Feminist Political Ecology and Post development

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the ecological crisis of reason

If our species does not survive the ecological crisis, it will probably be due to our failure to imagine and work out new ways to live with the earth, to rework ourselves and our high energy, high consumption, and hyper-instrumental societies adaptively ... We will go onwards in a different mode of humanity or not at all.

Val Plumwood 2007
Uses Feminist Political Ecology and Post-Development to examine:

The possibilities as well as the limitations and dangers of sustainable development as promoted and “delivered” by national and multi-national technocracies, powerful conservation NGOs and private interests.
What is under discussion

- The contestations and convergences between development, conservation, cultural survival, gender equality and political autonomy
- The search for sustainability, social justice, transformation, recognising cultural difference, complex identities and coalitions
- The need for social, ecological and technological alternatives to mainstream development understandings of the development and environment
What is Feminist Political Ecology?

- A process of doing environmentalism, justice and feminism differently:

- Interrogates the operations of power that define people’s unequal and differentiated access and control of resources at local, regional, and global scales.

- Defines environment as something *lived* as a simultaneously bodily and global process.
FPE: A relational approach of hope: *it could be otherwise*

- Questions hegemonic modes and relations of knowledge production
- Seeks to understand how humans are able to intentionally shape nature, not through its control, but by placing themselves within nature
- Invites us to notice relationality of humans and earth others
- Looks at how humans and more than humans are part of world making projects
How to understand and stop systemically linked patterns that threaten major system collapse after major system collapse after major system collapse

*How can we:*

*root sustainability in cultural identities and ecological conditions?*

*negotiate life in human damaged environments?*

*heal the rift between economic growth, life and livelihoods?*
Post development

Post development is: “the unmaking of development through the intervention of new narratives, new ways of thinking and doing” (Arturo Escobar 2007)
Post development going beyond the metaphors, ideologies, premises of development

- Challenges the assumption that development and economic growth = progress as the only organizing principle of modern social life
- Analyzes the power-laden processes through which particular worlds are brought into being
- Decentres capitalism to see it as dispersed, plural and partial in relation to the economy and society as a whole.
alternatives to development

- looks for viable alternatives to dominant eurocentric world views that go beyond developmentalism
- builds on concrete experiences of people and communities in terms other than those determined by (modern/capitalist) development
- eg buen vivir, ubuntu de-growth, community economies
Aims of Post development

- Transform the structural roots of a development along political, economic, social, cultural, and ecological axes.
- Question the core assumptions of the development discourse (e.g., growth, material progress, instrumental rationality, the centrality of markets and economy, universality, modernity and its binaries).
- Practice a radically different set of ethics and values to those underpinning the current modern capitalist system.
- Promote life-affirming principles such as: diversity, solidarity, commons, oneness with nature, interconnectedness, simplicity, inclusiveness, equity, non-hierarchy, pluriversality, and peace.
- Engage activists and academics looking for alternatives.
Examples of post development approaches: pluriverse

Builds on peoples’ ecological and cultural transitions towards the pluriverse.

Searches for post-capitalist, sustainable models of life

Resisting the coloniality of power in the struggle for sustaining the eco system
community economies

- The economy is not “out there” but “in here”, in our everyday lives and activities there are community economies, based around households, families, neighbourhoods, friendship groups, sporting clubs, charitable organisations, volunteer sites, places of worship, and so on.

- To find alternatives we need to identify existing economic diversity and recognise and foster economic interdependence.
Solidarity economies, caring for people, communities and climate

- Emergence and widening of diverse forms of solidarity economies
- Resistance to extractive economies and the building of networks of care through the interconnection of food justice, community solar, sanctuary movements
- Resistance to government assaults on migrant and refugee rights
- Organizing against urban gentrification
FPE and Postdevelopment

Feminism’s remapping of political space and possibility suggests opportunity for local economic and social transformation that does not require (though it indeed promotes) transformation at larger scales.
rethinking what constitutes life itself

• growing attention to emotions, feelings, the spiritual, matter, non-scientific knowledges, body and place, non-humans, non-organic life, sexualities, death
• rethinking in order to deal effectively with the inter-related crises of climate, food, energy, and poverty.
• reorient economic, cultural and social practice with the intersecting goals of ecological sustainability, cultural pluralism, and social justice.
Reimagining politics

Politics in this vision is an ethical practice of becoming.

Place is not a local geographic specificity (or not only that) but an aspect of potentiality.

There is always potential to become something other.
Justice for the more-than-human

- Granting legal personhood to rivers, lakes and mountains
- Lake Erie USA became a living being on 26 February 2019 through an emergency bill of rights (not a bundle of ecosystem services)
- All nature in Ecuador is enshrined in the right of Pachamama
- Whanganui River in NZ declared an indivisible and living whole
changing the stories

a common liveable world must be composed bit by bit learn to tell gaia stories or geo stories other worlding we need matters of fact, matters of concern, matters of care need alignment not decisions in our seriously entangled, messy world. we need to change the story of finite systemic coherence
Donna Haraway 2016
What does this mean for us?

Practice the art of noticing - how humanity is entangled in lively materiality.

Recognise diverse economies, societies, ecologies not always about capitalism.

Eco-design to cope with the climate crisis we are living through now drawing on past, present future.

Reimagine our futures through radical re-storytelling in order to co-design a future worth living.
Well-being, Ecology, Gender and Community Innovative Training Network

research and training agenda with EU funding to educate the next generation of interdisciplinary social-environmental scientists on feminist political ecology in Europe.

made up of 15 PhDs, 9 research institutes 7 community organisations

Looks at local communities’ coping strategies in global north and global south to negotiate life in human damaged environments and heal the rift between economic growth, life and livelihoods.

Applies a feminist political ecology lens to what is happening on the ground at the community level. Brings a post development perspective to the issues of climate change, destructive development practices, inequalities
1. Climate Change, Economic Development and Extractivism
how communities respond to economic and ecological changes in everyday social struggles

2. Commoning, Community Economies and the Politics of Care;
how gender relations are being shaped in emerging practices of commoning, community economies and work of care for families and communities in successful strategies of ‘living well together’.

3. Nature/Culture/Embodiment and Technologies
how environmental justice takes into account the ways embodied, gendered and everyday lived experiences are mediated by technological interventions