

Gender innovations: strategies to address “gender” in climate change policy

Life e.V., GGCA, WEDO

Bonn, 11 June 2013

Draft report, prepared by Sandra Bähge

Introduction:

- Background: confusion on concepts relating to gender within framework of (international) climate change policy
- Problem: stereotyping of gender roles, risk of perpetuating unequal gender relations even further when recurring to these stereotyped gender concepts
- To avoid homogenization and stereotyping, need to complement the gender dimension in climate change policy with an intersectional approach that takes into account other dimensions of unequal social relations (e.g. ethnicity, “race”, age, social status etc.)

Dr. Gunnhildur Magnúsdóttir (Malmö University): “The (In)visibility of Gender in Scandinavian Climate Change Policy Making”

- Research study undertaken with Annica Kronsell
- Point of departure/assumption: countries with high rates of gender equality do not only show ambitious climate change policies, but furthermore these policies will be gender sensitive
- Research interest: relation between the nominal and substantive representation of gender issues in climate change policies in three Scandinavian countries
- Study on Norway, Sweden, Denmark (countries with high rates of gender equality, self-perceived “gender pioneers”)
- Results:
 - o Nominal representation (i.e. representation of women officials in national institutions relating to climate change policies): in general gender balance and sometimes even over-representation of women officials
 - o Substantive representation (i.e. inclusion of gender aspects in climate policies, climate road maps): complete absence of gender reference, invisibility of gender, insensitivity to gender
 - ➔ No link between nominal and substantive representation: equal nominal representation does not automatically translate into substantive representation of gender issues
- Second step of the study: interviews with officials in the institutions studied in order to find out more about this discrepancy; result: both men and women interviewees displayed high degree of uncertainty with regard to the relevance of gender issues in relation to climate change in general, even denial of gender relevance for climate policies in a developed country context

Emilia Reyes (Equidad de Género), Bridget Burns (WEDO): “Gender stereotypes in (international) climate change policies. How the prevalent use of ‘gender’ might perpetuate and reinforce traditional gender roles”

- Use of gender stereotypes in international climate change policies causes the risk of perpetuating traditional gender roles and unequal gender relations
- Multitude of unclear terms: gender equality, - balance, -equity; gender responsive, - sensitive, - considerations

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- Gender rhetoric: gender as a synonym for women; gender/women as implying
 - o Vulnerable, victim, poor
 - o Agents of change, powerful, having solutions
 - o Altruistic stewards of the environment

➔ This kind of (strategic) essentialism risks perpetuating gender stereotypes even further
- Gender to be understood as a category of analysis that cuts across other categories of social inequality (intersectionality) and that lies at the basis of the structure of society
- Responsibility when designing climate policies in terms of the reproduction of inequalities
- Care economy: sexual division of labor, domestic unpaid work by women

Dr. Sybille Bauriedl (University of Kassel): “The social construction of climate change. How and what can feminist research contribute to gendered climate policy”

- Contribution from perspective of feminist political ecology and intersectionality
- Objective: deconstruct the dominant narrative(s) on gender and climate change
- “Gender speak” – gender conceptions in climate politics
 - o Based on dualisms, focus on women, men seem to have no gender
 - o Focus on local level
 - o Emphasis on gender specific vulnerability, gender specific perception of risks, gender specific involvement in production of climate change, adaptation, burden of climate change policies, participation in decision-making
 - o Gender essentialism (heteronormative, non-queer, ...)
 - o Climate research apparently done from an invisible “male eye”
 - o Need to trouble gender categories beyond gender hierarchies + gender normativity, take into account the intersection of gender with other categories (intersectionality)
 - o Need to consider the politics of knowledge production
- 3 gender discourses around climate politics:
 - o Sustainability discourse: empowerment of women as local resource managers
 - o Vulnerability discourse: women as victims
 - o Green economy discourse: active role of women, inclusion of women in neoliberal market economy

➔ These narratives involve gender dichotomies and spatial dualisms between “North” and “South”
- Contribution of feminist research:
 - o Deconstruction of gender speak
 - o Critique of a gender hierarchical neoliberalization of climate change; degendering of a division of labor in adaptation and mitigation
 - o Specification of criteria for gender responsive climate policies
 - o Awareness for politics of scale (representation: local-female vs. global-male)
 - o Deconstruction of the normative category of climate politics: white, Northern, male

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Discussion

- Audience notes discrepancy between rhetoric on the international and action on the national level with regard to gender and climate change in Scandinavian countries; Dr. Gunnhildur Magnusdottir : part of the problem = self-perception of these countries as “gender pioneers”, but in the field of climate change they perceive gender only being relevant in developing countries.
- Practical implications of insights brought forward by Sybille Bauriedl?
 - o Be aware of the politics of the production of knowledge
 - o Be more specific when talking about “gender”, “women” etc. (differentiate, make clear different situations of “women” in diverse contexts)
- Bridget Burns (WEDO): share expertise among those active in the field of gender and climate change, come up with a common understanding of the gender issues that are talked about
- Ulrike Röhr: 2 tracks: Keep on lobbying for the inclusion of gender language in the UNFCCC texts (entry point for inclusion of gender issues); the gender language provides the room for going beyond words: among ourselves continue the discussion about non essentialist gender approaches, regarding delegates: build their capacity on gender relations and gender approaches – in particular the ones from developed countries.