

Opponent's review of the Master's Thesis

Title: Feminist approaches to global environmental change

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The thesis deals with the gender dimensions of global environmental change. Its main focus is twofold: to analyze 1) how gender inequalities and feminist perspectives are reflected in selected concepts theorizing global environmental change and 2) how gender inequalities and injustices related to the global environmental change are addressed by key global sustainability and environmental policies. The very framing of the topic of the thesis is based on a complex understanding of the issue of global environmental change on the part of the author, who is herself an environmental scientist. However, the framing of the objectives in the thesis – or at least at its beginning – is not fully clear. It takes some time to "decipher" from the information provided what the object of the analysis will be or what source materials will be analyzed. The framing is also not entirely consistent throughout the text.

The theoretical part introduces – as a basis for a feminist analysis of global environmental change aiming to critically interrogate dominant accounts rooted in natural sciences – feminist technoscience studies. It also discusses the concept of epistemic injustice, provides an overview of the historical integration of the gender perspective into global environmental policies, highlights the problem of a binary (and sometimes stereotypical) approach to gender in environmental policies and outlines the benefits of an intersectional approach. The part is concluded with a review of feminist and queer approaches to the environment and environmental change – namely, feminist political ecology, anthropocene feminism and queer ecology perspectives. Throughout the chapter, the author builds on her good knowledge of the field and relevant contexts of the examined issue and draws on a wide range of relevant sources. Nevertheless, a stronger argumentation of the implications of the perspectives presented for the analysis would be helpful. I would also welcome a more detailed explanation of the concept of gender-transformative environmental policies as it is explicitly referred to by one of the research questions (currently, there is only a brief general description on p. 16-17).

The chapter dedicated to methodology, which aims to present in more detail the object of the analysis and the analytical approach chosen, is divided into two parts, corresponding to the two main objectives of the thesis. The first briefly introduces the concepts theorizing global environmental change to be analyzed (degrowth, anthropocene, planetary boundaries, climate change, ecosystem services) and the critical frame analysis. The second presents the policies selected for the analysis and two analytical tools (Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices and Gender Integration Continuum). The analytical approach is described as a content analysis without further specification (p. 43).

With regard to the object of the analysis, the author claims to have selected the key concepts and policies. Although I have good reason to trust the legitimacy of her choices, given her familiarity with the field, I would nevertheless welcome a more explicit justification of this selection. There is also an inconsistency in the information about the policies analyzed. First, the author mentions four policies

(p. 32), but a table later in the text lists six policies (p. 59). I understand that some documents may present an update of existing policies, but this should be made clearer.

To comment on the analytical approach, I will briefly return to the research questions presented in the introductory part of the thesis (p. 11) – specifically the two of them related to the analysis of sustainability and environmental policies: 1. "What is the status of gender mainstreaming in global environmental policies?", 2. "To what extent are current global policies gender-transformative?". At first glance, these questions may appear to be formulated insufficiently clearly or vague. But as becomes more apparent in later passages of the text, there is an unexplained logic behind this wording, in which they may be more "legitimate". In the case of policy analysis, the term "evaluation" is used in several places in the thesis. However, the terms "policy analysis" and "policy evaluation" seem to be treated as synonymous in the text. It would be more appropriate to state the intention to evaluate more explicitly in the thesis, to discuss what the evaluation entails, and to be more consistent in this regard. The research questions should also refer explicitly to the evaluation framework.

As far as the analytical part of the thesis is concerned, I asked myself while reading it whether a less ambitious focus – either solely on the reflection of the gender dimensions of analytical concepts of global environmental change or solely on the gender analysis of environmental policies – would not have been more appropriate. In the current version of the text, neither of these analytical objectives is fully developed. While the critical frame analysis of the selected concepts of global environmental change and sustainability opens – with the help of a number of relevant sources – many exciting questions, they often remain only hinted at without developing a more elaborate explanation or argumentation. One example is the reflection on the concept of degrowth and its gendered aspects, which covers just over one page (p. 45-46).

A more elaborate argumentation would also be appropriate in the case of the gender analysis of environmental policies. In particular, the research question concerning the extent to which current global policies can be considered gender-transformative is answered in a very elementary way. In the case of the Sendai framework, the reader is only provided with incomprehensible information presented in the table: "resonates in academic debate" (p. 67). Similarly, in the case of the Paris Agreement, it is stated: "IPCC Sixth Assessment Report and academic literature" (p. 71). In general, the gender analysis of environmental policies often remains descriptive. Occasionally, the author develops the topic with the help of thematic resources, but she almost does not relate her findings to theoretical concepts.

Another remark related to this chapter of the analytical part concerns the use of the concept of intersectionality: In several parts of her analysis of different policies, the author identifies "elements of an intersectional approach" (p. 61, 63, 68, 70, 73, 88), although the careful language she uses to describe this indicates that she is aware of the fact that this interpretation is not accurate. In fact, based on her description of the given parts of the policies, the documents appear to adopt an "additive approach" rather than an intersectional perspective, not considering the effects of different axes of inequalities jointly and as co-constituted, but rather implicitly assuming that they can be understood as the sum of individual parts.

My final set of comments relates to more technical aspects of the thesis. Unfortunately, the text is rather difficult to read and navigate through. Despite the apparent expertise of the author, the thesis itself is often disorganized at a micro level. The line of argument is not always fully clear, and in some chapters, similar sentences are repeated with minor variations. An extreme case is chapter 2.2.2, Gender Integration Continuum (p. 41-44), where the individual phases of the continuum are described several times, using almost the same wording. Reading is further complicated by using multiple synonyms for certain concepts and also by typos.

Despite the above-mentioned critical comments, I find the thesis insightful and appreciate the rather extensive literature review on which the thesis builds. I therefore **recommend the thesis for the defence**, and I suggest to evaluate it with **grade 2 ("very good")**.

Question for discussion:

Where does the author see possible differences between "policy analysis" and "policy evaluation" in terms of their implications for conducting the analysis?

23 January 2024, Praha

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