

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY

GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Edited by Melissa Leach

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GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

For pathways to be truly sustainable and advance gender equality and the rights and capabilities of women and girls, those whose lives and wellbeing are at stake must be involved in leading the way.

Gender Equality and Sustainable Development calls for policies, investments and initiatives in sustainable development that recognize women's knowledge, agency and decision-making as fundamental. Four key sets of issues – work and industrial production; population and reproduction; food and agriculture; and water, sanitation and energy provide focal lenses through which these challenges are considered. Perspectives from new feminist political ecology and economy are integrated alongside issues of rights, relations and power. The book untangles the complex interactions between different dimensions of gender relations and sustainability, and explores how policy and activism can build synergies between them. Finally, this book demonstrates how plural pathways are possible, underpinned by different narratives about gender and sustainability, and how the choices between them are ultimately political.

This timely book will be of great interest to students, scholars, practitioners and policy makers working on gender, sustainable development, development studies and ecological economics.

Melissa Leach is Director of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. Between 2006 and 2014 she directed the ESRC STEPS (Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) Centre.

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'Melissa Leach has brought together an outstanding team of practitioners and researchers to produce a crisply written and engaging review of the interlinkages among gender, environment and sustainable development. The forward-looking collection both challenges unsustainable pathways and charts new ones. A must read for all those working in the field of sustainable development.'

Wendy Harcourt, Associate Professor, Erasmus University, The Netherlands

'This is an excellent volume, with both range and depth. It not only brings an essential gender perspective to the issue of sustainable development, but also highlights the insufficiency of recognising women's contributions without providing them resources and voice. The lucid introduction, with its reflections on past and current debates, and on alternative pathways, is a significant contribution in itself.'

*Bina Agarwal, Professor of Development Economics and Environment,
University of Manchester, UK*

'This timely book provides innovative and exciting ideas for both scholars and policy makers, challenging dominant market-led development models. It shows how pathways to achieve sustainable development and gender equality can be built through women's collective action at the grassroots and supportive public investment and services.'

Diane Elson, Emeritus Professor, University of Essex, UK

'This astute group of critical observers and participants dare to question the dominant narratives of capitalism, sustainability and development as well as facile gender and development formulas. They reiterate the critical feminist question "Sustaining what for whom?" and acknowledge the political choices embodied in green technologies, green economies and the feminization of planetary care work.'

Dianne Rocheleau, Professor of Geography, Clark University, USA

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The twin challenges of building pathways to sustainable development and enhancing gender equality have never been more pressing. This book shows why each is so important, but also why they must be addressed together, and how this might be done.

And this is a timely moment. As the world moves towards defining and implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the post-2015 era, there is much talk of integration – of environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability; of goals around climate change, water, food and land, health and reproduction, and other issues; and, with these, of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. But what does integration mean in practice, and how might it be achieved? In this book we offer an approach to these questions centred on the concept of pathways to sustainability, informed by feminist thinking around rights, relations and power. The book untangles the complex interactions between different dimensions of gender relations and of sustainability, and explores how policy and activism can build synergies between them. But further, it shows how plural pathways are possible, underpinned by different narratives about gender and sustainability, and how the choices between these are ultimately political.

Too often, discussions and action around gender and the environment have followed simplistic stereotypes that focus narrowly on women's roles, and assume them to be either victims or 'sustainability saviours'. These past tendencies have recently been brought to life again in the context of policy concerns with climate change, 'planetary boundaries' and green economies. In chapters focusing on work and industrial production; population and reproduction; food and agriculture; and water, sanitation and energy, the book's authors challenge and move beyond these stereotypes. They analyse the varied interactions between gender relations as intersected by other differences such as class, ethnicity and place, and different views of sustainability, asking 'sustainability of what, for whom'? They explore

how gendered livelihoods, work and control of resources – but also identities, bodily integrity, dignity and knowledge – are implicated in pathways to sustainability – or otherwise. Revealed are tensions and trade-offs, and some powerful ways in which dominant market-led development models and policy approaches lead to both gender inequality and unsustainability. But the reverse is also possible: gender equality and sustainability can powerfully reinforce each other in alternative pathways. Women's knowledge, agency and collective action are often central to these, whether in managing local landscapes, adapting to climate change, producing and accessing food, or securing sustainable water, sanitation and energy services.

Drawing from these illustrations, the book calls for policies, investments and initiatives in sustainable development that recognize women's knowledge, agency and decision-making as fundamental. Such gender-equitable approaches can improve resource productivity and efficiency, and enhance ecosystem conservation and sustainable use. They can also build fairer and greener economies, and more sustainable, low-carbon and climate-resilient food, energy, water and sanitation, and health systems. Ultimately, for pathways to be truly sustainable and to advance gender equality and the rights and capabilities of women and girls, the book argues that those whose lives and wellbeing are at stake must be involved in leading the way, through community groups, women's organizations and other forms of collective action; through appropriate forms of investment and public services; and through fostering a linked, progressive politics of both gender and sustainability.

The book emerged from discussions and background papers originally commissioned by UN Women to inform its 2014 World Survey on the Role of Women in Economic Development. In a series of workshops and informal interactions, chapter authors – from different disciplinary, theoretical and sectoral backgrounds, yet sharing a commitment to engaged feminist scholarship – agreed that a common book-length project was both valuable and timely. The process of putting it together has been exciting and rewarding. As Editor I owe deep thanks to UN Women for its initial catalytic role and subsequent support, as well as to the chapter authors for their endeavour and collaborative spirit – it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work together, and a nice example of international feminist networking.

The book's overall conceptualization and individual chapter drafts have benefited greatly from others' comments and insights, both at the World Survey Expert Group meetings in New York and Rome in 2013–14, and in written reviews and informal interactions. Amongst others, particular thanks are owed to Bina Agarwal, Peter Alstone, Wendy Harcourt, Andrew Fischer, Stacy Jackson, Saraswathi Menon, Marjorie Mbilinyi, Mohan Rao, Liane Schalatek, Stephanie Seguino, Gita Sen, Libor Stloukal and Simon Thuo for their inputs to particular chapters or overall. We gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments of anonymous reviewers, while several chapters benefited from excellent research assistance, including from Senti Sojwal and Jessa Orluk (Chapter 3) and Tanya Kar and Larissa Ushizima (Chapter 4).

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Melissa Leach
Falmer, Brighton
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa
AoA	Agreement on Agriculture (WTO)
BC	black carbon
BPO	business process outsourcing
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CLTS	community-led total sanitation
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DFID	UK Department for International Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FPE	feminist political ecology
GAD	gender and development
GED	gender, environment and development
GMO	genetically modified organism
GVC	global value chain
HAP	household air pollution
HDI	Human Development Index
HGU	land-use concessions (<i>Hak Guna Usaha</i>)
HLPE	High Level Panel of Experts
ICN	International Conference on Nutrition
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development

ICTSD	International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	international financial institution
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT/ITES	information technology and services
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LPG	liquefied petroleum gas
MARA	Malthusian Anticipatory Regime for Africa
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MMR	maternal mortality ratio
MWC	Mahindra World City
NAPM	National Alliance of People's Movements (India)
NEP	National Electrification Program (South Africa)
NFPE	new feminist political ecology
NISP	National Improved Stoves Program
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
PPP	public–private partnership
SC/STs	scheduled castes and tribes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SIE	semi-industrialized economy
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
TFR	total fertility rate
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-REDD	United Nations collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WANTO	Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations
WCD	World Commission on Dams

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WED	women, environment and development
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	women in development
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
WiRES	Women in Renewable Energy Sector project
WOW	Wider Opportunities for Women
WTO	World Trade Organization

1

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A gendered pathways approach

Melissa Leach, Lyla Mehta and Preetha Prabhakaran

Introduction

Women in Kenya struggle to produce crops to feed their families amidst drying climates and insecure land tenure, on holdings diminished by private sector ‘land grabs’.

In many villages and cities, vital work to care for the people who sustain economies and societies is compromised and rendered more difficult, because the basic water, sanitation, health and energy services needed aren’t within reach.

Environmental and economic problems are blamed on population growth and the ‘excessive fertility’ of women – especially in Africa – encouraging a resurgence of coercive policies that undermine their bodily integrity and control.

Forest user groups in India with strong women’s involvement render landscapes greener and richer in biodiversity and climate mitigation potential, while also satisfying vital needs for livelihoods, food and fuel.

Waste picker networks with women at their heart combine livelihoods with ‘green’ circular economies both in their communities and through upscaling into global networks.

Vignettes like these highlight vital interconnections between gender, environment and development. Environmental degradation has different impacts on women and men. Development patterns that neglect everyday environmental and economic needs can worsen women’s positions, but so can environment and development discourses that target women inappropriately. Yet in an era when development is becoming sustainable development, women are also leading the way in new practices that combine environmental, economic and social goals. This book

highlights the vital synergies between sustainable development and gender equality, but also the need for transformational change if negative interactions are to be averted and positive pathways built.

Accelerating sustainable development, and enhancing gender equality are both current imperatives in research, policy and public debate. Too often, however, they are addressed separately. This book's central argument is that they need to be integrated in both understandings and practices, in ways that appreciate the diversity of women's and men's experiences and contexts. Pursuing either sustainability or gender equality without attention to the other is doomed to failure on practical, moral and political grounds; the challenge, therefore, is to find pathways that build synergies between these concerns, towards sustainable and just futures for all. But how is this to be done, and by whom? How are gender equality, sustainability and their interlinkages to be understood, and how might the challenge of integrating them be addressed? The chapters that follow take up these questions in relation to a variety of issues and settings across the world. In this chapter, we introduce the overall arguments, definitions and conceptual approaches that inform and unite these contributions.

Our starting point is glaring evidence that dominant patterns of production, consumption and distribution are heading in deeply unsustainable directions. In a world in which humanity has become a key driver of Earth system processes, we are seeing over-exploitation of natural resources, the loss of key habitats and biodiversity, and pollution of land, seas and the atmosphere. Scientific understandings are clarifying the huge social, environmental and economic challenges posed by threats such as climate change and loss of essential ecosystem services, as humanity approaches or exceeds so-called 'planetary boundaries' (Rockström et al, 2009a; IPCC, 2013; Steffen et al, 2015). Already, human interactions with the environment are producing unprecedented shocks and stresses, felt in floods, droughts, and devastated urban and rural landscapes and livelihoods, while many people and places have suffered from a 'nexus' of food, energy, environmental and financial crises. These unsustainable patterns add to poverty and inequality today – especially for the third of the world's population directly dependent on natural resources for their wellbeing (Unmüßig et al, 2012) – and create deep threats for future generations. And their effects often intensify gender inequality.

The causes and underlying drivers of unsustainability and of gender inequality are deeply interlocked. Both, we argue, are produced by political-economic relations in late capitalism that support particular types of neoliberal, market-led growth. These involve extreme privatization, financialization and concentration of capital; production geared to short-term profits; unfettered material consumption; and unprecedented levels of militarism – very often at the expense of state regulation and redistribution, reproduction and care. These political-economic relations rely on and reproduce gender inequalities, exploiting women's labour and provision of unpaid care, and often their bodies too. They are leading, in many settings, to crises of social reproduction, while undermining people's rights and dignity. The same political-economic relations also produce environmental problems, as market

actors seek and secure profit in ways that rely on the over-exploitation of natural resources and the pollution of climates, land and oceans. Such market-led pathways are leading in directions that are unsustainable in social and ecological terms, and ultimately in economic terms too, undermining the conditions for future progress.

Growing international attention and debate now highlight the need to move economies and societies onto more sustainable paths, whether to avert crisis and catastrophe, or enable prosperity through 'green economies'. Yet often missing in these debates is a sense of the politics involved. The challenge is often seen in technical and managerial terms, as a matter of getting the technologies, prices and regulations right. This overlooks the more profound restructuring of social, economic and political systems that we may require to transform unsustainable patterns. Equally, 'sustainability' is often presented as if it were a clear, uncontested term. Yet many tensions and trade-offs arise: for instance between finance for different kinds of low-carbon energy; between prioritizing food or biofuels in land use, or forests for carbon to mitigate global climate change or to meet local livelihood needs, to name a few. How such tensions are addressed has profound implications for who gains and loses – amongst social groups, and between local, national and global interests. Thus sustainability is a normative and contested term: we must constantly ask 'sustainability of what for whom' (Leach et al, 2010). As this book shows, many instances of policy and intervention today promote sustainability or green economy goals in ways that create tension with, or undermine, women's rights and gender equality.

Yet this is also a time of opportunity. Examples are accumulating around the world of alternative pathways that move towards sustainability and gender equality, uniting these in powerful synergies. Some are rooted in the everyday practices through which women and men access, control, use and manage forests, soils and urban landscapes in ways that sustain livelihoods and wellbeing. Others are evident in movements and collectives, many led by women, to build alternative food and resource sovereignty, agro-ecology, urban transitions or solidarity economies. While some of these offer alternatives or modifications within current capitalist relations, others suggest routes to more profound 'green transformations' (Scoones et al, 2015).

Integrating gender equality and sustainable development is therefore vital for several reasons. First, this is a moral and ethical imperative: building more equitable gender relations that support the human rights, dignity and capabilities of all women and men, intersected by differences of class, race, sexuality, age, ability and circumstances, is a central requirement of an ethical world order. Second, an integrated approach is vital to avoid women becoming victims, redressing the all-too-common pattern whereby women suffer most from environmental, climatic and economic shocks and stresses, undermining their vital roles in sustaining their families and communities. But third, and most significantly, an integrated approach offers opportunities to build on people's agency. Attention to gender offers routes to improve resource productivity and efficiency; to enhance ecosystem conservation and sustainable use, and to build more sustainable, low-carbon food, energy, water

and health systems. Not just victims, the chapters in this book show how women have been, and can be, central actors in pathways to sustainability and green transformation. Yet, crucially, this must not mean adding ‘environment’ to women’s caring roles, or instrumentalizing women as the new ‘sustainability saviours’. It means recognition and respect for their knowledge, rights, capabilities and bodily integrity, and ensuring that roles are matched with rights and control over resources and decision-making power.

Gender equality and sustainable development can thus reinforce each other in powerful ways (see Agarwal, 2002; Buckingham-Hatfield, 2002; Johnsson-Latham, 2007; UNDP, 2012). Charting what pathways that reinforce gender equality and sustainable development together might look like, and how they might be built, are the central aims of this book. Five key sets of issues provide focal lenses through which the book’s chapters consider these challenges. Thus Elissa Braunstein and Mimi Houston explore work and industrial production (Chapter 2); Betsy Hartmann, Anne Hendrixson and Jade Sasser consider population and reproduction (Chapter 3); Sakiko Fukuda-Parr addresses food security and agriculture (Chapter 4); Michael Levien takes up the related question of land rights and ‘grabs’ (Chapter 5), and Isha Ray examines everyday innovations around water, sanitation and energy (Chapter 6). These issues have been chosen – amongst many possibilities – because each illustrates ‘troubling intersections’ between dominant development pathways, (un)sustainability and gender (in)equality; each highlights the importance of a range of rights that are key to gender equality, from those involved with bare life and survival to those linked with voice, power and dignity; and each reveals contestation and debate between problematic narratives and pathways, and alternatives that offer pathways to sustainable development and gender equality.

The chapter authors are all eminent scholars and experts in the particular fields and issues they address. They come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds – including anthropology, economics, politics and technology studies – and a variety of positions in gender, development and feminist debates. These differences are reflected in the focus and analytical style of their particular chapters. Yet all share a broad political commitment to greater gender equality and a more sustainable and just world. This sense of the politics involved and their importance, as well as a desire to collaborate to produce a coherent set of analyses of gendered pathways to sustainability, was reinforced during a series of workshops and exchanges during 2013–14. These were hosted by UN Women, the United Nations entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to inform the preparation of the 2014 World Survey on the Role of Women in Economic Development (UN Women, 2014). While several of the book’s chapters originated as background papers from which the report drew material, the analysis and arguments developed during these dialogues went far beyond what a UN report could hope to include. Shahrashoub Razavi and Seemin Qayum (Chapter 7) reflect on these issues of inclusion and translation, as an exemplar of the wider challenges of bringing a feminist political perspective to bear on sustainable development debates. Meanwhile, this book emerged as a collective effort to present a deeper set of