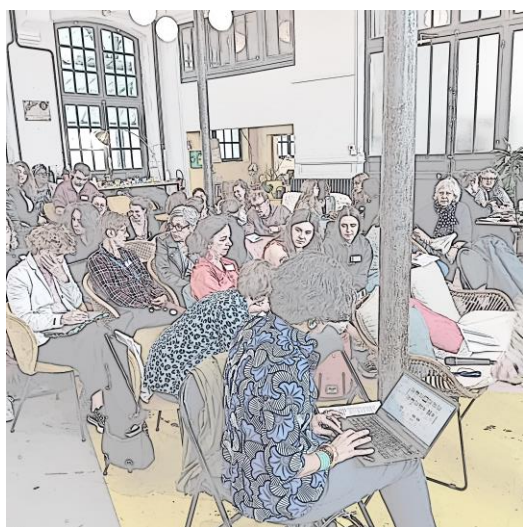




The ecological transition must be socially just and feminist!

Workshop Report

- *Why should action against the climate crisis tackle extractivism and consider gender issues?*
- *Does the transition towards renewable energy in the Global North lead to the destruction of the livelihoods of people in the Global South?*
- *How do we include gender issues in an intersectional way in climate policies?*
- *How can environmental organizations deal with gender equality issues internally?*



These (and other) critical questions were discussed during a **workshop on “Gender and Climate Justice”**,

held on **May 22, 2024 in Paris**

at the feminist house **Cité Audacieuse**¹,



organized by **Adéquations**² in cooperation with **WIDE Austria**³ and the **European WIDE+ network**⁴, with the support of **“Feminists for Alternatives on Climate and Environment” programme (FACE)**.

The event was attended by a wide range of around 50 representatives from different NGOs (feminist, international solidarity, environmental associations) and institutions.

The participants discussed challenges related to a just and really sustainable transition from a feminist perspective.

¹ <https://citeaudacieuse.fr/>

² <http://www.adequations.org/>

³ <https://wide-netzwerk.at/wide-austria/>

⁴ <https://wideplus.org/>

The workshop was facilitated by **Bénédicte Fiquet** and **Sarah Mantah** (both Association Adéquations). It was introduced by the organizers **Yveline Nicolas** for Adéquation and **Claudia Thallmayer** for WIDE Austria, who highlighted:

- the need to debate social and gender justice in relation to climate change,
- the necessity to include gender equality and intersectional issues in climate policies,
- the dilemma of how the energy transition is about to lead to new forms of neocolonial exploitation in the Global South, while ensuring decarbonisation in the Global North,
- the need to build common advocacy in relation to the issues that the speakers were about to bring up.



Emma Rainey (WIDE+) presented the COPGendered project with a freshly published WIDE+ briefing paper on gender and climate justice⁵. It contains different sections like a general introduction, including e.g. women as active agents in the context of climate change, chapters on gender and energy, climate justice and LGBTIQ, climate-induced forced migration, as well as on extractivism, and gender and mobility (transport). It is meant as a background resource for adult education but also for advocacy purposes for a gender-just transition.



“Climate justice” implies to consider social effects of the environmental damages caused by the global warming. It is a well-known fact that the impacts of climate change are worse for those who have historically less contributed to global warming due to greenhouse

gas emissions induced by Western industrialization: developing countries, and marginalized people across the globe.



Among these, it is often women and girls who bear the brunt of the burden of deteriorated living conditions, in terms of more unpaid subsistence and care work, be it in rural settings where they depend on small scale agriculture, herding, or working in informal settings.

Women have less resources to adapt, and they are less mobile in case they are forced to leave their place and migrate somewhere else, in search for a new livelihood.

⁵ Available in English, French, Bulgarian, Swedish, Spanish: <https://wideplus.org/copgendered-project/>

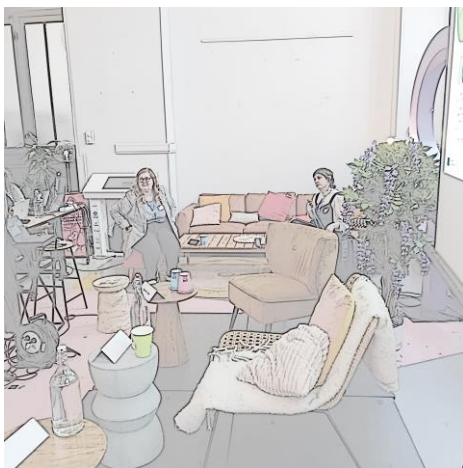
Patricia Muñoz Cabrera (WIDE+) made a critical assessment of the European Union green transition policies, also known as the Green Deal. This policy package includes legal frameworks and financial instruments, among which are the “Critical Raw Materials Act” (on sourcing) or “Global Gateway” (on investment).



She presented evidence demonstrating that EU commitments to reducing CO₂ emissions is contributing to social conflict, increased extractivism, human rights abuses, environmental damage, and will further accentuate loss of livelihoods, loss of biodiversity and gender and social injustices on the ground.

Fossil fuel extraction as well as other extractive industries, contributes to climate change. Extractive industry sites are often located in ecologically fragile environments, thus worsening the negative effects of the ongoing climate change (for example Lithium extraction in the Andean highlands of Chile, or gold mining in Sudan).

Legal frameworks like the ILO Convention 169 on indigenous peoples can play a crucial role in stopping harmful projects. Patricia Muñoz Cabrera highlighted *“how indigenous communities in Chile – some led by women leaders – and women organizations have organized resistance and won some battles”*. For her, *“a “green transition” that takes place at the expense of the fundamental rights of indigenous women or any other marginalized population in the global South is neither sustainable nor just. In a similar way, an energy transition that commodifies nature to ensure macroeconomic growth will exacerbate the impact of climate change, with irreversible consequences of our fragile ecosystems”*.



Elena Georgiadi (GenderCC/LIFE)⁶ pointed out: *“A feminist energy transition advocates for a fossil fuel phase-out whilst addressing racist, neo-colonial and gendered power structures; it fosters the active participation of marginalised groups in energy discussions, and it challenges the growth model for our economies. Just Transition is “just” only if it aligns with intersectional feminism”*.

Frequently, gender-based violence is related to territories where extractive industries operate. Sudan is one of the big producers of gold, with gold – among others – being used in the electric and electronic industry. Informal gold mining in Sudan exacerbates the degradation of land, already affected by the climate crisis. Women are the least to benefit from the gold production, whilst having to deal with the erosion of their agriculture- or herding-based livelihoods.

⁶ <http://gendercc.net/>

“Women typically work at the bottom of the supply chain, involved in tasks like reusing residual dirt left by men to extract gold, using mercury”, **Sara Mohamed**, environmental expert from Sudan (**WIDE Austria**), explained. “There’s a fear among women working informally at the lower end in mining of losing their jobs if they speak up about their hardships.” The gold business also fuels the civil war in Sudan, a conflict with devastating impacts on human security, with 6,5 million internally displaced and further two million exiled, after one year of war.



The presentation of these concrete cases clearly demonstrated the international and intersectional interconnections of climate justice.



Yveline Nicolas (Adéquations), pointed out the need for coherence of the so-called “energy and ecological transition” or “sustainable agriculture and food” policies: “The logical consequence of analyses and denunciations by civil society organizations of the mining boom and green extractivism must be a radical change in production and consumption models in rich countries.” Announcing that Adéquations would be working on the “feminism and degrowth” issues, she called on interested organizations to take part. She also stressed that the notion of climate justice enables concrete actions, such as the condemnation of Switzerland for climate inaction thanks to the “Aînés pour le climat” (“Climate Senior-Women”) at the European Court of Human Rights⁷, in solidarity with future generations.

Several initiatives, campaigns, reports were then presented to illustrate the added value of combining gender and climate issues and pointing the need for more support and dissemination.

The **Feminists for Alternatives on Climate and Environment programme (FACE)** was presented by **Aurélie Cerisot** (CCFD-Terre Solidaire).



FACE is a partnership between civil society organizations in France and Africa: CCFD-Terre Solidaire, Adéquations, ACORD Rwanda, ACORD Burundi, the pan-African ecofeminist alliance WoMin and the Rural Women’s Assembly movement. It is financed by the French Fund to Support Feminist CSOs (FSOF). “The projects supported combine gender and climate issues, for example: support for disabled women’s initiatives facing climate change in Burundi; dialogue between farmers and researchers on local seeds in Côte d’Ivoire, legal defense fund for women’s lands in South Africa”.⁸



⁷ <https://ainees-climat.ch/>

⁸ <http://www.adequations.org/spip.php?article2606>

According to **Oumou Koulibaly (WoMin African Alliance)**⁹, “*climate justice implies that the North take their responsibilities, by withdrawing completely from greenhouse gas emissions, not only in the North, but elsewhere, especially in Africa. It means putting an end to big dams, monocultures, new oil and gas exploration, and exploitations, carbon markets!*” In a video contribution, she presented the Ecofeminist Schools initiative: “*Local mobilizations where, for five days, women learn from each other, discuss climate justice, capitalism and its corollaries: patriarchy, imperialism, colonization, extractivism, at the root of the ecological crisis.*”

Salma Lamqaddam (ActionAid France)¹⁰, presented the campaign to restrict the fast fashion industry. “*It’s one of the most polluting industries in the world. It is responsible for around 10% of global emissions, consumes 93 billion cubic meters of water a year, and the dyes used pollute rivers and soils, affecting local ecosystems and the health of surrounding populations many of which are girls and women!*”. Fast fashion is based on an economic model that massively exploits women workers in developing countries. “*Women workers experience a double oppression: adding to working class exploitation, there is massive gender-based violence in the factories where men are in charge and women are subordinate*”.



ActionAid is promoting a bill to reduce the environmental impact of fast fashion brands, with a maximum production threshold per day, sanctions for multinationals that fail to meet these quotas, and the adoption of environmental labelling on products. ActionAid pleads to examine fast fashion by its dramatic impact on the planet, local communities and workers.

The issue of trade and consumption and the need for regulation led to the importance of addressing all players, including public authorities, trade unions and companies.

Aminata Niakaté, co-rapporteur of the report by the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE)¹¹ on “Gender inequality, climate crisis and ecological transition”, has developed a number of recommendations.



According to the report, we need to “*improve knowledge and research on the differentiated impacts of climate change, by*



systematizing the collection of gendered data when assessing the effects of environmental degradation and natural and technological disasters. This will make it easier to build public policies that integrate gender and climate, for example in the preliminary impact assessment of bills and proposed

⁹ <https://womin.africa/>

¹⁰ <https://www.actionaid.fr/publications/responsabilite-sociale-des-entreprises/loi-sur-la-fast-fashion-nos-demandes>

¹¹ <https://www.lecese.fr/actualites/avis-inegalites-genre-crise-climatique-transition-ecologique-adopte-avis>

legislation concerning the ecological transition. Let's engage all stakeholders, including companies, with the mix of green and greening professions and the promotion of women to positions of responsibility in these professions!"

Antoine Gatet (France Nature Environnement, the national federation of associations for the protection of the environment), co-rapporteur of the CESE report, asserted that "an environmental transformation is not possible in an unequal society, and can even reinforce inequalities if not thought with gender lens". Noting that issues of equality between women and men are a recent concern for environmental associations, he detailed the transversal approach to gender mainstreaming launched by FNE: *"All aspects of the organization are concerned: internal operations, with a charter of behaviour and values for employees and volunteers, for example, but also external communication (adoption of inclusive writing), and advocacy - which is more complex. Following an internal diagnosis, a gender action plan is currently being drawn up"*.



Numerous questions and contributions were received from the public. These included:

- We need to continue identifying initiatives that bring together gender, feminism and climate, and publicize existing educational tools, such as the gender and climate card game, the "Ecological transition: the challenges and benefits of gender equality" exhibition, the educational productions of Wide+'s COPGendered program, and so on. The same applies to methodologies such as participatory action research (such as Quartiers du Monde).

- It is important to generate "gender and climate" data, including from an intersectional perspective,

which is still insufficiently documented; and to provide concrete examples of practices to convince stakeholders, especially political decision-makers. Case studies may be used instead of big data when dealing with sensitive personal information like the gender-identity or sexual orientation of people.

- The objective of ecological justice or transition must not lead to the reinforcement of responsibilities that fall on women, such as care, or generate new inequalities (safety in public transport or in energy sobriety, such as public night lighting).
- Links can be established between stereotypes, sexism and over-consumption; consumer information needs to be developed with this in mind, not only in terms of health, but also in terms of paying a fair price to producers (e.g. fruit).



- Gender and climate issues also need to be explored in greater depth in terms of health (differentiated impacts of climate change on women's and men's bodies).
- The intersection of gender, climate and ecological transition requires us to address the global question of the capitalist and neoliberal model, of unequal free-trade agreements, of debt (financial/ecological) and of production/consumption models, so as not to displace the problem (green extractivism, sending waste and clothing to the South, leading to the destruction of ecosystems - on which peasant and indigenous women in particular depend).
- Progress has been made on corporate duty of care, but experience shows that binding standards are needed for real accountability, as voluntary standards are insufficient or lead to “green-washing” (and “gender-washing”).

Notes

The workshop was organized by the French NGO Adéquations (with support from the Programme Feminists for Climate and Environment Alternatives), in cooperation with the European network WIDE+ and its Austrian section within an Erasmus+ project (WIDE+ COPGendered project), with financial support of the European Union (Erasmus+).



Impressum

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More information:

<https://wideplus.org/copgendered-project/>

<http://www.adequations.org/spip.php?rubrique457>

<https://wide-netzwerk.at/gender-and-climate-justice-knowledge-for-empowerment/>



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