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Forty years of gender research and environmental policy: Where do we stand?☆

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SYNOPSIS

Forty years of gender research has ensured that gender is an important category that needs to be taken into account in environmental policy and practice. A great deal of finances and attention are currently being directed to gender in development and environmental organizations. At the same time, as gender research has become more sophisticated and theoretically strong, there is also frustration among academic researchers as well as practitioners and policy makers that it appears to have had a marginal effect on environmental practice on the ground.

Policies have turned to gender mainstreaming, attempted to include women and other marginalized social groups in environmental management and markets. Change has been mixed. Mainstreaming can become a technocratic exercise. The assumption that competing interests can be negotiated by adding women to organizations for environmental governance, in disregard for social relations, is problematic. Stereo-types about women and men, sometimes buttressed by gender research predominate in policy and programs. Inclusion in markets offer new options but can further curb women's agency. Contradictions arise - as gender becomes a part of the official machinery, when women are regarded as a collective but addressed as individuals in programs and when the focus is on the governance of gender with little attention on the gender of neoliberal governance. Yet, support for 'gender programs' has also led to unintended openings for empowerment. It is clear that the meaning of gender is far from settled and there are intensified efforts to define what 'gender' is in each context. I discuss the renewed interest in gender and what this engagement with power might mean for gender research, policy and practice and where we might go from here.

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Forty years of gender research and environmental policy: where do we stand?

There is a resurgent anxiety about gendered concerns in environmental policy-making today. Ministries of Environment in Europe, some for the first time, are producing reports on how to go about gender mainstreaming (e.g. Regeringskansliet, 2011), the CGIAR (the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) has pledged a great deal of funding for gender strategies, the World Bank's World Development Report 2012 was on Gender Equality. Investment banks such as Goldman-Sachs have launched a project, *10,000 Women* with the slogan, 'Investing in Women.'[1] On closer inspection though, environmental practice appears to be moving in an opposite direction. The focus on global governance and the predominance of climate change debates with technical discussions on the environment and complicated carbon calculations have pushed out ordinary people and especially gendered concerns from environmental questions. Contrary to the 1990s when questions of participation and decentralization occupied environmental studies and policy, discussions have now moved to high level meetings between governments, international organizations, companies and scientists' laboratories especially in relation to climate change. In the midst of this, the talk about gender at international and national arenas seems out of place. Why gender? And why now?

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Prescriptions to pay heed to gender in environmental issues has laid bare an associated inconsistency. As gender research has become more sophisticated and theoretically strong, there is also frustration among academic researchers as well as practitioners and policy makers that it appears to have had a marginal effect on environmental practice on the ground. Scholars feel that their work is rarely taken up in policy while practitioners complain that gender theorizations are far removed from their practical work of negotiating gender relations in environmental and development interventions. Gender research has given us precise concepts to understand society but the link between research and every day work appears to be more elusive. Although mostly on the margins of environmental policy and development from the 1970s to the present, 'gender' has nonetheless become institutionalized in the field of environment studies and policy. Most researchers and policy makers working within the fields of environment and development have an opinion on what it is and why or why it may not be relevant to their work.

In this article, I examine gender and environment debates within the academy in relation to shifts in the policy and practice of environmental work over the past forty years. In doing so, I help explain its current resurgence in policy and its absence on the ground and provide indications for the future. Tensions over 'gender' lie at the heart of the many contradictions. 'Gender' in environmental policy, especially in its early days and for the most part even now has been shorthand for 'women.' 'Gender' gained ground in the 1970s in environmental policy and practice when scholars and others first brought up questions of women's unequal positions *vis a vis* development and environmental interventions and focused attention on the critical roles women play in environmental management on the ground. Since then, researchers have used gender as an analytic category to probe how power relations organize all systems and interventions and how gender relations are implicit in environmental outcomes. Drawing on the work of a range of scholars (e.g. Scott, 1988; Butler, 1990; Haraway, 1991), gender and environment researchers have worked hard to clarify that gender is an analysis of power relationships and the practices through which what is a 'man' or 'woman' get defined and made to appear as natural in different environmental contexts.

As opposed to social policy, environmental policy has conventionally been about the biophysical world and not necessarily about people. Yet as policy makers especially in the global South have come to acknowledge, the social and political are linked inextricably to the biophysical and impossible to separate on the ground. The intersection of development and environmental policy making has been difficult to avoid. More recently, there has been a corresponding acknowledgement of gender issues in environmental policy-making in countries in the North especially in Europe. Although there are vast differences in each national context, whether in the global North or South, the aim of this article is to provide broad brush strokes of global trends in environmental policy-making *vis a vis* gender. Gender research has had an important role to play in these developments. As is evident in the following pages, most of the literature on gender and environment has its basis in countries in the South although there is now a growing literature on the North.

This is not a comprehensive review of all the literature in the field of gender and environmental studies and nor of policy initiatives over time. Here, I emphasize some insights on gender and environment that I believe have been important in these overlapping spheres and use my research experiences and the work of scholars (among many others) as I examine some major strands in research. I analyze the uptake of some gender research in policy, effects on the ground and indications for the future. I begin with asking: 1) What can we claim to know after 40 years of gender research and how has some of the early gender research been put into practice especially in environmental policy 2) What has moved on, what appears to be standing still and what effects has such gender research had in policy and practice? 3) Where are we today and what might this mean for the future of gender research *vis a vis* policy and practice?

It becomes clear that what 'gender' in 'environments' entails is not a settled issue and is riven with tensions: by the expectation that gender research needs to present stable categories that policy and practitioners can work with, by tensions over collective change *versus* personal empowerment, by feminist compromises over the use of gender in policy and practice and most importantly over the struggles to settle and define what gender is.

Gender and environment: some insights/what can we claim to know today and its relation to policy

Roughly from the time of Ester Boserup's work on women and economic development (1970)) to postmodern and postcolonial research, scholars, activists and development workers have been exploring the nexus between gender, environment and sustainable development. The genealogy of gender and environment debates (ecofeminism, Women in Development — WID, Environment and Development — WED, Gender and Development — GAD) are fairly well documented and I am not going through them here.[2] Instead I bring together insights from 40 years of varied, rich and often contradictory gender research in relation to environments. The aspects that surfaced as important are the 1) decentering of the male subject of environmental policy, through paying greater attention to women and other marginalized social groups in development and environmental initiatives and the understanding that environments mean different things to different groups of people 2) the importance of property rights and economic security and a recognition of women's unpaid labor in caring and environmental work 3) arguments for the inclusion of women in decision-making and formal environmental governance4) the transformative potential of gendered struggles for emancipation but also the ambiguities in support for them from outside agencies.

Bringing women into focus: decentering the subject of environmental management and policy

Early scholars working on gender and environment in the 1980s showed how women and men often fare differently due to their work, their differing roles, status and relation to their environments. Their research brought attention to women's work that was unacknowledged and made invisible in mainstream studies on the environment. Several

feminist scholars in the North described how women's skills and knowledge of the environment was eroded with the establishment of modern science (e.g. Ehrenreich & English, 1973; Merchant, 1980; Mongeau, Smith, & Maney, 1961; Oakley, 1986). In the South, broadly under the banner of ecofeminism and Women, Environment and Development (WED), scholars did the important work of bringing women into environmental considerations and decentered the subject of environmental study and policy by including women's work in environments (e.g. Bryceson, 1995; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Navarro & Korrol, 1999; Wickramasinghe & Momsen, 1993). They highlighted the extensive knowledge about their environments that women continue to bring to bear in everyday life.

While this research helped to decenter the male subject of policy, some strands of this research have been criticized for homogenizing women and for assigning essentialist attributes to women as a group. Critics drew attention to the need to understand women's actions in relation to the political economy of their everyday environments and the division of property and labor (Agarwal, 1992; Jackson, 1996). The category of the victimized woman of the global South in use in much 'western' gender research of the 1980s and 1990s was criticized by Chandra Mohanty (2003) and other postcolonial and 'third world feminists' who called for a fine tuned analysis of the contexts and gender relations that were being studied (e.g. Chaudhuri, 2004; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Narayan & Harding, 2000; Shohat, 2001). The gender research on the environment that established itself since the 1990s drew on different disciplines and fields. It contributed to rich analyses of power relationships in environmental issues and management, in explaining the effects of environmental policies and emphasized the importance of taking account of the context in which men and women worked and took action (e.g. Agarwal, 1992; Cleaver, 1998; Guijt & Shah, 1998; Leach, 1994; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996).

There was a conscious turning away from the emphasis on women as victims of patriarchy and environmental hazards, to also focus on women's agency in relation to environmental issues and their struggles for emancipation. Feminist research highlighted the importance of collective action and how women came together in groups and took action in protecting their environments in many parts of the world (Odoul & Kabira, 1995; Rocheleau et al., 1996; Shiva, 1989). On the other hand, in some contexts women also organized to protect working class men's employment in resource sectors such as conventional forestry that led to environmental damage. Argued that such collective action by women tended to be ignored in feminist research on the environment (Reed, 2000). Contradictions that arise from women's positioning that contributes to gendered rural ideologies that give primacy to men continues to call for deeper discussion and debate.

Overall, gender research in the 1980s and early 1990s was crucial in bringing to light the mechanisms that led to the marginalization of social groups and especially of women *vis a vis* environmental interventions and to rural women's indispensable, yet invisible, contributions to food production and environmental care. By making visible discriminatory practices scholars hoped to prompt changes for more equitable relationships and for better care for environments based on actual practice.

As approaches to environment and gender changed in the academy, policy initiatives also took varied forms over the years. Policy-making on forests for example, came to acknowledge that forests were not simply a source of timber but complex ecosystems that sustained livelihoods and provided a range of products and environmental services. It has since been widely recognized that forests contribute to rural development and poverty alleviation. In the 1980s and 1990s arguments of sustainable development brought social and economic concerns to bear to biological diversity, conservation and natural resource management. 'Conservation-with-development' programs began to pay attention to a mix of state/commercial and local livelihood interests in buffer zones outside of core reserve areas (Green, Joekes, & Leach, 1998: 261). International institutions promoting development and environment programs in the South came to appreciate that women played an essential role in the management of natural resources and that programs without their support were difficult to implement (e.g. World Bank, 1992).

Gender mainstreaming, that is the inclusion of a gendered analysis and gendered concerns at all levels was adopted by many governments in the 1990s and included in policies and programs at national and international levels. However, this did not reach environmental policy as it did social policy. Feminists at the time criticized many large-scale environmental projects of lacking attention to gender issues and thus compromising women's resource interests (e.g. Green et al., 1998). Nonetheless, the early period can be looked back on as a time when the idea of 'gender' (taken to be synonymous with women) did, in fact, make its way onto the agendas of environmental policy formulation and implementation. Over the years, from instrumentalist justifications of greater efficiency (c.f. Moser, 1989) to it being 'smart economics' to invest in women (World Bank, 2011) and alongside discourses on rights-based approaches,[3] 'gender' has become an important ingredient of environment and development policy, a must in policy documents, in applications for research grants and development projects. Whether this served the purpose of removing discrimination is moot. Different understandings of gender, both in policy and research, lie at the root of disjunctures that I discuss further.

Redressing discrimination? Economic empowerment and property rights

Feminist economists from the 1990s onwards pointed out that mainstream economics, the bedrock of development initiatives favored the experiences of men to the exclusion of women. Scholars advocated economic enquiry that would recognize the unpaid labor that women performed in the household and in their immediate environments and brought attention to the male bias in current economic, social and political institutions (e.g. Elson, 1995; Elson & Cagatay, 2000; Ferber & Nelson, 1993; Folbre, 1994; Waring, 1988). Diane Elson demonstrated how unpaid labor and the care work performed mainly by women substituted for the failure of state institutions to provide health, education and other services for their citizens and to make ends meet in an era of structural adjustments and high unemployment. This resulted in long-

term negative consequences for the health of women, children and for hopes for sustainable development (1995). Sociological analyses of welfare regimes especially in northern Europe have been useful in conceptualizing paid and unpaid care work even in the global South (Razavi, 2007). Comparative studies in Europe demonstrated that although there were considerable differences in welfare regimes across Europe, they were all characterized by the notion of the male breadwinner model albeit to varying degrees (e.g. Hobson, 1990; Hobson & Lister, 2002; Lewis, 1997). Feminists argued for the importance of paid work for women's emancipation and for their possibilities to 'exit' oppressive situations (Hobson, 1990). But research also showed that women's entry into paid employment did not necessarily mean a decrease in their unpaid work in the home. Neither had shifting unpaid care work into the paid economy been free of tensions. Organizational changes were needed simultaneously to ensure that the shifting of care to the paid economy did not result in low priced paid care work with low quality outcomes (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). As several researchers showed, markets were not neutral and tended to reinforce social stratification and inequalities, both in the South and the North (e.g. Folbre & Nelson, 2000; Harriss-White, 1998).

While unpaid labor and women's participation in the informal economy occupied researchers, social and environmental policy in the 1990s onwards turned to market solutions. Policy makers and practitioners argued for funding for programs with gender equality on the basis of broader social and economic impact. Programs were instituted that tried to lift women's economic status in countries in the global South through a range of income generation activities associated with natural resources such as non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and others pushed for local markets in the hope that women would have direct access and control over buying and that this would eliminate predatory middlemen who contributed to the exploitation of environmental resources. A related push was the introduction of micro-credit programs to enable women's savings and accumulation of small-scale capital. Micro-credit programs have since extended small loans and startup capital to individual and collective organizations for small enterprises. Lending continues to be enabled by banks, NGOs, the World Bank and government agencies.

Rights to land

Researchers also demonstrated that gender asymmetries in property rights affect the efficiency, environmental sustainability, equity and empowerment outcomes of natural resource use. Scholars endorsed the idea that women should be given legal rights to land and water to be able to enhance their bargaining position and to improve their status in the household and community. Notable examples of these discussions can be found in 'a field of one's own' (Agarwal, 1994), 'a plot of one's own' (Zwarteveen, 1996) and a 'well of one's own' (Jordans & Zwarteveen, 1997).

Researchers warned though, that the process by which the increase of women's command over land occurs has a critical bearing on outcomes (Agarwal, 1994: 44). Legal tenure did not necessarily mean that it was enforced or that it conferred power in management or governance. Land titling frequently came into conflict with customary practices since rights to land were often nested and overlapping and the products of social and ecological diversity. Women's rights could be vested in "in-between" spaces such as hedgerows or the understory in coffee or cocoa plots cultivated by them (Rocheleau & Edmunds, 1997) or tree tenure could be wholly separate from underlying land rights (Fortmann & Bruce, 1988). Scholars argued that instead of seeking a single 'owner' or holder of title, there was a need to identify the 'bundle of rights' to land or water that men and women may have to use and how those were negotiated or changed over time (e.g. Meinzen-Dick, Brown, Feldstein, & Quisumbing, 1997). Formalizing property in such cases implied 'cutting through this web of interests' that could lead to 'cadastral disasters' (Meinzen-Dick & Mwangi, 2008) that worked against marginal ethnic groups, women and environmental interests.

The decline in agricultural productivity in the 1980s led national and international bodies to recognize the importance of land rights. More recently, climate programs that necessitate clarity in tenure have once again strengthened the case for property rights. Ruth Meinzen-Dick and Esther Mwangi write that advocates of legal rights are driven by the seemingly commonsensical view that legally backed land ownership is critical to rural women's production and economic efficiency, welfare, equality, and empowerment. Transferability and formalization of ownership though without due attention to process tends to be regarded by many economists and policy makers as paramount for environmental management. Transferability and formalization is believed necessary in order to allow the property to serve as collateral for credit, to provide users with incentives to care for a resource or to transfer the resource to other 'higher value' users. "Although formalization processes do not necessarily involve privatization (the transfer of rights from the state or collective to individual or legal individual)… historically this has been the case in many countries" (Meinzen-Dick & Mwangi, 2008: 38). Thus, on looking back at policy attempts in relation to research within feminist economics and gender research on tenure it appears that research and policy took different directions. While feminist research focused to a great deal on process and informal mechanisms that affected gendered inequalities *vis a vis* formal rights and markets, policy focus in relation to gender emphasized the formalization of individual rights and women's entry into markets.

Gender and environmental governance

Gender research on institutions for local environmental governance in countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia and on rural public–private partnerships in Europe in the 1990s revealed that local organizations were dominated by male elites and reflected their concerns (Agarwal, 1997; Sarin et al., 1998; Guijt & Shah, 1998; Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001; Hudson & Rönnblom, 2003; Bock, 2004). Several feminists called for greater inclusion of women in committees and organizations. Having conducted extensive studies of forest protection in South Asia, Bina Agarwal's research indicates that groups that include both women and men tend to work better though there seems to be little difference in management practices of men's groups as opposed to those with women only. She does suggest however that

'all-women' groups tend to be stricter with their regulations and in cordoning off forests (Agarwal, 2010). The question of whether this means greater equity and leads to long-term effectiveness for environmental protection is more difficult to answer.

Research from within different disciplines, especially in anthropology and geography, began to focus on how the biophysical environment is inseparable from culture and emotions. Drawing variously on the work of scholars such as Michel Foucault (1979, 1990, 1991), Karen Barad (2003), Judith Butler (1990), and Donna Haraway (1991), researchers made a case for how gender relations do not precede or succeed environmental issues but that gender and power are intrinsic to these issues. It became evident how negotiating gender and environmental relations brought about long-term changes in diverse environments (Bhavnani, Foran, & Kurian, 2003; Li, 2007; Nightingale, 2006; Tsing, 1993; Whatmore, 2002).

From the 1990s onwards, gender researchers have given greater attention to what came to be called an 'intersectional' approach (see Crenshaw, 1991 who first used this term) to understand how different axes of identity intersect with gender to produce particular environmental outcomes. Richer analyses of women's and men's access, ownership, use, rights or action over environmental resources were enabled by a focus not only on gender but also in relation to other cross cutting categories that intersected with their social positions as women or men — their class, education, ethnicity, urban or rural base (see Nightingale, 2006; Baviskar, 2008; Bryant & Pini, 2009; also see issue of the journal Signs, 2001 for analyses for how gender is be produced across a global scale). When boundaries drawn by these categories have been transgressed, they have shown to lead to new openings and relationships (Arora-Jonsson, 2013; Crowley, 2009). Thus, a whole corpus of research drove home the point that although there are patterns in how social groups might behave, it is impossible to make *a priori* assumptions without taking account of the context.

Research from different parts of the world also highlighted the transformatory potential of women's collective action and struggles, not only in their own interests but that of the broader community of which they are a part (Gandhi & Shah, 1992; John, 1999; Kumar, 1999; Maathai, 2009; Muñoz, Paredes, & Thorpe, 2007; Rocheleau et al., 1996; Roseneil, 1995; Arora-Jonsson, 2009). An important insight from many such studies has been to show that environmental and developmental issues cannot be dealt in isolation from men and women's everyday lives whether in the South or North. It also became clear that 'public' environmental issues were linked closely to questions of violence in the home or in public space such as forests. As one woman active in a woman's group in a village in Odisha, India remarked to me during my research there, there was little point in protecting the forests if they could not protect themselves. Many women's groups demanded that they be accepted in the male dominated forest committees in their villages but also that male violence against women needed to be discussed side by side in these fora (see chapters 4–8 in Arora-Jonsson, 2013; Colfer, Pierce, & Minarcheck, 2013 for a review of literature on gendered violence and the environment). The importance of support to rural women's struggles from outside agencies (such as NGOs or through government programs) becomes crucial in such situations — although the nature of that support is decisive (Lingam, 2002; Sharma, 2006; Sundar, 1998). Such support can be double-edged, evident from research both in the global North and South (Arora-Jonsson, 2013; Sangtin, 2006; Tharu & Niranjana, 2001).

Environmental policies in the 1990s increasingly emphasized people's participation and attention to gender relations for sustainable forest governance. Decentralization of authority over resources was considered a 'powerful means by which to achieve development goals in ways that responded to the needs of local communities' (World Bank, 2000: 106). Policy prescriptions and NGOs and donors supporting local organizations in the global South played a role in the heightened concern for the inclusion of women and gendered interests in environmental governance. The following decade of 2000 cemented the shift from ideas on 'government' by the state to 'governance.' This change in nomenclature acknowledged the shift from conceptualizing management in relation to governments to contexts where a variety of different actors are active in pursuit of supposedly collective interests (c.f. Peters & Pierre, 1998). There is a difference in how the term governance has been conceptualized in relation to countries in the global North or South in theoretical and policy discussions. In the global North, governance has been used mainly in relation to civil society organizations and private interests. The literature on environmental governance in the global South has also focused to a large extent on rural communities' struggles with the state concerning the politics of decision-making and over use and ownership of environmental resources (Arora-Jonsson, 2013: 6–7).

Policy-makers have increasingly turned to markets in efforts to govern the environment — on markets in which, as much empirical evidence shows, women face 'intersecting structural constraints' (Folbre, 1994). Climate change, a policy area that has come to dominate current thinking on global environmental governance is a prime example of this turn. Climate programs and instruments span national boundaries and attempt to engage people from villages to stock exchanges in major cities. These build for example on the idea of payment for ecosystem services provided by men and women, mainly in the South, for services such as biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration. Such programs operate on gendered assumptions and have important gendered implications as is apparent on the research on the increasing global trade in agricultural and natural resource commodities where women provide a great deal of labor (Bair, 2010; Elias & Saussey, 2013; Ramamurthy, 2000).

With a greater policy focus on markets that transcend local and national boundaries, gender researchers have started paying more attention to global governance (Bedford & Rai, 2010; Rai & Waylen, 2008) and to questions of scale in relation to environmental and development challenges (e.g. Katz, 2004; see Hawkins & Ojeda, 2011 for a discussion among several feminist political ecologists on current environmental challenges). Monetary exchange and the movement of capital is not the only way in which connections spiral out between distant places (e.g. Pigg, 1996; Tsing, 2005). For example, in my study sites in India and Sweden, gender underpinned ideas of how forest management was to be carried out. While this took place in very local ways, men and women drew upon wider discourses on environmental governance and gender equality,

i.e. to a global scale that is becoming all the more important in local contexts and has in the past often been ignored in studies of 'local' governance. The women in India justified their demands by calling upon ideas of development and women's rights that they believed women in other places already had. In Sweden, the conviction that they were so much better than other countries blocked attempts at change by women who felt disadvantaged in environmental management (Arora-Jonsson, 2009).

Although gender research encompasses a wide spectrum, some of the major shifts in gender and environment studies from the 1970s to the present have centered on the insight that 'women' can no longer be taken for granted but that 'women' needs to be a category of analysis (e.g. Mohanty, 2003). Feminist scholars have also emphasized the need to reconceptualize the dualisms that have been taken for granted in a great deal of research. Through the lenses variously of 'hybrid geographies' (Whatmore, 2002) 'intra-action' (Barad, 2003), of 'performativity' (Butler, 1990) and through the figures of the coyote (Haraway, 1991) or volatile bodies (Grosz, 1994), feminists have conceptualized the indivisibility of nature and culture, of the material and the social and relationships between humans and the non-human. Research also shows how global flows, of capital (Katz, 2004) and of discourses, programs and ideas (e.g. Arora-Jonsson, 2009; Pigg, 1996) produce gendered landscapes in intimate ways, from international levels to the home.

Policy-making at present, both among national governments and international organizations, is increasingly concerned with scale — in trying to understand how issues take shape across scale but are also prompted by the desire to 'scale-up' or 'scale-out' and model best practices in relation to gender. There is an attempt to eschew past sector-based approaches, though it has been difficult not to slip into past routines and preservation of disciplines and terrain.[4] One such approach being promoted by some organizations within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is the 'Landscape Approach.'[5] Though difficult to pin down, it is an attempt at looking for solutions to environmental problems across disciplines and sectors. While it promises hope in that a material and geographical space and its relations are the subject of research and policy, there is also a danger that gender and power are subsumed in all-encompassing concepts as the example of policy making on resilience demonstrates (see Harrison, 2012). [6]

It is undeniable that today, 'gender' (for the most part, meaning women) is acknowledged, in its many different ways, as an (important) consideration in environmental governance and resource management, in local, national and international policies. For example, it is accepted that effective forest and water management is impossible without women's involvement in community based organizations or that disaster relief and risk reduction approaches get nowhere unless women are part of programs. The tangible effects of this inclusion of women or how much change there has been as a result of participatory and gender sensitive language in documents and strategies is of course contextual and a different story. In the following section, I examine where this history of gender and environmental policy appears to leave us now and what its effects might have been.

What has moved on? What appears to be standing still?

Gender research has in the past challenged mainstream academic theorizing on the environment, often disrupting categories that are taken for granted and pointing to their androcentric bias. When development practitioners and policy makers have leaned towards answers or models based on conventional research, they automatically and perhaps unintentionally have undermined the possibilities for uptake of gender and power in their work. And yet, in significant ways, gender research has contributed to how we think about our environments.As I show in the previous section, initiatives related to gender coalesced around three main rubrics that recurred in different ways in response to insights from research. These included efforts to 1) mainstream gender in environmental programs, 2) attempts at delineating property rights and efforts at women's economic empowerment by promoting income generation activities, inclusion in markets and establishing micro-credit programs and in 3) efforts to involve women in environmental governance. In this section, I analyze the consequences of some of these approaches.

New and varied ways of relating to the environment

Due to work by scholars working on gender and in the social sciences more broadly, the ways in policies view the environment had changed dramatically over the years. For example, timber was decentered as the only subject of forest policy and practice. It was recognized that the forests were more than its timber, that forests provided ecosystem services and were inseparable from the culture and society of the place. The focus on forests primarily as a male domain shifted as well since timber was closely associated with men and forestry as a male activity. That different social groups had varied ways of relating to the environment that needed to be taken into consideration became a guideline for several policy initiatives. While this is considered obvious in the global South, it continues to be less acceptable in the North although more and more research has begun to show that forests are important in the North not only for their timber but for livelihoods — employment generated through tourism activities, rural development and for social values including recreation and health (Arora-Jonsson, 2004; Marsden, Milbourne, Kitchen, & Bishop, 2003).

In the slipstream of gender mainstreaming

Attempts at mainstreaming gender in environmental policy and practice have been uneven. The transposition of feminist research into a non-feminist governmental machinery has worked both ways: while gender concerns have been appropriated into a formalistic machinery, bureaucrats and practitioners could not totally ignore gendered issues and have been forced to acknowledge women's networks and other activist groups. Since the mid-1990s, women's groups have been able to lobby for gender perspectives, funds in programs on the environment and for women's inclusion at all levels. Networks, feminists within bureaucracies and activists have led to changing institutions, building capacities and ideologies (see Basu & McGrory, 1995; Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

But, as history shows, mainstreaming became a formalistic ritual and at times had the opposite effect than that envisaged by its proponents. Baden and Goetz argue that as gender perspectives were sought to be included in all policy documents and programs or projects, its political focus was diluted. In the years following the Beijing Conference in 1995 where gender mainstreaming was adopted as a major strategy, women's groups, especially in the South began to raise critical voices. Among others, the authors cite Nighat Khan from Pakistan who asserted that the focus that had been on women previously, shifted to women and men (due to the idea of 'gender') and conveniently back to men, for example by prompting discussions on 'men at risk' (Baden and Goetz, 1998). One could say that 'gender' became important, but women disappeared or that 'gender-equality' replaced 'women's liberation' (Brush, 2002).

Gender became a technocratic exercise, evident for example in the quantitative expertise of economists expected to think about differences in women and men's involvement in environmental management. Baden and Goetz point out that although such information is important, by not at the same time taking into account issues of power and gender relations, gender and women's interests are reduced to a set of needs or gaps amenable to administrative decisions about the allocation of resources (Baden and Goetz, 1998). This technocratic attempt at mainstreaming gender and its negative consequences are equally evident in the academy. I have reviewed papers from scientists working on the environment who tabulate gender-disaggregated data and make far reaching conclusions without much basis for their analysis, often as is clear, without reading the literature on gender to which they allude. Although this certainly cannot be said of all researchers, this goes beyond the question of bad research. It is also a recurring issue of using gender research to say that women are vulnerable or marginalized to legitimize the promotion of new technologies or preconceived ideas about development that have nothing to do with gender or relationships of power.

Gender sensitive language and generalizations about including gender aspects in program documents have not necessarily meant concrete change on the ground. In the case of Europe, Elizabeth Prugl shows that in EU's Leader programs in most places, nothing was done despite lip service to mainstreaming (Prugl, 2010). In Sweden, resource centers for women were shut down in favor of mainstreaming gender, 'a strategy that was unclear to those who were meant to implement it' (Tollin, 2000). Critiques of gender mainstreaming have also centered on its taken for granted assumptions about heteronormative processes with women and men always in unequal positions that tend to reinforce existing gendered processes (see Davids, Francien Van, & Parren, 2013 for an overview of critiques of gender mainstreaming).

Scholars also point to a more insidious side of mainstreaming in relation to policy. They criticize development initiatives for taking on board certain ideas about 'gender' when they tended to serve larger agendas. Melissa Leach argues that discourses on eco-feminism and women's close relationships to the environment were picked up by policy makers and bureaucrats in the 1990s to involve women in conservation and tree protection and to make use of their labor. By appealing to women's altruism and closeness to nature, responsibility for various environmental programs as well as the eradication of poverty was put on women regardless of whether the women had the resources or time to be able to carry them out (Leach, 2007). This resulted in a 'feminization of responsibility' (Chant, 2008). Environmental chores got added to women's already long list of caring roles. It was convenient to assume that women's participation is good for women in general. As some scholars write, "the poor performance of …such project interventions was especially unfortunate …such projects may have stoked up expectations that women as 'environmental managers have the ability to 'fix' environmental problems. The failure of the environmental sector projects that have attempted to address gender issues to deliver such a result may lead to disillusionment among policy makers in their attempts to take account of gender concerns" (Green et al., 1998: 275).

Rights and tenure

In many places where tenure reforms have in fact been enacted, the gap between law and practice has persisted (Agarwal, 1994; Basu, 1999). The near impossibility of transferring the 'bundle of rights' and social relations attached to land and water in legal transfers continues to haunt such reforms. While collective ownership is increasingly acknowledged in tenure reforms in many countries, the focus has been on individual ownership and privatization. Customary land law for example is seen as moving steadily, even if in a chaotic and problematic way towards individualized tenure and land markets under its own steam (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003: 94). In many ways, this has also led to undermining collective cooperation around resource use, epitomizing a broader trend of individualizing interventions within development and environmental legislation.

Though granting of tenure rights has been an important step in securing women's rights to property, scholars have been critical of attempts at granting tenure to women in disregard of their social position. Studies from South Asia show how women choose not to contest patriarchal inheritance norms in order to preserve their positions within society, despite the existence of legislation to the contrary (Rankin, 2003; Rao, 2007). In sub-Saharan Africa, recourse to social norms crucial in building up women's claims (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003: 97). An example of granting of tenure to poor women in disregard of social position is Rhodante Ahlers' study of the land and water reforms in Mexico in the early 1990s. Despite acquiring formal rights, women were effectively disenfranchised in relatively short order, losing customary access and often selling their rights off at prices markedly less than their male counterparts (Ahlers, 2002).

The current focus on markets and privatization of tenure seems to be reemphasizing this trend. Women's rights over land have been an important ingredient in pushing through other policy objectives. Sagari Ramdas describes the repercussions for women in Andhra Pradesh in India who were awarded individual titles under the Forests Rights Act of 2006. The women were paid wages through a government scheme (the NREGA[7]) if they cooperated by planting cash crops on their land. Ramdas writes that these crops made the women vulnerable to irrigation problems, volatile markets, agricultural chemicals and resulted in a total change in their livelihoods. In some districts women were 'encouraged' to

grow biodiesel plants (*Pongamia pinnata*) as part of climate programs that would enable them to earn carbon credits. The degraded forests, which they would have regenerated with indigenous species, and agriculture lands that supported food crops were replaced with mono-plantations as they were assured a regular income from the sale of seeds. After one payment from the World Bank for neutralizing carbon emissions, a few years down the line, 80% of the trees perished, most families were forced to sell their cattle, were subject to an increased dependence on chemicals and ruined their land in the process. What also emerged was that the women were completely unaware of the reason they had received the money and had no idea about the ramifications of carbon trade and the relationship of their self-help group activities to climate change (Ramdas, 2009).

The current privatizing (neoliberal) moment in land and water policies appears to offer possibilities for realizing feminist ambitions. However as the examples from Mexico and India demonstrate, mainstream neo-liberal policy language and concepts tend to hide precisely those issues that much feminist research questions — the terms of policy frameworks that invisibilize, naturalize and objectify the politics and powers involved in resource re-allocation (Ahlers & Zwarteveen, 2009; also see Harris, 2009 for review on gender and neoliberalized water governance). It is clear that while law and legal rights to land and resources remain an important basis of environmental governance, social praxis and the social contexts in which policies are enacted determine outcomes. What appears then as lack of change despite legal reform in many contexts comes from the social embeddedness of law and the relational aspects of gender and power, largely ignored by statutory codes and development schemes.

The reliance on markets

On the one hand, women's inclusion in markets, in some places and to some extent, has increased their options and power in the family. On the other hand, it has led to women being drawn into a system over which they have little control (Arora-Jonsson, 2013: 222–224; Elias & Saussey, 2013; Harriss-White, 1998). Policies advocating market-based solutions have promoted the idea that economic grants and income generation programs or women's involvement in commodity/value chains would solve all women's problems, problems that in fact arise from unequal relations of power. As is clear from a great deal of research over the years, there is no direct correlation between economic growth and gender equality (e.g. Jackson, 1996; Kabeer, 2008). On the contrary, researchers have argued that economic programs for women, focusing on individual women, seek to dull resistance and depoliticize poverty (Keating, Rasmussen, & Rishi, 2010). For example, the widespread micro-credit programs for women reveal ambivalent results. Advocated as a progressive strategy for challenging existing distributions of wealth and power, they have been subjected to considerable feminist critique. Micro-credit programs have been accompanied by discourses about women's conscientious and responsible behavior in saving for their families as compared to men. Scholars have argued that these programs dilute collective action as individual women monitor each other to check defaulting on loans and take each other to task. In their study of micro-credit programs, Christine Keating, Claire Rasmussen and Pooja Rishi argue that micro-credit programs are a mechanism of gendered 'accumulation by dispossession' (c.f. Hartsock, 2006) and are in fact a set of processes by which poor women are brought into the structure of capitalism in exploitative ways (see review of research in Keating et al., 2010).

Prescriptions on the importance of market-based programs often disregard women's own preferences and understanding of their livelihoods. For example, in my discussions with women's 'self-help' groups in Odisha in India, several women complained that they were never consulted on decisions regarding programs selected for them. Many remained unaware, long after a micro-credit program had been accepted of what exactly was expected of them or what the program entailed. I was told by a women's group that they had been taken for a picnic to the neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh, which the NGO representatives later informed me was an introductory workshop on micro-credit. The women were dismissive of the time and money spent on the picnic/workshop in which they had little interest and insisted that they would rather use their resources to different ends. Such programs, much like gender mainstreaming have replaced previous welfare measures with convictions in small-scale female entrepreneurs. Employment or entrepreneurship and saving and not welfare are policy leitmotifs, in disregard of the relations that perpetuate unequal social positions to begin with (Arora-Jonsson, 2013: 149).

Some feminist critique has been taken on board within policy making. Chant and Sweetman cite the example of the World Bank's *Applying Gender Action Plan's Lessons* 2010–2013 report as a welcome shift in approach with comprehensive plans for women's gendered concerns in their programs (Chant and Sweetman, 2012). Similarly, the intrinsic value of gender equality, gender as politics, the recognition of women's unpaid labor and that gender equality does not automatically come with growth are recognized in the World Bank's flagship *World Development Report* of 2012 that was dedicated to gender issues (World Bank, 2011). Yet, as several scholars point out, the focus of current policy remains on the instrumentality of gender to assure economic returns. Investing in women, or 'fixing' women for economic growth remain the core of policy messages, exacting a heavy toll on the lives of poor women (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Razavi, 2012).

This is clear in new climate instruments that are relying on markets to bring about what they believe is a win-win-win proposition — wins in biodiversity, poverty alleviation and carbon sequestration. In exploratory studies[8] on REDD+ climate programs, we found that the increasing mobilization of female workers and the consolidation of a new gendered division of labor can be seen not only in the pilot projects already underway in Tanzania but also in the REDD+ policy discourse in Burkina Faso. Since REDD+ projects require a cessation of logging in order to sequester carbon, policy focus has turned to non-timber forest products (NTFPs) that are in many countries collected and processed by women. The loss of livelihoods from the forests is sought to be compensated by the propagation of NTFP markets. These processes are contingent on the labor of women but without accompanying social safeguards or taking account of 'structures of constraint' (Folbre, 1994) that poor women often face in local and global markets. Social and environmental policy

that would ensure security has still considerable catching up to do.

Gender and environmental governance

While not writing specifically about environmental governance, the sociologist, Lisa Brush makes a classification that is useful to think about in relation to environmental policy and gender. She points to the distinction between the 'governance of gender' and the 'gender of governance'. The governance of gender is how states and social policies produce and police the boundaries between masculinity and femininity and thus enforce or undermine male privilege in everyday life. Like others before (e.g. Pateman, 1988) Brush emphasizes what she calls the gender of governance, that is, the ways in which practices and assumptions of gender difference and dominance organize the institutions, capacities and ideologies of governance; that policies and in fact political theories of the state depart from an androcentric bias while purporting to be universal or neutral (Brush, 2003).

In environmental governance, the 'governance of gender' has often meant adding women to existing structures and organizations that continue to be dominated by certain groups of men. Research shows that it is not enough to 'add women and stir' — whether in forest committees (Arora-Jonsson, 2013) or water bodies at the village level (Zwarteveen, 1998). The singular focus on new institutions and organizations in disregard of the social context has been criticized by scholars who have studied the everyday practices outside of mainstream organizations that are actually responsible for the management of natural resources (e.g. Cleaver, 1998). Women have often been expected to join organizations and accommodate themselves to existing norms and structures rather than that the structures be changed to accommodate their subjective positions, needs and ideas to redress disadvantage (Arora-Jonsson, 2013: 187).

Environmental policy initiatives over the years have promoted women's self-help groups especially in relation to water. This has not meant that all such groups irrespective of how they come together, especially those that are set up as a response to programs and grants necessarily bring about more equitable gender relationships in environmental management. In many cases the inclusion of women, both in the North and the South, has played the role of rubberstamping male dominated organizations by legitimizing them as peoples' organizations. It is often when women have been able to carve out separate and alternative spaces for themselves through collective action in relation to the environment that it has led to their empowerment as well as of their communities (Arora-Jonsson, 2013).

On the other hand, the inclusion of women in committees and governance mechanisms because 'they had to' has in several places resulted in synergies among women's groups. As I elaborate in the book, *Gender, Development and Environmental Governance: Theorizing Connections*, discourses on participation and the rights of 'all' villagers in local management brought with it subversive openings in villages in Odisha in India and in Dalarna in Sweden. It provided women's groups in both places with a discourse that they used to open up a space for themselves in environmental governance. Women's micro-credit programs in Odisha enabled them to organize themselves and take place in public spaces. They had legitimate reasons to meet in public space and make demands. Some women's groups used this space and language to resist oppression in other spheres as well — such as violence by men. They spoke about 'women's rights' within the family, sometimes using terminology and language that had so far been alien for them (Arora-Jonsson, 2013).

On a similar theme, Aradhana Sharma who studies a women's empowerment program in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India concludes that empowerment (like gender mainstreaming) has emerged as a key modality of neoliberal self-government. She writes that "empowerment is increasingly becoming mainstreamed and packaged into government sponsored development programs — it has, in other words become what Partha Chatterjee calls "a category of governance." Her analysis of the program however echoes Chatterjee's claim that governmental programs do not just produce bureaucratized and passive state subjects. In postcolonial contexts, these programs produce active, sometimes dissident, political actors who can provide the ground for mobilizations of political society in which marginalized subjects make claims on the state, negotiate entitlements, and contest social hierarchies (Sharma, 2006). As Laxmi Lingam writes, in some places in India, state funded programs ended up in the peculiar position of sponsoring women's struggles against itself (Lingam, 2002).

To sum up, despite overarching national and international imperatives that environmental practice cannot ignore diversity on the ground, the impulse has been towards singular and naturalized categories (such as men, gender and/or women) that can be enrolled in environmental practice. This assumption of coherence makes them acceptable in policy discourse but difficult to act upon on the ground. The thrust of much environmental policy making *vis a vis* 'gender' has been to equate 'gender' with women or with assumed differences between all men and women, thus bureaucratizing the idea of gender. 'Gender' has also been used instrumentally in programs to advance economic goals that have little to do with relationships of power. Yet, as I describe above, the ambiguity of terms such as 'gender', participation and rights cannot foreclose all change and provide unexpected openings.

Discussion: where are we today?

Varied definitions of gender lie at the heart of the contradictions that I describe above. As I show in this section, these tensions become evident — as static interpretations of gender become a part of the official machinery, when women are regarded as a collective but addressed as individuals in programs and when the focus is on the governance of gender with little attention on the gender of current neoliberal governance.

'Gender' is fairly institutionalized in environmental policy, at least in policy rhetoric. One tangible reason for this attention to gender is that gender research has built up a whole of body of work in relation to environmental issues especially in relation to countries in the South. Over the years, research has shown conclusively that environmental practice ignores gendered concerns at its peril. Now that extensive budgets are being allocated in development/environmental organizations for gender expertise, what are the implications for gender research with this new engagement with power?

In some ways the ubiquitous talk of 'gender,' paradoxically, may be seen as the stumbling block to recognition of gender inequalities on the ground. A major push for change, for example, gender mainstreaming, has come due to feminists, both researchers and practitioners, active in international arenas. But it has also given rise to what Janet Halley and others within the sphere of law policy call 'governance feminism' — where some things are taken up in disregard to other gendered discrimination (Halley, Kotiswaran, Shamir, & Thomas, 2006). This can work in both ways as they point out — while it highlights some issues, it can also be used as a tool in the hands of powerful players in local contexts. In the case of current environmental initiatives that I discuss further, it is recognizable in stereotypes about how women and men are and what they do, in the empowered individual woman as object of policy and on the need to include women in existing structures and especially into markets.

Women as a group often serve as a 'conduit for policy' (Molyneux 2006 in Chant & Sweetman, 2012), legitimizing development interventions and environmental initiatives such as non-timber forest produce markets, infrastructural projects or climate instruments. In current policy thinking then, hopes for the environment rest on individual women becoming entrepreneurs and selling non-timber forest products, not on an end to discrimination and violence that for example the women in Sweden and India tried to bring into the environmental forums as a condition for women to be able to work at all (c.f. Arora-Jonsson, 2013). Strangely enough, while stereotypes about women as a social group abound in policy, redress for inequalities is directed mainly as individuals. Significant about environmental policy initiatives and programs, especially those associated with income generation and micro-credit are their focus on the individual, especially individual women. The vulnerable or virtuous woman, the privileged subject of policy (c.f. Arora-Jonsson, 2011) now has a new badge of honor, the conscientious female saver and small-scale entrepreneur. The examples of land reforms cited earlier show how well-intentioned reforms and granting individual property rights, in the absence of a sensitivity to context and an infrastructure that supports those rights, can put women in precarious positions and compound women's disadvantage. As Chant and Sweetman observe, universal understanding of women's empowerment based on neo-liberal models of self-determination conflates the empowerment of women as individuals with the feminist goal of removing structural discrimination that women face as a constituency (Chant and Sweetman, 2012).

One solution to gender inequalities and an effort to 'govern gender', has been the focus on *inclusion* — of women's work in the body of knowledge on the environment, women's inclusion in committees and local organizations and most importantly, the inclusion of women's labor in markets. Treating gender as a problem of women's inclusion is counterproductive if not seen in relation to other women and to men. Gender is taken up as if men and male privilege have nothing to do with gender and as if all women are interchangeable. Different women's relations to different groups of men in particular contexts is ignored. As research has shown, the inclusion of a few women in structures for governance or the allocation of grants and loans to women for community activities has depoliticized 'gender,' away from a struggle for change. This has a parallel in the kind of data that policy looks for. Gender disaggregated data has been extremely important in seeing patterns of discrimination in specific places but also over larger scales. At the same time, as Brush writes, "The bad news is that comparative research on gender seldom assesses women in social *relation* to men. In particular, analyses of women's subordination (rather than mere underrepresentation) are virtually impossible with the types of data at the center of equality gap comparisons. The cultural, sexual, physical and emotional enforcement of male dominance goes unmeasured, unremarked, and unchallenged" (Brush, 2002: 176).[9]

In all this, the gender of governance and the gendered nature of policies are given short shrift. Images of vulnerable women at the mercy of unequal gender structures and environmental hazards or that of environmentally conscious virtuous women abound in current environmental policy discussions on climate change regardless of context (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Despite decades of gender research and advocacy to the contrary, policy makers continue to operate with the notion of the 'male breadwinner.' Efforts to promote productivity are largely targeted to men while women are expected to carry on contributing to household livelihoods and caring for the family with little or no recognition or support of their efforts (Kabeer, 2003). Writing on welfare regimes in Europe, Jane Lewis points out that even where policy-making has opted for greater individualization, an 'adult-worker' model, without social provisions for the complexity of gendered family behavior, the unpaid care work performed mainly by women and the constraints in the labor market, is fraught with danger for women (Lewis, 2001). References to 'gender,' framed as already known truisms about men and women and the environment promote the status quo as structures and unequal relations that cause disadvantages are not questioned and continue to persist (Arora-Jonsson, 2011).

Further, as several have pointed out (Dahl, 2012; Fraser, 2009; Larner, 1998) there has been a co-option of discourses from below in governmental rhetoric – of participation, local responsibility and women's agency – that have enabled a dismantling of welfare measures to be replaced by neoliberal discourses on innovation and entrepreneurship. The World Bank believes in gender equality as smart economics (World Bank, 2011), what critical observers have called a tool for legitimacy and for 'soft governance' (Arnfred, 2012). There is increased faith among policy makers that inclusion of populations hitherto outside of formal economies would solve the crisis of sustainability. It does appear then that the ubiquitous mention of gender today has something to do with the desire to engage women into formal economies just as 'natural resources are being increasingly brought into the realm of global markets' (McAfee, 1999). Feminist demands to recognize women's roles and potential are taken over, with hopes that women's knowledge can be *harnessed* to protect and sustain environments (UNDP, 2013, *my italics*). All this has enabled the professing of a great deal of concern for gender without always needing to confront uncomfortable change and to promote the idea that women's labor and knowledge needs to be used for purposes of sustainability.

In the light of these trends, how may we think of gender research in relation to environmental policy and practice in the future? Where does it appear to be going and what can we do?

And what of the future?

At the heart of the contradictions outlined above, between the current widespread use of gender and what is seen to be little change on the ground, is the tension about what 'gender' is and how it is put into practice. The meaning of gender, theorized extensively as relationships of power, tends sometimes in research and almost always in policy to slip instead into a descriptive category — meaning women or at best differences between men and women. More often than not, 'gender' is reduced to stereotypes about men and women.

The current focus on gender is due in part to the work of feminist scholars and activists to bring it on the agenda and the accumulated body of knowledge that now exists on this issue. Some feminists use this opening and work within the official language – of 'smart economics' or 'mainstreaming' or the 'win-win' motto (with carbon sequestration, biodiversity and poverty eradication goals) of climate instruments – in coalition with organizations and bureaucracies that might have very different aims. Others warn of the dangers of such an approach of 'governance feminism' (Halley et al., 2006), calling for caution in such engagements (c.f. Chant & Sweetman, 2012) and to stall second wave feminism from being an inadvertent handmaiden to neoliberalism (Fraser, 2009). The settling of these terms – of gender equality, of women's empowerment, of smart economics or mainstreaming – can become a bureaucratic exercise that limits substantive change. Is the current resurgence of attention to gender then a stumbling block for real change and an instrument for other ends? While some argue for jettisoning terms such as gender-equality and mainstreaming altogether,[10] others argue for more comprehensive gender mainstreaming and empowerment (e.g. Margaret Alston, this issue). According to Tine Davids, Francien Van Driel and Franny Paren, we need to let go of the idea of a transformative change. They argue for breaking down mainstreaming into its many components and away from its utopian vision of women's empowerment, believing that it is then that gender mainstreaming can be considered a slow revolution (Davids et al., 2013).

Government programs and calls for the governance of gender cannot be underestimated. Discourses and ideas about participation and rights have enabled space for claim making and for demands for democratic and gender equitable governance. Policy-making and the work of NGOs and others have opened up spaces in unexpected places — giving rise to networks and links that go beyond 'gender' issues and take up questions of distribution and privilege (see discussion of my work and that of Sharma in a previous section). 'Mainstreaming' of women in governance, though fraught, has made a difference.[11] Looking back, it was often practitioners of development in the global South who looked to (and often funded) gender research in the 1980s when confronted with the complex realities and uncertainties of environmental work. However, as I discuss earlier, women's collective mobilization and struggle that are empowering have often come about as unintended effects of environmental and development programs, rather than with their support. Women's collective action and carving out of alternative spaces for themselves in local struggles have been empowering (e.g. Arora-Jonsson, 2013; Ivesen, 2010). Yet such attempts have not had the same kind of policy support as those directed towards individual women. There have been few policy interventions where women's groups have been supported to take up their political struggles — struggles that contribute not only to their emancipation but potentially also to better environmental governance. There must be better ways of supporting such movements?

As the examples above demonstrate, what gender means in each context is far from settled. The ubiquitous use of 'gender' in development and environmental contexts can be seen as an attempt to settle the unsettlable meanings of gender. For those looking to gender research for guidance on how to deal with inequalities, gender research has sometimes provided settled answers — about women and men. However, "gender analysis" constitutes a critical engagement with disputed meanings and is an attempt to reveal their contradictions and instabilities as they are manifest in the lives of those we study (Scott, 2012: 20) as well as our own. As an analytical lens, gender is about asking questions (Scott, 2012: 20). Posing gender as a set of questions requires us to think critically about what makes 'men' men and 'women' women and how conceptions of men and women's work are produced in different situations. At the same time, it is about challenging the structures and connections that seek to settle these terms. While theoretical knowledge is privileged in the academy, the practical work of environment and development projects is not only about 'practice' but also theoretical and practice is at the heart of theories many researchers espouse. There is a need to go beyond and reconstruct in specific contexts the categories that have been assigned especially to women — as vulnerable, as resilient, mothers, as able savers or small-scale entrepreneurs. And as Ahlers and Zwarteveen argue, there is a need to challenge the individualization, marketization and consumer/client focus of the neo-liberal paradigm (Ahlers and Zwarteveen, 2009). Neither can there be one final answer. Judith Butler puts it this way, "Sexual difference is the site where a question concerning the relation of the biological to the cultural is posed and reposed, where it must and can be posed, but where it cannot strictly speaking, be answered" (Butler, 2004: 16).

Such questions need to be asked of policy-making, practice and research, all of which are social processes. There needs to be a tactical understanding of the place and social relationships, building on locally situated criticism and action as the basis for development and environmental governance. These are not novel approaches but require focused and long term involvement. Participatory research, especially feminist participatory research that has sought to collaborate with local communities has brought about meeting spaces that have shown to make a difference and have given rise to new questions (see Fortmann, 2008). Possibly the most important at the moment, we need more research on knowledge producers, practitioners and policy makers — to understand how we work and our own preconceptions. The problem is not only that fine sounding policies result in apolitical and technocratic measures or are not implemented. How policy is formulated is also important. Issues of social equity are rarely included in evaluations of ongoing shifts in current environmental policy. Policy and programs can offer leverage against dominance, class and other privilege. Laws and social policies can promote women's economic welfare, personhood and participation. We know that is not enough. We also need to remedy the 'invisibility' of

privilege (c.f. Brush, 2003) — whether of men, class, caste that discriminates. The structures and unequal relations that cause disadvantage to persist need to be challenged.

And this is perhaps one of the most important contributions of gender scholarship in the past and what it can continue to contribute to environmental studies – making visible the mechanisms by which environmental governance takes place – the daily practices of knowledge production and action, so as to be able to find openings for better environments but also a more just society. It is time for us to acknowledge how our own institutions are embedded in the status quo and the politics of what we do.

Researchers, policy makers and practitioners thus need to be alert to how problems of gender are formulated. In efforts to justify gendered discrimination, we need to be careful not to reify it. The onus lies on us to be able to open up to critique and for a great deal of reflexivity. The work of theorizing on gender, power and environments is not over and neither that of practice.

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Endnotes

[1] http://www.goldmansachs.com/citizenship/10000women/index.html. 'Gender' events were also noticeable at the recent Conference of Parties (COP 19) in Poland as compared to previous COPs. Interest can also be seen in the growing number of gender indices, the most recent being the Environment and Gender Index. Divisions tasked with integrating gender are becoming common in environmental organizations.

[2] See Braidotti R, Charkiewicz E, Häusler S, et al. (1994) and Bhavnani et al. (2003) for overviews.

[3] See a review on the topic by Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi (2004).

[4] Pers. comm. with people working in development organizations.

[5] See www.landscapes.org

[6] There is always a danger of cementing such constructs into policy. In her study in the UK, Elizabeth Harrison shows how the focus on resilience as an antithesis of vulnerability among researchers and policy makers has lent itself to an overemphasis on the ability of those at the sharp end of economic downturn to 'bounce back,' …where resilience becomes a euphemistic way of talking about increased unpaid work of social reproduction that comes at considerable costs in terms of time. As with domestic labor itself, evidence suggests that the burden of this falls disproportionately to women.

[7] National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

[8] The SLU Global Food Security Research and Education Program 2010–2013: www.slu.se/slu-global.

[9] The limits of such data are evident in Reed's work on statistical data in Canadian forestry (2008).

[10] For example, the debate in the Swedish media after two researchers suggested doing away with the term, 'gender equality' (and mainstreaming) in Swedish politics which they see as depoliticised and a bureaucratic exercise — http://feministisktperspektiv.se/2012/10/26/framat-ar-vagen/ See also (c.f. Arora-Jonsson, 2013: 233–234) for the tensions of working with established gender categories that pull you back and yet the problems of giving them up completely.

[11] Examples from Sweden and Pakistan demonstrate that the inclusion of women has led to important legislation protecting women's rights.

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