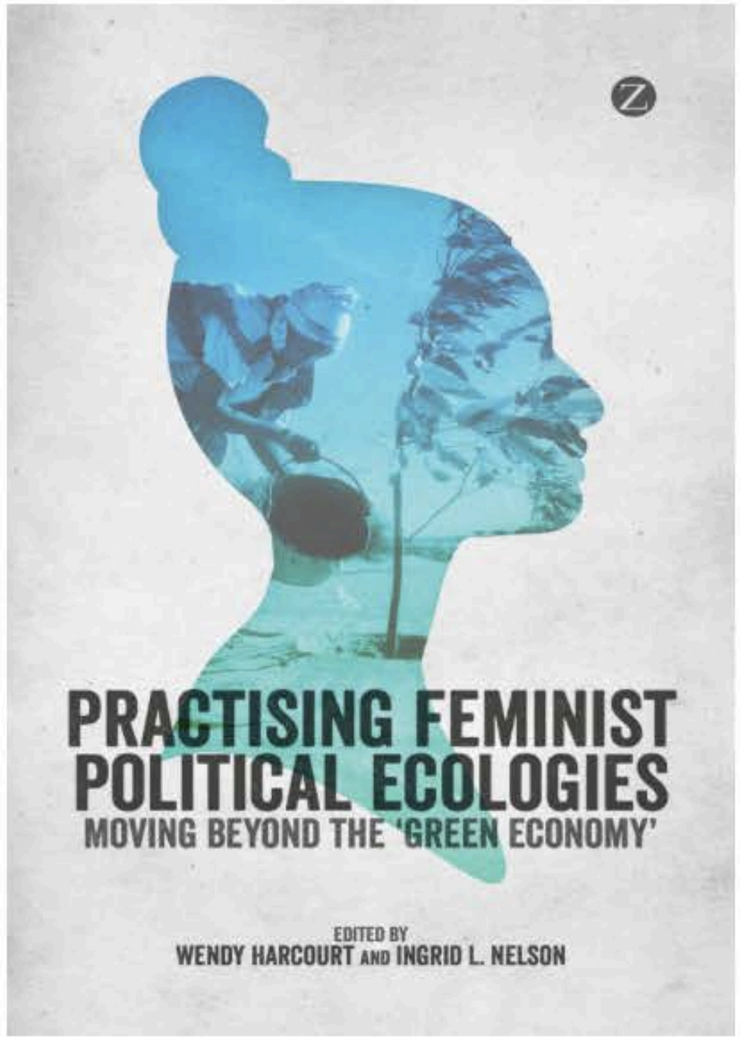

About the editors

Wendy Harcourt is associate professor at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University. She was editor-in-chief of the journal *Development* from 1995 to 2012 and during that period published five books, including *Women and Politics of Place* with Arturo Escobar (Kumarian Press, 2005). Her monograph *Body Politics in Development: Critical Debates in Gender and Development* (Zed Books, 2009) received the 2010 Feminist and Women's Studies Association's Prize. She is currently completing three books on transnational feminism, embodiment and civic change, and gender and development, and is editor of the book series Gender, Development and Social Change.

Ingrid L. Nelson is assistant professor in the Department of Geography and the Environmental

Critical Debates in Gender and Development (Zed Books, 2009) received the 2010 Feminist and Women's Studies Association's Prize. She is currently completing three books on transnational feminism, embodiment and civic change, and gender and development, and is editor of the book series Gender, Development and Social Change.

Ingrid L. Nelson is assistant professor in the Department of Geography and the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Vermont. She completed her PhD in geography and a graduate certificate in women's and gender studies from the University of Oregon. Her research in Mozambique examines masculinities, class and gender dynamics in forest conservation; afforestation 'land grabs'; and illegal timber trade contexts. She is currently preparing a monograph focused on the practices and rumours that make forest landscapes in Mozambique. Beyond academia, she contributed to the Women's Major Group submission for the 'zero draft' document, leading up to Rio+20.

PRACTISING FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGIES

MOVING BEYOND THE 'GREEN ECONOMY'

edited by Wendy Harcourt and Ingrid L. Nelson

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5 | HEGEMONIC WATERS AND RETHINKING NATURES OTHERWISE

Leila M. Harris

Introduction: lived ecologies and enlivened feminist political ecologies

This image was taken while I was conducting fieldwork in rural areas in south-eastern Turkey in 2001. In some ways, the image is unremarkable. Women all over the world access water for domestic needs – it is common to see images of women carrying water on their heads or shoulders, at times for long distances. However, this image is noteworthy in that it shows the massive infrastructure and technology made available for irrigation in this region (the Harran plain of the south-eastern Anatolia region), while underlining that access to water for other daily needs

5.1 Towards a lived feminist political ecology approach: a woman in south-eastern Turkey accesses water from an irrigation *canalet* for home use' (photograph by the author)

According to planners and engineers who have worked to build this infrastructure and are familiar with the water quality in the *canalets* (small canals), the water is not safe to drink, and is not meant for drinking or other domestic uses. The fact that the woman pictured is nonetheless using this water for domestic needs highlights tensions between state-led developmental priorities and everyday lived realities. In this case, water for productive purposes is a clear priority. While planners understand that households require water for washing, drinking and spiritual uses, engineers and other planners assume that people will find other water for those purposes, and that people would not attempt to use the unsafe *canalet* water.[1] While this example is potentially illustrative of several broad concerns of interest for environment and development, here I am most interested in what the

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According to planners and engineers who have worked to build this infrastructure and are familiar with the water quality in the *canalets* (small canals), the water is not safe to drink, and is not meant for drinking or other domestic uses. The fact that the woman pictured is nonetheless using this water for domestic needs highlights tensions between state-led developmental priorities and everyday lived realities. In this case, water for productive purposes is a clear priority. While planners understand that households require water for washing, drinking and spiritual uses, engineers and other planners assume that people will find other water for those purposes, and that people would not attempt to use the unsafe *canalet* water.[1] While this example is potentially illustrative of several broad concerns of interest for environment and development, here I am most interested in what the situation highlights regarding key debates and ways forward in feminist political ecology (FPE). In particular, I would like to consider the potential of an FPE approach that considers the *everyday, embodied and emotional* relations to resources and 'natures'. Viewing this situation from such a perspective – foregrounding the 3 'E's – highlights the different needs, values and potential uses of water as well as the daily practices that might result in someone accessing unsafe water for domestic uses. At a more general level, feminist political ecology perspectives also bring into view the tensions and impossibilities involved with those approaches to water governance that have become 'hegemonic' at present (Sneddon 2013) – particularly those that privilege productive, market-oriented water needs and uses (often referred to as 'neoliberal'). In this chapter, I explore some of these tensions and consider how we might rethink our relations to complex natures 'otherwise' by building on feminist, decolonial/post-colonial and allied approaches (see discussions in Walsh and others, this

volume).

The approach I offer here might be understood as an extended 'livelihoods' or 'lived feminist political ecology' approach, attentive to everyday needs, embodied interactions and labours as well as emotional and affective relations with the environments and natures where we live. As such, I do not wish to build on livelihood approaches that are construed narrowly as focused on economic needs and income as paramount. Instead, I work deliberately to move away from a perspective that might privilege production (e.g. irrigation uses of water), and instead highlight what a focus on everyday interactions and embodiments enables for thinking about our relations and investments with water and natures – broadly understood. I revisit and unpack some of these insights and tensions foregrounded by a lived or extended FPE approach centred on the 3 Es (everyday, embodied, emotions) in the pages that follow. My target is to consider what this offers to political ecology or nature studies more generally, as well as how such an approach might be meaningful given the context of current hegemonies related to the marketization of water in particular. I begin with a discussion of hegemony of contemporary approaches to water, highlighting economistic approaches to nature as central to neoliberal, marketized and indeed many livelihood approaches. I then provide an overview of key concepts and insights from feminist, decolonial and post-colonial thought that serve to enliven what a lived feminist political ecological approach might look like. To this end, I offer examples from the work of colleagues and from my own work to bring particular attention to the emotional, affective, embodied and relational aspects of socio-natures – offering these as key ways forward for feminist political ecology, nature-cultures and human-nature studies more broadly.

Neoliberalization of nature, and working towards counter-hegemonies

To be able to counter hegemonic trends, one has to

be able to imagine and articulate alternatives. The very concept of hegemony, following Gramsci (1971/1997), includes the sense that certain ideas or constructs become so normative, so taken for granted, that there is general acceptance – even among those who one might expect to be opposed (for livelihood, identity or other reasons). In lay terms, an idea or practice is 'hegemonic' when it is so normalized that there does not appear to be any alternative – *it is simply the way it is*. As commentators have noted, there is a key imperative to be able to imagine and articulate alternatives in order to work outside or beyond hegemonic thinking and practice (Ferguson 2010). Given the very definition of hegemony in making it seem as if there are no alternatives, this can be a particularly difficult enterprise.

The work of Chris Sneddon is instructive as a starting point for considering current hegemonies in the water realm – including notions of water scarcity, as well as common use of market instruments and logics. As Sneddon (2013) explores, over the past several decades we have seen a clear shift and entrenchment to certain market-based practices. These include full cost recovery for services, a privileging of 'efficiency' in policy decisions, as well as privatization of water services (see Harris 2013a for an overview specific to water marketization, and Bakker 2010 for a discussion of privatization in particular). Apart from recognizing these practices as increasingly common, a focus on hegemony also invites attention to how and why it is that these ideas and practices have become accepted, taken for granted and naturalized to the extent that even those whose interests might not be served by those approaches tend to accept and even validate those practices. While a comprehensive explanation is likely not possible, it is clear that hegemonies in the water realm are often achieved with the help of institutions such as the World Water Council, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (see work by Goldman 2007, 2005, as key examples, also discussed in Harris 2013b).

My contribution here picks up on other recent work that queries these neoliberal and market-based policies from a feminist perspective (Harris 2009). Feminism on the whole, even with many variants and its own tensions, is largely a project about exposing and questioning particular hegemonies, whether those associated with masculinism, sexism, patriarchy or increasingly other intersectional forms of difference and inequality (e.g. race, class and sexuality). As suggested by Ahlers and Zwarteveen (2009), feminist perspectives are particularly meaningful in deciphering things that otherwise might remain hidden within mainstream neoliberal policies that make invisible and naturalize particular modes of allocation of key resources (such as water). Taking up this insight, I suggest that feminist political ecology is a fruitful starting point for prying open possibilities for challenging particular hegemonies of thought and practice in the environmental governance realm. My goal here is precisely to interrogate what cracks, fissures and new possibilities arise from querying these policies and practices from a feminist and decolonial/post-colonial perspective. To do so, it is imperative to also draw on an extended and revised understanding of feminism and FPE that takes intersectionality seriously, including the politics of North–South and anti-racism, as well as decoloniality (Mollett and Faria 2012; Harris 2008; Nightingale 2011). Specific questions I consider include: how might FPE learn from other feminist, decolonial and post-colonial perspectives to illuminate features and aspects of current environmental policies and practices that could be 'otherwise'? Apart from enabling a perspective that takes inequality and difference seriously, even considers them paramount, what else might be exposed by such a perspective? More conceptually, how might we go about the difficult work of beginning to expose the hegemonic logics and foreclosures of specific environmental and nature–society practices?

By referring to marketized practices as 'hegemonic' and to some extent naturalized or 'accepted', I do not

at all suggest that these practices have not been subject to deep contestation. Clearly, these issues have been central concerns for water justice movements, and for broader struggles of equity, food and water security, or indigenous rights (key examples include resistance in Bolivia – Bustamante 2004 – and throughout Latin America – Harris and Roa 2013). Nonetheless, it is clear that in some respects these practices have been generally accepted and promoted in many policy realms – again, the above citations related to water governance hegemonies and roles of international financial institutions (IFIs) offer clear evidence of this. As one example, consider the 1997 report published by the World Bank group, 'Getting the private sector involved in water – what to do in the poorest of countries'. Mentioning a litany of problems in these contexts, from lack of government credibility, to high leakage rates, underpriced water and unsuccessful subsidy schemes, the report goes on to discuss how to make private sector involvement more attractive in impoverished contexts – the contexts that the report suggests are 'most in need' of that involvement. Offering a stepwise approach, the report suggests measures to be taken to reduce costs and increase the attractiveness of contracting in those countries (the goal of the report and the steps to be taken is clearly to entice private involvement – extending and improving service are implied and assumed benefits of the privatization approach). Similar endorsements are easy to find elsewhere. For instance, following on from the Johannesburg summit in 2002, the final report stated succinctly: 'water privatization is the best policy to tackle the global South's poverty and water delivery problems' (cited in Goldman 2007: 787). With such a policy focus, some have estimated that private water delivery in the global South could rise quickly, from an estimated 400 million consumers in 2000 to as many as 1.2 billion in 2015 (ibid.: 786).

Turning to the imperative to think through and articulate alternatives in such moments, Ferguson (2010) suggests that there is considerable attention in

the literature on what is wrong with 'neoliberal' approaches (i.e. there is sufficient critique and suggestion about what progressive and equity-oriented scholars and practitioners do not like about these policies). Yet, he argues, what we need is to offer more on what we would like to see in their place – what are the alternatives that we should, or must, consider? This interest in alternatives has been a central concern in recent debates related to post-neoliberalism – much of this discussion building on indigenous politics and countermovements to offer challenges to the normative bases of many mainstream developmentalist or market-oriented approaches. As just several examples, consider work on alternative and community-based economies (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013), the recent decolonial movements across Latin America (see Walsh, this volume), or the constitutional reforms that have swept the region and transformed regulatory and policy bases for water management (e.g. in Bolivia, Ecuador or Uruguay – Harris and Roa 2013). As Goodale and Postero (2013) lay out with respect to their investigation of the politics of neoliberalism in contemporary Latin America, a focus on everyday lives of people and institutions serves as a useful lever to question and challenge broader meanings and operations of neoliberalism. Here, we can see clear points of departure for the ongoing and unfinished work of exposing the possibilities that counter, and operate outside of or beyond, 'neoliberal' forms. The next section explores FPE as a fulcrum in such efforts.

FPE as a critical intellectual-political site to think through 'alternatives'

As noted briefly above, indigenous politics and decolonializing movements have already proved to be central to political and conceptual movements aimed at building alternatives to neoliberalism (or 'post-neoliberalism'; e.g. Escobar 2010; Yates and Bakker 2014; Goodale and Postero 2013; De Frietas et al. forthcoming). Feminist thought and politics have frequently been allied with these movements (for

instance, as discussed in Cusicanqui and Geidel 2010 for the case of Bolivia).

Yet there is also a clear need to build on these intersections, and to think through a politics of alliance that also considers ways that feminist politics and praxis are in some respects very central to these projects, particularly with regard to theorizing and living 'otherwise' (see Wichterich, Chapter 2, this volume). As suggested by Escobar, the project of thinking otherwise from a Latin American modernity/coloniality perspective faces several key tensions and open-ended questions. In particular, he suggests that there are at least three areas of focus that have remained largely outside of this intellectual and political project – requiring more careful engagement and focus. He writes, 'The first, and perhaps most pressing, is *gender*; the second *nature and the environment*; the third the *need to construct new economic imaginaries capable of supporting concrete struggles against neo-liberalism and designs for alternative economies*' (2003: 12, emphasis added).

These are precisely the tasks taken up by several of the contributions in this volume, including the present chapter. Beyond this groundwork laid by Latin American thinkers and political movements, we can also consider the work of Gibson-Graham, Vandana Shiva and other feminists and critical thinkers as offering ways forward to think beyond hegemonic economic understandings (e.g. such as capital-C Capitalism – Gibson-Graham 1996 – or rethinking the commons – Shiva 2002), as well as the larger body of work that challenges neoliberal policies and understandings through a focus on consequences for equity, for women or for socio-ecological sustainability (e.g. Eschle 2004; Peterson 2003; Duggan 2003; Lind 2002; Rankin 2001; Ahlers and Zwarteveen 2009).

Even with the clear resonances between decolonizing and post-neoliberal projects, these themes have not yet been taken up adequately as part of the feminist political ecological project and toolkit. It seems that a key task is to think through how these intellectual and political resources might be mobilized

more effectively, and collaboratively. In particular, in concert with the approach of this volume on the whole, how might we work to theorize and articulate alternatives to neoliberalism through enhanced attention to embodied, affective and everyday lived dimensions of our relations to nature (or what I refer to somewhat differently here as the 3 Es: everyday, embodied and emotional)? I do not offer an overview of what FPE has done effectively, since this is covered in the introduction to this volume and elsewhere (Mollett and Faria 2012; Hawkins and Ojeda 2011; Resurreccion and Elmhirst 2008). Instead, I turn to an exploration of FPE and thinking 'otherwise', with particular focus on the challenge of exposing fissures and articulating alternatives to neoliberalized environmental governance. I suggest that there are at least four things a 3E-expanded FPE approach helps to lay bare, providing starting points to deepen our engagement with these questions.

Specifically, FPE potentially challenges assumptions about efficiency/productivity and instead accents women's and others' experiences, livelihoods, basic needs and gender-sensitive approaches. As such, FPE propels an alternative sensibility of what matters, shifting away from market-based and capitalist logics of value that are often problematic from gender or equity perspectives.

FPE also has the potential to challenge the privileging of certain scales of analysis and interactions. In particular, FPE helps to offer a counterweight to scales and interactions often central to hegemonies of neoliberal water governance. Here we might highlight the importance of the everyday, embodied and local scales of interaction (with a focus on community, household and scales of the body), as needed correctives to governance scales and priorities that might focus on the logics of statist or global/transnational interests (e.g. trade, or state power). As well, as argued by Nightingale (this volume), FPE can help to offer nuanced approaches to scale and place that serve to unpack and interrogate assumptions about the 'local' or how the 'local' scale

may be enrolled in different technological or statist projects.

With analytical and political focus on identity, difference and inequality, FPE also offers a key lens through which to expose the ways that certain populations are not well served by hegemonies of neoliberal environmental governance; indeed, these logics and approaches may actively maintain power hierarchies and associated processes of marginalization. Again, evidence of such retrenched marginalization has served as a key basis for resistance movements in multiple contexts. Examples are Latin American movements in relation to water, or seed resistance and biopiracy movements in India (Shiva 1999). Through attention to inequality and difference (in many ways the bread and butter of political ecology in general, and FPE in particular), work along these lines is important to expose the fissures, gaps and inequities that are propelled through neoliberal environmental governance.

Finally, with more recent intellectual and political emphasis on affect, emotion and embodied experience, extended FPE approaches also have the potential to bring to the fore artistic and emotional responses to various 'crises' of environmental governance. While the potential in this regard is vast and relatively little explored, I offer several examples as key starting points, including the example of creative critical empathy to 'rethink rivers' (building on the work of author and artist Merlinda Bobis and the emphasis of a recent network focused on creative critical empathy housed in the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice at the University of British Columbia). I examine each of these dimensions, with examples, in the sections that follow.

Efficiency, productivity and misguided logics of resource provision and access Among the important conceptual issues related to hegemonic environmental governance, it is often the case that growth, efficiency and payment for services are considered paramount goals that inform how governance proceeds. For

instance, the move to privatize water provision is often based on the idea that doing so will be more efficient. In particular, bringing market logics to service provision for water or other basic services, private companies are also thought to be more adept at billing customers and collecting payment (with the aim of reducing non-revenue water and increasing the financial resources available to the utility, for instance). In terms of broader efficiency and conservation goals as well, the idea is that rather than wasting water for thirsty crops in dry regions, the 'market' will redirect scarce water to more efficient uses, therefore rectifying problems of misallocation and waste. For instance, a water-intense crop such as cotton will be grown only if it makes market sense, and if, on balance, the payments required for water inputs will reap profits given the price paid for cotton on regional or global markets. As such, the market will adjust what is grown where in ways that are more efficient, more in line with the comparative advantage of a particular locale, and in step with variable biophysical conditions (e.g. this would likely result in water-intensive crops not being grown in arid regions, unless the price is high enough to compel this to occur).

As Zwarteveen (1998), Peterson (2003, 2005) and others have cautioned, however, logics of efficiency and productivity risk sidelining non-productive uses, such as those associated with reproductive economies and household needs. A feminist perspective helps to expose this disconnect and the biases therein. In particular, from a feminist perspective, there is a concern that cash crops or other 'productive' uses of water might take precedence over household needs (or indeed 'basic' needs of drinking, washing, bathing, and so forth). Further, the general assumption of 'efficiency' and the idea that resources should be allocated based on the highest market value accentuates the fundamental difficulty of capturing non-market values of water, whether these be health benefits, poverty reduction, or links to cultural or spiritual values. In line with Zwarteveen's (1998)

caution that the focus on allocating water to its highest market value may undermine benefits of water derived by women, or lessen prioritization of other uses (e.g. domestic, spiritual), recall the introductory vignette from my own work in south-eastern Turkey. As that example highlights, some communities had access to water for irrigation uses (largely for growing cotton as a primary cash crop), but did not necessarily have sufficient water for bathing, washing laundry and dishes or other household uses (see Figure 5.1). As well, women in the region frequently complained that the irrigation schedule was determined by the cropping needs of cotton, but not of their household vegetable plots, which they used to meet household dietary needs (indeed, several women suggested that they would be able to maintain their garden plots a month longer into the autumn, but the plants would die as soon as water was no longer made available at the end of the cotton-growing season).

Considering these issues with a broadened focus on water policy and governance debates of the past several decades, it has been noted that even as the Dublin principles for water from 1992 emphasized economic value for water in a way that was also attentive to many social issues, for instance, with strong emphasis on participatory approaches and the recognition and inclusion of women as water users and managers (Ahlers 2002), the practice of the past two decades has been to increasingly reduce these principles in a narrow sense to market value (and further still, the notion of an economic value of water has often been bundled with imperatives to promote privatization schema – Harris 2013a). Here, we see the resonance of broader feminist debates related to the 'value' of reproductive labour and unpaid work, and how this is negotiated within a broader market sphere that assigns value only through considering elements of the market economy and waged labour (Waring 1988; Peterson 2005).

Linked to these concerns, yet another issue highlighted by Zwarteveen (1998) relates to the linked assumptions about rational choice. In brief, an

intersectional and feminist approach invites attention to the ways that different individuals make decisions based not only on market rationality, but also on sociocultural context, or labour practices, such as one's role as a caretaker, or broader senses of responsibility to community. Indeed, if we also consider the broader context and frequency of racialized and gendered violence, we might also more fundamentally question the biases inherent in assumptions of 'choice' – a questionable notion given sociocultural, institutional and colonial histories and practices that have often circumscribed options, particularly for certain populations (Razack 2000).

Here, the FPE critique of marketized environmental governance links with the broader interest of this volume in specific nature-cultures, and how complex cultural dynamics are often at play in the ways that we differentially experience, understand and negotiate 'natures'. As well, this critique also links directly to the fourth dimension detailed below – the potential for FPE to expose and even invite approaches to water governance based on embodied and affective dimensions, rather than approaches that foreground rationality, efficiency, productive uses and linked notions of economic value. In brief, these critiques and intellectual resources position FPE to more effectively articulate an approach to value and allocation of water (or other resources) in a way that is fundamentally 'otherwise' – posing a fundamental challenge to common 'hegemonies' in the water realm at present.

Shifting scales: renewed emphasis on the body, household or community and other counterweights

Yet another way that FPE offers an important leverage point to think through and articulate alternatives to current hegemonies is through focus on somewhat different scalar politics and negotiations. In particular, there is ample empirical evidence from the past several decades to suggest that given the reliance on market mechanisms, state or global scales may be implicitly privileged in governance schema. Consider, for instance, that ideas around 'productive uses' and

'comparative advantage' are very much part of the broader political economic tradition of trade theory from Ricardo onwards (Sheppard 2012; Sheppard and Leitner 2010). Here we can see a bias towards privileging 'national' scales for accounting of benefits of trade relations, without attention to the regional, community or even household scales that would allow us to understand how those benefits and costs may be distributed. Indeed, many of the resistance movements against privatization or corporatization of water have also been based on the idea that these policies favour transnational corporations at the expense of local livelihoods or cultural values related to water (Bakker 2013, 2010; Escobar 2010; Perreault 2005). Even the very fact that it is often the international financial institutions (e.g. the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund) which are pushing these policies forward, when even national governments may not be in favour (e.g. as in the case of Ghana's water privatization – Amenga-Etego and Grusky 2005; Yeboah 2006) is suggestive of the ways that neoliberal environmental governance may serve particular global economic interests at the expense of statist or national priorities, let alone community or household interests (this is especially so when we consider that Northern interests are so much a part of the make-up of those institutions, given voting rules and so forth – e.g. Harris 2013a, 2013b; Goldman 2007).

Countering the scalar politics and logics that arguably are 'built into' neoliberalized environmental governance (emphasis on state power, globalized trade or particular Northern interests) feminist work has long emphasized the value, indeed necessity, of foregrounding other scales of analysis and engagement: the body, the household or the community (Staeheli et al. 2004), though not ignoring connections to state or global scales (e.g. Aldama 2003). This is not to say that feminist approaches are solely focused on these scales, nor that other approaches are unable to highlight local and embodied scales of interactions (e.g. livelihood and political

ecology approaches often engage multi-scalar analysis). Nor is this to suggest a romanticization of community or the 'local' (Joseph 2002; Brosius et al. 2005). Nonetheless, feminists have long offered careful examination of the politics of scale, opening up ways to rethink the community, the household and the body – and to interrogate the complicated relations therein rather than holding those scales as unknowable or apolitical (Marston 1990; Agarwal 1988). As part of these broader discussions, these issues are also dealt with ably by Nightingale (this volume), to encourage greater nuance in understanding scales not only as 'levels' in a hierarchical sense, but also to think through the ways that knowledge is 'scaled', or to more clearly articulate the nuanced relationships between different invocations of scale (e.g. local knowledge is certainly not limited to specific locales, and technocratic knowledges do often engage understandings of the 'local').

By building on critical engagements with the politics of scale by authors such as Marston (2000) and Norman et al. (2013), we have several examples of ways that FPE might allow us to 'think otherwise' with respect to current assumptions and biases in environmental governance. As Marston states, much focus on capitalist production (and here we can consider neoliberalism as well) focuses on the role of the state, capital and labour as central interests. By paying attention to which scales are privileged in certain framings, we can see that other scales – the body, the household or of the community, which are often more central for social reproduction and livelihoods – bring other realities and possibilities to light. It is precisely in this way that FPE holds considerable potential to broaden the interests privileged in neoliberalized environmental governance, as well as to rethink those scales and relations that are so frequently marginalized in such relations. FPE (building on broader allied approaches) instead invites fuller consideration of lived and everyday scales of these negotiations and what

meanings people attach to them, as well as the ways that everyday modes of access of household dynamics might also shift with broad-scale economic changes, or even altered cropping patterns (see Carney 1993; Harris 2006; Rocheleau et al. 1996; Schroeder 1999; Loftus 2012, for examples of work along these lines). To give an example: earlier work in Turkey has shown the ways that even as justification of damming and diversion of the Tigris and Euphrates is often articulated on national scales, invocations of the household (indeed of gender relations) and the 'basin' are often pulled in strategically to justify those projects. However, at other times, the local implications of the project, or 'basin-wide' scale frames, are discounted as being inappropriate for decision-making regarding 'national' resources, such as water (Harris 2006, 2008; Harris and Alatout 2010).

As early work by Agarwal (1988) demonstrates, it is also key to consider these scales not in isolation, but as interdependent with other scales – e.g. how are women or households affected by state policies or how might changing scales of the local be articulated against changing notions of the global? Returning to Nightingale (this volume), we can also work to disentangle invocation of scales as a politics of place, and of knowledge, including considering how 'the local', the 'community' or the 'body' figure in interventions or associated knowledge production. The final point in the section that follows on emotion, affect and embodiment provides yet another way to think about changing politics of scale. Bringing everyday embodied experiences of changing natures into view offers a way to consider households, and experience of individuals, but also may open possibilities to think more carefully about the emotional and affective lives of nature–society interactions.

Focus on identity/difference/inequality Very much in line with the previous two sections, FPE also offers critical leverage and analytical engagement to open

up, and challenge, neoliberal environmental governance precisely by focusing on marginalized populations and experiences. These are precisely the populations and priorities that are so often left out of hegemonic governance policies and prescriptions. Feminist work has long foregrounded key operations of difference, inequality and power (e.g. Resurreccion and Elmhirst 2008; Truelove 2011). Over the last several decades, there has also been an increasing emphasis on highlighting intersectionality – not only thinking through gender difference, but also critical notions of race, class, caste, impoverishment, livelihoods and so forth (Harris 2008; Nightingale 2011; Mollett and Faria 2012).

The claim here is relatively straightforward. By highlighting the experiences of those populations most likely to be sidelined with economistic and market-based approaches we can most easily consider the cracks, fissures and gaps in those approaches. Indeed, resistance movements of the past several decades have gained considerable momentum by highlighting inequality and difference, and in particular the experience of the poor, or of indigenous and other historically marginalized populations. Documenting and building on these experiences has been especially critical in resisting ongoing neoliberalization, such as policies that have favoured mining or transnational interests at the expense of these populations (Walsh 2012). Building on the first point above – the suggestion that FPE reorients what matters and where our focus and priorities should be (for instance, perhaps away from efficiency, and more towards universal access) – here the point is rather that particular attention to marginalized populations and inequalities is crucial to be able to speak to the necessary failures, gaps and fissures of ongoing neoliberalization. It is only by highlighting the situation of the most vulnerable or impoverished populations that we can better understand the many important effects of neoliberal water governance (Kabeer 1994).

Just to provide several brief examples of where

attention to inequality and difference has been at the forefront of resistance to neoliberalized water governance, witness: resistance to Coca-Cola water privatization in India (Parmar 2008), rejection of the role of TNCs in Cochabamba's water supply (Bustamante 2004), or indigenous mobilizations against mining in the Peruvian Andes (Bury 2005; Budds 2013), among numerous other examples. There is reason to pause, however, to question why it is that even as women have often been very active in many of these resistance movements, there is nonetheless relatively limited evidence of a strong role of feminist movements and theorizing in some of these efforts – indeed, at times there has been a disconnect between feminist and indigenous or other movements (see Walsh, this volume; Rousseau 2011). This speaks again to the importance of a broadened FPE approach that engages seriously with politics or race, inequality and colonialism. As thinkers such as Walsh and Rousseau have highlighted (and as also raised by Escobar, as noted in the introduction to this chapter), there is a clear imperative to more clearly articulate the role of feminist analytics, and organizing, in such resistance. Shiva's work in India on seed saving and against biopiracy gives but one example of the ways that feminist movements and politics can, or perhaps even should, be foundational to forging alternatives to marketized environmental governance. As well, recall the critical work of Gibson-Graham (1996) in thinking through alternatives to capitalist engagements from a feminist perspective, or work by Walsh and others in thinking through the particular tensions and resonances in broader resistance efforts.

A key task is to provide other examples of how these movements potentially come together, as well as to promote further conversation and thinking along these lines. In setting this out the need for closer engagement with decolonial and post-colonial theory and politics as a key touch-point for an enlivened FPE, I am hopeful that this might serve as an invitation to further thinking and engagement in this vein (see similar arguments offered in Walsh and Rocheleau,

this volume, both of whom suggest the need for further rapprochement with decolonial and post-colonial politics and theorizing). The fact particularly that FPE (and political ecology more generally) has long had firm footing in the 'third world' and in a range of post-colonial contexts (broadly defined) makes this imperative even more apposite. However, as we tread this path there is an ongoing need for caution – to critically evaluate what feminist theoretical, empirical and political resources might offer these engagements, and where they might usefully remain separate.

Affect, emotion and embodied experience Finally, as a fourth point to highlight as a way forward, recent work in FPE and across the humanities and social sciences more generally has highlighted issues of emotion, affect and embodied experience. This is a novel and promising avenue for further work. To provide just a few examples, Sultana (2011), working on the arsenic crisis in Bangladesh, highlights the feelings of sadness or shame that women experience when they are unable to access safe water for family needs. Goldin et al. (2008), working in the context of participatory water governance in southern Africa, focus on the shame, sadness or pride that might be connected to one's participation in resource management. As well, Wutich and Ragsdale (2008) provide a quantitative analysis of water-related insecurity, demonstrating that communities in Bolivia (especially women) experience significant distress from social inequalities related to water access. These examples are particularly meaningful to show us that water and other resources are not only essential for livelihoods and bodily health, but in fact are important to broader dimensions of well-being and experience – including notions of exclusion and belonging. What these works highlight, building on the broader insights of FPE, is the importance of relative (in)access, or relative senses of knowledge and expertise, for one's sense of self or sense of belonging in community. For instance, even if someone has access to water for bodily needs and

basic household requirements, they may nonetheless attribute significant meaning to the fact that other communities or households enjoy easier or more consistent access to water, or more ready access to high-quality water. On this last point, work by Rodina (2013) in South Africa has shown the importance of relative differences in water and sanitation access in townships around Cape Town. In this example, even as shack dwellers technically have access to safe and affordable (indeed free) water for basic needs, the fact that they do not have in-home access to a private tap as their neighbours do has a significant impact on their sense of dignity, and of citizenship.

I find work along these lines to be particularly inspiring – giving importance to the multiple meanings and senses that access to water may have for people, and moving beyond notions of minimal access in ways that are defined by bodily requirements and detached from the actual meanings of access. Instead, FPE offers the potential to highlight a broader embodied and emotional-affective sense of well-being, enabling consideration of the diverse meanings and experiences of water. This understanding is central to my current work, and to that of several of students at the University of British Columbia, particularly a group of us working on water access and participatory governance in South Africa and Ghana (EDGES 2014). Our goal is, in brief, to understand water access and governance in terms of the meanings that people attach to it, not just viewing water in a reductive sense in terms of basic access and requirements. We do so with particular attention to narratives of access, as well as to deriving a better understanding of connections to broader senses of well-being and socio-political processes – including senses of belonging and citizenship (see Morinville 2012; Rodina 2013; Peloso 2014; EDGES 2014).

I have also been particularly inspired by other recent work that takes the role of emotions, affect and embodiment even farther. The work by author, playwright and performance artist Merlinda Bobis is particularly noteworthy. In her essay and novel *Fish-*

Hair Woman (2012) and in her one-person play and performance *River River*, Bobis illumines the multiple meanings and embodied experiences we have with rivers and the other aspects of 'nature' that surround us. These are not merely utilitarian relations with the resources we 'use'; rather, our relations with these more-than-human entities are complex and emotionally charged. In the example from her story and play, the relation of the fish-hair woman to the river that runs through her village is one of obligation, of violence, of longing and of loss. The river embodies pain, and this marks the very body of the female protagonist (in this case, her hair grows according to each death that occurred in her village during the civil war in the Philippines several decades ago). She is wrapped up with the violence; indeed, the hair on her head is a literal marker and outcome of the violence. She feels the pain each time her hair grows, and each time she is forced to go to the river to use her long and ever-growing hair to fish out the bodies that have been dumped in the water.

Colleagues at the University of British Columbia have recently been building on this work, in collaboration with Bobis, to forge a Rethinking Rivers Network. The goals are ambitious – but at the same time fairly straightforward. In short, using the notion of 'critical empathy' or 'creative critical empathy' that Bobis and others have elaborated, the aim is to build on feminist and intersectional theorizing to forge and enable more complex and perhaps caring relationships with our rivers in ways that recognize the complexity of the emotional and affective ties we have to surrounding natures. Here, the recognition is that many of us experience a range of relationships and interactions with rivers (and other aspects of 'natures'). As such, there is a need for new conceptual and artistic tools to capture these relations, to experience them more fully, and perhaps to foster or enhance them in ways that are more in line with an ethic of care – in short, *critical or creative empathy*. Here, the invocation of critical empathy moves us directly away from any naive assumptions that women

are more 'caring' towards the environment (as has been suggested by some ecofeminist thought). Yet there is nonetheless a recognition that it is dangerous to eschew emotional lives and relations, particularly if we do so in favour of a rational or overly intellectual approach to these challenges that have been shown to fall short multiple times. In this way, we return full circle to the first point elaborated above, in terms of the need to move beyond 'rational' approaches, or a sole focus on utilitarian or productive relations with resources such as water.

The Rethinking Rivers Network at the University of British Columbia – a collaboration of scholars and artists associated with the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice, and beyond – therefore aims to highlight the important creative and political work that needs to be done to understand, embrace and foster our emotional connections to rivers, and to think through the significance of our emotional lives in relation to changing ecologies, whether they be those that focus on river ecologies, or the state of other species and more-than-human beings who also depend on those 'natures'. Focusing particularly on the experience of recent migrants with rivers, the Rethinking Rivers Network is interested in how populations 'make meaning and sense of place(s) through expressions of love, loss, memories, mourning and lament for the past, and hopes for an imagined future'. To date, the Network has brought together students, activists and artists to do river walks, record the sounds along the rivers, and engage in other artistic expression in ways that underline our relationships to those ecosystems, and the complex emotions that these environments – and changes to them – bring forth in us (GRSJ Rethinking Rivers 2013). Moving towards an intersectional approach to these questions, the Network seeks to explore how different communities (migrant, aboriginal, artistic or otherwise) differently experience and connect to rivers and other water bodies. In this intersectional approach, race, class, gender and migration experiences are some of the ways that diversity is

explored through these relations.

This fourth dimension is one where work is particularly nascent, but where I for one can see many exciting ways forward for FPE, and for studies of nature–culture or nature–society studies more generally (see the recent volume by Chen et al. 2013 for another key example). As Neimanis (2012) offers in her essay 'Feminist subjectivity, watered', there may be radically different ways of thinking about subjectivity if we take seriously the complex relationships we have with water – the water that runs through us, that connects us to other living beings, and so forth. Taking these connections seriously, she suggests we also might radically reconceptualize our relations to other beings. It is worth quoting her at length:

> Becoming a body of water as feminist figuration, inspired by a more aqueous politics of location, would contribute to the renegotiation of the relationship between nature and culture within feminist thinking, and demand attention to the ways in which we as feminist subjects can also be posthumanist, obligated to more-than-human bodies. It would also continue to pay unflinching attention to the systematic oppressions that still affect some humans more than others. But to become a body of water as feminist figuration can also help us reimagine water itself as more than metaphorical vehicle for postmodern fluidity, as more than instrumentalised resource to be commodified and managed, and as more than passive receptacle for our human excretions and anthropogenic wastes. Might we imagine water instead as a responsibility asking us to respond? (Ibid.: 39)

In this spirit, we can imagine a host of questions and possibilities that arise with more attention to emotion, affect and reimagined subjectivities. We can ask both what meanings we attach to nature and what complex changes and losses hold importance for us, as

well as what the potential for creative expression, critical empathy or other reimagined subjectivities might be to help us forge more sustainable and equitable relationships with our surroundings. As well, there is clear potential to foreground artistic and emotional responses to various 'crises' of neoliberal environmental governance. The work of behavioural and social environmental studies has made it increasingly clear that scientific facts and 'rational' responses are often not those that win the day – evidence suggests that people often engage in certain behaviours despite the knowledge they have of the environmental harm they may cause (Robbins 2007). Here again, theorizing more fully emotional lives related to natures holds vast and relatively untapped promise. FPE is well situated to be at the forefront of such engagements.

Building post-colonial, decolonial and feminist-ecological-inspired alternatives to neoliberalized environmental governance

What is possible in terms of building on feminist, decolonizing and other critical approaches and methodologies to be able to think about counter-logics and counter-hegemonies in the world of neoliberalized environmental governance? I have explored in this chapter some potential avenues towards answering this question via an approach that emphasizes the everyday, embodied and emotional dimensions of these issues, and also offers several touch-points and possible ways forward. While I have emphasized FPE as a fruitful point of departure for these concerns, these are also issues that are being emphasized from other perspectives. Just to provide one example, the pathways I have offered here have clear resonance with recent work by Alex Loftus, who builds on sensuous, artistic and everyday encounters related to water access and the making of everyday life. As he writes, 'within the quotidian acts of relating to one another and to "nature", there are conditions of possibility for conceiving life differently' (2012: 135). Contributing to these insights from an FPE

perspective, we might also wish to dwell on what truly intersectional approaches to these issues might require, particularly given the complexity of linking intersectional processes of differentiation, or of linking the issues and politics of North and South more fully (Reed and Christie 2009; Mohanty 2002; Swarr and Nagar 2010; Laurie and Calla 2004). Such an approach, while merited, is necessarily complex and fraught.

With this in mind, it is useful to close with a point of reflection. Feminist thought and practice cannot neatly be grafted on to the complexities of neoliberalism – just as feminist thought cannot be easily translated across sites without encountering friction and corresponding challenges. We only need to think about articulations with race, sexuality or complexities of North–South histories and relations to underscore this point. With this in mind, I reiterate a question invited by the volume as a whole: 'what are the ethics, possibilities and risks of such travelling ideas and practices that connect complex lives, natures and genders?' Keeping a focus on the possible ways forward I have sketched above, this is a useful place to leave the discussion. It is clear that in terms of both possibilities and potential limits, much work needs to be done. As always, we must undertake this with attention to history, context and trajectories that cannot be easily defined, nor easily diverted (a feature of 'hegemony' by its very definition). As we have learned through varied feminist movements and debates of the past several decades, these frictions cannot be shunned, and indeed might be better thought of as central to our work. As this entire volume has sought to highlight, feminist work is important in keeping issues of inequality and justice on the table, particularly when the aim of 'hegemony' is often to brush them aside, or feign ignorance. I have suggested that there is currently a great need to revisit environmental governance through an enlivened and intersectional FPE – one that works with and through feminist, decolonial, indigenous or other insights that emerge at the complex intersections of gender,

sexuality, race and social justice. Combining these traditions and insights in creative, critical and empathetic ways is perhaps one of our best ways of thinking outside of, moving beyond and forging resistance to the ongoing neoliberalization of environmental governance – or at least the inequities and unlivable socio-natures that these trajectories too often engender.

Note

1 It is the case that the broader development programme (GAP) that resulted in the irrigation infrastructure also includes drilling wells in some villages for drinking water, or other modes of provision such as delivery by tanker trucks.

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