

Ecofeminist Approaches to the Construction of Knowledge and Coalition Building – Offering a way forward for international environmental law and policy

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Abstract

Some might wonder why it is necessary to include an ecofeminist approach in a volume on environmental law research methodology. There are a number of reasons why such an approach can add value to our consideration of environmental research: not least, it offers an important counter hegemonic critique of societal engagement with the environment and one that complements other important differential perspectives, such as those of indigenous peoples, and can ~~therefore~~ enrich our understanding of important environmental issues. Just as compellingly, ecofeminist approaches to engaging with environmental questions offer a powerful potential corrective to current dominant, gendered, methodologies which have proved ~~to be of limited effectiveness~~ in addressing environmental degradation. Ecofeminism, with its methodologically distinctive drive to achieve a working fusion of theory and activism, and its commitment to encapsulating the relevance of lived experience in addressing societal challenges, potentially has a great deal to offer in the endeavour to harness the artificially yet routinely sundered conceptual and practical approaches to environmental issues that is arguably a factor retarding progress in addressing complex, large-scale, socially embedded environmental issues. The impetus towards the synthesis of systemic thought and lived experience also recognises the necessity of fostering broader participation in the crafting of environmental policy and law responses to the major environmental problems of our time. To

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this end ecofeminist methodology employs innovative approaches towards garnering a wide range of gender perspectives that address the ~~neglected~~ complexities of women's vulnerability and agency as environmental actors. This chapter looks specifically at climate change and the eventual emergence of gender in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) regime, through making a case and ultimately obtaining recognition for the gender constituency in this, the chief institution of global climate governance. This ongoing process has seen women apply employ feminist approaches, such as transversal politics (with which this chapter is chiefly concerned) as vehicles facilitating the construction of knowledge and coalition-building to good effect in adding weight to their case for inclusion and ultimately influence in this most crucial, contentious, contested environmental law and policy context and arguably offering richer treatment of the substantive issues than hitherto.

(h) Introduction – a role for ecofeminism in tackling current environmental problems

In broad terms, ecofeminism applies the feminist gaze to the common construction of both women and nature as 'other' to dominant male ontology and their consequent susceptibility to subjugation and exploitation.² Ecofeminism is a very broad church indeed, and it would be impossible to do its range and richness full justice here,³ so discussion will focus on the strand

² See, for example, Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (Wildwood House 1981).

³ For a brief overview of ecofeminism see Karen Morrow, 'Climate Change, Major Groups and the Importance of a Seat at the Table: Women and the UNFCCC Negotiations', in Jerneja Penca and Correa de Andrade (eds.), *The Dominance of Climate Change in Environmental Law: Taking Stock for Rio +20* (European University Institute, 2012) online

known as social ecofeminism (itself comprising multiple stances) which is both dominant in current practice and most readily applicable to the matters with which this chapter is concerned. Briefly, social ecofeminist perspectives contend that a distinctive relationship exists between women and the environment that is at least partially attributable to women's reproductive functions understood as encapsulating the full range of activities necessary to sustain life. The exercise of broad reproductive functions is observed as lying primarily (though to varying degrees in different societies) in the hands of women. In consequence, social ecofeminist theories regard the sphere of the 'personal' as necessarily extending into the surrounding world and thus also seek to encapsulate within their ambit the complex interrelating factors that situate women beyond/additionally to gender, including (though not confined to): race/ethnicity; class; and age. In consequence, social ecofeminism posits that human experience and appreciation of our relationship with the environment is highly distinctive and predicated upon myriad social and societal factors ranging from geography and economics, through culture, politics, and law and the multifarious intersections between them. Each of these components in turn raises gender-specific considerations and in common with broader feminist approaches, social ecofeminism identifies gender as a cross-cutting issue that necessarily touches on all aspects of female being and agency. Understanding the impact of the intersectionality⁴ made manifest in the complex and intertwined identities of women further reveals a compound conception of disadvantage. In the context of social ecofeminism, intersectionality sees women featuring prominently amongst those victims subjected to the

<http://cadmus.euiy.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/24994/RSCAS_2012_67.pdf> accessed 09 June 2015 21-24.(Hereafter Morrow (2012)).

⁴ Kimberle Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color' (1991) Stanford Law Review 43 No. 6 1241.

greatest burden by all classes of environmental degradation (including climate change). That said, women are also, by virtue of their various reproductive activities, increasingly recognised among the actors driving environmental degradation. At the same time, as holders of complex knowledge and understanding borne of their experiences, women are potentially powerful (though thanks to entrenched societal constraints routinely underutilised) agents of change in tackling environmental degradation. Women thus enjoy a complex, composite victim/actor/agent status with regard to environmental issues generally and climate change in particular.

This chapter examines women's engagement with the global climate change regime as an example of what may be achieved through the outworking of ecofeminist and broader feminist values applied in an environmental context and resultant alternative approaches to knowledge gathering and coalition building in the context of a largely patriarchal global polis. In so doing it considers the application of distinctive ecofeminist/feminist praxis in a rapidly evolving area of the construction of knowledge about the environment, in part attempting to address its established but, until quite recently relatively unquestioned, integrally gendered character. It is argued that in interfacing with the global climate change regime, women have engaged in creative ways that may offer a means through which complex polycentric environmental law and policy dilemmas (of which climate change is an archetype) may be more effectively addressed.

(sh) Ecofeminist methodology - the fusion of theory and activism

First, in its rich (if oftentimes contentious) fusion of theory and activism as an integral element of its approach, ecofeminism avoids the preclusive closures of a hierarchical stance on

knowledge and its acquisition. Thus ecofeminist approaches actively foster drawing grassroots experience into the process of accruing information and developing understanding of matters of concern. This poses considerable challenges but is also arguably of crucial importance in developing the fullest possible understanding of the complex, multi-layered and multi-faceted existential threats posed by environmental problems as we are now coming to understand them. Ecofeminist approaches are of considerable interest in this in that they seek to combine mainstream scientific knowledge with the fruits of lived experience – arguably a salutary approach to issues such as climate change which manifest scientific, social and political complexity in intimately and inextricably intertwined synthesis.

Second, in integrating grassroots inputs into knowledge building, ecofeminism proceeds on a recognition of the situated, contingent and porous nature of knowledge, responding to this by actively pursuing open and collaborative approaches to this endeavour in the search for a fuller, deeper, wider – in short, a more complete - understanding of the issues involved.

Third, in heeding and valuing lived experience, ecofeminist approaches have developed an applied understanding of the concept of compound gender disadvantage in environmental contexts. In response, and viewing relationships between women and the environment as socially rooted and enforced/reinforced by a complex interlinked web of societal mechanisms,⁵ ecofeminist approaches attempt to grasp the implications of identity as an intersectional construct and thus to engage with a crucial element of real-world complexity.

⁵ See, for example, Elaine J. Hughes, 'Fishwives and Other Tails: Ecofeminism and Environmental Law' (1995) Can J. Women & L. 8 520.

The consequences of adopting an ecofeminist stance are manifold: on the one hand, as might be expected, it recognises the complexity and embedded nature of women's environmental vulnerability; on the other, less predictably, it emphasises the value of particular experiences of situatedness and intimate knowledge of local environments in women's potential agency as environmental actors. The desire to accommodate women's multiple identities and openness to considering their complex ramifications that social ecofeminist approaches in particular exhibit and the idea that women are not just victims of environmental degradation but also holders of diverse and crucial knowledge forged by lived experience, have prompted ecofeminism to invoke broader feminist, transversal approaches towards cooperation and constructing coalitions. The latter are arguably particularly well-suited to addressing the complexity and cross-cutting nature of modern environmental problems. Such innovative thought at the very least invites us to reconsider how we address the manifest environmental threats that we now face – and it may also offer a meaningful contribution towards re-animating the now dangerously ~~inadequate~~moribund international climate change governance project.

(h) Women, gender, the UN, and climate change

While the general links between women and the environment alluded to above have now been understood for many years;⁶ it has taken considerable time and a great deal of activity on various fronts for the seemingly (though evidently not) obvious recognition to emerge that these are also evident in the field of climate change.⁷ Indeed, while it is well established that

⁶ Morrow (2012) n3 at 21-24.

⁷ Ibid, at 26-32.

climate change impacts most severely on the most vulnerable in society,⁸ with women forming the majority of this group⁹, it is only latterly being recognised that ‘neither impacts of nor responses to climate change are gender neutral’.¹⁰

Within the United Nations, bodies concerned with women’s issues, notably the Commission on the Status of Women¹¹ and the institutional machinery of the Convention on the Elimination of

⁸ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2014), Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (Eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland online <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf> accessed 10 June 2015.

⁹ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Combating discrimination against women’ online <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/discrimination_women.aspx> accessed 10 June 2015.

¹⁰ Agnes Otzelberger, ‘Gender-Responsive Strategies on Climate Change: Recent Progress and Ways forward for Donors’ Institute of Development Studies; BRIDGE development-gender (2011) online <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/vfile/upload/4/document/1107/Gender%20responsive%20strategies%20on%20climate%20change_progress%20and%20ways%20forward%20for%20donors.pdf> (accessed 09/06/2014) at x.

¹¹ CSW, Issues paper ‘Gender Perspectives on Climate Change’, 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2008 online <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/issuespapers/Gender%20and%20climate%20change%20paper%20final.pdf>> accessed 10 June 2015.

All forms of Discrimination Against Women,¹² eventually (about a decade and a half after the adoption of the UNFCCC) became aware of both the paucity of women's involvement in climate change governance and the need to address this by prompting women's participation. Around the same time, this burgeoning awareness of the importance of gender in a climate change context was emerging in the UN's environmental institutions, notably the United Nations Development Programme.¹³

Nonetheless, as we shall see below, the specific UN institutions responsible for climate change governance attached to the UNFCCC regime, despite longstanding institutional awareness of the specific nexus between gender and climate change, took an unconscionable amount of time to engage effectively with these issues. This was apparent in the lengthy quest for recognition for a gender constituency within the UNFCCC regime (which will be considered below as an example of the practical application of ecofeminist approaches to engaging with both an emerging cross-cutting environmental issue and with the governance machinery of international environmental law).

¹² CEDAW, 'Statement of the CEDAW Committee on Gender and Climate Change', 44th session of CEDAW, 2009) online

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/Gender_and_climate_change.pdf> accessed 10 June 2015.

¹³UNDP, Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change (2009) online

<<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/resource-guide-on-gender-and-climate-change.html>> accessed 10 June 2015.

At the outset it is salutary to note that there are a whole range of reasons for promoting women's participation in respect of the global climate change regime, in addition to the compelling moral and legal arguments furnished by their compound victim/actor/agent status vis-à-vis environmental degradation both more generally and in this particular context.¹⁴ There are further, arguably paradigm-defining, arguments to be made for gender inclusivity in regard to the very nature of modern, existential environmental threats¹⁵ that are particularly graphically illustrated in the context of climate change. We shall consider two of the most far-reaching of these: first, the fact that our knowledge of climate change, while growing, can only be described as emergent and it is prodigal to thoughtlessly exclude wholesale potentially valuable contributions to our limited resources in this regard from half of the global population; second, climate change is a multi-level, complex, cross-cutting and polycentric phenomenon that is not adequately captured by traditional state-centric international environmental law¹⁶ and therefore ~~addressing it~~ arguably requires more thoroughgoing societal engagement than has been the norm in this area – it cannot be accomplished by state-craft alone. This chapter will maintain that ecofeminist approaches to the construction of knowledge and coalition building respectively offer insights that could better equip humanity to engage with these issues. The following section will discuss the former relatively briefly and the latter in greater depth.

¹⁴ See Morrow (2012) n3.

¹⁵ See the work of the Stockholm Resilience Centre on planetary boundaries online
<<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-programmes/planetary-boundaries.html>>.

¹⁶ See Morrow (2012) n3 at 26-30.

(sh) Ecofeminism and the construction of knowledge

(ssh) Knowledge construed as situated, contingent and incomplete

Our knowledge and understanding of climate change, while developing apace, is, given the complex and inter-connected nature of the problems, multi-scalar geographies, and the lengthy timescales involved, necessarily incomplete. Whilst the science of climate change has, relatively rapidly, shifted from controversial theory to orthodoxy,¹⁷ perhaps inevitably given the initial narrowly technocratic focus of the global climate change regime,¹⁸ our understanding of the social ramifications of climate change, has developed more slowly. Social impacts are however belatedly coming to form central considerations in the contexts of mitigation and adaptation at least,¹⁹ though arguably their broader significance to climate change governance is yet to be fully appreciated. In the first instance, it is in this appreciation of the social manifestations of climate change that ecofeminism arguably has a valuable contribution to make to climate change governance. Centrally, ecofeminism recognises that all knowledge is situated, contingent and inevitably incomplete. Furthermore in arriving at a position of collective understanding, ecofeminist approaches do not seek an artificially imposed uniformity but rather to encourage agreement on specific issues whilst at the same time allowing for difference and accommodating diversity.²⁰ This is a potentially constructive approach to explore in an emergent area as complex and contentious as climate change.

¹⁷ See, for example, IPCC n8.

¹⁸ See Morrow (2012) n3 at 26-27.

¹⁹ See IPCC n8.

²⁰ Sylvia Walby, 'Beyond the Politics of Location: The Power of Argument in a Global Era' (2000) *Feminist Theory* 1(2) 173.

(ssh) The fusion of theory and activism in open and inclusive discussion

Furthermore, ecofeminist approaches towards developing knowledge value and incorporate not only theoretical inquiry, but also the fruits of activism,²¹ a strategy that is likely to prove of considerable utility in engaging with many of the practical issues that arise in the context of climate change. The practice of incorporating activist perspectives necessarily features outreach and inquiry into concrete areas of concern and the application of feminist analysis to real-world environmental problems. In social ecofeminist methodological approaches these activities are internally reflexive, outward facing, and are ultimately harnessed to the pursuit of societal change.²² They are also inherently dialogic in approach, being predicated on open communication and discussion: accommodating multi-faceted intersectional identities; embracing multiple epistemologies; and welcoming the whole range of potential standpoints (that is, individually situated world views) in participants in knowledge-building processes. In actioning the active engagement with pluralism that such an approach to constructing knowledge requires, Kannibrian points to the radical, transformational, significance of the now well-worn slogan, 'the personal is political' when applied in dialogic contexts, in linking first the

²¹ Sherilyn MacGregor, 'From Care to Citizenship: Calling ecofeminism back to politics' (2004) *Ethics and the Environment* 9.1 56 argues that, in early attempts to accommodate activist perspectives there was an over-correction at the expense of theoretical ecofeminism; current praxis seeks to accommodate both strands of endeavour.

²² Rather than focussing on personal transformation as in cultural ecofeminism – see Karen Morrow, 'Ecofeminism and the Environment: International law and Climate Change in M. Davies and V.E. Munro (eds.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Feminist Legal Theory* (Ashgate 2013) 377-395. (Hereafter Morrow (2013)).

personal and public domains and then liberating feminist debate from ideological dominance from any one quarter.²³ Knowledge thus arrived at is freed from dogma in being the product of discussion that accommodates difference amongst equals and in according respect to multiple standpoints (a foundational methodological device which is also central role in transversal coalition building, discussed below). Standpoint-based experiential narratives play a prominent role in the dialogic knowledge construction which engages activist ecofeminism,²⁴ and the incorporates the salience of understanding lived experience to the social impacts of phenomena such as climate change and the policies and laws that seek to address its impacts. Accommodating activist perspectives and experiential narratives does not however equate with a descent into relativism as, while all standpoints may be brought to the table, once there, they are open to interrogation and contestation.²⁵

In conclusion, whilst incorporating individual standpoints and triangulating them with those of multiple others has a great deal to offer in advancing our understanding of complex issues by rejecting reductionism and artificial homogeneity; it is inevitably part of an improving though ultimately imperfectible process. Perhaps just as valuable is the fact that such an approach requires us to view the production of knowledge as necessarily contingent and always

²³ Kalpana Kannibiran, 'Feminism, Diversity and Dialogue: Possibilities for the Global South' paper delivered at a Harold Wolfe Memorial Trust Colloquium 'A Holistic Approach to Gender-Based Violence: Successful Interventions and Enduring Challenges', 30th November 2010, online <<http://www.wolpetrust.org.za/reports/colloquium/kannibiran.pdf>> accessed 11 May 2015, at 2.

²⁴ See Morrow (2013) n22.

²⁵ See Lori Gruen, 'Towards and Ecofeminist Moral Epistemology' in Warren, K.J. (ed.) *Ecological Feminism* (Routledge 1994) 120.

incomplete – arguably a wise approach to take in respect of the environment where, time and again, new discoveries have revealed the cost of the hubris of early, unwarranted, assumptions of full understanding. The one certainty with climate change is that, given the vast timescales involved, our knowledge and understanding of it will always be incomplete. That said, this by no means constitutes an excuse for ignoring potentially useful sources of information (even if they are themselves ‘works in progress’) when they can be accessed and added to our current body of knowledge with relative ease.

(sh) Ecofeminism and constructing alliances/coalitions – intersectionality and transversalism

The second area in which ecofeminist praxis is potentially useful in addressing multiscalar complex environmental problems lies in constructing coalitions/alliances to investigate and address them and in the application of the broader feminist approach of transversalism to this endeavour. The idea of the transversal originates in mathematics in which context it refers to a ‘... line that intersects with a system of other lines’.²⁶ At a more abstract level, transversalism refers to the ideas of cross-cutting and intersection – which in the current context, as we have seen above, can be readily related to the feminist~~the feminist~~ conception of intersectionality as explored in the context of compound disadvantage, as touched upon above.

Intersectionality broadly views gender as intersecting with a range of other concerns and identities including, but not limited to: race, gender, colour, and class and is, given the nature of environmental issues, a well-established line of inquiry in ecofeminism. Transversalism in the context of feminist theory and activism can be understood as trading in identifying and

²⁶ See ‘transversal’ in the Free Dictionary, online <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/transversal>> accessed 13 May 2015.

building upon areas of commonality shared with other women and other groups, seeking common cause as the basis of goal-oriented coalitions or alliances, and adopting an issues-based approach towards cooperative endeavours. Transversalism seeks to transcend and avoid the pitfalls of identity politics with all of its well-worn closures and limitations;²⁷ not least, it eschews tendencies towards essentialism and over-simplification. The approach to cooperation as a participatory and dialogic enterprise that is endorsed by transversalism is arguably well suited to engagement with a whole range of political and related legal contexts. The call to political engagement that is involved is shared by social ecofeminism as offering a way out of the inward-looking conceptual culs de sac of essentialism²⁸ and maternalism.²⁹ It also chimes strongly with calls for feminist citizenship.³⁰ All of these elements applied in an environmental context combine to revivify ecofeminism by pushing its focus more prominently into the public domain.

²⁷ See Michael L. Ferguson, 'Sharing without Knowing: Collective Identity in Feminist and Democratic Theory' (2007) *Hypatia* 22.4 30.

²⁸ Controversially positing identity between women and nature based on biology/spirituality see - Linda Marina, 'Woman & the Land' (2002) www.ecofem.org/journal online <<http://richardtwine.com/ecofem/linda.pdf>> accessed 09 June 2015).

²⁹ Identifying feminism and ecofeminism with motherhood - see Mary Dietz, 'Citizenship with a Feminist Face: The Problem with Maternal Thinking' (1985) *Political Theory* 13(1) 19.

³⁰ See MacGregor n21; Catriona Sandilands, *The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy* (University of Minnesota Press 1999); and Ruth Lister: *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (2nd edn, Palgrave Macmillan 2003).

It is worth pointing out that the terms transversalism, transversal politics³¹ and transversal dialogue are apt to be used interchangeably in the political scholarship in which this generally under-examined phenomenon is most frequently discussed.³¹ This tendency to elision is however less than satisfactory from the point of view of legal analysis. On closer examination it may be said that transversalism represents an approach to alliance building³² that seeks to supplant identity politics with a methodology based on a participatory, dialogic, citizenship and which, cognizant of our increased understanding of the complexity and fluidity of the concept of allegiance, focusses on uniting coalitions/forging cooperative pacts around specific issues of shared concern. Transversal politics encapsulates the process whereby the development of transversalism is promoted and ‘... implies perpetual, and even uncertain, movement.’³³ Transversal dialogue is a key mechanism whereby this process is operationalised. This section will briefly consider all three.

³¹ See Linda Eitrem Holmgren, “Where There is Dialogue, There is Hope”: Nation, Gender and Transversal Dialogue in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Working Paper Series Contested Administrations, (Lund, Lund University, 2014) online <<http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=4940767&fileId=4940768>>, accessed 11 May 2015 at 23.

³² Radical theorists would extend the possibility of alliances beyond human interactions, encapsulating ‘unlimited relation with any (number of) living entities’ Irving Goh, ‘Becoming-Animal: Transversal Politics’ (2012) *Diacritics* 39.2, at 51, though here we shall confine discussion to human interactions.

³³ *Ibid* at 38.

Transversalism emerged in Italy in the 1970s as a novel approach to constructing collective feminist positions. It was rapidly taken up by African American feminists³⁴ and feminists of the developing world;³⁵ and is currently being further developed, for example by Nira Yuval-Davis, in her work on the politics of belonging.³⁶ Transversalism developed alongside and shares commonalities with the concept of intersectionality, which, having initially been adopted as a corrective to the nascent, white, privileged, hegemony of first world feminism in the international sphere concomitantly acted as a curative to the hegemonic closures inherent in essentialist conceptions of feminist identity politics.³⁷ As Collins points out, such nuanced locational strategies underline the importance of consideration of various groups of women 'in the context of the transnational matrix of domination'³⁸ that extends its reach beyond gender, to embrace a whole spectrum of alternate/additional situating factors operating both within and without feminism. Transversalism now arguably continues to evolve into something more ambitious, as an important constituent of a project of cultivating a reflexive and outwardly engaged feminist citizenship, and as a strategy of the politics of resistance:

³⁴ See, for example, Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and The Politics of Empowerment* (Unwin Hyman 1990) 245-9.

³⁵ Kannibiran n23 at 1-2.

³⁶ Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Women, Citizenship and Difference' (1997) *Feminist Review* No. 5 4 (Hereafter Yuval-Davis (1997a)) and Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Power, Intersectionality and the Politics of Belonging' (Aalborg: Institut for Kultur OG Globale Studier, Aalborg Universitet, 2011) (Hereafter Yuval-Davis (2011)).

³⁷ Yuval-Davis (1997a) n36.

³⁸ Collins n34 at 245.

... the struggle must be transversal ... constructed on the intersections of women's different realities, priorities and experiences. It is impossible to put an end to oppression without also examining the differences in privileges amongst women; therefore these differences must be recognized and debated. A true plurality must be put into practice, constructing spaces of inclusion that also respect our autonomy and uniqueness. Crossing the question of race with class, gender and sexuality women can propose a model of diversity and solidarity to confront the homogenizing effects of neoliberal and authoritarian thought.³⁹

This recognition in transversalism of the complex and nuanced nature of both individual and/or group identities and the cross-cutting loyalties and allegiances that characterise them necessarily embraces intersectionality and the relational⁴⁰ nature of identities. In consequence it also rejects reductionism in the characterisation of women (and others) as political actors. While transversalism builds on an understanding of the impacts of intersectionality, at the same time it uses them to open up the prospect of building alliances within the women's movement itself and by reaching out to/exploiting the opportunities presented by women's active involvement in other groups and constituencies. Transversalism is centrally founded on the notion that values may be common across groups;⁴¹ a further claim may be made in this regard when considered in combination with considerations of intersectionality, with women

³⁹ Centro de Medios Independientes, Cuenca Ecuador 24-6 October 2002 - The Women of America 2003 quoted in Marianne M Marchand, 'Challenging globalisation: towards a feminist understanding of resistance' (2003) *Review of International Studies* 29, 145, 155.

⁴⁰ Collins n34 at 247.

⁴¹ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* London, (Sage 1997) 282 (Hereafter Yuval-Davis (1997b)).

identifying themselves in the context of multiple groups and having their values shape and be shaped by their compound identity and (inter)related activities.

Intersectionality and transversalism have a great deal to offer in their own right and even more when employed creatively, in combination, to address the real-world complexity of current existential environmental threats. Both approaches recognise that difference must be respected and accommodated, not buried in an attempt to arrive at what is inevitably a chimerical consensus, particularly in areas such as climate change which exhibit global, yet highly particularised and distinctive environmental and social impacts.⁴² As Yuval-Davis points out, action in transversal politics is based ‘not in terms of “who” we are but in terms of what we want to achieve’, and is grounded on the premise of working together for a shared purpose rather than allying on the basis of a fictionalised shared identity.⁴³ Acting on this basis cuts through at least one layer of complexity and removes a distracting element of largely pointless contention from the inevitably vexed process of arriving at common positions. Murtagh further alludes to the utility of alliances thus fashioned being ‘based on common principles and objectives rather than common identity, as identities are not fixed or singular but multiple and apt to shift over time.’⁴⁴ The coalitions in question do not therefore espouse ‘one unified stance on issues for which such consensus is impossible’,⁴⁵ but rather recognise the fluctuating

⁴² See IPCC n8.

⁴³ Yuval-Davis (1997b) n41 at 126.

⁴⁴ Cera Murtagh ‘A Transient Transition: The Cultural and Institutional Obstacles Impeding the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition in its Progression from Informal to Formal Politics’ (2008) *Irish Political Studies* 23:1 21, 24.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

and flexible nature of alliances that are friable, dynamic and open to reconstitution. This approach sees transversal cooperation plausibly positioned to deal with the governance of complex issues.

While the attempt to operationalise of transversal politics has mainly been discussed in domestic contexts,⁴⁶ its theoretical origins and its core tenets arguably make it particularly well suited to application in the international arena. In particular, being ‘... articulated at the intersection of people’s different realities, backgrounds, experiences and priorities’,⁴⁷ transversal politics offer an important alternative to seeking what has thus far proved to be an elusive (and which is in any event probably unfeasible) consensus in respect of the divisive, controversial, complex, multi-scalar, cross-cutting, polycentric, issues conjured by climate change.

(ssh) Transversal dialogue

As is clear from its fundamental conception of identity as multiple and intersectional, transversalism rejects simplistic binary/dualistic thinking;⁴⁸ less obviously, but relatedly, it views knowledge obtained from any single standpoint as necessarily partial and therefore inadequate. Thus in transversal contexts, knowledge is viewed as being at its most comprehensive (though inevitably incomplete) when it is arrived at as composite of many different situated knowledges. To elucidate fuller knowledge, transversal politics employs

⁴⁶ See, for example, Holmgren n31 and Murtagh n44.

⁴⁷ Marchand n39 at 151.

⁴⁸ Collins n34 at 245.

dialogue ‘across difference’⁴⁹ as a means of triangulating multiple knowledge perspectives into carefully crafted broader uniting positions. Transversal approaches to forging alliances place this dialogue ‘through which knowledge is acquired and perceptions modified’⁵⁰ centrally in the process of arriving at positions of accommodation based on shared values, which in turn provide the basis for founding alliances. Values in this context are identified as being distinct from both identity and positioning (accounted for by class, gender, sexuality etc.),⁵¹ which are in turn disaggregated from one another.

Inclusive, respectful and receptive dialogue as invoked in transversal politics shares significant commonalities with ecofeminist knowledge generation, notably in that experiential narrative partially fuels the process. In the context of transversal politics, dialogue actually serves multiple purposes, being: an end in itself; a vehicle for arriving at common positions; and a means of securing legitimacy⁵² for those positions. Probing these functions further, we could usefully apply Phillips’ approach to considering transversal dialogue as an end in itself, viewing

⁴⁹ Holmgren n31 at 23.

⁵⁰ Carmel Roulston, ‘Democracy and the Challenge of Gender: New Visions, New Processes’ in Celia Davies and Carmel Roulston (eds.) *Gender, Democracy and Inclusion in Northern Ireland* (Palgrave 2000) 24-48 at 41.

⁵¹ From Nira Yuval-Davis in (1999) soundings issue 12 94, quoted in Yuval-Davis n36, (1997a) at 4.

⁵² An important consideration in its own right in the expanding modern global polis, though not one that time constraints allow discussion of here, though the issue is one that has much exercised international relations scholars (though thus far lawyers less so), see for example, See Richard M. Price, ‘Transnational Civil Society and Advocacy in World Politics’ (2003) *World Politics* 55.4 579.

this type of participation in the public arena as being part of a process of ‘transformation’⁵³ in which: taking part; interrogating one’s own perspectives; and questioning those of other participants; combine to foster a mutual and enriching reflexivity. In terms of arriving at agreed positions, transversal dialogue recognises localised and identity concerns and feeds them into the process of arriving at a common position, but at the same time, the limits of the former factors are admitted and they are not regarded as ‘transcendent’.⁵⁴

Securing legitimacy for common positions arrived at in transversal dialogue is hugely significant in terms of claiming political (and ultimately legal) traction when they are fed into governance processes. Where participants in transversal dialogue are not usually elected (the prime source of legitimacy in much of the modern world, which, while not excluded, is unlikely in this context) they can invoke various alternative sources of legitimacy justifying their participation, which in turn lends heft to the outcomes of dialogic processes. Gutterman, examining transnational NGO activities, characterises alternative sources of legitimacy for participation as either tangible (variously invoking: direct support from people; expert knowledge; organisational and interpersonal relationships; mission effectiveness; partnership/support from powerful actors; internal democracy; operational transparency; constituent accountability; and strategic orientation) or intangible (raising considerations of: credibility; reputation; trust; and integrity).⁵⁵ Participants in transversal politics can arguably lay claim to many of these attributes, though untenable claims of ‘representativeness’ are

⁵³ Anne Phillips, *Democracy and Difference* (Polity Press 1993).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ellen Gutterman, ‘The legitimacy of transnational NGOs: lessons from the experience of Transparency International in Germany and France, (2014) *Review of International Studies* 40 398.

strenuously to be avoided,⁵⁶ abjuring reductionist, erroneous claims to act as ‘the voice’ of an imaginary, homogenous category of ‘women’.⁵⁷ Instead, transversal dialogue summons in aid the plurality of ‘voices’ that women raise in advocacy on a given issue,⁵⁸ acknowledging that accommodating differences between women is as important as addressing the differences between women and men, which also fall under its gaze.⁵⁹ Addressing difference between participants in dialogue central to the operation of this mechanism of transversal politics but so too is an appreciation that:

... Notions of difference should encompass, rather than replace, notions of equality. Such notions of difference are not hierarchical. They assume *a priori* respect for others' positionings - which includes acknowledgement of their differential social, economic and political power.⁶⁰

The twin concepts of ‘rooting’ and ‘shifting’, as identified by Yuval-Davis, are central to realising the inclusive dialogic process that is entailed in the attempt to achieve reconciliation among multiple divergent standpoints. The former requires participants to consciously reflect on the fact that they ‘rooted’ in their ‘particular groups histories’ or, more succinctly, to

⁵⁶ Unless, of course, they are elected – Kannibiran n23 at 3.

⁵⁷ Ferguson n27.

⁵⁸ Kannibiran n23 at 3.

⁵⁹ See K. Kellar and D. Nathan, *Gender and Tribe: Women, Land and Forests in Jharkhand*, (Kali for Women 1991).

⁶⁰ Holmgren n31 at 24, discussing Nira Yuval-Davis, ‘Women and the New Discourse of Citizenship’ 1-38 in Pnina Werbner and Nira Yuval-Davis (eds), *Women, Citizenship and Difference* (Zed, 1999).

acknowledge that their initial positioning is freighted with identity. This 'rooting' is offset by the latter requirement that, participants are prepared to engage in an open and transformative dialogic process, by being willing to 'shift' their positioning from their own perspectives to those of other parties,⁶¹ temporarily inhabiting alternative standpoints and reflecting upon what this reveals. As Macgregor puts it, in interrogating broader concerns of feminist citizenship:

It is through political conversation among these partially and temporarily-fixed and internally complex political subjects (citizens) that taken-for-granted assumptions may be challenged by means of open debate ...⁶²

The empathetic engagement and reflexivity that transversal dialogue involves eschews tokenism and requires open and deep participation, allowing other perspectives to permeate and perhaps alter one's own and *vice versa*. While such a process does not of itself guarantee agreement as an outcome, it optimises the possibility of attaining a better understanding of the various perspectives that are interrogated, which is an indispensable prelude to this end.

The promotion of dialogue as a transformative process is of course neither novel nor confined to transversalism, featuring in other older areas of discourse, such as civic friendship, which also 'accommodates disagreement without fracture'.⁶³ Scorza, in considering civic friendship,

⁶¹ Succinctly described by Collins n34 at 245.

⁶² MacGregor n21 at 74.

⁶³ Jason A. Scorza, 'Liberal Citizenship and Civic Friendship' (2004) *Political Theory* 32 No. 1. 85, 90.

draws on Emerson's conceptions of 'truth' and 'tenderness' in 'political speech' which demonstrate considerable commonality ~~with~~ the 'rooting' and 'shifting' of transversal dialogue:

The norm of truth, briefly is a posture of candour and directness in political speech, and a willingness to listen to such speech from others, while the norm of tenderness is an attitude of gentle respect towards others and a responsiveness or openness to others (particularly, those who are different from oneself).⁶⁴

Also present in the concept of civic friendship are notions of equality⁶⁵ and: '... mutual respect, recognition, and responsiveness' which comprise 'democratic connectedness'⁶⁶ and share core features with transversal dialogue.

So transversalism ~~then-enjoys~~ shared values, conceptual roots, and characteristics that reach out to other spheres of what may be termed active citizenship. This shared and increasingly enculturated foundation of rules of engagement for dialogue in public life seems apt to facilitate the adoption of transversal accommodations.

(h) An Applied Transversal Approach - Women's Engagement with the UNFCCC

⁶⁴ Ibid at 87.

⁶⁵ Ibid at 91.

⁶⁶ Ibid at 92.

Transversalism arguably has a valuable contribution to make towards re-configuring the operation of the deeply flawed global climate change governance regime in order to render it fit for purpose. Uniquely among the 1992 Rio agreements, the UNFCCC⁶⁷ not only failed effectively engage with gender⁶⁸ - it omitted to mention the issue. While this may on one level seem mystifying, given the UN's institutional commitment to addressing gender questions,⁶⁹ it may be attributable, at least in part, to the strongly scientific/technocratic and statist bent of the UNFCCC as originally adopted.⁷⁰ However, once the global climate change regime became operational, it rapidly became apparent that it was essential to the regime's prospects of success to actively involve stakeholder groups in the system. To this end, business and industry; environmental organisations; municipal/regional networks and local government; indigenous peoples; the research community and trade unions were all accorded formal special observer status (which accords legitimacy and invokes a range of participation rights) in the UNFCCC regime. For a long time women were not treated in the same way, only achieving this level of recognition in 2010.⁷¹ The failure to engage with women appears to be particularly marked when contrasted with wide outreach to other stakeholder groups. Furthermore, as it is

⁶⁷ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, online

<http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/convening.pdf> accessed 15 May 2015.

⁶⁸ See Minu Hemmati and Ulrike Rohr, 'Engendering the climate-change negotiations: experiences, challenges, and steps forward' (2009) *Gender and Development* 17.1 March 2009 19, 22.

⁶⁹ See Hilkka Pietila, 'The Unfinished Story of Women and the United Nations' Development Dossier, United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, New York and Geneva (2007) online <<http://www.un-ngls.org/orf/pdf/UnfinishedStory.pdf>> accessed 18 May 2015.

⁷⁰ Morrow (2012) n3 at 29.

⁷¹ Hemmati and Rohr n68 at 28.

well-known that women also tend to be under-represented in other stakeholder groups, particularly in leadership roles,⁷² it could not be argued that their interests were adequately covered through engagement with the other constituencies. The UNFCCC's long failure to grasp the importance of gender to its activities is also notable in continuing after awareness of the connections between gender and climate change had been established elsewhere in the UN (see above).

The UNFCCC regime's reluctance to engage with women as a stakeholder group acted not only to the detriment to the cause of gender equality but also served as an impediment (admittedly only one amongst many) to ~~its own the~~ effectiveness of the regime-, flying in the face of wide-ranging scientific and social science⁷³ research revealing the salience of gender to climate change. Whilst the initial focus in treating climate change as a gendered issue emerged as a preoccupation with women's vulnerability (certainly a valid perspective in its own right); latterly increasing credence has been given to women's agency⁷⁴ which, if harnessed, has the

⁷² See Delia Dillagrasa, 'Kyoto Protocol negotiations: reflections on the role of women' (2002) *Gender and Development* 10(2) 40.

⁷³ For a wide-ranging overview of work in this area see Georgina Aboud, 'Gender and Climate Change Supporting Resources Collection' Bridge development-gender (2011) online <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/vfile/upload/4/document/1111/Climate_changeSRC1.pdf> accessed 18 May 20.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Fatma Denton, 'Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation: Why Does Gender Matter?' (2002) *Gender and Development* 10.2 Climate Change 10; and CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC 'The Rio Conventions: Action on Gender' (2012) online

potential to significantly augment responses to climate change. Nonetheless, it took years for gender issues to gain traction in the UNFCCC regime and it remains to be seen how deep the UNFCCC's relatively callow engagement is/will become.

(sh) Constructing the case for a gender constituency

The cumulative (and arguably ongoing) inability of states to achieve meaningful progress through the UNFCCC regime on tackling climate change⁷⁵ has, in the first instance, prompted a degree of frustration bordering on rage in global civil society; at the same time the relative vacuum in leadership has encouraged non-governmental activism on an enormous scale and of vigorous creativity. For women, lack of progress was made manifest not only in the substance of the regime, but also in terms of gender issues more particularly. While it may be true to say that: '... the presence of women does not necessarily imply a gender-sensitive politics of resistance,'⁷⁶ it seems to be the case that their absence may prompt this to develop given the dearth of other options. This appears to have been the case in the context of the UNFCCC

<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/roi_20_gender_brochure.pdf> accessed 11 June 2015 at 10-11.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Hayley Stephenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism: the limits of state-based representation in global climate governance' (2014) *Review of International Studies* 40.1 177. While the Paris Agreement online <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09.pdf>, accessed 26 January 2016, represents something of a revival in the prospects of global climate change governance the ultimate adequacy of ~~both~~ its scope and ambition remain open to question.

⁷⁶ Marchand n39 at 146.

regime, where the paucity of women representatives in state delegations⁷⁷ and in the UNFCCC's institutional constituent bodies⁷⁸ and the long absence of a formally recognised gender constituency arguably ensured that just such a politics of resistance was the only viable way forward.⁷⁹ Here we will focus specifically on the role of women's transnational nongovernmental organisations (TNGOs) in using transversal approaches to construct the case for formal recognition of the gender constituency as one of the new 'global diplomacies' spawned by woefully inadequate progress of the climate change regime.⁸⁰

The role of women's TNGO activity in the global climate change regime has seen an intimate blending of resistance, posing on the one hand, a profound challenge to its authority (moral, legal and scientific) as a gender blind system; but on the other, aspiring to its re-orientation

⁷⁷ See Hemmati and Rohr n68 which identified women as always comprising less than 30% of government representatives and always less than 20% of the heads of delegations (in 2007 they represented barely over 10% of this group), at 27.

⁷⁸ See, FCCC/CP/2103/4 COP19 Warsaw item 15 of the provisional agenda: Gender and Climate Change Report on Gender Composition online <<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/cop19/eng/04.pdf>> accessed 18 May 2015 which identifies the ratio of men to women in climate range regime bodies as normally being in the region of 3:1; the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), 'Women's Participation in UN Climate Negotiations: 2008-2012' online <<http://www.wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/WomenUNFCCCParticipation2008-2012.pdf>> (2012) accessed 18 May 2015, also pointed to considerable differentiation between different geographical regions in this regard with women's representation from western and eastern Europe total about 42% but Africa and Asia Pacific only 21%.

⁷⁹ Discussed in greater detail in Morrow (2013) n22.

⁸⁰ See Stephenson n75 at 179.

and ultimate reclamation through achieving the mainstreaming of gender issues.⁸¹ This began with sporadic expressions of support for formalising women's participation in various parts of the global machinery of climate change governance, most notably: in civil society-run associated side events;⁸² and in the emergence of a women's caucus (subject-focussed daily meetings of NGOs and a variety of other actors) running alongside the formal summit processes.

The first systemic regime breakthrough on gender came at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) 13 (Bali, 2007). Here, the Indonesian Government, as the COP hosts, explicitly sought to pursue gender mainstreaming in the summit process and while this ultimately failed to deliver on its promise,⁸³ the development was of considerable symbolic significance. For present purposes however it was the establishment and maturation of the TNGO network, Gendercc (a platform for worldwide information and knowledge exchange for experts/activists specialising in gender and climate change) that was to prove most significant in the longer term. Gendercc's emergence was rooted in the wake of COP9 (Milan, 2003), progressing the agreement reached by women's groups there on the need to foster greater networking and cooperation to bring gender to the fore in the UNFCCC regime and setting up a web presence to promote these ends. It obtained wide support from TNGOs and others in fairly short order and this came to fruition when Gendercc emerged to prominence at the (gender-friendly) COP

⁸¹ This pattern of contestation on the one hand and seeking to improve legitimacy on the other is in many ways typical of TNGO engagement with transnational regimes, see, for example, Guttermann n55 at 391-2.

⁸² Morrow (2013) n22.

⁸³ See Hemmati and Rohr n68 at 25. Note that the authors were two of the founders of Gendercc.

in Bali.⁸⁴ Gendercc's goal in the first instance was to coordinate women's activities vis-à-vis the global climate change regime. From the outset it was active on an impressive number of fronts simultaneously: publishing position papers on women's rights and gender equality; actively participating in various capacities in COP side events involving NGOs and states; coalition building within and beyond gender groupings by participating in the women's caucus' drive to develop a working relationship with the new climate justice caucus; working on climate change with trades unions as part of a strategy of 'multi-track advocacy';⁸⁵ providing press briefings; and conducting coordinated lobbying with the women's caucus. These activities combined to ensure that, not only was an unprecedented degree of attention garnered for women's/gender issues at the COP, but also that Gendercc emerged alongside the women's caucus as a main point of contact with the UNFCCC Secretariat.

Across global civil society, information and communications technology (ICT) has of late become an important (if imperfect) platform for improving campaign visibility and opening up the possibilities of more inclusive and meaningful forms of interaction⁸⁶ and of forging stronger alliances. The fledgling gender constituency certainly availed itself the opportunities provided by ICT from its genesis, employing them to considerable effect by making copious use of electronic communications and using its website as a means of brokering a wide spectrum of inputs and information ~~and inputs~~.

⁸⁴ Gendercc website, online <<http://www.gendercc.net/about.html>> accessed 16 June 2015.

⁸⁵ See Hemmati and Rohr n68 at 25.

⁸⁶ Marchand n39 at 147.

(ssh) Using transversalism to build the case for the gender constituency

Transversal methodology was employed by the putative gender constituency in a number of ways, not least in discussions in the women's caucus and also in the processes employed to develop the draft Charter of the Women's and Gender Caucus as part of its case for recognition within the UNFCCC.⁸⁷ Composing the charter also served as a tool for building the constituency itself. The initial draft was the product of a working group set up by the women's caucus after COP14 (Poznan, 2008) comprising: Gendercc; Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF); ENERGIA (International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy); LIFE e.V.; and the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) and was arrived at through face-to-face and virtual meetings. The draft was then electronically promulgated for comment and promoted as a tool to stimulate uptake of constituency membership.⁸⁸ The principles encapsulated in Article 2 of the draft charter endorsed a number of the shared features of ecofeminism and transversalism, notably: participatory governance (which invokes dialogue); respect for divergent positions; and broad, equitable, representative, inclusive, and enabling procedures (in particular utilising electronic communications). The draft charter's objectives, laid out in Article 3, also featured a number of elements common to ecofeminism and transversalism, including: making women's voices and experiences heard; feeding women's views into ongoing discourse; and co-operating with the women's and gender caucuses^{es} and other constituencies and caucuses. The core content of the principles and

⁸⁷ Draft Charter: Principles and Criteria for Participation in a Women's and Gender Constituency under the UNFCCC online <<http://www.wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/gender-cc-draft-charter.pdf>> (accessed 12 June 2015)

⁸⁸ Ibid.

objectives originating in the draft Charter continue to feature prominently on the gender constituency's website.⁸⁹

The bottom-up pressure exerted by women's TNGOs was eventually met with a top down institutional appreciation that one strategy for attempting to breathe life into the climate change regime would involve filling '... knowledge and best practice gaps in participatory ways that capture men's, women's and young people's ideas and knowledge'.⁹⁰ Central to this endeavour would be institutional recognition of the need to '... promote gender responsive international climate negotiations by facilitating multi-stakeholder processes that are inclusive in a horizontal and vertical sense, promoting the inclusion of marginalised voices and [make] gender a core issue as opposed to a 'side event'.'⁹¹

The need for acceptance and institutionalisation of the need to broaden participation in the global climate change regime, of which gender provides a significant example, has broader conceptual roots in the crisis of international environmental governance. It may be regarded as adopting a Foucaultian approach, in the instant case casting TNGO participation in transnational regimes as a legitimate aspect of post-modern governmentality.⁹² This

⁸⁹ Women and Gender Constituency website online <<http://womensgenderclimate.org/about-us/>> accessed 12 June 2015.

⁹⁰ Otzelberger n10, writing in a report that was part of a project of gender and climate change sponsored by the UK's Department for International Development, at xi.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Michel Foucault, 'On Governmentality' 6 *Ideology and Consciousness* (1979) as discussed in Louise Amoore and Paul Langley 'Ambiguities of a global civil society' (2004) *Review of International Studies* 30 89 100-1.

perspective recognises the dilution of state supremacy in modern international law and the dispersal of power more broadly across a multiplicity of actors; though this in turn raises highly contestable issues, not least being the legitimacy of non-state actors participating in international governance.⁹³ It is however arguable that, as has been the case with the gender constituency, transversal dialogue can play an important role in providing a viable basis for legitimacy claims for such participants. As alluded to above, elected status, the shorthand for legitimacy in most modern politics, is not a pre-condition for participation in transversal dialogue itself and indeed claims to 'representativeness' are not germane; having a standpoint that can be fed into the process suffices for inclusion. This fits with both feminist citizenship approaches discussed above⁹⁴ and governmentality which similarly '... has the effect of repoliticising private individual ambitions, perceptions and experiences as these are brought into networks of power.'⁹⁵ In the current context it may even be possible to argue that this involves an emerging form of participatory (rather than representative) democracy made possible by and in the context of instantaneous global modern mass communication. Less radically, participants in transversal dialogue can invoke various alternative claims of legitimacy for their participation and the positions arrived at (discussed above) which, when fed into transnational governance processes, can arguably supplement the legitimacy of the latter.

As a result of the UNFCCC regime's eventual 'Damascene conversion', the women's and gender constituency (WGC) was accorded provisional recognition by the secretariat in 2009 and this

⁹³ This goes beyond the scope of this chapter but see, for example, Amoore and Langley *ibid*.

⁹⁴ As discussed by MacGregor n21 in terms of redrawing the public-private divide.

⁹⁵ Amoore and Langley, n92 at 101.

was formally approved in 2010, enabling it to actively participate in COP17 (Durban, 2011).⁹⁶ This recognition, which should arguably have been accorded as a matter of course, was hard-won and ultimately based on strongly evidenced claims to be able to make an ongoing and significant contribution to the climate change regime. The WGC now comprises a broad range of members, encompassing fifteen women's and environment networks and NGOs, and encapsulating a whole range of women's interests from the international through regional, national and subnational to grassroots levels, spanning six continents and sixty countries. The WGC aspires to expand this coverage.⁹⁷ The approach that the WGC espouses to carrying out its role as the platform for women's engagement with the UNFCCC continues to reflect ecofeminist and transversal approaches, its goals including: formalizing and unifying women's voices; honing and promoting shared positions; and seeking to unify a global movement committed to women's rights and gender equality.⁹⁸

Recognition of the importance of gender in principle, through according formal status to the WGC, is of course only one of the steps (albeit an important one) necessary to incorporate and ultimately mainstream gender in the UNFCCC regime. An appreciation of the need for and a commitment to delivering internal institutional change is also a prerequisite for effective coverage for gender concerns. An important additional driver for promoting engagement with gender within the UNFCCC regime was the review of the 1992 Rio conventions in the run-up to the Rio+20 conference in 2012. This saw, among other things, a reiteration of the express

⁹⁶ Gendercc, 'Women and Gender Constituency in the UN' online

<<http://www.gendercc.net/policy/constituency.html>> accessed 12 June 2015.

⁹⁷ Women and Gender Constituency website, n89.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

commitments to gender that were already contained in the Convention on Biodiversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and, in the case of the UNFCCC, the introduction of an express commitment to gender issues⁹⁹ and gender mainstreaming,¹⁰⁰ bringing it into line with its sister conventions. The impact of the new approach in the context of the UNFCCC could, at least initially, be described as formalistic,¹⁰¹ though significantly more is promised, for example by the important ‘political signal’¹⁰² provided by Decision 23/CP.18 on promoting gender balance etc.¹⁰³ adopted at COP18 (Doha, 2012). These initiatives notionally take the significance of gender to a new level in the regime but ongoing progress needs to be

⁹⁹ CBD et al. n74 at 10-11.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid at 15.

¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, content analysis of the UNFCCC’s own review of its activities in this area, for example, UNFCCC Secretariat, ‘CDM and Women’ 2012 online <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/cdm_and_women.pdf> accessed 18 May 2015, seems to suggest that gender, far from being mainstreamed, is being regarded as an add-on at best and an afterthought at worst.

¹⁰² UN Women/Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, ‘The Full View: Advancing the goal of gender balance multilateral and intergovernmental processes’ (2013) online <<http://www.mrfcj.org/pdf/2013-06-13-The-Full-View.pdf>> accessed 18 May 2015, at 2.

¹⁰³ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 18th Conference of the Parties (2012) Decision 23/CP.18, FCCC/CP/2012/8/add.3 ‘Promoting gender balance 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’ (2012) online <<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2012/cop18/eng/08a03.pdf>> accessed 18 May 2015. Note though that this was not the COP’s first commitment of that nature - they had undertaken to improve the participation of women in these contexts at COP7 Marrakesh (Decision 36/CP.7), though this had little impact.

kept under close and critical review in order to ensure that changes in form are matched in substance. ~~The Paris Agreement is not encouraging in this regard, making scant and comparatively peripheral reference to women and gender issues.~~¹⁰⁴

(h) Concluding Thoughts: Ecofeminist engagement with the global climate change regime – inspiration for more profound change?

Women's engagement with the global climate change regime is still very much work in progress but while it would seem inappropriate to end this chapter in an overly conclusive fashion, it is nonetheless timely to reflect on progress to date in order to capture lessons to be learned and to consider what insights can be drawn as to how we might better engage with climate change. These points can also shed light on the broader societal crisis (of which climate change is merely the most prominent manifestation) posed by the imperative need to develop a sustainable relationship between humanity and the environment.~~7~~

It is arguable that ecofeminist and transversal methodologies merit further examination in terms of the strong conceptual advantages that they offer in dealing with complex societal problems. Chief among these is the rejection of the temptation of oversimplification, instead firmly grasping the importance of both complexity and situated/lived experience as integral elements in developing our understanding of and ultimately responses to such issues. It is only in providing spaces in which articulating, owning, and acting upon a deeper understanding of the centrality of the many and various connectivities to our human and earth communities (of

¹⁰⁴ See n75. ~~Women as a group are mentioned only once in the Paris Agreement, in the preamble; gender is mentioned three times — once in conjunction with women in the preamble; in Article 7.5 (on adaptation); and Article 11.2 (on capacity building).~~

which gender provides an important cross-cutting example) is realised that we can develop a truly sustainable human/earth dynamic – and this is now indubitably a matter of the utmost urgency.

The inclusivity of ecofeminism and transversalism also offer a practical example of how this can be progressed – and the ongoing impact that this will have on the UNFCCC regime (and indeed on other global environmental governance regimes) will offer an opportunity to examine whether or not such innovative approaches can be effectively synthesised into existing statist regimes.

Furthermore, the drive of ecofeminist approaches in employing transversal methodologies to integrate activism with theoretical frameworks invites reflection on possibilities offered to reframe the orientation of global governance processes, promoting equality, respect for difference and participatory engagement – issues that of course arise and merit examination in other contexts. Relatedly, ecofeminist oriented transversal approaches to the climate change regime prompt reflection on crafting innovative, inclusive, and workable global engagement processes as a means to harness all of the experience and imagination that is available to us as humans to address the very real existential predicament of the Anthropocene. That we find viable ways give voice to the complexity of human identity and situatedness and provide space for the full diversity of humanity to speak and be heard in our attempts to engage with the pan-dimensional environmental threat that we face is the best, if much too long delayed, place to start.

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