

**GREEN WOMEN
PROPOSE TO INTERTWINE
THE GREEN MOVEMENT AND ECOFEMINISM**

WWW.GRONAKVINNOR.SE



WHAT'S IN THE WEAVE?

The independent Swedish organisation Green Women have for decades provided in-depth knowledge about women in pre-historic times and been helping out in describing the feminist Influence on philosophy throughout the ages. One conclusion is that the feminine principle can be regarded as close to today's ecofeminism. Both as overall useful tools in the ongoing transition. Furthermore Green Women see opportunities to gain strength in attending knowledge of how indigenous peoples describe their way of relating to people and the environment and give examples from Nordic Sapmi.

We invite you to share our thoughts on how we believe the whole community will gain in the transformation towards sustainability by applying these views. A way to be, act and of thinking where politics, civil society, academy and activism can work together towards sustainability.



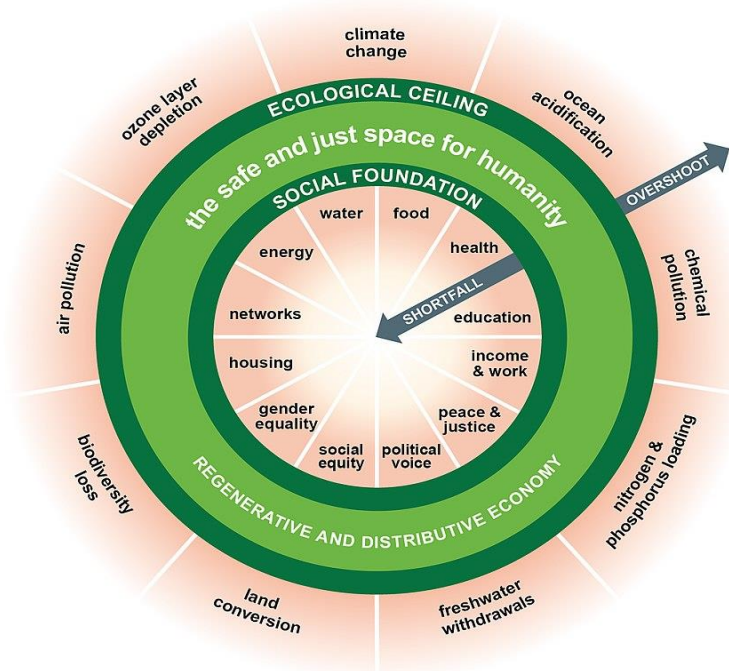
Ewa Larsson, Social Scientist

Former Member of the Swedish Parliament and Chairperson of Green Women. Supports the Lithuanian archaeologist and anthropologist Marija Gimbutas and her research on the importance of women in prehistoric Old Europe. Describes how Aristoteles's dualistic view of woman representing nature and man representing science, has contributed to today's split between the actual results.



Lotta Hedström, Author and lecturer

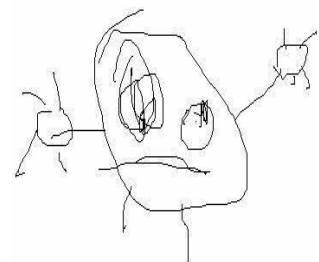
Former spokesperson for Swedish Green Party, ecofeminist lecturer and scholar in the History of Science and Ideas. Highlights how ecofeminist analysis and its call for activism contributes to the inclusion of all people in the ongoing transition to a sustainable world.



Reality of economics

We all know that this picture from the English economist Kate Raworth's book "**Donut Economy**" shows reality of global resources, and that growth has a limit. A very useful way of picturing how narrow the span for our human needs are, squeezed between our social requirements and the "outer" environment's ability to both provide for us and to sustain itself in a permanent way. Capitalism as an idea is based on the fact that everything is limitless and permissible. Feminist and ecological economics instead consider if what is produced is gender equal and environmentally sustainable. The financial market today lacks these requirements and what invested money is put to work for, can be utterly environmentally and gender-hostile while still offering high returns to fund savers and shareholders. In gender research, this is called male hegemony. This allows for people within dominant companies in economically dominant countries to control the entire economic value scale.

To take action based on actual reality, green parliamentarians, green environmental movements and gender equality movements all need to have a common perception of reality. We claim that there is something missing there. Classical pedagogy says that knowledge should go through the hands and through the heart before your brain makes decisions. We mean that reality is falsely communicated as if we were head-footers, the way young children draw how they perceive adults.



Power is a concept with several layers

Few women, no matter where on earth, have power over their own lives or their bodies. Power lies like a global cultural wet blanket over all of us and seems to have taken over people's minds and today's patriarchal economic system is completely built on power.

It has not always been like this. Today's social scientists quite agree that it was women who began to cultivate the land, who invented pottery to store food and who began to weave baskets for the collection of plants and herbs.

Archaeologists have found countless figurative symbols for women, goddesses, priestesses used in cultural ceremonies and communications. This kind of female figurines was labelled *Venus from Willendorf* in Austria and was made for about 27 000 years ago. She is not a sex symbol but represents an adult aged woman. Even at that time, women had longer lifespan than men, and the older woman of age passed on the family's gathered knowledge and their history to future generations. Hence – a very important symbolic figurine.



This is a bronze age figurine from Sweden, about 3000 years old. Females give milk, milk is a symbol of life and is mythologically associated with survival. Even in many of the early myths of Europe and the Middle East, countless figurines are found in which the woman shows that she has milk to give.

In these early settlements, the various abilities of people were consciously exploited and developed and carefully adapted to the cultural and natural environment in which they lived. This sustainable way of living went on for thousands of years in what the Lithuanian archaeologist and anthropologist Maija Gimbutas calls "Old Europe". Furthermore these types of early societies showed no traces of organized warfare, but were on the contrary structured in a cooperative and gender equal manner. In this context the feminine principle was a principle for giving life, protecting life, recreating life and helping the deceased to pass over to other lives, not to take lives. Hence "female" oriented societies like the ones in Old Europe, was a guarantee for living a good life and providing long lasting natural conditions for it.

Then something happened.

Climate changes may have contributed to completely different characteristics being prioritized than working together based on equal value. Giving food to more than to one's own family and clan became difficult. This new impulse led to new rules for the organization of society. Privatizations and controlling rules that imposed restrictions on women were built up. There was competition for food and the one with the most powerful weapons began to organize wars. Taking became normalized. Today, research shows that men from patriarchal tribes in the East at different times "flooded" Old Europe and much later the Nordic countries.

So what happened to the older, more feminine oriented principles?

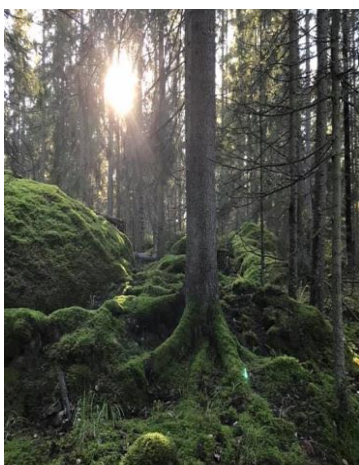
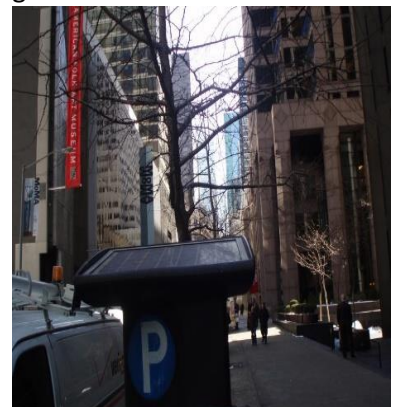
When we search in history to understand, we notice that both women and men at early academies and right up to the 300s BCE could be considered great thinkers, and that women could hold high positions in e.g. politics, mathematics and poetry. But around the time of 2000 f.Kr. around Persia, Anatolia, and Greece, a patriarchal interest grew in building fortunes, in organizing wars to defend power and wealth, and in making slaves work and not the least – to start controlling women. A completely different way of thinking and the feminine principle was no longer considered valuable. The woman from now on had to be controlled by her spouse, so that only the “right” child, the proper offspring of the patriarch, should be guaranteed to inherit the family assets. Different systems of ideas and beliefs arose during this time period to support the change and most of them began to regard the Woman as secondary in public life. Her way of being was considered more suited for housekeeping and social care that was considered less valuable.

In philosophy, both Plato and Aristotle believed that ideas and science were above material reality. Women who lived in reality and were close to nature, were considered unscientific and therefore subordinate, like a mutilated man. The tasks of women and Nature therefore became to serve men, but not to be as responsible and fully accountable as they once had been. Both woman and nature were there to simply be used, which also became consolidated in religion.

This has now been going on for about five thousand years.

More and more people have gathered in cities and more power and resources has been concentrated to keep them in order and to prevailing structures. Urbanization still continues where less and less people interact with the natural environment on a daily basis. Today’s economic system is built to fit patriarchal hierarchies and to effectively extract resources from Nature - without considering her as our life-giving, but also vulnerable Mother.

Furthermore the quest of global colonization since the 16th century has not only been spreading diseases to every corner of our world, it has founded an unsustainable trading world economic order, based on the hope for perpetual growth of money on a material limited planet. On the other hand, women throughout history have tried to stop this crazy economic course of developments by really taking into account the earth's finite resources, as well as advocating the right for all beings to live and even enjoy well-being. All in all is this what the ancient *feminine principle* stands for.



Time for an economy based on reality

Female labor has throughout history in this way made it possible for men to build their own world where women are not really included. According to UN statistics, the countries of the world today are ruled by over 70 percent men and global companies to almost one hundred percent. While women make up more than fifty percent of the world's population. Together women and men with insights can change the ongoing madness. *Ecofeminism can be a tool along the way and knowledge of indigenous peoples' relationship with mother earth can provide strength.*

The contribution of Ecofeminism

“Violence is the ultimate expression of the patriarchy”. This quote is written by the Swedish author and ecofeminist *Elin Wägner* in the first half of the 20th century. Her insights and the recognition she has been rendering since then is constantly growing. She was a sharp critic of both the male dominance in all corners of society, as well as of the predominant, destructive and self-indulgent view on Nature.

But the concept of “ecofeminism” as such was not labelled until mid-1970s. By that time the Global Green awareness rose in general, and many thinkers among them also started to combine the insights of how male domination also was being forced upon natural environments in equal amount as it had been forced upon women for ages. For many Green thinkers and activists this correlation is but too obvious.

You cannot have gender equality if the Environment is destroyed and you cannot reach an ecologically balanced world, if the imbalance between men and women, persist.



But there is a bit more to it

First it must be stated that *Ecofeminism*, rather than being a dogma, is more of a hands-on - *activism*. A practice to firmly protect the earth and its resources and fertility for the survival of local communities and preserve the living conditions for one's family and village.

Today we see painful evidence how for example women in Latin America, who organize to protect rainforests or other natural settings in e.g. Honduras or Brazil, are brutally harassed and even killed by greedy companies and exploiters. How the destructive invasion of capitalists into local settings also can bring prostitution, social unrest and an even strict exclusion of women from all rooms of decision. Women are not allowed to have their say when for example mining companies or big deforestation occurs in their inherited areas, that deprives them of their natural way of living and surviving!

This oppression has been seen in history for millennia and is similar to how the struggle for peace and demilitarization has been countered; in history women usually are the ones taking action for life and survival.

Ecofeminism is partly an academic and partly spiritual preoccupation

This not least in the field of history as mentioned above, but also in economics. - How can we measure sustainability if not the value of women's unpaid labor and the Civil society is kept within the balance sheet, alongside with the immensurable worth of Mother Nature's gifts?

A certain number of Ecofeminists have also been trying to spiritually seek and worship the more nurturing and not judging aspects of God, i.e. the female version. By addressing the Goddess one can in human history trace the Female principle in various religions.

Further comments

In order to get a clearer view of what Ecofeminism is, the most important is how it identifies the crucial mental concepts that is underlying the patriarchal domination and control. To put it simple, it is the way of constantly creating dichotomies. While reality is much more of a continuity, where contrasts only are temporary.



Instead of saying and thinking in terms of *Inclusion*, we humans sadly tend to think and act in terms of *either – or*.
Either your wealth – or mine.
Either day – or night.
Either win - or loose.
Either male power - or female power.
Either light - or darkness and so on.

If humanity only could realize that your wellbeing is the foundation of my wellbeing and that cooperation, not competition- is the key to everyone's success, our world would change for the better in one single day. Contrasts can be pedagogically useful, yes, but full-scale dichotomies, exclusion and separation, especially to separate oneself from the rest of the world, thinking that self is an entity without relations to everything and everyone else, is our most tragic mistake. Especially to believe that Nature is something separate from us is a big mistake. Actually, we all *are* Nature. She is within us, we are her. "Nature" is not somewhere else, a remote place where right now some odd species happens to go extinct.

This leads to the need for an approach where we combine *Technical rationality* with a *Caring rationality*. We must simultaneously learn to balance being result- and future oriented, with caring in the here and now for all living beings. Also see to that in decisions everyone gets involved in as stakeholders in what matters to them. At last we must again remember that we all belong to each other. Such a holistic view on life is an utmost fruitful combination between so called "male" and so called "female" qualities. Think *and* care. Results *and* process.

Critique of Ecofeminism

Isn't this a bit too biologicistic? Doesn't it actually say that men and women genetically are different and hence that the attributes that traditionally have been given to them are inherited and forever fixed? - The answer to this is – No! That is not the message from Ecofeminism. Men as individuals and on group level can be as caring as women are supposed to be, and women can be as technically rational as men are supposed to be. Gender theories have taught us that sex and gender are two different things, and that we all can learn and evolve. Matter of fact we all need to connect to booth our inner male respectively our inner female properties in order to mature.

All in all - Ecofeminism is a tool for analysis of what is happening in the world

It provides a set of binoculars through which one for example can notice that it is animal industry, military expenditure, industrialized agriculture, male car-loving, heavily patriarchally ruled countries with their women locked in, that caused climate change. Who also are gaining the most on wars and on oil extracting and trading. That is called *Petro-masculinity* and is what an Ecofeminist analysis of our globe's current situation gives us to realize and counteract.

Indigenous peoples in general and in our latitude in Nordic Sápmi can influence and inspire green transition

The rights of the Sami people are marginalized in the Nordic countries just as indigenous peoples are treated in the rest of the world. A nearby Swedish example is an ongoing dispute over mining at Gállok, which is located in the heart of Sápmi.

Gállok is a part of a Sámi tax land, an area that Swedish authorities have historically guaranteed Sami people in connection with their expulsion from other parts of the country. It was described as a Forest Sámi tax land, the land of Tjäruborgare. A tax land could be bought, sold and inherited, which was done according to Sámi legal tradition and on equal terms between daughters and sons. *Since the woman was considered to be responsible for the continuity of the Sámi society, the tax land usually passed to the daughter and it was the husband who moved to her tax land and family.* In addition to forest reindeer husbandry, those

who lived here also lived on tar burning and pearl fishing in the 1700s. Through historical documents, we learn that Sami people could be brought before the district court as encroaching on a tax land if they let their animals graze there or fished and were paid for the catch. With the first reindeer husbandry law in 1886, the state took over ownership of all tax lands and Sami only got the right of disposition "according to ancient tradition", a collective right via the Sami villages. Then the historically strong position of Sami women also decreased. (Green Women on a journey in Sami country since time immemorial)

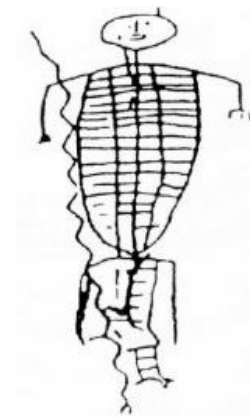


Today, "time immemorial" cannot stop a mine

despite the fact that the Sami's elected body, the Sámi Parliament, has unanimously said no to the plans for a mine in Gállok. Green Women believe that historical rights to land and water, which were previously Sami tax lands, need to be re-established. If Sweden had signed ILO Convention 169 on the Rights of the Sami, the extent of land rights would be clear. As the situation is now, Sami people are informed but their No is not respected, which the European Court of Human Rights has also criticized Sweden for. *We see it as the consolidation of an extremely Swedish patriarchal structure that has deepened over a hundred years of industrialization, it needs to be eco-feminized, now it goes the other way.*

Rock art teaches us the historical significance of the Sami woman

There we can read the role of women in people's interactions. Stories are also documented in images on drums.



Mattarahkka, Mattar-Ahkka, the primordial mother of the Sami faith, a mother earth, who ruled over the good of all things and gave life to children. The sun, Biejvve was her mediator and was the center of all life. Manno was the moon's representative, and was seen important at the new moon and she also gave life. The word Mattar is tied to the earth, pre-emptive/fedrerne and was also considered in the



beginning of time to be in contact with heaven. Ahkka means older wise woman such as great-grandmother. (Mattarahkka from prehistoric times on rock art, Mattarahkka on drum from Luleå Sami people and Mattarahkka on a silver jewelry.)



Mattarahkka had three daughters of different roles, Sarahkka, assisted in childbirth near the fireplace and gave the girl child its gender, Juksahkka with bow in hand defends the child's upbringing, and Uksahkka was the guardian at the entrance to the tent.



The stories of a mother and her three daughters are featured in fairy tales all over the world. In Old Norse mythology it is Hel who has three daughters. They were called Nornor. The oldest stood for the story, she was dressed in black and named Urd, origin. The one who was in the middle of life was dressed in red and was called Verdandi. And the youngest person who stood for the future was dressed in white and was called Skuld, the one who would take future responsibility. The three spun together and created the future. Their wove was attached to the tree of life, Yggdrasil, a primordial tree, and the weave they wove shaped the future.

So what do Gimbuta's archaeological interpretations teach us, what does Sami culture teach us, what do tales and myths teach us? Well, in order to survive we need to interact and interact as one humanity. No one should can take more than it gives back. Resources and energy is a zero-sum game and the limits of growth have already been reached.

Green Women have a holistic perspective.

We connect men's violence against women, to the violence over Nature, our Mother Earth, and see it as a patriarchal practice based on a hierarchical order.

Our aim is a gender equal transformation of all economic structures based on the rights of nature, social durability and biological diversity.

By illuminating the connections between people, society and nature we organize women to be active in the great transformation.

www.gronakvinnor.se



**Either you agree to our way of reasoning or if you disagree,
do not hesitate to contact us!**

**Maybe you, your group or your party just want to discuss
or enrich your methods with new perspectives?**

**Ewa and Lotta are all available for lectures, debates, seminars or
webinars at very low costs.**

But will bring you rich ideological gains!

Let us know by writing to

info@gronakvinnor.se



WE CAN DO IT!