Introduction

The Women’s Manifesto on Climate Change, published on 15 May 2007, emerged from a collaboration between the Women’s Environmental Network (WEN) and the National Federation of Women’s Institutes (NFWI), forged at the UK party political conferences in Autumn 2006. Stemming from awareness that environmental politics can be ‘gender-blind’, both organizations support women to voice and take action on their environmental concerns, and to campaign on local and global issues, including climate change (see Bond and Clevely 2010; Metcalf et al. 2015; WEN 2010, n.d.). The NFWI’s remit goes beyond environmental issues, although it is not always easy, or appropriate, to establish where the boundaries lie between these issues and those of broader social justice (Di Chiro 2008). Interestingly, WEN’s incursion into climate change campaigning had been energetically discussed at its trustees’ meetings. WEN had historically campaigned on a range of environmental issues as they specifically affected women’s lives. Its past campaigns included those against lindane in chocolate, as well as how chocolate manufacturers target women consumers; chemicals in sanitary products which can cause the potentially lethal adverse reaction ‘toxic shock syndrome’; and disposable nappies, which, by 2007 were contributing 3 to 4 per cent to the UK’s non-recyclable waste stream (The Nappy Alliance 2007; Metcalf et al. 2015). Campaigning to address climate change in ways that empowered and benefited women would be a departure in WEN’s style and scope and was, in part, occasioned by the changes in a funding environment in which climate change-related activity was being prioritized. Eventually, WEN trustees and employees agreed, with a degree of reluctance, to reframe its work to take advantage of these changes.

As one of the participants at these party conferences, and one of the originators of the manifesto, I will reflect, from an insider perspective, on the genesis of the document. This chapter presents a narrative of how the manifesto emerged, and uses it as a basis for critically examining the gender politics in the environmental movement(s), particularly in the United Kingdom. My focus is on the position of women in women-focused organizations such as WEN and in more mainstream (or, perhaps more accurately, ‘malestream’) environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs). I argue that ENGOs operate in a gendered institutional and political milieu that they reflect as much as challenge and that, as such, their power to create change is limited. Nevertheless, I am encouraged by what I perceive as a renewed interest in and commitment to feminism in many parts of the world, which may yet generate some potential for systemic change.
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To make sense of these phenomena, I draw on two feminist theories that I have found useful for understanding the context and potential of women’s climate change action: feminist political theorist Nancy Fraser’s ‘status model’, in which ‘recognition’ is seen as a corollary of redistribution in the domain of justice, and the epistemic privilege of ‘standpoint theory’, whereby structural change can only be created by those with least to benefit from prevailing systems of power.

The birth of the Women’s Manifesto on Climate Change

In the late summer of 2006, the editor of The Independent newspaper invited WEN to participate in the ‘Climate Clinic’ fringe event the newspaper was organizing at the UK party political conferences that autumn. These conferences are increasingly seen by businesses and other organizations as opportunities for lobbying the governing party and its main opposition (Harris and Lock 2002). At the conferences, the influence of lobbyists is signified by their relative proximity to the decision makers. Fringe participants do not have the right to enter the main conference and will only, therefore, have access to those politicians and their advisors who agree to join a fringe panel or are interested enough to attend. Participants at the Climate Clinic ranged from the giants of the ENGO world such as World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Friends of the Earth (FoE), and Greenpeace; quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations (NGOs, or ‘quangos’) such as Natural England; academic institutes such as the Tyndall Centre; and businesses keen to present their green credentials, such as Saab and the Co-operative Bank. A handful of smaller NGOs were also invited in a gesture toward inclusiveness. Speakers across the programme included journalists, business representatives, a few MP and ministers sympathetic to (or at least wanting to be associated with) environmental issues, and spokespeople from participating organizations. The panels, as advertised in the programme for the Labour Conference, were overwhelmingly male, with the 101 male presenters vastly outnumbering the nineteen females (the one exception was WEN’s all-female panel). Of the thirty-five panels, only three were chaired by women. Notably twelve panels, including a number of high profile ENGOs, had no women contributors at all. The Climate Clinic at the Conservative Party conference was smaller, but no more gender balanced. Of the twenty-five panels, one was chaired by a woman; participants included sixty men and six women. So few women were there that it is easier to count those panels with women (four) than those without.

The Independent published a special conference edition newspaper featuring the programme and sixteen commissioned articles, of which only two were written by women: one by WEN (Sutton 2006a, b) about the role women can and do play in mitigating climate change, and one on making it easier for consumers to buy products with low environmental impact written for the retailer B&Q (Kenrick 2006a). The front covers of the Labour and Conservative special editions featured, respectively, a close up of then prime minister Tony Blair and, more strikingly, a Gore-Tex clad Tory party leader David Cameron striding out across the Arctic snow with a team of huskies in his now legendary bid for the green vote.

At the Labour fringe conference, WEN’s panel ‘Climate Change Is a Gendered Issue’ featured Susan Buckingham (me) speaking for WEN; Ruth Bond, then Chair of the NFWI; and Emily Thornberry, Labour MP for South Islington. It was chaired by Baroness Uddin (Member of the House of Lords). The panel for the Conservative Party event comprised Joanne Bowlt (the regional coordinator of ‘Women2Win’, an organization supporting women to stand as parliamentary candidates for the Conservative Party); Baroness Byford (then Shadow Minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [DEFRA]); Juliet Davenport, the Founder and CEO of Good Energy, a renewable energy power distributor; Ruth Bond; and myself. It was chaired by Lucy Siegle, ethical living journalist with The Observer. We had been allocated rather low profile
time slots at both events (8:30 and 9:30 in the mornings), and attracted a (not entirely unexpectedly) small audience, mostly women.

Unsurprisingly, our experience of participating in these fringe events was of being overwhelmed by a hyper-(white)-masculinity, which reflected our experience of government and ENGOs more generally (with more on this later). It was our perceived exclusion from the political and organizational ‘boys’ clubs’ of environmental politics, the clear but unacknowledged masculine gender bias that manifested in the ‘out of hours’ social arrangements at both conferences (among other things), which prompted the initial drafting of a specifically women’s manifesto on climate change. Only able to afford a modest hotel in the inflated accommodation market of conference season, we four women, the chairs and press and public affairs officers of WEN and NFWI, retired to our quiet, darkly upholstered and veneered hotel bar to ponder what this manifesto might include, and how it might differ from the climate change campaigning of mainstream ENGOs. As a result of these discussions, the two organizations commissioned a survey of five hundred women to identify ‘what women wanted’ regarding climate change, and the data generated provided the basis of the manifesto (see Box 26.1 and WEN/NFWI 2007).

The broad categories that encompassed the findings of the survey were that much more action was necessary to tackle climate change; more help and guidance was needed to enable women to take decisions to minimize carbon impact; and greater involvement and representation of women in climate change action and decision-making was required. The manifesto was officially endorsed by Green Party MP and WEN ambassador Caroline Lucas, and collected signatories, including ActionAid, Oxfam, Breast Cancer UK, Women’s Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). With this support, the manifesto was used in campaigning for the UK government to do more at both national and international levels to enable women and others to live and act in ways that reduce their carbon emissions.² Box 26.1 reproduces the main points of the manifesto, which can be seen as covering the areas of home, travel, shopping, energy, children and family responsibilities, jobs and education, and developing countries. What comes through, also, is women’s desire to have some recognition by government for their concerns and the work they are already doing, a concern which Nancy Fraser (2000) considers, alongside redistribution, to be a key dimension of justice.

Fraser’s (2000) ‘status model’, in which recognition is understood as ‘a question of status’, and where a lack of access to resources (economic) impedes participation (political), is helpful to understand the potential of social action and protest. The model identifies ‘struggles for recognition [properly conceived]’ as an aid to redistributing ‘power and wealth and can promote interaction and co-operation across gulfs of difference’ (Fraser 2000:109). With this in mind, I will next review how recognition of women has been addressed in the broader institutional context of environmental politics before considering women’s experiences in ENGOs, as the latter are more embedded in masculinist institutional structures than might, at first glance, be expected.

Box 26.1 Women’s Manifesto on Climate Change

1. In our homes
   - More clear guidance, advice and practical support to enable women to switch to a low-carbon lifestyle;
   - More government grants and incentives to make green energy choices, including energy conservation, cheaper and more easily available;
• More help to prevent waste and consistent and comprehensive recycling facilities in all local authority areas;
• Stronger environmental standards for both new builds and refurbishments, to make all housing stock carbon neutral.

2. In our travel
• Efficient, affordable and safe public transport, which women are more likely to use than men;
• Safe and comprehensive cycling and walking options, including car-free school runs for women and children;
• Introduction of a tax on aviation fuel and/or other fiscal measures to ensure the true environmental and social costs of air travel are accounted for.

3. In the marketplace
• Lower prices for environmentally friendly goods;
• Clear labelling so consumers know the food miles and carbon footprint of the goods they buy;
• Legislation to ban products which are unsustainable or contribute heavily to climate change;
• Legislation to encourage product durability and re-use, reduce excess packaging and waste;
• Much stronger support for local food production and supply.

4. In our use of energy
• Investment in renewable energy which matches or exceeds that in non-renewable sources, to make it a viable industry;
• More government grants and incentives to reduce carbon emissions through greater energy efficiency and lower energy demand;
• More support for microgeneration as an alternative to fossil-fuel based electricity generation;
• Greater transparency so that women know where the energy they use is coming from, allowing them to make greener choices.

5. For us and our children
• More information about the best ways to reduce the environmental impact of the first years of a child’s life, for example, support for real nappy promotion schemes;
• More education about climate change, its causes and ways to avoid it – for all age groups;
• More help, support and encouragement for women to enable them to take climate change action at home and with their family.

6. For the future
• Equal involvement of women and men in environmental decision-making in industry, government, and civil society;
• Measures to increase the number of girls and women studying science subjects and working in science related jobs;
• Recognition that most women are concerned with the expansion of nuclear power. A survey for WEN found 72 per cent against; other surveys have recorded more than 50 per cent of women against;
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- The inclusion of air and sea freight CO₂ emissions in the UK’s carbon footprint so the true scale of emissions from food and product miles can be measured and action can be taken to reduce them;
- Greater promotion to UK residents of holidays in the UK, without flying;
- Greater government recognition of the contribution that women are already making in reducing personal and domestic carbon emissions, which account for the majority of the nation’s carbon footprint.

7. For developing countries

- Recognition by the UK Government that climate change is a matter of social justice, affecting the poor in developing countries, and especially women, the most;
- More government funding of initiatives which will help women and their families to adapt to climate change, focusing on the need for sufficient food, water and renewable clean energy, cooking fuels, a climate-proof asset base to prevent poverty, protection against climate-induced floods, famine, drought and conflict, and the provision of climate change related education and information;
- Support for appropriate climate offsetting schemes which will help to support poor women in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change;
- More knowledge transfer of low carbon technologies to develop sustainable solutions in both developed and developing countries;
- Respect for indigenous cultures and values and avoidance of exporting western values and consumerism.

Stop Climate Chaos

As member organizations of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition, both WEN and NFWI support demands on the UK Government to:

- Negotiate internationally for global warming to peak at no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. This will mean global greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2015 and then decline irreversibly thereafter;
- Institute a Carbon Budget to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by an average of at least 3 per cent p.a.;
- Give all necessary support to developing countries to help them adapt to climate change.

Conclusion

The women of this country have the will to tackle climate change. What we need now is the way – which is currently made difficult by government inaction. With our concern for the environment, we are your single biggest constituency to the cause and an important part of the solution.

The role of gender in environmental policy-making

Since 1996, and following the European Union’s adoption of it as a policy approach, the UK has made a legal commitment to gender mainstreaming, which the EU defines as ‘the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men’
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(European Commission 2016). In pilot research for the EU’s Environment Directorate, I explored how effectively waste management was gender mainstreamed, and found little evidence of success six years after the legislation was introduced (Buckingham et al. 2005). Angela McRobbie (2009) calls into question how just gender mainstreaming is, suggesting that it bolsters neoliberal managerialism by focusing on how decision-making can benefit from women’s skills and knowledge, rather than on the gender justice of equal opportunities (and outcomes) for women. Within the context of climate change, Röhr et al. (2008) argue that gender mainstreaming has been institutionalized very tenuously, and attributes this weakness to the androcentricism of governmental institutions. They go on to state that while it is necessary to have an equal number of male and female decision makers, alone it will not guarantee ‘(gender) justice in institutional orientation’. This view informs Magnusdottir and Kronsell’s (2014) conclusions about the lack of impact on the drafting of gender sensitive climate change policy in Scandinavian countries, despite gender balance, and in some cases, greater proportions of women, in climate policy-making. Röhr et al. (2008) argue the need to go beyond a consideration of gender differences to understand and question gender relationships which are underpinned by differential power. Without dismantling these structural dimensions of gender inequality, it is impossible to make any fundamental changes, which may explain the limited success of gender mainstreaming.

It is useful to bear this claim in mind when considering efforts to increase the proportion of women on company boards. Since the publication of the 2011 Davies Report, the UK government has, at least superficially, acknowledged that businesses would do better if their boards were more gender balanced, and has agreed a voluntary target of 25 per cent of board members to be women for the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) one hundred listed companies (Davies 2011). By 2014, 20.7 per cent of FTSE100 board members were women. Of course, this assumes that what Röhr et al. (2008) would term the androcentrism of these organizations remains intact, and the inclusion of more women enables better performance within existing structures. Better gender balanced boards (40 per cent minimum of either men or women) are also the subject of an EU directive which was agreed upon by the European Parliament in November 2013. Contradictorily, however, there is no similar requirement for government departments to follow this practice, and these are weighted toward men. At the time of writing, the departments with greatest responsibility for climate change related matters have between 25 per cent of senior managers who are women (Department of Transport) and 40 per cent (DEFRA). The UK Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has 30 per cent of their most senior management posts held by women.3

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) can be carried out by policy-making bodies to determine how potential policies are likely to affect ‘protected groups’ identified by the UK’s Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). While not a legal requirement, EIAs can be used to provide evidence of complying with the PSED, which is a requirement. This could be seen as an attempt to ‘gender mainstream’ and has led to the practice of reviewing policies for their likely impact on vulnerable populations. In reality, however, these assessments are often inexperstly made after the policies have been drafted, by staff who lack the training to undertake a rigorous analysis (Buckingham and Kulcur 2017). There is no evidence of equality concerns informing policy design at its inception, which suggests (after Röhr et al. [2008]) that the gendering of institutions and institutional practices are preserved intact.

Feminist campaigners are caught in a paradox here: while supporting any move, such as gender mainstreaming or the gender equality duty, which encourages greater equality of opportunity to achieve decision-making status for (some) women, we recognize that this is not, in itself, likely to change fundamentally the way in which business is done, or how climate change continues to be produced, analyzed, framed, and addressed.

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Male domination of climate change policy-making

Often claimed as the pre-eminent environmental issue of our time, climate change is both the result and reinforcer of deep-seated social and political divisions. It is the result of a ‘long durée’ drive for economic and material growth which itself is predicated on inequalities: between countries, communities, ethnicities, classes, and genders. No system built on these inequalities can address climate change, as the past twenty years of superficial attempts have made clear. Joni Seager (2009) reflects on the genesis of the target of holding climate change to two degrees above what was the average global temperature when climate change began to be considered as an international problem. She cites William Nordhaus as proposing this as the tipping point, or ‘trade-off between economic growth and environmental policy’ (Nordhaus 1979 in Seager 2009:13), and thereby what has become understood as a scientific ‘desideratum’ had its origin in the mind of ‘economic man’.

The fields that dominate climate change decision-making, whether as an entirety (economists, politicians, civil servants, climate change scientists) or in its component parts (transport, energy, water, waste management) are heavily dominated by professional men who, by virtue of their status in society, are precisely those most able to evade its impacts (see MacGregor 2010; Nelson 2012). Feminist standpoint theory, most often attributed to philosopher Sandra Harding (ed) (2003), argues that those so embedded in, and benefiting from, positions of power cannot readily see the consequences of this power and as such lack the epistemic privilege required to understand and therefore properly address this. It argues that the most authentic epistemic privilege is available to those who are most likely to be affected. However, as those who monitor gender (im)balances in the international climate change negotiations consistently point out, these are dominated by men. As Figure 26.1 shows, from data

![Figure 26.1](https://example.com/figure26.1.png)

**Figure 26.1** Percentage of women delegation heads and members of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, 1996–2015

*Source: GenderCC (2015)*
compiled by GenderCC, the proportion of women members of negotiating teams rarely (and for women leads never) exceeds 30 per cent. More salutary is the lack of what might be seen as steady progress, with the data for the UNFCCC conference of the parties – COP21 – in 2015 revealing one of the lower participation rates for women since 1996 (GenderCC 2015; see also Morrow in this volume).

A most striking illustration of the masculinism – machismo, even – of climate change decision-making is provided by the international negotiations which take place every year. By their detailed account of COP 6 in 2000 at The Hague, Grubb and Yamin (2001) identify the brinkmanship, lack of transparency, and dominance of English language speaking elites as contributing to the breakdown of talks, and particularly the failure of the European Union and United States to agree on elements of the Kyoto Protocol. Particularly inflammatory was the dispute between the UK and French delegations occasioned by then UK Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott’s decision to negotiate a deal ‘backstage’ with the Americans, which was heavily challenged by a number of EU member states, including the Nordic countries, Germany, and France, whose chief negotiator was a woman: then French environment minister (and founding member of the French Green Party), Dominique Voynet. According to a UK newspaper report at the time:

[T]he Deputy Prime Minister blamed [Dominique Voynet] for the collapse of the environment summit in The Hague. . . . Mr Prescott had stormed out of the summit in the early hours of Saturday, complaining that Mme Voynet had scuppered a deal on climate control because she had ‘cold feet’ and was ‘tired and exhausted’.

(McSmith 2000:n.p.)

In response, she accused him of behaving like an ‘inveterate macho’. . . . With the backing of Downing Street, Mr Prescott sought to make a joke out of her rebuke, despite concern that the row could damage relations with France . . . ‘Macho man – moi?’ he said in the Commons. ‘I must say that remark leaves me most gutted’. Voynet retaliated by describing Mr Prescott’s reaction as ‘really pathetic’. His comments, she said, were ‘unacceptable, both in form and content . . . mediocre and shabby’. Later she told a news conference: ‘He does no service either to his image or mine; nor does he do any service to the cause of the EU’. Mme Voynet added with heavy irony: ‘Of course a woman is tired, is frightened and doesn’t understand things’.

(McSmith 2000:n.p.)

Voynet’s admission ‘that she was (by the end of the final night) too exhausted to understand the issues and explain them properly to the full EU group of Ministers’ (Grubb and Yamin 2001) is probably more reflective of the conditions of negotiating (the hours of which would surely contravene any international labour law) than of her ability, and bespeaks the machismo of international climate change negotiations commented on by participants and observers in these conferences. For example, one observer notes that responses from women’s organizations involved in COP9 in 2003 ‘showed that the group who felt uncomfortable with both the mode and content of negotiations was bigger than expected’ (Röhr 2009). Since this gendered ‘showdown’, there have been calls for more women to be involved in, as well as gendered concerns to be addressed by, the international climate change negotiations (Röhr and Hemmati 2008), although there appears to have been limited development in either regard (see Buckingham 2010 and Figure
26.1). In addition, there is very little attention to these issues by non-feminist scholars of global environmental politics and policy-making.

It is interesting that research indicates a connection, which may or not be causal, between governments with higher than average proportions of women in them, and those which have stronger climate change related legislation (Buckingham 2010). The relationship between countries in which women have higher political status and those which had lower per capita CO₂ emissions has been tested statistically in a cross-national study by Ergas and York (2012). Even when controlling for variables such as countries’ level of ‘modernization’, ‘world-system position’ and ‘democracy’, the relationship between women’s status and per capita CO₂ emissions appears to be robust. In 2012 the COP18 agreed to start, and monitor, a process to move toward gender equality in climate change decision-making positions, and COP20:

also known as the Lima work programme on gender, requested the secretariat to include in this report information regarding the implementation by the secretariat of decisions that include a gender approach, in keeping with applicable gender-related policies under the Convention.

(UNFCCC 2015:3)

The Women and Gender Constituency (WGC), formed in 2009 and recognized as one of the nine official constituencies by the UNFCCC in 2011, works with the UNFCCC secretariat, national governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to ensure that ‘women’s issues and gender justice’ are addressed by the Convention (WGC 2015). However, the extent to which these initiatives and processes can achieve systemic change, bearing in mind the caveats concerning gender mainstreaming discussed in this chapter, is questionable.

This dominant masculinity in climate change decision-making in industry, business, and government, and indeed of privileging climate change as ‘the’ pre-eminent environmental problem of its time (see MacGregor 2014), could potentially be challenged by gender sensitive environmental lobbying, but in the UK (and many other places) the environmental movement is similarly characterized by cultures of masculinity.

Cultures of masculinity in environmental non-governmental organizations

Generally, as Rakibe Kulcur’s (2013) research nicely illustrates, mainstream ENGOs are not sympathetic to nuances of gender. In her interviews with key players in UK ENGOs, there is a clear, and sometimes apparently wilful, lack of understanding of the role gender plays in the construction, production, and resolution of environmental issues, as well as their impacts. The available, and stark, facts of the men and women who are employed, promoted, and appointed to senior positions in management and on the boards of ENGOs are augmented by revealing interviews in which (mostly male) senior decision makers argue that gender is not an issue for generic (primarily conservation oriented) ENGOs, but instead for women’s, or perhaps development, organizations. Employment practices that resist flexible working and demand long and unsociable hours while offering only limited term contracts appear to be gendered, as they do not easily accommodate caring responsibilities, most commonly performed by women. Kulcur’s women interviewees revealed how, for example,

You don’t really see many female managers at all. I’ve been quite alone in that regard . . . even when they are women, the culture itself felt very male . . . there is a way
of working that I have noticed in the environmental movement that is very male, is very macho.

*(quoted in Kulcur 2013:206)*

This respondent concludes that she has ‘had so many sexist remarks’ and that ‘moving into the environmental sector turned me into a much stronger feminist than I think I was before’ (Kulcur 2013:206–207). Those women who are promoted tend not to have children or caring responsibilities. One of Kulcur’s male respondents suggested that the number of female managers who did not have children ‘maybe . . . proves the point that the women who don’t have children go higher up in the career ladder . . . whereas if you look at the men . . . well, two out of three have children’ (213).

One of Kulcur’s main conclusions is that ENGOs are failing to erode gendered working practices as they appear to mimic the masculinist institutional structures and concerns of those organizations from which they seek funding. At one point in her research Kulcur was asked by a male chief executive officer whether she has children, and when she affirmed that she did (she had one daughter at that point), his response was ‘There you go, it is too late, you’ve ruined your career [laughs]’ (216).

Years of representing WEN at government briefings and environmental gatherings have impressed on me just how masculinist the mainstream environmental organizations can be. At one meeting convened by the UK’s DEFRA in the early 2000s, I recall the combative stance of the CEOs of two leading environmental organizations, dressed in sweaters and jeans, standing at the back of the room, conspicuously challenging civil servants at every opportunity. My neighbour at this event was a woman who had once led the Green Party. I was surprised to hear her admit to feeling intimidated by these alternative ‘masters of the universe’, such that she failed to add her voice to the debate. This is a good illustration of feminist theorist Iris Marion Young’s argument that the dominant style of communication and discussion in Western society is one that values the ‘assertive and confrontational’, rather than the ‘tentative, exploratory or conciliatory’ (1997:64). This, she says, encourages those with a sense of entitlement, while effectively silencing the less privileged, including women, who ‘often feel intimidated by the argument requirements’.

Where women are conspicuous, however, is in the marketing of environmental campaigns. Consider, for example, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals’ (PETA) campaign to ban fur using the near naked bodies of young and slender women (for evidence, type ‘PETA I’d rather go campaign’ in Google images), or more recently, in the winter of 2013, the focus on one of the minority of women protestors against drilling for oil in the Arctic becoming the ‘poster girl’ of the ‘Free the Arctic 30’. One Twitter response (Digital Spy) asked ‘Anyone else tempted to join Greenpeace to meet hot girls like [the woman portrayed]?’, which generated threads of sexual innuendo. However insulting these responses are, I think Greenpeace has to take a share of responsibility for using this young woman’s photograph – vulnerable and behind bars – to the virtual exclusion of images from the rest of the Arctic 30. A review of the photographs and short autobiographical reasons for joining the campaign reveal eight of the thirty to be women, with a noticeably younger age average than the twenty-two men (*The Guardian* 2013). It could be argued that the image of the woman used represented the only British woman on board the Arctic Sunrise, although there were also five British men, who did not feature nearly so prominently.

organizations (including mainstream ENGOs, foundations and government agencies), in which she finds that although some gains have been made by white women, men are still much more likely than women to hold powerful positions.  

The future of gender justice and climate justice

So how might the aims of the Women’s Manifesto on Climate Change regarding action, information, and recognition be taken forward in such a masculinist world? Recalling Fraser’s (2000) work on recognition, which places it alongside distribution within the context of justice, it can be seen that strategies to achieve more women in decision-making will not, in themselves, change the lack of attention to women’s voices, although this is still a worthwhile aim. The environmental justice literature argues that those who have the least, in terms of resources and power, bear the brunt of environmental problems (see Di Chiro 2008; Walker 2013). Given that those who have the most to lose in a material sense from solving these problems have an interest in preserving the prevailing status quo, any situation in which decision-making is concentrated within an elite group is unlikely to alter this arrangement. Feminist standpoint theory may also be useful here because it argues that those who are most on the periphery of systems of power and privilege – those with epistemic privilege – can better see its faults (Harding 2003). They are therefore more reliable critics than powerful elites. The privileged among women who are admitted to positions of power in climate change policy- and decision-making are, on current evidence, the highly educated and credentialized, typically with no dependents to care for or with the wherewithal to buy high quality care services. They consequently lack this perspective of the outsider. Attending to numerical gender balance alone, therefore, is unlikely to significantly disrupt the system, which has created the conditions for anthropogenic climate change, in order to create the structural social change that is needed.

Paradoxically, evidence of truly engrained sexism and male entitlement, privilege and power provided, for example, by the ‘Everyday Sexism’ project in the UK (everydaysexism.com); by the repressive reaction toward women protesters in the Middle East (FIDH 2013); and by widespread international concern about male violence against women in India occasioned by the gang rape and murder of a young woman on a bus in Delhi in 2013 (BBC 2012), appears to have raised the profile of, and renewed commitment to, feminism by a new generation of women and some men, and some of this may be slowly encroaching on the environmental movement. For example, the ‘Federation of Young Greens’ in Europe produced a manifesto comprising five areas, albeit addressed separately: gender and LGBTQ+; migration and free movement; social Europe; democratic Europe; energy, climate change, and agriculture (FYEG 2013). FoE’s ‘Big Ideas Project’, launched in 2014 to identify ten main themes critical to the next thirty-five years, identifies women’s empowerment as key to achieving environmental sustainability as one of these ten ‘big ideas’ (FoE 2015).

Social media is also a platform for alternative grassroots environmental action; witness, for instance, the activity of Avaaz and 38 Degrees in recent climate protests. If these environmental and feminist organizations can speak to each other more directly, then the potential for gender sensitive climate decisions is likely to increase. There is, then, potential for the few women’s environmental groups, and the Women’s Manifesto for Climate Change to intervene to encourage this dialogue, although, to date, these groups have a low social media presence.

Research into how environmental decision-making and campaigning is gendered is currently scarce and has a low profile in the field of environmental politics and social movements. As a relatively low priority for research funding, arguments have often relied on a small number of reports of practical projects and personal experiences, small scale ethnographic research and generalizations of varying reliability. A much higher consideration needs to be accorded...
to examining gender relations, which entails studies of men and masculinities as well as those of women and femininities. More attention also needs to be given to how gender norms, roles, and relations affect, structure, and result from environmental problems, including climate change. This work needs to articulate practice with research, and be grounded in a broad social justice context.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that women’s role in climate change advocacy in the Global North is, in many ways, a reaction to the marginalization of women in environmental politics – both formal and informal. Using the development of the Women’s Manifesto of Climate Change as a starting point to examine women’s roles and achievements in climate change campaigning, I explored how gender is addressed in policy-making and how environmental campaigning generally is blind to gender concerns. Advocacy to raise gender as an issue in climate change, therefore, requires more than the insertion of gender into policy, or even, the insertion of more women into climate change policy-making. It requires challenges to the social structure in which institutions, from government and businesses to NGOs, deeply embed gender inequalities. Groups such as the WEN are those most marginalized in environmental campaigning and could, therefore, be said to hold ‘epistemic privilege’ in this arena. The recognition of women’s concerns, reflected in the Women’s Manifesto of Climate Change, can be scaled-up to illustrate the general lack of recognition of women’s collective voices in campaigning. But recognition is usually claimed rather than given, and I suggest that some cause for hope in new movements for gender and climate justice emerging from unorthodox protests and campaigns, to which WEN has contributed.

Notes

1 Every year in the UK the political parties’ annual conferences are scheduled in the same order, with the minor parties earlier (e.g., Green Party, Liberal Democrats), followed by the Labour Party, and with the Conservative Party meeting closing the party conference season. This chronological order, Labour before Conservative, is used to discuss WEN’s involvement in fringe events at both conferences.
2 For further details of the manifesto, see: www.wen.org.uk/climate-change/
Numbers may have changed since the time of writing. In July 2016 Theresa May (the UK’s second woman prime minister) disbanded the Department of Energy and Climate Change.
4 For example, in 2009, The Lancet and the Institute for Global Health Commission (University College London) argued that climate change was the biggest global health threat of the twenty-first century and called for a ‘public health movement that frames the threat of climate change for humankind as a health issue’ (2009:1696). See: www.ucl.ac.uk/global-health/project-pages/lancet1/ucl-lancet-climate-change.pdf. The EU holds that climate change and its impacts are ‘the greatest environmental, social and economic threats our planet is facing’, and that this ‘is becoming a key international problem of the 21st century’. See: http://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/index_en.cfm?pg=climate
5 Taylor’s (2014) report highlights the fact that the domination of US environmental organizations by white people is a much more striking problem than the imbalanced male-female ratio in leadership. She finds, for example, that ‘despite the growth in the ethnic minority population in the US, the percentage of minorities on the boards or general staff of environmental organizations does not exceed 16% in the three types of institutions studied’ (Taylor 2014:2). Her research revealed that while 76.9 per cent of the presidents and 71.3 per cent of the chairs of the boards of environmental conservation and preservation societies sampled were male, 88.7 per cent of leadership positions in the same organizations were held by people who are white (2014:49–50).
6 But see the EU’s Horizon 2020 research programme, launched in 2013, which calls for greater gender balance among researchers and more consideration of gender issues in research.
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References


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UNFCCC (2012) ‘Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol’, FCCC/CP/2012/8/Add.3.


