make an indispensable contribution to sustaining livelihoods and foster a reorganization of the economy in a sustainable and caring way:

- focuses on the needs of people and not on wants,
- aims at facilitating life processes of nature and human beings and ensuring a good life for everyone,
- is embedded in social-ecological context, focusing on life-giving processes,
- needs to be error-tolerant and reversible in order to allow a turnaround if needed (e.g. risk technologies like nuclear power or the use of genetically modified organisms are far away from being error-tolerant or reversible)
- anticipates long-term consequences,
- acts thoughtfully, slowly and transparently in terms of time and space (Biesecker et al. 2000).

#### 4. Care and Nature in the Global Market Economy

The construction of a sustainable and caring economy entails the extension of the ethics and the rationality of care over the set of social and economic relations, including human relations with nature. A new economic system should arise based upon gender equity relations, respect for human rights and acceptance of nature as a partner. At present we are confronted with an entirely different development, however. On the one hand, nature has been transformed into a tradable commodity and thereby become an object of financial speculation. In many countries, natural resources (land, water, and forest) that in the past comprised the cultural heritage of people but also provided for their living and food subsistence have become mere financial assets for multinational investment groups. On the other hand, we observe the increasing »commercialization of intimate life« (Hochschild 2003) through the increased »out-

sourcing» of care activities to the market. Market products and services are replacing traditional family work using formal and informal care solutions. For instance, global shortages in the supply of home workers in Europe has led to migrant workers becoming a plausible solution to care demands in richer countries. In Italy, for example, the proportion of workers employed in domestic positions who were born outside Italy increased from 20 per cent in 2001 to 83 per cent in 2006 (Tarricone Rosanna, 2012).

In high and middle-income countries, changes in the demographic composition of society with reduced rates of birth and two wage-earners in the family restrain the capacity of the family to provide unpaid care for whoever needs it. Likewise, the restructuring of public services and the privatization of social care provisioning have compounded the gaps between increasing demand for and decreasing supply of care. The development of global care chains to fill in these gaps further contributes to broadening existing gender inequalities while creating new ones. Gender inequalities are being extended to a global network of cities through migration flows of domestic workers, nurses, and sex workers from low-income to high-income countries (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Sassen 2002). As it has been repeated in this Concept Note, caregivers are unpaid or underpaid workers. Besides the fact that migrant care workers are underpaid, labour conditions are precarious and insecure (see Box II).

In the countries supplying care, these Global Care Chains are creating new social gaps since the women who leave the rural areas to care and do work in more industrialized countries or in export industries in their own countries leave behind not just their food provision activities, but mostly their indigenous knowledge of the ecosystem and the way they would protect it. The gaps will be partly filled by markets, thereby accelerating the destruction of subsistence economies. The indigenous knowledge of rural women will furthermore be lost forever. Moreover, when women decide to move to industrial countries they leave behind their families, their communities and their countries. Other women, mostly the elders (grandmothers), have to care for the families left behind. In the case of trained nurses or other skilled labour, public resources invested in their professional training will not be returned to these countries.

## Box II: Precarious working conditions of caregivers

Most of the time while caring for others, a caregiver is not considered a worker. Teenagers, most of them girls, are disadvantaged because their single option is to become caregivers. They lack all other opportunities in their lives starting with an education that could help them to overcome poverty and be economically independent. They cannot claim just and favourable conditions of work, decent remuneration, safe and healthy working conditions, and more. This situation is worsened in low-income countries where there is no government social support for those involved in full-time unpaid care. These conditions are perpetrating inequalities. The Synthesis Report on the Global Thematic Consultation on Addressing Inequalities stresses that inequalities manifest themselves in unequal access to opportunities, essential goods, services and other resources as well as in differences in treatment or status and differences in the ability to participate in and influence decision-making. Hence, »inequalities are also deeply entrenched by structural drivers and barriers in the economic, social, political, cultural and environmental domains. These drivers intersect and can have cumulative, mutually-reinforcing effects that lead to the systematic disadvantage of some social groups and to the perpetuation of poverty and exclusion from generation to generation.« (Synthesis Report 2013: 8)

### Unpaid work in livelihoods

Women play a significant role in all livelihood activities that provide subsistence to families and communities by taking care of their basic necessities such as food, water, fuel, homes, health, and social security. In many parts of the world women make up 50 per cent of agricultural workforce. They are also primary users of forests and other natural resources. What they produce is mostly used for household consumption and not for the market and therefore they are not seen as workers or producers, instead remaining invisible. Even when they work alongside their husbands on



farms they are often only seen as dutiful wives. They have been denied productive resources including security of land, training, skill-building, technology, credit, market access etc.

The current economy, which ignores care and nature, gives priority to higher yield and profit and favours agro-business or mining industries. In the name of development, it has systematically pushed communities, small farmers, especially women farmers, away from traditional livelihoods, and alienated and displaced them from their land and natural resources. With the collapse of rural economy, with subsistence farming no longer being viable, women from rural areas in large numbers are forced to migrate to seek jobs in export factories in special economic zones (SEZ) in their countries. With lax labour laws, SEZ further exploits women's labour. The tragedy of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, which killed over 1100 workers and injured 2500, is one among many thousands of tragedies that take place in such SEZs.

These gender inequalities and exclusion prevail beyond borders and are now taking on new dimensions. Asian women began working as domestic service workers in Middle Eastern countries as early as in the 1960s, (Herrera and Gioconda 2013). Since then, the number of migrant workers has soared. African and Latin American women have joined the ranks of migrant care workers leaving their home countries mainly for Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, this trend is also taking place within regions in more affluent economies in South America such as Chile, where we find Peruvian domestic workers; or in Asia like in Singapore and Hong Kong, where there are numerous Filipino domestic workers. And it is also taking place in the European Union, where women and men from Romania, Poland and other less developed countries come to work in richer European countries (see Box III).

### Box III: At the bottom of the Care Chain

»Each year, around 700,000 people emigrate from Indonesia alone – and over 70 per cent of them work as domestic workers. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that there are up to 100 million domestic workers worldwide, most of whom are employed illegally and 80 per cent of whom are migrants. Also 80 per cent of them are women. They emigrate from south-eastern Europe to industrial nations such as Japan or Hong Kong, or to the wealthy Arab Gulf states. They emigrate from South and Central America to North America and from Africa and eastern Europe to western Europe. The global care chain is an economic factor: for example, according to the World Bank, migrants sent back around 326 billion dollars to so-called developing countries in 2009. The EU country from which the highest remittances are sent is Germany – according to the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), 15 billion dollars were sent from Germany to various less wealthy countries. According to the German Confederation of Trade Unions, 2.6 million domestic workers work in German households. Just 250,000 of them are working legally. According to care expert Oliver Lauxen, around 100,000 eastern European carers work in care for the elderly alone – and he estimates that most of them are working illegally or in the grey economy.«

(FES Gender-Infobrief, Nr. 2, 2013)

It should be added that the financial crisis of 2007-2008 has severely affected women in the global economy (see Box IV). In industrial countries conservative fiscal policies led to a significant decline in public provision of social services, whereas in the low and middle income countries the crisis has deepened survival strategies of entire families (Orozco 2010). In both regions, care activities that had become a matter of public concern were returned to the private realm of the family to be supported by women's unpaid labour.

The shift of care to the market and the creation of global care chains, formal and informal provision of care by the markets, raise a set of complex questions relating to

several dimensions of international care migration, the rights of care receivers and caregivers as well as concerns over labour conditions in care service industries, particularly in terms of human rights violations suffered by immigrant care-providers.

#### Box IV: Effects of the crisis

»Even if the situation varies among individual economic sectors, there is a host of fundamental tendencies to be witnessed with regard to the impact of the crisis on the employment situation. Among these is rampant unemployment, with insecure and informal employment relations growing on a massive scale, and mounting poverty. Women are especially hard hit by all of these factors. Women have been affected less by the actual loss of their job and more from rising underemployment as a result of part-time work, with »shorter working hours« at the same time. As a result of the crisis, already existing trends in the labour market have been consolidated, while part-time work plays a sort of cushioning role for women. On top of this, the crisis has led to a massive expansion in so-called precarious working conditions, with short working times and very low wages, primarily affecting women.« (translation from: <http://transform-network.net/de/zeitschrift/ausgabe-102012/news/detail/Journal/women-facing-crisis-and-austerity.html>, 15.04.2014)

In the United States, women are mostly employed in the public sector as teachers and clerical workers, and these are the areas that have been experiencing heavy cuts. At the official end of the recession, women comprised over half – 57.2 per cent – of all public workers. However, between June 2009 and April 2012, women lost 66.6 per cent of the 601,000 jobs shed in the public sector. For every two jobs gained by women in the private sector, one was lost in the public sector (NWLC 2012).

Thus women from socially and economically marginalized or vulnerable groups continue to provide care services to meet the needs of others because of gender roles and norms, historically and across a diverse range of countries. In low-income countries, although extremely heterogeneous as a group, the situation of women has not changed much. Even in places where women's social networks and their organized movements have succeeded in making care work more visible, women and girls are still considered potential caregivers as part of their gender role, while men continue to be reluctant to assume more care duties. Policy-makers in those countries do not effectively address the labour conditions of unpaid care work, therefore perpetuating gender inequalities that do not allow workers in this sector to have a decent livelihood. In many low-income countries, disadvantaged women continue to care for their families' children, sick people and communities, natural resources, and for the elders of most socially powerful sectors without receiving adequate protection from the state against the abuses of care activities as a private practice. In the poorest homes in rural areas of developing countries, families rely on income derived from the employment of young women as care workers in an attempt to cope with unemployment, extreme poverty and economic insecurity. Women's unpaid work in subsistence agriculture, seed production and post-harvest management, animal husbandry, fishery, natural resource management and energy management also provides food security and subsistence to families.

## 5. An Agenda of Change – Values, Structures and Institutions

The transformation towards a sustainable and caring society and its economy is a long-term project. On the one hand we have this vision of such a society, but on the other hand we face the reality of capitalistic globalisation. Profound changes are required in the concept of the economy, in the definition of economic rationality, in the way societies and economies are organized and in the society-nature relationship. The productivity of nature, its regenerative forces and renewal must be ensured not only for the present day but also for future generations. The productivity of human beings and their capabilities to care for others must furthermore be ensured as well. But how can we get there? Where should we start? Which steps will lead us into a

sustainable and caring future? We have developed the following Agenda of Change at a very abstract level. The recommendations proposed are by no means exhaustive and should be only seen as central parameters in a transformational process. They aim at different levels of implementation/action and also differ in terms of their extend of transformative power. All in all we can divide the recommendations into two categories: The first category of recommendations is aiming at the overall transformation of the social and economic model of development, the values, principles and ethics of economic rationality. The second category of recommendations proposes institutional changes and policy interventions that would be in line with a caring and sustainable economy.

### 5.1 Model of Social and Economic Development

- The proposed transformation process will be a long, common learning process: Because the culture/ethics of care will become a key element in future society, processes of revaluing nature as well as care will be necessary. Human societies need to learn to coordinate their activities with the living processes of nature – in terms of quality, quantity, time and space and in a consistent way. It means, e.g., that only renewable energy should be used. And societies should also learn to value care needs and care work to provide adequate time and remuneration to market and state-provided care activities as well as to bring about a redistribution of unpaid care work among household and community members. Redressing the current situation of gender inequality in care provision implies changing the rules of the game towards what Nancy Fraser calls the Universal Caregiver Approach (Fraser 1997).

- The notion that heavy and unequal care responsibilities are major barriers to gender equality and for women to fully enjoy their human rights should shape the design and implementation of labour and social policies (including, among other things, parental leave, maternity pay, access to high-quality childcare, and flexible work arrangements). Care should be understood as a social and collective responsibility and not as an individual problem confined within the realm of the family. Social awareness of inequalities in scarce distribution combined with the concept of time poverty that affect

unpaid female care providers should improve women's livelihoods by reducing and redistributing unpaid care work at the household level.

- The transformation of the current economic model into a caring and sustainable one requires political will and the courage to change. The most important level for this transformation is the local level but support is necessary at all other levels (regional, national and global). In order to shape such a transition democratically, the »marketization« of governance has to be stopped<sup>3</sup> and the involvement of all societal actors and concerned communities is necessary. Today the economy precedes politics. This relationship will change during the transformation process. Increasingly, the political process will shape the economic realm and not the other way round.

- And, finally, new ideas have to be developed and perhaps tested in order to find out which pathways will produce a new economic model rooted in the principles of care and sustainability. Experiments are necessary, including to find new forms of sustainable and caring lifestyles (sufficiency). States are called upon to facilitate such experiments.

### 5.2 Institutional and Policy Interventions

- Referring to the concept of labour, the transformation towards a sustainable and caring society means integrating all sorts of labour so that everybody can participate in all fields. This calls for a manifold redistribution of unpaid and underpaid care work which should take place in three ways:

- (1) *Redistribution from women to men.* Both in the public as well as private domain, solutions to care provision should take both men and women into account. For instance, employment leave should aim at both parents in order to challenge gender stereotypes and roles and to promote the concept of shared responsibilities for unpaid care work.

- (2) *Redistribution from households to the state,* but not necessarily to the market: States should shift from a strategy of reliance on the market and voluntary

3. See for example: Taylor (2000).

provision of care back to public, affordable and high-quality care provision with universal access to health, education, and social security.

(3) *Redistribution of time and resources among social groups*, particularly to poor households.

- A precondition for all those redistribution processes is a reduction of the paid working time. A sustainable and caring society needs more time for caring. To guarantee a good life with a smaller wage income, a basic income would be necessary.
- Societies should provide opportunities for participation and decision-making power of caregivers and care users in the design, implementation and monitoring of care services and other relevant policies.
- More funds for research on care and sustainability should be made available, while the curriculums of schools and universities should include gender, care and sustainability as indispensable parts of educational training.
- Economic and social policies should recognize care as work and caregivers as workers. It should respect individuals' rights to use collectively owned resources that are maintained, expanded and supported through diverse ways of producing and reproducing (regenerating) and using goods and services. It should value the skills and

knowledge that care givers have especially in various livelihood systems. It should help caregivers to organize for collective bargaining. It should be guided by the obligation to respect, protect and respect all human rights.

- The ethics and principles of care should be established as principles of a good entrepreneurial praxis. This means making enterprises responsible for sustaining and renewing the resources they use as well as for recreation possibilities of their labourers. This should also be a precondition for state support for enterprises (e.g. development of a care and sustainability index for enterprises)<sup>4</sup>.
- States should stop subsidizing non-sustainable economic activities, production and enterprises (e.g. lignite coal mining). Instead they must lay down regulations that allow only care responsible and sustainable economic activities in the long run.
- Institutional transformations will be globally necessary to guarantee gender equity relations within and between countries. These institutional transformations should set up a framework of rules and regulations that lead to ecologically, economically, socially and gender-just societies. At the global level, we could also think about structures/institutions that critically monitor and accompany the development towards sustainable and caring economies.

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4. See for example: Scherhorn, Gerhard (2013).



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