

## Feminist political ecology

**Juanita Sundberg**

*University of British Columbia, Canada*

Feminist political ecology (FPE) is a subfield that brings feminist theory and objectives to political ecology, which is an analytical framework built on the argument that ecological issues must be understood and analyzed in relation to political economy (and vice versa). Feminist political ecologists hold that gender – in relation to class, race, and other relevant axes of power – shapes access to and control over natural resources. FPE also demonstrates how social identities are constituted in and through relations with nature and everyday material practices. FPE builds bridges between sectors that are conventionally kept apart – academia, policymaking institutions, activist organizations – thereby connecting theory with praxis. In addition, FPE weaves threads between sites and scales to produce nuanced understandings of the socioecological dimensions of political economic processes. Rooted in feminist critiques of epistemology (the study of how knowledge is produced and legitimized), FPE asks compelling questions about who counts as an environmental actor in political ecologies and how ecological knowledges are constituted. As such, FPE has made substantive, epistemological, and methodological interventions in political ecology, environmental studies, and gender studies.

## Sites of inspiration and formation

---

Feminist political ecology was forged out of feminist and women-centered scholarship and activism in environmental and livelihood/quality of life issues. Inspired by feminist movements of the 1970s, many scholars and activists began to approach nature–society issues with a feminist sensibility, characterized by a persistent linking of the personal and the political. Such feminist environmental engagements brought the feminist movement's diverse political objectives to bear on the most intimate sites of daily life including relations between humans and nonhumans, food consumption, and corporeal wellbeing. Feminist scholarship in this vein both elaborated critiques of research that excludes women, and advanced alternative theoretical framings to account for women (Haraway 1991; Seager 1993). This now extensive and theoretically varied body of work asks fundamental questions about the relationship between forms of oppression and the domination of nature as manifest in environmental degradation, species extinction, industrial slaughter, toxic contamination, and so on. Feminists also advanced alternative ethical framings built on concepts such as relationality, care, responsibility, and friendship (Cuomo 1998).

Feminist political ecology emerged from this arena of lively debate and theorizing. Three bodies of work are particularly relevant to the consolidation of FPE as a subdiscipline: ecofeminism, feminist science studies, and feminist

## FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY

critiques of development. Ecofeminists point to links between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature, although how such links should be analyzed and acted on is highly debated (for an overview, see Diamond and Orenstein 1990). Although some suggest that women are closer to nature because of their biologically constituted corporeal experiences, the majority of ecofeminist scholars turn to historical shifts in Europe, including the scientific revolution, capitalism, and colonialism, to demonstrate how and why women in Western societies (and their colonies) are so frequently associated with nature, as well as how nature is feminized (see Merchant 1980). For example, environmental philosopher Val Plumwood (1993) traces associations between women and nature in Western societies to oppressive material relations – for example, sexism, colonialism, anthropocentrism (a belief that humans are the most important entities) – that have left their mark on epistemology (or ways of knowing) in the form of a network of dualisms. Accordingly, *the human* has been framed in opposition to *nature* in Western thought, with the human capacity for reason and abstract thought as the grounds for transcendence and domination of nature. In turn, reason is framed as masculine through its opposition to and domination of all that is associated with nature, the body, reproduction, emotion, and ultimately the feminine. Plumwood's work demonstrates how such dualisms underpin oppression.

Postcolonial feminist scholars have criticized Western ecofeminism for its narrow focus on the philosophical or conceptual dimensions of oppressive relations as well as its neglect of the political economic arrangements – at multiple and intersecting scales – that constitute actual ecological relations in particular places (see Shiva and Mies 1993). Debates in ecofeminism continue to inform feminist political ecologists' interest in how women and men's relations

with the natural world, in particular, played an important part in defining gender norms, such as notions of appropriate femininity and masculinity.

An equally important arena of inspiration for the emergence of FPE is feminist critiques of science and epistemology. Sandra Harding (1986), Donna Haraway (1991), and others argue that patriarchal gender norms inform basic conceptions of who counts as a knowledge producer, what counts as knowledge, and how knowledge is produced. Scholars in this vein demonstrate how women and other marginalized groups are systematically disadvantaged by conventional scientific practices that exclude them as knowers, while producing knowledge that renders their experiences invisible or represents them as inferior. As such, feminist studies of science problematize the concept of objectivity. Conventionally framed as a value-free *view from nowhere*, objectivity is predicated on the assumption that the researcher's mind is separate from his or her body, social position, and geopolitical location. Feminists argue that, historically, claims to objectivity masked and protected what were actually the partial perspectives of dominant social groups, specifically European or white, heterosexual, bourgeois men. Hence, the *aura* of objectivity is an achievement, derived from denying or concealing the researcher's embodied subject position. In addition to these critiques, feminists introduced various alternatives to masculinist forms of objectivity. For instance, Haraway's (1991) concept of *situated knowledge* suggests that knowledges emerge in relation to embodied social locations. Harding's (1986) proposal for *partial objectivities* takes subjective or local knowledges seriously by developing methods to verify and validate them within specific contexts of shared experience. Theirs are not calls for relativism but for responsibility and accountability in practices of knowledge

production. Feminist political ecologists build on these conversations to address how research practices are implicated in (re)producing and contesting power relations.

A third body of scholarship important to FPE is feminist critiques of development, which demonstrate how women have been excluded from or exploited by (sustainable) development and conservation projects (Shiva and Mies 1993). Feminist postcolonial scholars such as Chandra Mohanty (1991) complement this work, exposing how Western feminists leading development projects tend to depict what she calls “Third World women” as victims in need of Western help; such homogenizing portrayals deny the diversity of women’s locations, experiences, and knowledges. Scholars working in this field address the ways poverty is deepened and feminized when women are neglected as agents of environmental transformation (e.g., as managers of natural resources) and environmental knowledge bearers/producers. For instance, Judith Carney (1992) revealed how gender differences in land use, labor obligations, and crop rights articulate with development in The Gambia, Africa. International donor projects that introduced irrigation systems and improved rice production packages to male household heads resulted in women’s loss of access to land and, in some cases, income. Richard Schroeder’s (1999) research, also in The Gambia, centers on conflicts between men and women sparked by international donor projects in the 1970s, which were designed to include women in development by supporting women’s expansion of market gardening. When donor interests shifted to environmental concerns in the 1980s, however, men were encouraged to engage in agroforestry *on the same plots of land* as the gardens. Consequently, men’s and women’s crop production systems came into conflict. Ultimately, as scholars have documented, if

development agency personnel and researchers consult only men, then the relevance of particular resources, women’s specific knowledge of them, and women’s livelihood strategies are made invisible. This, in turn, generates resistance among women toward development and conservation interventions. The importance of this body of work is evident in FPE’s ongoing emphasis on the potentially devastating consequences for women and their dependents when gender differences in resource management and land-use practices are neglected.

Building on these three bodies of work and debates, Dianne Rocheleau, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari (1996) put forward feminist political ecology as an integrative conceptual framework in the edited volume *Feminist Political Ecology*. The book situates gender as a crucial variable – in relation to class, race, and other relevant dimensions of political life – in shaping environmental relations. Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari (1996) suggest that gender norms result from social interpretations of biology and socially constructed gender roles, which are geographically varied and may change over time at individual and collective scales. As such, the editors shift away from essentialist (i.e., one-dimensional and universalizing) constructions of women found in some ecofeminist work to treat gender differences and gender relations as constituted in and through material political ecological relations. The book’s conceptual agenda advances three primary areas of research: (i) gendered environmental knowledge and practices; (ii) gendered rights to natural resources and unequal vulnerability to environmental change; and (iii) gendered environmental activism and organizations. And, the editors outline an exciting call for research that connects the local and global, urban and rural, North, South, East, and West, through close analysis of everyday experiences and practices of gendered

## FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY

environmental risks, rights, and responsibilities. Chapters feature case studies from across the globe rooted in collaborative and activist methodologies. Authors address issues such as the struggles of women on the front lines of the rubber tappers' movement in Brazil, women in environmental justice organizing in West Harlem, New York, as well as women dealing with industrial waste in Spain. *Feminist Political Ecology* marks a noteworthy moment in environmental studies by demonstrating the analytical purchase of feminist political ecology to identify how inequality is (re)produced when women's environmental engagements, knowledge, and activism are neglected. Recent work in feminist political ecology continues to engage with the agenda and debates outlined in the book.

### Sites of intervention and contribution

---

Feminist political ecologists have produced a vibrant body of work that significantly enriches understandings of the political–ecological nexus. Moreover, researchers' substantive contributions have prompted *epistemological* shifts and *methodological* innovation. Simply by engaging women as political actors, agents of environmental change, and bearers/producers of environmental knowledge, feminist political ecology revolutionized research in political ecology. While seemingly straightforward, considering women has far reaching consequences, for it is not possible to simply add women to existing frameworks and proceed as before. Indeed, to disrupt conventional assumptions about men as the primary environmental actors is to ask fundamental epistemological questions about how knowledge is produced and legitimized. For instance, feminist political ecology challenges claims to objectivity by pointing out that if researchers only engage men in any given site (as if they represent the

only or primary actor), then their results are partial rather than neutral or unbiased.

Dianne Rocheleau and David Edmunds (1997) make this point by showing that women in many rural areas manage spaces – along with specific natural resources – that are nested in or between spaces controlled by men. Their analysis of the gendered dimensions of tree tenure around the world sheds light on the complexity of customary laws that grant men and women differing rights and responsibilities to multidimensional fields with distinct and overlapping species. For example, women often have customary rights to species above, below, or between men's crops or trees; as such, they are subject to men's decisions about changing the species they plant or tend (see Schroeder 1999). As this research highlights, attending to women as resource managers reveals the limitations of existing two-dimensional concepts of land and landownership, which are based on fieldwork with men only. These concepts do not account for the multidimensionality of species management by men and women.

Likewise, the personal experiences of white middle-class Western feminists/scholars may restrict their interest in or attention to particular spaces or activities, which, in turn, has the effect of shaping knowledge production. Maria Elisa Christie (2008) makes this point in relation to the kitchen, which is often framed as a principal site of women's oppression in Western feminism. Christie's close engagement with women's "kitchenspaces" in central Mexico demonstrates the importance of food preparation in the enactment of rituals and fiestas that sustain extended family and kinship networks as well as unique skills and knowledge. In short, FPE demonstrates that political ecological stories are implicated in power relations, and researchers risk reproducing gender inequalities if and when women are left out as agents of environmental change.

Accounting for women as actors brings about additional epistemological shifts. Since many women around the world labor in social spheres that, historically, have been excluded from analysis, addressing the particularities of their knowledges and practices requires asking questions about what scales of political ecological life count as relevant. Building on feminist economics and feminist geography, research in FPE draws attention to everyday intimate and embodied practices along with household micropolitics. The scale of the everyday is where social reproduction takes place, where subject identities and social orders are brought into being and contested. Attending to daily life allows FPE to shed light on otherwise neglected dimensions of environmental engagements. For instance, Shubhra Gururani's (2002) research with women collectors of fuel and fodder in the Kumaon Himalayas suggests that forests are sites of emotion, memory, and meaning. Women engage the forest as much more than simply a backdrop or site of resources where they meet livelihood needs, Gururani argues; indeed, women's everyday material engagements constitute but also challenge culturally specific gender norms. As such, Gururani's findings contest predominant utilitarian and mechanistic assumptions of human-nature relations in political ecology.

Likewise, Farhana Sultana (2011) examines how natural resource access is mediated through emotions, which are defined as intersubjective (e.g., produced in relationships between people or people and nature) rather than as individual mental states. In rural Bangladesh, where drinking-water wells are contaminated by naturally occurring arsenic, women's relations with water are saturated and constituted by emotions, particularly suffering. Thus, Sultana suggests, women's daily lives are configured not solely by struggles to obtain safe drinking water for their families but also by emotional

distress; these emotions, in turn, shape women's decisions about how to negotiate the power relations that constitute water access and control. As Leila Harris (2015) notes, attention to emotions allows feminist political ecologists to demonstrate not only that resource access is important for livelihood and health but also people's sense of dignity and belonging.

Even as FPE legitimizes the everyday as a significant scale of analysis, researchers also excel at demonstrating how the intimate connects with other scales such as the nation or global political economy. For instance, Yaffa Truelove's (2011) research on women's water-collecting practices in Delhi, India links the body to city and state. While city planners look to market mechanisms to fulfill their vision of a modern city with efficient services, Truelove shows how the establishment of metered water sources creates a whole range of "illegal" water practices. Such legal mechanisms particularly affect women in slums without legal water connections, as they must engage in time-consuming, dangerous, and illegal activities just to procure water for daily needs. As a consequence, young girls in marginalized communities are often kept out of school because of the amount of time required to meet family water needs; this, in turn, limits their life opportunities but also their sense of belonging in a city with global aspirations. For Harris (2015), the importance of research such as Truelove's is to challenge existing claims made by state and nonstate actors (such as the World Bank) that the commodification of water leads to increased efficiency. As Harris contends, addressing embodiment and the scale of the everyday serves to demonstrate how capitalist logics privileging efficiency ignore nonproductive needs and uses associated with health, poverty reduction, or cultural and spiritual values (e.g., preservation of heritage seeds/crops).

## FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Another important epistemological intervention stemming from the seemingly straightforward act of accounting for women relates to how the subject or person is conceptualized in political ecology. Historically, political ecologists have tended to assume that subject identities are narrowly defined based on taken-for-granted or congruent notions of class position, sex, or race. Juanita Sundberg (2004), Leila Harris (2006), and Andrea Nightingale (2006) draw from feminist poststructural theory to outline anti-essentialist framings of the political ecological subject. Judith Butler's (1999) work is particularly significant here. Butler argues that gendering practices are not simply built on sex difference; instead, bodies are gendered in and through the regulatory practices of disciplining institutions such as the family, along with medical, educational, and religious institutions. In other words, gendered bodies have no natural foundation (in sex) but are constituted in and through gendering practices that are reiterated or performed in daily life. For Butler, everyday performances *produce* gendered subject positions rather than simply reflect them.

Sundberg, Harris, and Nightingale build on Butler's work to insist there is no necessary or pre-given relation between men or women and the environment; rather, such relations are forged through geographically contingent, power-laden practices. Sundberg (2004) analyzes how conservation discourses, practices, and performances in Guatemala are instrumental in mapping gendered and racialized ways of life. In the process, Sundberg also reflects on her research collaboration with an indigenous women's group to highlight how research practices are constitutive of gendered and racialized performances that (re)produce asymmetrical geopolitical relations. Likewise, Nightingale (2006) treats gender as a

process to show how performances of masculinity, femininity, and caste are constituted in community forest management in Nepalese villages. Harris (2006) demonstrates how differences between men and women are (re)cited and naturalized in relation to new irrigation economies and ecologies in Turkey; gender comes to matter to irrigation practices, she argues, through the regulatory insistence on difference.

Feminist critiques of knowledge production also prompt *methodological* innovations in FPE so as to include previously excluded actors and to account for their knowledges as well as how they come to know their environments. Women and other marginalized groups may consider themselves or their work to be unimportant and their life experiences may lie beyond those of researchers. Moreover, as noted, women's spaces of work are often nested in those controlled by men. Examining what was made invisible or neglected requires methodological creativity. Many feminist political ecologists work with feminist participatory or collaborative methodologies to enable research that supports feminist political objectives. In this context, feminist scholars tend to conduct qualitative research from the bottom up by privileging the experiences, spaces, and categories of marginalized people. Along these lines, Louise Fortmann (1996) specifically addresses strategies for ensuring that women's distinct experiences with trees, plants, and animals are included in natural resource mapping. For example, forming separate groups of men and women while undertaking natural resource mapping helps to ensure that women have the space to express themselves freely (see also Sundberg 2004).

Some feminist political ecologists suggest that qualitative methodologies need not be the only ones appropriate to feminist research. Rocheleau (1995) pioneered the development of methodologies to triangulate data derived from

quantitative, interpretive, and visual methods. In her discussion of research evaluating the results of a forestry and agricultural initiative in the Dominican Republic, Rocheleau notes that gender-informed quantitative analysis contradicted predominant assumptions of women as auxiliaries to men; in addition, counter-mapping – map-making that starts with rural people and their homes – produced images that resulted from the mixing of local people and researchers' specific skills and knowledge. Relatedly, Nightingale's (2003) study of a community forestry program in Nepal combined aerial photo interpretation with ecological oral histories to analyze the effectiveness and sustainability of community forest management. Each of these two methods is rooted in a distinct epistemological tradition and, therefore, produces distinct kinds of knowledge. Working with Haraway's concept of situated knowledge, Nightingale (2003) treated both aerial photo interpretation and oral history collection as partial yet internally valid methods of generating distinct stories about forest change. Rather than triangulating data, Nightingale attended to the inconsistencies between the data, thereby producing new insights about the pace and location of forest regeneration as well as how and why local people claimed the community forestry program as a success. In so doing, she also framed local people as legitimate producers of environmental knowledge.

In short, research that accounts for women necessitated epistemological innovation, and feminist political ecologists have been at the forefront of developing new theoretical and methodological tools. Nonetheless, the contributions of FPE tend to be assimilated into mainstream political ecology with little explicit acknowledgment. Indeed, in the recent trend to canonize political ecology through the publication of textbooks and edited collections,

feminist political ecology is only marginally addressed. And yet, Rebecca Elmhirst (2011a) suggests, political ecology owes an *epistemological debt* to feminist theory for the range of fresh perspectives it offers. Nonetheless, many scholars whose work articulates with the political and theoretical objectives of FPE do not identify as such. Thus, a review of recently published research demonstrates that the field of gender and environment is flourishing although few identify as feminist political ecologists, leading Elmhirst (2011a) to ask if FPE is a *disappearing subject*. The response to her question is evident in renewed attention to FPE along with debates about its analytical purchase.

### Sites of challenge and debate

---

In part, the apparent disappearance of FPE is due to the emergence of anti-essentialist framings of gender, which have destabilized assumptions about *who* counts as the (natural) subject of feminist-oriented research. In addition to Butler's argument, noted earlier, postcolonial scholars have challenged homogenizing views of *women* as a pre-given, coherent category that is studied using similar theoretical frameworks the world over (see Mohanty 1991). Such critiques lead to a crucial question: if women are no longer the organizing purpose of feminism and gender is no longer its central analytical category, then what is the point of FPE?

A new generation of feminist political ecologists responds to the destabilization of gender by emphasizing *intersectionality* as the primary method of addressing how social subjects are constituted in and through diverse and interlocking processes of differentiation such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and livelihood. In other words, new FPE seeks to account more fully for the ways systems of power articulate

## FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY

in time and place. Farhana Sultana and Andrea Nightingale advance the concept of intersectionality by explicitly considering how subject identity is constituted in and through material ecological relations. While FPE has long treated the natural environment as a constitutive element of political subjectivity, this dimension is often neglected in feminist theory more generally and is in need of further theorization. Sultana's (2011) analysis of gender–water relations in Bangladesh highlights how the geologic distribution of arsenic in the local aquifer plays a crucial role in configuring gendered subjects. By and large, the contamination of water sources and the resulting need to travel longer distances to fetch safe water has worked to entrench the notion that masculinity is not compatible with water collection. Nightingale (2011) examines how imaginaries of gender and caste boundaries are materially enacted in postconflict Nepal. Normative femininity, she notes, requires Hindu women of a particular caste to be spatially segregated during menstruation because their bodies are considered polluting and therefore damaging to the environment. As such, appropriate performances of femininity are enacted in and through such spatial moves. Nightingale found that the Maoist insurgency disrupted gender and caste performances by enacting shifts in embodied spatial practices like sitting and eating in mixed caste and gender groups.

Sharlene Mollett and Caroline Faria (2013) present a strident critique of new FPE, suggesting that researchers too often continue privileging gender without also giving full consideration to the ways it intersects with race. Race is a crucial variable in subject formation, the authors suggest, while racial thinking constitutes the very categories used to name and order the modern world (e.g., racial labels such as “European” or “African” along with binaries like civilized/primitive, modern/

traditional, formal/customary). In other words, the environment and environmental politics are not raceless. Mollett and Faria (2013) point to whiteness as an institutional factor that shapes the production of knowledge in FPE; the predominance of whiteness in the Western academy works to normalize the absence of critical race perspectives. Mollett and Faria (2013) call for a *postcolonial intersectional* approach that situates patriarchy and racialization as entangled in postcolonial genealogies of nation building and development.

Even with these critiques and reflections, some feminist political ecologists stress the continuing relevance of gender as a key variable due to the persistence of masculinist forms of objectivity and ongoing neglect of women as environmental agents. For instance, Aya Hirata Kimura and Yohei Katano (2014) suggest that performances of gender are at stake in times of crisis or disaster, such as Japan's Fukushima nuclear reactor accident. Their study highlights how gender norms informed perceptions of risk in the aftermath of the nuclear disaster. Political elites called on binary constructs of appropriate masculinity and femininity to manage the disaster; in emphasizing the need for patriotism, normalcy, and safety, citizens concerned about radiation were feminized as irrational or hysterical. For her part, Elmhirst's (2011b) study of forests in Indonesia introduces queer theory, which examines how normative gender categories are produced and contested. Elmhirst demonstrates how the Indonesian state manages and controls access to natural resources by privileging heterosexual conjugal couples. In other words, heterosexual marriage becomes an important conduit for resource access and therefore affects women as well as men. Elmhirst calls on political ecologists to question the naturalness of categories such as conjugal relationships and heterosexuality as they are deployed in the practices of knowledge production.



## Future directions in feminist political ecology

---

Even as feminist political ecologists clearly demonstrate the ongoing importance of gender relations in natural resource struggles, feminists work on a range of topics wherein gender is not the primary analytical variable. In other words, feminist scholarship is not restricted to analyses of gender. This is evident in recent FPE scholarship centering on the body as the primary analytical category and site of analysis (Sultana 2011; Truelove 2011). In this vein, Jessica Hayes-Conroy and Allison Hayes-Conroy (2011) elaborate a *political ecology of the body* framework to account for the intersection of material and affective/emotive practices. Intended to facilitate analysis of food–body relations, especially how schools seek to promote healthy eating habits, the framework insists on considering the articulation of variables at multiple scales: structural factors that (re)produce inequality and therefore access to particular foods; discursive practices that constitute imaginaries of health and good food; and the material interactions that shape the emotive and bodily experience of eating. Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy’s framework is attuned to the unpredictability of bodily dispositions and potentialities and, as such, makes space for explanations that are complex, partial, and unfinished (as called for by feminist theories of knowledge production). In many ways, their approach is in line with Harris’s (2015) appeal for an FPE centered on the *everyday, embodied, and emotional* aspects of society–nature engagements.

Another exciting new direction in FPE is evident in recent efforts to more actively consider relations between humans and other-than-human beings such as animals. Here, two concerns found in ecofeminism are given new life: the connections between different forms of oppression; and, proposals for a feminist ethics of

care. Building on work that registers the active presence of other-than-humans in coproducing our world, as well as ongoing feminist concerns about who counts as a political actor and what counts as politics, Kirsty Hobson (2007) argues for the inclusion of animals as political actors in political ecology. As Hobson notes, political ecologists risk reproducing oppressive relations between humans and nature by treating animals as mere objects over which people struggle rather than as living beings whose ecology, behavior, and wellbeing are caught up in (shaping) political ecological outcomes. These concerns are taken up in Sundberg’s (2011) elaboration of a more-than-human methodology to consider other-than-human beings as actors in geopolitical processes. As Sundberg demonstrates, desert soils, thornscrub landscapes, and ocelots (a small feline) constitute, inflect, and disrupt the United States’ enforcement of its southern boundary, forcing state actors to call for more funding, infrastructure, and boots on the ground. Sundberg tells alternative stories about the escalation of US boundary enforcement strategies, stories that refuse the US government’s narratives of mastery over borderland environments. With its unique focus on oppressive formations, corporeality, and the politics of knowledge production, FPE is ideally positioned to make innovative contributions to the shift away from treating nature as backdrop and toward an understanding of agency on the part of other-than-human actors.

Finally, recent work suggests that FPE is moving in the direction suggested by Rocheleau (1995) over two decades ago: to undertake research touching on gender, class, and other systems of difference from a position of *affinity* as opposed to *identity*. If identity politics implies assuming that women share concerns as women, affinity politics entails situating ourselves and research participants in webs of power and identifying research questions on the basis of issues

## FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY

of shared concern, such as neoliberalization, environmental degradation, and imaginative geographies of distance and difference. A useful template for the establishment of research collaborations across sites and scales is Cindi Katz's (2001) concept of *counter-topographies*, which entails tracing lines between places to show how they are constituted in and through the same processes of development or environmental change. In this vein, Roberta Hawkins (2012) forges new ground in her critique of ethical consumption campaigns that position Northern (female) consumers as saviors of (feminized) people and environments in the Global South. Approaching consumption as a gendered and environmental act that connects the intimate and global across geopolitical space allows Hawkins to chisel away at entrenched binaries such as North/South and researcher/researched that continue to structure political ecology.

Likewise, Harris (2014) considers the implications of Western models of environmentalism in Turkey through a framework she terms *imaginative geographies of green*, which builds on postcolonial and intersectional analytics. Harris examines how everyday narratives of environmental politics in Turkey articulate differences between East and West and, in so doing, evoke painful legacies of colonialism. Harris calls on scholars to problematize what counts as *appropriate* environmental politics so as to refuse the West as the primary or only legitimate point of reference and thereby initiate the process of decolonizing conceptualizations of green politics, citizenship, and subjectivities. Research that begins from a position of affinity rather than identity promises to shift political ecology away from studies that examine the concerns of distant and different others and toward research that is accountable to the many ways in which scholars are entangled in and complicit with the

very webs of power, privilege, and oppression they seek to analyze.

As a style of research, FPE works with feminist concerns about how oppressive relations are (re)produced at various scales of everyday life and makes significant epistemological and methodological interventions in feminism and political ecology alike. Working at the nexus of nature, power, and knowledge production, FPE promises to continue supporting broader feminist political objectives for more equitable and ecologically viable futures.

**SEE ALSO:** Bodies and embodiment; Environment and gender; Feminist geography; Feminist methodologies; Gender; Gender and development; Identity; Intersectionality; Natural resources; Political ecology; Race and racism; Scale

## References

---

- Butler, Judith. 1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn. New York: Routledge.
- Carney, Judith. 1992. "Peasant Women and Economic Transformation in the Gambia." *Development and Change*, 23(2): 67–90.
- Christie, Maria Elisa. 2008. *Kitchenspace: Women, Fiestas, and Everyday Life in Central Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Cuomo, Christine. 1998. *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing*. London: Routledge.
- Diamond, Irene, and Gloria Orenstein, eds. 1990. *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Elmhirst, Rebecca. 2011a. "Introducing New Feminist Political Ecologies." *Geoforum*, 42(2): 129–132. DOI:10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.006.
- Elmhirst, Rebecca. 2011b. "Migrant Pathways to Resource Access in Lampung's Political Forest:

- Gender, Citizenship and Creative Conjugal-ity." *Geoforum*, 42(2): 173–183. DOI:10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.12.004.
- Fortmann, Louise. 1996. "Gendered Knowledge: Rights and Space in Two Zimbabwe Villages: Reflections on Methods and Findings." In *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences*, edited by Dianne Rocheleau, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari, 211–223. New York: Routledge.
- Gururani, Shubhra. 2002. "Forests of Pleasure and Pain: Gendered Practices of Labor and Livelihood in the Forests of the Kumaon Himalayas, India." *Gender, Place & Culture*, 9(3): 229–243. DOI:10.1080/0966369022000003842.
- Haraway, Donna. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Harding, Sandra. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Harris, Leila M. 2006. "Irrigation, Gender, and Social Geographies of the Changing Waterscapes of Southeastern Anatolia." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24(2): 187–213.
- Harris, Leila M. 2014. "Imaginative Geographies of Green: Difference, Postcoloniality, and Affect in Environmental Narratives in Contemporary Turkey." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 104(4): 801–815.
- Harris, Leila M. 2015. "Hegemonic Waters and Rethinking Natures Otherwise." In *Practicing Feminist Political Ecologies: Moving Beyond the "Green Economy"*, edited by Wendy Harcourt and Ingrid L. Nelson, 157–181. London: Zed Books.
- Hawkins, Roberta. 2012. "Shopping to Save Lives: Gender and Environment Theories Meet Ethical Consumption." *Geoforum*, 43(4): 750–759. DOI:10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.12.009.
- Hayes-Conroy, Jessica, and Allison Hayes-Conroy. 2013. "Veggies and Visceralities: A Political Ecology of Food and Feeling." *Emotion, Space and Society*, 6: 81–90. DOI:10.1016/j.emospa.2011.11.003.
- Hobson, K. 2007. "Political Animals? On Animals as Subjects in an Enlarged Political Geography." *Political Geography*, 26: 250–267.
- Katz, Cindi. 2001. "On the Grounds of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 26(4): 1213–1234. DOI:10.1086/495653.
- Kimura, Aya Hirata, and Yohei Katano. 2014. "Farming After the Fukushima Accident: A Feminist Political Ecology Analysis of Organic Agriculture." *Journal of Rural Studies*, 34: 108–116. DOI:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2013.12.006.
- Merchant, Carolyn. 1980. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Mohanty, Chandra. 1991. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, edited by C. Mohanty, A. Russo, and L. Torres, 51–80. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mollett, Sharlene, and Caroline Faria. 2013. "Messing with Gender in Feminist Political Ecology." *Geoforum*, 45, 116–125. DOI:10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.10.009.
- Nightingale, Andrea J. 2003. "A Feminist in the Forest: Situated Knowledges and Mixing Methods in Natural Resource Management." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 2(1): 77–90.
- Nightingale, Andrea J. 2006. "The Nature of Gender: Work, Gender, and Environment." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24(2): 165–185.
- Nightingale, Andrea J. 2011. "Bounding Difference: Intersectionality and the Material Production of Gender, Caste, Class and Environment in Nepal." *Geoforum*, 42(2): 153–162.
- Plumwood, Val. 1993. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London: Routledge.
- Rocheleau, Dianne. 1995. "Maps, Numbers, Text, and Context: Mixing Methods in Feminist Political Ecology." *Professional Geographer*, 47(4): 458–466.
- Rocheleau, Dianne, and David Edmunds. 1997. "Women, Men and Trees: Gender, Power and Property in Forest and Agrarian Landscapes." *World Development*, 25(8): 1351–1371. DOI:10.1016/S0305-750X(97)00036-3.

## FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY

- Rocheleau, Dianne, Barbara Thomas-Slayter, and Esther Wangari, eds. 1996. *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences*. New York: Routledge.
- Schroeder, Richard A. 1999. *Shady Practices: Agroforestry and Gender Politics in The Gambia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Seager, Joni. 1993. *Earth Follies: Coming to Feminist Terms with the Global Environmental Crisis*. New York: Routledge.
- Shiva, Vandana, and Maria Mies. 1993. *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books.
- Sultana, Farhana. 2011. "Suffering for Water, Suffering from Water: Emotional Geographies of Resource Access, Control and Conflict." *Geoforum*, 42(2): 163–172. DOI:10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.12.009.
- Sundberg, Juanita. 2004. "Identities-in-the-Making: Conservation, Gender, and Race in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala." *Gender, Place & Culture*, 11(1): 44–66. DOI:10.1080/0966369042000188549.
- Sundberg, Juanita. 2011. "Diabolic Caminos in the Desert & Cat Fights on the Río: A Post-humanist Political Ecology of Boundary Enforcement in the United States–Mexico Borderlands." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101(2): 318–336.
- Truelove, Yaffa. 2011. "(Re-)conceptualizing Water Inequality in Delhi, India through a Feminist Political Ecology Framework." *Geoforum*, 42(2): 143–152. DOI:10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.004.