



EcoFemSkills Learning Course

Developing an ecological mindset

Comprehensive and critical
approach to ecological
issues, from an individual
and systemic view.

Developed by Dafni Kek



Developed by the EcoFemSkills Erasmus+ Partnership as follows

- **Plastic waste processing** - Asociación Ecologica Precious Plastic Canarias hacia una economía circular
- **Create a small business** – Asociación para la participación e integración social FACTORÍA SOCIAL
- **Addressing the gender-based biases** – Erifyli Center
- **Developing an ecological mindset** – Dafni Kek

This document has been produced by its respective partner and is part of a 4-part series. You can access the other three documents or the complete publication through the [EcoFemSkills minisite](#).



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Introduction

This handbook has been developed within the EcoFemSkills project, which aims to provide an intersectional approach to women and femininities' empowerment and proactive stance in relation to climate change.

The project has identified women and femininities as the main target group, as a way to deal with gender-based stereotypes around green practices, especially those that are of a more technical nature. This choice has not been made as a way to limit the involvement on non-female identifying persons, but rather to support the mainstreaming of a gender-neutral approach towards technical and decision-making activities.

Our course has been developed around 4 individual units, for everyone using this handbook to be able to choose which one seems more interesting and follow it independently of the other units if they wish so. The 4 units are:

Plastic waste processing (Unit 1)

An experiential guide with practical workshops suggestions to allow for a comprehensive understanding and knowledge gaining around small-scale plastic recycling, from recollection to final products. Plastic recycling is the practical ecological practice we suggest in the EcoFemSkills project as it combines a tangible example of what recycling looks like in practice (not just collection), understanding the science behind plastic and becoming more conscious in its use. For the case of the EcoFemSkills project, the partners implemented a series of workshops where these activities were implemented for learners to actually learn the whole process.

Developing a small business (Unit 2)

Through this unit you get to know the structural elements that make a small business run, from initial idea and design to actual everyday challenges and realities. The small business can be a very helpful "tool" in combating climate change in a meaningful, sustainable and motivating way, especially when it is a conscious choice and an example of a paradigm shift driven by intersectionality. This part can be studied either in a group or by oneself. For the case of the EcoFemSkills project, the content of the unit was implemented in a group setting.

Addressing gender biases (Unit 3)

This unit, as its name suggests, aims to go deep into the issue of gender identity, address traditional perceptions and expectations from the traditional gender binary and challenge beliefs and mentalities that dictate who can/should do something and who cannot/should not do it. As learners you will be able to gain knowledge on terminology, ideas and philosophical “test” that allow you to become more inquisitive on biases and stereotypes and thus address them within yourselves and the people around you. The content has been implemented in group settings, as with all the previous units.

Developing an ecological mindset (Unit 4)

This final unit addresses the notion of ecology and environmentalism in relation to the individual, the collective and the wider societal levels. This chapter follows a holistic approach to ecological mentalities, meaning that it doesn’t analyse only individual responsibility and practices, but goes a step further into how it is at its core a rather intersectional issue that reflects on the natural environment. As a chapter it integrates elements from all previous ones in terms of mentality related to them, without repeating information that has already been addressed. As was the case with all previous units, this one was also implemented in a group setting which helped refine its content and overall approach.

In this document you can access the content related to “Developing an ecological mindset”. For the other 3 thematics, please visit the [minisite](#) to access the other 3 parts as individual publications or as part of the complete publication.

The handbook has been designed (as much as possible) to be used both in “classroom” setting, as well as for self-study. As it is published under creative commons license, you are free to use, adapt and remix it as much as you wish and depending on the needs of your communities and yourselves, as long as you use it under the same conditions.

This course intentionally blends theoretical, practical, and case-based approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles. The document emerged from the expertise of four different organisations’ practitioners—we’ve preserved their unique voices to reflect the richness of the field.

Unit 4 |

Developing an ecological mindset

Introduction

In this unit, we make an effort to define what an environmentally friendly mindset looks for in assessing the world around it. We'll start with a brief overview of the environmental challenges of our time and we'll see some actions that are taken worldwide to deal with their negative impacts. Then we'll speak about what is the ecological mindset and we'll try to understand how each one of us perceives the world around us. This part will be more sociological, for the fact that we will focus on mainstream understanding of the world around us. Next we'll go into the Agenda 2030 which consists of the main worldwide strategy in regards to sustainable development and just transition (we'll see more on these later). The final three sections will deal with recycling as an environmentally sustainable practice, with its positive and challenging aspects, we'll discuss about other forms of ecological transitions practices and finally we'll touch on the issue of ecofeminism with a focus on the ecological practices promoted by it.

The approach of this unit aims to help build the following literacies and skills:

Environmental, Sustainability, Critical, Media, Civic, Analytical, Collaboration/team working, Communication, System thinking, Risk assessment, Problem solving, Ecological, Policy

We welcome all contributions and comments regarding the content of this unit, so if you find any misinformation, falsely associated information or simply if you think that a certain part could be further enhanced, don't hesitate to contact us!

4.1: The Great Environmental Challenges

Objective: To identify the most pressing environmental challenges and explain how human activities contribute to them, explore strategies and actions for individuals, communities, and governments to address these issues

Environmental challenges are fundamentally **disruptions in the usual function of ecosystems**. These disruptions can be caused by both human activities and natural processes. A situation becomes serious when an ecosystem cannot recover in its current state, and catastrophic if it's projected to certainly collapse.

An **ecosystem** is defined as a geographic area where plants, animals, and other organisms, along with weather and landscape, interact to form a "bubble of life". Within an ecosystem, every factor depends on every other, directly or indirectly. The entire surface of Earth is a series of connected ecosystems, often part of larger biomes like forests or oceans.

Ecosystem recovery refers to an ecosystem returning to its original balance, while **ecosystem restoration** involves tangible human actions taken to aid this recovery. Ecosystem collapse signifies substantial, non-reversible changes or even the disappearance of an ecosystem's key characteristics and extent. While Earth naturally undergoes phases and evolutions, many severe environmental issues today are a direct result of human activity, particularly overconsumption of energy and resources. Our analysis will take a critical approach, focusing on systemic processes and inspiring pro-active, grassroots interventions.

Key Environmental Challenges and Their Causes

Drawing on categorization by earth.org for 2024, here are some of the most pressing environmental challenges and the human activities driving them:

Global Warming From Fossil Fuels: This is primarily caused by **generating electricity and heat from burning fossil fuels** like coal, oil, or gas, which release powerful greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide. Other human factors

include **excessive use of fossil fuels for economic activity** (industries, transport, war industry), an underlying dogma of continuous consumption, social inequalities, and grandiose mentalities of states, corporations, and capital providers.

Poor Governance: This stems from the **unwillingness of large industries to risk profits** and governments to set strict requirements. It's also linked to an **excessive rhetoric of "development" and "competition"** that rigidly adheres to industrial revolution principles, and politically motivated climate change denial or misinformation.

Food Waste: Approximately one-third of food intended for human consumption is wasted. Causes include **excessive production for saturated markets** (justified by "free market" notions), the ability for increased production through technology, **concentration of capital** in specific areas, and **aesthetic reasons** (e.g., "ugly" produce being discarded).

Biodiversity Loss: A significant decline in animal populations has been observed, with human destruction of nature accelerating this rate. **Rapid growth in human consumption, population, global trade, and urbanization**, particularly the **conversion of habitats into agricultural systems**, are major drivers. Illegal wildlife trade also contributes.

Plastic Pollution: Annual plastic production dramatically increased from 2 million tons in 1950 to 419 million tons by 2015, with about 14 million tons entering oceans annually. This is exacerbated by **single-use plastics, improper waste disposal**, and a significant **lack of recycling** (91% of plastic ever made is not recycled).

Deforestation: Forests are cut down at an alarming rate. This is driven by the **expansion of agricultural land, livestock grazing, logging, urbanization, human population growth**, and increased need for resources. Slash-and-burn techniques and over-exploitation of natural resources also play a role.

Air Pollution: Linked to millions of deaths annually. It's caused by concentrations of various pollutants: **particulate matter** (from combustion, transport, construction, chemical reactions), **oxides of nitrogen** (from combustion processes, primarily road

transport), **ozone** (from chemical reactions of other pollutants initiated by sunlight), **sulfur dioxide** (from burning coal and heavy oils), **polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons** (from coal/wood burning, fires, industrial processes, transport), **benzene** (domestic/industrial combustion, road transport), **1,3-butadiene** (petrol combustion, motor vehicles), **carbon monoxide** (from incomplete combustion), **lead** (from coal/metal combustion), and **ammonia** (primarily from agriculture).

Melting Ice Caps and Sea Level Rise: Human activities, especially **carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions since the industrial revolution**, have raised temperatures, particularly in the poles, leading to rapid glacier melt. **Ocean warming**, where oceans absorb 90% of Earth's warmth, also affects marine glacier melting.

Ocean Acidification: Primarily caused by **carbon dioxide dissolving into the ocean**, which lowers its pH, making it more acidic. This process is occurring much faster now than in the last 20 million years.

Agriculture: While essential, problematic agricultural practices lead to **deforestation, biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas emissions, water scarcity and pollution, soil degradation, and monocultures** that reduce genetic diversity. Socially, it can lead to corporate control, exacerbated inequalities, and mistreatment of workers.

Food and Water Insecurity: Driven by **conflicts** (impacting supplies and health systems), **climate change and extreme weather events** (depleting/contaminating water), **poverty and social inequalities** (eroding access to resources), and **displacement**.

Fast Fashion and Textile Waste: The fashion industry accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions and nearly 20% of global wastewater. This challenge arises from **cheaper, speedier manufacturing methods, consumer demand for new styles**, and increased purchasing power. It depletes non-renewable resources, emits greenhouse gases, uses massive amounts of water and energy, and deposits microplastics into the environment. Social impacts include forced labor, child labor, and hazardous working conditions in developing countries with loose legislation.

Overfishing: Driven by **increased global demand for fish** and **intensive fishing methods**. Illegal fishing also contributes.

Cobalt Mining: Surging demand for cobalt in batteries (especially for electric vehicles) leads to environmental costs like **high radioactivity levels, water pollution, and dust-related breathing problems** in local communities. It's also associated with dangerous worker exploitation. This is exacerbated by policies promoting electric cars over public transportation.

Soil Degradation: About 40% of the planet's soil is degraded. Causes include **poor farming practices** (monocropping, inefficient irrigation, overuse of chemicals), **aggressive cultivation** (deep plowing), **misusing fertilizers, overgrazing, deforestation, erosion** (water/wind), **urban expansion**, and **industrial/mining activities** that introduce pollutants.

Strategies and Actions to Address Environmental Challenges

Addressing these challenges requires a combination of international cooperation, systemic changes, and individual actions.

International Frameworks: Global challenges are addressed through various international pacts, agreements, protocols, and treaties. Examples include:

- **The Paris Agreement** and **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, which focus on limiting dangerous climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **The Ozone Treaties (Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol)**, designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out ozone-depleting substances, which have shown encouraging results despite recent setbacks.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity** (including Nagoya and Cartagena Protocols), **Basel Convention** (hazardous waste), **Aarhus Convention** (public participation), **CITES** (endangered species trade), and **Convention on the Law of the Sea**.

Mitigation Actions:

For Global Warming/Melting Ice Caps/Ocean Acidification

The core solution is **reducing greenhouse gas emissions**. This involves **transitioning to renewable energy sources**, enhancing energy efficiency, adopting regenerative agricultural practices, and protecting/restoring forests and critical ecosystems. For melting ice caps, one proposal even suggests pumping melted water back onto ice sheets as artificial snow.

For Poor Governance

Individuals can **support informed activism, promote grassroots education**, and critically evaluate political commitments. Systemic strategies include **transparency and anti-corruption measures**, strengthening legal frameworks, and international pressure.

For Food Waste

Key actions include **increasing food recycling, reducing landfill waste**, implementing policies for reuse and recycling (like EU directives), and promoting food donation. Planning food consumption at household and commercial levels, and utilizing technology for "smart kitchens" also help.

For Biodiversity Loss

Vital actions involve **protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, implementing sustainable agricultural and fishing practices**, controlling invasive species, and strengthening conservation policies and awareness initiatives.

For Plastic Pollution

Individual actions include **reducing plastic bottle use, using cloth bags, avoiding plastic straws and cutlery**, bringing reusable containers for coffee, and **properly recycling**.

For Deforestation

Suggested actions include **government regulations** (like banning clear-cutting), **reforestation efforts**, reducing paper and meat consumption, and supporting sustainable, forest-friendly companies.

For Air Pollution

Individuals can **drive less, use public transport/bikes**, turn off car engines, **plant trees, conserve energy at home**, and recycle.

For Agriculture's Impact

Shifting to **organic crops**, reducing fertilizer and pesticide use, providing incentives for farmers, and adopting nutrient-preserving cultivation schemes are important.

For Water Insecurity

Strategies include **citizen education for rational consumption, new water-saving technologies, wastewater recycling**, improved irrigation, energy-efficient desalination, and holistic ecosystem management.

For Fast Fashion

Individuals should **prioritize needs, inform themselves, donate/exchange/recycle old clothes**, buy from second-hand stores, and choose sustainable materials. The EU strategy aims for more durable, repairable, and recyclable textiles, tackling fast fashion through eco-design requirements and company responsibility.

For Overfishing

Consumers can **choose sustainable fish** (caught at right size, season, and with appropriate gear), avoid endangered species, and look for labels like MSC and ASC. The catering industry can also select sustainable supplies.

For Cobalt Mining

Methodical strategies and sound government decisions are needed, focusing on **de-dependence from fossil fuels** to reduce demand for cobalt in batteries. If not 100% possible, then proper control and planning of mining are necessary to reduce environmental and social costs.

For Soil Degradation

Measures include **limiting overgrazing, prohibiting deforestation, reducing pesticide/fertilizer use, updating cultivation methods**, limiting soil pollution, maintaining soil fertility, and controlling erosion.

Addressing these challenges demands a shift away from overconsumption and rigid adherence to industrial revolution-era practices. It requires acknowledging that both our everyday actions and large-scale systemic changes are necessary for a sustainable future.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** This chapter defines environmental challenges as disruptions to ecosystems, details numerous pressing issues such as global warming, biodiversity loss, and various forms of pollution, elucidates their multifaceted human and systemic causes, and outlines a range of proposed solutions from individual actions to international agreements and policy changes.

 **Reflection:** How can we ensure that human activities and societal structures evolve to foster true ecosystem recovery and long-term environmental sustainability, rather than just delaying inevitable collapse?

 **Keywords:** Environmental challenges, Ecosystems, Human impact, Global warming, Biodiversity loss, Pollution, Resource insecurity, Sustainable solutions, International agreements, Systemic change

Further study and assessment

Further study

National geographic, Human Impacts on the environment (collection of resources): <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-human-impacts-environment/>

Sentient, Humans Destroying Ecosystems: How to Measure Our Impact on the Environment: <https://sentientmedia.org/humans-destroying-ecosystems/>

Knowledge assessment activities

1. According to the chapter's content, what is the primary definition of environmental challenges?

- a) Natural disasters that occur regularly
- b) Disruptions in the usual function of ecosystems
- c) Changes in weather patterns
- d) Problems with animal migration

2. Complete the following statement about ecosystems:

An ecosystem is "a geographic area where _____, _____, and other organisms, as well as _____ and _____, work together to form a bubble of life."

Word Bank: plants, animals, weather, landscape

3. Match the severity level of environmental challenges with their correct definitions:

Challenge Level	Definition
Serious	Projected to certainly collapse
Catastrophic	Ecosystem cannot recover in its current state

4. Which of the following are identified as major environmental challenges in the 2024 earth.org analysis? (Select all that apply)

- a) Global warming from fossil fuels
- b) Poor governance
- c) Food waste
- d) Biodiversity loss
- e) All of the above

5. Analyze this scenario: A government refuses to implement environmental protection laws because industries claim it will hurt their profits. This is primarily an example of which environmental challenge?

- a) Global warming
- b) Poor governance
- c) Deforestation
- d) Ocean acidification

6. What is the main human-driven cause behind the majority of severe environmental issues according to the document?

- a) Natural climate cycles
- b) Volcanic eruptions
- c) Overconsumption of energy and resources
- d) Solar radiation changes

7. Fill in the missing information about air pollutants:

The document identifies several air pollutants including Particulate Matter, _____, Ozone, _____, PAHs, Benzene, 1,3-butadiene, _____, Lead, and _____.

8. Which international agreement is specifically mentioned as important for addressing ocean acidification?

- a) Basel Convention
- b) Paris Agreement
- c) Montreal Protocol
- d) CITES

9. Examine the connection between fast fashion and environmental challenges. Which of these impacts are directly linked to the textile industry? (Select all that apply)

- a) Microplastic pollution
- b) Non-renewable resource depletion
- c) Forced labor issues
- d) Unsustainable cotton production
- e) All of the above

10. Open question: Based on what you've learned about environmental challenges and their human causes, explain in 2-3 sentences why addressing environmental

problems requires both individual actions and systemic policy changes. Consider the interconnected nature of ecosystems in your response.

(Indicative answers in annex)

4.2: Ecological mindset and practices

Objective: define what an **ecological mindset** means and explore how individuals and communities can **shift their practices towards sustainability**, assess understanding and actions in relation to **ecological practices** and identify **key principles** of ecological living

First, let's define what we mean by "mindset." It can be briefly described as "**a set of attitudes and stances held by a person**". While a mindset is an invisible mental process, it visibly affects our behaviors, interactions, and overall psychology. Therefore, developing an ecological mindset isn't just about learning facts; it's a process of **understanding yourself, your beliefs, your environment, and how these factors have shaped your habits and understanding of the world**.

It's crucial to acknowledge that environmental challenges are deeply socio-political. Our individual actions are heavily influenced by our socio-political reality, our choices, and available resources. For example, some people's actions might be environmentally problematic due to endless consumption, while others might choose less environmentally friendly options out of economic necessity. Similarly, the environmental impact of economic activities varies greatly by entity size and domain, and indirect contributions to environmental problems (like a law firm supporting a polluting factory) must also be considered. There's no foolproof way to definitively label someone as "totally environmentally conscious" or "unconscious".

Developing an ecological mindset does not mean you must radically transform your entire lifestyle or deal with all environmental challenges. While radical transformations are valid for some, they are not universally applicable, and no single approach works for everyone. Instead, an ecological mindset is a **set of attitudes and stances that encourages environmental action in a positive sense**. It's not a standardized scientific term but is easily understood. Each of us has a unique mindset, and understanding our own patterns through reflection, perhaps via journaling, can be incredibly helpful on this journey.

Strategies and Actions for Adopting an Ecological Mindset

Adopting an ecological mindset and putting it into practice is a process that takes time, but many strategies and actions are available. We've categorized some helpful options to understand their impact:

Changing personal everyday habits:

- Switch to renewable energy sources, use energy-efficient appliances, and reduce electricity use.
- Minimize waste by practicing the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) for non-organic waste and composting organic waste.
- Limit water usage, fix leaks, store water, and be mindful of water-intensive products like jeans, paper, dairy, meat, and cereals.

Consuming sustainably and minimally:

- Choose products with low environmental impact, biodegradable packaging, and sustainable materials.
- Reduce overall consumption by focusing on quality over quantity and buying only what is necessary.
- Support local farmers, artisans, and companies with sustainable practices.

Connecting with nature and learning:

- Spend time in nature through activities like walking, gardening, or volunteering.
- Self-educate on ecosystems, biodiversity, and human impacts.
- Join local environmental groups or citizen science projects.

Using and advocating for sustainable transportation:

- Prioritize public transportation, walking, or cycling.
- Share car rides (carpooling).
- Consider electric or hybrid vehicles if changing your car, but be aware these aren't always as eco-friendly as promoted.
- Request to work from home if possible.

Restoring and protecting ecosystems:

- Volunteer or donate to environmental restoration initiatives.
- Support agricultural producers using ethical environmental and labor practices, such as organic farming or agroforestry.
- Undertake individual initiatives like creating pollinator gardens, supporting native plants, and avoiding harmful chemicals.

Political and economic engagement:

- Follow and engage with environmental policies focused on climate action, renewable energy, and sustainable development at national and EU levels, often through NGOs.
- Be cautious of "ethical" investments due to potential greenwashing; consider direct support for sustainable options instead.
- Engage with local politics, provide feedback on environmental actions, and utilize local monitoring mechanisms.

Understanding social justice:

- Educate yourself on the social impacts of environmental challenges, recognizing privilege, systemic racism, structural inequalities, and gendered politics.
- Understand that ecological impact is closely linked to labor rights; sustainable choices must include fair labor conditions.
- Support initiatives that ensure green spaces are accessible to all.

Learning Cultural Perspectives and Traditional Approaches:

- Learn from the practices and knowledge of local people connected to their land.
- Critically assess rural ways of life, keeping what serves you while discarding problematic aspects like gender hierarchies.
- Address issues of colonization and learn from indigenous practices, especially if you are part of a hegemonic group, reflecting on your own circumstances and perceptions.

Developing a critical view towards systems:

- Understand consumer culture and its environmental impact.
- Recognize the importance of moving beyond individual responsibility to address how larger systems influence ecological impact.
- Learn about economic alternatives like circular economy, cooperative and social entrepreneurship, sharing economy, and degrowth initiatives that prioritize needs over profit and excessive production.
- Identify greenwashing by companies and their disregard for labor rights.

Understanding the importance of community and participatory approaches to sustainability:

- Support or participate in local environmental groups that educate, resist harmful developments, stay updated on legislation, and advocate for sustainable policies.

- Recognize that environmental health is public health, supporting grassroots initiatives for clean air, water, and healthy food.
- Advocate for community involvement in designing eco-friendly, socially equitable, and diverse public spaces.

Critical education and media literacy:

- Critically assess how environmental issues are portrayed in mainstream media and education, noting the emphasis on personal responsibility over institutional issues or electric vehicles over public transport.
- Be mindful of oversimplification or overcomplexity of information and detect fabricated information.
- Extend the concept of citizenship to ecological citizenship, embracing responsibility for your interaction with the environment and social structures.
- Support educational initiatives that go beyond lifestyle changes to examine the social, economic, and political roots of environmental issues.

Assessing Existing Values, Attitudes, and Behaviours

Let's transition into a more formal self-assessment, with which we **evaluate our current attitudes and perceptions**. Ideally this assessment is to be repeated at the end of unit 4 to allow for comparison of results, with the guarantee of privacy until participants choose to share. The assessment is based on the **Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI)** developed by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). This inventory utilizes a specific approach within the **eeVAL framework, which is built on six core values**: equity in motion, authentic engagement, deep curiosity, ongoing journey, quality redefined, and shared learning. These values are intended to foster "just, inclusive and healthy partnerships, programs and communities". The aim of this assessment is to help individuals make choices that align with their circumstances while adhering to the key principles of ecological living.

The questionnaire is available here: <https://evaluation-archive.naaee.org/tools/environmental-attitude-inventory> (brief version – see annex for es-gr translations)

Key Principles of Ecological Living (UN Environment Approach)

In addition to these strategies, we can benefit from assessing practices that align with key principles of ecological living. The UN Environment offers a relevant framework:

- **Enjoy your food while tackling food waste and focus on a more plant-rich diet.** This includes reducing wasted food at home and in the community, and eating less red meat and dairy unless medically necessary.
- **Getting around more sustainably and reducing the need for travel.** Increase your use of public transportation, walking, or cycling, find alternatives to car ownership, and reduce or eliminate the need for travel where possible.
- **Using and wasting less, sharing more.** Rethink buying new items, seek second-hand options, consider renting over owning, and repair instead of replacing. Reduce high-footprint materials like paper, plastic, and textiles, minimize consumption waste, and increase recycling and reuse.
- **Living well in complete, low-carbon communities with more sustainable buildings and construction.** Reduce housing energy needs, choose smaller homes, and make energy-efficient upgrades. Support affordable housing and well-designed density, and tackle building/construction waste. Shift to more sustainable furniture and appliances.
- **Enjoying your free time and lowering your footprint.** Rethink celebrations and events to be meaningful and low-footprint, promote sustainable recreation, and reduce the carbon footprint of holidays.
- **Embracing well-being, engaging collectively, and shifting the big picture.** Practice well-being with a lighter footprint, reduce advertising, and engage in collective groups.

Addressing Resistance to Change

Transforming one's mindset can be challenging because our mindsets are shaped by external influences and personal choices. While some individuals may have backgrounds that encourage critical thinking, many have lived under imposed mentalities that are suspicious of change. You might encounter or experience this resistance firsthand, which can affect your belief in the level of change you can help create.

We've observed that people may resist acknowledging climate change, for example, not because they lack undeniable proof, but perhaps due to fear or anxiety about being "in danger of believing something that will force them to reassess who they are". This can lead them to find "solace" in fictional narratives that protect their existing identity, effectively misinterpreting the world by projecting their feelings onto it. As Judith Butler's work suggests, sometimes **the contradiction itself works to "emancipate" people from developing a rational position**, rather than them needing to be enlightened.

It's important to recognize these patterns in ourselves and others, not to judge, but to understand our limitations and motivations. Becoming conscious of our "chains" allows us to choose to transform our lives. However, we must also acknowledge that some people consciously choose not to engage, viewing it as an act of submission. While hope exists, it may not extend to everyone.

Ultimately, this journey involves self-assessment and continuous reflection on our existing values, attitudes, and behaviors. We encourage you to honestly reply to assessment questions without fear of judgment, recognizing that all replies are equally important as we collectively extract knowledge and understanding.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** The chapter provides a comprehensive understanding that ecological practices are profoundly shaped by a complex interplay of individual choices and personal mindsets, which are themselves influenced by available resources and circumstances; societal structures, including cultural perspectives, social justice, and the promotion of community involvement; and economic realities, encompassing consumer culture, systemic inequalities, and the varied environmental footprints of different entities, underscoring that environmental challenges are fundamentally socio-political issues requiring engagement beyond mere individual responsibility

 **Reflection:** Given the socio-political nature of environmental challenges, how can individuals and communities cultivate an ecological mindset and implement sustainable practices while critically addressing the limitations imposed by societal structures and economic realities?

 **Keywords:** Ecological Mindset, Personal Choices, Societal Structures, Economic Realities, Environmental Practices, Socio-political, Systemic Issues, Sustainability, Critical Thinking, Community Action

Further study and assessment

Further study and interactive media

More quizzes you can try yourself can be found here:

<https://evaluation.naaee.org/resources/methods-library>

Ethical consumer: <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>

Knowledge assessment

1. Defining the Ecological Mindset Circle all the components that are part of an ecological mindset according to the material:

- a) Personal beliefs and values
- b) Daily shopping preferences
- c) Environmental influences
- d) Daily habits and their impact
- e) Social media followers
- f) Understanding of consumption patterns

2. Socio-Political Context Matching Match each socio-political factor with its corresponding individual impact by writing the letter in the space provided:

Socio-Political Factors	Individual Impacts
A. Resource distribution	___ 1. Consumption patterns
B. Economic constraints	___ 2. Access to alternatives
C. Available choices	___ 3. Living circumstances
D. Shared social realities	___ 4. Indirect contributions

3. Ranking Practical Strategies Rank the following strategies for developing an ecological mindset from 1 (easiest to implement personally) to 8 (most challenging to implement personally):

___ Change personal habits

- ___ Practice sustainable consumption
- ___ Connect with nature
- ___ Use sustainable transportation
- ___ Protect ecosystems
- ___ Engage in political action
- ___ Understand social justice
- ___ Learn from cultural perspectives

4. Core Values Application Select the THREE core values of ecological living that you think are most relevant to building sustainable communities:

- a) Equity in motion
- b) Authentic engagement
- c) Deep curiosity
- d) Ongoing journey
- e) Quality redefined
- f) Shared learning

5. Resistance and Solutions Analysis For each challenge to adopting an ecological mindset, select the BEST strategy to overcome it from the options provided:

Challenge 1: Fear of climate change impacts

- a) Ignore the information
- b) Focus on achievable goals
- c) Avoid environmental news

Challenge 2: Reliance on familiar patterns

- a) Change everything at once
- b) Embrace gradual transformation
- c) Maintain current habits

Challenge 3: Contradictory thoughts and behaviors

- a) Practice self-reflection

- b) Justify inconsistencies
- c) Avoid thinking about it

(Indicative answers in annex)

4.3: Agenda 2030 and the strategy for sustainable development

Objective: explain Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, including how it addresses ecological challenges, discuss the role of individuals and communities and how to measure progress towards these goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global plan designed for "people, planet and prosperity". At its core, this agenda identifies the **eradication of poverty in all its forms** as the "greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development".

The Agenda is structured around **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and 169 targets, building upon the foundations of the Millennium Development Goals. To gauge our progress toward these ambitious goals, we use a system of **targets and indicators**. Think of it like this: if your **goal** is to make a village accessible for people with disabilities, a **target** might be to make infrastructure accessible. Then, **indicators** would be measurable elements, such as "how many public buildings have wheelchair ramps?" or "how many sidewalks have no potholes?". These verifiable values help us understand if we're reaching our targets and, by extension, our goals.

Here's a simplified look at each of the 17 SDGs, their core aims, and how we measure progress:

Goal 1: No Poverty

- **Aim:** To end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030, particularly **eradicating extreme poverty** (defined as living on less than \$1.25 a day). It also emphasizes reducing poverty by national definitions and ensuring social protection and access to basic services for the poor.
- **Measurement:** We track the proportion of the population living below the international poverty line and assess coverage by social protection systems.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

- **Aim:** To end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030. This includes ensuring year-round access to safe, nutritious food for all and ending all forms of malnutrition.

- **Measurement:** Progress is measured by the prevalence of undernourishment and the prevalence of stunting and wasting among children under five years of age.

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

- **Aim:** To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for everyone, at all ages. This encompasses reducing maternal and child mortality, ending epidemics like AIDS and tuberculosis, and achieving universal health coverage.
- **Measurement:** Key indicators include the maternal mortality ratio and the under-5 mortality rate.

Goal 4: Quality Education

- **Aim:** To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. This involves ensuring all children complete free primary and secondary education with effective learning outcomes.
- **Measurement:** We look at the proportion of children achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics and completion rates for primary and secondary education.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

- **Aim:** To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by ending discrimination, violence, and harmful practices (like child marriage and female genital mutilation). It also seeks to ensure women's full participation and equal opportunities in leadership.
- **Measurement:** Indicators include the existence of legal frameworks promoting equality and the proportion of women in national parliaments and managerial positions.

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

- **Aim:** To ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030. This means universal access to safely managed drinking water and adequate sanitation, eliminating open defecation, and improving water quality.
- **Measurement:** We assess the proportion of the population using safely managed drinking water services and safely managed sanitation services.

Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

- **Aim:** To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all by 2030. A key focus is substantially increasing the share of renewable energy in the global mix.
- **Measurement:** This is tracked by the renewable energy share in total final energy consumption and the proportion of the population with access to electricity.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- **Aim:** To promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. This includes supporting micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises and eliminating forced labor, modern slavery, and child labor.
- **Measurement:** Key indicators are the annual growth rate of real GDP per capita and the unemployment rate, disaggregated by sex, age, and disability.

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- **Aim:** To build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation. This involves enhancing scientific research and upgrading technological capabilities across industrial sectors.
- **Measurement:** Progress is monitored by manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP and research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

- **Aim:** To reduce inequality both within and among countries. This means progressively achieving and sustaining income growth for the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.
- **Measurement:** We assess growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 percent and the proportion of people living below 50 percent of the median income.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

- **Aim:** To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable by 2030. This includes ensuring access to adequate housing and basic services, upgrading slums, and providing access to safe transport.
- **Measurement:** Indicators include the proportion of the urban population living in slums and access to public transport.

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

- **Aim:** To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Key elements include halving global food waste by 2030 and promoting environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste.
- **Measurement:** This is assessed through food loss and food waste indices and the national recycling rate.

Goal 13: Climate Action

- **Aim:** To take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. This involves strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and integrating climate change measures into national policies.
- **Measurement:** We track the number of countries adopting and implementing national disaster risk reduction strategies and total greenhouse gas emissions.

Goal 14: Life Below Water

- **Aim:** To conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. This includes preventing marine pollution, managing marine ecosystems, and regulating fishing to end overfishing.
- **Measurement:** Indicators include the index of coastal eutrophication and the proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels.

Goal 15: Life on Land

- **Aim:** To protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt biodiversity loss. This includes preventing the extinction of threatened species and ending poaching and trafficking.
- **Measurement:** We monitor forest area as a proportion of total land area and the Red List Index for species extinction risk.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

- **Aim:** To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. This includes reducing all forms of violence and corruption.
- **Measurement:** Indicators involve the number of victims of intentional homicide and the proportion of the population reporting they feel safe walking alone after dark.

Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- **Aim:** To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. This goal focuses on finance, technology, capacity-building, trade, and systemic issues to support all other SDGs.
- **Measurement:** Key indicators include total government revenue as a proportion of GDP and net official development assistance as a proportion of donors' gross national income.

Current Progress and Measurement

The most recent assessment reveals that the world is "**severely off track**" to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Out of 135 assessable targets, only 17% show sufficient progress for achievement by 2030, with nearly half (48%) exhibiting moderate to severe deviations. Alarming, 18% indicate stagnation and 17% show regression below 2015 baseline levels.

Specifically, four goals have none of their targets displaying sufficient progress: **Goal 1 (No Poverty)**, **Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**, **Goal 13 (Climate Action)**, and **Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)**. On the flip side, **Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)** and **Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)** show promising future prospects, with Goal 7 having only positive progress among all 17 SDGs. The profitability of energy investments compared to, for example, clean water – or even peace - initiatives, might contribute to this success (which is quite worrisome!).

Progress is measured globally by the UN, which collects data from participating countries and public sources. Countries are also called upon to integrate the 2030 Agenda into their national planning instruments, policies, strategies, and financial frameworks, building on experiences with National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS).

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** The sources explain that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a comprehensive plan for people, planet, and prosperity, built upon 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, with progress measured through specific indicators, though the current assessment reveals that the world is severely off track in achieving most of these goals by 2030, necessitating intensified efforts and their integration into national planning.

 **Reflection:** Given that nearly half of the assessable Sustainable Development Goals targets are showing moderate to severe deviations from their desired trajectory, indicating marginal progress, stagnation, or even regression, what are the fundamental drivers behind this lack of sufficient progress, and how can the global community effectively shift course to meet the ambitious 2030 Agenda?

 **Keywords:** 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Targets, Indicators, Poverty eradication, Global challenges, Progress measurement, National planning, Clean energy, Gender equality

Further study and assessment

Further study and interactive media

Just4all Webinar series & Online Course: <https://eaea.org/our-work/projects/just4all-adult-education-for-a-just-transition/just4all-webinar-series/>

Just4all Good practices: <https://www.solidar.org/project/just4all-adult-education-for-a-just-transition/>

Knowledge assessment

1. Match each SDG number with its correct title by drawing a line to connect them:

SDG Number	SDG Title
Goal 1	Climate Action
Goal 4	No Poverty
Goal 7	Quality Education
Goal 13	Affordable and Clean Energy

2. Fill in the blanks:

The 2030 Agenda consists of _____ Sustainable Development Goals and _____ targets. It builds upon the work of the _____ Development Goals.

3. Which of the following statements about Goals, Targets, and Indicators is correct?
(Select all that apply)

- a) Goals represent the "big picture" of what is to be achieved
- b) Targets are measurable elements that track progress
- c) Indicators are specific actions needed to accomplish goals
- d) Targets are the specific actions or objectives needed to achieve goals
- e) Indicators help determine if targets are being met

4. According to the 2024 UN report, what percentage of assessable SDG targets show sufficient progress for achievement by 2030?

- a) 17%
- b) 30%
- c) 48%
- d) 18%

5. Complete the following categorization by placing each SDG in the correct column based on 2024 progress data:

Word Bank

No Poverty	Clean Water and Sanitation	Affordable and Clean Energy	Climate Action
Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Responsible Consumption and Production		

Goals with NO targets on track for 2030 Goals showing very promising progress

Goals with NO targets on track for 2030 Goals showing very promising progress

6. Fill in the blanks:

The 2030 Agenda is described as a "plan of action for _____, _____ and _____." The eradication of _____ is identified as "the greatest global challenge."

7. Which goal has the most targets (19 targets total)?

- a) Goal 1: No Poverty
- b) Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being
- c) Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- d) Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

8. Which of the following characteristics are commonly used for disaggregating SDG indicators? (Select all that apply)

- a) Income
- b) Sex
- c) Age
- d) Disability status
- e) Geographic location
- f) Hair color

9. Open question:

Based on your understanding of the chapter, explain why you think some SDGs are progressing better than others. What factors might influence whether a goal achieves its targets by 2030?

(indicative answers in annex)

4.4: Recycling as a practice

Objective: examine the **positive and negative aspects of recycling**, its **different types**, and its importance as an **intermediary solution**. We also discuss the **benefits of recycling for the environment and communities** and ways to **improve recycling efforts**.

As we've explored in previous sessions, recycling plays a vital role within mitigation strategies to combat waste and pollution. While it is undeniably important, it's crucial to understand that recycling is often an **intermediary solution rather than the primary long-term action** for environmental impact. This chapter delves into both the positive and negative aspects of recycling, its various forms, and why it holds this unique position.

What is Recycling?

At its core, recycling is defined as "the process of **converting waste materials into new materials and objects**" or "recovering of energy" from them. The effectiveness of recycling a material hinges on its "ability to reacquire the properties it had in its original state". For example, some plastics can be re-melted into the same type of plastic, whereas organic waste, while not returning to its original state, can generate energy.

A brief history of recycling

Recycling is not a new concept; historical records suggest its practice in ancient times, particularly during periods of resource scarcity or increased demand for raw materials. Early indications include repulped paper in 11th-century Japan, ash used for brick-making, and the unweaving of rags to create wool thread. The 19th century saw manufacturers offering recycling deposits for beverage bottles in Great Britain and Ireland, with Sweden establishing an official system in 1894. During **WW2**, **recycling became a "patriotic duty,"** and in the 1970s, it surged again due to rising energy costs, especially for **aluminum, which requires only 5% of the energy to produce from recycled material compared to new production**. Efforts to recycle plastic began in the 1970s, though they faced challenges from lobbying and a lack of economical means. By the 1990s, **electronic waste** became a new focus for recycling due to rapid technological development and increased consumption. Unfortunately,

the surge in plastic and electronic waste in the 1980s and 90s also led to problematic waste exports to developing countries, with serious environmental and quality of life consequences.

Of course, for people that have grown up in places where industrialisation was less systematised (or even non-existent), implementing recycling practices has been a lived experience.

Importance of Recycling

Recycling is a critical component of the waste hierarchy, positioned just after responsible waste disposal, and it is the third of the "**3Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**". Its significance stems from several key benefits:

Conservation of Natural Resources: Recycling materials like paper, wood, plastic, metals, and glass reduces the need to extract virgin raw materials, helping preserve forests, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and lessen damaging mining activities.

Protection of Ecosystems and Wildlife: By reducing the demand for new raw materials, recycling minimizes harmful disruption to natural environments, such as deforestation, river diversion, and pollution of water, soil, and air. It also prevents plastic waste from polluting waterways and coastlines.

Reduces Demand for Raw Materials: This practice helps prevent the displacement or exploitation of vulnerable communities whose lands and resources are often impacted by the search for new raw materials.

Saves Energy: Producing items from recycled materials almost always requires less energy than making them from scratch. For instance, recycling aluminum saves 95% of the energy, steel saves about 70%, and making paper from recycled pulp uses 40% less energy.

Cuts Climate-Changing Carbon Emissions: Less energy consumption in production means lower carbon emissions. Recycling also keeps waste, which can release methane, out of landfills, thereby reducing greenhouse gases vital for combating climate change.

Cost-Effectiveness: Recycling can be more economical than general waste collection and disposal, potentially saving money for households, businesses, and public services.

Green Job Creation: The recycling sector has the potential to create sustainable "green jobs," contributing to community, environmental protection, and skills development.

Forms of Recycling

There are three primary forms of recycling:

Mechanical Recycling

This is the most common method, used for materials like plastic, paper, and glass. It involves **mechanically transforming materials into new usable versions without altering their chemical composition**, through processes like grinding, washing, separating, drying, re-granulating, and compounding.

- A **"closed loop"** occurs when a material is recycled back into its current state, as seen with glass.
- However, plastic often undergoes **"cascade recycling,"** where each process lowers its quality, limiting its ability to be reused in the same way and eventually leading to an end-of-life for the plastic. For example, a PET bottle might be recycled into a plastic film, then downcycled into clothing material, and finally into packaging, losing quality at each step.

Chemical Recycling

This method offers a promising solution to the cascading problem by **changing the chemical structure of a material to return it to a raw state** and closer to its original quality. It includes:

- **Pyrolysis:** Heating material in the absence of oxygen, often used for plastics, breaking polymers into an oily substance similar to "petrochemical naptha" that can be used as feedstock for chemicals, synthetic rubber, and various plastics.
- **Gasification:** Heating with water and oxygen to produce "syngas," a mixture of gases that can serve as a chemical feedstock.
- **Depolymerization:** Breaking polymers into monomers, which can then be used to produce new plastics of similar quality. Examples include producing PE and PP from ethylene and propylene, PVC from vinyl chloride, PS, SAN from styrene, PMMA from acrylic, PTFE from tetrafluoroethylene, and various silicones from siloxanes.

Energy Recycling

This specifically applies to plastic waste, **converting it into thermal and electric energy by burning it** and turning the released heat into fuel. While it has potential, its standard form produces significant emissions, though efforts are being made to make it more environmentally friendly.

Negatives and limitations of recycling

Despite its benefits, recycling faces considerable challenges:

Encourages Continued Use of Unsustainable Items: Recycling, especially for plastics, can inadvertently support the ongoing production and consumption of materials that are problematic. Globally, **only about 9% of annual plastic waste is recycled**.

Improper Practices and Health Risks: Improper waste handling and processing can harm human health and the environment. Mechanical processes contribute to **microplastic creation**, which is a challenging issue to tackle, and chemical processes can release harmful emissions.

Contamination and Pollution: Difficulty in separation during collection and sorting can lead to contamination, impacting recycling accuracy, causing pollution, and even health problems for workers. Processing and manufacturing can increase pollution due to energy requirements and improper handling of hazardous materials.

Underinvestment: The recycling industry suffers from severe underinvestment, affecting workers, infrastructure, processes, and ultimately, environmental outcomes. This issue may be rooted in systemic racism.

Varying Carbon Footprint: Not all recycling offers low carbon footprints. While paper and aluminum recycling save significant energy, glass recycling often requires the same energy as producing new glass from scratch. Some plastics also require substantial energy to recycle.

Limited Recycling Cycles: Many plastics degrade in quality and strength with each recycling cycle, meaning they will eventually end up in landfills regardless.

Therefore, while recycling is a promising process, its effectiveness is hindered by various parameters. It is crucial **not to rely solely on recycling** but instead prioritize **reducing consumption, reusing materials, engaging with circular economy principles, aiming for zero-waste habits, and choosing eco-friendly materials** whenever possible.

The Future of Recycling

Environmental policies worldwide increasingly recognize recycling as a standard practice for achieving environmental goals, suggesting that **recycling volume and scale will likely continue to grow** over the next 25 years. Examples include the UK's goal of zero avoidable plastic waste by 2050 and the EU's target of 50% of plastic packaging being recyclable and recycled by the same year.

The future of recycling presents significant opportunities for learning and careers in several key industries:

- **Food Industry:** High volumes of food waste and its methane emissions offer a great opportunity for alternative energy production.
- **Manufacturing Industry:** With less than 10% of plastic currently recycled, the manufacturing sector holds immense potential given the vast amount of wasted material available.
- **Fashion Industry:** The massive amount of textile waste ending up in landfills (75%) highlights the need for reuse and recycling to combat overconsumption.
- **Technology (E-waste):** Only 20% of e-waste is recycled, often under harmful conditions. This area offers significant opportunities to recover valuable materials and improve practices.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** This chapter comprehensively outlined recycling as the process of converting waste into new materials or energy, tracing its historical roots, detailing its three main forms—mechanical, chemical, and energy recycling—while highlighting its benefits in conserving natural resources, saving energy, and reducing emissions, but also acknowledging its significant limitations, such as low plastic recycling rates, contamination, microplastic formation, and the necessity to prioritize reduction and reuse for long-term sustainability

 **Reflection:** Given recycling's acknowledged benefits yet persistent challenges and its position as an intermediary solution within the waste hierarchy, what is its optimal role in achieving true long-term environmental sustainability, and how can its limitations be effectively addressed alongside broader waste reduction and reuse strategies?

 **Keywords:** Recycling, Waste Hierarchy, Mechanical Recycling, Chemical Recycling, Energy Recycling, Resource Conservation, Energy Saving, Microplastics, Circular Economy, Waste Mitigation

Further study and assessment

Knowledge assessment

1. Which of the following statements about the effectiveness of recycling different materials is most accurate?

- a) All materials can be recycled indefinitely without losing quality
- b) Recycling effectiveness depends on a material's ability to reacquire its original properties
- c) Organic waste is the most effective material to recycle
- d) Energy recycling is always the most environmentally friendly option

2. Fill in the blanks:

According to the waste hierarchy, recycling is positioned as the _____ "R" in the 3Rs framework, which suggests that _____ and _____ should be prioritized before recycling.

3. Match each recycling process with its correct description:

Process	Description
Mechanical Recycling	Heating materials without oxygen to break down polymers
Pyrolysis	Physical transformation without changing chemical composition
Depolymerization	Breaking polymers into monomers for new plastic production
Gasification	Heating with water and oxygen to produce syngas

4. Energy savings from recycling vary significantly by material. Rank these materials from highest to lowest energy savings compared to producing from raw materials:

Materials: Steel (70% savings), Aluminum (95% savings), Paper (40% savings)

Highest savings: _____ Medium savings: _____
Lowest savings: _____

5. The concept of "cascade recycling" primarily affects which material, and what is the main consequence? Select all that apply.

- a) Plastic - quality decreases with each recycling cycle
- b) Glass - becomes contaminated during processing
- c) Paper - fibers become shorter and weaker
- d) Metal - loses structural integrity over time

6. Analyze this scenario: A manufacturing company claims their plastic packaging is "environmentally friendly" because it's recyclable. Based on current global recycling rates and the limitations discussed, evaluate this claim.

What percentage of annual plastic waste is actually recycled globally? _____%

What are two major limitations that challenge this company's environmental claim?

- _____
- _____

7. True or False:

Glass recycling requires significantly less energy than producing glass from raw materials, making it one of the most energy-efficient recycling processes.

Answer: _____

Explain your reasoning: _____

8. Complete the following statement about chemical recycling:

Chemical recycling is considered promising because it aims to _____ materials to their _____ state, potentially solving the problem of _____ that occurs in mechanical recycling.

9. Which industries present the greatest future opportunities for recycling development, and what makes each significant?

Word Bank

Food	Manufacturing	Fashion	Technology
methane emissions	10% recycling rate	75% waste to landfills	harmful working conditions

Industry: _____ - Key issue: _____

Industry: _____ - Key issue: _____

Industry: _____ - Key issue: _____

Industry: _____ - Key issue: _____

10. Critical Analysis:

Consider the statement "Recycling can paradoxically encourage continued use of unsustainable items." Explain how this contradiction works and what alternative approaches should be prioritized instead. Use specific examples from the reading to support your response.

(indicative answers in annex)

4.5: Ecological transition practices

Objective: define and explore ecological transition practices, their necessity, and how they differ from traditional environmental management. It also critically examines the influence of the current economic system (capitalism) on these transitions and the sustainability of proposed solutions

This chapter explores **ecological transition practices**, examining their necessity and how they differ from traditional environmental approaches. It delves into the core definitions, critically analyzes the impact of the current economic system, and questions the true sustainability of proposed solutions.

Defining Ecological Transition and Related Concepts

The concept of **ecological transition** can be understood as an evolution towards a **new economic and social model of sustainable development**. This model aims to renew our ways of consuming, producing, working, and living together to address major environmental challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity, biodiversity loss, and environmental health risks.

The idea of "ecological transition" was first theorized in 2005 by British teacher Rob Hopkins, based on experiments focused on achieving **autonomy and local resilience**. His principles and practices were outlined in "The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience," published in 2008. Initially focused on cities tackling climate change and peak oil, the concept has since expanded into various economic and social spheres, influencing:

- **Energy transition:** Emphasizing energy efficiency and renewable energies.
- **Industrial transition:** Promoting local production of recyclable goods within a circular economy framework.
- **Agri-food transition:** Shifting from industrial agriculture to organic practices.
- **City planning:** Incorporating urban densification, green spaces, and energy efficiency.
- **Transport sector:** Fostering ecomobility like car-sharing, electric buses, and public bikes.
- **Financial institutions:** Developing fiscal incentives and new forms of education based on cooperation.

The Transition movement is characterized by its **bottom-up dynamic**, with central citizen participation, offering an **optimistic vision for the future** by viewing crises as opportunities for change.

Closely related concepts include:

- **Sustainable development:** Defined in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This concept emphasizes both intergenerational sustainability and universal access to natural resources.
- **Just transition:** Broadly defined by the UN as ensuring "that no one is left behind or pushed behind in the transition to low carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies". Originating from efforts to defend workers facing job losses due to environmental regulations, it has expanded to include broader community interests, different concepts of justice, and inclusive decision-making.
- **Green Transition(s):** A term more commonly used at the EU level, combining various transitions that contribute to environmental recovery while also ensuring a more socially just and industry-focused approach. The European Commission targets Green Transition through domains such as climate action, just transition (focused on fossil-fuel dependent economies), sustainable development (broader social justice), energy, transport, environment and circular economy, research and innovation, and greeng public/private finances.

Ecological Transition Practices and the Critique of Capitalism

While previous sessions covered mitigation strategies, ecological mindsets, and the 2030 agenda, in this chapter we will try to go deeper into ecological transition practices. We are approaching these practices through the lens of specific sectors and major economic actors. While there are EU case studies mentioned in the EC's "Reform Support" website, they lack comprehensive detail, necessitating the search for other resources.

The ecological transition is a **comprehensive process** that ties these concepts together, but its implementation is profoundly influenced by economic structures and power relations. A key component of understanding ecological transition involves criticizing the current economic system, primarily **capitalism**, as a determining factor in its successful implementation.

For this analysis, we reference the article "**Capitalism and sustainability transitions research: time for a turn?**". The paper uses Gallino's definition (1993) of capitalism as a specific form of social and economic organization characterized economically by:

- The **private property of the means of production**.
- The **freedom to pursue economic gains** through production and the market.
- The **transformation of labour power into a commodity**.
- The **owners' control of the means of production and the destination of value generated through production**.
- The **generalisation of production and exchange of commodities**"

Beyond the economic sphere, capitalism also shapes individual and collective identities and relations through principles like **competition, individualization, rationalization, commodification of human and non-human beings, and an imaginary of progress based on endless accumulation**.

Despite its dominant nature, capitalism co-exists with **non-capitalist logics, institutions, and practices**. These can be found in the intersects of modern capitalist societies, such as:

- **Cooperatives.**
- **Alternative finance and local exchange networks.**
- **Everyday family practices.**
- **"Hidden" (unvalued in economic terms) social reproduction in the household.**
- **Non-market exchanges.**
- **Non-utilitarian rationality expressed in social solidarity networks.**

The Sustainability of Sustainability Transitions: A Critical Review

Continuing our review of the paper "**Capitalism in sustainability transitions research: Time for a critical turn?**", a crucial question arises: are the proposed solutions to environmental issues truly sustainable, or do they inadvertently create new problems?

The paper argues that it is often assumed a more energy-efficient technology is "more sustainable". However, a deeper understanding of capitalist logic reveals that in systems aiming for **endless accumulation of capital and economic growth**, gains in efficiency are likely to ultimately result in **"less sustainable" outcomes**. This is because any efficiency gains are often re-spent by consumers in further consumption and used by companies to invest in further production capacity. **Efficiency within capitalist economic systems thus drives the continuous cycle of economic growth necessary for the system to avoid collapse.**

In essence, if the inherent need of the capitalist system for continuous gains is not addressed, efforts to make environmentally friendly practices truly sustainable are often doomed to fail. A core element of environmental crises is the **profit-seeking approach of industries operating within the capitalist system**.

For example, consider local initiatives promoting plastic recycling with a sustainable mindset, aiming to reduce plastic waste and create new products from recycled materials. While environmentally beneficial, if such a business strategy prioritizes profit, it faces an existential risk when appropriate resources (local plastic waste) become scarce. An environmentally responsible approach would be to accept this limitation, recycle only when resources are available, or even cease operations, allowing the practice to become obsolete if its purpose (reducing traditional plastic waste) is achieved. However, if the business instead chooses to maintain its "success" despite resource scarcity, it might end up producing new plastic waste rather than recycling, thus contradicting its original environmental purpose. This highlights that a seemingly eco-friendly process like plastic recycling is only truly beneficial as long as it genuinely reduces waste and aims towards its own obsolescence as plastic waste diminishes.

While plastic has undeniably been a useful resource for society and the economy, its exploitation and illogical development, often covering fictitious needs without considering mitigation, make it one of today's most problematic resources. Alternatives like organic plastic developed from organic waste offer much more eco-friendly solutions.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** The chapter provided definitions for ecological transition, sustainable development, and just transition, highlighting their comprehensive nature and the historical context of their development, while critically examining how the inherent characteristics of capitalism (such as private property, pursuit of economic gains, commodification of labor, control of means of production, and endless accumulation) can hinder genuine sustainability by driving continuous economic growth and potentially negating efficiency gains, emphasizing the need to consider non-capitalist approaches

 **Reflection:** How can genuine ecological transition be achieved and sustained when current economic systems, particularly capitalism, inherently drive continuous growth and often undermine efforts intended to foster true environmental sustainability?

 **Keywords:** Ecological Transition, Sustainable Development, Just Transition, Capitalism, Economic Model, Resource Scarcity, Circular Economy, Efficiency Paradox, Non-capitalist Logics, Environmental Challenges

Further study and assessment

Knowledge assessment

1. Transition Movement Characteristics Match the transition sector on the left with its correct focus on the right by connecting them.

Transition Sector	Focus
Energy transition	Car-sharing and electric buses
Industrial transition	Organic farming practices
Agri-food transition	Circular economy and local production
Transport sector	Efficiency and renewable sources

2. Capitalism's Core Characteristics Check ALL characteristics that define capitalism according to Gallino's (1993) definition:

- a) Private property of means of production
- b) Government control of all industries
- c) Freedom to pursue economic gains
- d) Transformation of labor into a commodity
- e) Equal distribution of wealth
- f) Generalization of commodity production and exchange

3. The Rebound Effect Scenario A company develops energy-efficient LED lights that use 75% less electricity than traditional bulbs. However, because consumers save money on electricity bills, they buy more electronic devices and leave lights on longer. This scenario demonstrates:

- a) Successful ecological transition
- b) The rebound effect undermining sustainability
- c) Effective resource management
- d) Proper implementation of green technology

4. Sustainable Development Timeline Fill in the missing information about sustainable development:

The concept of Sustainable Development was defined by the _____ in the year _____ as development that meets present needs without compromising _____ ability to meet their own needs.

5. Critical Analysis - Plastic Recycling Dilemma

A local business focused on recycling plastic waste into useful products faces a problem: there's less plastic waste available in their community due to successful reduction efforts. From a capitalist business perspective, what contradiction does this create, and what might the business be tempted to do to survive?

(indicative answers in annex)

4.6: Ecofeminism Concept (Focus on Ecological Aspect)

Objective: explore **ecofeminism, its connection to environmental issues, and how patriarchal systems contribute to ecological degradation**. It also seeks to present **ecofeminist perspectives on ecological challenges and solutions**, and how its principles foster sustainable development

Ecofeminism, or ecological feminism, is a branch of feminism that examines the profound **connection between women/femininities and nature**. This movement was inspired by the French writer **Françoise d'Eaubonne** in 1974, with the term gaining prominence during environmental protests in the 1980s. D'Eaubonne posited that the marginalization and oppression of perceived inferior social groups—including women/femininities, people of color, and the poor—are intrinsically linked to the degradation of the natural world by patriarchal society. The theory emphasizes the **similarity between the human domination of nature and the oppression of women/femininities** by patriarchy, capitalism, and "white supremacy".

At its core, ecofeminist theory upholds the basic principles of gender equality while adding a crucial commitment to **protecting both the environment and women/femininities**. It argues that women/femininities and nature are often characterized by negative, derogatory terms, implying irrationality and a need for control, unlike the more positive terms used for the male gender. This hierarchical approach aims to degrade both. The movement also highlights how **women/femininities are disproportionately affected by environmental issues** globally, often due to less financial wealth and greater reliance on the natural environment, leading to hardships like traveling long distances for resources such as water, particularly in African countries.

Early examples of ecofeminism in action include the **Chipko movement in India (1970)**, where rural women/femininities peacefully protected forests from logging. Similarly, in America in 1978, Lois Gibbs organized women/femininities against a polluting plastics industry, noting men's lack of interest. Women/femininities' participation in land movements, such as battles to defend forests, struggles against dams, and actions against toxic waste, has remained particularly strong due to their deeper empathy for environmental crises.

The evolution of ecofeminism saw its first division in the late 1980s into two schools:

- **Radical ecofeminism** argued that dominant patriarchal society equated and degraded both nature and women/femininities, thus advocating for an end to these associations.
- **Cultural ecofeminism** encouraged the connection between women/femininities and the environment, often drawing from pagan religions, believing that this connection fosters sensitivity to the environment's sacredness.

Towards the end of its historical course, ecofeminism became strongly associated with environmentalism, attracting women/femininities in public policy, technology, science, and environmental studies. Modern ecofeminism has diversified into sub-branches like vegetarian, spiritual, and materialist ecofeminism, all supporting core principles.

How do patriarchal systems and structures contribute to ecological degradation?

We understand that the **structure of patriarchal capitalist society directly causes oppression and disrespect for both women/femininities and nature**. Modern society's emphasis on industrial production and profit means industries often lack incentives for sustainable practices. For instance, the **fashion industry** exemplifies this by contributing significantly to climate change through tropical forest destruction, soil degradation, greenhouse gas emissions, and waste production. This industry also exploits its workers, approximately 80% of whom are women/femininities, subjecting them to unsafe conditions, abuse, hazardous chemicals, and low wages.

What are some ecofeminist perspectives on ecological challenges and solutions?

Ecofeminism consistently links the exploitation of nature to the oppression of women/femininities, identifying shared patriarchal and capitalist structures as root causes for both climate crisis and social inequalities. Some key perspectives and solutions include:

- **Decentralization and community management:** Empowering local communities, especially women/femininities, in managing natural resources through models like agroecology and renewable energy.
- **Holistic environmental policy:** Combining sustainability with social justice to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

- **Critique of capitalism and overconsumption:** Proposing alternative economic models centered on **care, solidarity, and frugal living**.
- **Resistance to destructive industries:** Opposing the destruction of ecosystems by large corporations and supporting sustainable farming practices.

How can ecofeminist principles and practices contribute to sustainable development and ecological transition?

Ecofeminist principles can be integrated into ecological transition strategies through:

- **Gender mainstreaming in policymaking:** Ensuring sustainable development addresses the needs of women/femininities, who are disproportionately affected by climate change.
- **Strengthening local self-sufficiency:** Supporting women/femininities' cooperatives, circular economy initiatives, and sustainable agriculture.
- **Education and empowerment:** Recognizing women/femininities as crucial agents of change who can lead environmental movements and programs like reforestation, recycling, and waste management.
- **Care as a core value:** Promoting policies that prioritize care for nature, people, and future generations.

The vision of ecofeminism is to **eliminate stereotypes that subordinate women/femininities and nature** and to gradually **dismantle systems that degrade both**. The movement strives to lay the foundation for a future equal society, regardless of race, gender, or sexuality. Although historically facing challenges with inclusivity and sometimes perceived "heterosexual bias," modern ecofeminism aims to be inclusive and representative of every individual, embracing all genders, races, social classes, sexualities, and religions. It recognizes that the way to win the battle against exploitation is through the unity of all marginalized groups, safeguarding their rights and asserting their demands.

Notable Ecofeminist Activists

Several influential figures have shaped the ecofeminist movement:

- **Françoise d'Eaubonne (1920-2005):** Coined the term "ecofeminism" in the 1970s and theorized the connection between environmental struggle and the fight against patriarchy in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death).
- **Vandana Shiva (b. 1952):** An Indian academic, environmental activist, and food sovereignty advocate. She joined the Chipko movement in the 1970s and later founded Navdanya to fight GMOs. Her book *Staying Alive* (1988) was pivotal in

understanding environmental issues from the perspective of rural Indian women/femininities.

- **Starhawk (Miriam Simos, b. 1951):** A prominent voice in contemporary ecofeminism, known as a writer, activist, and teacher. She identifies as a witch and practices Wicca, a modern pagan religion she considers feminist, connecting it to nature through concepts like "witchcraft" and "goddess".
- **Wangari Maathai (1940-2011):** A Kenyan academic, environmentalist, and human rights activist. She founded the Green Belt Movement in 1970 to empower women/femininities and fight for the environment through tree planting. She was the first environmentalist to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.
- **Maria Mies (b. 1931):** A German teacher and sociologist who researched women/femininities' livelihoods in India and recognized capitalism as a major problem. She co-wrote a book with Vandana Shiva, explaining the similarities between violence against women/femininities and violence against nature.

As long as the seriousness of climate change and the importance of transforming social structures for equality are not fully grasped, the ecofeminist movement will continue to be essential. Failure to recognize the connections between nature's destruction and social issues, such as the degradation of the female gender, hinders solutions to both. By exploring the sustainable relationship between the environment and women/femininities, the struggle for environmental protection must draw in more women/femininities, while also fostering stronger relationships among women/femininities themselves within society.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that highlights the interconnectedness between the oppression of women/femininities and the degradation of nature, asserting that patriarchal and capitalist systems are root causes of both ecological crises and social inequalities, thereby advocating for holistic solutions that integrate gender equality, social justice, and environmental protection

 **Reflection:** How can recognizing the shared historical path and ongoing subjugation of both women/femininities and nature under patriarchal systems guide us toward more effective and equitable solutions for both environmental sustainability and societal justice?

 **Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Patriarchy, Ecological Degradation, Women/Femininities, Nature, Oppression, Capitalism, Social Justice, Sustainable Development, Environmental Protection

Further study and assessment

Knowledge assessment

1. Match each ecofeminist activist with their primary contribution or achievement.

Activist	Achievement/Contribution
Françoise d'Eaubonne	Founded the Green Belt Movement in Kenya
Vandana Shiva	Coined the term "ecofeminism" in 1974
Wangari Maathai	First environmentalist to win Nobel Peace Prize
Starhawk	Joined the Chipko movement and founded Navdanya
Maria Mies	Practices Wicca and connects spirituality to environmentalism

2. According to ecofeminist theory, patriarchal society treats women and nature in similar ways. Select all characteristics that apply to how both are typically portrayed: (Multiple correct answers)

- a) Rational and logical
- b) Irrational and unpredictable
- c) Something that needs to be controlled
- d) Degraded through negative terminology
- e) Superior to masculine qualities

3. Fill in the blanks using the word bank below:

The _____ Movement in India (1970) was one of the earliest movements to embody ecofeminist principles. Rural women led this _____ movement to protect trees from government logging by literally _____ them. In America, the _____ incident involved women organizing against industrial pollution when men showed little interest.

Word Bank

Chipko peaceful hugging Love Canal

4. Rank the following stages of ecofeminism's evolution from earliest (1) to latest (3):

- ____ Diversification into sub-branches like vegetarian and spiritual ecofeminism
- ____ Division into Radical and Cultural ecofeminism schools
- ____ Association with environmentalism by women in public policy and science

5. Circle True or False for each statement about the two main schools of ecofeminist thought:

Radical ecofeminists wanted to end the connection between women and nature: **True / False**

Cultural ecofeminists encouraged the woman-nature connection: **True / False**

Cultural ecofeminism often incorporated pagan religious elements: **True / False**

Both schools disagreed on core ecofeminist principles: **True / False**

6. Complete this cause-and-effect analysis of the fashion industry by selecting the most appropriate connections:

Patriarchal Capitalist Structure in Fashion leads to:

- a) 80% female workforce experiencing unsafe conditions
- b) Better environmental protection policies
- c) Climate change through pollution and waste
- d) Improved wages for all workers
- e) Destruction of tropical forests

Select the letters that represent actual effects: _____

7. According to the UN report mentioned in the text, why are women more vulnerable to climate change? Choose the best explanation:

- a) They are less interested in environmental issues
- b) They have less financial wealth and depend more on natural resources

- c) They live in areas with better climate conditions
- d) They have more political power to influence policy

8. Match each ecofeminist solution with its description:

Solution	Description
Decentralization	Supporting economic models based on care and solidarity
Holistic Environmental Policy	Local communities managing natural resources
Alternative Economics	Integrating sustainability with social justice
Industrial Resistance	Opposing ecosystem destruction by corporations

9. Identify which of the following represents the core vision of ecofeminism by selecting all that apply: (Multiple correct answers)

- a) Eliminate stereotypes that subordinate women and nature
- b) Maintain current capitalist economic structures
- c) Create an equal society regardless of race, gender, or sexuality
- d) Focus only on women's rights without environmental concerns
- e) Dismantle systems causing environmental destruction

10. Critical Thinking Question:

Based on what you've learned about ecofeminism's principles and challenges, explain in 3-4 sentences how the movement's goal of inclusivity conflicts with its current limitations, and suggest one practical way to address this issue.

(indicative answers in annex)

Practical issues and pedagogical considerations

This document is complementary to the presentations (accessible through the local seminars tab on the minisite).

It can be used however you wish, yet the original design was for educators to use it as background for the presentations.

Depending on how the course is implemented, the trainer can choose to split each chapter and section into distinct documents for learners to study themselves.

In case of self-directed learning, this document can be used as the primary source, but we highly encourage further research and studying to confirm or challenge the positions taken.

The course doesn't aim to indoctrinate, so don't use it as "an encyclopedia".

Do your research, expand the arguments and take action based on your needs and abilities.

The only thing we would concentrate on, is to always have an inclusive and progressive mindset!

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Annexes

Accessibility review - note

For each unit's content, ensure the following accessibility considerations are addressed:

- Provide materials in multiple formats (e.g., text, audio, video, braille, and large print) to accommodate various needs.
- Utilize high-contrast visuals and accessible color schemes for presentations, slides, and documents.
- Include closed captions and transcripts for all video and audio content.
- Ensure all digital resources are compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies.
- Offer alternative assignments or exercises for learners with sensory or physical limitations.
- Ensure physical spaces for in-person sessions are wheelchair accessible and equipped with assistive listening devices.

For the course as a whole:

- Incorporate flexibility in deadlines and participation requirements to accommodate learners with varying schedules and abilities.
- Provide clear navigational guidance for course platforms and tools, ensuring ease of use for all learners.
- Regularly audit materials and tools for compliance with accessibility standards such as WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines).
- Include ongoing feedback mechanisms for learners to share accessibility challenges and to adapt the course accordingly.
- Train educators and facilitators on best practices for inclusive teaching and accessibility support

Notes and Considerations Based on Specific Units

For Unit 4: Use of terminology

- Develop or provide a dictionary of terms to help learners familiarize themselves with academic and standard language used in this unit.
- Ensure the language used is accessible, with simplified explanations available to support learners who may struggle with complex terminology.
- Offer glossaries in multiple formats (physical and digital) for ease of reference.
- Include exercises that contextualize the terms within practical applications, such as examples or case studies.
- Alternatively, encourage learners to search unknown words and terms themselves, providing a critical view to ensure that there are no misinterpretations

For technical units with diagrams or charts:

- Provide textual descriptions or audio explanations of visual elements to support learners with visual impairments.
- Ensure diagrams are labeled clearly and use accessible fonts and sizes.

For collaborative or interactive sessions:

- Offer alternative formats for participation (e.g., virtual discussions or asynchronous forums) to accommodate different learner needs.
- Provide clear instructions and expectations for group activities to minimize confusion.

Code of conduct

Code of Conduct for Learners

Engage actively with learning materials and exercises, striving to apply terms in practical contexts such as examples or case studies.

Respect the accessibility measures provided, utilizing glossaries, textual descriptions, audio explanations, and alternative formats as needed.

Participate in forums, discussions, or group activities with an open mind and respect for diverse perspectives and needs.

Follow clear instructions for collaborative sessions, ensuring equitable contribution and understanding.

Adhere to respectful communication practices, fostering a positive environment for all learners and educators.

Code of Conduct for Educators

Design learning materials that are accessible and inclusive, offering simplified explanations, glossaries, and accommodations for visual or other impairments.

Ensure all diagrams and charts are clearly labeled and utilize accessible fonts and sizes.

Provide alternative participation formats for collaborative or interactive sessions to accommodate diverse learner needs.

Set clear expectations and instructions for activities to reduce confusion and enhance learning outcomes.

Promote an environment of patience, respect, and encouragement, recognizing the varying needs and capabilities of each learner.

Code of Conduct for Collaboration Between Learners and Educators

Maintain a mutual respect for each other's roles, contributions, and perspectives in the learning process.

Communicate clearly and constructively, ensuring that all participants feel heard and valued.

Work collaboratively to address and accommodate diverse needs, utilizing available resources and alternative formats effectively.

Encourage curiosity and feedback to refine and improve learning materials and methods.

Prioritize inclusivity and accessibility, striving to create an equitable and engaging learning environment.

Indicative replies to knowledge assessment

Knowledge assessment U4.1 - Answer key

1. According to the document, what is the primary definition of environmental challenges?

b) Disruptions in the usual function of ecosystems

2. Complete the following statement about ecosystems:

plants, animals, weather, landscape

3. Match the severity level of environmental challenges with their correct definitions:

Serious - Ecosystem cannot recover in its current state

Catastrophic - Projected to certainly collapse

4. Which of the following are identified as major environmental challenges in the 2024 earth.org analysis? (Select all that apply)

e) All of the above (Global warming from fossil fuels, Poor governance, Food waste, Biodiversity loss are all listed as major challenges)

5. Analyze this scenario: A government refuses to implement environmental protection laws because industries claim it will hurt their profits. This is primarily an example of which environmental challenge?

b) Poor governance

6. What is the main human-driven cause behind the majority of severe environmental issues according to the document?

c) Overconsumption of energy and resources

7. Fill in the missing information about air pollutants:

NO_x, SO₂, CO, Ammonia

8. Which international agreement is specifically mentioned as important for addressing ocean acidification?

b) Paris Agreement

9. Examine the connection between fast fashion and environmental challenges. Which of these impacts are directly linked to the textile industry? (Select all that apply)

e) All of the above (Microplastic pollution, Non-renewable resource depletion, Forced labor issues, Unsustainable cotton production are all mentioned as impacts of fast fashion)

10. Critical Thinking: Based on what you've learned about environmental challenges and their human causes, explain in 2-3 sentences why addressing environmental problems requires both individual actions and systemic policy changes. Consider the interconnected nature of ecosystems in your response.

Sample response should include: Environmental challenges are caused by systemic issues like overconsumption and poor governance that require policy-level changes, but individual actions are also necessary because collective behavior drives demand and can influence policy. Since ecosystems are interconnected, problems in one area affect others, making comprehensive approaches essential. Students should demonstrate understanding that both levels of action are needed due to the complex, interconnected nature of environmental systems.

Knowledge assessment U4.2 - Answer key

1. Circle all the components that are part of an ecological mindset according to the material:

a) Personal beliefs and values, c) Environmental influences, d) Daily habits and their impact, f) Understanding of consumption patterns

2. Socio-Political Context Matching:

A-3 (Resource distribution matches with Living circumstances) B-2 (Economic constraints matches with Access to alternatives) C-1 (Available choices matches with Consumption patterns) D-4 (Shared social realities matches with Indirect contributions)

3. Ranking Practical Strategies:

Individual responses will vary based on personal circumstances. Grading guideline: Accept any logical ranking that shows thoughtful consideration of personal capacity and circumstances. Look for consistency in reasoning between easier (typically personal habits, sustainable consumption, connecting with nature) versus more challenging (typically political action, ecosystem protection, social justice understanding).

4. Core Values Application:

Accept any combination of three values. Grading guideline: Look for selections that demonstrate understanding of community building. Strong combinations might

include equity in motion, authentic engagement, and shared learning, but other combinations are valid if student reasoning is sound.

5. Resistance and Solutions Analysis:

Challenge 1: b) Focus on achievable goals Challenge 2: b) Embrace gradual transformation Challenge 3: a) Practice self-reflection

Knowledge assessment U4.3 - Answer key

1. Match each SDG number with its correct title by drawing a line to connect them:

Goal 1 connects to No Poverty; Goal 4 connects to Quality Education; Goal 7 connects to Affordable and Clean Energy; Goal 13 connects to Climate Action

2. Fill in the blanks: The 2030 Agenda consists of _____ Sustainable Development Goals and _____ targets. It builds upon the work of the _____ Development Goals. **17, 169, Millennium**

3. Which of the following statements about Goals, Targets, and Indicators is correct? (Select all that apply) **a) Goals represent the "big picture" of what is to be achieved; d) Targets are the specific actions or objectives needed to achieve goals; e) Indicators help determine if targets are being met**

4. According to the 2024 UN report, what percentage of assessable SDG targets show sufficient progress for achievement by 2030? **a) 17%**

5. Complete the following categorization by placing each SDG in the correct column based on 2024 progress data: **Goals with NO targets on track for 2030: No Poverty, Clean Water and Sanitation, Climate Action, Peace Justice and Strong Institutions; Goals showing very promising progress: Affordable and Clean Energy, Responsible Consumption and Production**

6. The 2030 Agenda is described as a "plan of action for _____, _____ and _____." The eradication of _____ is identified as "the greatest global challenge." **people, planet, prosperity, poverty**

7. Which goal has the most targets (19 targets total)? **d) Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals**

8. Which of the following characteristics are commonly used for disaggregating SDG indicators? (Select all that apply) **a) Income; b) Sex; c) Age; d) Disability status; e) Geographic location**

9. Based on your understanding of the chapter, explain why you think some SDGs are progressing better than others. What factors might influence whether a goal achieves its targets by 2030? **Sample answer should include: Economic**

profitability/investment potential (as seen with Goal 7), political will and prioritization, available resources and funding, complexity of the challenges addressed, international cooperation levels, measurability of progress, and whether goals align with existing economic systems. Students may also mention that some goals require more fundamental systemic changes than others.

Knowledge assessment U4.4 - Answer key

1. Which of the following statements about the effectiveness of recycling different materials is most accurate?

b) Recycling effectiveness depends on a material's ability to reacquire its original properties

2. According to the waste hierarchy, recycling is positioned as the _____ "R" in the 3Rs framework, which suggests that _____ and _____ should be prioritized before recycling.

third, reduce, reuse

3. Match each recycling process with its correct description:

Mechanical Recycling - Physical transformation without changing chemical composition
Pyrolysis - Heating materials without oxygen to break down polymers
Depolymerization - Breaking polymers into monomers for new plastic production
Gasification - Heating with water and oxygen to produce syngas

4. Energy savings from recycling vary significantly by material. Rank these materials from highest to lowest energy savings compared to producing from raw materials:

Highest savings: Aluminum Medium savings: Steel Lowest savings: Paper

5. The concept of "cascade recycling" primarily affects which material, and what is the main consequence?

a) Plastic - quality decreases with each recycling cycle c) Paper - fibers become shorter and weaker

6. Analyze this scenario: A manufacturing company claims their plastic packaging is "environmentally friendly" because it's recyclable.

9%

1. Only 9% of plastic waste is actually recycled globally 2. Plastic quality decreases with each recycling cycle (cascade recycling) / Mechanical recycling can create microplastics / Chemical recycling can release harmful emissions

7. True or False: Glass recycling requires significantly less energy than producing glass from raw materials.

False Glass recycling requires the exact same amount of energy as making it from scratch

8. Complete the following statement about chemical recycling:

return, raw, quality degradation (or cascade recycling)

9. Which industries present the greatest future opportunities for recycling development:

Food - methane emissions Manufacturing - 10% recycling rate Fashion - 75% waste to landfills Technology - harmful working conditions

10. Critical Analysis: Consider the statement "Recycling can paradoxically encourage continued use of unsustainable items."

Students should explain that recycling, especially for plastics, can make people feel justified in continuing to use unsustainable materials because they believe recycling solves the problem. However, with only 9% of plastic actually being recycled and quality degradation through cascade recycling, this creates a false sense of environmental responsibility. Alternative approaches should include: reducing consumption, reusing materials, engaging with circular economy principles, adopting zero-waste habits, and prioritizing eco-friendly materials. Examples should reference specific statistics or concepts from the reading.

Knowledge assessment U4.5 - Answer key

1. Transition Movement Characteristics Matching: Energy transition connects to Efficiency and renewable sources; Industrial transition connects to Circular economy and local production; Agri-food transition connects to Organic farming practices; Transport sector connects to Car-sharing and electric buses

2. Capitalism's Core Characteristics: a) Private property of means of production, c) Freedom to pursue economic gains, d) Transformation of labor into a commodity, f) Generalization of commodity production and exchange

3. The Rebound Effect Scenario: b) The rebound effect undermining sustainability

4. Sustainable Development Timeline: United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), 1987, future generations'

5. Critical Analysis - Plastic Recycling Dilemma: The contradiction is between environmental goals (reducing plastic waste) and business survival needs (maintaining profitable operations). The business might be tempted to produce new plastic waste or source plastic from elsewhere to keep operating, which contradicts the environmental purpose of waste reduction. This demonstrates how capitalist logic of continuous operation and profit can undermine ecological transition goals.

Knowledge assessment U4.6 - Answer key

1. Match each ecofeminist activist with their primary contribution or achievement.

Françoise d'Eaubonne - Coined the term "ecofeminism" in 1974
Vandana Shiva - Joined the Chipko movement and founded Navdanya

Wangari Maathai - Founded the Green Belt Movement in Kenya AND First environmentalist to win Nobel Peace Prize
Starhawk - Practices Wicca and connects spirituality to environmentalism
Maria Mies - (Co-wrote book with Vandana Shiva about violence against women and nature)

2. According to ecofeminist theory, patriarchal society treats women/femininities and nature in similar ways. Select all characteristics that apply to how both are typically portrayed:

b) Irrational and unpredictable, c) Something that needs to be controlled, d) Degraded through negative terminology

3. Fill in the blanks using the word bank below:

The Chipko Movement in India (1970) was one of the earliest movements to embody ecofeminist principles. Rural women led this peaceful movement to protect trees from government logging by literally hugging them. In America, the Love Canal incident involved women organizing against industrial pollution when men showed little interest.

4. Rank the following stages of ecofeminism's evolution from earliest (1) to latest (3):

3 - Diversification into sub-branches like vegetarian and spiritual ecofeminism
1 - Division into Radical and Cultural ecofeminism schools

2 - Association with environmentalism by women in public policy and science

5. Circle True or False for each statement about the two main schools of ecofeminist thought:

Radical ecofeminists wanted to end the connection between women/femininities and nature: True
Cultural ecofeminists encouraged the woman-nature connection: True

Cultural ecofeminism often incorporated pagan religious elements: True Both schools disagreed on core ecofeminist principles: False

6. Complete this cause-and-effect analysis of the fashion industry by selecting the most appropriate connections:

a, c, e

7. According to the UN report mentioned in the text, why are women more vulnerable to climate change?

b) They have less financial wealth and depend more on natural resources

8. Match each ecofeminist solution with its description:

Decentralization - Local communities managing natural resources
Holistic Environmental Policy - Integrating sustainability with social justice
Alternative Economics - Supporting economic models based on care and solidarity
Industrial Resistance - Opposing ecosystem destruction by corporations

9. Identify which of the following represents the core vision of ecofeminism by selecting all that apply:

a) Eliminate stereotypes that subordinate women/feminities and nature, c) Create an equal society regardless of race, gender, or sexuality, e) Dismantle systems causing environmental destruction

10. Critical Thinking Question:

Sample response: Ecofeminism aims to be inclusive of all marginalized groups regardless of gender, race, class, and sexuality, but currently represents mainly a small group and often reflects Western cultural standards. This excludes many women/feminities' experiences and marginalizes identities that don't fit Western norms. The movement could address this by actively seeking leadership and perspectives from diverse cultural backgrounds and ensuring decision-making processes include voices from different communities rather than imposing Western feminist frameworks universally.



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- Asociación Ecologica Precious Plastic Canarias hacia una economía circular (Spain) [[facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [website](#)]
- Asociación para la participación e integración social - FACTORÍA SOCIAL (Spain) [[website](#)]
- Erifyli Center (Greece) [[website](#)]
- Dafni Kek (Greece) [[website](#)]

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