

Mitigating Climate Change through gender sensitivity

Susan Buckingham, representing 'genderSTE', a policy-driven targeted network funded by the EU through COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology),
College of Health & Life Sciences, Brunel University, London, UK

For over twenty years, a case has been made for women to be better represented in environmental decision-making (UN Conference on Environment and Development, 1992; UN Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995) on the grounds that women are affected in many different ways to men, and that these experiences give them other, equally valid, perspectives on environmental problems. Meanwhile their relative lack of visibility in rather masculinist decision making bodies - from the village council to the UNFCCC - means that these experiences are not well represented or taken into account in decision making. Climate change decision making has been slow to catch up with these calls, and it was only in 2012 that the UNFCCC passed the resolution requiring gender balance and women's equal participation in negotiating teams. A report in 2014 suggests that this is making slow progress. Meanwhile there are moves to bring greater diversity – including gender diversity – into Board Rooms (much of it inspired by Norwegian legislation in 2003 requiring 40% of board members of publically listed companies to be women by 2008), and into the study of STEM subjects, long dominated by male students and academics.

The European Union has called for greater gender diversity in scientific research, nationally funded medical research in the USA and Canada has started to require gender considerations in research trials, while high ranking journals such as Nature and The Lancet are now expecting evidence that authors have considered how gender affects research before agreeing to publish. It is within this context that 'genderSTE', exploring how research and innovation in science, technology and environment can and should equally represent women and men, has emerged. Its brief concerns changes in structures, innovation and research, and one of its three working groups is concerned with the climate change related issues of urban design and planning, transport, and energy. One of our tasks is to scope what gender sensitive work is already underway, and, the larger share: what needs to be done.

Drawing on examples of research which have already demonstrated gendered energy consumption, transport use and mobility, and climate change decision making, for example, the presentation will probe the implications of making the contemporary research agenda more sensitive to gender: in its underlying assumptions, its research content, and its staffing. With particular respect to non-CO2 greenhouse gases, it will pay attention to how the causes and impacts of these greenhouse gases are gendered, and suggests how mitigating these emissions can achieve greater gender justice, and provide inspiration for further mitigation.