



## The Climate Connection

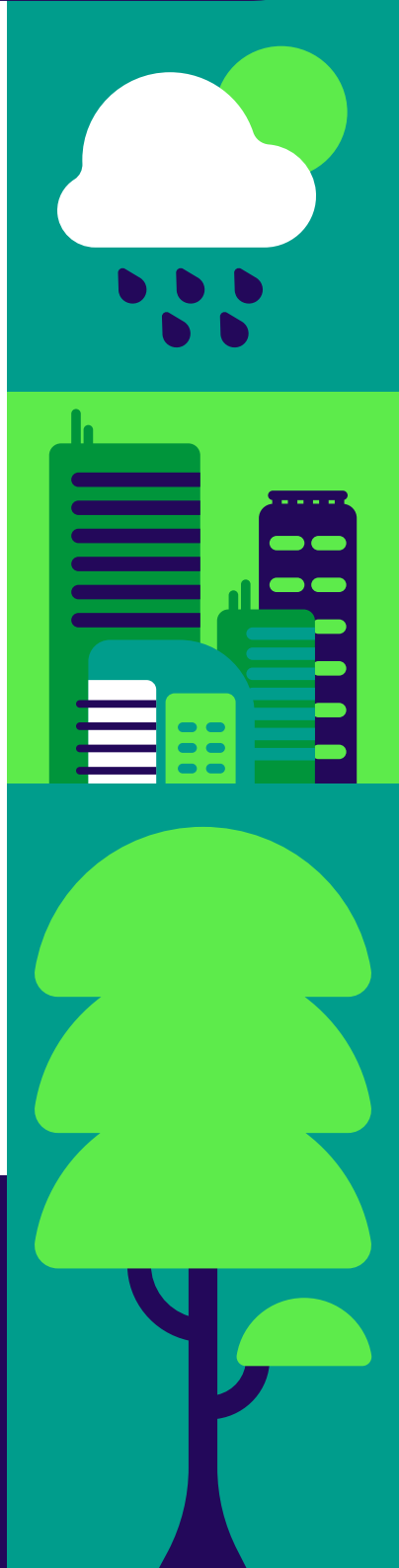
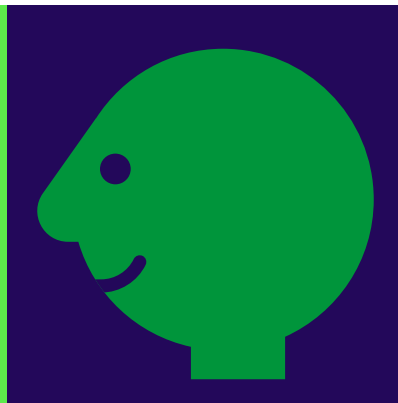
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## Join the global climate conversation

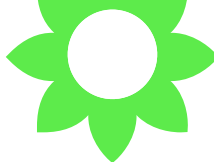
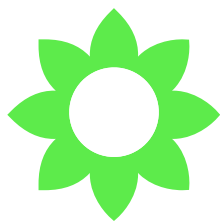
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#TheClimateConnection

# Green careers guide

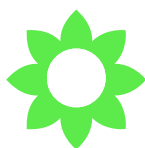
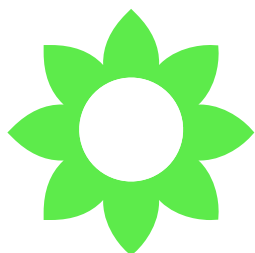
Elsie Buckle  
France



# Elsie Buckle France

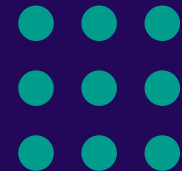


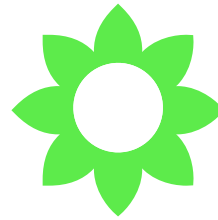
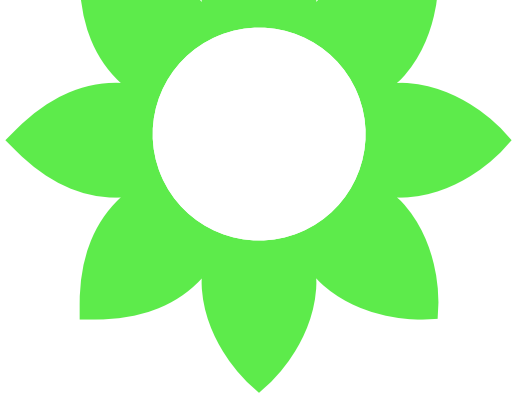
When I was twenty years old (about twenty years ago), I was studying at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, I discovered the interesting biography of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a famous politician and leader of the Green Party in France, Germany, who then became an active Member of the European Parliament. I also read about the Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, as one of the best examples of democracy, with a great level of checks and balances, plenty of space for cultural diversity and a strong empowerment of local authorities through a highly decentralized political system. I don't think I would have guessed that I would live in Switzerland or even run for elections, one day, in this very unique country. As I grew up in the French Alps, I always felt that I belonged to the Alpine Ecosystem and Bioregion. All I was missing was a bit more of a local accent, but also a strong dose of courage to face the reality of a society that is still quite heavily dominated by men.



My first step into politics was in 2004, after completing my Masters degree at the London School of Economics, I was able to join the team of the Green Members of the European Parliament, as an environmental policy advisor. Looking back, I think I was terribly lucky, first to get to know about the new opening, and then to be selected as an advisor. From all the jobs I have done, this was probably one of the most fascinating positions. I got to discover the EU institutions inside out, at a time when there was a growing public interest for the hot-button environmental issues, starting with climate change and energy, as well as sustainable agriculture, GMOs, and environmental health. I coordinated a public campaign for a stronger "REACH" regulation to protect the environment and the European consumers and workers' health, from harmful chemicals. I read the multiple scientific reports about the impacts of chemicals on cancer, infertility, allergies, asthma, and their transmission from mothers to babies before these babies are even born. That was frightening. By the end of the year, I had replaced our cleaning products and cosmetics with healthier and safer alternatives. I also started buying organic fruits and vegetables, even if it was much more expensive.

In 2005, as I was working intensively for the MEPs Marie-Anne Isler-Béguin and Marie-Hélène Aubert, they offered me the opportunity to go to my first UNFCCC COP11 in Montreal, Canada. I met Agnès Sinaï, a well-respected journalist writing for Le Monde, and learned everything about international climate politics. Member States and Parties to the UN Climate Convention were negotiating the Kyoto Protocol, under an increasing level of public pressure from NGOs, already organized as a strong coalition of Climate Action Network (CAN). I found global politics even more fascinating than European





politics. Climate change also became my number one preoccupation and this has been the red thread of my professional life until now. I attended most COPs until COP21, when the Paris Agreement was sealed, including COP15 in Copenhagen, when international cooperation got close to falling apart. As we are getting close to celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Paris Agreement, I can only remember the happy ending of that long marathon.

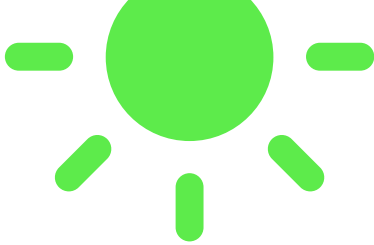
If Copenhagen was the low point for international climate politics, that was also the time when I turned 30 years old. I decided to play “pause” on my international career and play “on” with fertility. One month later, I was pregnant with my son Lucas, who is now 10 years old. I remember running around the corridors of the UNFCCC venue in Bonn in May 2010, together with my CAN colleague Morgane Créach, who was also pregnant and due almost the same month as me. We were both quite stressed, and starting to wonder if all our efforts were useful. I had to take 10 days of medical leave after that trip. In the end Lucas was still born 3 weeks early, but not too early, on October 9th 2010. At that point, my life started to radically change. I realized that being a mother was both the most rewarding but also the most challenging job in the world. How could it be so undervalued by society?

I still wanted to “get back into it” and left IUCN for WWF to run a global campaign for climate finance in the lead up to the G20 Summit. In 2011, France had the G8 and G20 Presidency, and my multiple high-level contacts with the French government helped tremendously. I went to Deauville, the other side of France, by train, pumping my milk and trying to save it in a cooler. Lucas was still a small baby then. Arriving at the hotel, I remember watching a BBC news documentary, showing an

African woman who had to bury her own child, as she was not able to feed her baby anymore and the baby had died from starvation and dehydration. As I was still pumping the milk, and throwing it down the sink (the cooler didn’t work), this image really broke my heart. How could we still live in a world of shocking inequalities? That night, my African colleague Hawa managed to convince the Senegalese delegation to include our proposed language on climate finance into the text of the G8 final communiqué and it was adopted by all Heads of States. Before the G20 Summit in Cannes, we doubled our efforts, working with a strong network of policy officers who were well connected to their governments in capital. The final text was also very well aligned with our policy asks. I had also been invited to a private meeting with President Sarkozy the day before the Summit and was interviewed by Le Monde. This costed me a lot though, as my newly appointed and inexperienced manager decided that this was not to his liking, in a mix of jealousy and willingness to control tightly what the young lady was doing.

From 2011 to 2015, I stayed out of politics, focusing on my private life, giving birth to a second child, my daughter Leïla Buckle, surviving the sleepless nights and the multiple trips to the pediatrician during the winter. I was still busy with work but not travelling as much. I learned a lot about organizing collective actions during that my time at UN Global Union. The power of building global alliances and collective networks was truly inspiring, catalyzing positive change for individual workers who were able to make their case and challenge some very rich and powerful CEOs. In 2015, just before the Paris Agreement, we managed to convince Société Générale to be the first multinational French Bank to sign an agreement with a global trade union organization.





Another big win, which also costed me a lot with my direct line manager, a Brazilian man was felt challenged by the super-dynamic French lady.

That was about time to get back to my true passion for international climate politics and climate action. I joined the UN Development Programme to assist the Climate Vulnerable Forum, an influential group of 48 nations highly vulnerable to climate impacts. I learned a lot about the more discrete and highly coded politics of UN Permanent Missions and Embassies. The Philippines were running the show as CVF Chair, with a strong position that would carry a lot of political weight in the UNFCCC negotiations. A bit later, I advised President Hilda Heine, an inspiring woman leading the Republic of the Marshall Islands and CVF Chair in 2018. We organized the first ever online Climate Summit with 42 Heads of States and Ministers calling for more climate ambition and NDC enhancement. That was before COVID 19 had brought these online Summits into our lives, as the “new normal”. I was working for CAN-International as Special Projects Director and saw our Executive Director being suspended from his job from one day to the next. The Board had taken this decision after some serious allegations of harassment and mobbing had been made by many women, including a young lady who very sadly committed suicide. When the news broke out into the media, with hundreds of climate journalists reading the news in Climate Home, I decided to focus on the CVF Summit to make it a success for Hilda Heine, for her leadership, as well as for the 48 countries affected by climate change. We succeeded, sleeping on average 3 hours a night for 2 weeks. This had a heavy toll on my work-life balance.

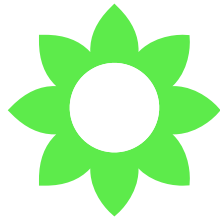
I also advised Ambassador Khan, one of the most inspiring woman leader I have ever met, when she was appointed as Chief Negotiator for the UNFCCC COP23 Fijian Presidency. Watching her

conducting all these high-level consultations gave me a glimpse into what a top-level politician could do. She was truly the best, both at listening with empathy to get all countries on board for the inside game, and at building a network of highly trusted non-state actors to support her on the outside game, through the Talanoa Dialogue. Once again, she was probably too brilliant. The Prime Minister thanked her for her work, shortly after COP23. I felt disheartened when watching the news without being able to help. What could we do to better protect women leaders ?

Finally, in 2020, as I turned 40 in the middle of the fires that were ravaging Australia, I decided that my turn had come to step up. I came back from that family Christmas trip, even more determined than ever to engage in real politics and fight for climate action, here and now. As I was still advising the UN, I founded Climate & Sustainability, a platform of “radical collaboration” set up to connect people and organizations who share the same sense of urgency and are ready to go beyond their logos and egos to accelerate action and amplify impacts. It turned out to be a super useful concept and catalyzer to develop and grow the Planetary Emergency Partnership, which now brings together more than 300 leaders from around the world to advocate for a green, healthy and just economic recovery.

Another U-turn happened. And I must thank my former IUCN colleagues Nadine McCormick for this. She contacted me to talk about the idea of running dialogues to catalyze a deep transformation and systemic change at the local level. As I was already a Member of the Local Council, we both decided to test this approach by convening a local dialogue with all political parties, to come together and discuss how we could address the climate emergency, going beyond the traditional political boundaries and partisan logos. And it worked. After nearly





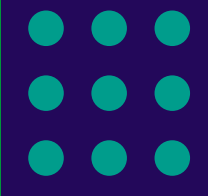
18 months and more than 7 meetings, we have infused the “Talanoa Dialogue” spirit into these local meetings, creating a space of trust and deep listening. We managed to get a few proposals approved by the Local Council, including the Plan for the development of solar energy, and the Climate Action Plan.

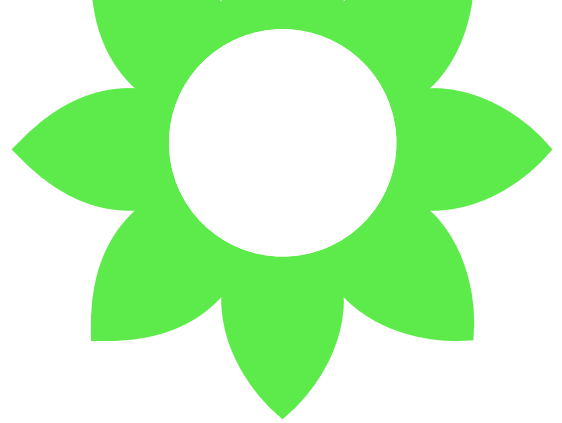
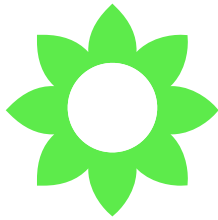
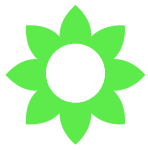
After the first wave of COVID-19, we went a bit further by organizing a public Citizens Forum on the 9th of September 2020, to talk about the future of the city of Nyon, and more broadly the future we want after COVID, with several roundtable discussions and dialogues focusing on energy, transport, food and nature-based solutions. I had been approached by several Members of the Green Party to run for elections and was considering it as an option, but tempted to say no, to preserve my already challenged work-life balance and my busy family life. But that night, I changed my mind. There was so much energy and enthusiasm in the room that it was irresistible. We had organized the Forum in the main room of the City Council. Suddenly I could picture how things would be different if all these people were elected as new Members of the Council. It would just revolutionize local politics, with a much younger, more feminized and just a more diverse group of people elected for decision-making.

That was only the start of the adventure. After that, I had to present myself and my vision for the city to our internal local group members who ended up voting for Pierre Wahlen and myself as the two lead candidates for the “Municipalité”, the executive power at the city of Nyon. We are now working as a tandem, as a woman and man, getting to know each other and finding out how we can best maximize our complementarities to get the best score ever in the local elections coming up in March 2021. It is quite challenging, but also fascinating. We are now finalizing the

full list of nearly 30 candidates for the Local Council as well, aiming for gender balance, or at least getting as close as possible to 15 women on the list. And it is not easy. I can see myself when I ask my girlfriends if they want to join: “I am already so busy with my job and my kids, when could I find the time for this?”. But the truth is that there is never ever enough time in your life to do everything you want to do. So why not make the space and time for the things that matter the most: the future of your city, your community, and real action on the ground to prepare a better future for your children, my children, and generations to come.

We should all engage more in politics, not just to talk about it, but also to get things done. It is too easy to say that our leaders are not good enough. What about you, me, and others? Are up for the job? And if not you, then who else? I am not saying that this is for everyone. And I am myself learning every single day, in a fast-learning curve, about what it means to go into politics. There will be tough moments, painful criticism (and sometimes this can even come from your own camp, or from your own family!). But overall, you will never be alone. You may lose 1 friend, but you will make 9 new friends. First, among women involved in politics, there is a lot of solidarity. And this might be because it is a rather hostile environment. That brings us closer to each other, with the willingness to make other women succeed. Not all of them will behave like that, and women can even be more competitive than men, and deploy a huge amount of masculine energy for domination. But when the feminine energy comes back, it can trigger magic. And this is actually when women and men work together that teams perform the best. There are multiple studies demonstrating this as a fact. We all have our share of masculine and feminine energy, the ying and the yang. When there is balance, there is harmony. And when there is harmony, much larger groups are able to





share their collective power and energy to deliver positive impacts for people and the planet, for the global commons and for the public good.

We are now at a crossroad. We can continue with Business-As-Usual, burn more fossil fuels, deplete natural resources, exhaust people in factories and trigger all of the tipping points threatening our planetary health and balance. Or we can have the courage to reinvent the world, and make this world possible, not just through our imagination, but also through our political will and through day to day action at all levels. The phrase “Think global, Act local” is still valid. And we can also “Think local, and Act global” as many local solutions can be scaled up to deliver greater impacts for the world.

Women are part of the equation, more than ever. I truly believe that a new type of leadership is emerging and may save humanity in the 21st century. That doesn't mean that we don't want men to lead. That means that we want women AND men to co-lead and co-construct our future, the future of the children of the world. By working together as a tandem, we can learn so much from each other, listen with empathy, and play on each other strengths when different types of skills are needed for different situations. Diversity makes us stronger and more resilient in the face of potential unprecedented future shocks. The ongoing pandemic may well be a “great rehearsal” for much bigger waves of systemic impacts, coming from droughts, heatwaves, ecosystem collapses or political breakdowns due to rising inequalities. We must be ready for the unknown.

Now is the time for humanity to make peace with nature. Now is also the time for women and men to make peace with each other, to hold each others hand and prepare the future for the children of the world, with solidarity, fraternity, love and self-care for themselves, and with care for the world around them.

Elise Buckle studied at the London School of Economics in 2003-2004, to complete a Masters' degree in Environmental Policy Planning and regulation, thanks to the support of the British Council Entente Cordiale Scholarship program.

She is now Director of Climate & Sustainability, Strategic Advisor to the UN, Co-President of the Greens, Member of the Local Council and Candidate to the Executive Council for the city of Nyon, Switzerland.

