



*Routledge Studies in Gender and Environments*

# **MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN GLOBAL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE**

## **WOMEN AND GENDER CONSTITUENCY IN THE UNFCCC**

Joanna Flavell



# Mainstreaming Gender in Global Climate Governance

This book explores the role of feminist activists in The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and highlights the progress they have made in mainstreaming gender as a key issue in global climate governance.

It is now commonplace for gender to be framed as a political issue in global climate politics within academic scholarship, but there is typically a lack of robust empirical analysis of existing advocacy approaches. Filling this lacuna, Joanna Flavell interrogates the political strategies of the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) in the UNFCCC. Through a conceptual framework that integrates climate change with intersectional critical inquiry and political practice, Flavell analyses hundreds of historical documents, coupled with interviews and observations from two UNFCCC conferences. This research uncovers a so-far untold story about the history of the UNFCCC that foregrounds gender and feminist advocacy, highlighting the importance of the WGC in shaping dominant narratives of global climate governance through a series of rhetorical and procedural strategies. Overall, the book draws important conclusions around power in global climate governance and opens up new avenues for advancing a feminist green politics.

This volume will be of great interest to students and scholars of environmental justice, climate politics and governance, environmental activism and gender studies more broadly.

**Joanna Flavell** is a fellow and ecofeminist scholar researching and teaching in environmental politics, with a special interest in activism in global climate politics. Joanna's 2020 paper 'The embodied politics of climate change: analysing the gendered division of environmental labour in the UK' was published in *Environmental Politics* and was shortlisted for the best paper award 2020.

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**Joanna Flavell**

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**For my son, Iggy**



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# Acronyms

ADP	Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform
AIWC	All India Women's Conference
AWG-LCA	Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
BAP	Bali Action Plan
BINGO	Business and Industry Non-Governmental Organisation
CAN	Climate Action Network
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFFP	Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy
CFLEDD	The Coalition of Female Leaders for the Environment and Sustainable Development
CMA	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
CMP	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon Dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRC	Combahee River Collective
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DFPA	Danish Family Planning Association
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ENGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation
EU	European Union
FAWCO	Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GED	Gender, Environment and Development
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GGCA	Global Gender and Climate Alliance
GLBTQ	Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Trans, Queer

INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPO	Indigenous Peoples Organisations
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LCIPP	Local Communities and Indigenous People's Platform
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans
LGMA	Local Government and Municipal Authorities
LWPG	Lima Work Programme on Gender
MRF	Mary Robinson Foundation
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NOW	National Organisation of Women
NSM	New Social Movements
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
RINGO	Research and Independent Non-Governmental Organisation
RUWES	Rural Women Energy Security
SB	Subsidiary Body
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SWAGEN	Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment
TUNGO	Trade Union Non-Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference of Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WDF	Women's Delegate Fund
WECF	Women in Europe for a Common Future
WED	Women, Environment and Development
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organisation
WGC	Women and Gender Constituency
WINGO	Women's International Non-Governmental Organisations
WOTR	Watershed Organisation Trust
YOUNGO	Youth Non-Governmental Organisation.

# 1 Introduction

Women do not want to be mainstreamed into a polluted stream: We want the stream to be clean, clear and healthy.

(Abzug, 1991 opening speech)

On 8 November 1991 in Miami, Bella Abzug, co-founder of the Women's Environment & Development Organisation (WEDO) and leader of the American feminist movement, addressed more than 1,500 women from 83 countries at the 'Miami Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet' (Dankelman, 2011) closing with the words above. The five-day conference brought together a diverse group of women ahead of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), colloquially known as the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Participants at the Miami Women's Congress discussed their vision for a healthy planet, which resulted in the Women's Action Agenda 21 (Miami Women's Conference, 1992), its name a play on the official Rio Earth Summit agreement 'Agenda 21'. At its heart, the Women's Action Agenda 21 provided a fundamental critique, from an ecofeminist lens, of the political-economic system:

As long as Nature and women are abused by a so-called "free market" ideology and wrong concepts of "economic growth," there can be no environmental security. Rainforest dwellers, island peoples, and inhabitants of fragile arid zones are threatened with displacement and dispossession due to human disruption and pollution of vulnerable ecosystems. In a world that condones such practices, there lies little hope for long-term survival or peace among peoples.

(Miami Women's Conference, 1992, preamble)

The document spanned a host of critical issues, including governance, the environment, militarism, the global economy, poverty, women's rights and education (WEDO, 2015). The Women's Action Agenda 21 became the spark for activism over a series of conferences on development, including Rio 1992.

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The Miami Women's Congress helped to form a coalition of feminist environmentalists who, armed with the Women's Action Agenda 21, went on to be hugely successful at Rio.<sup>1</sup> Irene Dankelman, a researcher and specialist in gender and environment who was involved with the women's movement at the time, wrote that 'we left Rio with Principle 20 [of the Rio Declaration] in our hands: "*Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development*"' (Dankelman, 2011, existing emphasis). In the huge document that was Agenda 21, Chapter 24 reflected 'Global Action for Women towards Sustainable Development' in 11 commitments along with 145 other references that mentioned the necessary steps to be taken from a gender perspective (Dankelman, 2011; see also UNCED, 1992).

Most of the outcomes from Rio, including Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the Conventions on Biodiversity and on Desertification and Drought, made clear attempts to address the kinds of concerns and recommendations set out in the Women's Action Agenda. The combined advocacy of women leaders from governments and civil society organisations at Rio 1992 had demonstrated the importance of public participation and resulted in the creation of nine Major Groups, one each for farmers, trade unions, indigenous peoples and their communities, women, children and youth, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local authorities, science and technology, and business and industry – creating a formal mechanism for diverse constituencies of civil society to have representation in the follow-up activities (Women's Major Group, 2015). Another outcome, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), however, did not see this kind of 'gender mainstreaming' (i.e., having gender written into its foundations) and did not include 'women' as one of its constituencies. Initially, only two were included: business and industry (BINGOs) and environmental NGOs (ENGOS), with others corresponding to the Major Groups included at later dates (UNFCCC, 2020a). Of all the outcomes of the Rio Earth Summit, the UNFCCC was the only one not to include any mention of gender. Dankelman (2011) reflects that those involved 'lobbied with the NGOs and with indigenous groups for many more innovative and fundamental ideas to be included in these Rio results, so we came home a bit disappointed'.

Twenty-five years later, on 11 November 2017 in Bonn Germany, the outlook was remarkably different. Over 20,000 delegates congregated for the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the UNFCCC (UNFCCC, 2017a), including representatives of the 29 women's and gender environmental NGOs under the umbrella of the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) which had been formally admitted in 2011 (see WGC, 2020 for full list of members). In a small meeting room on the top floor of the World Conference Centre on the United Nations (UN) Campus, called Room Tokio, Party negotiators, women's and gender NGO representatives, as well as UNFCCC Secretariat representatives exchanged tearful celebratory hugs

because, just 30 minutes over schedule, negotiators had agreed a text which would become the UNFCCC's first Gender Action Plan (GAP). The agreement of the GAP was one of the key priorities of the Fijian Presidency at COP23 (COP23 Fiji, 2017), with the Prime Minister of Fiji and COP23 President Frank Bainimarama warmly welcoming the agreement. Bainimarama characterises the GAP as 'a major achievement as it recognises the critical role of women in climate action' (Bainimarama, 2017).

The purpose of the GAP was to consolidate for implementation the growing number of decisions and mandates relating to gender that existed under the UNFCCC. In 2017, WEDO launched a smart phone app to help those interested in issues of gender and climate change keep track of the growing number of gender decisions that had been adopted by the UNFCCC (WEDO, 2022). As of spring 2022, the app shows that there are 104 'gender mandates' that currently exist under the UNFCCC, ranging from issues of adaptation and mitigation to finance and technology transfer. The mandates cover themes of 'gender balance', 'gender equality', 'gender mainstreaming' and 'women as a vulnerable group'. As a method of 'quick analysis', the app states that 'out of the current decisions that reference gender, while many explicitly refer to gender balance and enhancing women's participation on boards and bodies, the majority now reference or use a gender-mainstreaming approach' (WEDO, 2022).

The concept of gender mainstreaming has long been contentious among feminist academics and activists. While some academics, such as Margaret Alston (2014), consider gender mainstreaming as a potentially radical means of avoiding the traps of treating women's issues as women *only* issues, others such as Susan Buckingham and Rakibe Kulcur (2009) consider the process as a mere tick-box approach to inserting gender, or gender understood as women, into existing masculinised frameworks. This debate presents a bind for feminist activists: how can they meaningfully participate in global governance processes while remaining true to their feminist principles that demand radical change? This is a key motivating question underpinning the research in this book.

Clearly, the UNFCCC has advanced greatly in terms of women's and gender considerations. The institution has gone from 'zero-gender' to 'Gender Action Plan' in the space of 25 years. Yet, most historical accounts of the UNFCCC do not tell this story. In fact, an infographic timeline on the UNFCCC website celebrating '25 Years of International Climate Policy' (UNFCCC, 2019a) fails to mention gender, nor the WGC and its members who have played a huge role in the process of mainstreaming gender into the UNFCCC. The infographic does not even mention the GAP despite its seemingly prominent status at COP23. A small number of women's, gender and environment NGOs including WEDO (WEDO, 2018a) and GenderCC (GenderCC, 2019a) have given a systematic, feminist account of the history of the UNFCCC. But no such account currently exists in scholarly literature. This book offers an important corrective to this gap in knowledge

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about processes of global climate change governance, positioning the story of gender-mainstreaming in the UNFCCC and the feminist political work that negotiated that change, front and centre. I begin by asking the questions ‘what is the story of gender in the UNFCCC’ and what role has the WGC played in the evolution of a gender-blind UNFCCC to a Gender Action Plan? What does the WGC experience tell us about the limits and possibilities of ‘doing’ intersectionality in the UNFCCC? Doing so allows critical reflection upon both feminist environmental theorising and feminist practice in global climate politics, creating productive space for a dialogue between ideas and action.

#### Why ‘Gender and Climate Change’?

The topic of ‘gender and climate change’, while missing from broader writing on climate change, is a steadily increasing area of scholarly attention. The story of how the WGC succeeded in shifting the UNFCCC from gender-blind in 1992 to being in a gender-bind today is a prime example of ‘gender and climate change’ in practice, yet little scholarly attention has focused specifically on this activist work. Instead, much of the early contributions to gender and climate change scholarship typically appeared in Gender, Environment and Development (GED) journals such as *Gender and Development* or *Climate and Development*. These contributions tend to focus on women despite ostensibly looking at gender. In doing so, they position women in one of three ways: as being more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men; virtuous in their ability to solve the climate crisis; or part of the problem due to their reproductive capacities (Bretherton, 1998; Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Resurrección, 2013; Sasser, 2018). These kinds of discursive framings of gender in relation to climate change have dominated academic research as well as social movement priorities and have been responsible for most of the ‘policy-wins’ seen on gender in the global climate governance process. For example, every mention of gender in the ‘Intended Nationally Determined Contributions’ (INDCs) that were submitted by Parties to the UNFCCC ahead of COP21 Paris in 2015 appear in sections pertaining to adaptation, relating specifically to women located in the Global South (WEDO, 2016a; Tobin, Schmidt and Tosun, 2018).

These kinds of narratives should be credited for their role in getting the issue onto the policy agenda. However, a disproportionate focus on the material impacts on and differential vulnerabilities of women compared to men has limited the political scope of the issue and diverted attention away from issues of structural imbalances of power, including patriarchal power (MacGregor, 2009; 2017). This represents a tricky strategic bind for feminist activists who engage with the UNFCCC. On the one hand, activists have seen success in mobilising rhetorical strategies that foreground how poor women are vulnerable to the effects of climate change. On the other hand, these strategies may risk reinforcing existing structures of power, including

patriarchal and geopolitical power structures, and limit political ambition on gender equality. This concern has prompted a handful of feminist scholars to problematise simplistic and universalising narratives of ‘vulnerable versus virtuous’ women in the gender and climate change field, and to highlight the political work that such framings do. For example, Seema Arora-Jonsson (2011) has highlighted how limited narratives of vulnerable women risk reinforcing stereotypes of women from the Global South and could potentially result in an increased workload for women. Similarly, Bernadette Resurrección calls attention to the way that policy translations of fixed and uniform framings of gender divert attention from wider webs of power and reify traditional gender roles. As a way of moving the conversation onto more fruitful ground, Sherilyn MacGregor (2009; 2017) suggests that scholars need the freedom to fully explore important questions of power and authority and begin to theorise for a positive feminist vision for a future post-carbon world. As a means of theorising such a positive vision, Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell (2014) have suggested intersectionality as a critical tool for feminist research, drawing attention to the different ways climate change is experienced by people at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalisation and oppression.

In response to the challenge of diverting feminist attention towards questions of power and authority, several scholars have noted that the production of climate change knowledge is highly masculinised and ultimately works to frame climate change as an issue of science, requiring technological fixes and market solutions (c.f. Alaimo, 2009; Seager, 2009; Nelson, 2012). They argue that climate change, as a concept, is one in which masculinised ideals, perspectives and approaches are deeply entrenched, with effects ranging from the ‘hyper-masculinity’ of aggressive consumption that has increased carbon footprints (Alaimo, 2009) to the subtle masculinism of climate change governance, in institutions such as the UNFCCC (Nagel, 2015). This entrenchment of masculine norms and ideals has resulted in climate change being constructed and framed as a problem of science requiring technological and economic solutions, while individual behaviour change is hailed as a corner-stone of neo-liberal climate change policies (Bee, Rice and Trauger, 2015). Bee, Rice and Trauger (2015) suggest that this ‘common sense’ of climate change requires both a dismissal of non-scientific, embodied or experiential forms of knowledge and fails to consider the everyday spaces where climate action takes place. Emma Foster (2017) also illustrates this using a Foucauldian-inspired analysis of ‘governmentality’ (the shaping and production of ‘good citizens’), showing that there has been a marked shift in the international consensus on sustainable development between Rio 1992 and Rio+20 2012. Foster argues that the dominant discourse has shifted from governance and citizen decision-making to one that is almost solely fixated on the market and technology.

In another feminist critique of global climate change politics, Joane Nagel (2012) points out that climate change is increasingly framed as a threat to



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security which should be met with militarisation, reflecting the gendered power, privilege and preoccupations of the mostly male policymakers around the world. Framing climate change in terms of security – food security, energy security, border security – dominates the political discussion to such an extent that these narratives are now so deeply entrenched in the dominant discourse that resisting them is a huge challenge for feminist climate activists (Seager, 2009; Detraz and Windsor, 2014). Focussing on ‘human security’ could be better than a focus on ‘state security’ because, despite rhetorically playing into discourses of militarisation, the term human security shifts the narrative yet still fits into the masculinised political sphere of climate change without much disruption (Detraz and Windsor, 2014). The hegemonic masculinity that dominates climate politics has been borne out of the male-dominated spheres of science, innovation, economics and politics. In fact, ‘men dominate the issue at all levels, as scientific and economic experts, entrepreneurs, policy-makers and spokespeople’ (MacGregor, 2009, p. 128). There is no space for nuance or differences of experience in this story and so climate change is framed as a common threat to all of humanity rendering the issue as gender neutral, meaning that social differences and asymmetries can be ignored, perhaps explaining the initial gender-blindness seen in the UNFCCC despite advances on women’s equality in other outcomes at Rio.

Scholarly writing that problematises the masculinised dominant framings of climate change and highlights how these framings ignore and even exacerbate social inequalities is important intellectual work. Equally, scholarship that challenges how gender is framed in order to easily slot into dominant framings of climate change has advanced feminist climate knowledge in important ways. But what is missing in these accounts is attention to the realities of feminist practice in the UNFCCC. Feminist climate activists have been advocating for women’s and gender issues in the halls of the UNFCCC since its inception and have been largely responsible for the institution’s increasing attention to issues of gender equality. Little is known about the institutional conditions that the WGC is operating under, efforts by its members to advance feminist arguments in the UNFCCC or the political strategies – rhetorical and procedural – that they have mobilised in order to make them. Greater integration between academics and activists who work to advance a feminist agenda in global climate politics could provide more creative visions for the future of feminist organising in spaces of climate politics.

### **The UNFCCC as a Site of Inquiry**

Climate change is one of the biggest political challenges facing humanity today. Countries across the world are declaring climate emergencies and pledging to more ambitious climate action, creating a renewed sense of urgency in solving the climate crisis (Climate Emergency Declaration, 2020).

The UNFCCC is the institution tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change (UNFCCC, 2020b) and is a political space where feminist climate activists devote much of their resources under the umbrella of the WGC. As such, the UNFCCC is a key site for the investigation of the kinds of political strategies mobilised to integrate gender into global climate governance. The UNFCCC was adopted on 9 May 1992 and opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. In March 1994, a sufficient number of countries had ratified the Convention and it entered into force. Article 2 of the UNFCCC, which sets out the Convention's long-term objective, states that,

The ultimate objective of this Convention and any related legal instruments that the Conference of the Parties may adopt is to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

(UNFCCC, 1992, p. 9)

There are 197 Parties that are members of the UNFCCC, including all United Nations member states, United Nations General Assembly observer State of Palestine, UN non-member states Niue and the Cook Islands and the supranational union the European Union. In addition, the Holy See is an observer state (UNFCCC, 2020c). The Parties to the Convention have met annually (with the exception of 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic) since 1995 at the Conference of the Parties (COP) in order to assess progress on dealing with global climate change and to negotiate necessary new mandates.

The Convention is supported by the UNFCCC Secretariat (also known as UN Climate Change), which is part of the United Nations. In the early years of the UNFCCC, the Secretariat was focused largely on facilitating the intergovernmental climate change negotiations, but today supports a complex architecture of bodies that serve to advance the implementation of the Convention itself and its two treaties, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. The Secretariat provides technical expertise and assists in the analysis and review of climate change information reported by Parties, and in the implementation of the Kyoto mechanisms, as well as the Paris Agreement. The Secretariat is staffed by around 450 people and is headed by the Executive Secretary, a position held today by Patricia Espinosa (UNFCCC, 2020d).

The Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement establish the institutional arrangements for the intergovernmental negotiation process and is comprised of several bodies and entities. The UNFCCC website

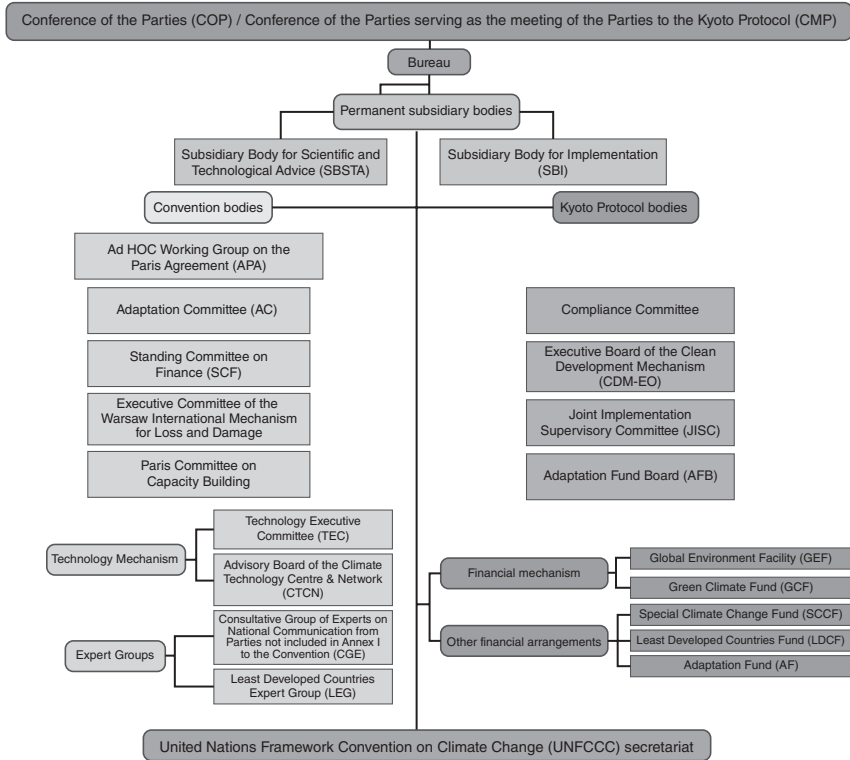


Figure 1.1 Structure of the UNFCCC (UNFCCCC, 2022).

gives a useful overview of this structure (UNFCCC, 2020e), which was summarised as follows (also visualised in Figure 1.1):

- A supreme governing body: the COP for the Convention, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA);
- A process management body: the Bureau of the COP, the CMP and the CMA;
- Subsidiary bodies: two permanent subsidiary bodies – the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) – as well as other ad hoc subsidiary bodies established by the COP, the CMP or the CMA as deemed necessary to address specific issues;
- Technical subsidiary bodies with limited membership (referred to in practice as the constituted bodies) established under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement;

- A secretariat; and
- Entities entrusted with the operations of the Financial Mechanism – i.e. the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Collectively, these institutions participate in the process of developing policies and guidance to support Parties in the implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement (for more details about the roles of each of the bodies and entities, see UNFCCC, 2020e).

The UNFCCC negotiating process is observed by nine constituencies representing civil society that are based on the nine Major Groups described above: Business and Industry NGOs (BINGO); Environmental NGOs (ENGO); Local Government and Municipal Authorities (LGMA); Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPO); Research and Independent NGOs (RINGO); Trade Union NGOs (TUNGO); Women and Gender (WGC); Youth NGOs (YOUNGO); and Farmers (UNFCCC, 2020a). Constituencies provide advocacy organisations legitimacy in, and access to, the negotiations. The WGC was admitted as an official constituency in 2011 shortly before COP17, several years after the UNFCCC came into force. Today, the WGC consists of 29 women’s and gender environmental NGOs working closely in coalition with each other to advance gender concerns, ensuring women’s rights and gender justice in global climate governance. The Constituency provides member NGOs with a platform to

exchange information between members and with the UNFCCC Secretariat. [It] also ensures that meetings, workshops and conferences include the participation and representation of women’s civil society and non-governmental organizations which otherwise would not be able to attend.

(WGC, 2020)

Most of the gender-related policy discussions in the UNFCCC take place under the Gender Agenda Item, which is consumed under the SBI (significant since this denotes gender as relevant for the *implementation* of UNFCCC treaties). It was under the Agenda Item that the GAP negotiations were conducted. The adoption of the GAP is a pivotal moment in the history of gender in the UNFCCC, because it reflects that the Convention was beginning to take seriously the issue of gender and climate change and began the process of meaningful implementation of existing gender decisions and mandates, or, as members of the WGC called on them to do the UNFCCC began to ‘mind the GAP’ (International Alliance of Women, 2017). The GAP

sets out objectives and priority areas that aim to advance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action and its coherent mainstreaming in the implementation of the UNFCCC and the work of

## 10 Introduction

Parties, the secretariat, United Nations entities and all stakeholders at all levels, as well as women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the UNFCCC process.

(UNFCCC, 2020f)

The priority areas are capacity-building, knowledge management and communication; gender balance, participation and women's leadership; coherence; gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation; and monitoring and reporting.

The WGC was a powerful force during the GAP negotiations:

Political will was also built through the effective mobilization efforts of both the Women and Gender Constituency and other civil society allies who refused to see this COP stall progress on gender equality.

(WGC, 2019)

For these reasons, the negotiation of the GAP, including documents produced as part of the negotiations, interviews with people involved as well as my own field notes, makes up a large part of the empirical data that I have analysed as part of this research. The adoption of the GAP represents a key success for the WGC in its advocacy efforts to get Parties to the UNFCCC to take gender seriously. Crucially, the GAP does not aim to introduce new gender mandates. Rather, the purpose of the GAP is to consolidate for implementation *existing* gender mandates (UNFCCC, 2017b). Because of this, the GAP is a hugely important document for the study of both rhetorical and procedural strategies of the WGC in the UNFCCC, as is the information gathered from fieldwork during its negotiation. The document itself gives a good indication of the most dominant framings of gender in the UNFCCC as well as pointing to previous important decisions such as the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG). But an analysis of WGC members' accounts of their advocacy efforts in the years and months leading up to the adoption of the GAP also gives valuable insights into the procedural strategies that govern the WGC in its advocacy.

### **Overview of the Book**

Feminist activists in the WGC have made remarkable progress in mainstreaming gender into the UNFCCC. The central argument of this book is that, by focusing on an insider strategy of feminist practice, this success has come at a cost of relying on simplistic and universalising arguments, limiting the political conversation to material impacts on women and differential vulnerabilities between the sexes (with little or no attention to men). However, an analysis of this political work through a framework of ecofeminist intersectionality as critical inquiry and political praxis can work to create space for feminist theorising and activism to work closely in dialogue to

envision a next phase for the feminist climate project. My contribution to this dialogue is that such a next phase would rely on a political strategy of ecofeminist transversal politics shifting the conversation from focusing on women as a marginalised and homogenous group to demanding a positive feminist vision for doing climate politics differently.

As discussed above, there are a small number of feminist scholars who have commented on the persistence of simplistic and universalising framings of ‘gender’ in political spaces of global climate governance, such as the UNFCCC. These scholars comment on rhetorical strategies that position women as vulnerable to the effects of climate change, virtuous in their knowledge of climate solutions, or when understood through discourses of overpopulation, as the problem due to women’s reproductive capacities (c.f. Bretherton, 1998; Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Resurrección, 2013; Sasser, 2018). While these authors do not always explicitly refer to the political, rhetorical and procedural strategies mobilised by members of the WGC, the Constituency is part of a broader coalition of feminist environmental activists. The persistence of universalising and problematic framings of gender with regards to climate change has prompted MacGregor (2017) to argue for ‘better answers’ to the gender and climate change question. The debates that emerge from this kind of critical feminist environmental scholarship are not unique to the topic of ‘gender and climate change’. Rather, the questions raised speak to a set of enduring debates in many other feminist writings. In Chapter 2, ‘Enduring Debates in Feminist Climate Inquiry and Practice’, I identify and explore four debates in this literature under the headings: ‘dilemmas of rhetorical strategies’, ‘radical outsiders versus pragmatic insiders’, ‘questions of power dynamics and hierarchies’ and the ‘academic-activist debate’.

Integral to each of these debates has been the bind posed by intersectionality: how to maintain a theoretical commitment to intersectional feminism while pursuing collective political projects in spaces of global governance such as the UNFCCC. The concept of intersectionality emerged as a counter to the ideas of ‘identity politics’ that

assumes the same positioning and identifications for all members of the grouping, and thus each member can, in principle, be a ‘representative’ of the grouping and an equal contributor to the collective narrative – which, of course, is virtually never the case.

(Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 10)

In this way, intersectionality can provide a useful tool for troubling the kinds of universalising representations of gender that are mobilised by feminist environmental activists, including those active in the UNFCCC.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, intersectionality is the key concept that underpins my inquiry into the political strategies of the UNFCCC. Intersectional frameworks remain largely absent in feminist environmental scholarship despite the obvious

crossovers between intersectionality and principles of environmental justice. Kaijser and Kronsell (2014) remain two of the only scholars to offer such a framework of intersectionality in the context of climate change.<sup>3</sup> Theirs is an intersectional framework that acts ‘as a tool for critical thinking and provides a set of questions that may serve as sensitisers for intersectional analyses on climate change’ (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 417). This is an important contribution that demonstrates the kind of knowledge that can be uncovered through an intersectional lens and offers a useful starting point for my own analysis in this book. However, I am less concerned with the study of ‘gender and climate change’ per se and more interested in the intersections of hegemonic understandings of the relation between gender and climate change and feminist resistances to these dominant framings. As such, in Chapter 3, *Ecofeminist Intersectionality: Inquiry and Praxis*, I set out a conceptual framework of intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry that is structured around the six core ideas set out by Collins and Bilge (2020): social inequalities, intersecting power relations, social context (or contextuality), relationality, complexity and social (or ecological) justice. Kaijser and Kronsell assert that it is important that, for research on climate issues, ‘the intersectional approach must be informed by a range of social theories as well as theories generated in research fields that look at the relationship between society and nature’ (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, pp. 423–424). In response, I turn to theories that emerge from feminist environmental scholarship, such as Tuana’s (2008) commitment to foregrounding the natural context in environmental analyses, Plumwood’s (1993) conceptualisation of dualisms and Merchant’s (1983) thoughts on the backgrounding of women and nature. The framework in Chapter 3 offers an important intellectual contribution to the intersectional study of environmental issues in ways that take seriously the role and agency of nature and its position in intersecting lines of marginalisation, oppression and destruction.

While a framework of ecofeminist intersectionality as critical inquiry is necessary for the academic analysis of feminist strategies of resistance in global climate politics, more concepts are needed to theorise new directions for that resistance. Yuval-Davis’ (1997) ideas of transversal politics are useful in conceptualising new forms of feminist ‘co-resistances’. Her ideas on flexible solidarity, epistemic communities and ongoing dialogue are all integral concepts for informing a conceptual framework of ecofeminist intersectionality as political praxis. Coupled with Bretherton’s (1998) conceptualisations of organising in climate governance, Morrow’s (2017a) ideas about the structure of the WGC as transversal politics and Haraway’s (1988) ideas about solidarity politics, this framework offers a useful mode of thinking about *doing* intersectionality in political spaces of global climate governance such as the UNFCCC. These frameworks are not intended to be understood as an ‘off-the-shelf’ solution for studying climate politics in intersectional ways, but they do offer a potentially rich dialogue between climate justice projects and intersectionality.



Chapter 4 ‘From Zero Gender to GAP: Foregrounding gender in UNFCCC history’ shifts focus to the empirical content of this book and represents an important contribution in that it provides the first rigorous tracing of the political process that has seen the UNFCCC go from gender-blind to gender-bind. There have been three important phases in this history: 1992–2007 ‘Zero Gender’; 2007–2013 ‘Mainstreaming Gender into the UNFCCC’; and 2014–2021 ‘Gender Action Plan’. In the early phase ‘Zero Gender’, the UNFCCC was, largely, characterised by an institutional blindness to gender concerns despite a very active, but informal, coalition of feminist climate activists who were working hard in the COP spaces. These feminists were not yet granted institutional recognition and, as such, employed more ‘outsider’ tactics of demonstrations and parallel events designed at catching attention and making noise. They succeeded in securing one gender decision, Decision 23/CP.7, which was adopted to improve the participation of women and address the unequal gender balance on UNFCCC boards and bodies. In contrast, the period between 2007 and 2013 demonstrates a period of mainstreaming gender into the UNFCCC and a slow shift from feminist climate activists focusing on ‘outsider’ tactics towards more ‘insider’ strategies. The feminist coalition within the UNFCCC became more and more formalised during this time, eventually resulting in the coalition being granted full constituency status creating the Women and Gender Constituency. This was followed by a sharp increase in gender decisions as well as an increase in institutional concern for gender issues in global climate change politics. The third and last period is between 2014 and 2021 and is characterised by the ongoing negotiations towards adopting, implementing and then renewing a Gender Action Plan, a decision that was finally adopted in 2017 and renewed for a further five years in 2019. During this time, members of the WGC were simultaneously heavily involved in influencing the negotiations with the aim of securing the most progressive language on gender in the GAP, as well as a kind of self-distancing from the UNFCCC as an institution in the wake of the disappointing Paris Agreement.

The importance of this timeline of the development of gender as a political issue in the UNFCCC is that it uncovers the hard work and determination of the feminist climate activists that make up the WGC. Chapter 5 ‘Political Strategies Mobilised by the Women and Gender Constituency’ investigates the WGC’s role in embedding gender in the UNFCCC. There are four primary rhetorical strategies uncovered by this analysis. The first is empowering women, which focuses on women’s inclusion in domains of power either as negotiators in national Delegations to the UNFCCC or as local resource managers. The second strategy is universalising lived experience which works to foreground arguments based on women’s poverty, particularly of women located in the Global South, as a primary means of political action. This strategy typically manifests in arguments about vulnerabilities and has proven a seemingly necessary and effective step in influencing the negotiations. The feminist climate activists who were involved in UNFCCC

negotiations in the early years had been reluctant to rely on strategies that foreground women's vulnerability, precisely because the potentially damaging political work that such strategies do. But, as the UNFCCC shifted from a focus on mitigating the worst effects of climate change to adapting to the already visible effects, along with the increased participation of development NGOs, feminist climate activists were left to conclude that 'women as vulnerable' worked as a strategic 'hook' on which to hang arguments about the importance of gender in relation to climate change. The political deployment of strategies that universalise lived experiences, or position women as virtuous, requires the mobilisation of a third rhetorical strategy, equating gender with women, which was a key concern for those reluctant to pursue arguments about women's vulnerability. Because of this concern, the Constituency typically makes arguments about 'women and gender' that foreground women's issues while backgrounding 'gender' meaning the workings of both masculinities and femininities. This has been a move necessitated by institutional resistance to understanding gender as including the workings of masculinities and male power, because to do so would require an entirely different climate politics. While these three strategies give empirical weight to the kinds of critiques levelled at feminist environmental practice highlighted in Chapter 2, they have also uncovered important reasons behind these decisions. Furthermore, there is a fourth, less commented upon, strategy that has been increasingly mobilised by members of the WGC, particularly since COP21 Paris in 2015: 'intersectionality in baby steps'. This involves making arguments based on multiple-axes of social inequalities and promises to more effectively challenge the problematic framings of women and gender that have resulted from the necessity of the first three strategies.

The rhetorical strategies mobilised by members of the WGC are put to work in the UNFCCC through a carefully developed procedural modus operandi: identifying entry points for gender aspects in the climate change debate; raising awareness and disseminating information; building women's capacity and joint strategising; and developing a future research agenda. While these strategies have been successful in influencing the negotiations, they have typically focused on the workings of the UNFCCC as an institution, and strategies through which to engage with that institution, and less on the inner workings of the Constituency itself. This kind of self-reflection is necessary for a next phase of feminist organising in the UNFCCC if it is to overcome the challenges of making intersectional arguments in a political space that has traditionally been resistant to them. This next phase is the focus of Chapter 6 'Lessons for Ecofeminist Intersectional Praxis' reflects on.

Placing the intellectual work of watching and engaging with the WGC and its members into conversation with the critiques of feminist environmental and climate change, activism underscores a key argument in this book that doing intersectional feminist work in the UNFCCC is hard. Understanding the complexities of this work, including the challenges and the successes, is an important step in reflecting upon what lessons can be learned from the

political work of the WGC for intersectional praxis. There are three key lessons to be learned: there are no easy solutions; prevalent domains of power have hindered intersectional praxis in the UNFCCC; and intersectional inquiry and practice cannot be separated in the feminist political project. Building on these lessons and reflecting on theoretical principles of critical ecofeminist intersectionality can create new, and exciting, spaces for the next phase of feminist organising in the UNFCCC. Based on the empirical analysis of previous phases, coupled with a conceptual framework of ecofeminist intersectionality as critical praxis, I suggest that there are three possible next phases: fold and withdraw, ‘business as usual’ or ecofeminist transversal politics. It is the third option that offers the most promising next phase of feminist praxis in the UNFCCC. Ecofeminist transversal politics offers feminists new language of co-resistances, or epistemic communities comprised of like-minded individuals or groups, that can help to shift the focus on women, as a homogenous group in need of masculine saviour, towards a focus on multiple and intersecting lines of inequalities and arguments based on a feminist vision for a different kind of feminist climate politics.

Making the arguments set out above makes several important contributions to the feminist climate agenda. The first contribution is an empirical one: a systematic and in-depth story of the history of the UNFCCC that foregrounds ‘gender’ and feminist organising. This history serves as a useful resource for those writing about feminist climate activism in the way it compiles years of historical documents pertaining to gender in the UNFCCC, coupled with elite interviews and observations from primary research at two UNFCCC conferences. This historical account of gender developments in the UNFCCC promises to bring academic inquiry and political practice into closer conversation through shedding light on the, otherwise untold, story of gender and feminist organising in the UNFCCC. The timeline also provides an important corrective to scholarship on climate change governance more broadly, which has traditionally been silent on issues of gender equality, by uncovering the importance of feminist climate activism in shaping contemporary global climate governance. This history also makes visible the feminist political work that has been integral in shaping it. Understanding the challenges facing feminists active in spaces of global climate governance, such as the UNFCCC, is of crucial importance to intersectional academic thought because, as Collins and Bilge (2020) remind, the role of academic work is not simply to reproduce or advance explanations of inequality, though this is part of it. Rather, the role of academic theorising is critical to intersectional praxis for its ability to advance the conversation to shape the future of both the intellectual contours and political action that intersectionality offers.

Putting concepts of intersectionality into productive conversation with ecofeminist, or feminist environmental, ideas is a theoretical contribution of this book. While environmental concerns, particularly climate change, are increasingly entering feminist consciousness, intersectional frameworks

rarely offer the conceptual tools to integrate the natural world into intersecting lines of marginalisation, oppression and destruction. The resulting frameworks of intersectionality as inquiry and as praxis, from placing intersectional concepts with feminist environmental ideas into productive conversation, are not intended as a framework that can simply be lifted and placed into another context to inform analyses. Rather they should be considered as frameworks that integrate the natural world into intersectional analyses and offer concepts that can be adapted for different intersectional analyses of environmental issues such as climate change.

Finally, this book offers an important political contribution to the pursuit of a feminist climate project. Opening up productive ground for starting a dialogue between theorising and activism, that considers theorising as an important act of activism, is the fourth key contribution of this research. By sitting in the intersection of feminist inquiry on climate change and feminist practice in spaces of climate governance, this book offers a pathway for intersectional *praxis* in climate change governance. Putting inquiry and practice into productive conversation creates space to move the debate onto more fertile ground recognising both the complexity of making intersectional demands in political institutions such as the UNFCCC, and the need for strategies to enable feminists to make collective political demands. By highlighting some of the key challenges of feminist organising in the UNFCCC and reflecting on how this can inform important lessons of intersectional inquiry, I suggest a mode of ecofeminist transversal politics as intersectional praxis in the UNFCCC that can overcome the bind that feminist climate activists are in.

## Notes

- 1 While I am comfortable with the term ‘ecofeminist’ to describe my approach, I recognise that not all feminists who write about environment and/or climate change, or who participate in feminist climate activism, are comfortable with the term ecofeminist to name their politics. Consequently, I use ‘feminist environmental’ as a more inclusive term when referring to scholarship or activism on environmental politics from a feminist perspective that does not claim the term ecofeminism.
- 2 The use of ‘troubling’ as a verb is common in feminist writing. Judith Butler (1990) uses troubling as a verb in her seminal book *Gender Trouble* to denote the unsettling character of critical feminist inquiry. Butler suggests that ‘contemporary feminist debates over the meanings of gender lead time and again to a certain sense of trouble, as if the indeterminacy of gender might eventually culminate in the failure of feminism’ (Butler, 1990, p. xxvii). To make trouble is an act of rebellion and, as Butler suggests, an inevitable task of feminist theorising about power. ‘To trouble’ gender categories that support gender hierarchies, then, describes the kind of unsettling work that feminist inquiry and theorising does. While the use of trouble as a verb may be used in ways detached from the kind of unsettling, even mischievous, way Butler intended it, I find its use an apt description of the kind of work that this research aims to do.
- 3 Though critical environmental justice literature is very well aligned with much of intersectionality’s premises and core ideas (Collins and Bilge, 2020; see also

Schlosberg, 2007; 2013; Di Chiro, 2008; Pellow, 2018 for examples of environmental justice research that, while not employing intersectional frameworks, are closely aligned to intersectional concepts).

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## 2 Enduring Debates in Feminist Climate Praxis

### Theorising Feminist Climate Activism

Where does gender figure in the debates on climate change? Dual themes recur throughout the existing though limited literature on gender and climate change – women as vulnerable or women as virtuous in relation to the environment. This imagery makes two viewpoints seemingly obvious: women in the global South will be affected more adversely by climate change than men in those countries and that men in the global North pollute more than their female counterparts.

(Arora-Jonsson, 2011, p. 744)

In her 2011 paper ‘Virtue and Vulnerability: Discourses on women, gender and climate change’, Arora-Jonsson argues that ‘dual themes’ feature in the existing literature on gender and climate change: women as vulnerable or women as virtuous. Women as vulnerable entails that women are disproportionately affected by (i.e., they are vulnerable to the effects of) climate change due to their disproportionate poverty (Hemmati and Röhr, 2007; cited in Arora-Jonsson, 2011) or cultural and gender norms in many contexts resulting in higher mortality rates in natural disasters (Brody et al., 2008; cited in Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Alternatively, women as virtuous considers women as more risk averse, more prepared for behavioural change and more likely to support drastic policies and measures on climate change than their male counterparts (Brody et al., 2008; cited in Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Arguments about women’s vulnerability or virtuousness resonate with Women, Environment and Development (WED) debates over whether women are closer to nature and more environmentally conscious than men (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). These claims have held powerful sway in development circles since the 1980s but have been largely echoed in some of the research on gender and climate change. This is despite the ‘unconvincing and inadequate’ (Arora-Jonsson, 2011, p. 745) empirical evidence to back up the premises that arguments focused on women’s vulnerability or virtuousness are based on. Not only that, but framings of gender that focus on a single-axis of identity (such as women’s class or poverty) can do political damage.

Arora-Jonsson highlights that reiterating statements about ‘poor women in the South and the pro-environmental women of the North’ (p. 744) can reinforce stereotypes and potentially lead to an increase in women’s responsibility for responses to climate change. Furthermore, focusing on women’s vulnerability or virtuousness can deflect political attention from other kinds of inequalities, such as inequalities in decision-making in political institutions like the UNFCCC.

In her paper, Arora-Jonsson draws upon research and reports written by feminist environmentalists who are at the front lines of the struggle for a feminist green future, perhaps an indication of the relative lack of scholarly writing on the topic at the time.<sup>1</sup> For example, she refers to Minu Hemmati and Ulrike Röhr (see Röhr, 2006; Hemmati and Röhr, 2007) both of whom have been at the forefront of feminist advocacy in the UNFCCC since the convention was adopted. Many feminist organisations, in recognising the kinds of risks involved in mobilising single-axis framings of gender, are quick to point out that women are not just victims of climate change, but they are also powerful agents of change (c.f. Henrich Böll Stiftung and WEDO, 2009), invoking the discourse of women as virtuous. While Arora-Jonsson is justified in pointing out the harmful political work this kind of framing can do, the claim that women are more environmentally conscious than men is not a simple baseless assumption: it is an empirical reality for some women. Ergas and York (2012) found that nations with greater female representation in high-level politics had lower carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions per capita. Similarly, arguments about women’s vulnerability are based on several studies showing that women (and children) are more likely to die in a natural disaster event than men (c.f. Denton, 2002; Neumayer and Plümper, 2007; Terry, 2009). But, like Arora-Jonsson, it is the political work of rhetorical strategies that rely on simplified narratives about women that has motivated a number of feminist scholars.

It is the political work of framing women as ‘the problem’ that has motivated Jade Sasser (2018) in her book *On Infertile Ground: Population Control and Women’s Rights in the Era of Climate Change*. Sasser argues that a return among youth climate activists in Canada of overpopulation as a key concern for climate policy problematically rests on simplified images of the conditions of women’s reproductive freedoms (or lack thereof) in the Global South. She cites Chandra Mohanty’s description of how the homogenous Global South woman of these images

Leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being “third world” (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family orientated, victimised etc.) [...] in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control of their own bodies, and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions.

(Mohanty, 1984, p. 337; cited in Sasser, 2018)

Sasser (2018) argues that advocacy efforts that problematise global population growth as an environmental and climate problem, with contraception as the solution, are based on simplistic narratives about women and work to obscure the social, political and economic drivers of environmental problems. Not only that but a lack of understanding about these key drivers of environmental change threatens to undermine social and ecological justice and bodily autonomy for women in the Global South. Sasser argues that part of the resurgence of overpopulation arguments is due to the need for funding among Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) advocates following the reintroduction of the Global Gag Rule.<sup>2</sup> Again, this speaks to an important concern for feminists advocating for gender concerns in policy discussions. Women's organisations are typically poorly resourced meaning that population advocacy has become increasingly important in helping to ensure that women around the world have access to contraceptives and other reproductive health services (Sasser, 2018). But, as Sasser argues, it is important that feminist scholars remain critical of these narratives and work to offer corrective ones.

Criticisms of the rhetorical strategies employed by feminist activists are common in literature on gender and climate change (and gender and environment more broadly). For example, Resurrección suggests that 'at the heart of all the earlier criticisms of women–environment discourses was the *intellectual unease* with the idea of a centred feminine subject as the stable icon of feminist environmental advocacy' (2013, p. 36, my emphasis). In her 2013 paper 'Persistent Women and Environment Linkages in Climate Change and Sustainable Development Agendas', Resurrección explores how women-environmental linkages remain 'seductive and influential' (2013, p. 33). For gender to enter climate politics women's identities must be projected as 'fixed, centred, and uniform – and tied to nature' (Resurrección, 2013, p. 33), which presents a difficult strategic dilemma for feminist climate advocates. Simplifications of women as atomised individuals with fixed attributes found in policy translations of WED are entirely dissociated with wider relationships of power and so can be counter-productive for women insofar as they reify traditional gender roles. Yet images that signify a victim status of rural women in the Global South have proven to be a successful strategic entry point for feminist advocacy. Pointing specifically to the gender experts who were (many of whom still are) active in the UNFCCC, Resurrección demonstrates how the icon of women being climate victims has drawn significant attention from the climate negotiating tables and thus remains a persistent rhetorical strategy in feminist climate advocacy.

MacGregor levels a similar criticism at feminist climate justice activists such as the Mary Robinson Foundation (MRF) and the WGC in her 2017 chapter 'Moving Beyond Impacts: More Answers to the "Gender and Climate Change" Question'. MacGregor acknowledges that activists have

worked ‘tirelessly’ (p. 15) to make the case that the global ecological crisis is exacerbating global gender inequality but:

While the work of activists and spokespeople such as Mary Robinson has been invaluable in getting gender included in UNFCCC documents and in drawing attention to the material links between climate change and the suffering of women, it is important that theirs are not the only interventions.  
(MacGregor, 2017, p. 27)

MacGregor argues that while it is tempting to explain what gender has to do with climate change in terms of impacts and vulnerabilities, ‘better answers are necessary’ (MacGregor, 2017, p. 27). Those answers can be found in feminist environmental theoretical insights about discourse, politics and normative visions that have been developed over decades of feminist work (MacGregor, 2017, p. 27).

Positing three arguments that act as answers to the ‘gender and climate change question’ MacGregor first contends that climate change discourse is gendered. Feminist theoretical tools including deconstruction of binaries and the concept of a ‘gender lens’ uncover the fact that climate change has been shaped by a number of hegemonic discourses. These discourses position climate change as a scientifically defined problem reflecting dominant gendered power structures. Arguments that problematise the masculinised nature of the scientific framing of climate change are common in the gender and climate change literature. For example, Nagel (2015) writes that masculinised ideals, perspectives and approaches are deeply entrenched in institutions of climate change governance, such as the UNFCCC. Meanwhile, Julie Nelson (2012) argues that the mainstream economics that underpins climate policy is informed by highly gendered, sexist and ageist attitudes.

MacGregor’s second argument is that gender equality and environmental protection are linked and there is a link between gender balance and pro-environmental policies (c.f. Buckingham, 2010; cited in MacGregor, 2017). Therefore, ‘another good answer to the “gender and climate change question” is that women-friendly politics and climate-friendly politics go hand in hand’ (MacGregor, 2017, p. 21). The third ‘answer’ is that the transition to a post-carbon world requires gender justice. If strategies for climate mitigation and adaptation are to work, they need to resonate with a significant proportion of the population requiring that visions of a post-carbon world are inclusive of diverse experiences and respond to the everyday needs of men and women (MacGregor, 2017, p. 22). These three ‘better answers’, MacGregor suggests, might help move the debate onto more positive and productive ground, over-coming the ‘persistence’ (Resurrección, 2013) of simplistic explanations connecting climate change and the suffering of women.

Critiques of feminist climate advocacy are not limited to academic theorising but can also be found in the ranks of feminist climate activists who are active in the UNFCCC. For example, in an analysis of the power dynamics

and hierarchies present in the UNFCCC, gender and youth advocate Jessica Olson remarks that civil society holds some of the responsibility to involve women's voices in the negotiations. Olson stated that

Current work by the activists at the UNFCCC perpetuate systems of domination through consistent tokenisation of women from developing nations. For example, a commonly reported practice in both the Women and Gender and Youth Constituencies, official civil society interest groups within the UNFCCC, is for a group of people from more privileged countries to write an intervention to be read by or on the behalf of a person from an impacted nation.

(Olson, 2014, p. 186)

In the face of such criticism, it is easy to be critical of the actions and strategies of the WGC. But it is important not to overlook the many challenges that the Constituency has faced and overcome. In her 2009 essay 'A View from the Side? Gendering the United Nations Climate Change Negotiations', Röhr reflects on those challenges and highlights the complexity of UN agencies such as the UNFCCC since 'the language had become abstract to such an extent that only insiders and full-time climate experts could access the negotiations' (Röhr, 2009, p. 54). She further reflects that most women's organisations did not engage with climate politics, meaning that the number of gender experts working in the climate politics sphere was limited. Coupled with an institution that is imbued with 'scientific bias' (Röhr, 2009, p. 56), the difficulties of making the case for a gender perspective are many. Röhr highlights that there was an 'attention boost' in 2002 at COP9 Milan that was, in part, due to 'development NGOs finally acknowledging the issue' (Röhr, 2009, p. 55). These development NGOs were far more familiar with gender analyses, gender assessments and the implementation of gender mainstreaming, and tended to push those issues (Röhr, 2009), perhaps explaining the persistence of WED discourses foregrounding women in developing countries criticised by both Arora-Jonsson (2011) and Resurrección (2013).

Karen Morrow is one of the only academics to write specifically about the WGC, taking a more sympathetic approach to her analysis. She notes that while agenda setting is the ultimate goal of the WGC, it remains a relatively disempowered group meaning that more incremental approaches tend to dominate its strategy. In this light what the WGC has achieved is 'little short of miraculous' (Morrow, 2017a, p. 404). Since COP9 Milan in 2003 and the formation of GenderCC as a global network of women, gender activists and experts on gender and climate justice issues representing all world regions, the UNFCCC has seen an extraordinary rapid advancement of gender issues (Morrow, 2017a). Morrow applauds the Constituency for the 'inclusive and participatory approach' (2017a, p. 404) that has featured strongly in its activities, evidenced through the Constituency's draft Charter behind which women could rally. The draft Charter of the WGC, Morrow explains, was

shaped through an inclusive dialogue undertaken by a global coalition of women's groups and included principles of: participatory governance; respect for divergent positions; and wide and inclusive membership in terms of age, region and background (GenderCC, 2016, Article 2; cited in Morrow, 2017a). Morrow suggests that the Charter's objectives echo an ecofeminist agenda, by prioritising making women's voices and experiences heard, feeding women's views into all aspects of ongoing climate change discourse and promoting co-operation with other constituencies and caucuses in the search for constructive and mutually reinforcing alliances (GenderCC, 2016, Article 3; cited in Morrow, 2017a). Thus, Morrow's account of the advocacy work and strategies of members of the WGC sits in contrast with some of the more critical accounts of feminist environmental and climate activists made by others. Given that Morrow is one of the few feminist scholars who has empirically investigated the advocacy and strategies of members of the WGC this suggests a tension between feminist critical inquiry and feminist political practice that is worthy of deeper investigation.

### **Enduring Debates**

There are several unresolved debates that emerge from the account of the literature on feminist advocacy in climate and environmental policy circles given above. The first is what I am calling dilemmas of rhetorical strategy which includes debates around the theoretical commitment to making intersectional, or at least multi-axis, arguments about women and gender and the feminist political goal of advancing women's interests in political institutions. As noted above, Resurrección questions the rhetorical strategies employed by feminist climate activists to produce simplifications of women as atomised individuals with fixed attributes that are more palatable or easy to understand for policymakers. This atomisation of identity is at odds with a theoretical commitment to intersectionality that recognises multiple and intersecting lines of marginalisation and oppression.

The second debate is one concerning the choice that social movements, including feminist and environmental movements, must make between working as radical outsiders versus pragmatic insiders. This questions whether it is better to work within existing political institutions and agitate for reform, or if it is more effective for activists to remain outside of those dominant political systems with an aim of more fundamental structural change in how society works. Third is questions of power dynamics and hierarchies. This is evidenced above in Olson's (2014) criticism of the WGC for perpetuating systems of domination and tokenisation. There are significant questions around the internal structures of feminist and environmental movements and the ways in which they might work to perpetuate existing webs of power and hierarchies. The fourth unresolved debate is linked to the 'intellectual unease' that Resurrección (2013) speaks of in relation to the idea of a centred feminine subject which is connected to a long-standing tradition of

separating ideas and actions. The academic–activist divide refers to the artificial distinction between ‘ideal theory’ and ‘pragmatic policy’. These debates are certainly not unique to feminist organising in climate change politics. Rather they speak to a series of enduring debates that are found in feminist inquiry and practice more broadly.

### ***Dilemmas of Rhetorical Strategy***

Questions of the use of problematic rhetorical strategies are linked to a long-standing debate over ‘strategic essentialism’. Several scholars writing about political strategies of environmental and climate activists have commented on the use of strategic essentialism including MacGregor (2006), Sasser (2018) and Resurrección (2013). The issue of gender essentialism – the idea that there is a fixed essence to women – has haunted ecofeminism (and indeed many other feminisms) for over 20 years (Gaard, 2017). Strategic essentialism is a concept that was introduced by Gayatri Spivak and is a strategy of representation that involves rhetorically taking the risk of adopting an essentialist position to identify categories, or what Spivak called ‘masterwords’ (such as women, worker, nation or the subaltern), in order to mobilise a collective consciousness for achieving particular political ends (Spivak, 1993, p. 3). Strategic essentialism is the use of common identities for the strategic or political purposes of oppositional movements. As a strategy, strategic essentialism pragmatically accepts the necessity of using identity categories to advance political claims despite the perception of homogeneity (Resurrección, 2013). In the case of gender and climate change that centred identity, as explained above, tends to manifest itself as a ‘rural producer vulnerable to environmental change and crisis’ (Resurrección, 2013, p. 36). Butler (1994) refers to this as materialising a particular understanding of gender as fact, and repetitively harnessing a central identity of ‘woman’. This form of essentialism, Spivak (1987) argues, is strategic precisely because it is a self-conscious act that is always attuned to its ‘constructive paradox’ that evokes that the common identity is not always reducible to a singular essence. But MacGregor, who is much more critical of the concept of strategic essentialism, questions if it can ever be strategic, suggesting that the strategy simply allows ‘feminists to simultaneously acknowledge the way rhetoric plays into universalising ideas and use it anyway’ (MacGregor, 2006, p. 50).

In ecofeminist literature, the topic of strategic essentialism is taken up most directly by Noël Sturgeon in her 1997 book *Ecofeminist Natures* in which she argues that ‘ecofeminism seems to be situated in a history of feminism in such a way that it is required to solve the mystery of how to create an anti-essentialist coalition politics, while deploying a strategic politics of identity’ (Sturgeon, 1997, p. 5). For many years feminist theorists have been concerned with the problem of trying to conceptualise ‘women’s differences from men (differences, from a feminist point of view, imbued



with the consequences of women's domination by men) and at the same time acknowledge differences among women (also imbued with unequal power relations)' (Sturgeon, 1997, p. 16). Sturgeon calls the common identities that are often deployed by ecofeminists (e.g. 'third world woman' or 'indigenous woman') 'essentialist constructs' or 'ecofeminist natures' (Sturgeon, 1997, p. 5) and asserts that the use of such ecofeminist natures is acceptable if it contributes to an oppositional consciousness and political collectives.

In feminist climate movements this kind of strategy is deployed all the time. As shown above, Resurrección demonstrates that essentialism played a significant role in the 1980s, helping feminists bring women's issues to the table. Similarly, Braidotti et al. (1994) note that ways in which femininity was essentialised to fulfil the strategic aims of the women's lobby which was ultimately reproduced in the outcomes of the 1992 Rio Declaration. MacGregor (2006) also notes that organisations such as WEDO use constructions of 'traditional knowledge' as a means of getting more women at the table. Indeed, WEDO have been successful in their endeavours to place women both in high-level environmental policy meetings, as well as to place women (if not gender) on the political agenda. Sasser (2018) suggests that the success of essentialising strategies is perhaps because 'presenting women's relationships to nature in the Global South in homogenous ways provides policymakers with a shorthand for understanding the basics of gendered environmental roles and differentiated impacts' (Sasser, 2018, p. 106). Critics of strategic essentialism (such as MacGregor, 2006; Moore, 2008; Gaard, 2017; Sasser, 2018) assert that essentialised narratives

fix women in a static model: that of an essentialised, universal relationship between women and nature. As a result, the initial policy attention to women's environmental experiences left little room for articulating dynamic, diverse experiences in ways that resist the victim-agent role.  
(Sasser, 2018, p. 106)

This debate has led to feminist environmental theorists to work towards providing corrective challenges to gender essentialism, strategic or otherwise (Gaard, 2017). For example, MacGregor (2006) disagrees with Sturgeon's assertion that 'the invocation of "essentialist natures" is valuable for ecofeminism *in spite of the particular dangers it presents*' (MacGregor, 2006, p. 52, existing emphasis). Not only do such homogenising categorisations and romantic portrayals of women 'in the South' do more harm than good (Mohanty, 1991), but discourses of femininity do not challenge or disrupt prevailing gender norms.

MacGregor asks:

what are the longer-term effects of this strategy? How do policy-makers, the majority of whom do not make gender part of their political platform, regard women's concerns? Does this strategy foster critical



discussions of gender relations and the impact of environmental change on women's lives? Or are gender roles taken as given?

(MacGregor, 2006, p. 51)

She further states that no one seems to have asked these questions and that an effort to address them will lead to the conclusion that essentialist arguments are not a good strategy for a green feminist politics that seeks to destabilise existing gender codes.

More recently this debate has shifted from a focus on harnessing a particular 'essence' of womanhood, as seen in strategic essentialism, towards a focus on the use of single-axis framings of identity in order to make collective political demands. Alaimo (2009) argues that a 'feminist and an LGBT-affirmative politics must avoid reinstalling rigid gender differences and heteronormativity' (2009, p. 31). To ignore intersectional concerns, or to position identity politics under the catchment of gender, and to reduce gender to a male/female binary is to lose out on incredibly rich and important knowledge and embodied experiences.

Explicitly intersectional studies are still largely absent from the gender and climate change literature with only a few scholars addressing multiple intersecting lines of marginalisation and oppression in the context of climate change (for an example of an intersectional framework to the study of climate change see Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). The concept of intersectionality posits that inequality, oppression and marginalisation do not happen in a gendered vacuum, but are made up of multiple, and intersecting, power relations that shape identity politics such as race, class, gender, ability, ethnicity and sexuality, to name a few (Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality's history is often told as quite a straightforward history, with most citing Crenshaw as having 'coined' the term in her 1991 article 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Colour'. But intersectional praxis is arguably much older, with movements in the late 1960s to early 1980s catalysing many of the main ideas of intersectionality (Collins and Bilge, 2020). Crenshaw's work is vital but Black feminists in the US were creating their own political organisations using the epithet 'Black Feminism', drawing attention to inherent sexism in the Black Power movement, and an autonomous Chicana feminist movement separate to the Chicano liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s. These movements set much of the groundwork for intersectional ideas (Collins and Bilge, 2020; see also Garcia, 1997a, 1997b; Arredondo et al., 2003). Women in these movements expressed many of their ideas in political pamphlets, poetry, essays, edited volumes, art and other creative venues and the core ideas of intersectionality appear in several key texts of Black Feminism. Collins and Bilge (2020) highlight Black feminist author and essayist Toni Cade Bambara, editor of *The Black Feminist* in 1970 which, through a collection of essays, pointed out how Black women would never gain their freedom without attending to oppressions of race, class and

gender. Similarly, the work of Gloria Anzaldúa has been central to intersectional modes of Latina feminism. Her semi-autobiographical book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) examines the condition of women in Chicano and Latino culture discussing several critical issues related to their experiences including heteronormativity, colonialism and male dominance.

Despite the obvious influence these forms of knowledge have had on intersectional thought, they remain neglected in most narratives of intersectionality's history (Collins and Bilge, 2020). Instead, writings on intersectionality that do acknowledge the huge influence of social movements on intersectional thought tend to cite the Combahee River Collective's (CRC) 'A Black Feminist Statement' originally published in 1977. Collins and Bilge (2020) put the popularity of the CRC down to the resources available to its members to make their voices heard. The CRC was a collective made up of a community of Black feminists and developed its intersectional analysis in the context of social movements for decolonisation, desegregation and feminism, making it an integral part of intersectionality's history. Yet, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s when social movements went into abeyance and political protest took on different forms (Collins and Bilge, 2020) that intersectionality became a popular phrase. As stated above, prevailing stories about the emergence of intersectionality repeat verbatim that it was 'coined' by Crenshaw in 1991. 'Mapping the Margins' is an important article in marking the 'translation of understandings of intersectionality emanating from Black and Chicana feminism and similar social justice projects, and understandings of intersectionality within academia' (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 91) and represents a pivotal moment for intersectionality. But intersectionality has a far longer history in social movements than the early 1990s.

Despite its popularity, or even because of it, intersectionality is not without criticism, particularly surrounding its methodological application and use in policy circles. Even Crenshaw remarked in 2009 that she is 'amazed at how [intersectionality] gets over- and under-used; sometimes I can't even recognise it in the literature anymore' (Crenshaw, 2009; cited in Berger and Guidroz, 2009). The term intersectionality is used throughout contemporary public international discourse, including in the United Nations (UN), particularly included in human rights discourses. Yet, as Yuval-Davis (2006) has pointed out, not only do these attempts to bring in intersectional arguments in policy processes raise important ontological questions of how many social divisions there are, but also raises important methodological issues surrounding conflation between vectors of discrimination and difference, and identity groupings. Simply identifying a series of 'vectors of difference' is problematic, both theoretically and politically, as it constructs difference as automatic grounds for both discrimination and entitlement for defence from discrimination. It does not attend to differential positionings of power in which identity groups can be located or the dynamics of power relations within these groups. Nor does it give recognition to the 'potentially

contested nature of the boundaries of these groupings and the possibly contested political claims for representation of people located in the same social positionings' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204). In other words, any attempt to categorise difference for the methodological application of intersectionality raises difficult and complex empirical and analytical questions. As Kaijser and Kronsell state the

the aim of intersectionality is not simply to include as many analytical categories as possible, or list an – obviously not all-encompassing – number of factors that may determine responsibility and vulnerability in relation to climate change, but to widen the perspective and reflect upon what factors may be relevant in a particular setting.

(Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 422)

Kathryn Russell (2007) suggests 'current scholarship seems to be *caught in a bind* between collapsing social categories together and separating them out in a list' (p. 35; my emphasis). This bind is not only a challenge for feminist academics studying gender and climate change, but, based on the scholarship concerned with feminist political strategies discussed above, is also a major challenge for feminist climate activists in the UNFCCC when making collective political demands.

### ***Radical Outsiders versus Pragmatic Insiders***

A second enduring debate that emerges in the literature on feminist climate and environmental activism and strategy is the choice between acting as radical outsiders or pragmatic insiders. This debate stems from writing on New Social Movements (NSM) (c.f. Diani, 1992; Doherty, 1992; 2006; Ciplet, 2014). Perhaps one of the most famous contemporary examples of this debate is the internal struggle of the German Greens in the 1980s (Doherty, 1992). In short, the fundamentalist 'Fundis' advocated remaining a party of protest while the realist 'Realos' advocated for compromises. The Realos ultimately won the argument, and the German Greens went on to share power with the Social Democrats in Gerhard Schröder's red-green coalition – perhaps the ultimate version of working inside the system. The fundamentalists in green parties can be defined as those who are critical of coalitions with other parties and are sceptical about achieving radical change by parliamentary means (radical outsiders), while the realists argue that radical change must involve an instrumental parliamentary strategy as well as extra-parliamentary action (pragmatic insiders).

A small body of feminist literature examines the political strategy of both gender and environment networks as well as the gender and climate change network, including the WGC. This work is mostly written by academics and a few activists who have themselves been active in these networks (c.f. Bretherton, 1998; 2003; Alber, 2009; Röhr, 2009). As with other social movements,

the feminist efforts in global climate change politics have been similarly be-devilled by debates over the best approaches for advocating feminist positions in global climate politics. The choice between feminists working inside or outside conventional political institutions is one that is always at the forefront of feminist organising. Bretherton is one feminist environmental scholar who has theorised this dilemma, stating that the ‘principal division, in terms of women’s organising, lies in the choice between insider and outsider strategies’ (Bretherton, 2003, p. 108). Meyer and Prügl sum this up neatly in reference to women’s international NGOs:

Some women’s international NGOs (WINGOs), particularly the older ones, are more formally organised and seek to influence more directly the agendas of multilateral institutions. Other WINGOs, particularly those founded since the 1970s eschew this formality and its related hierarchy and bureaucracy, preferring instead to mobilise and organise women at the grassroots and national levels around global feminist issues like development, population, women’s human rights, violence against women, environment and so on.

(Meyer and Prügl, 1999, p. 8)

The WGC, as part of the Women’s Major Group, exhibits predominantly ‘insider’ characteristics, employing ‘an innovative lobbying strategy that has vastly increased the participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at recent UN conferences’ (Higer, 1999, p. 130). But these strategies are supplemented by mobilising women outside of official processes by, for example, disseminating insider information to women’s networks at local levels to inform their political activism. This kind of dual process has set the precedent for women’s participation in UN conferences: the insider approach has allowed the women’s movement to become a highly visible player at the policy table, while outsider approaches have allowed them to articulate an alternative policy framework to existing international institutions (Higer, 1999). Yet, Bretherton (2003) argues that while women’s movements have the potential for much power, their strategy of engagement has resulted in rather limited success. The dilemma is that networked women must learn to work within existing processes of global governance, which, Bretherton argues, inhibits actions intended to undermine dominant norms and practices.

The benefits of working inside dominant political structures and institutions, like the UNFCCC, however, are many. A strategy of engagement, developing centralised, hierarchical organisational structures and levels of expertise enables feminists to contribute to, and disseminate, information in order to challenge the dominant narratives of climate change (Bretherton, 1998). And as Hemmati and Röhr point out ‘if women’s organisations are not actively involved, gender and women’s aspects will not be addressed’ (2007, p. 6). In other words, getting the word on the page requires a seat at

the table. But, as demonstrated above, that seat at the table often requires the mobilisation of single-axis framings of identity to get the word into the document.

The challenges of making intersectional arguments within political institutions are taken up by Kaijer and Kronsell (2014):

Intersectional analyses of institutions may reveal how power structures are reflected materially but also normatively as norms are reproduced in practices of political, economic, and social institutions. For climate issues, political and societal institutions that regulate and create demands for transport, energy, and consumption are particularly relevant. Such institutions both build on and take part in the construction and reinforcement of injustices and intersectional categorisations.

(Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 426)

The key to intersectional analyses of institutions, Kaijser and Kronsell argue, is to look not only at policies and actions but also at the normative assumptions that they reflect. For example, transport policies reflect the travel needs, priorities and preferences of the white, middle-class male car owner helping to explain the reluctance to curb car use (Polk, 2009; cited in Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). Specific to research on climate change, it is important not only to look at the adverse impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups but also to problematise the norms and underlying assumptions that are naturalised and regarded as common sense (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014).

Writing from a Feminist Institutional perspective, Krizsan, Skjeie and Squires (2012) suggest that before the turn of the century there were three main approaches to equality in institutional structures: those focused on only one inequality, mostly gender (a single approach); those that addressed more than one inequality but treated them as separate and as specific (a multiple approach); and those that address multiple inequalities in integrated ways (an integrated approach). The authors argue that due to policy changes in the 2000s, as a state response to pressure from civil society groups, greater attention was given to an anti-discrimination approach that tended to judicialise *inequality* rather than the previously predominant approach that focused on group-based differences. While some see this gradual shift towards more intersectional practices in institutions as positive, others express reservations that the emerging focus on multiple inequalities could result in downsizing already established gender equality policies and institutions (c.f. Squires, 2008; Kantola and Nousainen, 2009; Lombardo and Verloo, 2009; Strid, Walby and Armstrong, 2011). This reservation, however, rests on an understanding of intersectionality as a theory of identity. While intersectionality places value on the richness of multiple identities that make every person unique, a primary understanding of intersectionality as a theory of individual identity overemphasises some dimensions of intersectionality while underemphasising

others, specifically the intersecting nature of identity and the ways in which those intersections of identity manifest in structures of marginalisation and oppression (Collins and Bilge, 2020; see also Chapter 3 for a critical intersectional framework).

These kinds of debates, Bretherton (2003) suggests, are a matter of perspective. She argues that women who adopt an equity perspective, which tends to prioritise issues associated with women's political, economic and social inequality over the interests of the natural environment, are relatively comfortable with insider strategies such as working closely with governments and international organisations. On the other hand, ecofeminists and more radical elements within the broad women's environmental movement are deeply suspicious of insider strategies, and the accompanying danger of co-option (Bretherton, 2003). The issue of co-option is an important concern for those who advocate more radical outsider techniques.

Participation by societal actors is implicit in the concept of global governance. Social movements, including the women's movement, are encouraged to participate in global governance, hence the inclusion of civil society in the UN system, including the UNFCCC (Bäckstrand et al., 2017). Today, most organisations proclaim their eagerness to listen to women's caucuses (or constituencies in the case of climate change). In return there is an expectation of access and influence. Some argue that this is a case of states and governments co-opting NGOs for their own purposes since engagement with NGOs gives states legitimacy (Stienstra, 1999). Through the UN, NGOs have more access than ever, and for many NGOs this level of participation has been equated with more power – they are necessary partners who provide significant contributions to the text. But these NGOs may have overestimated their influence since they also operate in a global system of push and pull from transnational corporations and global finance (Stienstra, 1999). Understanding this dilemma is important because 'divisions are not trivial; choice of strategy and related ideological position are important determinants of cohesiveness in women's movements' (Bretherton, 2003, p. 109).

Another area that the insider/outsider debate has been explored is in debates on 'gender mainstreaming' a concept that has emerged as an attempt to move away from the discursive essentialisation of women and their concerns. Gender mainstreaming was developed by international NGOs (INGOs) and women's lobby groups operating from a radical feminist framework (Alston, 2014). It was developed as a policy tool aiming to ensure the widespread and systematic insertion of gendered priorities into the policymaking process. Alston (2014) reflects that gender mainstreaming emerged as an attempt to move away from essentialising women's issues as women's *only* issues, through ensuring that they are instead included throughout all policy areas, not just those specifically focused on women, and at all stages of the policymaking process. She states that



essentially gender mainstreaming is designed to bring about gender equality, by exposing gender as a socially constructed phenomenon and making transparent new possibilities for reshaped, and more equitable gender arrangements.

(Alston, 2014, p. 289)

But, as a political strategy gender mainstreaming has been criticised for reducing the gender issues to a tick-box exercise and being limited in scope (c.f. Buckingham and Kulcur, 2009; Wonders and Danner, 2015; Rochette, 2016). Gaard (2015) highlights the bind of these strategic decisions in climate change negotiations in relation to inserting queer feminist arguments:

Given the gender-blind techno-science perspective dominating climate change discussions, queer feminist entry to these discussions has been stalled, trapped between Scylla and Charybdis: over the past two decades, discussions have alternated between the liberal strategy of mainstreaming women into discussions of risk, vulnerability, and adaptation, as WEDO has done; or, adopting the cultural feminist strategy of calling on women's "unique" capacities of caring for family and for environment, women's "special knowledge" and agency based on their location within gender-role restricted occupations, and lauding women's grassroots leadership. In either strategy, "gender" is restricted to the study of women, and feminist analyses of structural gender inequalities that compare the status of men, women, and GLBTQ others are completely omitted.

(Gaard, 2015, p. 24)

More scathingly, Susan Hawthorne suggests that 'gender mainstreaming asks feminists not to rock the boat, not to go too far, not to demand anything other than equality of treatment in a badly skewed system, rather than equality of outcomes' (2004, p. 120). Critics of gender mainstreaming assert that much of the approach is concerned with simply getting the word on the page, or counting women into the political process, rather than addressing the root causes of inequality (Wonders and Danner, 2015). According to Hawthorne gender mainstreaming simply 'encourages feminist projects to have the same aims as projects that benefit men'.

Alston (2014), as one scholar who sees benefits in strategies of gender mainstreaming, does not refute criticisms of the strategy but suggests that there may be a lack of understanding about the goals of the policy tool. She suggests that while the origin of gender mainstreaming was transformative it can be interpreted and operationalised in divisive ways. Gender mainstreaming may be understood as: a means of achieving sameness (fostering women to enter male domains where masculinised norms prevail); difference (working to ensure that the differing contributions of men and women are valued in gendered societies); or transformative actions (where

transformation of inequitable gender relations is undertaken) (Alston, 2014, p. 290). It is typically the first operationalisation, and to a lesser extent the second, that has occurred in political institutions such as the UNFCCC. Morrow (2017a) concurs that gender mainstreaming needs to be fully integrated into all aspects of policymaking in more meaningful ways than has previously been permitted. She suggests that a reconfiguring of gender mainstreaming could be entirely consistent with ecofeminist values since it would demand institutional change and work to foster a more profound enculturation of gender at an institutional and societal level. But for gender mainstreaming to be successful it requires both attitudes and practices to change.

The debate over the merits, or lack thereof, of gender mainstreaming can be read as a proxy for the insider/outsider debate. Those who champion insider strategies are typically preoccupied with the insertion of words or phrases in international agreements, which has become the principal measure of their success, and they fail to demonstrate similar force in relation to monitoring and compliance (Morrow, 2017a). In many ways women's movements have been successful in getting gender on the agenda. But gender mainstreaming strategies have resulted only in ensuring that *women/environment* links have featured on global agendas which neglect to address *gender/environment* links (Bretherton, 1998). It does not 'encourage curiosity as to how, why and in whose interests' women and gender are perceived as synonymous' (Bretherton, 1998, p. 95), a flaw that lies in its failure to conceptualise the more subtle operations of power that intersectionality demands.

Bretherton writes:

Inclusion of women/environment links on global agendas can now be re-interpreted: it is eminently sensible given the need for women's cooperation in policy implementation. More-over, it enhances the legitimacy of international decision making, giving the appearance of increased openness and democratisation. But the added-on nature of women as a special, separate category – subsequently joined in Agenda21 by youth and indigenous peoples – presents no major challenge to existing value systems or power structures. Attempting to incorporate gender would involve fundamentally challenging both.

(Bretherton, 1998, p. 96)

Spivak is particularly critical of forms of insider organising that fail to conceptualise power. In her critique of feminist organising at the 1995 UN Beijing Conference on Women, Spivak fears a 'proliferation of feminist apparatchicks who identify conference organising with activism, who cannot successfully imagine the lineaments of the space of existence of the Southern grassroots' (Spivak, 1996, p. 4). She calls out feminists who fail to resist the ways in which women are being 'framed' in the neoliberal agenda that gender mainstreaming supports and encourages.



This point is further reinforced in a study between gender representation and climate policymaking in Scandinavia in which Magnusdottir and Kronsell (2015) found that a critical mass of women does not automatically result in gender-sensitive climate policymaking, recognising established gender differences in material conditions and attitudes towards climate issues. This study draws upon Ergas and York (2012) whose cross-national research finds that carbon dioxide emissions were, per capita, lower in countries where women have higher political status (controlled for factors such as world system position or industrialisation). Magnusdottir and Kronsell assert that it would be reasonable to assume these countries would also show signs of gender sensitivity. The authors argue, however, that a single-minded focus on women is problematic and instead the focus should be on winning ‘critical acts’ not a ‘critical mass’ (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2015). Simply introducing more women into the policymaking process, without feminist scrutiny of gendered practices and norms, will not necessarily affect change.

The debate over gender mainstreaming is by no means resolved and the strategy continues to prevail in political institutions of global governance such as the UNFCCC. This raises an important question around the kinds of procedural political strategies that are available to feminists making the case for gender considerations to be embedded in climate responsive policies: how can feminists ensure gender is embedded throughout global climate change policy without resorting to a tick-box approach to including gender concerns?

### ***Questions of Power Dynamics and Hierarchies***

In keeping with insider strategies, Tripp (2006) argues that the UN allows feminist movements to create a truly transnational network, rather than simply gaining national influence. Keck and Sikkink (1998) refer to this as a ‘boomerang effect’ that allows the UN to provide the space for NGOs to bypass their own states and seek out transnational advocacy networks, whether it be women’s, environmental, human rights, or indigenous rights in order to pressure their state from outside (though inside the UN). She argues that one key aspect of the creation of such a transnational feminist movement was that it gave local activists of the Global South the opportunity to challenge and change the perspectives and priorities of the North. However, scholars such as Higer (1999) and Kingdon (1984) argue that despite a rhetoric of inclusiveness, transparency and solidarity, power structures inevitably emerge within feminist networks that work to silence both disagreement and geographically different positions.

Feminist networks are not removed from internal power relations and the rhetoric of feminist cohesion can mask considerable dispute. For example, Spalter-Roth (1995) describes one instance where disagreement boiled over into discontent within the feminist movement exposing internal divisions in strategic goals and direction. Spalter-Roth recalls that the ‘Washington pro-choice coalition of women’s organisations was nearly torn apart’ (1995, p. 114) when one organisation – The National

Organisation of Women (NOW) – announced its desire to use methods of civil disobedience during the 1992 pro-choice demonstration. Eventually NOW yielded to the vehement objections of its coalition partners who ‘argued that such tactics would be counter-productive in an election year’ (Spalter-Roth, 1995, p. 114). Instead, the coalition relied on more conventional tactics consistent with an insider strategies such as lobbying, providing policymakers with information, developing media campaigns, and even writing legislation.

Networks comprising geographically diverse women’s organisations are entirely heterogenous, made up of a mosaic of individuals, informal groups, research institutes and more formal organisations concerned with improving women’s status and pursuing issues perceived to reflect the interests of women (Bretherton, 2003). Issues of difference are always present, but reflections from those involved in the feminist environmental movement suggest that these are not always articulated. For example, Gaard (2017) recalls feeling uncomfortable in the audience of the Women’s Conference in Miami ahead of Rio 1992 while one elite speaker after another addressed the audience. Sitting with queer friends Gaard remembers her feelings of disengagement; the speakers were not addressing them. Indeed, ‘a social movement has to be understood as an ongoing social process in which solidarity is continually subject to dissent and negotiation’ (Eschle and Manguashca, 2007, p. 293). So, when a movement claims to speak for all women but neglects to put issues of importance to women of colour, lesbian/queer women and working-class women in the policy agenda, serious tensions can arise.

Heterogeneity or difference within social movements is not simply a question of varying identities but is also reflective of the inequalities generated by power relations from which social movements are not immune (Eschle, 2004). For example, Stienstra (1999) refers to another ‘significant dispute’ (p. 264) which broke out at the Beijing women’s conference between WEDO and the organisers of the conference. Both groups felt that they should manage the presence of women’s NGOs during the conference due to their leadership in the women’s movement. It reflected a tension between WEDO, who had significant lobbying experience in the UN, and the organisers of the conference, who claimed to be more regionally based and representative. Thus, ‘existing power relations often determine leadership within social movements’ (Stienstra, 1999, p. 264).

Existing divisions of power are reflected in women’s movements whose leaders tend to be white middle-class women from the Global North, much like the criticism levelled at the WGC by Olson for putting forward a woman from a Global South country affected by climate change to read an intervention written by women from the Global North (Olson, 2014). A robust analysis of the WGC that questions how it can ensure the just inclusion of diverse voices in ways that do not romanticise marginalised women or make tokenistic gestures could provide more fruitful modes of participation by a diverse range of Constituency members.

### ***The Activist-Academic Divide***

It is clear from literature both criticising and defending the feminist environmental and climate movement, including the WGC as part of the climate movement, that there is a discrepancy between academic critique of problematic and simplistic narratives about women and their lives and the pragmatic approach by practitioners at the forefront of global climate policymaking. Referring to the environmental justice movement, David Schlosberg and Lisette Collins (2014) characterise this distinction as ‘ideal theory’ and ‘pragmatic policy’. The authors draw a clear distinction between three articulations of climate justice: ideal theory of academic discourse; pragmatic policy concerns of elite NGOs; and social movement concerns of grassroots movements. Noting that there is a disconnect between the different articulations of climate justice, the authors suggest that this is, at least in part, due to a lack of conversation between them: ‘as much as their interests and ideas may overlap, these theorists rarely cite movements, and movements do not commonly refer to academic journal articles to clarify their positions’ (Schlosberg and Collins, 2014, p. 365). It is this separation between ‘ideal theory’ and ‘pragmatic policy’ (or separation between ideas and action) that works to separate academia and activism in troubling ways, as found in feminist climate politics.

Eschle and Manguerra (2007) comment on the ‘widespread belief that academia and activism are separate worlds, driven by contrasting aims and imperatives and governed by different rules’ (p. 119). They suggest that the view that academia and activism are entirely separate worlds is based on a series of taken for granted and highly problematic ontological dichotomies: mind/body, theory/practice, reason/emotion, abstract/concrete and ‘ivory tower’/‘real world’. This kind of dualistic construction sets up thinking and reflecting in opposition to doing and acting. Eschle and Manguerra (2007) argue that most feminist writers in global politics see this divide between academia and activism as problematic and should be challenged. Yet, it is a tension that still exists in writing on feminist environmentalism and climate activism. For example, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, Resurrección (2013) describes the ‘intellectual unease’ with the idea of a centred feminine subject in feminist environmental advocacy. When reading this separation through Schlosberg and Collins’ (2014) framework of ‘ideal theory’ and ‘pragmatic policy’ academic theorising is positioned as superior to activism and organising.

The separation of ideas and actions is abundantly clear in the narrative of intersectionality’s complex history offered above. Most contemporary scholars either ignore or are unaware of intersectionality’s deep connection to social movements, instead assuming that intersectionality did not exist until it was ‘named’ in the academy in 1991 (Collins and Bilge, 2020). Because many of the germinal ideas of intersectionality were generated in social movements pre-dating ‘Mapping the Margins’ by 10–15 years, they

are not commonly included in histories of intersectionality. Not only does neglecting the writings and activities of the many people who came before Crenshaw invisibilise an important part of intersectionality's history, it also does not do justice to Crenshaw's arguments. Crenshaw advances intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry *and* praxis (Collins and Bilge, 2020) and builds on the ideas of the CRC. The purpose of 'Mapping the Margins' is certainly to name intersectionality as a concept but also to draw links between individual identity and collective identity and to remind readers that the political importance of intersectional scholarship lies in its contributions to social justice initiatives. It is not to simply advocate for a theory that is disconnected to social justice concerns. As intersectionality has been integrated into the neoliberal academy, it has been invited to 'settle down' within, rather than unsettling, established frameworks of knowledge production (Bilge, 2014). This has led some to question whether intersectionality remains critical enough (Bilge, 2013; 2014). But it is intersectionality's connection to both academic inquiry and political praxis that provides its critical potential.

MacGregor takes a slightly different view on what she sees as a 'strange and troubling relationship between academic researchers and the activists or grassroots, non-academic women about whom they write' (MacGregor, 2006, p. 131). She suggests that there is a tendency by some ecofeminists to trivialise research and theorising done by feminist academics. She points to examples of ecofeminists such as Ariel Saleh (1997) and Mary Mellor (1997) who position the practices of 'grassroots women' as superior to the abstract theorising of 'postmodern' feminism. Agreeing with Gaard (1998), MacGregor suggests that 'it is important to be vigilant against using examples of activism uncritically to support one's own ecofeminist positions' (2006, p. 133). Clearly then, there are questions, or even tensions, around the relationship between academics and activists and the different kinds of knowledges created. MacGregor (2006) calls on feminist researchers to imagine a more cooperative relationship based on dialogue and to acknowledge that feminist theorising itself has always been connected to the movements and is its own form of activism. The relationship between theory and practice is at the heart of this research and as such, this book aims to address the separation between ideas and actions in relation to feminist interventions in global climate governance.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted some of the dilemmas and difficult strategic decisions facing feminists pursuing collective political projects. These dilemmas raise many questions: how can feminists make collective political demands without invoking a homogenised framing of gender? How can feminists navigate a theoretical and ideological commitment to intersectionality

while still providing firm policy recommendations? How can feminists raise marginalised voices without romanticising or tokenising women of colour, indigenous women and Global South women? How can feminist academics and activists mutually reinforce each other to advance the feminist climate agenda?

These kinds of questions have motivated many of the scholars showcased in this chapter, but they have not been asked of the WGC in any sustained or curious way. Scholars who have levelled some criticism at the WGC, or feminist environmental activists more broadly, have tended to comment on the problematic results of decisions made in the face of dilemmas and difficulties. This criticism is necessary, important and valid. But there is a need for empirically rooted research that takes these kinds of criticisms and examines the processes and strategies that have succeeded in inserting a gender perspective into institutions of global climate governance. There is a need for empathetic research that recognises that feminist organising in political spaces such as the UNFCCC is hard, and offers suggestions based on an understanding of the history.

It is clear from the introductory section of this chapter that feminist environmental scholars have begun to provide answers to an important set of questions around the possible ways in which the WGC (or feminist environmental practitioners more generally) could provide better feminist interventions in global climate governance. But this should be preceded by other, important, questions: what kinds of political and rhetorical strategies does the WGC rely on? How have the institutional conditions of the UNFCCC shaped these kinds of strategies? In what ways, if any, has the WGC improved or adapted its strategies? Robust empirical evidence that answers these kinds of questions is a necessary pre-requisite to be able to answer questions about future directions for feminist climate organising. Those answers are necessary because understanding the WGC's position, and appreciating efforts made by its members to improve, will encourage a sense of empathy of the kind of strategic, institutional or political binds that they are in.

## Notes

- 1 Indeed, more than a decade after Arora-Jonsson wrote this paper, little has changed in environmental social science research. I conducted a literature search on Web of Science in 2020 searching for the terms 'gender', 'sex' or 'feminism' and 'climate change' in the top five environmental social science journals. This search returned a mere 26 articles in 40 years of environmental social science research, just 0.4% of all citations in the leading environmental social science journals, including citations with just the briefest mention of one of the three terms 'gender', 'sex' or 'feminism' which also included the term 'climate change'.
- 2 US President Donald Trump reinstated the Global Gag Rule in 2017 preventing NGOs outside of the US from receiving US family planning funding if they provide (or even offer counselling or referrals on) abortions.

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# 3 Ecofeminist Intersectionality

## Inquiry and Praxis

Feminists advocating in spaces of global climate governance come up against many dilemmas in their political strategy. The questions that are most interesting from an integrated academic/activist perspective are: how to make collective political demands without relying on homogenising single-axis framings of gender? Does working ‘inside’ the system allow feminists more influence than working ‘outside’ the system or does it result in the co-option of feminist ideas for non-feminist purposes? How can feminists ensure that marginalised voices are amplified without resulting in little more than a mere tokenistic gesture? How can feminists translate abstract feminist theorising into tangible policy recommendations in ways that retain the critical potential of intersectional feminism?

The on-the-ground, practical responses by feminist activists to these complex binds come with the best of intentions aiming to improve the quality of women’s lives but, as discussed in Chapter 2, have often resulted in perpetuating images about women’s vulnerabilities, their under-representation in climate politics and/or their (lack of) sexual freedoms and liberties. As a means of troubling limited understandings of gender, intersectionality is an increasingly popular framework that allows the feminist investigator to explore multiple axes of difference. Kaijser and Kronsell (2014) suggest that the concept can be an important analytical framework for understanding the complex dimensions of climate change. Using ‘intersectionality as an analytical tool fosters more expansive understandings of collective identities and political action’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 166), making it an important tool for a critical analysis of the kinds of rhetorical and procedural strategies mobilised by members of the WGC. And, given intersectionality’s deep connection and rooting in social movements, an intersectional framework can help to put intellectual inquiry and political practice into productive conversation.

As an analytical tool, intersectionality sheds light on ‘the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power’ (Davis, 2008, p. 68). Kings (2017) suggests that ecofeminists have been ‘doing’ this kind of intersectional

work for decades by grappling with questions of the interconnected relationship between the domination of women and the domination of nature (see also MacGregor, 2017). Ecofeminist projects encompass the oppression of humans and nonhumans, as well as focusing attention towards the rights of animals and the natural world, offering a potentially rich dialogue with intersectionality. But this work rarely informs intersectional frameworks within (non-ecofeminist) feminist scholarship. Given the lack of attention to intersectional concepts in most environmental scholarship, coupled with the lack of concern for ecological issues in feminist frameworks, most intersectional analyses remain highly anthropocentric in nature. This means that most intersectional frameworks lack the critical tools needed to interrogate the way in which the natural world intersects with multiple lines of marginalisation and oppression.

It is my aim here to offer such a dialogue between intersectional feminist and ecofeminist, or feminist environmental, thought as intellectual inquiry and as political praxis. I take my conceptual lead from Collins and Bilge (2020) and the ideas laid out in their book *Intersectionality*. I find this a particularly useful starting point due to their conceptualisation of intersectionality as both a form of critical inquiry and praxis. As a form of inquiry, intersectionality is inherently critical because it has traditionally ‘challenged existing bodies of knowledge, theories and epistemologies, methodologies, and pedagogies, especially in relation to social inequality’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 38). When used as a form of praxis, ‘intersectionality refers to the ways in which people, either as individuals or as part of groups, produce, draw upon, or apply intersectional frameworks’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 39). This praxis is important, though often underemphasised, because practices make intersectional knowledge possible, ‘especially those that involve criticising, rejecting and/or trying to fix the social problems that complex social inequalities engender’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 39).

There are two frameworks that underpin the analysis in this book. Table 3.1 sets out my conceptual framework for ecofeminist intersectionality as critical inquiry. It is structured around Collins and Bilge’s (2020) six core ideas of intersectionality: social inequality (or inequalities); intersecting power relations; social context (or contextualisation); relationality; complexity; and social justice (or ecological justice). Following Kaijser and Kronsell’s direction that ‘for research on climate issues, the intersectional approach must be informed by a range of social theories as well as theories generated in research fields that look at the relationship between society and nature’ (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 424), intersectional concepts are put into productive conversation with feminist environmental concepts. For example, Tuana’s (2008) commitment to foregrounding the natural context in environmental analysis, Plumwood’s (1993) conceptualisation of dualisms and Merchant’s (1983) thoughts on the backgrounding of women and nature. Naming this framework as ‘ecofeminist intersectionality’ highlights the hybrid nature of putting intersectional thought into conversation with ecofeminist ideas.

Table 3.1 A Framework of Ecofeminist Intersectionality

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*Ecofeminist intersectionality offers the conceptual tools to identify and trouble the rhetorical strategies of feminist organising in the UNFCCC.*

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<p>Social Inequality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Troubles single-axis framings of inequality and the strategic process of simplification.</li> <li>• Interrogates which identities are promoted and serve as grounds for political action.</li> <li>• Asks which identities, if any, become invisible in these processes.</li> <li>• <i>Asks how the natural world is considered in relation to framings of inequality?</i></li> </ul>	<p>Intersecting Power Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reveals how dominant ideologies mask significant power differences.</li> <li>• Troubles the types of knowledge that are privileged by recognising that knowledge is situated.</li> <li>• Asks how types of legitimate knowledge are related to intersecting power relations.</li> <li>• <i>Asks how multiple power structures interact in order to objectify and instrumentalise nature.</i></li> <li>• Requires the symmetrical treatment of masculinities and femininities.</li> </ul>
<p>Contextuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draws attention to the specific concerns of groups in specific social contexts.</li> <li>• <i>Troubles the relation between the 'social' and the 'natural' in these contexts.</i></li> <li>• Asks how social contexts are considered in making collective political demands.</li> </ul>	<p>Relationality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embraces a both/and analytical framework, not an and/or framework.</li> <li>• Shifts focus from seeing categories as oppositional to examining their interconnections.</li> <li>• <i>Interrogates the dualistic construction of rhetorical strategies to make feminist demands.</i></li> </ul>
<p>Complexity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges that doing intersectional work is hard.</li> <li>• <i>Asks how political projects for climate change mitigation and adaptation can be designed that achieve emancipation without essentialising categories or promoting certain identities while others remain invisible?</i></li> </ul>	<p>Ecological Justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges notions of meritocracy and assumptions of fairness and equality.</li> <li>• Challenges the ways that dominant ideologies work to obscure inequality.</li> <li>• <i>Shifts focus from impacts and vulnerabilities towards socially just climate solutions.</i></li> </ul>

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Ideas stemming from feminist environmentalists denoted in italics in order to highlight a hybrid approach to intersectional investigation.

Table 3.2 offers a framework for ecofeminist intersectionality as critical praxis. This framework recognises that 'at the heart of feminism is the centrality of praxis, the necessary linkage of intellectual, political and activist work' (Gaard, 2017, p. 272) and shifts attention to how intersectionality can be *done* in practice.

Yuval-Davis' (1997) work on transversal politics is particularly useful here in conceptualising how intersectional ideas can be embodied by political

Table 3.2 A Framework of Transversal Politics

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*Transversal Politics offers the conceptual tools to consider how intersectionality might be 'done' in practice.*

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#### Solidarity

- Encourages coalition building that takes into account the specific positions of political actors and is based on principals of solidarity.
- Troubles collective political demands based on strategies that highlight single-axis identities and homogeneity.
- Accepts that knowledge is partial but that collective entities working together can better understand the world in which they live.

#### Epistemic Communities

- Those with similar and compatible values can assume an 'epistemic community' that shares common value systems and can exist across difference.
- Provides an effective strategy for groups to link together in a relation of mutual equivalence, not of domination and subordination.

#### Flexible Dialogue

- Advocates for a political dialogue between participants who each bring with them reflexive knowledge of their own positioning and identity.
  - Each participant brings to the dialogue the rooting in their own membership and identity, but at the same time tries to shift in order to put themselves in a situation of exchange with women who have different membership and identity.
  - Demands that dialogue is *ongoing*.
- 

movements and translated into intersectional political action. This framework is structured around Yuval-Davis' key ideas of transversal politics – flexible solidarity, epistemic communities and ongoing dialogue – and I have put these into conversation with ideas about feminist environmental organising, namely Haraway's (1988) ideas about solidarity politics, Bretherton's (1998) conceptualisations of organising in climate governance and Morrow's (2017a) ideas about transversal politics in the WGC.

These two frameworks are not intended to act as a novel common intersectional methodology that can be taken verbatim and applied to different contexts. Rather they should be considered an important dialogue between intersectional concepts and feminist environmental thought that can provide a solid base for ecofeminist intersectionality as a mode of critical inquiry and praxis that can make sense of feminist resistance in the UNFCCC. In what follows I provide an extended discussion of these two frameworks.

### **Ecofeminist Intersectionality as Critical Inquiry**

Despite debates surrounding intersectionality, particularly around its methodological application and use in policy circles and political institutions, a critical framework can harness intersectionality's potential to highlight and

trouble the issues associated with homogenisation based on single-axis identity markers such as ‘women’. Coupled with ideas articulated by important ecofeminists and feminist environmentalists, what follows is an important theoretical contribution for the critical analysis of feminist climate organising and political institutions such as the UNFCCC.

### ***Social Inequalities***

The first of the core ideas outlined by Collins and Bilge (2020) is the need for intersectional research to pay attention to social inequalities of gender, race, nation and class that characterise institutional practices. Social inequalities are the ‘fundamental object of investigation for intersectionality’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 224). The use of the plural in inequalities is important here in drawing attention to multiple axes of inequalities experienced by any one person. By troubling inequality seen through single-axis lenses – i.e. race- or gender-only – and conceptualising social inequality through interactions among various power structures, intersectionality ‘constitutes a way of understanding and explaining complex social inequalities of the world, in people and in human experience’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 224). In this way, intersectionality can inform different explanations for inequality than those based on a single-axis framing of identity. An intersectional lens used to analyse the political strategies employed by members of the WGC can help to understand how social movements constitute important political responses to patterns of social inequality, such as the intersections of racism, sexism, class exploitation and national identity.

One approach to attuning oneself to the multiple axes of social inequality is as straightforward as Matsuda’s framework of ‘asking the other question’:

When I see something that looks racist, I ask, ‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, ‘Where is the hetero-sexism in this?’ When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, ‘Where are the class interests in this?’

(Matsuda 1991, p. 1189; cited in Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014)

More specifically, an investigation into strategies, particularly rhetorical strategies, of members of the WGC might ask: Which identities are promoted and serve as grounds for political action? And which identities become invisible in such projects? (Kaijser and Kronsell, p. 422).

The way in which certain (or multiple) identities become invisible or ‘backgrounded’ in collective political projects has been the scholarly focus of several feminist thinkers, including key ecofeminist thinker Carolyn Merchant. Merchant (1983) used the term ‘backgrounding’ to describe the denial of women and nature through their connection and their mutual inferiorisation, providing an important tool for extending the term ‘social inequalities’ to encompass nature in the intersections of marginalisation, oppression and

destruction. Backgrounding is the way that women and nature ‘provide the background to a dominant foreground sphere of recognised achievement of causation’ (Merchant, 1983, p. 21). Alaimo reflects on the way backgrounding manifests in ecofeminist projects such as the Chipko movement where nature became ‘a mere background for the gendered human drama that unfolds’ (Alaimo, 2008, p. 23). This same process can be seen in popular depictions of ‘gender and climate change’. A simple Google Image search typically returns pages of images depicting vulnerable women located in the Global South, set to a background of a barren landscape to foreground her plight. Backgrounding certain intersections of social inequality, including nature and *earth others* (Plumwood, 2002), is important in analysing rhetorical strategies and discursive framings because, as ecofeminists have demonstrated, paradigms that omit, or background, ‘race, class, gender, sexuality, and species effectively ensure that these paradigms will be marked by the “unmarked” dominant group – typically white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, and human animals’ (Gaard, 2017, p. 9). Therefore, advocates looking to challenge such dominant paradigms need to recast the issues in dialogue with an ecofeminist intersectional framework that highlights *multiple* and *intersecting* social inequalities.

### ***Intersecting Power Relations***

Collins and Bilge (2020) stress that important to intersectional analyses is the recognition that social inequality is not natural, normal or inevitable. In this way, intersectionality provides an important tool for understanding *intersecting power relations* and how they produce social inequalities, as well as political responses to them. Intersecting power relations should be analysed (or resisted) across specific intersections of power such as racism, sexism, capitalism or hetero-sexism but also across intersecting domains of power, namely structural, disciplinary, cultural and interpersonal.

Collins and Bilge suggest that the framework of power domains offers an important heuristic, or thinking tool, for examining power relations. The structural domain of power refers to the fundamental structures of institutions, such as the UNFCCC, and their rooting in power relations of masculinity, patriarchy, racism or capitalism (and I would add anthropocentrism). The cultural domain of power refers to the increasing significance of ideas and culture in ways that help to manufacture and disseminate dominant narratives. For the purposes of my analysis, the cultural domain of power helps to position climate change as a scientific and technocratic issue, backgrounding issues of social inequality. The disciplinary domain of power refers to the rules and regulations that are fairly or unfairly applied to different people or groups. Collins and Bilge (2020) explain this in the context of the FIFA World Cup which shows how intersecting power relations are organised and operate in a social institution where the ideology of ‘fair play’ masks significant power differences such as who gets to play and how, and



where? Finally, the interpersonal domain of power refers to the way that individuals experience the convergence of the structural, disciplinary and cultural domains of power in ways that perpetuate intersecting lines of marginalisation and oppression or social inequalities.

There are two feminist conceptual tools that are crucial to this line of inquiry into domains of power and the way in which they produce social inequalities: situated knowledges and the symmetrical treatment of masculinities and femininities. Situated knowledges, a concept used widely in feminist research, particularly in Feminist Geography and International Relations, acknowledges that all knowledge is partial precisely because knowledge is situated. That is, rooted not simply in one's own positionality, but also in the situatedness of that positionality in political time and space (c.f. Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997). Proponents of situated knowledges argue that all knowledge is produced in specific circumstances and that those circumstances shape it in some way. Kaijser and Kronsell (2014) suggest that theories of situated knowledges are useful in intersectional analyses of institutions and encourage feminist analysts not only to look at policies and actions but also at the normative assumptions that they reflect. For example, the dominant ideology of climate change as a scientific and technological issue masks significant and multi-axis differences in power, both in terms of setting the agenda and in terms of how the agenda is experienced (speaking to both cultural and interpersonal domains of power).

The concept of situated knowledges provides the theoretical tools to challenge the legitimacy of dominant framings in climate politics, by offering different stories based on different situated knowledges. Kaijser and Kronsell explain this in specific reference to connecting climate change to gender concerns:

To speak in terms of situated knowledge rather means a questioning of universal claims of knowledge production; not all women give birth, and if they do, it is often only a fraction of their life experience. The conditions of life vary so significantly between, for instance, a female subsistence farmer in a low-income country and a Western female academic that the knowledge emerging from those positions varies considerably, which means that one should be careful to talk about a particular female experience or perspective. Different knowledges are generated by differences in economic resources, division of labour, and place.

(Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 423)

This quote highlights two important ways that the concept of situated knowledges can aid intersectional analyses of domains of power. First, Kaijser and Kronsell trouble the use of rhetorical strategies that rely on universalising claims about women and their lives by addressing the complexity and variation of women's experiences. But this quote also speaks to the importance of recognising that academic knowledge can be very different to other forms of

knowledge. Both forms of knowledge production are important in making political claims about women and women's experiences. Therefore, Kaijser and Kronsell suggest that an intersectional analysis should ask: what type of knowledge is privileged in dealing with climate change? How is the understanding of what is legitimate knowledge related to social categories and power relations? And how do multiple power structures interact in order to objectify and instrumentalise nature? These are important questions in an analysis of domains of power and their role in shaping social inequalities.

The symmetrical treatment of masculinities and femininities in feminist research addresses the criticism that attempts to bring in intersectional lines of critique to environmental policy circles have often failed to account for the plurality of gender itself and its place in webs of power. Bretherton (1998) has noted, for example, that attempts to put 'gender' on the agenda have resulted, not in the incorporation of gender per se, but rather the addition of women to existing frameworks and policy positions allowing dominant (masculinised) ideologies to prevail. Bretherton asserts that 'gender – understood as a relational term which would focus critical attention upon men and the operation of male power – has not reached the global environmental agenda' (Bretherton, 1998, p. 92). While Bretherton made these observations over 20 years ago, little has changed in the intervening years. Gender has remained synonymous with women (as a single-axis category) and women remain, problematically, the focus of policy attention. Bretherton draws upon influential feminist writing on gendered organisations, specifically the work of Joan Acker (1990) who argues that organisations, despite being assumed to be gender neutral, are in fact organised by gendered power structures. Acker engages with Kathy Ferguson's 1984 book *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*, which conceptualises bureaucracy as an organisation of male power constructed through abstract discourses on rationality, rules and procedures (much like the UNFCCC). In response to this overwhelming organisation of power bureaucrats, workers and clients are all feminised in their powerlessness. Acker (1990) however points out that such a metaphor for feminisation not only uses a stereotype of femininity as oppressed, weak and passive but also, by equating the experience of male and female clients, women workers and male bureaucrats, obscures the specificity of women's experiences and the connections between masculinity and power. She asserts that the origins of Ferguson's analysis in Foucauldian theory can account for the problem since Foucault himself fails to place gender in his own analysis of power.

The work of Bretherton and Acker is critical of the *asymmetrical* treatment of masculinity and femininity and highlights the importance of paying attention to the workings of masculinity and male power in feminist analyses. Such asymmetrical treatment results in analyses that focus on women, femininities and feminisation, but does not hold the analytical capacity to consider the role of masculinity and male power. Kronsell's 2005 study which applies Connell's (1995) theorising of 'hegemonic masculinity'

to military and defence institutions is particularly useful in highlighting how paying attention to the workings of masculinity and male power aids in analysis across domains of power. Kronsell suggests that the silence on hegemonic masculinity is possible because ‘once a particular set of behaviours has been established as the norm for appropriate conduct within any institution, it becomes difficult to critique, in part because normativity makes certain practices appear “natural”, beyond discussion’ (Kronsell, 2005, p. 288). Read through the framework of domains of power, a particular set of behaviours are established as the norms (structural), they become difficult to criticise (disciplinary) and they appear natural and beyond discussion (cultural). These power relations are then experienced by individuals across multiple and intersecting lines of oppression and marginalisation in different ways (interpersonal). To aid such a critique, Kronsell advocates a feminist critical analysis that questions what appears normal in institutional practice by listening to the voices of women who challenge the norm of hegemonic masculinity. She takes Cynthia Enloe’s germinal approach of ‘feminist curiosity’ when questioning the previously taken for granted in order to ‘bring in more narratives about the international than are usually voiced’ (Kronsell, 2005, p. 288). However, Kronsell criticises Enloe for her focus on women whose lives remain ‘outside’ of hegemonic institutions and for underestimating the significance of the transformative work of those who work on the ‘inside’. Thus, Kronsell encourages scholars to ask:

what happens when women engage in institutions of hegemonic masculinity? What types of insight do they gain? How can that knowledge be related to a feminist project?

(Kronsell, 2005, p. 288)

Treating gender as an analytical category rather than simply an empirical one (i.e., understanding gender as encompassing both femininities and masculinities rather than the sexed differences between men and women) requires the symmetrical analysis of both the workings of masculinities and femininities and has a long history in feminist scholarship (c.f. Harding, 1986; Connell, 1987; 1995; Peterson, 2005). The aim is to find new avenues into the dense and complicated problems of explaining the extraordinary persistence through history and across societies of the subordination of the feminine, making it an important tool for analyses across domains of power.

### *Contextuality*

The third core idea as named by Collins and Bilge (2020) is *social context*. This encourages intersectional analysis to recognise the specific concerns of groups in specific social contexts. As Collins and Bilge (2020) point out the term ‘contextualise’ comes from the impetus to think about social inequality, relationality and power relations in a social context. Tuana provides an

illustrative example of this in her research on how the impacts of climate change are shaped by power relations. In her 2008 study of Hurricane Katrina, 'Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina' Tuana places the devastation of New Orleans in relation to various intersecting forms of marginalisation. She demonstrates that those most marginalised in New Orleans were less likely, or even unable, to evacuate prior to the hurricane, the result of which made uncomfortably visible how climate change interacts with existing social structures. The specific context of Hurricane Katrina demands that intersectional stories are told about lived experiences of climate events. Thus, universalising claims about women's vulnerability to the effects of climate change fail to draw adequate attention to social context. Not all women (or men) everywhere will be affected in the same ways. Furthermore, in *Witnessing Katrina*, Tuana writes 'the urgency of embracing an ontology that rematerializes the social and takes seriously the agency of the natural is rendered apparent' (Tuana, 2008, p. 188).

Important to the study of feminist political strategies in the UNFCCC, but missing in most intersectional frameworks, is the separation of the 'social' and the 'natural'. The way in which knowledge practices in both the natural sciences and the social sciences have been divorced from each other does not provide an adequate contextual view of lived experiences of climate change (Tuana, 2008). Tuana stresses that the world cannot be divided into two neat and tidy piles and that 'witnessing the world through the eyes of Katrina reveals that the social and the natural, nature and culture, the real and the constructed, are not dualisms we can reasonably separate' (Tuana, 2008, p. 209). It is the interaction between them that is important. Tuana calls upon feminist theory and practice to abandon ontological divides between nature and culture in an effort to better understand the world, as well as our place in it. She suggests interactionism as a means of compelling researchers to speak of the social context without importing the mistaken notion that this social context somehow exists independently of, or prior to, cultures and environments: 'it serves as witness to the materiality of the social and the agency of the natural' (Tuana, 2008, p. 210). That is not to say that nature should be treated as an empirical category of analysis, simply added onto an ever-growing list. Rather, as Kaijser and Kronsell (2014) point out, the aim of intersectionality is to widen our perspective to reflect on the factors that may be relevant in a particular context. Attention to the social context, including the natural context, provides the conceptual tools to do so.

The historical context is equally integral in the process of contextualisation in ecofeminist intersectional analyses. The historical context is of particular importance in the study of climate justice movements precisely because of the rapid shift seen in attention given to climate change as a political issue. Those scholars who have criticised feminist environmentalists, including feminist climate activists (such as those discussed in Chapter 2) were not writing in an age of a 'climate emergency' giving weight to the

urgency of climate action. MacGregor has written about the effects of urgency in post-political discourse that gives the impression that ‘we are all in the same leaking boat careening towards the apocalypse’ (MacGregor, 2014, p. 620) and obscure differences in lived experiences of climate change. Similarly, early activism in the UNFCCC was not taking place in a time where the concept of intersectionality enjoyed the popularity that it does today. In this way, attention in intersectional frameworks to the historical context encourages a sense of empathy for what is, or is not, possible. But it also draws attention to how different historical contexts might open up spaces for intersectional praxis. For these reasons, the term ‘contextualisation’ is perhaps more fruitful for an ecofeminist intersectional framework than social context. Contextualising the social, natural and historical contexts in intersectional inquiry enables a more complex and nuanced narrative.

### ***Relationality***

The fourth core idea, *relationality*, informs all aspects of intersectionality by embracing a *both/and* analytical framework rather than *either/or* framework. At its most basic, this logic provides a simple heuristic in challenging the ‘seemingly simple idea that entities that are treated separate may actually be interconnected’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 232). Embracing a both/and analytical framework shifts the focus from seeing categories as oppositional to examining their interconnections. This helps to highlight the idea that identity is not an a-political, individualistic category but is always constructed in relation to and within social, natural and historical contexts shaped by intersecting power relations. The insight that ‘entities that have historically been conceptualised as separate and oppositional are interconnected and interrelated constitutes a major contribution of intersectionality to a variety of intellectual and political projects’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 233). A both/and framework helps to trouble the political necessity of simplification, or atomisation – i.e. reducing ‘gender’ to narrow man-woman binaries – risks reinforcing categorisations and invisibilises how differences are socially constructed and context-specific (Kajser and Krsnell, 2014). A both/and framework rejects the idea that humans are ‘atomistic, autonomous individuals in need only of basic legal rights to protect our freedom of choice’ (Chambers, 2013, p. 6).

The atomisation of individuals with fixed attributes (e.g. womanhood) allows them to be dissociated from wider webs of power (Resurrección, 2013) and from each other. For example, Mies (1982) describes how lace-makers of Narsapur, India, are viewed as ‘non-working housewives’, their work a ‘leisure-time activity’ keeping them entirely atomised and disorganised as workers, and ensuring that their work remains outside of the realms of productive work resulting in its devaluation. Merchant (1992) comments on how the atomisation of humans and nature has resulted in the illusion that humans can ‘master’ climate change (see also Seager, 2009). Mechanical

conceptualisations of Earth as separated from humans are so totalising that Merchant describes it as the Death of Nature:

As the unifying model for science and society, the machine has permeated and reconstructed human consciousness so totally that today we scarcely question its validity. Nature, society, and the human body are composed of interchangeable atomised parts that can be repaired or replaced from outside.

(Merchant, 1992, p. 48)

Mohanty asserts that in an atomising and totalising framework ‘questions of history, collective memory, and social and structural inequality’ (Mohanty, 2003, p. 209) are inadmissible since they are fundamentally at odds with institutional fabrics. In resisting these institutional fabrics relationality offers new political relationships between historically disenfranchised groups (Collins and Bilge, 2020). Relational terminology such as ‘solidarity’ and ‘coalition’ can help intersectionality to emerge from within coalition building for environmental justice movements (I return to this point below).

Rhetorical strategies of simplification and atomisation that invisibilise the relationship between identities should be troubled because ‘fixing difference and turning it into categories [...] excludes those who do not fit in these static categories and denies social struggle, contestation, and the complexity and fluidity of identities’ (Alaimo, 2009; cited in Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 421). This can result in the homogenisation of groups whereby differences among them are disregarded for strategic purposes. Plumwood (1993) suggests that homogenisation in gender stereotyping is well known ‘involving the appeal to homogenous and eternal male and female “natures”’ (Plumwood, 1993, p. 54). But homogenisation can occur in any heterogenous group, not just the groupings of ‘women’ and ‘men’. For example, homogenisation is a feature of the colonial relationship where all colonised people are alike and not considered on personal terms or as individuals (Plumwood, 1993). Even the natural world is homogenised and ‘defined negatively and in relation to humans as “the environment”’ (Plumwood, 1993, p. 70). The kind of insensitivity shown to the natural world under the category of ‘the environment’ treats beings in nature as if they are all alike in their defectiveness, ‘their *lack* of human qualities’ (Plumwood, 1993, p. 70 existing emphasis). Positioning nature, including the natural world and all earth others in relation to humans, results in a dualistic construction that subordinates nature under humans resulting in what Plumwood terms as ‘radical exclusion’ or hyper-separation, negating the relationality between them.

The feminist tool of critical deconstruction of binaries can help draw attention to how issues are framed in oppositional terms, for example women’s marked vulnerability versus men’s assumed invulnerability. Feminist environmental scholars are attuned to seeing how things are discursively framed in particular dualisms that work to position contrasting concepts



(for example, masculine and feminine gender identities, or human and nature) through a lens of domination and subordination, constructed as oppositional and exclusive (Plumwood, 1993). The critical deconstruction of dualisms highlights the ways in which that which is regarded as feminine is constructed in opposition to that which is regarded as masculine. Such opposition not only dichotomises masculinity and femininity but also, de facto, ranks men above women and culture above nature (Mathews, 2017). It is this entrenchment of hierarchical dualisms in Western thought (e.g. man/woman, culture/nature, mind/body, reason/emotion, ideas/actions) that places the traits associated with maleness over those associated with femininity that is central to feminist scholarship.

The concept of dualisms is an illuminating means of understanding and deconstructing rhetorical strategies in climate politics. Plumwood suggests that ‘what is at stake here is not the distinctions between men/women, and human/nature, but rather their dualistic construction’ (Plumwood, 1993, p. 33). That dualistic construction, Plumwood argues, is not merely that the terms in each binary are dichotomised and ranked as relative (either/or logics), but that the subordinate terms are instrumentalised to, or made to appear as it is created for the purposes of serving, the dominant term. Mathews (2017) illustrates this relationship by pointing out that the body (in Western worldviews) is seen as merely a vessel for the mind, rather than having significance in its own right. Furthermore, the ‘inferior’ term in the binary is backgrounded with respect to the superior (e.g. the private sphere figures only in the background to the public sphere). Seen through this analysis, it is clear how dualisms legitimise not only male domination, but also domination in general, thus crucial to an intersectional analysis because dualistic constructions can only be properly understood if seen relationally. Dualisms are constantly re-imagined and re-applied – coloniser/colonised, public/private, productive/reproductive and so forth. The superior category, or the master category, does not always distinguish men from women but rather maleness from femaleness. For example, in colonial contexts, a white woman might assume the master identity in relation to indigenous or colonised peoples, though their position would be merely honorary. As Mathews explains, ‘the white women in the colonial context might assume a masculine-tinged identity in relation to the native people, who will be glossed over as feminine’ (Mathews, 2017, p. 59). In other words, she is *both* a woman *and* white. This is the importance of a logic that allows for *bothland* reasoning.

### ***Complexity***

The fifth core idea, *complexity*, acknowledges that doing critical intersectional work, inquiry and praxis, is hard! Both because intersectionality itself is multifaceted, as demonstrated by this framework, but also because



intersectionality aims to analyse the complexity of the world and it requires intricate strategies to do so. Collins and Bilge (2020) point out that this can be a ‘source of frustration for scholars, practitioners, and activists alike’ (p. 34). As Kaijser and Kronsell (2014) put it ‘when relying on categorisations of people, there is a risk of falling into determinism and neglecting the complexity and constant renegotiation of power relations’ (p. 423). Recognising and understanding that frustration is an important part of this research.

Complexity is not something that can be achieved by deploying an intersectional framework, rather it is something that deepens intersectional analysis. Complexity allows researchers to acknowledge that single-axis framing of identity can be mobilised under certain circumstances but ‘the fluidity and constructedness of categories should always be kept in mind’ (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 423). Complexity is key to understanding the political landscape facing feminist climate activists, as demonstrated in the questions posed by Kaijser and Kronsell: how can political projects for climate change mitigation and adaptation be designed that achieve emancipation without essentialising categories or promoting certain identities while others remain invisible? In other words, how do feminists *do* intersectionality? I return to this question below and offer some tentative answers through a framework of transversal politics as intersectional praxis.

### ***Ecological Justice***

The sixth core idea, *social justice*, has historically informed much of intersectionality’s critical inquiry and political praxis. Indeed, the connection to social justice is what makes intersectionality critical (Collins and Bilge, 2020). The commitment to articulating a goal of *social justice* is important in challenging notions of meritocracy and beliefs that economic inequality, for example, is the outcome of fair competition and fully functioning democratic institutions (Collins and Bilge, 2020). In this framing, social inequalities can exist without it being socially unjust. But an intersectional commitment to social justice challenges this view by highlighting the ways in which social inequality is reproduced in ways that are neither fair nor just. It challenges the researcher to trouble norms and rules in the name of fairness, or even equality, that, while applied equally to everyone, produce unequal and unfair outcomes.

The notion of justice also has important significance in the climate movement. Discussions of ‘climate justice’ have gained traction in global climate policy with notable impacts (Okereke, 2010). In the climate justice movement, the term ‘justice’ rhetorically plays two important roles. First, it highlights the ‘injustice’ of climate change, acknowledging differential impacts and vulnerabilities that cut across multiple and intersecting lines of social inequality. Second, it suggests a human rights-based approach to climate solutions (c.f. Climate Just, 2017; Friends of the Earth, n.d.; United Nations,

n.d.; Mary Robinson Foundation, n.d.). That is, the focus on justice acts as a signal to move on from making arguments based on material impacts and vulnerabilities towards making the case for just climate solutions. It is a positive force for change. For these reasons, I find the term *ecological justice* more apt in an ecofeminist intersectional analysis.

This framework of ecofeminist intersectionality for critical inquiry informs my analysis in this book by helping to identify and analyse the rhetorical strategies mobilised by members of the WGC and to assess how they challenge or fit into dominant framings of gender in the UNFCCC. But, as Collins asserts, intersectionality on its own is unlikely to yield more effective political solutions because ‘analysis is important, yet action also matters’ (Collins, 2017, p. 1467). ‘Thinking’ one’s way out of domination is unrealistic so ‘how might more sophisticated analyses of power that take into account the ties linking violence, intersecting oppressions and domination facilitate more robust analyses of political resistance?’ (Collins, 2017, p. 1467). This is a question that has motivated a number of scholars to turn to ‘transversal politics’ as a means of ‘doing’ intersectionality.

### **Transversal Politics as Ecofeminist Intersectional Praxis**

In the face of the political, social, economic, and ecological urgencies of our times, the viability of social movements that may build an alternative future depends on how well we can practice radical relationality and deep reciprocity with each other and with nonhuman animate and inanimate beings, and work together in co-resistance.

(Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 235)

The idea of relationality is of particular importance to intersectional praxis, found in terms such as ‘dialogue’, ‘conversation’, ‘interaction’, ‘community’, ‘solidarity’ and ‘coalition’. Writing about the work of the WGC, Morrow (2017a) shows that the task of coalition building across highly heterogeneous yet administratively convenient constituencies is a difficult challenge. She suggests that Yuval-Davis’ (1997) concept of transversal politics has been a key tool to overcome this as a means of developing collective identity and action:

Transversal politics appears to offer an excellent opportunity to build upon the recognition of intersectionality that is a key response to the ecofeminist conception of compound disadvantage, as it can, among other things, potentially capitalize on the politics of multiple overlapping identities, identifying important elements of commonality that can promote coalition building.

(Morrow, 2017a, p. 403)

Transversal politics – a concept stemming from autonomous Left and feminist politics in Bologna – offers a solution to the bind of the ‘universalistic’ politics of the Left on one hand and identity politics on the other (Yuval-Davis, 1997). It avoids the traps of ethnocentrism and exclusionary practices while challenging the essentialism associated with reifying boundaries between groups. Transversal politics also challenges the principals of ‘identity politics’ which conflate individual and collective identities that assume any member of any social category or identity can speak for all other members of that identity (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The transition from identity politics to transversal politics has made clearer the separation between the individual and collective voice, thereby offering ‘an exciting means to progress beyond the deadlock that inevitably ensues from a need for total agreement in forging subject-specific alliances, requiring instead an openness to dialogue as a means to arriving at a common perspective’ (Morrow, 2017a, p. 404).

Transversal politics offers a potential solution to some of the dilemmas of feminist organising in climate governance that I discussed in Chapter 2. There are three core principles that inform this framework of transversal politics based on Yuval-Davis’ (1997) conceptualisation of intersectional praxis: solidarity politics; epistemic communities; and flexible dialogue, all building upon the relational language of intersectionality.

### ***Solidarity Politics***

Transversal politics emphasises coalition building that takes into account the specific positions of political actors (Collins, 1998). The notion of coalition building is a concept that has inspired several feminist thinkers. For example, Mohanty describes the ‘urgent political necessity of forming strategic coalitions across race, class and national boundaries’ (Mohanty, 2003, p. 18). Such strategic coalitions, as Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser (2019) argue, should be based upon the principles of solidarity not sameness. Sameness is precluded by the ideas of intersecting power relations and complexity, yet it is at the root of many of the criticisms of feminist environmental activism in that universalising claims presuppose a sameness of the category of ‘woman’ that intersectionality challenges. Solidarity, on the other hand, presents a radical challenge to the status quo by demanding a redistribution of power. Mohanty defines this solidarity

in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis of relationships among diverse communities. Rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression, the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together. Diversity and difference are central values here – to be acknowledge and respected, not eased in the building of alliances.

(Mohanty, 2003, p. 7)

This kind of solidaristic politics is influenced by a long history of feminist theorising about feminist political resistance. For example, Haraway (1988) theorises a coalition politics that is about diverse social actors engaging in strategies that embrace multiple ‘situated knowledges’ about the world and creating new collective eco-political entities in the hopes of surviving together (see also Di Chiro, 2008, p. 280). Coalition politics, like intersectionality, accepts that knowledge is partial (c.f. Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997) but that collective entities working together in solidarity can better understand the world in which they live.

### *Epistemic Communities*

Transversal politics does not assume that solidarity among different groups is without boundaries or that each and every conflict is reconcilable. But similar and compatible values can cut across differences in positioning and identity and assume what Alison Assiter (1996) calls ‘epistemological communities’ (see also Yuval-Davis, 1997). These epistemological (or epistemic) communities share common value systems and can exist across difference.<sup>1</sup> This speaks closely to the ideas of mutual equivalence in Laclau and Mouffe’s pivotal book *Hegemony and Social Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). The purpose of this book is to highlight, against a certain type of Marxist economic reductionism, that the working class has no necessary or preordained ‘leading role’. Instead, the authors argue that an effective strategy for the Left must be to link together a number of autonomous movements in a relation of mutual equivalence, not of domination and subordination. For Laclau and Mouffe, the term hegemony designates precisely the linking together, or ‘articulation’, of heterogenous struggles and demands into a bloc which must oppose the political ‘right’.

The work of articulation is not merely ideological or cultural, although it is these things too. It also takes place across material institutions and practices and is political work in the fullest sense. Political work can help to keep a sense of the ‘centrality of radical democratic politics to our tradition’ (MacGregor, 2014, p. 629) and challenge the very concept of a ‘global we’, highlighting multiple and intersecting lines of oppression and marginalisation meaning that ‘we’ do not all experience climate change in the same ways. By ‘articulating’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; see also Mouffe, 2005) the ‘them vs us’ (Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser, 2019), feminist environmental co-resistances (that is linked resistances of heterogenous struggles and demands) can create a political and collective identity that can unite different social movements in common resistance, not common identity, resisting the political necessity of homogenisation.

Yuval-Davis (1997; 1999) points out that what or where the boundaries of a feminist ‘epistemological community’ should be is a difficult question. Indeed, she recalls that Angela Davis has herself recognised that if the

struggle against her imprisonment in the 1970s had been limited to only those who shared her politics, the campaign would never have been successful (Yuval-Davis, 1999). As shown in Chapter 2, however, even within feminist environmental movements, there are many strands of self-identified feminists who may have very different opinions, goals or even preferences in political strategy. Yuval-Davis suggests that ‘transversal politics stop where the proposed aims of the struggle are aimed at conserving or promoting unequal relations of power, and where essentialised notions of identity and difference naturalise forms of social, political and economic exclusion’ (1999, p. 97). This may be clear cut in some cases, but far more complicated in others. For example, campaigns about women’s control of their own bodies might simultaneously prioritise struggles for the legislation of abortion in one location *and* they might prioritise against forced sterilisation in another (Yuval-Davis, 1999). But, if there are limited human and financial resources available and the movement must choose only one of those struggles at any one time, then transversal politics offers no built-in way of deciding which one to choose (Yuval-Davis, 1999). That is not the point of transversal politics. Yuval-Davis points out that there is no ‘end of history’ or ‘end goal’ for political struggles, precisely because of the complexity of intersectional work (1997, p. 135). Instead, transversal politics might offer a means of mutual support and greater effectiveness in the continuous struggle, through flexible and ongoing dialogue.

### *Flexible Dialogue*

Transversal politics advocates for a political dialogue between participants who each bring with them reflexive knowledge of their own positioning and identity (Yuval-Davis, 1999), embodying intersectional frameworks. The importance of dialogue stems from Collins’ argument in *Black Political Thought* (1990) that

each group speaks from its own standpoint and shares its own partial knowledge, situated knowledge. But because each group perceives its own truth as partial its knowledge is *unfinished*.

(Collins, 1990, p. 236; cited in Yuval-Davis, 1997 p. 125, *existing emphasis*)

Partiality, not universality, is the condition of being heard and so dialogue is critical to the success of this approach. In this way, it is clear how transversal politics offers an exciting method of intersectional political work in the WGC. The Italian activists that influenced Yuval-Davis referred to this process of dialogue as ‘rooting’ and ‘shifting’ (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Each participant brings with them to the dialogue the rooting in their own membership and identity, but at the same time tries to shift in order to put themselves in a situation of exchange with women who have different membership and

identity. It is important that the process of shifting should not involve self-decentring nor should it homogenise the ‘other’ (Yuval-Davis, 1997). The process of rooting and shifting should not be considered a straightforward or fixed process (Yuval-Davis, 2006) speaking to the complexity of intersectional inquiry and practice. Rather, ‘the point of transversal politics is to transcend the binary divisions of those who are in different positionings in the dialogue’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 284). The process of rooting should not be considered as simply relational but instead a process of deep engagement. The aim of the rooting process is *not* to simply imagine oneself in relation to the social category of the Other, but also to consider the different kinds of relationships that can be developed through transversal politics. Similarly, it is not possible in the process of shifting to simply imagine oneself in the narrative of the Other but those narratives may be envisioned in very different ways than the narrator intended (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Not only does this point speak to the complexity of intersectional praxis but it highlights the importance of *ongoing* dialogue in any transversal politics.

## Conclusion

In sum, my analysis applies the conceptual frameworks of ecofeminist intersectionality as critical inquiry and praxis to my investigation of feminist resistance in the UNFCCC. My critical intersectional framework is a hybrid of feminist and ecofeminist and/or feminist environmental ideas and offers the conceptual tools to identify and trouble the rhetorical strategies employed by feminists organising in the UNFCCC and to comment on the procedural strategies through which the WGC engages in the UNFCCC. This chapter has offered two interrelated frameworks: ecofeminist intersectionality as critical inquiry and as critical praxis. I mobilise these frameworks in the second half of this book to analyse the empirical material during fieldwork.

## Note

- 1 Assiter (1996, 2000) uses the phrases epistemological communities and epistemic communities interchangeably in her work, and Yuval-Davis refers to this as epistemological communities. I use the phrase epistemic communities in this book to name communities that share common knowledge and value systems. Where I use the phrase epistemological communities, it is in reference to Assiter’s or Yuval-Davis’ use of the term.

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## 4 From Zero Gender to GAP

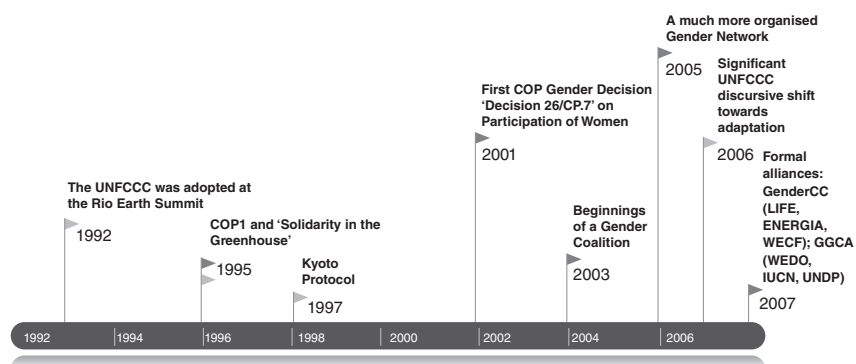
### Foregrounding Gender in UNFCCC History

A key motivation for this book was wanting to understand the adoption of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) in 2017 and its subsequent renewal in 2019. The GAP represents a pivotal moment in the history of feminist organising in the UNFCCC, which has gone from being entirely gender-blind at its formation in 1992 to having so many mentions of gender in 2017 that a GAP was required to streamline the policies for implementation. The advocacy/lobbying efforts of the WGC appears to have been integral to this shift. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 2, most histories of the UNFCCC fail to acknowledge this important political work. The lack of knowledge surrounding feminist advocacy and activism in the UNFCCC has meant that academic critiques of feminist environmental practice (such as Arora-Jonsson, 2011; MacGregor, 2017) have included the WGC under this umbrella without the necessary contextualisation of feminist climate activism. This results in a lack of understanding about the specific successes of and challenges facing the WGC in lobbying the UNFCCC ensuring its transition from zero gender to GAP.

This chapter fills an important gap in existing literature on gender and climate change by offering an empirically grounded history of feminist organising in the UNFCCC. This history is based on data from participant observation, interviews, and archival documents.<sup>1</sup> Through analysis of the empirical data I have organised this history into three key phases of feminist organising in the UNFCCC, though given the nature of an historical account there are some overlaps between them. The first phase, 1992–2007, represents an early, zero-gender phase of strong feminist voices in the COP but a lack of attention from Parties. The second phase 2007–2014 represents a period of relative success whereby, due to more formal organising within the feminist community, gender became increasingly mainstreamed throughout the UNFCCC. The final phase, 2014–2021, represents another period of transition towards implementation through the negotiation, and subsequent renewal, of the Gender Action Plan (GAP).

**Phase 1: Zero Gender – 1992–2007**

The UNFCCC as a ‘Rio Convention’ opened for signature at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and by 21 March 1994 it had gained enough signatures to be ratified and entered into force (UNFCCC, 2020i). The Convention’s adoption was remarkable for its time since there was far less scientific evidence surrounding climate change than there is today. Borrowing a line from the very successful Montreal Protocol, the UNFCCC ‘bound member states to act in the interests of human safety even in the face of scientific uncertainty’ (UNFCCC, 2020i). The first UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP1) was held in Berlin in March 1995. At this time, despite a handful of feminist activists lobbying for a gender perspective to be included in the negotiations, the UNFCCC remained largely gender-blind. It was not until 2001 that the first gender decision was agreed by the COP, Decision 36/CP.7 ‘*Improving the Participation of women in the representation of Parties established under the UNFCCC or the Kyoto Protocol*’ (UNFCCC, 2001a). This remained the only gender decision for some time and the period between 1992 and 2007 can mostly be characterised as ‘zero gender’, except for Decision 28/CP.7 ‘*Guidelines for the preparation of national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs)*’ (UNFCCC, 2001b).<sup>2</sup> Decision 28/CP.7 called on Parties to the COP to design and submit National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) to be a complementary approach to existing plans and programmes, including attention to ‘gender equality’, ‘simplicity’ and ‘cost-effectiveness’ among others. On my analysis, this phase has three distinct periods: Early Days: 1992–2002; Getting Organised: 2003–2005 and Gaining Momentum: 2006–2007. Figure 4.1 shows the primary, or most important, events of this phase of zero gender.



*Figure 4.1* Gender in the UNFCCC 1992–2007 (light grey flags denote UNFCCC-wide developments, dark grey flags denote gender-specific developments).

**Early Days: 1992–2002**

Following an initial gender-blind UNFCCC it took several years after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 before gender appeared in a COP decision under the UNFCCC. But, as Morrow asserts, ‘if the institutional machinery of the UNFCCC was slow to grasp the significance of gender to climate change, the same was not true for women themselves’ (2017b, p. 35). Feminist activists have engaged in the UNFCCC process since before COP1 (see Chapter 1) and have ‘provided constant enthusiasm, expertise and support and advocacy’ (Participant B, 2018, interview). At COP1 a local organisation called ‘Women for Peace and Ecology’ hosted an international women’s forum with the title ‘Solidarity in the Greenhouse’ (Women for Peace and Ecology, 1995). According to a newsletter account of the event, the forum was held in parallel to the official negotiations and was attended by more than 200 women from 25 countries who came together to discuss and exchange views on climate protection from a gender lens (Women for Peace and Ecology, 1995). Despite great appetite for lengthy in-depth conversations by the attendees, the organisers ‘only had limited space as a result of lacking financial means, [meaning that they] had to reduce the four forums to half a day each’ (Women for Peace and Ecology, 1995, p. 7). Refusing to be deterred, the newsletter reports that attendees continued their conversations past the designated time and into the corridors, coffee rooms and even official COP1 evening receptions.

‘Solidarity in the Greenhouse’ helped build momentum within the network of feminist activists organising in the UNFCCC process to advocate for the connection between environmental degradation and issues of women’s equality:

The context between environment and development on the one hand and issues of violence and women’s issues on the other was pointed out, together with the fact that feminist contributions have to be inserted into the environment-political agenda as an integral part.

(Women for Peace and Ecology, 1995, p. 7)

In these early days of feminist organising within the UNFCCC the term ‘feminist’ was used liberally by activists. For example, in a newsletter circulated after ‘Solidarity in the Greenhouse’ one of the conference organisers, Eva Quinstorp set out her vision for a ‘climate politics from a feminist view-point’. Quinstorp suggested that a feminist climate politics was needed because: (a) the majority of the extremely poor are women and children, (b) modern natural science and technological development, which pretends to be gender-, interest-, and class-neutral, complies with economic growth and mobility-mania and (c) alliances of feminists and environmental activists and experts were organising themselves simultaneously for the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen, the Climate Conference in Berlin and the UN

Women's Conference in Beijing (Quinstorp, 1995, p. 10). Feminist discussions were taking place in other international forums, and it was time that the UNFCCC took note.

This kind of linking to other international forums is a common tactic in the feminist environmental community, who at this time were likely boldened by events at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing 1995. In a personal account of the conference Jo Freeman, an American feminist and political scientist recalls that although most issues had been discussed at previous conferences, the environment was added to the agreement at this time (Freeman, 1996). I would describe this period as a kind of Golden Age of feminist organising on climate change with the Beijing Platform for Action on Women not only providing a document that they could point to, or draw upon, but also providing healthy fertilising ground for feminist movement building. WEDO had been in attendance with over 4,000 representatives of over 20,000 NGOs (United Nations, 1995), providing plenty of opportunity and cross-fertilisation as well as potentially providing an explanation for the strong level of feminist organising in these early days of the UNFCCC.

The main organisers of 'Solidarity in the Greenhouse', Eva Quinstorp and Alexandra Wandel, sent an open letter to Angela Merkel, President of the COP and then German Minister of Environment, as well as the former Minister for Women and Youth. An excerpt of the open letter states:

How do you respond to our demand that NGO representatives from women's and environmental organisations have as much influence at the UN Conference as business lobbies from the coal and oil-producing countries who are preventing an energy tax not only by the Clinton-Gore administration, but also in the EU and in Germany? If the conference bows to the pressure from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in setting up its rules of procedure and adopts a consensus rule, every step toward CO<sub>2</sub> reductions will be nullified.

(Quinstorp and Wandel, 1995)

Two primary concerns can be read from this excerpt, both of which are linked to the structure of the UNFCCC. The first relates to civil society participation in the UNFCCC. Initially, there were two formal constituencies – the business and industry non-governmental organisations (BINGOs) and the environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) (UNFCCC, 2020a), speaking to the technocratic nature of these early days of the UNFCCC. Women and Gender was not yet a recognised constituency and the excerpt above speaks to the power dynamics that are at play in this set up. Quinstorp and Wandel suggest that BINGOs were in fact hindering the process through the power that they held. The second concern is with the decision-making process itself, warning against the system of consensus (and de facto veto), that is in place today. This kind of 'system-change' approach

is emblematic of the network of feminist climate activists at the time with general anti-capitalist sentiments running through documents from 1995 (International Women's Forum, 1995; Quinstorp, 1995). The small network of feminists took every opportunity to point out the inadequacies of the 'free market' and 'economic growth' in any attempt to tackle climate change. The evidence shows that in these early days feminist climate activists were advocating a distinctly feminist (if not explicitly intersectional) climate politics.

### ***Getting Organised: 2003–2005***

After 1995 it took several years to regain this level of momentum. However, Röhr (2017, interview) noted in our interview that records suggest that there were some women's activities and position papers distributed at COP3 Kyoto in 1997, although these are no longer available. However, there was an e-mail sent out by an Australian delegate asking why women's organisations were not more strongly present at COP3 and why they did not take more notice of the conference. Partly in answering her own question the delegate suggested: 'The arguments used here are almost entirely economic. Decisions are made mostly with little consideration being given to survival. Perhaps women felt that they could not penetrate this masculine perspective – and stayed home' (Sargent, 1997; cited in Hemmati and Röhr, 2009). Despite the presence of feminist climate activists who were advocating a feminist approach to climate politics, the professional make-up of Party delegates in the early days of the COPs included people who hailed predominately from economics, science and law (Participant B, 2018, interview), meaning that activists found it difficult to make arguments about intersecting social inequalities. The lack of presence of women may have been more of a structural issue than simply an issue of wilful dismissal of gender issues since women (and gender) was not yet an official constituency. Not holding constituency status meant that women's NGOs did not enjoy benefits of access to the Plenary floor, invitations to limited-access workshops and meetings and so on (see UNFCCC, 2020a for constituency benefits). Competition for access to the negotiations was particularly fierce in 1997, with 9,850 registered participants compared to 3,969 at COP1 in 1995 and just 1,584 at COP2 in 1996 (UNFCCC, 2020g). The reason for this was that COP3 Kyoto was the COP that agreed the Kyoto Protocol, the first UNFCCC treaty to reduce global emissions (UNFCCC, 1997). I discuss in the concluding section of this chapter how key moments tend to coincide with a drowning out of gendered concerns (see Figure 4.4), so when all is considered I do not see much reason to be surprised at the lack of evidence of feminist activity at this time.

As a result, despite a handful of gender based side events (see GenderCC, 2000) the COP remained mostly gender-blind. But in the years immediately following the Kyoto Protocol, one prominent issue did begin to emerge: the low participation of women in the negotiations. A number of articles and statements were published by the daily newsletters that are circulated

during the COP and related meetings of the Parties (such as The Earth Times, ECO, and Equity Watch) criticising the low participation of women (see for example Climate Action Network, 2001). This led to the adoption of the first ever gender decision under the UNFCCC resulting in Decision 36/CP.7 *'Improving the participation of women in the representation of Parties in bodies established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or the Kyoto Protocol'* (UNFCCC, 2001a) at COP7 Marrakech in 2001. Civil society organisations (CSOs) pointed out that neither the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) executive board, COP7 Working Group chairs nor the Bureau of the COP featured even one woman on their boards (Climate Action Network, 2001, p. 2). The decision itself was proposed by Samoa and supported by Russia and the European Union (EU) and called for more nominations of women to bodies under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. It also tasked the Climate Secretariat (or UN Climate Change) with monitoring the gender composition of these bodies and with bringing the results to the attention of the Parties, a practice that still stands today.

Hemmati describes the feminist organising at this time as 'rather sketchy and uncoordinated' (Hemmati, 2005, p. 2), somewhat ad hoc and reliant on a handful of individuals. But COP9 Milan in 2003 provided an opportunity for those working on gender and climate change issues to re-group and come together with a view of organising more coherently, establishing their goals and priorities within the negotiations. Women's and gender NGO LIFE – Education, Environment, Equality, in co-operation with similar organisations ENERGIA – International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), hosted an informal meeting to address the question 'Is gender an issue in climate change negotiations?' (LIFE, ENERGIA, and WECF, 2003). According to minutes from the meeting, the 30 or so people that attended the meeting on 5 December 2003 were all in agreement that that gender had been a missing component of the climate change negotiations and that more action was needed to make gender more visible in the process (LIFE et al., 2003). I discussed this event with Röhr, who was one of the event organisers. She noted her surprise at such levels of interest in the issue of gender and climate change, something she had felt, despite the small steps of progress made, was a hugely marginalised issue (Röhr, 2017, interview). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss strategy and resulted in the conclusion that a more formalised network for gender advocacy was required if feminists were to make more headway in influencing the negotiations.

It took two years of strategising, but this new and more formal network was implemented at COP11 Montreal in 2005 (GenderCC, 2005). In preparation, Hemmati drafted a strategy paper (Hemmati, 2005) which identified possible entry points for gender aspects in the climate change debate, with a particular focus on the Global North. This was in contrast with the majority of scholarship on gender and climate change and gender and environment



social movement priorities at this time which tended to focus on women located in the Global South and highlighted their disproportionate vulnerability to the effects of climate change (see for example Cannon, 2002; Masika, 2002). Hemmati's (2005) paper called for women's organisations, researchers and others working on climate change to develop a strategy towards a more effective effort to have the gender aspects of climate change included in a future regime. She pointed to a series of specific entry points to be addressed when looking at the gender aspects of climate change in the Global North specifically, which included: health issues (e.g. mortality and caring work), economic issues (e.g. energy prices, health costs and food security/nutrition), social issues (e.g. natural resource conflicts and economic and environmental migration) and gender roles and gender-specific attitudes (e.g. power and decision-making and risk perception) (Hemmati, 2005, pp. 4–5).

Reports from the time show that the feminist network additionally organised a series of events including: raising awareness and disseminating information via an exhibition booth called 'gender-justice-climate'; a written statement which was handed out to delegates (Women at COP11 and MOP1, 2005a); the first ever intervention (or statement) to the COP Plenary on gender (Women at COP11 and MOP1, 2005b); and the creation of a mailing list that is still in use today (GenderCC, 2005). This level of organisation marks a shift in feminist strategy:

individuals and organisations working on women & environment issues are a bit stuck – maybe not in a cul-de-sac, but at least at a cross-roads. Over the last few decades, we have moved from activism “outside” the political processes (literally outside the buildings and conference rooms) to advocacy on the “inside”. Much of the early activism was to ensure access to the policy-making processes, highlighting the need for women's participation to ensure quality of discussion and legitimacy of outcomes. Nowadays, women's organisations are being consulted in many national processes, their representatives are being invited to advise governmental delegations, and women are recognized as a “Major Group” in many UN processes, participating actively as NGOs, civil society representatives, and stakeholder dialogue participants. In many fora, we have opportunities to speak at negotiating sessions and/or lobby delegates at meetings, distribute materials, etc. We are nowadays being asked for inputs, comments, ideas, strategies, paragraphs (including the rather exploitative mechanisms that often come with that). Much of the work is professionalized; there are highly educated women doing the work – the research, the advocacy, and implementation in governments and elsewhere. These mechanisms have been used by women's organisations in many processes, and have resulted, at least in many cases, in more gender-sensitive decisions and policies. However, women are still far from equal representation in decision-making. And many areas

remain where we have not moved from general statements concerning gender issues to the necessary concrete and substantive recognition of gender specific aspects of particular issues.

(Hemmati, 2005, p. 24)

This quote demonstrates a that clear strategic decision was taken to work inside the official UNFCCC structures with a view to gaining access inside the institution, a successful decision that resulted in feminists gaining much more power to influence the agenda. But the quote also demonstrates a concern that the greater opportunities afforded to the feminist network were rooted in exploitative mechanisms. Despite the dangers of working inside the UNFCCC, GenderCC hints at the excitement felt by feminist climate activists stating that ‘after almost ten years of on-off and largely uncoordinated participation by women’s organisations, the direction from COP1 had been found again’ (GenderCC, 2005). Those involved approached the negotiations with more purpose, focus and strategic thinking than ever before.

### ***Gaining Momentum: 2006–2007***

The momentum established from feminist efforts at COP11 in 2005 helped to propel organising efforts into COP12 Nairobi in 2006, the first climate change conference to focus on sub-Saharan Africa. This COP marks a significant shift in discourse from mitigation to adaptation and so provided a strategically convenient entry point for women’s equality advocates, who had recently begun to formalise their activities. They used this opportunity to make visible the point that while women are particularly affected by global environmental changes, they also play a key role for the development and implementation of adaptation measures (Waititu, 2006). In other words, women are not just vulnerable victims to the effects of climate change, but they are also powerful agents of change. This point was relayed to Parties in an eloquent intervention made by Annabell Waititu from Kenya. In closing she made the sassy remark: ‘therefore, we call for a creative and integrated approach to climate change policy. If you are lacking in ideas, women are prepared to contribute!’ (Waititu, 2006).

COP12 Nairobi was presided over by the first ever sub-Saharan African country and because of this Röhr points out that the issue of women’s vulnerability to the worst effects of climate change slotted well into the discourse that was shifting towards adaptation, and was something that continued into COP13 Bali:

So, this was for me, it really was the starting point and just because we got attention only by evidencing women as the most vulnerable. So, what we have to do, my experience was, to get to end with gender into these processes, or women into the process, we had to take this approach as an entry point on women are the most vulnerable. And so, for that

reason, and I remember it very well in Bali, you'll have to look for the dates or COP numbers, but in Bali that was for me the first conference where much more focus was put on adaptation. Beforehand it was much more on mitigation, so it was a shift in issues because of pressure from development corporations, or organisations, working in these areas.

(Röhr, 2017, interview)

This entry point played well in a strategy intended to advocate on the 'inside' and represents a distinct shift in feminist organising in the UNFCCC that would come to shape the future of the Constituency. But it is important to point out that this shift was not one that was welcomed by all feminist climate activists. Rather, for many who had been engaging with the UNFCCC for many years, such as Röhr, it was a necessary strategic manoeuvre to integrate other stories about women and their lives.

In keeping with a more insider approach, COP13 Bali in 2007 saw what had been a loose collective of feminist climate activists became more formalised with the emergence of two broad coalitions: GenderCC – Women for Climate Justice was created out of the small group of NGOs present within the negotiations including LIFE, ENERGIA and WECF; and The Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) formed between WEDO, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). While GenderCC was a coalition of small gender focused NGOs, GGCA was more institutionally focused. This was, at least in part, because WEDO had much more experience in bringing gender into the negotiations, having been a strong force at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and so favoured a more formal means of working directly with UN organisations (Meyer and Prügl, 1999). Though the two alliances disagreed on certain issues such as finance and carbon markets (see GenderCC, 2007a; 2007b), both alliances worked very closely together creating the Women's Caucus which met (and still does) every morning from 9am to 10am during the negotiations. This marked a move towards a more formal role in the UNFCCC infrastructure and the beginning of a two-year process towards the caucus being recognised as an official UNFCCC constituency.

Constituency status, while not a compulsory or binding requirement for observer NGOs, comes with several benefits including: access to the Plenary floor in the form of an intervention; allocation of secondary badges when 'site access limiting' is planned by the Secretariat; receipt of informal advance information from the Secretariat; timely information through daily meetings; occasional and very limited invitation to Ministerial receptions by host Governments; access to bilateral meetings with officials, invitation by the Secretariat to limited-access workshops between sessional periods, etc. (UNFCCC, 2020a). To become an official constituency, the group must apply and serve a two-year term similar to a kind of probation. The purpose of this two-year process is to allow NGOs to demonstrate that they can work

together as a constituency, but a more cynical view might suggest that it also has the added benefit of ensuring those on ‘probation’ play by the rules, and an exercise of disciplinary power if read through an intersectional framework. The Women’s Caucus (caucus being the name given to those waiting for full constituency status) had applied as the *Women and Gender Constituency*, a point of departure from the UN wide Women’s Major Group on which it was based. The inclusion of ‘gender’ in ‘women and gender’ was intended to communicate the intention to take a more inclusive feminist approach to climate action (see Morrow, 2017a).

Despite the increasing formalisation of the Women’s Caucus in the UNFCCC, the institution remained largely gender-blind. As of 2006 only one decision relating specifically to gender existed, Decision 36/CP.7 (UNFCCC, 2001a) intended to increase the participation of women, and one other decision mentioning gender equality Decision 28/CP.7 (UNFCCC, 2001b), suggesting a persistent resistance from decision makers in the UNFCCC process. As noted above, feminists and gender advocates were being increasingly called upon to feed into gender-responsive climate policy ideas but these efforts rarely translated into official policy. Instead, policy-makers stalled, calling for more specific data, as opposed to the anecdotal evidence seen to be provided by the Women’s Caucus. A report of a high-level roundtable on ‘How Changing Climates Impact Women’ at COP13 in 2007, George Pataki, former Governor of New York and US Representative on Climate Change to the UN General Assembly remarked ‘we have heard powerful anecdotes. What we need now is gender-specific data on climate change’ (Pataki, 2007 in Council of Women World Leaders, WEDO and Henrich Böll Stiftung, 2007). He further goes on to state that ‘there is a need for research, gathering data and documentation of gender specific consequences of climate change’ (Pataki, 2007 in Council of Women World Leaders, WEDO and Henrich Böll Stiftung, 2007), despite years of research, policy recommendations and position papers (see for example Kronsell, 2005; United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2005; Davion, 2009). Lorena Aguilar, Senior Gender Advisor at IUCN, at the same event noted that

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that “the impacts of climate change will fall disproportionately upon developing countries and the poor persons within all countries, and thereby exacerbate inequities in health status and access to adequate food, clean water, and other resources.” We also know that 70-80% of overall deaths were women in the 2004 Asian Tsunami. In Bangladesh, women suffered the most following the cyclone and flood of 1991. Among women aged 20-44, the death rate was 71 per 1000, compared to 15 per 1000 men. Warning information was transmitted by men to men in public spaces, but rarely communicated to the rest of the family. Without secure access to and control over natural resources (land, water, livestock,

trees) women are less likely to be able to cope with permanent climatic change or willing to make investments in disaster mitigation measures.

(Aguilar, 2007 in Council of Women World Leaders, WEDO, and Henrich Böll Stiftung, 2007, p. 5)

Thus, the calls for more specific data, despite clear evidence that the knowledge exists in other forums, raises important questions around what kind of research, data and evidence would be sufficiently scientific to support action on gender and climate change. An intersectional reading of the exchange above might suggest that structural and cultural power is at play in gate-keeping the kinds of knowledge that is deemed legitimate in global climate politics.

The period from 1992 to 2007 is characterised by a loose network of feminist climate activists who were increasingly organising their efforts inside the UNFCCC. By 2007 this network was becoming more formalised itself and was gaining important recognition in the UNFCCC infrastructure. This work seemingly had paid off given that ‘gender’ was now included in UNFCCC decisions and mandates, including a decision specifically relating to the need to include more women in negotiating processes. Yet, despite years of research and feminist knowledge about the gendered impacts of climate change, much of the political energies of the network of feminists were still focused largely on making the case for gender as a relevant political issue for climate change. The UNFCCC broader system remained unconvinced of the importance of mainstreaming gender into its structures.

## **Phase 2: Mainstreaming Gender into the UNFCCC – 2007–2013**

By 2007 feminist climate activists were actively and strategically working ‘inside’ the UNFCCC institutional boundaries, building alliances with one another as well as seeking formal recognition in the UNFCCC as a constituency. Because of their insider advocacy work, negotiators and the UNFCCC Secretariat were taking increasing notice of these efforts. My analysis suggests that 2007–2013 was a phase of mainstreaming gender into the UNFCCC. The phase can be divided into two distinct periods: Getting Noticed: 2007–2009; and Feminist Leadership: 2010–2013. Again, the key moments are visualised in Figure 4.2 for reference.

### ***Getting Noticed: 2007–2009***

The focus of COP13 Bali in 2007 was the Bali Action Plan (BAP), a two-year process whereby every major component of climate change was to be addressed: a shared vision for long-term cooperative action as well as enhanced action on mitigation, adaptation, technology development and transfer, capacity building and finance (UNFCCC, 2007). The BAP process

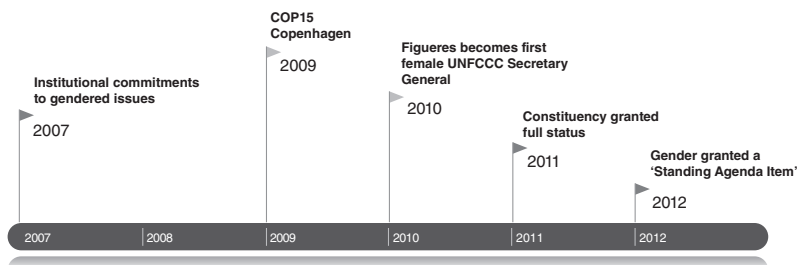


Figure 4.2 Gender in the UNFCCC 2007–2013 (light grey flags denote UNFCCC-wide developments, dark grey flags denote gender-specific developments).

offered an opportunity for the global community to shift its focus from the scientific and highly technological conversations towards a climate politics that was more aware of the pressing social issues, including sustainable development and poverty eradication (WEDO, 2009). The BAP offered a more holistic approach to the climate negotiations and gender was a part of that discussion. A post-analysis report of the COP13 stated that

it was not only NGOs, but also United Nations Organisations like IUCN who expressed their commitment to gender mainstreaming in climate change policies. Thus, it seems that ‘gender equality’ is finally beginning to be accepted as one of the core principles for mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts.

(Röhr and Hemmati, 2007, p. 2)

The authors went on to state that ‘some countries, and not least the UNFCCC Secretariat, are also appearing more open-minded towards gender equality’ (Röhr and Hemmati, 2007, p. 2). Indeed, six months before the COP the Indonesian COP President, Minister for the Environment Rachmat Witoelar expressed the Presidency’s commitment to support women’s involvement in the conference (GenderCC, 2007c). Later the Presidency also expressed a desire to integrate a commitment to gender equality in the deliberations during a meeting with Indonesian CSOs (Hemmati and Röhr, 2009). While he failed in doing so – the BAP, while recognising the need for economic and social development and poverty eradication as global priorities, did not mention women or gender (see UNFCCC, 2007) – his statement was a strong message at the institutional level.

Two years later, COP15 Copenhagen took place, a COP widely regarded as a failure on many fronts (see Vidal, Stratton, and Goldenberg, 2009 for example). A series of meetings paved the way for COP15 that feminist climate activists followed closely in the hopes of lobbying for strong gender language to be included in the agreement. The priority for Copenhagen was to adopt a comprehensive agreement for tackling global climate change, in

which the women's coalitions had hoped gender would feature prominently. In the words of UNFCCC Executive Secretary at the time, Yvo de Boer, the Copenhagen summit was a 'rollercoaster ride' (de Boer, 2009). In draft documents that were prepared before the COP there were 137 references to gender (Röhr, 2017, interview), but most did not make the final document, a document that was not based on any previous draft but an entirely new one written by the Danish Presidency-- although the Presidency previously denied any such document existed (Climate Action Network, 2009).

Far from the comprehensive, binding agreement that had been hoped for, the resulting Copenhagen Accord was a sparse 12-paragraph document with few details. The Accord was produced by just 26 Parties and introduced on the 18 December 2009, the last day of the negotiations (UNFCCC, 2009). The Copenhagen Accord was controversial; it made promises but lacked legally binding commitments and, as the final text was not negotiated or debated by all of the 194 Parties to the UNFCCC, many Parties and Observers questioned its viability (WEDO, 2009). During the process, however, support for the principles of gender equality was found in a variety of Parties including allies in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Arab League and industrialised countries, most prominently the Nordic States (WEDO, 2009). The text of the Copenhagen Accord makes note of the scale of the challenge of climate change and agrees, in principle, that 'deep cuts' are needed (UNFCCC, 2009, paragraph 2). While the text recognises enhanced vulnerability of least developed countries the Accord does little to attend to the social issues, such as gender, that had been in wide discussion since Bali in 2007.

The Copenhagen Accord represents a theme that would become common in the history of gender in the UNFCCC: issues of gender equality tend to fall to the background in years of heightened political tensions and in years where focus is placed on agreeing official UNFCCC treaties, while technocratic and economic concerns, such as technology transfer and carbon markets, are foregrounded in the political discussion.

### ***Feminist Leadership: 2010–2013***

After the disappointing outcome at COP15, de Boer stepped down and was replaced by Christiana Figueres from Costa Rica as the first woman UNFCCC Executive Secretary in 2010 (UNFCCC, 2020d). In collaboration with the Mexican COP16 President Patricia Espinosa there was a radical departure in focus from the previous conference in Copenhagen, ultimately delivering a comprehensive package to assist developing nations in mitigating climate change and adapting to its effects through the GCF, the UNFCCC Technology Mechanism and the Cancun Adaptation Framework. But it was the Cancun Agreements established under the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) that was the main outcome of COP16.



The Agreements were essentially a series of annexes in which gender was mentioned six times on issues ranging from women's participation, gender-sensitive adaptation plans and recognising women's vulnerability (UNFCCC, 2010). As part of this shift COP16 Cancun is regarded as the COP that 'really opened up to cross-cutting issues like gender' (Coates, 2018, interview) representing a shift towards a deliberate gender-mainstreaming effort. One interview participant attributes this shift as due to the Women's Caucus providing a lot of technical assistance and support to Parties alongside a huge amount of advocacy pre-Cancun (Participant B, 2018, interview). Reports from the time show that the Women's Caucus was ultimately happy with the outcome in Cancun (WEDO, 2010). Not only had the total number of references to women in the final text of the AWG-LCA increased, there were also qualitative improvements compared to previous texts (GenderCC, 2010). For example, the issue of 'women and gender' was beginning to be mainstreamed throughout the UNFCCC bodies including appearing in climate finance, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) and adaptation. In particular, discussions around the GCF acknowledged that climate finance was not a gender-neutral issue (Climate Action Network, 2010). As a result, gender was written into the founding documents of the GCF, with particular focus on the need for 'gender balance' (Schalek, 2017, interview), although Schalek also notes that this has never actually happened.

Gender-mainstreaming efforts continued into COP17 Durban in 2011, where the Women's Caucus was finally granted full constituency status and became known as the Women and Gender Constituency, with several COP decisions referencing gender, including Decision 2/CP.17 *'Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention'* (UNFCCC, 2011a) and Decision 13/CP.17 *'Capacity-building under the Convention'* (UNFCCC, 2011b). However, an intervention by Emily Tjale on behalf of GenderCC suggests that not all women felt that these developments had been fully informed:

Every year the world's nations have been meeting to come up with a global climate change agreement. However, the voice of grassroots communities, particularly women, has effectively not been heard. These are people who depend on the weather for their survival yet their voice has been overshadowed by the corporations with their strong lobby and as a result their environmental, economic, social and cultural rights receive very little or no attention on the UNFCCC agenda.

(Tjale, 2011)

This quote suggests that despite the leaps forward in terms of references to gender in the decision texts, the very structure of the UNFCCC, that same structure that feminist environmentalists had critiqued at COP1 in 1995, was very much still in place. Corporations and their 'strong lobby' still held

the locus of power in civil society at the expense of ‘grassroots communities’. This raises important questions around the process of advocating for women and gender concerns in neo-liberal political institutions laced with multiple and intersecting webs of power (c.f. Spivak, 1996).

Notwithstanding the challenges facing the WGC, the issue of ‘gender and climate change’ had captured institutional attention. At a high-level event co-hosted by the Government of Mexico and the Mary Robinson Foundation (MRF) ministers decided to form a ‘Troika’ that originally consisted of the COP15/CMP5 President and Minister for Climate and Energy, Denmark, Connie Hedegaard, COP16/CMP6 President and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mexico, Patricia Espinosa and COP17/CMP7 President and Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, South Africa, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane (Mary Robinson Foundation, 2020). The Troika, which quickly became a ‘Troika+’, consists of women leaders on gender and climate change and now boasts more than 55 high-profile women leaders (Mary Robinson Foundation, 2020). The MRF has served as a Secretariat for the Troika+ since its inception, providing briefing papers and convening meetings (Mary Robinson Foundation, 2020). The Troika+ played a significant role in realising the ‘Doha Miracle’ (Mary Robinson Foundation, 2020) that was Decision 23/CP.18 *‘Promoting gender balance and improving the representation of women in the UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established under the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol’* (UNFCCC, 2012). The MRF claims that ‘through collective action and leadership the Troika+ succeeded in overcoming significant procedural obstacles with a decision being introduced and adopted at the same COP’ (Mary Robinson Foundation, 2020). ECO (Climate Action Network, 2012), a daily newsletter distributed at the COP produced the Climate Action Network (CAN), rightly pointed out that the decision was remarkably similar to the very first gender decision from COP7 (36/CP.7) which was aimed at the ‘improvement’ of the participation of women and encouraged UNFCCC Parties ‘to give active consideration to the nomination of women for elective posts in anybody established under the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol’ (UNFCCC, 2001a paragraph 1). The new decision, however, was widely supported and had gained input from various organisations.

Despite this win, the WGC, which has engaged very little with the MRF or the Troika+ on a formal basis, remained less convinced of the outcome of the Doha Miracle than the MRF. The WGC was quick to state its ‘deep disappointment’ at the watering down of the wording, which had shifted from language on ‘gender equality’ to the less contentious phrase ‘gender balance’. Alber, then Focal Point for the WGC, pointed out in a press statement that while gender balance is important from an equity and human rights perspective it falls far short of the substantive gender equality needed to accomplish fundamental changes in human societies (Alber, 2012). The WGC was clear that language specifically on gender equality would help to move beyond the numbers and to deal with substantive issues of equality.

Decision 23/CP.18 is significant in two ways. First, rather than simply urging Parties to improve the participation of women, it ‘invites Parties to commit’ to the goal of gender balance (UNFCCC, 2012 paragraph 5). Second, and more significantly, it established ‘Gender and Climate Change’ as a standing agenda item. Previously gender issues were discussed under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) Agenda 21 – Any other Items. Being under the ‘any other items’ section of the negotiations, ECO suggested, meant that

the needs and concerns of half the world’s population were not given a place of their own in the central agenda of the COP. Adopting this decision would place gender and climate change issues on the official COP agenda so that the interests of women would no longer be considered auxiliary to UNFCCC goals.

(Climate Action Network, 2012, p. 2)

Furthermore, one interview participant remarked that by giving the issue of ‘gender and climate change’ formal space within the Convention signified that Parties accepted gender and climate change as an important cross-cutting issue that needed to be resourced (Participant B, 2018). As such, the new ‘Gender and Climate Change’ Agenda Item was to be supported by a Gender Advisor who had begun working in the Climate Secretariat from Spring 2012 with the aim of strengthening the gender perspective in the various strains of the negotiations. The advisor appointed was Fleur Newman who quickly became highly respected amongst negotiators, the WGC and the Secretariat itself. But, while this position, and the work that went with it, needed funding, Parties had failed to provide that funding (Participant B, 2018, interview).

From an intersectional feminist lens COP18 in 2013 was a particularly interesting year within the WGC. For one reason, in May 2013 at a pre-COP meeting, Röhr gave an intervention on the need to discuss ‘justice’ in discussions about equality since justice opened up pathways to discuss power relations, social divisions and inequality within borders as well as across borders (Röhr, 2013a). Röhr also brought up the ‘dominance of male values and standards’ or ‘androcentrism’ (Röhr, 2013a) which, she later informed me in an interview, had received a frosty reception from both Parties and CSOs (Röhr, 2017, interview). At the same time, Bridget Burns and Emelia Reyes gave a capacity building workshop presentation that warned against problematic gender rhetoric: using women as a synonym for gender; gender/women implying vulnerable, victim, poor or altruistic stewards of the environment; and (strategic) essentialism (Reyes and Burns, 2013).

This pre-COP event represents an important moment of reflection for the Constituency, in collaboration with a handful of academics including Magnúsdóttir who presented her co-authored research with Kronsell (Magnúsdóttir and Kronsell, 2015). Reflections on the event suggest that the WGC and its members were aware of the challenges of making intersectional

demands in the UNFCCC and were committed to beginning a dialogue with actors outside of the Constituency, including academic theorists, in an effort to advance women and gender arguments and to enact intersectional praxis.

### Phase 3: Gender Action Plan – 2014–2021

By 2014 ‘gender’ was an issue that was increasingly mainstreamed throughout the negotiations with so many decisions, many of which aiming at the same thing, that a mechanism was required to streamline these decisions for implementation. This was the purpose of the GAP. This section gives a history in three key parts: Towards Implementation: 2014–2015; Extending the Lima Work Programme on Gender: 2016; The Gender Action Plan: 2017–2021. Figure 4.3 depicts the main events from 2014 to 2021.

#### *Towards Implementation: 2014–2015*

COP20 in Lima in 2014 was a landmark year in the history of gender and the UNFCCC. COP President and Minister of Environment of Peru, Manuel Plugar-Vidal noted that a key priority for COP20 was ‘to build on progress in advancing gender-responsive climate-policy’ (Plugar-Vidal, 2014). To this end negotiators were debating a new framework for harmonising gender-related mandates located within existing decisions that would provide a platform to define actions, guidance and instruments as well as setting the benchmarks for implementing those decisions (Climate Action Network, 2014). As a result, parties to the convention at COP20 Lima adopted a new and significant decision on gender equality: Decision 18/CP.20 *The Lima Work Programme on Gender* (LWPG). In the LWPG, Parties requested the Secretariat to prepare an action plan for the development of a two-year work programme on gender, including mapping all of the relevant decisions on gender and climate change (UNFCCC, 2014) in order to take stock of the existing decisions relating to gender to advance them for implementation.

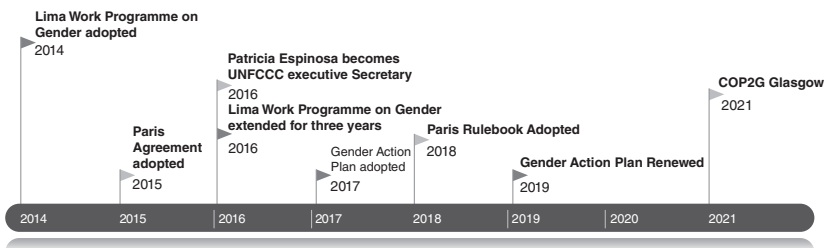


Figure 4.3 Gender in the UNFCCC 2014–2021 (light grey flags denote UNFCCC-wide developments, dark grey flags denote gender-specific developments).

While pleased with the outcome of Lima, the WGC was again disappointed by the watering down of language from gender equality to gender balance (WGC, 2014a). Canadian negotiator Laura Coates noted in our interview that the Gender Agenda Item was being used as a bargaining chip in the tense negotiations resulting in this weaker language (Coates, 2018, interview). In a press statement Burns, the recently elected WGC co-Focal Point for the Global North (Kalyani Raj had been elected Global South co-Focal Point) made the point that

Without gender equality, women's rights, indigenous peoples rights and climate justice, including financing for loss and damage, a rapid transition to safe and renewable energies, massive commitment and emissions reductions by the developed world, and full participation of those most impacted, the programme of work to be done will be incubated and launched within an empty shell and will do little to support the lives of millions nor protect the precious ecosystems upon which we depend for our survival.

(WGC, 2014b)

In this vein the Constituency had already turned its attention to COP21 Paris in 2015.

In a plenary intervention Mrinalini Rai, speaking on behalf of the WGC, warned the chairs of the Paris Agreement that it was 'crucial that gender equality is included as a guiding principle in the operative language of the new climate agreement, a cross-cutting issue in all elements of climate policy' (WGC, 2014c). This was because COP21 Paris was set to adopt the 'Paris Agreement' to provide a comprehensive framework for tackling global climate change (see UNFCCC, 2015). COP21 was held between 30 November and 11 December 2015 and, after two weeks of intense negotiations, the Paris Agreement was adopted to cheers, tears and hugs from exhausted negotiators, facilitators and observers (for an interesting visual overview of the two weeks of COP21 Paris see UN Climate Conference, 2015).

The expectation for the Paris Agreement within the WGC was that gender would be meaningfully included in the agreement in all areas including adaptation, mitigation, capacity building, finance, and technology (Burns, 2017). An Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform (ADP) meeting (ADP2.8) in Geneva in February 2015 showed that 'a significant number of groups and countries; including Mexico, Uganda, Chile, the EU, Bolivia, and Tuvalu, supported the inclusion of strong language of human rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, and gender equality' (Climate Action Network, 2015a, p. 1). Most significantly Burns (2017) recalls that this was to be included in 'Section C' of the decision text which would ensure that these principles applied to all aspects of the agreement.

CSOs, including the WGC, were well prepared with many demonstrations and lobbying efforts planned for the two-week conference.

Reports from Paris show that the WGC loudly protested and lobbied on everything from the need for a ‘fair and ambitious Paris Agreement’ to climate finance (see GenderCC, 2015). Perhaps the biggest action seen at COP21, organised collaboratively between climate justice orientated NGOs was the civil society sit-in for climate justice. The sit-in included huge cut-outs of animals that face extinction and chants claiming that they were ‘unstoppable; another world is possible!’ Actions such as this were particularly notable at COP21 Paris since civil society action was heavily policed during the conference. The city was still in an emergency state of law following terror attacks in the French capital, meaning that the usual climate marches had been banned from taking place (Fishwick, 2015). Naomi Klein, a well-known author and climate activist, claimed that the ‘French government had taken advantage of people’s fear and grief’ (Klein, 2015). She further pointed out that it seemed curious that football matches and Christmas markets had been allowed to continue, but mass protests had not.<sup>3</sup>

Despite more than 40 countries calling for language on human rights, including gender equality, to be included in the Paris Agreement a draft text released in October, just one month before the summit, left many Parties and observers wondering why the issue of human rights had been left out of the text in all areas apart from the non-legally binding preamble (Climate Action Network, 2015b). The Paris Agreement was a huge disappointment for members of the WGC. In a statement they claimed that ‘the responsibility to protect people’s rights and ecosystems, [had] either been surgically removed or lack[ed] specificity’ (WGC, 2015a). Rather than gender being fully mainstreamed across all themes of the Agreement the most significant inclusion was a line in the preamble which stated

Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.

(UNFCCC, 2015, preamble)

The terms ‘women’ and ‘gender’ were further included in the areas of adaptation and capacity building (UNFCCC, 2015, pp. 25, 28 respectively), which includes reference to ‘gender-responsive’ approaches to adaptation and capacity building and concern for achieving the goal of ‘gender-balance’ on boards and committees in the implementation of the Agreement. In a webinar in 2017 Burns described how the WGC had been assured that the principle of gender equality would underpin all climate policy, but the Paris Agreement did exactly the opposite. The WGC said that



The Paris Agreement served to undermine the concept of international solidarity – a founding principle of the UN that requires differentiation amongst states in a way that should lead to redistribution and shared prosperity.

(WGC, 2015b)

In addition to a somewhat disappointing Paris Agreement several analyses of their INDCs showed that while 64 countries included reference to gender in their INDCs, none of these countries were Annex 1 nations (or the most developed nations) (WEDO, 2016a; Tobin, Schmidt and Tosun, 2018). All references to gender in the INDCs related to issues of adaptation in the Global South. Perhaps, Burns suggests, this is because nations of the Global North do not ‘understand gender as a lens in their own countries’ (Burns, 2017), yet Party delegates from the EU, Canada and the United States are prominent figures in the gender negotiations.

The Paris Agreement represents little quantitative progress from COP1 with focus placed on adaptation, and thus women’s vulnerability, and gender balance, which does not constitute a means of improving gender equality in itself but merely serves ‘better’ policy. What was different from the COP1 context, however, was the prominence that the issue was afforded along with the widespread support and understanding from individuals across the UNFCCC institutional infrastructure. The UNFCCC was no longer a technical and economic political space, but rather social concerns including gender equality were given much more prominence in the negotiations. Furthermore, the WGC were increasingly turning to intersectional language and engaging in coalition politics consistent with principles of transversal politics.

### ***Extending the Lima Work Programme on Gender: 2016***

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, focus turned towards its implementation at COP22 Marrakech, dubbed the ‘Action COP’ (GenderCC and LIFE, 2016). After a successful outcome at COP21 Figueres stood down and her successor was announced shortly before COP22 as Patricia Espinosa, former foreign minister of Mexico and previous gender advocate alongside Figueres in 2011 during her Presidency of COP16 (Climate Action Network, 2016). Part of the negotiations concerned the continuation of the LWPG, which had been adopted in 2014 with a planned duration of two years (see UNFCCC, 2014). Ahead of the COP a two-day workshop was held in Bonn, Germany on the topics of adaptation and capacity building (UNFCCC, 2016a), the two areas where gender is formally mentioned under the Paris Agreement. The second day of this workshop involved splitting both Party delegates and observers into separate working groups focusing on four different groups of actors that make up the UNFCCC: Parties to the UNFCCC; Finance and Financial Institutions; UNFCCC Secretariat



and United Nations Systems; and Implementing Agencies and Civil Society (UNFCCC, 2016a). The working groups were tasked with identifying challenges and elaborating on recommendations that could be applied to each group of actors.

The working groups recommended that the LWPG should be extended, and that there was a need for continued dialogue/exchange and skill sharing between policymakers and NGOs and grassroots community leaders (SBI, 2016). They also recommended action focused on specific issues of climate justice and stayed away from the more technical language commonly seen in UNFCCC negotiations. For example, Working Group 4 – Implementing agencies and civil society at national/subnational level, recognised the need for ‘analysis of structural power imbalances (ex. patriarchal or matriarchal society), which can be done by applying tool kits (ex. “floating coconut tool kits” for demonstrating productive labour of women) and can be improved by having male champions’ (UNFCCC, 2016a).<sup>4</sup>

Following these workshops COP22 took the decision to extend the LWPG for a further three years and to further enhance the activities under the programme (UNFCCC, 2016b). This included women’s full and equal participation in the UNFCCC process and strengthening gender-responsive policies in all activities concerning adaptation and mitigation as well as finance, technology development and transfer and capacity building. Significantly, in the decision text Parties mandated COP23 Fiji (to be hosted in Bonn) in 2017 to develop a two-year Gender Action Plan (GAP) and tasked the Secretariat with continuing to conduct annual in-session workshops and to offer training specifically for women delegates (UNFCCC, 2016b). In short, rather than introduce new themes, issues or concerns, the extended LWPG made a concerted effort to streamline for implementation the growing number of decisions that already existed under the Convention.

While Decision 21/CP.22 was warmly welcomed by gender advocates, including members of the WGC, and was accepted to have gone further than the somewhat disappointing Paris Agreement, they also felt that it has a number of faults (GenderCC and LIFE, 2016). The WGC expressed concern of the lack of consideration of what they felt was the most important issue: the question of finance (GenderCC and LIFE, 2016). The main point of concern was that the text of the decision stated that actions were to be taken ‘subject to the availability of financial resources’ (UNFCCC, 2016b, paragraph 32). This lack of specificity of financial resources, the WGC argued, undermined the effectiveness of the extended LWPG while also representing a trend of Parties paying (easy) lip-service to issues of gender without putting meaningful finances behind the actions (Participant B, 2018, interview).

The extended LWPG also invited all countries to appoint National Gender Focal Points who were intended to lead for national delegations on gender issues throughout the negotiations. There are several issues, or inconsistencies with the introduction of the National Gender Focal Point positions that became apparent in interviews with several such Focal Points.

First, Parties were only ‘invited’ to nominate a Gender Focal Point, something which many Parties have been slow to do. Indeed, as of May 2018, the time that I was conducting these interviews, only 32 Parties out of 197 had nominated a Focal Point (UNFCCC, 2018a). This had increased to a more impressive 59 by January 2020 (UNFCCC, 2020h). Second, the National Gender Focal Point was an unpaid position which was an ‘add-on’ to delegates (predominantly women) with already exceptionally busy day jobs (Participant C, 2018, interview). This speaks to a question of interpersonal power whereby women are expected to take on the heavy-lifting work of ensuring gender equality, while the institution continues to be viewed in a positive light since it is, seemingly, taking meaningful action on gender equality. There was no clear definition of what the National Gender Focal Points were, thus leaving the interpretation very much in the hands of individuals (Mertz, 2018, interview). Some see it as a role that requires them to do a huge amount of research and actively pursue the introduction of gender-sensitive climate policies in their home countries (Mertz, 2018, interview; Terpstra, 2018, interview), while others see it more (or additionally) about acting as an information hub in the negotiations themselves (Nummelin, 2018, interview). There were also differing views on where the National Gender Focal Point should be located within national Governments and how a person would be selected. For example, Finland held a lengthy discussion on this, first considering the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health where gender issues are mainly based, or in the Foreign Ministry where the Department for Development is located. Finally, Finland decided that gender was far more overarching than one of these two issues and so decided that the Focal Point should be someone located in the Department for Environment (Nummelin, 2018, interview). Other countries however, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, simply had one interested individual who nominated themselves for the position (Mertz, 2018, interview; Terpstra, 2018, interview). Thus, while the introduction of National Gender Focal Points, on the face of it, was a positive and logical step towards streamlining, it has become itself a very uneven process; it could be construed as a mere box-ticking exercise.

The WGC, while ostensibly still heavily involved in negotiations of the extended LWPG, returned to a more ‘outside’ position and were more critical of the UNFCCC as an institution following COP21 Paris. For example, WEDO joined feminist allies in civil society in a collective effort to draw global attention to the climate crisis and its urgency at a protest called ‘Reclaim Power’ (WEDO, 2016b). Reclaim Power had many demands including: stop new dirty energy projects; end public handouts to dirty energy; and advance energy democracy that promotes solutions to the climate crisis and to energy poverty (WEDO, 2016b). Similarly, a report of the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) Forum in Brazil in 2016, at which several members of the WGC were present, stated that the Paris Agreement represented that a ‘dominant patriarchal elite and capitalist elite and their corporations took decisions that affect us all without consent of

peoples and communities, and certainly without the consent of the earth and its other inhabitants' (Acha, 2016, p. 4), reflecting a distinctly intersectional feminist position that also included concerns for the natural world.

In these actions the WGC is, seemingly, positioning itself as outside of, and separate from, the institutional fabric of the UNFCCC. After years of working 'inside' the system the Paris agreement was a huge disappointment for the WGC. After this the Constituency started to position themselves as a 'protest Constituency' and began to loudly challenge masculinised climate action including the patriarchal and capitalist power structures that they were based upon. In this way the WGC were becoming more reminiscent of the early years of feminist organising in the UNFCCC.

### ***The Gender Action Plan: 2017–2021***

The WGC's distancing from the UNFCCC mainstream continued into COP23 2017 Fiji (held in Bonn). In an interview conducted by WEDO, Azeb Girmai, a climate change advocacy and campaign advisor, said

Honestly, it's time we revise our strategies. We have become numb in a way; we keep thinking a solution is going to pop up and it isn't. We must engage and strategize on a grassroots level. Clear action plans from conventions have attempted to address these issues for so many years but that narrative hasn't connected or sunk in for the majority of the international community.

(Girmai, 2017, p. 1)

But at the same time, 2017 was the year that the GAP was to be adopted. In the months before COP23 Fiji in December 2017 several workshops were held with the intent of considering possible elements for a Gender Action Plan. A two-day workshop brought together both Parties, observers and other stakeholders in an informal setting to co-develop elements that would be formally negotiated, and ultimately adopted, at the COP (UNFCCC, 2017d). The elements that were proposed included: capacity building, knowledge sharing and communication; gender balance, participation and women's leadership; coherence within the UNFCCC and other UN agencies; gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation; and monitoring and reporting. Timing was important and Parties (and their negotiators) were acutely aware that if the GAP was to draw any attention at all it must be adopted at COP23 (O'Hehir, 2018, interview). The reason was that COP24 Katowice in 2018 was likely to be the biggest COP since Paris (Wyns, 2018) due to the upcoming deadline to agree upon a 'Rulebook' for implementation of the Paris Agreement. The 'Rulebook' would set out the rules and operating procedures which were essential to drive a fair and effective process that will support all countries to achieve zero-carbon, climate resilient transformation (Dagnet and Cogswell, 2018). Colin O'Hehir,

head of Irish Delegation and chair of the GAP negotiations, pointed out in an interview that if the GAP rolled into COP24 the headlines would read ‘mitigation, litigation, compliance, adaptation, oh and p.s. GAP’ (O’Hehir, 2018, interview). In this spirit additional workshops were organised by the Netherlands in The Hague and by Canada in Ottawa, both leaders in the GAP negotiations (Terspta, 2018, interview).

By the time negotiations reached COP23, one of the main challenges was that it was supposed to consolidate over 60 actions that had come out of the workshops which O’Hehir, along with other Parties including the EU, Canada and the USA, felt was too many. He noted: ‘how do you measure that? What if you only achieve 30? They might be the good 30, or they might be the easy 30’ (O’Hehir, 2018, interview). Additionally, because of the nature of the workshops not all Parties had been present at each one. For instance, China raised an objection early in the negotiations of COP23 that they had not been invited to the workshop in The Hague. However, Terpstra, who had organised that particular workshop, rebutted that China had been invited, but as the workshop was not ‘in-session’ (i.e. organised internally by the UNFCCC Secretariat) there was no funding to offer for travel as is custom for non-Annex 1 Parties. Terpstra, further noted however that video conference was offered as an option (Terpstra, 2018, interview). Nonetheless, by COP23 all Parties were coming at the negotiations from a different starting point and O’Hehir was aware that they rapidly needed to get to a point where all Parties felt a sense of ‘ownership’ over the document (O’Hehir, 2018, interview).

As a result, O’Hehir took the decision to close the GAP negotiations to observers, including members of the WGC, (meaning that only those with Party or Secretariat badges were allowed to enter). This decision was taken in order to give Parties an opportunity to debate the finer details and create a common starting point without the pressure of NGOs watching their every move, every decision and, importantly, every disagreement and concession made (O’Hehir, 2018, interview). Observers took this as another stab at the principle of transparency within the negotiations that CSOs had felt was increasing since COP15 Copenhagen. Members of the WGC felt that initiatives such as the Talanoa Dialogue (an informal dialogue between negotiators and civil society that was introduced at COP23) were ‘good in principle’ (Lauron, 2017, interview) but served to distract from the very real issue that civil society had been redefined over the years to include businesses promoting renewable energies but did not account for the fact that renewable energies displace people. Lauron also expressed frustration at the fact that researchers who are interested in watching the negotiations but do very little advocacy were included in civil society (Lauron, 2017, interview), speaking to a clear separation of ideas and action by both academics and the WGC. There was a clear sense of frustration amongst the WGC since many of its members had been involved in the process long before discussions of a GAP had started. They felt that they were the experts on the issue

and raised concern that they did not even recognise the negotiators, since they were new at every meeting (Goldner, 2018, interview). This was compounded even further with gender considered a ‘soft’ issue (Marchington and Coates, 2018, interview) with very few meaningful implications.

The GAP was exactly a case of a soft issue with minor implications within the wider negotiations. Indeed, its very design was to consolidate for implementation *existing* decisions under the Convention. It was not a space to introduce new issues, predominately loss and damage and human rights. This was a second sticking point in what had been regarded a very easy negotiating process (Verla, 2018, interview). However, there were some Parties, namely Mexico, who were pushing until the very last minutes for loss and damage to be included in the preamble text to the GAP. Again, because this process was unfolding away from the eyes of observers, the rumour mill went into overdrive in the last minutes of negotiations. On Saturday 11 November at 6.30pm (half an hour over schedule) I waited for news while negotiators were popping in and out of the room to give updates to their allied observers. The rumour was that ‘Mexico is holding it up, Mexico is stopping the GAP being adopted’. Mexican negotiator Emilia Reyes (2017, interview) later confirmed in an negotiating debrief that this was not the case; in fact Mexico were the only ones in the room pushing until the very last minute for the inclusion of stronger language on gender, particularly language that recognised the intersectional nature of women’s identities. Reyes told me that this was a common negotiating tactic. She would insist on the most progressive gender language possible in the hope that the chairs would extend the time allocated for negotiations. It was essentially a game of ‘chicken’ to see who gave in first. In the end, opposition was too strong, and Mexico conceded, meaning a text could be agreed.

Another issue concerning language in the GAP negotiations, according to Reyes, was around the issue of human rights. An unnamed Party refused for ‘human rights’ and ‘just transition’ to be in the same paragraph as this would require that Parties to extend basic human rights to workers. ‘It’s disgusting’ Reyes concluded, clearly exhausted after two intense weeks of negotiations and disappointed with the outcome.

Not everyone was enthusiastic about the idea of a GAP because it exists purely under the Gender Agenda Item, so that gender issues may become ‘further side-lined, meaning that gender will not be discussed in the “real” negotiations’ (Röhr, 2018, interview). For members of the gender and climate change advocacy community, although the GAP may be ‘better than nothing’, it also opens the possibility that the COP can finally get on with discussing the issues that matter, such as mitigation or climate technology, which then makes little to no effort to include gender. While more radical language of human rights and just transition is beginning to be articulated in the GAP, it is not yet seen in other areas of the Convention, which are still dominated by highly technical discussions about technology transfer and finance mechanisms, which could be criticised as market-fixes.

Röhr's comments about the potential silo-ing of gender issues under the Gender Agenda Item acts as a caution: the GAP certainly is a huge win for the WGC, but it is important to remain vigilant in ensuring that the UNFCCC has embraced a gender perspective throughout the climate negotiations and not simply meant that women have been mainstreamed into the polluted stream that Bella Abzug warned of in 1992.

In the years following the adoption of the GAP a series of workshops and gender-related events were held, including the Gender Workshop requested by the GAP as well as a Gender Dialogue that invited the chairs of the UNFCCC constituted bodies to discuss their efforts to achieve gender balance and to integrate gender aspects into their work (Gender CC, 2018). But attention was already turning towards COP24 Katowice with growing concern about a bill adopted by the Polish government which would give the Polish authorities access to extensive private data of all COP24 participants. The WGC opposed this bill strongly on the basis that it would effectively prohibit 'the freedom of assembly, among other rights, [and it] cultivates an atmosphere of intimidation and fear and reinforces the highly worrisome tendencies of shrinking spaces for civil society worldwide' (Bohland, 2018 cited in WGC, 2018b). The WGC attributed this move to a worrying trend in global environmental politics more broadly where it was increasingly difficult to 'speak truth to power'. In a press statement, the Constituency stated

*These actions effectively impose a 'gag rule' on pointing fingers at those who are most responsible for climate and social injustice. And this is not limited to actions from civil society but also to dialogues among Parties where, as we saw in the Talanoa Dialogue, Parties were asked to refrain from 'naming and shaming'. Is this not the point of international policy, particularly in the context of a 'bottom-up' and nationally determined climate agreement with only a facilitatory compliance mechanism? If the people of the world cannot hold countries accountable, what and who will?*

*Certainly, the WGC will not be silent about where we are (WGC, 2018b, online)*

Throughout 2018 there was little progress on gender issues but 2019 saw the GAP renewed for a full five years which, the WGC claimed, 'highlighted the critical importance of gender equality in climate action' (WGC, 2019a, cited in GenderCC, 2019b). This was a huge achievement at a COP that, according to the WGC, 'saw unprecedented resistance of Parties against acknowledging the interconnections of human rights with every aspect of the negotiations' (WGC, 2019a, cited in GenderCC, 2019b). Tensions were heightened during the Conference when more than 100 civil society delegates were physically locked out of the conference centre following a peaceful protest calling for more climate ambition, many left without coats and other possessions in the cold Madrid winter (WGC, 2019a).



COP26 Glasgow was, perhaps, the most anticipated COP since COP21 Paris in 2015 because states were expected to pledge further cuts to their emissions. This was part of the design of the Paris Agreement which expected a ‘ratcheting up’ of carbon emission cuts pledges every five years (Yeo, 2015). COP26 was held against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic which caused huge logistical problems for CSOs, particularly those located in the Global South, to attend. The WGC repeatedly raised concerns that COP26 was far from inclusive (Gender CC, 2021). During online WGC caucuses which I attended remotely, those present in Glasgow reported, with alarming frequency, enormous queues and a lack of space for civil society delegates to actually enter the building, instead being asked to log in via remote link in the hotel rooms.

In keeping with an emerging theme from this history, women’s and gender issues somewhat fell off of the agenda in the face of the ‘real’ politics of the renewed NDCs and any discursive progress made, from an intersectional feminist viewpoint, at COP24 Madrid was swiftly abandoned. Indeed, the Glasgow Summit was billed to be the ‘whitest and most privileged ever’ (Taylor, 2021) due to a combination of ‘visa and accreditation problems, lack of access to Covid vaccines and changing travel rules – as well as “scarce and expensive” accommodation’ (Taylor, 2021) meaning many civil society observers had given up trying to attend, making it one of the most exclusionary COPs yet.

## **Conclusion**

In tracing the history of gender in the UNFCCC I have shown a clear shift from ‘outsider’ political strategies to far more ‘insider’ strategies employed by members of the WGC, though there are signs that the Constituency is returning to its outsider roots. I have identified three clear phases of feminist organising: 1992–2007 ‘Zero Gender’; 2007–2013 ‘Gender-Mainstreaming’; and 2014–2021 ‘Gender Action Plan’. The early period between 1992, i.e. the agreement of the UNFCCC, and 2007 was characterised by a mostly gender-blind UNFCCC. While the informal coalition of feminist climate activists were very active in their advocacy efforts during this period there was little institutional response bar one main gender decision 23/CP.7 adopted to improve the participation of women and address the unequal gender balance on UNFCCC boards and bodies. The period between 2007 and 2013, however, was characterised by far more active institutional gender-mainstreaming. This institutional shift, however, did not happen by chance, nor can it be attributed to the mere passage of time. Rather, it coincided with a feminist coalition that was becoming increasingly organised, formalised and, indeed, bureaucratic. Several alliances at different levels were formed at this time, including GenderCC, GGCA and the MRF and these alliances moved towards becoming a full Constituency within the UNFCCC. At the same time a wider discursive shift in the institution from



issues around mitigation towards those of adaptation provided a hook for gendered concerns to be included in global climate policy, primarily in the form of a concern for women's vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Ultimately, this period was characterised by both a sharp increase in decisions mentioned or related to gender as well as an increase in institutional concern for gendered issues in global climate politics. The final period 2014–2021 was characterised by the ongoing negotiations towards adopting and implementing a Gender Action Plan, a decision that was finally adopted in 2017. During this period, members of the WGC were simultaneously heavily involved in influencing the negotiations with the aim of securing the most progressive gendered language in the GAP, as well as a kind of self-distancing from the UNFCCC as an institution in the wake of the disappointing Paris Agreement.

This chapter has put into stark contrast the more well-known history of the UNFCCC and a lesser known history in which gender is foregrounded. As Colin O'Hehir head of Irish Delegation and chair of the GAP negotiations pointed out in an interview, if the GAP rolled into COP24 the headlines would read 'mitigation, litigation, compliance, adaptation, oh and p.s. GAP' (O'Hehir, 2018, interview). I understood O'Hehir to be saying that it was important that the GAP was agreed in 2017, specifically, because had it fallen to 2018 the UNFCCC, as an institution, would be more concerned with agreeing the Paris rulebook, the guidelines which would underpin the implementation of the Paris Agreement in 2020. Significantly, O'Hehir was suggesting that in that case nobody would have paid attention to the GAP. Indeed, this is a trend that has become apparent throughout the UNFCCC's history (see Figure 4.4).

'Gender' as a political issue only seemed to become one of real importance in a year when little else of note was taking place. More concretely, as visualised in Figure 4.4, plotting the most high-profile moments of the UNFCCC's history (1995, Kyoto Protocol, 2009 Copenhagen Accord and 2015 Paris Agreement) against the most important moments in the gender timeline (2001 first gender decision, 2014 LWPG and 2017 GAP), it is clear that the two almost run in opposition to one another.

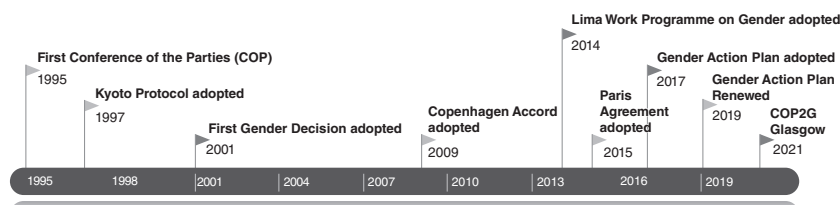


Figure 4.4 Key Moments in the History of the UNFCCC (light grey flags denote UNFCCC-wide developments, dark grey flags denote gender-specific developments).

## Notes

- 1 For a detailed account of the methodological approach under-pinning this research, see Appendix 1.
- 2 Technically Decision 28/CP.7 was adopted immediately prior to Decision 36/CP.7. However, Decision 36/CP.7 represents the first *gender* decision, while Decision 28/CP.7 represents the first decision that mentioned gender, though gender was not its focus.
- 3 In their 2020 book *The Future We Choose: Surviving the Climate Crisis* Figueres and Rivett-Carnac (who led the Paris negotiations) recall the moment late one evening when they were informed that a bomb had been found in the underground rail station serving the climate conference, suggesting there may have been more reason for the restrictions that Klein concedes.
- 4 The floating coconut is a tool kit that can be used in community settings to help men overcome their traditional mindsets of thinking that women's paid and unpaid work is inessential. The tool kit involves participatory learning approaches, as all groups within a community are engaged in brainstorming, listing their work and then give presentations back to the community (see UNFCCC, n.d.).

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## 5 Political Strategies Mobilised by the Women and Gender Constituency

The goal of the Women and Gender Constituency is to formalise the voice of the women's and gender civil society organisations present and regularly active in UNFCCC processes, and to debate, streamline and strengthen the positions which these organisations put forth. The Constituency draws upon global commitments to gender equality and women's rights, especially as they relate to climate change, and toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and related commitments and Conventions. The Constituency works to ensure human rights and a gender perspective is incorporated into UNFCCC negotiations, plans and actions.

(WGC, 2009, p. 1)

The WGC is comprised of 29 NGOs out of around 2000 organisations that now observe the annual UN climate conferences as 'civil society' (UNFCCC, 2016c). The UNFCCC Charter (1992) establishes in Article 7.6 the mandate for the admission of observers as follows:

Any body or agency, whether national or international, governmental or nongovernmental, which is qualified in matters covered by the Convention, and which has informed the secretariat of its wish to be represented at a session of the Conference of the Parties as an observer, may be so admitted unless at least one third of the Parties present object. The admission and participation of observers shall be subject to the rules of procedure adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

(United Nations, 1992 Article 7.2)

Under these rules of procedure (or the disciplinary domain of power in an intersectional framework – see Chapter 3), there are a number of activities that observer organisations can undertake at the COPs including: observing the official negotiations (where permitted, though some sessions have restricted access), organising and participating in side events and parallel events (events outside of official UN remit), hosting exhibits, as well as business-to-business meetings and informal discussions at numerous social

events (UNFCCC, 2020a). Therefore, as a Constituency the WGC is the primary platform for observer organisations working to ensure women's rights and gender justice within the UNFCCC framework and has been an integral force in the transition from gender-blind to GAP in the UNFCCC. The Constituency works on behalf of its members to enhance access to meetings, workshops and conferences and to ensure that such events include the participation and representation of women's and gender NGOs who otherwise would not be able to attend. Being affiliated with a Constituency means that NGOs gain more institutional respect through being called upon by the Secretariat as experts for consultations with chairs of committees and the COP Presidencies.

GenderCC founder and board member Gotelind Alber served as the first Focal Point from 2008 until 2014 (GenderCC, n.d.). The Focal Point is not considered to be the 'leader' of the Constituency, but they do act as the liaison between Constituency members and the UNFCCC Secretariat. Alber is currently GenderCC treasurer and takes part in the decision-making processes of the steering group. Based in Berlin she works as an independent researcher and consultant and has been following the UNFCCC since the beginning gaining recognition for her work around gender and climate change. Alber stepped down in 2014 giving way to Bridget Burns as the Global North representative (2014–present) and Kalyani Raj as Global South representative (2014–2018). This was a move taken in attempt to ensure that the WGC remained representative of all its members and could amplify traditionally marginalised Global South members' voices. Burns is 'a feminist, environmental activist and Director of WEDO' (WEDO, n.d.), who specialises in policy advocacy, research and movement building on the issue of gender equality. Raj is honorary Secretary of All India Women's Conference (AIWC), has extensive experience working on gender and climate change and has advocated for disaster preparedness, adaptation and mitigation as well as alternate energy, as is her focus in AIWC (WEDO, n.d). Raj has been firmly committed to the participation of grassroots women during her involvement in the UNFCCC.

Raj announced at SB48 in 2018 that she would be stepping down, i.e. not seeking re-election, as co-Focal Point due to her large workload in her own organisation. While a feature of all constituencies, not exclusive to the WGC, Raj stepping down to reduce her workload raises an important issue regarding the voluntary nature of the co-Focal Point position, much like the National Gender Focal Points as discussed in Chapter 4. The co-Focal Point takes on a huge workload in the organising and facilitating of Constituency efforts, not just at the COP but throughout the year. The Focal Point's work is carried out on top of often high-ranking positions in their home organisations. Thus, taking on the position requires time and resources to be allocated by the home organisation, effectively preventing many from taking on the role, particularly those from under-resourced organisations often from the Global South. Raj was replaced by Ndivile Mokoena from GenderCC

Southern Africa and is based in South Africa. The focus of Mokoena's work is on gender and climate change, including policy interventions, capacity building, advocacy, lobbying and training (Women2030, 2017).

The WGC is a complex coalition that currently comprises of 29 NGOs, all but five of whom place the WGC as their primary Constituency, meaning that their primary climate change focus is related to issues of women and gender.<sup>1</sup> Member organisations of the WGC vary widely. While some favour advocacy of particular issues, others prefer the facilitation role that global or regional networks play. While some specifically work on issues of gender others cover issues of environmental justice more broadly. The NGOs themselves can be broadly grouped: advocacy NGO and networks (global, regional or independent); national NGO; grassroots organisation; or consultancy NGO. Advocacy NGOs work to defend or promote specific issues or causes. Rather than operational project management, advocacy NGOs raise awareness, acceptance, and knowledge of particular issues through processes of lobbying, press work and/or activist work. For example, the focus of AIWC is primarily on climate change mitigation processes through the propagation of alternative energy (AIWC, 2018a). In its advocacy efforts, AIWC runs training and awareness programmes on energy conservation and energy efficiency as well as poverty alleviation through the self-assembly and repair of solar equipment as an income generation activity (AIWC, 2018a). Similarly, the Centre for 21st Century Issues (C21C) works to build capacity for sustainable development with youth groups, promoting environmental, social and economic justice and peace building (C21C, n.d.). They do so through gender and climate change workshops which have been held in Nigeria and at the COPs in Copenhagen and Cancun.

Advocacy networks are essentially alliances whether they be global, regional or even independent networks and are typically small groupings of NGOs working on similar issues with a central organisation. Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) is one example of a regional network of women's, environmental and health organisations advocating globally for a healthy, sustainable and equitable future (WECF, 2018a). The 150 organisations in WECF work together to promote greater and more equitable participation at local and global levels in policy processes for sustainable development. WECF, like most networks, has a Board of Trustees who bear final responsibility for the strategic and financial management who are based in three offices in the Netherlands, Germany and France, though member organisations hail from Turkey, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and many, many more.

National NGOs such as Rural Women Energy Security (RUWES) Initiative work at the national level to advocate national interests. RUWES, for example, have a geographical focus in Nigeria and target women with the aim of making access to energy easier (RUWES Nigeria, 2018). Similarly, but more localised, grassroots organisations such as Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment (SWAGEN) create strong grassroots

community groups capable of actively participating in, meaningfully contributing to, and efficiently tapping into the benefits of mainstream national and international development. Finally, consultancy NGOs, such as the Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR) provide consultancy services, in this case through training villagers to regenerate their watersheds by trapping and making full use of their scarce rainfall which not only vastly increases agricultural yield but enriches economies with greater opportunities and standards of living (Watershed Organisation Trust, 2018). The NGOs that make up the WGC are also varied in both geographical base and focus. Indeed, 20 of the 28 state a geographical focus of the Global South, most of which being focused on sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (WGC, n.d.). Of the remaining eight, five state a focus on the Global North, though only LIFE and the Italian Climate Network state a sole focus on the Global North, specifically Europe. The other NGOs, the Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA), The Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO) Foundation and WECF state their geographical focus as 'Denmark, Europe and International', 'International, United States' and 'Europe, Global South and International' respectively. This broad coalition of women's and gender NGO's has been crucial in its advocacy efforts in the UNFCCC, as demonstrated in Chapter 4.

The Constituency works closely with the UNFCCC Secretariat gender advisor, Fleur Newman, and has been, in large part, responsible for the increasing inclusion of gender concerns in the UNFCCC. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the political (rhetorical and procedural) strategies that are mobilised by the WGC. On my analysis, the WGC follows a carefully developed political strategy that falls into two categories: rhetorical strategies and procedural strategies. Rhetorical strategies refer to the ways that gender is framed as a political issue in order to influence the negotiations. Based on my analysis I categorise the rhetorical strategies mobilised by the WGC in four main themes: gender equality and empowering women; universalising lived experience; equating gender with women; and intersectionality in baby steps. Procedural strategies are concerned with the specific actions taken in order to implement the rhetorical strategies. In the case of the WGC, I categorise these as: identifying entry points for gender aspects into the climate change debate; raising awareness and disseminating information; building women's capacity and joint strategising; and developing a future research agenda.

## **Rhetorical Strategies**

Consistent with arguments made by scholars who have criticised feminist environmental activists for their persistent use of universalising and simplistic representations of gender, Chapter 4 demonstrates that members of the WGC have drawn on rhetorical strategies that universalise lived experiences and equate women with gender. But while these stories have gained the most

traction in policy influence, they are by no means the only stories told about women and their lives by the WGC. My analysis of data collected from historical documents, interviews and my own observations suggests that there are four main rhetorical strategies that have been mobilised by the WGC which have seen varying levels of success: gender equality and empowering women; universalising lived experience; equating women with gender; and intersectionality in ‘baby steps’.

### ***Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women***

The commitment to gender equality through the empowerment of women is a principle enshrined in the United Nations institutional fabrics, mostly thanks to the hard work of feminists and gender advocates at the Beijing Declaration of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (United Nations, 1995). Because Parties to the UNFCCC are committed to wider UN principles it has been a common tactic of the WGC to pin arguments about gender equality on the principles of gender equality and women’s empowerment that are enshrined in other UN documents. There has been a good level of success in mobilising rhetoric around empowering women in the name of gender equality in the UNFCCC. Decision 36/CP.7, or the very first gender mandate under the UNFCCC that aimed to improve the participation of women in the institution recalled the Beijing Platform for Women as a key reason for the adoption of the decision:

Recalling the Beijing Declaration of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women which recognizes that women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making processes and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.  
(UNFCCC, 2001a, p. 1)

However, despite the obligation of Parties to the UNFCCC to respect the principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the WGC has experienced regular resistance to the phrase ‘gender equality’. In 2012 Decision 23/CP.18 ‘Promoting gender equality and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol’ was adopted (UNFCCC, 2012). While the phrase ‘gender equality’ appeared in the title, the wording of the main body of the text had been watered down to ‘gender balance’. The WGC and its members were extremely disappointed by this change:

However welcome this decision, GenderCC must express its deep disappointment at the watering down of the wording, from the initial insistence on gender equality to its present position on gender balance. Gender balance, though important from an equity and human rights



perspective, falls far short of the substantial gender equality needed to accomplish fundamental changes in human behaviour. Gender equality moves us beyond the numbers to deal with issues of substantive equality. Substantive equality would require us to begin to rephrase both climate science and climate politics from a gendered perspective, making true empowerment of women an issue, according to Gotelind Alber, co-founder and board member of GenderCC. “The decision on gender balance, though only a very first step, offers opportunities to strengthen the gender agenda in the UNFCCC process”.

(GenderCC, 2012, p. 1)

Related to the kind of re-imagining of climate politics that the phrase ‘gender equality’ implies is the phrasing of gender equality *and* empowerment of women, instead of gender equality *through* the empowerment of women. The latter suggests gender equality through women’s equality with men, while the former suggests both gender equality and women’s empowerment as crucial, but separate processes. As such, members of the WGC have consistently lobbied for a change in phrasing so that UNFCCC documents recognise *both* women’s empowerment *and* gender equality. The GAP offered a huge win for the WGC in this respect: ‘the GAP aims to ensure the respect, promotion and consideration of gender equality *and* the empowerment of women in the implementation of the Convention and the Paris Agreement’ (UNFCCC, 2017b, p. 4, emphasis added). Including the phrase ‘gender equality *and* women’s empowerment’, the WGC argues, signals the important distinction that gender equality does not necessarily mean equality with men under male terms. Rather, the phrase gender equality signifies a far greater shift in priorities.

The issue of the empowerment of women is commonly understood as necessitating greater participation by women in the UNFCCC negotiating processes. As one practical means of ensuring the increased participation of women, particularly women from developing countries, the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), formed of WEDO, UNDP, IUCN in 2009, partnered with the Government of Finland and launched the Women’s Delegate Fund (WDF). Over the years this WDF has drawn support from several other donors including the governments of Australia, Canada, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, Scotland, Sweden, and Switzerland (WEDO, 2018b). Administered by WEDO, the fund provides travel support for women from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to attend the COP as well as a night school intended to build leadership skills, regional trainings and provides advocacy by facilitating organisations and the delegates themselves to highlight the importance of women’s full participation and networking opportunities. Since 2009 the WDF has supported ‘trips for 175 women across 69 countries to attend 35 sessions of the UNFCCC’ (WEDO, 2021).

It is not only within the halls of the UNFCCC that members of the WGC advocate for gender equality and women’s empowerment, but strategies



that pin arguments on these principles are mobilised by the WGC in efforts to influence negotiations on adaptation and mitigation, particularly in the Global South. Typically, these kinds of strategies will work to promote women's participation in green climate solutions such as technology transfer. A factsheet published by ENERGIA and WEDO in 2010 called 'Recommendations for Climate Negotiators on Energy Technologies and Gender Equity' is a good example of this. The factsheet stated that:

The technology transfer, capacity building and financing provisions of climate agreements and response plans should be inclusive and equitable so that both women and men can have access to, and benefit from, the development and transfer of new energy technologies, and should specifically:

- Require gender balance on management boards, expert panels and advisory groups for international, national and local climate response planning, energy technology transfer and dissemination, and carbon financing;
- Support training of women on the use, development, production and marketing of low-carbon energy technologies, and opportunities to share that knowledge with other women;
- Set targets for women's participation in projects and programmes designed to expand energy access, including as designers, managers and entrepreneurs;
- Establish programmes and centres focused on capacity building for women on clean energy business initiatives and opportunities;
- Create financing mechanisms for making access to carbon finance easier for smaller projects;
- Engage gender and energy experts to apply a gender analysis in the development of climate and energy policies and projects (ENERGIA and WEDO, 2010, p. 1).

Underpinning such arguments is the idea that women should be able to take advantage of a Green Economy type approach to climate action in accessing equal business opportunities to improve women's opportunities for economic empowerment. In this way,

The role of women as energy providers can be transformed into suitable micro-enterprises if they can manage fuel wood or oil seed plantations, dispense kerosene or liquified petroleum gas (LPG), assemble solar panels, build cook stoves and brick kilns, and even manage electricity distribution and bill collection.

(ENERGIA and WEDO, 2010, p. 1)

These strategies have been, on paper at least, successful in influencing policy. There are several mandates under the UNFCCC that include the term

‘women’s empowerment’ including Decision 23/CP.18 that aimed at promoting gender balance and improving participation of women in the UNFCCC. The decision draws attention to the importance of

ensuring coherence between the participation of women in the UNFCCC process and the principles and objectives of international instruments and relevant multilateral processes, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which recognize the importance of women’s empowerment and their full participation on equal terms with men in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making processes and access to power.

(UNFCCC, 2012, p. 1)

But as Anniete Cohn-Lois, WDF Delegate from the Dominican Republic, warned, ‘at the national level we speak a lot about the importance of women empowerment, but it’s not the same thing as actually implementing policies to achieve progress on this’ (Cohn-Lois, 2014, in Burns and Andre, 2014, p. 6). This suggests that the term ‘women’s empowerment’ is an example of gender-mainstreaming as a tick-box exercise that is rarely followed up by meaningful political action (see Buckingham and Kulcur, 2009).

### *Universalising Lived Experience*

So, this was for me, it really was the starting point and just because we got attention only by evidencing women as the most vulnerable. So, what we have to do, my experience was, to get to end with gender in these processes, or women into the process, we had to take this approach as an entry point on women are the most vulnerable. And so, for that reason, and I remember it very well in Bali, you’ll have to look for the dates or COP numbers, but in Bali that was for me the first conference where much more focus was put on adaptation. Beforehand it was much more on mitigation, so it was a shift in issues because of pressure from development corporations, or organisations, working in these areas.

(Röhr, 2017, interview)

As discussed in Chapter 4, COP13 Bali in 2007 represents a pivotal moment in feminist organising in the UNFCCC. Members of the Constituency made the decision to speak to the wider shift in UNFCCC discourse from mitigation towards adaptation, which resulted in the pursuit of a rhetorical strategy that centred framings of gender – meaning women – as vulnerable victims of climate change. Prior to COP13 Bali, the network of feminists active in the UNFCCC had avoided discussing the specificity of women located in the Global South, instead favouring a more holistic feminist approach to global climate politics.

For example, at an informal meeting of feminist climate activists at COP9 Milan in 2003 the attendees noted that ‘the process tends to be driven by a masculine view of the problem and its solutions’ (LIFE et al., 2003, p. 1). Similarly, in 2005 Genanet, the organisation that preceded GenderCC, published a working paper entitled ‘Gender & Climate Change in the North: Issues, Entry Points and Strategies for the Post-2012 Process and Beyond’ (Hemmati, 2005). The paper was aimed at researchers and other gender advocates calling upon them to focus on ‘ensuring a (more) comprehensive and effective recognition of gender aspects of climate change in a future regime’ (Hemmati, 2005, p. 1).

But the WGC shifted in 2007 from what can be described as a relatively holistic vision of a feminist climate politics to one that foregrounds women’s vulnerability in the Global South, mirroring the wider shift in the UNFCCC. The political conversation shifted from being concerned with how to halt climate change (mitigation) towards one more concerned with how to deal with the most harmful effects of climate change (adaptation). The result was a growing focus on the Global South as a primary location for climate action, which, as one interview participant remarked, meant that ‘the constituted bodies are obviously all dealing with non-Annex 1 [developing countries] country issues’ (Participant B, 2018, interview).<sup>2</sup> The WGC responded, shifting to a strategy of foregrounding the lived experiences of vulnerable women in the Global South, and presenting these as a universal experience. For example, several high-level statements and plenary interventions from the time began to highlight women’s vulnerability to the most severe effects of climate change (see for example, Aguilar, 2007; Brundtland, 2007; Zeitlin, 2007). They saw this as a means of influencing policy and had some great successes in doing so. The 2010 Cancun Agreements, for example, make special reference to ‘those segments of the population that are already vulnerable owing to geography, gender, age, indigenous or minority status, or disability’ (UNFCCC, 2010, p. 2).

A technical guide to existing mandates for gender equality from 2014 written on behalf of the GGCA by Burns and Patouris, both from WEDO, highlights that the most mentions of gender appear in the UNFCCC topic area of adaptation. The authors put this down to three primary reasons. First, the decision from COP7 in 2001 which integrated a gender-sensitive approach mandated that National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) should be guided by gender equality (UNFCCC, 2001b). Second, from the outset of the current UNFCCC adaptation framework it was mandated that adaptation should follow a gender-sensitive approach. And third,

early research and awareness-raising highlighting the linkages between gender and climate change framed women predominantly in terms of their vulnerability to climate impacts, making the link to adaptation more relevant to policy-makers than in other areas such as mitigation and technology.

(Burns and Patouris, 2014, p. 6)

Out of all of the main negotiating areas (adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology, and capacity building) mitigation has the lowest number of decisions that reference gender, with no guiding mandate for gender-sensitive mitigation actions (Burns and Patouris, 2014).

Despite the seemingly limiting effects of arguments that are based on women's vulnerability there have been some practical benefits for the WGC working under such a framework. The move from a holistic feminist approach attending to issues of masculinities and Global North considerations, to foregrounding women's vulnerability and presenting it as a universal lived experience allowed the network to increase its legitimacy as a group working inside the UNFCCC. It also provided the tools to help make the links between gender and climate change clear, or perhaps more palatable to, Party negotiators:

Initial attempts to link gender and climate change may seem rather *far-fetched* especially for the sceptic. However, analysing the issues from a poverty, vulnerability, environmental resource management, equity and sustainability angle the links become *inherently obvious*.

(ENDA Tiers Monde, 2002, p. 7 my emphasis)

The WGC makes these links in a variety of ways. For example, in a presentation given in 2007 Lorena Aguilar, in the words of Doña Vera Sanchez, a survivor of Hurricane Mitch, gave an account of 'how a changing climate impacts women':

I lived on the Atlantic coast in Honduras. At that time, I was a single mother of three kids, my husband had left us some time ago. I built a very "rustic house" close to an estuary. With my older son I collected molluscs, did some fishing from the coast and processed (dried and salted) some of the smaller fish that the fishermen gave up.

One morning some of my neighbours said that they had heard in the radio that a big storm was coming and that it had winds of about 290 Km per hour. I remember thinking, what is a 290Km wind?

Most of us on the coast were women with our sons. What should we do? We had no idea. Some women commented that they had heard from their husbands that we had to take some precautions. Unfortunately, none of us had ever been invited or went to meetings dealing with this type of situation.

Then it happened. The winds, the waves, the flood. I took my three kids and started walking inland. Very soon the current was so strong, I could not hold all of them, my oldest son was holding my daughter. My hands were holding my youngest baby. The water snatched them, I saw my son trying to swim ... I lost sight of them.

(Aguilar, 2007, p. 1)

Aguilar goes on to note that ‘in the 2004 Asian Tsunami, 70–80% of overall deaths were women’ (Aguilar, 2007, p. 2).<sup>3</sup>

Other examples are found in a series of ‘case studies’ published between 2008 and 2009 that highlight individual country issues, all of which are focused on the Global South including the Philippines, Bangladesh, Senegal and Ghana (Alam, Fatema, and Ahmed, 2008; Gueye, 2008; Mensah-Kutin, 2008; Henrich Böll Stiftung and WEDO, 2009). For example, Yacine Diagne Gueye of Environmental Development Action in the Third World (EBDA) in Senegal gives an overview of the climate change situation in Senegal drawing attention to the implications for women’s livelihoods, security and gender equality. She writes that women in Senegal face several issues including access to water due to a 35% decrease in rainfall, issues of energy due to the reliance on biomass as the main source of energy and fishing since more than 90% of women are involved in the fishing process while coasts are particularly sensitive areas (Gueye, 2008).

The purpose of these case study examples is to highlight the main issues faced by women across the (developing) world and to provide entry points for feminist advocacy in the UNFCCC. A final example of linking climate change to women’s vulnerability from 2008 is a fact sheet on ‘climate change and women’ published by WEDO in collaboration with Oxfam (Oxfam America and WEDO, 2008). The fact sheet, which was distributed during the COP, included a map of the impacts of climate change on women. It shows that because of their ‘dual roles as providers and caretakers, women experience a long list of consequences when the climate changes. They sometimes feel the effects all at once’ (Oxfam America and WEDO, 2008, p. 2). The examples given are almost all from the Global South including ‘clean water shortage in Senegal’ and ‘civil war/conflict in Sudan’. There is one notable exception, which is ‘displacement in the US’ which focused on displaced people (mainly women and children) in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In order to foreground women’s vulnerability to the effects of climate change it is necessary to point to examples such as women’s role in caring for family members, resulting in their added burden when fleeing a climate disaster (see Aguilar, 2008). Or to connect traditional gender roles with intensified domestic labour, for example water collection in an environment of increasing water scarcity (see WGC, 2015b). While these roles represent an empirical reality for many of the world’s women, they are not a universal female experience.

Members of the WGC are aware of the potentially harmful effects that strategies that rhetorically universalise the lived experience do:

We [US communities of colour] know that solutions look different for our communities and there is no one-size fits all, (and) recognise that we must resist in the different ways that we can.

(Managaliman, 2016; cited in Acha, 2016, p. 13)

But, as Ghani (2017, interview) frankly put it: ‘you could be a raging feminist, but you never bring that into your conversations or the work that you are doing. There’s no space. It’s just not possible’. This is just one example of the dilemmas facing the WGC and its members as feminist activists working ‘inside’ the system: arguments for the inclusion of gender equality are most successful when they fit into dominant frameworks, in this case frameworks that position climate change as an issue of science, requiring technological change and individual behaviour change (c.f. Alaimo, 2009; Seager, 2009; Nelson, 2012).

### *Equating Gender with Women*

Underpinning both rhetorical strategies described above is the need to centre women and their experiences rather than making arguments that understand gender as a relational concept, including attention to both masculinities and male power. This reinforces Bretherton’s (1998) claim discussed in Chapter 3 that gender, understood as a relational term requiring critical attention to men and male power, has not yet reached the global environmental agenda. Though making this claim in 1998, there is little evidence from this research that much has changed. The use of rhetorical strategies that frame ‘gender’ to be synonymous with ‘women’ has, again, been a matter of strategic necessity due to the institutional resistance to accepting masculinity as relevant to issues of global climate politics. For example, Röhr recalls the push-back she faced after mentioning masculinity during an intervention on behalf of the WGC:

[The intervention] was about Article 6 of the Convention, so about education and capacity building and I said ok capacity building for women is important, but we need much more capacity building for men to change their masculinised approaches to reducing emissions, and so on. And this is, you know, nobody is listening to interventions and that moment when I used the term masculinity, then you could see everybody oh.... [mimes sticking head up]. Haha and it was directly part of the intervention but in the Women and Gender Constituency there were people who said I hate it, don’t do it again everybody is asking me about masculinity now and I don’t we don’t want to fight against men. I also don’t want to fight against men but it’s a different approach.

(Röhr, 2017, interview)

Later in the conversation, when I asked her who had been against the use of the term masculinity, Röhr replied ‘everyone really, both Parties and civil society’ (Röhr, 2017, interview).

There are several explanations as to why some might be against bringing men, masculinity and masculine power into the gender and climate change debate. Röhr suggests it is an issue of lack of understanding which

has forced the Constituency to rely on strategies that conflate women and gender. She claims that

These terms gender and women were used as if they were the same, so gender is equal to women and women is equal to gender. And one of the problems that we're facing here, and I wouldn't make a difference between erm civil society organisations, environmental civil society organisations, negotiators, sometimes also UN organisations, though they might be a little bit yes, further in their debates. They work with gender concepts but also their gender concepts are women concepts, as empowering women etc. And that's one of the difficulties, we tried several times to explain the difference between gender and women and what it means, but it's too much. They don't follow.

(Röhr, 2017, interview)

Another interview participant told me that

Lack of understanding is definitely a part of it, it's also about power. It is also because even if you do educate people, they are not necessarily going to take it on board, or agree, and there are lots of other political shifts going on.

(Participant B, 2018, interview)

It would seem that the UNFCCC pursues the kind of gender-mainstreaming approach that has been criticised by several scholars for lacking a critical potential to challenge existing political frameworks (c.f. Buckingham and Kulcur, 2009; Rochette, 2016; Wonders and Danner, 2015). This approach is becoming increasingly prominent as countries in the Global North try to understand gender as an issue for all countries, not just the Global South. One interview participant recalled that a Party delegate approaching her very excitedly a couple of days after asking for an example of how they might be able to incorporate a gendered perspective in their domestic European policy. The Party delegate eagerly told her that they had 'found one'; women need less water in a heatwave than men and this fact could be written into domestic policy on responding to a heatwave (Participant B, 2018, interview). The delegate had told me the exact same titbit in my interview with them one day prior (Participant E, 2018, interview). Participant B went on to gently criticise this kind of approach:

But that was a lightbulb moment 'I know and understand this is concrete'. And I had a contact with a guy at a stakeholder meeting with the EU, it was a project they were doing on energy and he was transmission specialist, and he said well I don't see the gender in transmission and I said that's because you're not looking and because you're looking at the wrong thing. You're looking at the transmission lines once the decision



has been made to put those lines up. But where was the discussion before the transmission lines were put up about whether or not having a massive power station with massive lines was the appropriate way to go given that there will be however many people, many of them women, who won't be able to access that electricity from the grid. Where is the discussion about distributed energy?

(Participant B, 2018, interview)

This approach to writing gender into policy does not challenge the existing agenda, rather it involves adding women into it. This is similar to what Bretherton (1998) suggests results in a resistance to a broader conversation about gender, since this would fundamentally challenge existing value systems and power structures. An implication of this approach is that attempts to steer the conversation away from a focus on women's vulnerability results in the Constituency relying on strategies that simply insert *women* into existing frameworks and making arguments that demonstrate how the inclusion of women can be of benefit to dominant systems of neoliberal capitalism. For example, members of the WGC published a document in 2009 stating that, although women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men,

At the same time, women's vulnerability can obscure the fact that they are an *untapped resource* in efforts to cope with climate change and reduce the emissions that cause it. As innovators, organisers, leaders, educators and caregivers, women are uniquely positioned to help curb the harmful consequences of a changing climate.

(Blomstrom, Cunningham, Johnson, and Owren, 2009, p. 3, emphasis added)

In a context where technocratic and economic interests are given priority over all others (c.f. Alaimo, 2009; Seager, 2009; Nelson, 2012; Bee, Rice and Trauger, 2015) it makes sense that the WGC would have to adapt its strategies in its attempts to influence the negotiations. Dutch negotiator Pieter Tepstra candidly noted in an interview that 'the economic arguments carry more weight with negotiators than the moral ones. If you want Parties to act then you have to show that by not including women, they are losing out on half the workforce' (Tepstra, 2018, interview). However, as I have shown elsewhere (Wilson and Chu, 2019) a gender intervention in a Green Economy approach to dealing with climate change that over-emphasises participation of women can only ever result in a simplified tick-box inclusion of women, another challenge facing feminists working inside the system.

### ***Intersectionality in Baby Steps***

It's this being able to see that diversity brings different ideas and again it's not just about gender diversity but more generally. But that's one

of the things that comes with gender equality and I often talk about this, there's women's equality and there's women's empowerment. We need women's empowerment to get gender equality but gender equality means women and men and boys and girls and that's critically important because there are many things where men are more vulnerable than women. [...]. So there's this whole issue about caste, and around ethnicity and race and other things, but in all of the gender equality stuff that's what it also means. That's part of the feminist perspective, if you are a feminist then you are for everybody's rights.

(Participant B, 2018, interview)

It is clear from the documentary data I have analysed as well as from my interviews and observations that the WGC, and its members, are committed to principles of intersectional feminism. Intersectionality is particularly explicit in internal training events (c.f. Burns, 2013; Reyes and Burns, 2013; Röhr, 2013b). It can be easy to overlook these commitments because they rarely make it into official policy documents. Nonetheless, a commitment to the principles of intersectionality is at the heart of the WGC's political practice. As discussed in Chapter 4, there was a moment of reflection within the Constituency in 2013 about the use of problematic rhetorical strategies (including the ones described above) to get women's issues on the negotiating table – e.g. gender as synonymous for women; gender/women implying vulnerable, victim, poor or altruistic stewards of the environment. The presenters called for a more embedded intersectional approach to gender advocacy (c.f. Reyes and Burns, 2013). A series of internal capacity building events stressed that intersectionality was not only relevant for research but for policymaking too. They also encouraged members of the WGC to be aware of the politics of knowledge production, to be more specific when talking about 'women' and 'gender' and to make clear the different situations of 'women' in different contexts (Alber et al., 2013). As a result, the Constituency agreed that its members should share expertise with an aim of coming up with a common understanding of gender issues (Burns, 2013, in Alber et al., 2013) and that they should pursue a two-track strategy of continuing to lobby for the inclusion of gender language in UNFCCC texts while also continuing the internal discussion about non-essentialist and intersectional approaches and building capacity within the Constituency (Röhr, 2013b in Alber et al., 2013).

Since then, there has been an increase in explicit articulations of intersectional principles with the term being used more commonly in the Constituency's demands. For example, in an eDiscussion on Climate and Environmental Justice held in 2016, María Alejandra Rodriguea Acha, Co-Executive Director at FRIDA – The Young Feminist Fund, the co-founder and former co-coordinator of *TierrActiva Perú*, claimed that 'groups are increasingly rejecting single-issue campaigns and demands and recognising the intersectionality of diverse movements and struggles' (Acha, 2016, p. 13).

Aguilar, Granat and Owren (2015) even assert that as part of the significant progress that has been made in addressing the complexity and intersectionality of global environmental and development challenges, the UNFCCC has progressed to understanding the need to tackle climate change impacts as an issue of human rights. To this end the term intersectionality was explicitly mentioned in the GAP negotiations and was incorporated into an informal summary of a workshop intended to develop the main elements for the plan to stress that implementation of climate solutions must ‘highlight intersectionality and broader social contexts as part of gender-assessments’ (UNFCCC, 2017b, p. 5).

This new focus on the need to consider ‘broader social contexts’ is significant from an ecofeminist intersectional lens because it draws attention to the importance of contextuality of experience. Despite these small wins, the Constituency is aware that it faces a huge challenge in gender rhetoric at the official agreement and policy level because

while gender issues have now a higher profile in the UNFCCC, a normative understanding of the link between gender equality and climate action, and the role of the gender mainstreaming strategy is still very limited, as are links to a human-rights based approach to development. (Burns and Lee, 2015, p. 18)

Burns and Lee go on to suggest that within the UNFCCC challenges in the process of gender-mainstreaming are in part due to limited capacity and resources. But critically there is gap in knowledge among the majority of those engaging in climate policy from a scientific, technical, and financial background regarding to the social dimensions of climate change issues. As such, the WGC pursues intersectionality in ‘baby steps’ or, as Morrow (2017a) suggests, they favour incremental progress towards an inclusive gender-just climate framework.

### **Procedural Strategies**

Rhetorical strategies can only be effective if they are coupled with procedural strategies to implement them. This is linked to the decision facing social movements between acting as pragmatic insiders or radical outsiders (see Chapter 2). The WGC actually employs both of these approaches as a Constituency, as do individual member NGOs. Alongside their insider strategy of influencing global climate change negotiations in the UNFCCC, member NGOs also conduct a lot of advocacy and grassroots work. For example, AIWC conducts a series of awareness programmes in various Indian regions around issues of climate change as well as providing training on the consumption of conservation of energy (AIWC, 2018b). Similarly, as part of their ‘Great Green Wall’ project, Women’s Environment Programme (WEP) is

building capacities of women on efficient use of energy to reduce health hazards associated with the burning of biomass and save the vegetation from degradation by teaching women to construct energy efficient cook stoves from local materials. WEP is also training women on alternative sources of income, to empower them economically and reduce over-dependence on farming.

(WEP, 2017 n.p.)

Because my fieldwork was focused on the COPs, I will not discuss these outsider strategies in detail. Rather, I focus here on the insider strategies of the WGC vis-à-vis the UNFCCC. The Constituency has developed a particular modus operandi over the years in order to ‘speak truth to power’ (Röhr, Hemmati and Lambrou, 2009, p. 297). As I see it, this modus operandi is organised around four complementary activities: identifying entry points for gender aspects into the climate change debate; raising awareness and disseminating information; building women’s capacity and joint strategising; developing a future research agenda.

### *Identifying Entry Points for Gender Aspects into the Climate Change Debate*

As a first point of reference for lobbying for gender issues to be integrated into global climate change policies, the WGC draws upon the links between gender equality, women’s rights and climate change that exist outwith the confines of the UNFCCC itself. As discussed above, UN declarations such as the Beijing Platform for Action for gender-mainstreaming (1995) are particularly significant because Parties to the UN have already committed to this mandate. Similarly, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has direct implications for climate change policy because it obligates Parties to the UN to take

all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development.

(United Nations, 1979, p. 5)

CEDAW further addresses issues of resources, credit, family planning, education and the right to work, to participate in forming and implementing government policies and to represent the country at an international level – all of which, the WGC asserts, impact a woman’s capacity to adapt to impacts of climate change and to participate in the planning and implementation to address climate change (UNEP, 2004). More recently feminists have pointed to the Paris Agreement, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030. For example, during COP23 at an open negotiation for the Gender Action Plan (GAP) where observers were admitted to

the negotiating room to observe proceedings, the Mexican negotiator called for the GAP to make clear links to both Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, resulting in the preamble including the line ‘reaffirming the General Assembly resolution on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ (UNFCCC, 2017b).

These links inform the WGC’s members when lobbying for the inclusion of specific language, such as ‘loss and damage’, ‘human rights’ and ‘gender equality’. It gives the Constituency something concrete (in that they have already been agreed and mandated by Parties) to pin arguments on while lobbying. Emilia Reyes, negotiator for Mexico and human rights activist, sums this up as ‘the biggest achievement of the GAP was including language on human rights for the first time under the gender agenda item’ (Reyes, 2017 interview). She went on to say ‘gender equality [in the Paris Agreement] was the same fight. We don’t care about where it is, we just want the precedent. In the preamble is ok’ (Reyes, 2017, interview). Therefore, it seems that the logic of much of the work around identifying entry points for gender aspects in the climate change debates is about getting specific words and phrases in the document, because once it is there it can act as a precedent to be drawn upon in future negotiations. A phrase that came up in multiple interviews with both negotiators and with WGC members was that gender advocacy was best done in ‘baby steps’ (Lauron, 2017, interview; Reyes, 2017, interview; Coates, 2018, interview; Marchington, 2018, interview; O’Hehir, 2018, interview).

Language is important, not just in the gender negotiations, but also in the UNFCCC negotiations as a whole. Language provides a reinforcing framework for the UNFCCC which is, at its heart, an institution that is concerned with negotiating treaty text. As such, ‘language in the UNFCCC is often a huge point of contention and there’s so much attention paid to words and how they go together’ (Marchington, 2018 interview). Contention and disagreement on language at COP24 Katowice in 2018 was what made national news in the UK when Parties failed to reach an agreement on the IPCC Special Report where oil producers Saudi Arabia, Russia and the US refused to ‘welcome’ the report in favour of merely ‘noting’ it (Doherty, 2018). Such a distinction is seen as important because it ultimately sets the tone for global climate ambition.

But language on gender in the UNFCCC does not seem to have as much of a strict code of conduct with phrases often being introduced including: ‘gender equality’, ‘gender balance’, ‘gender-mainstreaming’, ‘gender-responsive’ and ‘gender-sensitive’, among others. As Canadian negotiator Erin Marchington recalled: ‘I know when I started looking at the gender decisions I was trying to differentiate, ok what is the difference between gender-responsive and gender-sensitive? And I’m not sure there’s really a good answer’ (Marchington, 2018 interview). She suggested that there is a variety of reasons why such vagueness exists around language on gender issues, but perhaps the most pragmatic of those is that for most negotiators

English (the primary negotiating language) is not their first language. Therefore ‘you have people trying to craft a document together who it is not their first language and in the case of the GAP it is not always logical’ (Marchington, 2018, interview). But ‘when you have a soft issue that’s not an obligation for Parties [like gender] I think people become a bit laxer and the concept of those terms are not always well understood’ (Marchington, 2018, interview).

Vagueness in gender language can reveal politically vested agendas. Choosing less threatening words becomes a political strategy. For example, the phrase ‘gender equality’ is more threatening, more prescriptive, than simply ‘gender balance’ (as described above), ‘gender’ or ‘gender equality in line with national circumstances’. Resistance to the phrase gender equality was a contentious feature of COP19 Warsaw in 2013 where ‘gender equity’ was introduced as an alternative to ‘gender equality’ because Saudi Arabia, backed by the EU (who were looking for Saudi support in other aspects of the negotiations), were strongly opposed to the phrase gender equality. Saudi Arabia have always been opposed to the phrase gender equality, because it would require a huge upheaval in national social policy and so, while they do not actively block gender decisions, it is often the case that language on gender is watered down, or highly caveated rendering it non-binding.

The focus on language, or on getting the word on the page, advances the WGC’s general demands for gender-mainstreaming, a strategy that focuses on anchoring women’s concerns and gender aspects in the negotiating texts. But, in an analysis of the strategies used by members of the WGC, Röhr suggests that there is more than one way to influence negotiations (Röhr, 2009) and that their submissions and interventions aim at a more fundamental change in structures and practices than WGC efforts to lobby for policy recommendations. She gives three examples of this more radical ambition, the first being WEDO which refers explicitly to the existing negotiating text and suggests that

financial support be directed at adaptation initiatives and national policies and programs that prioritize women and other vulnerable populations. [...] Regarding the effectiveness of vulnerability and adaptation assessments to support adaptation planning and implementation: gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data.

(submission by WEDO 2008 on behalf of GGCA; cited in Röhr 2009)

In another example, WECF refers to the instruments of the Kyoto Protocol urging that they be applicable at the local level benefiting women:

we propose to create a simplified CDM mechanism for sustainable energy projects in rural areas at the household and community level, including improved funding conditions for smaller scale and cutting-edge-technology projects. Such projects should be developed in

consultation with the local communities, including women, and should be accessible to them.

(submission by WECF 2009; cited in Röhr 2009)

GenderCC provides one even more explicit example of demanding that the negotiations themselves should aim at fundamental change:

Gender mainstreaming is an important part of involving women and gender aspects actively in climate politics. However, achieving true justice between women and men – including in relation to climate change – will involve more fundamental changes of cultures, structures and institutions, individual capacities and relationships between sectors in society. [...] Recognize the ways in which the economic crisis and the climate crisis are based on the same failures: we consume more than we have at our disposal, we are living in an unsustainable way that ignores economic, ecological and social limits to growth whilst relegating those elements we need to live a good life to the status of mere “resources”. Therefore, economic activity has to be transformed and renewed from a “careless” process into a “caring” one. The vantage point for this transformation should be the provision of care and caring, paid or unpaid work that has, up to now, mostly been done by women. The economy, its actors, structures and processes need to adapt to the environment, to the needs of women, indigenous peoples, the socially disadvantaged, not vice versa. This transformation needs additional financing mechanisms, beyond market-based mechanisms. Investigation in creating and supporting funding mechanisms that provide an alternative to market-based solutions is essential.

(submission by GenderCC LIFE 2009; cited in Röhr 2009)

Since such submissions and interventions lack the binding power of language in official policy documents, the rhetoric can be much more radical in its aim for fundamental structural change. Submissions and interventions also serve a different purpose. They are designed to be strongly worded and demanding. As such, I interpret the strategic decisions about when and where to use specific language and words to be WGC’s way of navigating the complex political landscape of global climate politics.

Several factors have influenced Parties in the decision to shift from nominally ‘gender-blind’ to ‘gender-responsive’ (Barre et al., 2018). For one, this shift has required similar shifts in climate policy discussions and literature that allowed for a more socially focused, society-wide debate on climate action that happened around the launch of the Bali Action Plan. Secondly, this shift from gender-blind to gender-responsive, even in the face of opposition from a handful of Parties that challenged the relevance of gender to climate change policy, was possible because there remained strong political will from heads of states, ministers, key government negotiators and



political leaders in the UN, particularly champions within the UNFCCC (Barre et al., 2018). But the achievement of any feminist successes in global climate change policy has relied on the strategic savviness of the WGC and its members. It has relied on the WGC's members painstakingly lobbying for very specific wording while simultaneously introducing radical ideas in less politically charged spaces. Therefore, my understanding is that gaining formal recognition is a worthwhile and successful endeavour. Better to gain support than to be shut out of the negotiations altogether.

### ***Raising Awareness and Disseminating Information***

Efforts to get language on gender included in official policy are informed by a dedicated team within the WGC of primarily younger feminists who design creative ways to raise awareness of gender and climate change issues at the COP. This includes the increasing use of social media and 'actions', by which they mean strategies of disruption, as well as more traditional informational side events and exhibits. 'Actions' are relatively common features of the COP, performed by most sectors of civil society, not only the WGC. One feature any COP attendee will quickly become familiar with is the Fossil of the Day, hosted by ENGOs, specifically the Climate Action Network (CAN). To the theme of Jurassic Park presenters award the country who has been most abysmal during the day's negotiations the Fossil of the Day. Although only a light-hearted competition, no country really wants to be known as the Fossil of the Day. Typically, actions are designed to draw attention to recent or upcoming events, both at the COP and sometimes more broadly. One such example entitled #MindTheGAP, performed at COP23 amidst the GAP negotiations in 2017, was designed to highlight the importance of the GAP and to reinforce demands for the negotiators. In a press release Hanna Gunnarsson, policy and communications officer for the WGC, wrote

The Women and Gender Constituency views a comprehensive, targeted and resourced two-year gender action plan (GAP) as a critical outcome for COP23, in order to urgently advance gender-responsive and human-rights based climate policy and action.

(Gunnarsson, 2017)

The action itself was based around an aerobics class which included all the main priorities that the WGC argued are essential for a comprehensive GAP. In this spirit participants (myself included) and observers were urged to 'reach for the money', 'lift the [gender-disaggregated] data' and to 'fight for gender equality' (WECF, 2017a).

Another example of an action from COP23 was held the last available day for GAP negotiations where it looked as though the negotiations would fall through entirely and no GAP would be adopted. Early in the morning

members of the WGC congregated outside of the negotiating room with the intention of greeting the negotiators as they entered to ‘wish them luck and good will’. Lisa Goldner, a member of the WGC at the time explained that despite the friendly approach, the action was really a way of saying ‘we are here, we are gender experts and you can call on us if you need us.’ One final example occurred one year later at COP24 Katowice in 2018. The action was designed to draw attention to the emergence of ‘macho-fascism’ not only, the Constituency asserted, in the corridors of the UNFCCC, but also around the world (WEDO, 2018c). The action was essentially a response to the worrying rise of figures such as US President Donald Trump and Brazilian President-elect Jair Bolsonaro. The participants enacted a feminist standing up and ‘saying no’ to aggressive, violent figures acted out by some members of the WGC wearing big black paper moustaches.

The purpose of such actions is to increase visibility and to change both public and negotiator opinions, as well as to gain global, national and social media attention. The reasoning is that media attention can raise awareness both within and outwith the COP corridors. But it is not clear just how much impact such actions have. According to the WGC such actions do have some impact. At a WGC Caucus that I attended, Gunnarsson informed the Constituency that during the two-week conference the twitter hashtags had made 22 million impressions. While impressive, I am not convinced that this strategy necessarily corresponds with how the Constituency is perceived at the COP itself. To use the example above, Trump and Bolsonaro were not in attendance so using the COP is a space for calling out their ‘macho-fascism’ comes with risks of with being dismissed as hysterical women by the people in the room (so to speak), rather than praised by allies on social media. Lauron suggested that ‘there is a notion that CSOs are there to create problems or make lots of noise, and that’s keeping governments defensive’ (Lauron, 2017, interview). This is similar to what Harriet Thew (2018) found in a study on Youth NGO strategies at the COPs. Many youth participants felt that they would rather talk to people more directly than performative actions allow and they felt that they were either perceived negatively by negotiators or ignored by them completely. On the other hand, the action aimed at wishing negotiators luck in the final hours of GAP negotiations was mentioned explicitly by lead GAP negotiator Colin O’Hehir in the final moments of the tense negotiations. According to one interview participant who was in the room, O’Hehir reportedly told fellow negotiators ‘we have to come to an agreed text; those women [the WGC] out there are counting on us, we can’t let them down’ (Participant A, 2017, interview). This suggests that there is a kind of trade-off to be made in these actions, or a fine line between a successful action that catches the eyes and ears of negotiators and being dismissed as frivolous.

Actions do not happen in a vacuum; they are just one part of a package of activities designed to raise awareness and disseminate information. The WGC also uses side events as a means of introducing potential agenda items

for the negotiations, networking and connecting with people as well as promoting reports and research. Side events were originally held in the break between negotiating sessions, but as the COP has grown along with observer participation, they currently run throughout the day with space being highly competitive (UNFCCC, 2016c). Typically, events are in the form of panels with speakers on particular issues. For example, at COP23 in 2017 the WGC held side events on issues ranging from: ‘Secure Women’s Land Rights as a Climate Strategy’; ‘Climate Finance and Sustainable Land Use: The Gap between Theory and Reality’; and ‘Fair Shares and Ambition in the Post-Paris Regime’ (WGC, 2017a). Previous research by Schroeder and Lovell (2009) has shown that around one quarter of attendees of side events are negotiators or government representatives. So, side events are not a parallel world with little interaction between them and the formal sessions, but the information being presented at side events can have a potential knock-on effect in the negotiations. They are an integral part of the UNFCCC process.

However, at COP23 formal sessions and side events were separated by a 1.3km path known as the Bonn Zone (for NGOs) and the Bula Zone (for negotiations). This meant that busy negotiators were much less likely to attend side events due to the time it took to travel between zones, which also included a security check each time they entered a different zone. Members of the WGC, and CSOs more broadly, suggested that this physical separation represents an increasing trend of restricting the access of civil society organisations to COP events (Lauron, 2017, interview). Since 2017 this trend has seemingly increased with hundreds of observers being physically shut out of the building without bags or coats (in December) in Madrid at COP25 Chile in 2019 (Magulio, 2019). Furthermore, the institutional set-up requires individual negotiators to actively seek out this information, meaning few negotiators may be aware of gender issues at all. For example, Fanny Mertz, the Belgian Gender Focal Point in the UNFCCC, remarked that she had given a presentation to her colleagues that was ‘well received because many of [her] colleagues said that this is something quite new, they didn’t know about it’ (Mertz, 2018, interview). As such, it is not clear how much influence side events or constituency stalls have.

### ***Building Women’s Capacity and Joint Strategising***

Creating an influential movement requires coordination, and one of the key strategies in representing the interests of women is to form networks or coalitions with like-minded COP participants. In many ways, the Constituency itself is an example of this coalition-building, or ‘epistemic community’ building (Yuval-Davis, 1997). The WGC organises throughout the year, hosting regular webinars and caucuses in order to build women’s capacity and to facilitate joint strategising among feminists. Morrow (2017a) sees this as indicative of the Constituency’s strategy of transversal politics. It is beneficial for NGOs to be a member of an advocacy network such as the

WGC partly because it allows for coordinated national and international advocacy. While there are some in the WGC who prefer to work with their national governments and are only nominally involved with the Constituency, other WGC members rely heavily on advocacy at the UNFCCC in addition to pressing their government officials.

One means of joint strategising in the WGC is to invite representatives of other constituencies to the Women and Gender Caucus. It is a tradition during the COP events for the WGC to host 'theme' days during which women and feminists from other constituencies are invited to the WGC's Caucus. During COP23 the WGC held several themed days including Young Feminist Day and Indigenous Women's Day, as discussed above. Both days were very poignant, with the Young Feminists opting to use their time to highlight issues faced by young women in a series of moving poems. For example:

Dear society, you told me to be cute and adorable, to be quiet and pliable. I told you I will be loud and speak my mind. I was your joke. The only wrong-doing I did was take the space of boys.

Dear society. Dirty. Fat. Fag. Undesirable. These are all words on my body that you prescribe, like the crashing of waves on coastlines that were never supposed to know how high sea level can rise.

Dear society. I do not shave the hairs off my body like you shave the trees off this Earth (Read by Deleon & Gunnarsson).

I'm Laura, I'm from the US. Millions of youth are rising up. We are tired of the current system that is based on the destruction of the Earth, on greed, on war and violence. Young people all over the world have been raising their consciousness to include feminists, queer, trans, anti-capitalist, environmental, racial, intersectionality and indigenous analysis. We are not only in social movements but are leading them. From Black Lives Matter, to Palestine, to Ende Gelende and to UN spaces to the fight to control our bodies we have a world to win! (Read by Cooper-Hall).

On Indigenous Women's Day women from indigenous communities from around the world began with an invocation led by Tarcila Rivera Zea from Peru calling for an intersectional gender just sustainable future. This was a moving event that involved lighting candles and forming a circle sealed by holding hands for quiet reflection.

Despite the divisions of the constituencies, building alliances between NGOs is imperative, not least in linking issues and allowing like-minded groups to push for issues of human rights together. As such, submissions by various UNFCCC constituencies, particularly ENGOs, WGC, YOUNGOs and IPOs often mention women's rights, indigenous people's rights and youth rights as well as issues of climate justice more generally, in a bloc (see for example WGC, 2016a; 2017b). But some members of the Constituency

are wary about the kinds of alliances that are built and the coalitions that are formed. One interviewee, for example, said:

This morning I read in the advocacy list [an email list that is used for strategizing among the Constituency both during and beyond the COP] an advertisement for a side event that was weird. It was transformation of ... of principles of Pope Francis, a book or pamphlet or something. Have you read it? It's against gender, well it's against reproductive rights of women, and we from the WGC promote it! I asked and they said, well yes but it's [another member of the Constituency] who is on the podium. I said, well we should ask why they are on the podium!

(Participant C, 2017, interview)

This speaks to what Yuval-Davis warned about the creation of epistemic communities, whereby the divisions of who should be included, or where the boundaries of a community should be, are not always clear. Joint strategising with other activists who are committed to the principles of climate justice, or principles which could be articulated together in a 'chain of equivalence' (see Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2005), facilitates efforts not only for lobbying Party delegates in the creation of a cohesive message, but also for capacity building activities which are of huge importance to the Constituency and for Party delegates. Internal capacity building workshops began at COP14 Bali in 2007. The idea was that workshops were a small step towards hosting global strategy meetings every two years with 'the aim of discussing latest research and recent developments from a gender perspective and strategising about the integration of gender perspectives in climate change negotiations, programmes and measures at all levels' (Röhr, Hemmati and Lambrou, 2009, p. 301).

The aim of formalising a process of joint strategising through regular strategy meetings is built upon previous informal strategy meetings. For example, shortly before the COP13 in 2006 an *Indigenous Peoples' Capacity Building Workshop* was held between 25 and 28 November. During this workshop a member from GenderCC facilitated sessions and participated in strengthening the gender issues relevant to forest conservation, displacement, mining and water source loss and contamination issues (Röhr, 2008, p. 3). The main aims of the capacity building workshops were both to develop positions on these issues and to develop strategies to lobby for gender perspectives to be included in these areas. A second capacity building workshop was held during COP14 on the 4 December 2007~ which, on one hand, focused on the main elements and principles of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol and how the process is organised and, on the other hand, on gender issues related to the process and content (Röhr, 2008). This workshop was attended by 25 women and proved to be so popular that the group met twice more during the COP. Again, the idea was both to strengthen the network's position in lobbying for gender considerations as well as enhancing women's

knowledge on the make-up and inner workings of the UNFCCC itself, a practice that is still in place today in the first few days of the COP.

The focus of capacity building events is to teach women the skills, knowledge and resources needed to engage in the UNFCCC negotiations. These events, in my observations, are not about building men's capacity on what a feminist climate politics might look like. This issue was brought to light at a Gender Dialogue event at SB48 in May 2018. The event, mandated by the GAP, was intended as a dialogue between the chairs of the UNFCCC constituted bodies to discuss the outcomes and recommendations in a technical paper identifying possible actions within each of the constituted bodies on gender. At this event one of the male participants remarked

I will excuse myself in advance if I say something offensive because I was not educated enough. I am very happy to have this event but I am a bit puzzled as to why the audience does not have any men.

(Participant A, 2018)

The participant went on to share his concern for the lack of men's participation and encouraged the WGC, or women more broadly, to ensure in the future greater participation of men in the process of capacity building on gender. This comment sparked some disagreement between members of the WGC on the role and inclusion of men. One senior member argued that it was necessary to come up with a standard push-back on this type of criticism, while another more junior member took the position that 'we don't need men in this process, women are more than capable'. Meanwhile, others felt that the male participant's comment was fair and that it was important to encourage men to participate in the process if any progress was to be made. The main point of contention was the assertion that it was women's duty to educate men on gender issues. That 'gender' is a stand in for women, while men remain ungendered (or unmarked by gender).

Alongside these capacity building workshops members of the WGC also meet regularly during the COP for informal workshops. One such workshop occurred at SB48 Bonn in May 2018. At the end of a long and disappointing day, the WGC gathered outside in the sun for a last-minute workshop led by Reyes, who was serving as a negotiator for Mexico. Reyes encouraged members of the WGC to wear their brightest clothes and biggest smile and always carry fresh fruit with them when lobbying negotiators. Her idea was that during the UNFCCC conferences negotiator are exhausted and lacking good nourishment. Their bright clothes, big smiles and fresh fruits will be happily accepted by negotiators and provide a means of getting an 'in'. Or, as Reyes put it, 'put them in a good mood before stating your demands!'

While historically feminist writers have been critical of smiling as a gendered practice, used to manage how gender advocates, and so gender itself, are perceived (see Friedan, 1963; Ahmed, 2017), I read this situation slightly differently.<sup>4</sup> The next morning the WGC Caucus was filled with laughing



feminist environmentalists armed with a new strategy to take on the negotiators, who at that time were failing to reach any meaningful agreement on the Paris Rulebook. There was a sense of camaraderie among the Constituency itself and the over-worked, over-tired and thoroughly disappointed women had a new renewed sense of purpose. And, if nothing else, speaking as one of those over-worked, over-tired and thoroughly disappointed women present, it was a bit of fun!

### *Developing a Future Research Agenda*

Underpinning all of these efforts is a broad research agenda. Having access to specific material resources allows the Constituency to establish themselves as experts on the issue of gender and climate change and helps gain influence in UNFCCC meetings. Via an email list-serve the Constituency has a system of information access exchange among its members, but they also share this between the other constituencies and Party delegates, which is how I, as a researcher, was added to this list. Recently, there has been a tendency to keep research within the WGC, preferring material written by practitioners rather than academic researchers. During my fieldwork there was some tension between academics and members of the WGC, with one member in an interview even remarking that academics should not necessarily be labelled as civil society as they take up space from those who are more actively trying to influence the negotiations (Lauron, 2017, interview). Her position speaks to the separation of ideas and action that has been emblematic of the relationship between academics and activists in the feminist climate project.

Academics who do research on processes of global climate governance have not typically been involved with the WGC in ways that contribute to the activist priorities. I learned that WGC members do not tend to regard academic theorising as an important part of feminist praxis. Röhr suggests that part of that tension is the result of the fact that most academics writing about the WGC having never actually attended a COP:

I have had a lot of discussions with German researchers who have never been at a conference here and they look at the text and say “Oh, what’s that”? Women here are so traditionally working on words so I have one of them here and we are always trying to explain [...] I say come and speak about this problem and see how people react and come to the caucus and see a little bit how the situation is, that is also women’s organisations have to react to the situation they are facing. And then they usually come up with the ‘right’ research questions but sorry, we are already two steps ahead why don’t you ask us?

(Röhr, 2017 interview)

However, Röhr also went on to suggest that there is also some resistance from the WGC towards academic research, and that it is an exciting time for



gender and climate change research because so many early career, usually women, researchers are interested in the area:

And this might really be an opportunity to bring these some steps further and to provide debates and new ideas, fresh impetus to our discussions. And I think this is done in a connection between researchers and activists, it's really always one of the demands or recommendations that we have to. But, no we don't want this academic research, we need research from the ground, from the grassroots organisations and I say yeah, but so I am part, mine is also researcher and more academic and I'm thinking yeah it's important to have knowledge and to bring this knowledge to other parts of the world let's say. But it's not enough, we need to connect.

(Röhr, 2017, interview)

Rather than engaging with the academic writing on either strategies of resistance or connecting gender and climate change more broadly, the Constituency tends to favour 'in-house', or NGO-produced research and reports. As discussed above, the WGC published a series of case studies in 2007 and 2008 by local NGOs aiming to give an overview of the local situation in countries such as Senegal, the Philippines and Ghana, and to draw out the contextualised implications for women's lives and for gender equality (c.f. Alam, Fatema and Ahmed, 2008; Gueye, 2008; Mensah-Kutin, 2008; Henrich Böll Stiftung and WEDO, 2009). Similarly, position papers have been developed by various member NGOs of the WGC aiming to think strategically about the ways forward, such as a report by Agnes Otzelberger, from the BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies, entitled *Gender-responsive strategies on climate change: recent progress and ways forward for donors* (Otzelberger, 2011). The GGCA have also published a variety of reports such as 'Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence' (GGCA, 2016a) and 'Gender and Climate Change in Africa, Asia, Latin America, America and Europe' (GGCA, 2016b). What these kinds of reports and research papers have in common is tangible policy recommendations and strategies for feminist organising in the UNFCCC.

While relying on NGO-produced research and reports may be explained by the separation between ideas and actions seen in both social movements and in academia, I also see this in this case as being about strategic necessity. The need for more research and knowledge was a common theme in interviews with negotiators, particularly among those based in the Global North. For example, Mertz, the Belgian Gender Focal Point, proclaimed that there were no examples to draw upon in making the case for a gender perspective in the Global North. She also commented that 'it takes time to go through and read one report' (2017, interview). Given that the National Gender Focal Points typically take on the role as an add-on to their already busy day-jobs, it is clear that they are looking for easy to find and

context-specific examples on which to draw. Negotiators are not interested in abstract academic theorising about gender and climate change. They are looking for specific measures that can easily be implemented in domestic and international policy.

## **Conclusion**

The account of feminist modes of organising in the UNFCCC offered in this chapter demonstrates the sheer complexity of bringing a gender perspective to the global climate negotiations. Difficult decisions have had to be made in order to gain increased access and legitimacy in the halls of the UNFCCC, and lines have had to be drawn between a commitment to the principles of intersectional theory and practice. There have been two defining moments in the history of feminist organising in the UNFCCC. The first occurred in 2007 where the, then small, network of feminist climate activists, were caught in a bind between an outsider approach based on making feminist demands based on the masculinity of global climate politics or an insider approach that required more strategic means of influencing the negotiations. Ultimately, the feminist environmental network decided on a (mostly) insider approach and effectively dropped the more radical demands of a feminist lens. This has resulted in a strategy that fails to challenge the masculinity imbued in the negotiations for insider tactics which focused on influencing the negotiations. This required a shift towards arguments based on women's vulnerability in the face of a changing climate in line with the wider discursive shift seen in the UNFCCC at that time from adaptation to mitigation. The WGC has seen some great success through this approach, but it has also come with its own set of challenges in that it has required arguments that equated gender with women resulting in a universalised and simplistic framing of women's lives and gender as a social category to dominate the negotiations.

The second defining moment came as a direct result of the choices made in 2007 where the WGC was caught in a new kind of bind about how to use its power and legitimacy gained from working inside the system to better ends. In 2013 the Constituency began a dialogue among like-minded feminist activists and researchers about the importance of the framing in gender in more nuanced and complex ways. Attendees of the internal capacity building workshops stressed the need to move away from essentialised framings of gender (strategic or otherwise), to address the plurality of gender and to add new stories to complement the dominant framings of women as vulnerable, the empowerment of women as local managers and the active role of women and the inclusion of women in the neoliberal market economy. Those new stories should ensure that gender was 'understood as a category of analysis that cuts across other categories of social inequality (intersectionality) and that lies at the basis of the structure of society' (LIFE, GGCA, WEDO, 2013 in Bathge, 2013, p. 2). However, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, these efforts

were somewhat thwarted by the negotiations for the Paris Agreement in the run up to 2015. The Constituency was so focused on ensuring that gender language was included in meaningful ways in the Paris Agreement that the kinds of dialogue about the meaning of gender and gender equality never happened.

What is clear from this story is there is a vast difference between the kind of strategic bind facing the WGC in 2007 and the one it faces today. Indeed, the decisions made in 2007, and the subsequent hard work and determination of WGC members, has changed the conditions under which the Constituency operates. While this has not yet resulted in more meaningful inclusion of intersectional language in UNFCCC policy, the power and access now held by the WGC opens up exciting new possibilities for a next phase of feminist organising in the UNFCCC. In order to start a dialogue as to what that next phase of feminist organising in the UNFCCC should look like, it is important to first consider what the WGC has offered intersectional praxis and to recognise and accept the challenges still facing intersectional political projects in spaces of global climate governance. This reflection is the focus of Chapter 6.

## Notes

- 1 Those who do not list the WGC as their primary constituency include: Global Forest Coalition (ENGO constituency); Italian Climate Network (YOUNGO constituency); Landesa (ENGO constituency); Watershed Organisation Trust (ENGO constituency); and Youth Action for Development (YOUNGO constituency).
- 2 The constituted bodies are committees that support the COP such as the Adaptation Committee and the Green Climate Fund. For more details see Chapter 1.
- 3 Although subsequent reports of Hurricane Mitch suggest that more men died than women in this particular event (see Resurrección, 2017).
- 4 Ahmed (2017) discusses 'smiling' as a gendered act performed by women in 'diversity' roles in academic institutions. She describes the act of smiling as a means of women appearing less threatening to those who may be resistant to her work. It is a performative act that makes her day-to-day life more tolerable. Freidan (1963) has also discussed the role of smiling in the context of 'the housewife' who smiles while washing the dishes, or performs her house-wifely duties, depicting her happiness at doing this work, masking the 'rotten underside' underneath her smile.

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## 6 Lessons for Ecofeminist Intersectional Praxis

We have a situation of inequality between women and men, and we have to respond to it. I want to change the situation, not to make the inequality less unequal, but to change the reasons for the inequality. That's what we try to work on. *It's hard. It's hard.*

(Röhr, 2017, interview)

One thing that is abundantly clear from watching and listening to activists who have worked tiringly to embed a gender perspective into global climate governance is that it is *hard*. While the concerns about the political strategies of feminist environmental and climate activists outlined in Chapter 2 are valid and, in many ways, true for the WGC, spending time and engaging with the Constituency has shed light on the 'real-life' challenges in the negotiating process and the difficult strategic decisions that must be made. Simplistic and universalising claims about women and their lives sit as uncomfortably with feminist activists in the UNFCCC as they do with feminist academics writing about them. In an interview Röhr commented that 'from the very beginning I said I don't want to use this argument – the most vulnerable – I want to go more about transformation, and the masculinities and so on. But nobody was interested' (Röhr, 2017, interview).

For the WGC, making arguments that universalise lived experience and equate gender with women were important strategic manoeuvres that were necessary in order to get gender concerns onto the negotiating table. In particular, women's vulnerability in the face of climate change fit well with a wider discursive shift in the UNFCCC towards issues of adaptation as opposed to mitigation and with the kind of 'special interest thinking' that underpins the UNFCCC. While a focus on women's vulnerability has proven to be the most effective rhetorical strategy for influencing climate change negotiations, it is certainly not the only story told about women and their lives by the WGC. Indeed, the WGC has evolved in line with both academic and activist trends out with the confines of the UNFCCC in their response to the call for better answers to the gender and climate change question (c.f. MacGregor, 2017).

There is plenty of evidence, as discussed in Chapter 5, that the WGC is committed to principles of intersectionality and its members share a desire to expand the political conversation to encompass more intersectional conceptualisations of identity. Attempts to widen the scope of ‘gender’ to focus less on issues of vulnerability has resulted in a Gender Action Plan (GAP) that calls attention to the areas of the UNFCCC that needed more consideration of gender issues including areas of mitigation, implementation and decision making. This has seen even further improvement since the COP renewed the GAP for a further five years in 2019 (see UNFCCC, 2019b). The extended LWPG and GAP ‘takes into account human rights, ensuring a just transition, and the challenges Indigenous Peoples face while fighting for climate justice and protecting their communities’ (Mokoena, 2019), arguably far more consistent with intersectional demands. Though lacking in clearly defined indicators and targets, the new and enhanced GAP ‘acknowledges intersectional identities that women hold, including indigenous women and women with disabilities’ (Birk, 2019).

While academic criticism is to be welcomed, it is often too abstracted from the concrete realities of feminist resistance within the UNFCCC and a methodological claim of this book is that a more integrated approach is crucial to understanding this process. In discussing criticisms levelled at the WGC for not making enough progress on gender in the UNFCCC by researchers who are removed from the COP process, Röhr commented that ‘I think if you are writing about these processes then you don’t have to be here three years every time, but to get a feeling how it works is quite important’ (Röhr, 2017, interview). This process of seeing how it is, watching, talking and listening to feminists trying to make collective political demands has been integral to my research. Doing so has fostered an appreciation of the challenges facing feminist climate activists and, in this light, I find the successes of the Constituency to be remarkable. Morrow (2017a) has also come to this conclusion after sustained engagement with the WGC. Gender equality is now reflected in a number of key UNFCCC decisions and mandates, including the Standing Agenda Item of ‘Gender and Climate Change’ giving the issue both weight and prominence within the negotiations. More concretely, the actions of the Constituency have improved the lived experiences of many women, an achievement that should be celebrated by feminist environmental activists and academics alike. For example, through both the mentoring and financial support of the Constituency, Dorothee Lisenga from The Coalition of Female Leaders for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CFLEDD) has helped women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) gain access to land and forest titles. Through dialogues on women’s inheritance rights between customary chiefs, local and indigenous women this work has led to huge success in women’s access in the provinces of Ecuador and Maindombe of the DRC (see WECF, 2017b). Similarly, at least in part due to lobbying by members of the WGC there has been an increased percentage of women in delegation parties from slightly over 20% in 1996 to almost 40% in 2017 (see UNFCCC, 2018b).

It is clear from the success of the WGC that through engagement inside the UNFCCC the conditions under which the Constituency operates today are very different from those that shaped its political strategy in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Early organising was concerned with gaining traction for social arguments in a political space that was only concerned about scientific, technological and economic arguments. But social concerns, such as gender equality, are firmly on the agenda now. The Constituency has done much to contribute to shifting the agenda of the UNFCCC to a more socially just framework, yet still struggle to get multi-axis arguments about identities into important UNFCCC mandates. Understanding both the successes and challenges of the WGC's intersectional practice is an important step towards conceptualising what a next phase for feminist organising in the UNFCCC might look like.

### **Lessons from the WGC for Intersectional Inquiry and Praxis**

While it is true that a deeper intersectional perspective has not reached mainstream discourses of climate governance, the WGC has contributed in many important ways to intersectional praxis and critical lessons can be learned to inform both future ecofeminist intersectional frameworks as well as future feminist organising in the UNFCCC. At the very heart of the WGC is a commitment to actively protest social inequality. According to its Charter, the WGC

works to ensure that human rights and gender equality are firmly anchored in all climate actions under the UNFCCC and to challenge the extractive, exploitative and patriarchal economic model which has resulted in the climate crisis.

(WGC, 2016b, p. 1)

In this way the WGC is ultimately doing intersectional political work, not least in its efforts to connect social inequalities, particularly gender inequality, to processes of ecological degradation. Based on my research findings, I think the following important lessons should be drawn from this political work.

#### ***Lesson One: There Are No Easy Solutions***

This first lesson should be obvious by now, but it is worth reiterating. Doing intersectional work, both political and intellectual, is hard work. This has been a key theme throughout this book and is significant because it means that there are no easy answers to the kinds of questions feminist academics like to pose. Answers are difficult because intersectional work is complex:

because these ideas interact with one another, collectively they contribute to intersectionality's complexity. Thinking about social inequalities

and power relations with an ethos of social justice, and doing so not in abstract generalisations but in their specific contexts, brings complexity to intersectional inquiry and praxis.

(Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 235)

Accepting complexity is important for intellectual work because it means that attempts to theorise solutions should always be closely linked to the material realities of feminist climate activism. It is also a useful reminder that just because something is difficult does not mean that it is not worth doing. The tensions between intersectional critical inquiry and practice in global climate governance does not mean that feminists are resigned to relying on a weakened, or less critical, version of intersectionality that ultimately works to sustain existing and intersecting lines of marginalisation and oppression. Rather, it is imperative that academics and activists work together in open dialogue to think through the conditions under which intersectional arguments can prevail in spaces of global climate politics.

***Lesson Two: Prevalent Domains of Power have Hindered Intersectional Praxis in the UNFCCC***

COP24 in 2018 saw an ‘action’ designed to stand up to the macho-fascism of political leaders such as Presidents Trump and Bolsonaro, as discussed in Chapter 5. Distinctly, even surprisingly, ecological in its intersectional advocacy, the Constituency claimed that

Political leaders that are rooted in the patriarchal system and claim supremacy, endanger human rights, including women’s, LGBTQI+’s and indigenous peoples’ rights with their toxic masculinity. These political forces are denying climate change, while pushing their neoliberal agenda, choking the Paris ambition on serious climate action at the national and global level. They are inhibiting a just transition by holding on to dirty energy, endangering biodiversity and lives of indigenous peoples, local communities, women and other groups. Time is up! To fight against this oppressive system, we at the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) and our feminist allies are organising an action at COP24 and inviting any feminists and people that stand in solidarity to say NO to the global rise of macho-fascism.

(WECF, 2018b)

Here the WGC is calling out the structural power that macho-fascism (and, of course, the direct, behavioural, coercive power held by individuals such as Trump and Bolsonaro) has in shaping climate ambition and that results in weakened, or even stalled, action on climate change.<sup>1</sup> In similar ways the Constituency has repeatedly challenged the sexism prevalent in the UNFCCC that keeps women, particularly indigenous women, away from

the negotiating table. But the WGC has seen less success in challenging cultural domains of power, or the significance of ideas and culture in the organisation of power. The ‘time is up’ campaign frames the neoliberal agenda not just as an oppressive system but also one that is increasingly being mobilised by far-right populists whose messages play on toxic masculinity such as Trump and Bolsonaro. In effect this what shifts attention away from the ways in which the UNFCCC is itself caught up in those same webs of power. The UNFCCC is not exempt from the structural power that masculinity, capitalism, hetero-normativity and nationalism hold in shaping its politics.

The inability of the WGC to challenge effectively the cultural domain of power lies in the challenges facing feminist climate activists in the UNFCCC in resisting dominant modes of knowledge production. This finding is supported by my interviews with National Gender Focal Points, particularly those from the EU. Several Focal Points commented on the lack of resources and knowledge that they need to be able to the shape their domestic and international policies, despite an increasingly expanding body of scholarly literature on ‘gender and climate change’. Gender Focal Points tend to seek specific reporting on policy issues for specific countries, particularly those in the Global North. While this is, in many ways, in keeping with a gender mainstreaming approach that either siloes gender issues or attempts to add women into existing frameworks (see Chapter 2), it is less compatible with the principles of intersectional feminism. Simply looking for specific examples of where gender can be easily inserted into policy does little to challenge existing knowledge frameworks (c.f. Alston, 2014). As discussed in Chapter 5, the favouring of specific policy recommendation reports by negotiators has resulted in a political strategy whereby some members of the WGC tend to favour research and reports from social movements rather than by feminist climate scholars, resulting in an awkward separation of ideas, criticisms and actions.

The framing of the natural world in arguments made by the WGC is another example that uncovers the challenges in resisting existing and dominant frameworks. There have been plenty of examples in this book of the WGC including nature in the intersections of oppression, marginalisation and destruction. One telling example is found in the Young Feminist Day held in 2017 where Gunnarsson read a poem with the lines: ‘Dear society. I do not shave the hairs off my body like you shave the trees off this Earth’. Laura Cooper-Hall’s poem echoed these sentiments in the lines:

We are tired of the current system that is based on the destruction of the Earth, on greed, on war and violence. Young people all over the world have been raising their consciousness to include feminists, queer, trans, anti-capitalist, environmental, racial, intersectionality and indigenous analysis.

But these kinds of arguments connecting women’s oppression, racial discrimination and homophobia with the destruction of the natural world



rarely make it into the arguments for policy interventions because to do so would require a real challenge to prevailing masculinist norms. Instead, nature and the natural world tend to feature little in arguments aimed at influencing policy. As a result, nature implicitly serves as a background to the unfolding human drama in face of a climate breakdown, similar to the observations of Plumwood (1993) and Alaimo (2008). For example, the compelling story of Doña Vera Sanchez told by Aguilar in 2007 demonstrates the backgrounded role that nature plays:

Then it happened. The winds, the waves, the flood. I took my three kids and started walking inland. Very soon the current was so strong, I could not hold all of them, my oldest son was holding my daughter. My hands were holding my youngest baby. The water snatched them, I saw my son trying to swim... I lost sight of them.

I climbed a tree, it was very cold, I could not sleep. Other animals, especially the snakes, were trying to save themselves as well. I was in the tree for almost three days, I was lucky I could breast feed my baby.

(Aguilar, 2007, p. 1)

While the natural world is integral to this story, it features as a background for the horror that Sanchez experienced. This is perhaps hardly surprising since the WGC are making arguments in a political space that understands nature and the natural world – the planet’s climate system to be precise – as something that can be ‘fixed’ by masculine intervention (see Merchant, 1983; see also Fleming 2017; MacGregor and Paterson 2020). In this framework, arguments based on the need to ‘save’ women from climate change, rather than the need to protect nature itself carry more political weight.

Analysis of the disciplinary domain of power, or the rules and regulations that are applied to different people or groups, in the UNFCCC lays bare fundamental issues with the very structure of civil society involvement in the UNFCCC. Through membership to particular constituencies the constituency structure in effect separates civil society, and their concerns, from the dominant aspects of climate governance and from each other in atomised ways. This prevents a *both/and* understanding of identity and prevents relational arguments about women’s identities as they intersect with other lines of marginalisation and oppression. In 2011 at COP17 Durban, the WGC was granted full constituency status and today observes the negotiations along with eight other constituencies (see UNFCCC, n.d.). In this UNFCCC constituency structure, issues relating to women and gender are positioned outwith the purview of the ENGO Constituency. This sets up an odd (and false) separation where the issue of women and gender is kept separate from wider environmental politics; it remains an add-on. Each constituency that has been set up to represent a specific group (e.g. YOUNGOs, IPOs and the WGC), must create a common sense of identity and make collective political demands on their behalf. In other words, these identity-based constituencies

have to ‘utilise the power of the collective voice’ (Olson, 2014, p. 186), which seems inevitably to result in the kinds of universalising arguments discussed in Chapter 5.

Analysis of the disciplinary domain of power demonstrates how the essential borders of the constituencies that are based on specific identity markers helps to sustain conceptual entities such as ‘woman’ that are constituted through acts of exclusion or ‘othering’ (Moore, 2008; see also Ahmed, 1998), and prevents any form of epistemic community building between civil society constituencies. Although the inclusion of civil society through constituencies is an attempt to level the playing field and ensure marginalised voices (such as women, indigenous peoples, young people and even the environment through ENGOs) are included in the process, a feminist analysis of both masculinities and femininities reveals how this is anything but equal. In effect women, and the female body, are set up as a variant to the ‘normal’ male (see also Buckingham and Kulcur, 2009). Men, after all, do not need to be represented through a special interest constituency; they are governed by different rules. Much has been written about the role and legitimacy of civil society (see for example Biermann et al., 2012; Bäckstrand and Kuyper, 2017; Bäckstrand et al., 2017), but rarely is the basic concept of constituencies, envisioned in their current form, scrutinised or criticised. Indeed, the inclusion of civil society, an important outcome for United Nations Conference on Environmental and Development (UNCED) (or Rio 1992), is generally hailed as a positive step in widening the scope of the UN and expanding the political sphere beyond a space that is reserved for ‘statesmen’ and lawmakers. But from a critical intersectional perspective it is clear that the structure of constituencies that ultimately govern civil society’s involvement in processes of global climate governance is actually a hindrance to the full and successful participation of civil society that represents those experiencing multiple and intersecting lines of social inequalities.

Keeping the WGC in its own pigeonhole (while backgrounding gender and foregrounding women) forces its members to make political demands based on single-axis framings of identity. This means that attention to the relational nature of identity becomes impossible through the disciplinary domain of power that treats men and women (or masculinity and femininity) asymmetrically. ‘Pigeonholing’ civil society also serves to keep multi-axis identities atomised and separate from each other. Gender (meaning women) typically appears in a (short) list of social inequalities. Gender equality and empowerment of women (an important rhetorical strategy for the WGC) is included in the preamble of the Paris Agreement in this way:

Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in

vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.

(UNFCCC, 2015, p. 2)

In this example, there is an implicit atomisation of experience in relation to the impacts of climate change. Experience (as an indigenous person, as a migrant, as a child etc.) is defined as fundamentally individual and atomistic, subject to behavioural and attitudinal change to ensure their equality with men (on masculinist terms). Making collective and intersectional political demands in the UNFCCC fundamentally challenges the very disciplinary fabric of the institution, which explains many of the challenges faced by the WGC. This is an important lesson for intersectional praxis because any next phase of feminist organising in the UNFCCC needs new kinds of strategies to overcome the challenges posed by intersecting domains of power that are features of the UNFCCC itself.

Finally, it seems to me that the interpersonal domain of power is an area that has seen the greatest success. As discussed previously, women now make up much higher percentages of national delegations and their voices are taken seriously in the UNFCCC. The Gender Advisor in the UNFCCC Secretariat, Fleur Newman, is considered so powerful that some delegates avoid asking her advice. One interview participant told me that they 'suggested to some people in the secretariat working on finance, well go talk to Fleur, she's the Focal Point and they say oh no no, if we go talk to Fleur then everything is going to be about gender' (Participant E, 2018, interview). But a critical intersectional analysis of the ways in which the structural, cultural and disciplinary domains of power converge to affect women's lives paints a slightly different picture. Women might be included in national delegations and make up a significant proportion of civil society, but several interview participants commented on their different treatment depending on their positioning in multiple and intersectional lines of social inequalities. For example, Ghani reflected on her experiences as a delegate for both Parties and as part of civil society recalling that

And so, for me it was, I kind of experienced discrimination and also outward harassment from all angles, so within the NGOs, it depends on how you are being treated but it can be subtle and unsubtle. It depends on what your position is, so lots of my colleagues were harassed by their colleagues, people they are working with and people they often meet just within this setting. Because you know everyone is coming together for the COPs and they are there for the COPs and it's intense, three weeks you are working really long hours, you're you know in the middle of nowhere sometimes. And so, and then also being harassed by delegates because delegates have power of information. And, often that is just held over you if you want to get information then you'd go out for drinks, or they'd talk about it over a drink – oh come join us for dinner

or oh we can talk at the CAN party. You know things like, and there's no talking happening at the CAN parties!

(Ghani, 2017, interview)

However, Röhr reflected that as an older woman she did not experience harassment in the same ways:

I think young women might perceive it quite different. So, I don't know if you have seen those, this is a little bit I think a different issue, but if you have seen these erm, #MeToo discussions from which was here started as far as I got it, started by Farhana Yamin. And she also said that it was much more in the years when she was younger so, and to have a particular age. Yeah you are not harassed in any way anymore, because nobody is interested in grandmothers. Let's say it in that way.

(Röhr, 2017, interview)

There is also an issue about the workload of women advocating for gender concerns, best evidenced through the introduction of National Gender Focal Points that I discussed in earlier chapters. These roles are predominately undertaken by women and are entirely voluntary. While the UNFCCC looks good on paper, appearing to be taking issues of gender equality seriously, the interpersonal domain of power ensures that the burden for this work remains women's burden.

In these ways, it is clear that the UNFCCC is shaped by dominant power structures in ways that limit possibilities for successful gender advocacy. This is not a new lesson for feminist environmental academics who make the case for intersectional arguments in global climate governance. Indeed, MacGregor (2009; 2017) has been one scholar who has been at the forefront of the call for 'better answers' to the gender and climate change question. These better answers would necessarily challenge the structural, cultural, disciplinary and interpersonal domains of power. It is not the case that such better answers do not exist and members of the WGC hold many of those answers themselves. Importantly, however, what are missing are the strategies needed to embed those answers into political spaces of global climate governance. This finding, this lesson from the WGC, should be a key area for future research on feminist intersectional praxis in global climate governance.

### ***Lesson Three: Intersectional Inquiry and Practice Cannot Be Separated***

The idea that intersectionality requires a creative tension between inquiry and praxis is not a new one. In fact, this idea is central to the arguments made in Collins and Bilge's (2020) book *Intersectionality*:

In the case of intersectionality, the synergy between inquiry and praxis can produce important new knowledge and/or practices. Inquiry and

praxis can be effective without explicitly taking the other into account. Yet bringing them together can generate benefits that are greater than each alone.

(Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 39)

But in the case of the feminist intellectual and political work in the area of global climate governance I find the distinction between ‘inquiry and praxis’ unhelpful for two primary reasons.

First, I am not convinced that the work of the WGC necessarily constitutes praxis, based on the definition offered by Collins and Bilge:

Praxis understands thinking and doing, or theory and action, as intimately linked and mutually informing each other. It rejects a binary conception that sees scholarship as providing other theories and frameworks and relegates practice to people who apply those ideas in real life settings or to real-life problems. Praxis-orientated knowledge – for example professional practice of trained medical personnel or skills in social organising – sees theory and practice and interconnected.

(Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 5)

Given the resistance to academic knowledge from the WGC, discussed in Chapter 5, the term ‘practice’ more aptly describes the work of the WGC today. While the Constituency has engaged in its own knowledge production as part of its political activity (certainly entailed in the notion of praxis) it has remained sceptical about the role of academic knowledge production. In this way there remains a disconnect between theory and practice, both of which are integral to critical intersectional knowledge production.

The second, and more important, reason that the distinction between inquiry and praxis is unhelpful in this case is that it keeps academic theorising outside of ‘praxis’. A key lesson from this research is that, in the case of global climate politics, the intersectional inquiry of scholars and the intersectional practice of the WGC have been separated in ways that do not constitute intersectional praxis. Theorising often takes the form of ‘armchair theorising’ about feminist climate activism without first-hand participation and without engaging in any meaningful dialogue with the women about whom theorists write. For example, MacGregor (2006; 2017) criticises the Mary Robinson Foundation and WEDO calling for better answers but has not (by her own admission) ever engaged in UN-level lobbying or feminist activism in institutions of global climate governance. Meanwhile, intersectional practice has moved progressively further away from academic theorising. As Röhr comments

That’s always one of the recommendations or demands is always that we have to, so all these no we don’t have to have this academic research we need this research from the ground from the grassroots organisations

and I say yeah, but so I am part of mine is also researcher and more academic and I'm thinking yeah it's important to have your knowledge and to bring this knowledge to the other parts of the world let's say. But it's not enough, we need both and we need to connect.

(Röhr, 2017, interview)

Future intersectional inquiry and practice need to evolve in ways that are more interconnected and should always remain in dialogue with one another. Ecological justice provides a solid starting point for this dialogue:

As a form of inquiry that grapples with complex social inequalities, intersectionality's *raison d'être* is not simply to provide more complex and comprehensive explanations of how and why social inequalities persist, or to bemoan social injustices in the world, leaving someone else to fix them.

(Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 237)

This is, arguably, the WGC's biggest contribution to intersectionality. Placing climate change within a discourse of justice made it possible to conceptualise it as a social issue that affects the marginalised and oppressed the most as well as showing that it is the result of the same power structures that other social movements seek to resist, including Black Lives Matter, anti-capitalism, etc. This work has been done in a joined-up way with other constituencies coming together and fighting for a common cause, an important strategy for the future of feminist organising in the UNFCCC.

### **Towards an Ecofeminist Transversal Politics**

In the spirit of intersectional praxis that encourages open and ongoing dialogue, I offer possible options for a next phase of feminist climate activism within (or outwith) the UNFCCC in light of the reflections and lessons learned above. This is a critical moment for feminist climate activism for two main reasons. First, the UNFCCC is itself in a moment of transition. Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 and the agreement of its rulebook in 2019, the UNFCCC is shifting from making global climate change policy towards implementing it. This not only changes the focus of the WGC but also offers new opportunities for feminist organising in the sphere of climate governance.

The second reason is that more broadly, millions of people, many of them young, around the world are becoming more concerned about climate change and, importantly, are using their collective voices to demand change (c.f. Fridays for Future, 2020). This growing youth climate movement offers members of the WGC new language and new arguments for making intersectional demands and new avenues for co-resistances. The need for inward reflection is pressing for the WGC. There was an attempt at this in 2013, but as

I have discussed, the Paris Agreement negotiations took attention away from this internal reflection. Chapter 5 shows that the procedural strategies of the WGC tend to focus on lobbying and engaging with the UNFCCC structures. There is little reflection on the mode of organising within the Constituency itself. As such, I suggest three possible options for the next phase of feminist climate activism: fold and withdraw, ‘business as usual’, or ecofeminist transversal politics. These suggestions should not be read as a blueprint for the future activism in the UNFCCC, but rather they are my contribution to the beginning of a dialogue that embodies intersectional praxis.

### ***Option One: Fold and Withdraw***

One option for the WGC is to fold and withdraw from the negotiations. To cease engaging with the UNFCCC on the basis that, as an advocacy group, the Constituency has achieved its primary aims: gender is mainstreamed throughout the UNFCCC and the GAP represents an important moment for the implementation of this. Arguably this should be the aim of any feminist organising: to achieve their goals and put themselves out of a job. In effect, the WGC has achieved most of their original aims. For example, one of the demands of the small network of women who first attended COP1 in 1995 was that the principles of Agenda 21, and especially Chapter 24, the Global Action Plan for the Enhancement of Women in Sustainable Development, have to become part of climate protection policy (International Women’s Forum, 1995, p. 2). While these particular mandates are not specifically named in climate policy, there are many references to similar initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and CEDAW. In short, the principles of both Agenda 21 and the Global Action Plan for the Enhancement of Women in Sustainable Development are firmly rooted in global climate politics. A second demand was that women’s participation had to be increased. This has been the basis of several gender decisions under the Convention (see UNFCCC, 2001a, 2014, 2015). The final demand was that women wanted to exchange ideas and organise themselves, which they have achieved through the creation of a Women and Gender Constituency. Of course, the WGC’s demands have changed and evolved over time, but it is easy to see that these goals, if not achieved in their entirety, have had the motions put in place to achieve them.

One could argue that this is as much progress that feminists can expect from the UNFCCC, and efforts are best placed in outsider activist tactics aimed at ensuring that local implementation of the Paris Agreement is done in gender-just ways. There is a sense among members of the WGC that influencing the negotiations is not the reason that feminists are active in the UNFCCC in the first place. One interview participant said:

I think we have to be pragmatic, although I don’t believe in pragmatism, we have to be idealist to set the bar high, but I think we also have



to contend with the truth that the UN will never deliver on climate justice it will never deliver on system change – because it is the system. We have to be clear in ourselves why we bother to be in this space.

(Lauron, 2017, interview)

The notion that the WGC will never effect system change because the UNFCCC is the system was a common theme in interviews, which raises questions about the effectiveness of insider strategies in the UNFCCC.

That said, given the success of the Constituency through insider tactics, the suggestion that feminists should not have a presence within the institution makes equally little sense. Given the achievements of the WGC thus far, many of which are remarkable given the structural constraints and weight stacked against them, there is little reason not to believe that there is more to come. If there were no feminist presence (or pressure) within the negotiations, it would be all too easy for Parties to renege on previous commitments, let alone fail to include gendered considerations in future decisions.

### *Option Two: ‘Business as Usual’*

A second option is for the WGC to continue ‘business as usual’. Morrow (2017a) characterises the WGC advocacy as consistent with the principles of transversal politics, a claim that is supported by my research. Members of the WGC have forged excellent ties, or networks, with the UNFCCC Secretariat and with Parties, but also with other constituencies, particularly the Youth Constituency (YOUNGOs), Indigenous Peoples Organisations (IPOs) and ENGOs. As Morrow (2017a) suggests, even the very structure of the WGC itself is consistent with transversal politics in that it emerged as a network of like-minded NGOs. The WGC is, itself, an example of an epistemic community formed through coalition building based upon chains of equivalence (see for example, Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Haraway, 1988; Yuval-Davis, 1997;1999; and Mouffe, 2005). It is a coalition of feminists who work together to advance the feminist climate project. Through baby steps and compromises, the Constituency has successfully embedded a gender perspective (at least understood as women) in the negotiations. The importance of this should not be understated. As Ghani remarked

Yes. I totally think it makes a difference. It brings a change of perspective and it gets delegations used to having women and having their perspective. And the more women we have the more opportunities you have for other women. And you know younger women see it’s possible to be a part of delegations or to be a part of the process. And to be recognised for their talents and expertise. I think it so so important, like I totally get a lot of people brush aside but actually in the US it’s called, I think, affirmation policies or whatever, and they have it in some countries, like Norway that have a requirement for all boards to have 50% women.

And it's really really helped women at least be represented. Because it provides opportunities and I think its these kinds of policies are so so important.

(Ghani, 2017, interview)

Yet, any reflexive feminist movement should always remain mindful of the political effect of compromise. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 5, those consequences include a lack of consideration of men and masculinities, and an invisibilisation of difference between women themselves as a non-homogenous group, as well as a lack of a radical feminist drive in climate solutions.

### ***Option Three: Ecofeminist Transversal Politics***

An ecofeminist transversal politics has the potential to harness the commitment to intersectional praxis in the WGC in a way that also challenges dominant frameworks and understandings of identities within the UNFCCC in more fundamental ways than has been previously allowed. An ecofeminist transversal politics would embody the relational terminology of intersectionality such as solidarity politics, flexible dialogue and epistemic communities (see Yuval-Davis, 1997; 1999). This kind of political work has long been at the heart of intersectional praxis. For example, one of the founding messages of the CRC statement was a commitment to coalitional organising working with 'other progressive organisations and movements' as a way of dealing with interlocking systems of oppression (Combahee River Collective, 1977). Further, the CRC was not opposed to conflict:

Learning from their own internal contestations, they would come to more overtly identify both capitalist exploitation as well as homophobia (and the conferred privileges of heteronormativity), for instance, as core issues to be addressed among and between Black women.

(May, 2015, p. 50)

While an ecofeminist coalition would represent a radical change in terms of the way politics is done in the UNFCCC, there is evidence that some within the WGC already want such an approach. For example, a meeting of women from Asia held in 2009 produced a statement noting

We, over 70 women from many parts of Asia with various backgrounds – indigenous, peasant, fisher, labour- from different networks and social justice movements, met on September 2009, in Bangkok. We exchanged experiences with our sisters and discussed the impacts of climate change in our communities and on us, the women, from these communities. We discussed strategies and solutions to bring out voices and thoughts into the discourse on climate change and shape solutions to tackle the

climate crisis. We also resolve to continue our own education about climate issues, educate other women and policy-makers, and build alliances and coalitions to work towards genuine climate justice with the principles of gender justice.

(AWG-KP9/AWG-LCA7 Meeting Participants, 2009, p. 1)

Ghani also noted the need for greater coalition building in UNFCCC civil society:

Well I don't mind the constituencies, but I want them to interface more, work together more. And for me, I think it's been deliberate to have the siloed approach because it creates expertise and it creates jobs for certain people to focus on just one thing right? And so it's very hard to break through that, it's not easy it's something that I have tried to do within all the organisations that I've worked with and it's not easy.

(Ghani, 2017, interview)

Key to an ecofeminist transversal politics is the principle of solidarity in allowing coalition members to embrace difference rather than harness a collective sameness on which to hook political arguments. This kind of feminist practice depends on building feminist solidarities across the divisions of place, identity, class, work, belief and so on (Mohanty, 2003, p. 25). Therefore, it does not hide or diminish intra-group difference. As shown in previous chapters, there is a tendency among members of the WGC, to downplay issues of difference in collective political action because difference is seen to have the potential to undermine the perception of unity that is essential in legitimising collective political demands (Crenshaw, 1991). A politics of solidarity shaping the motivations of an ecofeminist transversal politics could also place climate justice at its core since arguments would be less concerned about multiple identities of individuals and more concerned with a common goal: justice for people and planet.

It is important that political coalitions based on solidarity are not the kind of 'opportunistic tactical alliances built and destroyed overnight' that Lauron suggests are commonplace in UNFCCC civil society (2017, interview). Rather alliances and coalitions should be based on mutual respect and a desire to challenge dominant knowledge frameworks in the UNFCCC. The work of Laclau and Mouffe is helpful in understanding the strategic role coalitions can play. For them 'the radicalisation of democracy requires the transformation of existing power structures and construction of a new hegemony' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; cited in Mouffe, 2005, p. 53). That new hegemony is formed of like-minded organisations, connected through chains of equivalence, and in global climate politics can and should be the next phase for UNFCCC civil society, including the WGC. A coalition formed through chains of equivalence is inherently intersectional in nature through connecting different struggles: the struggle for meaningful climate

action is the struggle for gender equality is the struggle for racial equality is the struggle for indigenous rights, for example. Of course, Laclau and Mouffe are not the only thinkers who advocate for a coalitional politics in the creation of a powerful counter-hegemonic force in global politics (nor am I the first to connect this to environmental political organising). Smith, one of the founding members of the CRC similarly understands coalitions as important because ‘the only way we can win – and before winning, the only way that we can survive is by working with each other, and not seeing each other as enemies’ (Smith, in Taylor, 2017, p. 64).

Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser (2019) make a similar argument in their manifesto for a ‘feminism for the 99%’, which is useful in conceptualising how such an approach might evolve in global climate change politics. A coalitional politics in the UNFCCC that is based upon solidarity not sameness would directly challenge the non-articulation of men as the norm by creating a coalitional force that is bound together not by a common essence of identity, but by a common goal. A coalitional politics that is based on solidarity, not sameness can present a radical challenge to the status quo by demanding power to be in the hands of the many not the few. Demarcating the 1% from the 99% is important in articulating ‘who’ any coalitional practices are fighting against (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser, 2019), speaking to Yuval-Davis’ (1997; 1999) notion of epistemological communities in transversal politics.

An ecofeminist coalition comprised of CSO’s with radical and progressive goals importantly does not include all of civil society. As Lauron (2017, interview) said, the Farmers Constituency, as one example, works in the interests of big corporations (as do many CSOs in the BINGO Constituency), not small scale and local farmers. An ecofeminist coalition would mark such organisations as firmly part of the 1%, the powerful who should be challenged and resisted. The intersectional language of solidarity and coalition offers new political relationships among historically disenfranchised people. It is important for building co-resistances in social justice-, or climate justice-based movements.

Perhaps the most important aspect of an ecofeminist transversal politics is *ongoing dialogue*. I became acutely aware during fieldwork of issues surrounding conflict and feminist debate or dialogue, or indeed the lack thereof. In the first week of COP23 I attended a parallel event at the People’s Summit in 2017. The event was held by DIVA for Equality, an activist group of queer indigenous women from the Pacific Islands and was aimed at holding a feminist dialogue between Global South and Global North feminists (see WGC, 2017a). At the event there were various ‘feminist circles’ during which the organisers split the group into an inner Global South feminist circle and an outer Global North feminist circle. The inner circle was to talk while the outer circle listened. Themes that arose from the Global South feminist dialogue included: silencing, white feminism, lack of a voice, powerlessness. Solidarity must be constructed, it not something that simply happens, and ongoing dialogue can aid in this process.

Open debate and feminist critique are almost entirely absent among members of the WGC currently, not out of maliciousness, but because the perception of unity is important for both articulating and legitimising collective feminist political demands. Discussions of difference are seen as a threat to that perception. As Crenshaw (1991) observes, unity is only unifying for some members of the group, typically those who are dominant or those with access to power and privilege ‘but for’ one quality (i.e. gender). A perception of unity, or sameness, within any heterogenous group is likely to reproduce the very same power structures that it claims to be resisting. But the genealogy of intersectionality offered in Chapter 2 ‘emphasises the significance of social movement projects advanced by historically disenfranchised people for intersectionality’s critical inquiry and praxis’ (Collins and Bilge, 2020, p. 223). These voices should be foregrounded in an ongoing dialogue because, as Collins and Bilge (2020) suggest, they are often most versed in social justice praxis.

An ecofeminist transversal politics in the UNFCCC could radically change how civil society operates and how it is viewed. Rather than slicing civil society into sections that are held as separate to one another with deliberately competing aims, civil society would be viewed as a counter-hegemonic movement of co-resistances that is far more representative of the world, where the fight does not have to be based entirely on what people look like, sound like or act like. Such a structure could more readily deal with cross-cutting or intersecting identities by not foregrounding some identities while backgrounding others. Working in coalition feminist NGOs and environmental NGOs, for example, can overcome the backgrounding of either women and gender or the environment in order to make collective political arguments. This kind of transversal politics could focus more easily on issues of masculinity and male power and the role that gender, including both masculinities and femininities, plays in shaping global climate politics. Not being necessarily concerned with women per se, a *feminist* coalition could push for a more feminist climate politics that places at its core resistance to hierarchies of power and the subordination of that which is deemed feminine.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter serves three important purposes. First, it speaks back to criticisms seen in academic theorising on feminist environmental activism, including climate activism. While academic criticism is to be welcomed, it often remains removed from the practices that it comments upon. A more integrated methodology, such as the one offered in this book, invites more empathetic analyses of the political strategies, both rhetorical and procedural, of groups such as the WGC. This chapter, then, reiterates the claim that intersectional practices in the UNFCCC is ultimately hard work. Viewed in this light, the successes of the WGC appear remarkable, and this

leads to the second purpose of this chapter: lessons can be learned from an analysis of WGC's intersectional practice that can inform intersectional feminist praxis in important ways. The primary lessons are: there are no easy solutions; prevalent domains of power have hindered intersectional praxis in the UNFCCC; and intersectional inquiry and practice cannot be separated.

The third purpose of this chapter is to offer a basis for dialogue that can contribute to intersectional praxis. By presenting three possible next phases, I argue that option three – ecofeminist transversal politics – offers the most effective solution to overcoming the challenges facing members of the WGC. I have thereby created a space for open and ongoing debate and for intersectional inquiry and practice ideally to work together. This process of dialogue could result in more fruitful and mutually reinforcing ways to develop an intersectional praxis that can challenge and transform global climate governance. I do not presume to have offered a solution to all of the challenges presented by dominant forces of power in the UNFCCC, but my firm conclusion is that both intersectional theorising and political practice are both crucial to this process.

## Note

- 1 It is, however, contestable, in this instance, that political figures such as Trump and Bolsonaro are pushing 'their neoliberal agenda' since it suggests that what existed before was not neoliberal, a suggestion that runs counter to other arguments made by the WGC.

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# 7 Conclusion

## New Directions for Ecofeminist Intersectional Praxis

This book is motivated by a sense of empathy for feminist climate activists who have worked tiringly to embed a gender perspective into a framework of climate governance that is notoriously masculine in its approach (c.f. Alaimo, 2009; Seager, 2009; Nelson, 2012). While I did not set out to dispute these criticisms, *per se*, I did seek to understand the reasons behind such strategies and to assess their effectiveness in the context of the UNFCCC. At the heart of my research is a methodological approach that involved watching, engaging with and listening to the women who have devoted their working lives to the feminist climate project. This approach has produced insights that challenge critical portrayals of feminist climate change activism and lobbying, which opens up more productive space to theorise new strategies of feminist resistance in the UNFCCC.

Foregrounding ‘gender’ in the history of the UNFCCC, as done in Chapter 4, tells a new story about global climate governance and lays bare not only the importance of integrating gender into global climate politics but also the importance of feminist activists in shaping dominant narratives of the UNFCCC. In answer to the question, what is the story of gender in the UNFCCC? My answer is that this story has been remarkable. The WGC, along with feminist allies, has played an integral role in shifting the UNFCCC from a political space that was entirely concerned with market fixes and technocratic solutions to one that understands climate change as an important social issue that requires innovative and new solutions. In this political work, the WGC has certainly mobilised strategies that universalise lived experience and equate gender with women, effectively invisibilising the role of masculinity and male power, consistent with claims made by scholars such as Arora-Jonsson (2011), Resurrección (2013), Sasser (2018) and MacGregor (2017). But these are not the only stories that the Constituency tell. The WGC is clearly committed to intersectional feminism and in recent years have been more vocal about the need for climate policies to consider intersecting lines of oppression and marginalisation. While strategies that draw upon intersectional arguments have been mobilised in ‘baby steps’, there are encouraging signs that these arguments are making their way into popular discourse in the UNFCCC. For example, the enhanced

GAP adopted in 2019 ‘acknowledges intersectional identities that women hold, including indigenous women and women with disabilities’ (Birk, 2019).

There are important lessons that can be drawn from the political work of the WGC for the theory of intersectionality, discussed in Chapter 6. Briefly reiterated here the first lesson is that there are no easy solutions. Precisely because intersectionality is multifaceted, but also because intersectionality attempts to make political sense of a complex world (Collins and Bilge, 2020), there are no simple solutions to making intersectional arguments in political spaces of global climate governance. The second important lesson is that prevalent domains of power have hindered intersectionality in the UNFCCC. This is crucial for future theorising of intersectionality in institutions such as the UNFCCC because feminist activists need not only the rhetorical tools to make intersectional arguments but also the procedural strategies through which to advance them. As a means of beginning a dialogue between intellectual inquiry and political practice in a mode of feminist organising that constitutes as praxis, I have suggested a series of options for the next phase of feminist organising in the UNFCCC. It is the third option, ecofeminist transversal politics, that offers the most radical potential for moving the political conversation forward in its ability to shift focus from individual inequality towards a feminist future for a better climate politics. Based on principles of solidarity not sameness, ecofeminist transversal politics allows feminists to make collective political demands while also remaining consistent with an intersectional approach to feminism. So, at the end of this story, I want to return to the two central research questions that have guided this research: What role has the WGC played in the evolution of a gender-blind UNFCCC to a Gender Action Plan? What does the WGC experience tell us about the limits and possibilities of ‘doing’ intersectionality in the UNFCCC?

Without the WGC’s feminist presence in the UNFCCC, the institution would not be as advanced in its process of gender mainstreaming. Certainly, this work has come at a cost. Through a process of working inside the UNFCCC, the WGC has been forced (primarily due to intersecting domains of power in the UNFCCC) to pursue their goals in ways that advance simplistic and universalising narratives about women and their lives which backgrounds the multi-axes and intersectional arguments that are at the heart of the Constituency’s commitments. This has worked ultimately to reduce the effectiveness of gender mandates in the UNFCCC. But the Constituency’s political work has altered the conditions under which it operates in important ways. This opens up the possibility for a new story to be told about gender in the UNFCCC. If climate activists and academics learn from previous successes and challenges, a new future can be shaped that embodies intersectional praxis. Ecofeminist transversal politics offers feminist activists in the UNFCCC new language for making political demands. Through new co-resistances feminists can harness their collective power to pursue new strategies and advance new arguments that avoid the traps of simplification and universalisation of single-axis identities.

### **Original Contributions**

This book contributes to existing knowledge and political practice in several important ways. First, its empirical contribution is to tell a hitherto untold story about global climate governance that foregrounds gender and feminist strategy. This is an important contribution to the study of global climate governance, whether specifically concerned with gender or not. Chapter 4 – *From Zero-Gender to GAP: Foregrounding Gender in UNFCCC History* – is the product of a content analysis of hundreds of documents, elite interviews and my own observations at two UNFCCC conferences. It is the product of research on and participating in gender advocacy and activism within the WGC at the UNFCCC. As such, it provides an important side of history that is not usually seen: feminists have been active throughout the history of the UNFCCC and it is because of this work that the UNFCCC now includes many mentions of gender in official decisions and mandates. In identifying three key phases of feminist activity in the UNFCCC, from gender-blind to GAP, I hope that this can provide feminist environmentalists with a useful resource in understanding an alternative account of the history of global climate change politics.

Chapter 5 – *Political Strategies Mobilised by the Women and Gender Constituency* – provides an in-depth study of the political strategies, both rhetorical and procedural, that are mobilised by the WGC and their efforts to mainstream gender in the UNFCCC. Through a process of talking to, engaging with and even working with the Constituency, I have gained a deep sense of empathy and understanding for the challenges that the Constituency have faced. Certainly, the Constituency over-rely on problematic rhetorical strategies that universalise the lived experience of a specific group of poor and vulnerable women and equate gender with women in ways that fail to challenge patriarchal norms and assumptions. But these strategies have been necessary to ensure gender (at least meaning women) is included in UNFCCC mandates. The Constituency is committed to the principles of intersectional feminism, but these arguments are met with resistance within the UNFCCC. This is important, empirically based knowledge that opens up new avenues for feminist theorising on political strategy in institutions of global climate governance.

A second contribution of this book is a theoretical one. By putting into productive conversation concepts of intersectionality with ecofeminist and feminist environmental ideas, I have offered the conceptual tools to think about intersectionality in a way that places importance of the role and position of the natural world in structures of marginalisation and oppression. As highlighted in Chapter 3, there has been little engagement between intersectional frameworks and ecological issues. While intersectional theorists such as Collins and Bilge (2020) acknowledge the important ways that concepts of environmental justice can enhance intersectionality, ecofeminist ideas have rarely made it into intersectional consciousness. This book has offered

an important corrective in developing a framework of ecofeminist intersectionality as critical inquiry and as political praxis that brings together concepts of intersectionality (including concepts about ‘doing’ intersectionality in practice) with ecofeminist thought. The product of this conversation is a framework of intersectionality that places nature – encompassing the natural world, earth others and the environment – in the intersection of multiple lines of oppression, marginalisation and destruction. While this framework is not intended to be an ‘off the shelf’ framework that can be simply applied in different contexts, it does offer feminist environmental scholars a way of embodying intersectionality as a mode of critical inquiry.

Finally, this book offers an important political contribution; it is my political contribution to the feminist climate project. Throughout this book, I have called on activists to engage more openly with academics and for academics to consider their work an act of activism in its own right. This is my act of activism. It is my offering to the ongoing dialogue between feminists from all backgrounds who are committed to the feminist climate project. It is not intended to act as a blueprint for the future of that project, but rather as an attempt to begin the conversation, and I hope it will be received as such.

## **Coda**

The lessons for intersectionality as a theoretical concept made visible throughout this book are the product of a conversation between academic theories of intersectionality and intersectional political practice that have for too long remained separated in the context of global climate change governance. The dialogue between theory and action, or thinking and doing, in this book has opened up space for an ongoing dialogue between activists in the UNFCCC and academics researching feminist approaches to climate governance in ways that I hope will continue to contribute to the feminist climate project. As I wrap up this book, I want to reiterate a key point made throughout: both feminist intellectual projects on climate change and feminist activism in the UNFCCC have been successful separately, but together feminist intersectional praxis holds the potentiality to radically re-think how climate politics is done.

The women (and men) that I have interviewed are all committed to their work and have devoted their working lives to making life better for the world’s women. This experience means that they hold vital contributions to advancing feminist knowledge on ecologically informed intersectionality in practice and should be considered an important part of the theorising process. By allowing these women’s words to richly inform this book, I have demonstrated a methodological approach that has been, mostly, absent in feminist theorising on climate change. In doing so, I have offered an important starting point for ongoing dialogue between academics and

activists involved in climate politics. Equally, feminist intellectual work that advances the feminist climate project is, itself, deeply political work. I encourage those thinking and writing about positive visions for a future feminist post-carbon world to consider their endeavours as critical activist work. Collins and Bilge conclude that they ‘want to see more people involved in the kind of dialogical intellectual and political work that pursuing intersectionality entails’ (2020, p. 241). This book is my contribution to this political work. It is my act of feminist praxis to advance the feminist climate project.

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# Appendix 1

## Methodology

### Introduction

When Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* was first published in 1990 the book truly broke ground. Enloe was (and still is) a radical pioneer of feminist IR literature and posing the question 30 years ago to all feminist academics – where are the women? – was *hard*. Not only did Enloe challenge traditional conceptions of 'political science' through demanding gender analyses, she was also challenging her own academic training and realising all that was missing in her own teaching and writing (CFFP, 2018). Asking where women are remains difficult, but it is largely through the work of Enloe and other trailblazing feminist scholars that the road was paved for a new generation of feminist academics.

Since the 1990s feminist methodology has progressed from locating women in spaces of global politics and, while it is broadly understood that there is no 'feminist way' to do research (Reinharz, 1992; Tickner, 2006), there are several common characteristics that make feminist research distinctive. Shulamit Reinharz (1992) offers an 'inductive definition of feminist methodology' (p. 240) comprised of ten common themes that arise from her analyses of feminist literature on methodologies in social research:

- 1 Feminism is a perspective, not a research method.
- 2 Feminists use a multiplicity of research methods.
- 3 Feminist research involves an ongoing criticism of non-feminist scholarship.
- 4 Feminist research is guided by feminist theory.
- 5 Feminist research may be transdisciplinary.
- 6 Feminist research aims to create social change.
- 7 Feminist research strives to represent human diversity.
- 8 Feminist research frequently includes the researcher as a person.
- 9 Feminist research frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied (an interactive research).
- 10 Feminist research frequently defines a special relationship with the reader (Reinharz, 1992, p. 240).



Each of these themes are clear in my own reading of feminist methodologies in global politics. For example, S. Laurel Weldon (2006) claims that feminist methodologies trouble the relationship between the researcher and the researched through a commitment to collectiveness while J. Ann Tickner (2006, p. 20) suggests that feminist knowledge building is ‘an ongoing process, tentative and emergent’. Ticker writes that feminist knowledge about global politics often emerges through conversations with texts, research subjects or data (see also Reinharz, 1992). Others such as Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True (2006) assert that the distinctiveness of feminist research lies in its commitment to reflexivity. These principles inform the approach I have taken to conducting this research with, and about, the WGC.

Given the diverse nature of feminist methods and methodologies, many feminist scholars agree that what makes feminist research ‘feminist’ is not the particular methods used but the kind of conceptual or theoretical frameworks that are mobilised (Reinharz, 1992) as well as the types of research questions that emerge from those frameworks (Ackerly, Stern and True, 2006). In light of the importance placed on the research question, Tickner (2006) describes feminist research as being distinctively ‘post-positivist’ because positivist methods provide no account of the origin or the importance of the research question asked. Indeed, Tickner (2006) argues that the types of questions asked are what gives rise to the multiplicity of feminist approaches to methodology since feminists ask different questions and these questions cannot be answered within the epistemological boundaries of positivist approaches. For example, Enloe’s (2004) question ‘where are the women?’ is crucial to her methodology of ‘feminist curiosity’. Developing a feminist curiosity, Enloe explains, starts with taking women’s lives seriously, a practice that ‘implies listening carefully, digging deep, developing a long attention span, being ready to be surprised’ (Enloe, 2004, p. 3). Feminist curiosity practices these methods while not valorising women and being equally curious about those women who deserve feminist praise as well as those who are complicit in violence and the oppression of others. It:

finds all women worth thinking about, paying close attention to, because in this way we will be able to throw into sharp relief the blatant and subtle political workings of both femininity and masculinity.

(Enloe, 2004, p. 4)

I began this research following Enloe’s lead and asking ‘where are the women in global climate change politics?’ The answer was found quite quickly. Women play a relatively prominent role in global climate politics – indeed the past two Executive Secretaries of the UNFCCC Secretariat have been women. Yet, as Magnúsdóttir and Kronsell (2014) demonstrate in the context of Scandinavian climate policy, the presence of women in the policy-making process does not necessarily result in feminist-orientated climate policies.

It was clear that it was not enough to simply be curious about women in global climate change politics, but rather to be curious about ‘gender’. To fully understand the construction, mobilisation and resistance to gender as a political issue in global climate politics more questions were needed which stemmed from my own frustrations with the narrow sense of gender that I was finding. As such I turned to explore different kinds of questions around what kinds of gender are being mobilised? Are ‘we’ happy with this kind of gender?

## **Collecting Data: Gathering Data, Conducting Interviews and Observation**

I collected a wide range of data for analysis. This process began with a desk-based search of historical digital data relating to gender in the UNFCCC, which I compiled with data from transcriptions of a series of interviews with both members of the WGC and with Party negotiators for the Gender Agenda Item, as well as digitised versions of observations from field-notes.

### ***Gathering Data***

A large amount of textual data including gender policies, grey data made by and for the WGC and other data relating to the UNFCCC and the COP process were included in this research. This was necessary since, as discussed in Chapter 2, very little scholarly attention is paid to the workings of the WGC and I wanted to understand more fully, and make visible, the history of gender as a political issue in the UNFCCC. Compiling these documents was aided, in large part, by a document mandated by Parties to the COP in the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG): ‘*Compilation of decisions, subsidiary body reports related to gender and climate change: prepared by the Secretariat*’ (UNFCCC, 2017c). The document brings together all the reports and decisions that have been adopted under the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement and that pertain specifically to gender, including decisions in other substantive areas with reference to gender. The purpose of that document is to more easily identify areas of progress, potential gaps, and areas that require further support for implementation. The benefit of beginning in this way was that it pinpointed the exact references to gender in the decisions and adopted conclusions, which were then cross-checked with the original document in order to ascertain the context in which it appears. Also included in the analysis were texts from gender and climate NGOs. This process began by consulting various websites including GenderCC, which includes a year-by-year documentation of feminist collective organising specifically in the context of the UNFCCC. I also consulted the WGC’s website which collates every intervention given by members of the WGC in the history of the UNFCCC as well as WEDO’s website which includes lots of training materials for activists. This process was an important

first step in the construction of a timeline that foregrounds gender and the WGC in the history of the UNFCCC (see Chapter 4) as well as highlighting areas that required further clarification or contextualisation from interviews. Of course, there is always a question of credibility when relying on documentary sources (Bryman, 2006). The texts that I have included in this analysis have been created by, and often for, the UNFCCC and the WGC respectively. As such, they hold within them certain biases. The texts included in this analysis are written in order to convey an impression and to represent the authors, as well as those about whom they write, in particular ways, though Bryman (2016) suggests that this is precisely what makes these kinds of documents interesting. However, these documents do not stand alone in this research but are held in conversation with data from other sources, as outlined below. As Ticker (2006) points out this type of conversation with texts, research subjects or other data is common in building feminist knowledge about global politics. The process of collecting historical and textual data, conducting interviews and observing climate negotiations was not a linear one. It was an ongoing and emergent process that ultimately led to being able to tell a history of the UNFCCC that foregrounds 'gender' as a political issue and the work of the WGC in getting it there.

### *Elite Interviews*

Semi-structured interviewing is a common technique for gathering data in feminist research (see Reinharz, 1992). Ann Oakley (1981) proposed interviewing as a method that encouraged a feminist ethic of commitment and egalitarianism, overcoming the detachment between the researcher and the researched that is typically seen in non-feminist positivist research (see also Reinharz, 1992; Tickner, 2006). Oakley (1981) called for feminist research that embodies openness, engagement and the development of a long-lasting relationship. Developing relationships with those featured in this book has been especially important for this research since one of the primary conclusions calls for both activists and academics to work more closely with one another. I do not see this research as an end-point in the process of pursuing a feminist climate politics and I envision a relationship with those whom I interviewed to last beyond the temporal confines of this particular research project.

Given the lack of visibility of feminist organising in the UNFCCC discussed above it was important – politically and methodologically – to include interviews in this research as a means of allowing 'women to document their own experiences in their own terms' (Tickner, 2006, p. 41). Interviews with those involved with negotiations on gender in the UNFCCC were key in revealing details, uncovering nuance, and seeking clarification of events, processes and context directly from women (and some men) who were present in more detailed ways than an analysis of textual data alone could allow. For these same reasons, semi-structured interviews were more appropriate than a more rigid interview style or survey instrument, since

semi-structured interviewing allows for a more free-flowing conversation that is interviewee-led (Reinharz, 1992).

In total 22 interviews were conducted typically lasting between 30 minutes to one hour (a full list can be found in Appendix 2). Interview participants included members of the WGC, such as Ulrike Röhr from GenderCC (15 November 2017) who has been involved in the gender and climate change community since before Rio 1992 and I have since kept in contact with her via e-mail. Other members of the WGC included Liane Schalek (14 November 2017) from the Henrich Böll Foundation, the main point of contact within the WGC on issues relating to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and Tetet Lauron, Ibon International (15 November 2017). The sample of women interviewed from the WGC spanned the history of the WGC, from informal network to formal Constituency, and represented women at various career stages and various levels of involvement with the Constituency itself. These women provided rich insights into both the history and the structure of the WGC, helping to develop a timeline of feminist organising in the UNFCCC. In particular, and to my surprise, interviews (and in some cases the lack of) with members of the WGC made visible the tensions between activists and academics resulting in an important line of enquiry for this research.

At the official UNFCCC level, I interviewed several gender negotiators and other Party delegates who have engaged with gender issues. One such interview was with Colin O’Hehir (5 May 2018), head of the Irish delegation and co-facilitator of the GAP negotiations. Delegates become co-facilitators of negotiations through Party consensus and in O’Hehir’s own words ‘I was new to the process and so had not real feeling about a GAP yet. They chose me because I was neutral’. Some of the negotiators interviewed acted as National Gender Focal Points including Erin Marchington (Canada) and Pieter Terpstra (the Netherlands). The role of the National Gender Focal Point remains quite unclear (both to me and, based on my conversations with them, to the National Gender Focal Points themselves) but generally serves to function as a point of contact for non-Party stakeholders who wish to engage with gender and climate change related issues, including the WGC. I had anticipated some bad feeling from negotiators towards members of the WGC, but I was surprised that this set of interviews highlighted the importance of, and power held by, the WGC in the negotiating process. Several negotiators and National Gender Focal Points commented on how invaluable they had found the expertise of the WGC. A third group of stakeholders interviewed were other non-Party stakeholders who are either gender experts or engage with gender in some way. This includes Meera Ghani (9 March 2018) who, during COP23, along with Farhana Yamin, wrote a series of blog posts titled ‘#MeToo’ (see Ghani, 2017) that heavily criticised the UNFCCC as an un-safe space for women who are objects of sexual harassment and abuse. This set of interviews uncovered a more critical voice about the role and potential of counter-hegemonic forces such as the WGC in the UNFCCC infrastructure.

The data collected from these interviews is similar to what Reinharz (1992) describes as ‘feminist oral histories’ which allow the creation of new material about women. Feminist oral histories can be used to identify patterns and has the ‘potential for bringing women into history’ (Reinharz, 1992, p. 134) providing an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s voices altogether, making them an important method in feminist research. In short, feminist oral histories are about seeking women’s interpretation of events. Feminists rely on these kinds of historical or narrative methodological orientations, rather than causal analysis of pre-defined empirical patterns, precisely because the knowledge generated is new (Tickner, 2006). In this case I employed careful listening to women’s interpretations while being careful not to reify, or overemphasise, their woman-ness, in keeping with the intersectional framework informing my approach (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, I do not want to overstate the knowledge generated from these histories which are, by nature, subjective allowing the possibilities for individuals to overstate their own role in history. However, the variety of individuals interviewed in this research, coupled with methods of textual analysis and direct observation, allows for a greater degree of accurate representation, as discussed below.

To access interview participants, I employed a number of recruitment techniques: relying on personal connections; listserv outreach; and developing a snowball sampling technique. This process began by contacting certain individuals whose names had appeared repeatedly in initial research through e-mail, but this method had limited success. Making contact in person with individuals at COP23, and at the 48th meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB48) proved to be much more fruitful. Once I was able to make contact with a number of key individuals I found snowball sampling to be particularly useful, not only in gaining access but also helping to build a sense of trust and credibility since I had come ‘recommended’ by a colleague (see Reinharz, 1992). On the whole I found the newer and younger members of the WGC were happy to discuss their role and knowledge of the negotiations, as were those who were more established and had been involved in the UNFCCC from the very early days but had now taken a back-seat in the process. But the more currently senior members were much less forthcoming in my requests to talk to them. I sensed a feeling of distrust towards researchers in general. This lack of trust and adversarial academic-activist dynamic is something that I unpack in more detail in Chapter 5.

The final sample size of 22 was not a pre-agreed or target number, rather it was determined by theoretical saturation, or when the interviews were not yielding any new information. Saturation was met faster with negotiators than with activists. Ultimately, there was a finite number of individuals who had experience of gender negotiations in global climate politics and I feel confident that I talked with the key people in the WGC itself but also the people who have led the GAP negotiations formally. I decided I had reached saturation when I found I was hearing similar comments from each new

person, and consensus began to emerge around the themes that addressed the research questions (see Bryman, 2016). Though it is important to note that saturation was reached among gender experts and those involved in gender negotiations, not the body of the UNFCCC process in general.

In practice, the semi-structured interviews took an informal tone, allowing participants to talk freely on issues, events or concerns that they felt important (see Tickner, 2006). Interviews began from the participants' chosen starting point by asking the interview participant to tell me about themselves, their work/position and their interest in issues of gender and climate change. While beginning interviews in this way is a common tactic in feminist research in order to develop a sense of ease for the participants, it was used in this case – a case of 'interviewing up' (Reinharz, 1992) – to allow myself that time to relax and find my bearings. Interviewing up – that is interviewing women who held considerably more power than I – highlighted some complex methodological issues around power in this research. The issue of power seen in much feminist reflexive research, raises important questions about the researcher/researched relationship: to assume the researcher holds inherent power over the researched is to make particular assumptions about *which* women (and men) are being researched. It (often) assumes researched women to be women (primarily located in the Global South) who lack the material and knowledge resources that the researcher holds. It also implicitly makes assumptions about what kinds of knowledge are valued. The women (and men) that I have interviewed, observed, and interacted with are, themselves, in positions of power. The women who so richly inform the words on these pages are themselves elite women, who in most cases have access to education, resources, and professional status. They are not the women that Sarah Radcliffe refers to when she makes the point that 'in producing representations of (Third World) women, we are inextricably bound up with questions of authority, communication and representations' (Radcliffe, 1994, p. 28; see also Rose, 1997). Nor are they the women that Melissa Gilbert felt separated from when interviewing due to her middle-class luxuries of education and professional status (Gilbert, 1994; see also Rose, 1997). But even if they were, the knowledge produced from living life on the front lines of climate change is immensely important to just climate solutions and should not be diminished. Given this complex researcher/researched relationship it was important to find strategies which would increase my own credibility. For this I found directly participating in the activities of the WGC hugely important in cultivating relationships and snowballing sampling techniques (as described above). Directly participating in the activities of the WGC allowed me to transform from an 'outsider' to a more trusted 'insider' and to develop a more egalitarian relationship as described by Oakley (1981).

Asking participants to reflect on their own role and memories of history in the UNFCCC additionally helped, right from the outset, to understand what the most important issues, events or concerns were to the participant. Of



course, this process evolved and developed over the course of the fieldwork, so no two interviews were identical. This did not impede on the transcription or analysis process as I was concerned about the primary themes that emerged rather than a comparison between different individuals' answers.

It is worth noting that I opted not to anonymise interview participants, unless the participant themselves desired, which, while common in feminist research that aims to develop collective knowledge building as feminist practice (Reinharz, 1992; Tickner, 2006), remains a rather contentious subject in university ethics procedures. Automatically anonymising interviews not only assumes that the interview participant will wish to be anonymous, but also effectively claims the researcher to be the owner of knowledge. In order to avoid this problem, I gave participants the choice either to be named or not, as well as whether their words could be quoted directly in the book. Participants agreed to both choices, with the exception of a handful of who agreed to the use of direct quotes but requested a letter be used in place of their name (e.g. Participant A). However, in cases where comments might cause discomfort or embarrassment to the participant, I have not included their name.

### ***Direct Observation***

In order to see the negotiations and to understand the process through my own eyes I conducted field work at the UNFCCC COP conferences – COP23 Fiji, hosted in Bonn from 6 to 17 December 2017 and SB48 in Bonn from 3 to 10 May 2018.<sup>1</sup> Observation is a useful tactic helping to situate or contextualise interviews (Kronsell, 2006). Observation troubles the idea of 'research objects' that are detached from their real-life surroundings (Tickner, 2006) lending itself as a useful method in a feminist methodological toolbox. In short, observation in this research served as a supplementary method helping me to add nuance and context when answering the research questions set out above. At COP23 in Bonn I attended both strategy meetings and the daily Women's Caucus hosted by the WGC. These meetings were an opportunity for members of the WGC to plan their strategy for the day and to coordinate who would attend what negotiations as well as who would lobby whom. It was these strategy meetings around which my own day was structured. I decided to follow (observe and follow the progress of) the negotiations on the GAP since although gender is, occasionally, discussed in other thematic areas, particularly finance, these instances are relatively few and far between. Following the GAP negotiations helped gain a stronger sense of how gender was discussed and framed by different actors within the UNFCCC. There was some difficulty, however, when, to the surprise of the WGC's members, most of the negotiations on the GAP at COP23 were closed to observers. While I was unable to observe scheduled negotiations, I mostly attended the negotiations in the Local Communities and Indigenous People's Platform (LCIPP), which was the second major issue at COP23.



This was because many of the negotiators who were involved in the GAP negotiations were also involved in the LCIPP and I was curious about the gendered relations within and between Parties and non-Party stakeholders. I also followed closely the activities of the WGC's members in order to make observations on the political strategies of resistance, specifically procedural strategies, employed which included lobbying efforts as well as publicly staged 'actions' designed to draw attention to the issues for which the WGC were lobbying. This involved participating in the communication efforts of the WGC helping to draft press releases, stock tweets and taking part in actions.

At SB48 I attended strategy meetings and the WGC's daily caucuses as well as actions and events hosted by the WGC, but spent more time gaining access to negotiators and Party delegates. I attended the gender workshops and Gender Dialogue that had been mandated by both the LWPG and the GAP as well as continuing to pay close attention to the negotiations on the LCIPP, which were growing more tense as time drew on without a clear conclusion. In addition to these 'in-person' observations I followed various workshops and dialogues through webcast when not able to attend in person. This includes past years' gender workshops in the run up to the GAP negotiations as well as the Talanoa Dialogues which were open to a very limited number of invited people. These webcasts provided great insight into the content of the negotiations, but some of the inter-personal interactions and social relations were lost in the digital format.

Enloe writes that 'the feminist investigator always arrives before the meeting begins to hear the before-the-meeting offhand banter and is still wide awake and curious when the after-the-meeting continues with a select few down the corridor and into the pub' (Enloe, 2004, p. 5). It was this motto that I tried to keep in mind as I carried out my fieldwork. I kept extensive notes that where possible were written up at the time or as soon as possible thereafter. These field-notes include: exact quotes, where possible; a detailed description of activities in order in which they occur; descriptions of events without inferring meaning – my own thoughts and assumptions were noted separately; and relevant background information to situate events. Perhaps the primary benefit of conducting fieldwork through observation is the opportunities that arise for informal conversations (Cohn, 2006) that not only allowed me to build relationships with feminists in the UNFCCC, but also to gain a far deeper understanding of UNFCCC processes and the WGC's role in the institution. These informal conversations often alerted me to issues that participants might not have admitted to in a more formal interview setting or prompted me to follow up on threads of conversations in formal interviews. As Carol Cohn (2006) reflects, the 'I' in interviews not only shapes the questions asked or responses received, but also what people would say to me (in interviews) and in front of me (while observing). In this way direct observation was a complementary, yet integral, method supplementing data gathered from interviewing.

***Interpretation and Analysis of Documents***

Cohn is perhaps best known for her extensive research on defence intellectuals writing extensively on the weird relationships to the phallic shapes and language of nuclear weapons (Cohn, 1987a; 1987b). In writing about field experiences and her approach to research she claims a commitment to 'listen to the material' and to put genuine intellectual curiosity and a desire to understand at the heart of research (Cohn, 2006). This characterises my approach to the interpretation and analysis of the data gathered. I undertook all of the interview transcription myself, transcribing verbatim including all of the 'ums' and 'ahs', and did not attempt to edit the interview participant's words for clarity. Listening back to the interviews provided an excellent opportunity to revisit the interview and to begin to identify some common themes that emerged. This served as a preliminary form of analysis. Along with the interview transcriptions hard-copy data collected during fieldwork was digitised and included with transcriptions and online data. Further, I digitised field-notes and included these in my data set. In total 425 documents were compiled for analysis.

Having transcribed the interviews, I used NVivo software to code and analyse the data. The software itself has many interesting functions but it was primarily used as a content management system that systematically allowed the cataloguing and categorisation of the data. It did not replace any of the analytical or interpretive work. I used NVivo's feature of codes, nodes, categories and memos in my analysis. That is, particular themes are assigned nodes that do not remove them from the original context. These nodes were based on the data itself. Again, this was an inductive (and imperfect) process that began by identifying themes that arose before streamlining these into broader discourses of similar themes. The memos were further used to summarise the main themes and key details for each document analysed to help get the general gist at a glance.

I began by locating and marking out all the parts of the document that refer to gender (aided by the 2017 UNFCCC report in the case of policy decisions and adopted outcomes), primarily through a word search of the words gender and/or women, and in some cases the phrase social-considerations as a 'stand-in' for gender (a phrase learned from interviewing negotiators). I also paid attention, and actively searched, for co-located phrases or words typically associated with women and gender (influenced by my review of the literature relating to gender and climate change but evolving over the process of analysis). Such terms included: vulnerable/virtuous, marginalised, children, empowerment, adaptation, equality, human rights, gender balance, participation and development. The frequent or repetitive co-location of such words and phrases helps to understand the often more implicit, discursive framings surrounding gender and climate change and position the topic within a concept. While this began with a few key themes, as indicated above, this was reviewed and revised after various readings

to reflect findings so that the categories evolve from theoretical considerations (from existing literature) into a fully-fledged list based on empirical evidence. These themes were coded as ‘nodes’ in NVivo. Themes first derived from an initial review of literature on gender and climate change included phrases such as ‘women as vulnerable’ and ‘women as under-represented’ but were aided and refined as the process continued with new themes, such as ‘intersectionality in baby steps’, being added to the list.<sup>2</sup> This process was integral to the creation of a timeline of UNFCCC history foregrounding ‘gender’ and the WGC (Chapter 4) as well as an analysis of the political strategies mobilised by the WGC (Chapter 5).

The results from this analysis were gathered in order to explain what the dominant rhetorical framing is about and how it works (i.e. build a picture to tell the story of how gender works at COP) and looked for links to, and resonance or dissonance with the theoretical literature on gender and climate change. As Tickner (2006, p. 20) asserts, what makes feminist research ‘feminist’ is the framework or perspective that fundamentally challenges often unseen androcentric or masculine biases (to this I would add anthropocentric). Feminist research is also, on my reading, about fundamentally challenging single axis understandings of gender (see Collins and Bilge, 2020). It was this dialogue between the empirical material that I had collected and the theoretical literatures (outlined in Chapters 2 and 3) that allowed me to turn my attention to my final research questions – what lessons can be learned for ‘doing’ intersectionality from this story? And, how can these lessons inform a next phase of feminist organising in the UNFCCC? – to start to envision what a ‘next phase’ of feminist organising might look like in the UNFCCC (the answers to which I unpack in Chapter 6).

In keeping with my feminist commitment to transparency I often provide block quotes in the interview participant’s, or in the document’s, own language before analysing it myself (see Reinharz, 1992). This allows participants to speak for themselves but, more importantly, makes (more) apparent the assumptions that I am making in my theoretical connections. Certainly, in doing so I am making the final decisions about my analytical conclusions which can be disputed by other researchers.

### **Internal Validity and Limitations of the Research**

Ensuring validity and reliability is always complex in qualitative research since the purpose is to tell a story and make sense of the world without relying exclusively on numerical or statistical data (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Addressing the issue of reliability, or dependability is more difficult in qualitative research since it is not possible to guarantee that if the research was carried out in another context the results would be the same; my research is more situated and contextual. Generalisation in a study like this is neither possible nor desirable. But, through transparency readers can

assess the validity of my research with a full understanding of my theoretical and conceptual assumptions and a clear and transparent description of how the results were obtained. That said, I have strived for internal validity in my research, primarily through methods of triangulation.<sup>3</sup> The use of triangulation techniques in qualitative research is important in addressing the limitations of individual techniques. The use of triangulation in this research should be seen as a form of ‘complementarity’ (Nightingale, 2016) in that different methods are not expected to provide exactly the same results but instead complement each other. Complementarity ‘relies on using epistemologically consistent methods to provide answers to the same question’ (Nightingale, 2016, p. 45). The use of multiple, complementary, methods adds layering and the different types of data can be used to refine one another (Reinharz, 1992, p. 201). I have also employed techniques of repeated contact and observation, participatory research, and peer examination all of which enhance the internal validity of my research.

While I consider my findings internally valid there are some limitations that should be noted that are related to the research design. One obvious limitation is the focus on the UNFCCC process. While I have focused much of my scholarly attention to the work of the WGC and its members, I have focused this attention on the specific work inside of the UNFCCC. The WGC, however, is made up of 29 individual NGOs most of whom undertake extensive advocacy work in their communities outside of the COP. This work, due to the constraints (namely time and financial) of a doctoral research project, has not been included in this book. Similarly, being just one researcher with limited time and resources for fieldwork I focused my attention on the gender specific negotiations at the COP. I have explained my reasons for this above, though it is worth noting here that this limits my ability to be able to discuss in more detail ‘gender’ as a wider issue in the COP. I have attempted to address this through a rigorous analysis of UNFCCC wide documents.

## Notes

- 1 I had planned to attend COP24 Katowice but after these two conferences I felt that I was reaching saturation and had already gathered a large amount of material. Since limited in resources I decided, in conjunction with my supervisors, that another trip was not needed.
- 2 While this approach holds many consistencies with what is commonly termed ‘discourse analysis’ I find the term textual analysis to be a more apt description of this work. While I searched for emergent themes and common discursive framings surrounding women and gender in the UNFCCC, I did not follow any standard method of ‘discourse analysis’ nor did I engage in an analysis of the creation of particular discourses to any real extent. I was more interested in tracing common themes around the *mobilisation* of particular discursive framings by the WGC as well as the more procedural strategies used in that mobilisation.

- 3 Cohn (2006) refers to her method choice as the juxtaposition of many different windows that allow identifying patterns over time: ‘strength is derived from the layering and juxtaposition of what is found in different sites, contexts and constituencies’ (p. 107). It is a process of looking at several different ‘windows’ to pick up and pull through the common threads, similar to what others term ‘triangulation’. Reinharz refers to the use of triangulation in feminist research for both technical and feminist reasons: it can express a commitment to thoroughness and a desire to be open ended (Reinharz, 1992, p. 197). As such, I find the term triangulation a useful phrase in visualising this process of looking through different windows and across different layers.

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