

Death by Degrees:

Taking a Feminist Hard Look at the 2° Climate Policy

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International policy-makers are forging a consensus that a 2°C rise in global temperature represents an acceptable and manageable level of danger to the planet. This is not a conclusion supported by climate science. Feminist analysis helps to reveal the gendered political and ideological underpinnings of this approach to climate change.

The 2009 Summit meeting of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized countries produced what British Prime Minister Brown described as an “historic agreement” on climate change. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, was less ebullient, but agreed that “a clear step forward had been made” (CBS 2009).

The ‘steps forward’ include a commitment by the G8 to continue collaboration “to identify a goal to substantially reduce global emissions by 2050” (G8 2009). The G8 did not offer such a goal, rather it declared the aspiration to arrive at one. Beyond this aspiration, the official record of the Summit identifies almost no specific goals towards which future collaboration will be directed. The G8 achieved no harmonization on reduction standards or benchmarks. The G8 leaders, for example, apparently could not come to an agreement to stipulate the baseline year against which their aspirational carbon emission “reductions by 2050” would be measured. Tar-

gets currently in place illustrate wide variability in policy and effectiveness: by 2020, Japan's government, for example, has committed to cut emissions by 15 percent below 2005 levels; Australia has set a 5-15 percent reduction below 2000 levels; Canada plans to cut 2006 levels by 20 percent; the European Union (EU) has committed to cut emissions by 20 percent below 1990 levels, and by 30 percent if other rich nations follow suit. The United States has merely said it was *considering* cutting its emissions by 14-17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, but the possibility of this goal was not manifested in the official Summit record.

The sole fixed climate change target included in the Summit Statements, for which the Summit as a whole was dubbed putatively 'historic', is that the G8 leaders for the first time "recognize[d] the scientific view that the increase in global average temperature above pre-industrial levels ought not to exceed 2 degrees C" (G8 2009). The EU in general, and Chancellor Merkel particularly, has struggled for a number of years to bring the other G8 leaders onto the 2° bandwagon. Chancellor Merkel remarked after the Summit that, "After a long struggle, all of the G8 nations have finally accepted the 2 degree goal. From the United States of America to Japan and Europe, everyone will work on this goal" (CBS 2009).

In the absence of any other fixed agreement out of the G8 summit, this singular agreement on a 2°C floor (ceiling?) is particularly notable. Over the past decade, 2°C (3.6°F) has – somewhat mysteriously – emerged in climate policy discourse and in the popular imagination as a threshold that separates 'acceptable' levels of global warming from 'dangerous' degrees of warming. The underlying messaging embedded in the 2° narrative is that 'we' (usually implying a global community) are OK up to 2°C of warming, but in jeopardy beyond that level.

The G8 summit is not the primary climate change forum. But the G8 leaders represent nations responsible for more than 40% of worldwide carbon emissions, and what they agree to at their annual meetings will be translated into policy in fora that follow. The G8 leaders, in climate terms, are principal actors. Moreover, the 2° bandwagon is crowded these days; it has become as much of a popular reference point as a policy one. Many of the most prominent climate change policy advocates, including those in the public eye such as Al Gore and Bono, have adopted it as a touchstone. Most environmental groups are on board. Just prior to the 2009 G8 Summit, a group of more than 47 environmental groups including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, National Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club, and the Union of Concerned Scientists issued an open letter to US President Obama urging that the G8 embrace a goal of "staying below the 2°C/3.6°F target" (Sheppard 2009). Increasingly 2° has become an iconic goal in the global climate policy arena.

THE CURIOUS HISTORY OF 2°

There is considerable uncertainty about when and why the notion took hold that 2°C of global warming is an appropriate target threshold for climate change policy. Despite the G8 leaders' declaration that it is a "scientific view" that dictates the 2° target, there is little in the record to support this. Since the earliest climate change models were developed in the mid-1970s, the scientific community has largely been averse to make what are inherently political or policy climate targeting recommendations. Very few scientific reports advocate for a specific target, or even mention one, and in the scant literature in which scientists do call for one there is little agreement on what that target might be.

The impression that 2° represents a science-supported consensus is supported

by the erroneous association of this target with both the 1994 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Reports. The 2° notion is most often mapped onto Article 2 of the UNFCCC that famously sets an ultimate objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations “at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system”; the Convention continues that “such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.” A relationship is often implied or asserted, *post-hoc*, between the 2° target and the UNFCCC warning about “dangerous” levels of warming. But there is nothing in the UNFCCC itself to support this: the Convention it provides little wisdom on what constitutes a “dangerous level” and the rationale for a 2° target is not to be found within the UNFCCC.

Neither is it to be found within the IPCC Assessment Reports. The IPCC strikes a rigorously neutral stance on policy matters. Its mandate is to synthesize and report to the world’s governments on the accumulated scientific knowledge on the state and projections of climate change; the IPCC hews close to a line of providing data to support policy-makers, not making or suggesting policy.

ECONOMIC MAN

The earliest identified reference to a 2° desideratum appears to come not from a climate scientist but from a Yale University economist, William Nordhaus (Oppenheimer and Petsonk 2005). Nordhaus was among the first to attempt to model the economics of limiting carbon dioxide concentrations. In 1979, Nordhaus wrote:

Up to now there has been no serious thought of the level of standard on carbon dioxide. As a first approximation, it seems reasonable to argue that the climate effects of carbon dioxide should be kept within the normal range of long-term variation....If there were global temperatures more than 2 or 3°C above current average temperatures this would take the climate outside [this normal range] (1979:141-142).

While he acknowledged considerable uncertainty about the science of warming, this did not deter Nordhaus from pursuing his overarching research interest in exploring “the trade-off between economic growth and environmental policy” (1979:130), a field to which he made several key contributions over several decades. Thus if we start with Nordhaus as the notional founder of a focus on 2°, we see the determining influence of economics, and an emphasis on trade-offs, setting the terms of the discourse from the beginning.

From Nordhaus forward, the 2° target has been contrived and deployed primarily as a policy and economic trade-off point. It is driven largely by political expediencies and economic modeling that is distanced from the actual consequences of ‘even’ a 2° rise in global temperatures. One climate scientist, recently reviewing whether there is a scientific basis for the 2° target concludes that it is “supported by rather thin arguments, based on inadequate methods, sloppy reasoning, and selective citation from a very narrow set of studies... [that is] overall unfounded” (Tol 2007:424).

MODELING ACCEPTABLE DANGER (MAD)

2°C of global warming is not a real geophysical threshold. It does not mark a boundary between little and much danger. It does not demarcate a known tipping point, below which there is minimal threat to the world’s ecosystems and human po-

pulations, above which the danger is remarkably higher. In reality, climate science is unable to make such fine distinctions; in reality, geophysical systems do not work that way. In truth, 2° represents a notional point on a spectrum of climate consequences somewhere between ‘likely to be quite bad’ and ‘likely to be really catastrophic.’

It is patently a political target, constructed ideologically in the service of distinctive interests. Arguably, any climate target is forged through a political process (‘political’ being broadly understood). But the nature of 2° as a *degree*-based target is distinctively ideological: it is precise enough to appear to be scientifically based, and it is a target for which geophysical systems themselves appear to be the primary referent (rather than emissions-control targets or historically based reduction goals, for example, which are directed towards human actions).

One of the core illusions of the 2° target is that humans can ‘master’ climate change, allowing the global temperature to rise to an arbitrary line and then stopping it. The narrative of 2 is infused with references to “stopping” global warming “before” it goes beyond 2; the G8 summit statement repeats this trope with its agreement that warming “ought not exceed” two degrees. This conceit frames the climate as a machine that we can control – perhaps like an oven, that we can turn on and off or hold at a more or less steady temperature point. There is neither an historical nor scientific basis for assuming that humans can ‘stop’ global warming at any particular temperature point, 2° or otherwise. Such an assumption is entirely removed from geophysical and atmospheric reality, a cultural fabrication constructed wholly of Baconian cloth. Feminist scholars (including Merchant 1980, 1992; O’Brien 2007; Plumwood 1993, 2009; Seager 1993a, b, 2003; Warren 2000) have provided trenchant analyses of the ecological and social havoc

that has been wrought by such mechanical conceptualizations of the earth – a reduction so totalizing that Carolyn Merchant dubbed it the *Death of Nature*:

As the unifying model for science and society, the machine has permeated and reconstructed human consciousness so totally that today we scarcely question its validity. Nature, society, and the human body are composed of interchangeable atomized parts that can be repaired or replaced from outside... The removal of animistic, organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature... the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature. Moreover, as a conceptual framework, the mechanical order had associated with it a framework of values based on power, fully compatible with the directions taken by commercial capitalism (1992:48).

The current feminist project is to reveal the “framework of values based on power” that explains who is creating and driving the agenda for the otherwise rather inexplicable 2° climate target.

In the first instance, presumptions that nature can be – and should be – controlled are deeply masculinized (Merchant 1980; O’Brien 2007; Seager 1993b; Easlea 1987).

More saliently, perhaps, this ‘masters of the universe’ stance rests on a larger deceit that is also deeply infused with gendered social meaning and consequence: that global warming up to 2° presents a modest threat, a degree of danger that is acceptable. Notions of the acceptability of risk are always refracted through a prism of privilege, power, and geography. The challenge is to unpack whose interests lie at the heart of this notional climate target. For whom is 2° warming ‘not dangerous’? Who defines acceptable levels of danger? Who determines what ‘acceptable’ risk is acceptable?

The answer is, polemically, that the same masters of the universe who believe they

can stop warming at 2° are driving the global policy agenda to accept that warming up to 2° is acceptable. The drivers behind the 2° contrivance have been mostly first-world politicians and economists cocooned in a masculinized rationality and a certainty that in the climate ‘winners and losers’ paradigm they conjure, they will be on the winning side – and that holding global warming below 2°C will somehow ensure this. Less polemically, it is possible to start to tease out the major influences and influencers who are shaping this agenda. This is an urgently incomplete project, but some of the pieces of the puzzle are in view.

For elites situated in Berlin or Paris or Washington DC, the dangers of global warming may appear to be comfortably manageable up to about 2°. For most of the global 2° policy drivers, climate change is not yet a threat in their own backyard, or they believe it is not. It is an irony of ‘global’ warming that it manifests itself locally: all climate models predict geographically uneven effects from warming. Climate impact assessments repeatedly point to inequalities in the regional and sectoral impacts of climate change (O’Brien and Leichenko 2003), and there is little disagreement that the poorest countries and low-latitude countries will suffer first. Considerable ecosystem and livelihood damage will occur at levels of warming well below 2° – but from the point of view of buffered, rich-world elites, it happens to ‘others’ and ‘elsewhere’. Indeed, climate models predict possible initial benefits for temperate and cold-latitude states in the lower temperature range of global warming – milder winters, expanded crop ranges and yields, and increased water availability. The ‘least developed countries’ of the world are generally at greatest threat, if only because overall vulnerabilities are higher and adaptive capacities are lower (Huq et al. 2003). Within poor countries, the poorest people, among whom women predominate, will suffer earliest and most.

This is well understood by the more marginalized states, those not at the G8 table. As the G8 leaders announced their ‘historic’ embrace of the 2° target in July 2009, the Alliance of Small Island States on Climate Change (AOSIS) at the same time rejected it, calling instead for short- and medium-term targets that would limit increases to below 1.5 °C. Dessima Williams, the AOSIS Chairperson, remarked that

“We welcome new outcomes which indicate greater momentum towards tackling the challenges of climate change. However, for AOSIS, 2 degrees of temperature rise is still unacceptable, because it exceeds safe thresholds necessary for the protection and survival of small islands ... for the smallest and most vulnerable islands, climate change [is] already here, causing damage” (AOSIS 2009).

The capacity for differential success in adaptations to global warming is well understood. As Jon Barnett and Neil Adger recently point out, “It may be within the capacity of human ingenuity to adapt to 2°C of warming. If emissions slow such that climate stabilises at this level, the pace of change may be such that adaptation can by and large be successful. This is effectively the argument in the EU’s 2°C target and policy position. In such scenarios of adaptation, many people in most places can continue to lead valuable and meaningful lives. But even at these levels, important justice issues are raised given the likelihood that some people and ecosystems will not be able to adapt” (Barnett and Adger, forthcoming). Many ecosystems and peoples will hit limits to adaptation long before 2°C, and some already have.

An analysis published by the widely-influential economist, Nicholas Stern (2007), and drawn from the most recent IPCC report, details a range of harmful effects that will occur at relatively low levels of warming and that can be confidently anticipated at higher levels, among them:

- With 1°C warming: flora and fauna range shifts; increasing malaria (+300,000 deaths); extreme weather events; glacier melts; floods; droughts; permafrost instability; fish stock declines; severe food disruptions in the Sahel region of Africa;
- with 1-2°C: decreases in crop productivity, in the tropics and low latitudes up to 50% yield declines; threats of Arctic mammal species extinction;
- 1-3°C: widespread coral bleaching (up to possibly 80%) and reef mortality;
- at about 2°C: severe water shortages (affecting 1 billion people); tropical forest ecosystems collapse; 40-60 million more people exposed to malaria; 10 million people endangered by coastal flooding.

Even a cursory review of these effects points to the unmistakable conclusion that if the 2° warming cap looks like a safe bet, it is only so for temperate-latitude, rich countries. For the millions of people in poor countries, low-latitude countries, low-lying states, and small island states, 2° is not acceptable. For the dozens of states already pushed to adaptive limits, a 2° cap, even if achievable, is too little, too late. For fragile ecosystems, perhaps especially coral reef and other marine communities, 2° of warming is not a safe target.

Even against this backdrop of First World nonchalance about lower levels of warming, the question still remains about why it is 2°, specifically, that has been plucked out of the spectrum to be the designated safe line. Would 1.5° not be safer? Or would 2.5° or 3° not be OK too? The specificity of the 2° target suggests a taut scientific rationale.

But this is not the case. This target is determined almost exclusively by self-protective economic considerations and by (almost) transparent self-interest of rich countries. The ‘aha’ moment comes when reading between the lines of the mainline climate models: 2° is roughly the point at which most climate models suggest, first,

that truly *global* changes (ocean current shifts, rapid ice sheet melting) will supercede regionally-manifested ones and, secondly, that temperate-latitude impacts, such as increased hurricane intensity in the US, are predicted to accelerate. Two degrees Celsius, according to most models, is when global warming comes ‘home’ to the rich world.

Economic models and modelers have played at least as influential a role in climate policy as climate models and modelers. Foremost among them is Nicholas Stern, whose 2007 report commissioned by the UK government, the *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change*, is widely regarded as the single-most influential policy document other than the IPCC reports.

The *Stern Review* identifies a further implication of what is expected to happen above 2° – ‘their’ problems are likely to become ‘ours’:

The impacts of unabated climate change, – that is, increases of 3 or 4°C and upwards – will be to increase the risks and costs of these events very powerfully. Impacts on this scale could spill over national borders, exacerbating the damage further. Rising sea levels and other climate-driven changes could drive millions of people to migrate... (vii).

The fear of problems “spilling over borders” and of hordes of poor people fleeing from ravaged environments has long inflamed the popular imagination in rich countries (Hartmann 1999); the 2° target now insinuates this into global climate policy as part of a discourse about ‘climate security’.

It is raw economic modeling, however, that largely dictates a rationale for 2°. The costs of adapting to climate change are substantial; the costs of mitigating it, even higher. It is economists who have selected 2° as the upper limit of a reasonable cost burden for industrial economies. Stern, again:

The Review estimates the annual costs of stabilisation at 500-550ppm CO₂ to be around 1% of GDP by 2050 – a level that is significant but manageable.... Anything higher would substantially increase the risks of very harmful impacts while reducing the expected costs of mitigation by comparatively little. Aiming for the lower end of this range would mean that the costs of mitigation would be likely to rise rapidly. Anything lower [than 2°] would certainly impose very high adjustment costs in the near term (xvii).

There can be no objection to economic analyses contributing to the decision-making around mitigation strategies for climate change. Politicians and policy-makers have a reasonable obligation not to provoke more economic chaos in mitigating climate change than climate change itself might incur. However, the latter costs are largely unaccounted for – they are not knowable and can not be comprehended by mainstream economic models. This means that there is no way for economic models to actually compare what the trade-offs might be. While Stern and other economists evaluate the costs of a more stringent climate policy (more stringent than 2° of warming) as too expensive and too disruptive to normal economic activity, they actually have no idea what will be the the biogeographical, social, and economic costs of allowing global warming to proceed up to 2°. Social costs can not be accommodated by economic modeling; environmental costs are similarly unaccountable. Thus, there is no sensible way to weigh the ‘trade-offs’ of allowing warming to proceed as high as 2° versus at temperature gradients below and up to 2°.

TO MARKET WE GO

The dubious integrity of an environmental policy developed on the basis of economic rather than ecological principles becomes most evident in the heated excitement

about climate change ‘winners and losers’. Stern makes clear that climate change is not just about costs, but benefits – and he predicts good news for some:

There are also significant new opportunities across a wide range of industries and services. Markets for low-carbon energy products are likely to be worth at least \$500bn per year by 2050, and perhaps much more. Individual companies and countries should position themselves to take advantage of these opportunities.

The notion of winners and losers arises recurrently in the literature and discussions of climate change:

In the climate impacts literature, winners are usually referred to in terms of improved conditions, opportunities, positive effects, and benefits, while losers are referred to in terms of negative effects and increasing vulnerability. Although mention of winners and losers is commonplace in discussions and debates, explicit reference to winners and losers is largely avoided in official documents such as the IPCC assessment reports, reflecting the political sensitivity of the topic. Nonetheless, the most recent evidence suggests that winners from climate change will include the middle and high latitude regions, which are expected to experience warmer summers and a longer agricultural growing season. Losers from climate change are expected to include marginal lands in Africa, which are likely to experience an increased frequency and magnitude of extreme events, particularly droughts, and countries with low-lying coastal zones, which many be damaged by more frequent storm surges or flooded by rising sea levels (O’Brien and Leichenko 2003).

Underlying this trope, O’Brien and Leichenko argue, is the notion that winners and losers in a climate change context are ‘natural’, inevitable, and almost evolutionary, determined by physical endowments and natural environments.

A robust counter-analysis establishes that vulnerabilities are socially constructed (Bohle, Downing and Watts 1994; Ribot 1995; Handmer et al. 1999; Kelly and Adger 2000; Adger et al. 2003). Feminist scholarship has been particularly central to this analysis, adding not just conceptual framing but analytical specificity in understanding the ways in which environmental impacts (of all kinds) are refracted unevenly by gender (for example, Denton 2000; Enarson 2000; Fordham 2001; Gupta and Gupta 2003; Lambrou and Piana 2006). Social vulnerabilities analysis has made inroads into some official policy approaches, but climate solutions on a macro scale are remarkably unperturbed by these insights.

The mainstream economic approach to climate winners and losers, as the Stern Report suggests, marries environmental and social determinism. In effect, the climate-opportunity boosters argue that there are inevitable winners and losers in climate change, and those people and enterprises smart enough to anticipate and game the system can be on the winning side. In this rhetoric, ‘competitive advantage’ on a warming world goes to he who stakes out the right market position first. Remarkably, some environmentalists are adding their credibility to this approach. Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute, co-authored a highly-publicized article in the 2007 *Harvard Business Review*, titled “Competitive Advantage on a Warming Planet” (2007):

Companies that manage and mitigate their exposure to climate-change risks while seeking new opportunities for profit will generate a competitive advantage over rivals in a carbon-constrained future. We offer here a guide for identifying the ways in which climate change can affect your business and for creating a strategy that will help you manage the risks and pursue the opportunities.

At the same time that Lash and Wellington

were heralding climate change business opportunities, in *The Atlantic* magazine (2007), Gregg Easterbrook was invoking scenarios of warming-world chaos that could result in landgrabs, wars, and uprisings of the climate have-nots:

If climate change causes developing nations to falter, and social conditions within them deteriorate, many millions of jobless or hungry refugees may come to the borders of the favored North, demanding to be let in. If the very Earth itself turns against poor nations, punishing them with heat and storms, how could the United States morally deny the refugees succor? Shifts in the relative values of places and resources have often led to war, and it is all too imaginable that climate change will cause nations to envy each other’s territory (4).

Like Lash and Wellington, Easterbrook exhorts the global community to take climate change seriously, and like them he sees the market as the only solution: “The market has caused the greenhouse-gas problem, and the market is the best hope of solving it. Offering market incentives for the development of greenhouse-gas controls – indeed, encouraging profit making in greenhouse-gas controls – is the most promising path to avoiding the harm that could befall the dispossessed of developing nations as the global climate changes.”

Where environmentalists and economists are most rapidly forging common cause these days is on the terrain of carbon trading. Like the 2° target, carbon trading now has become a widely heralded ‘solution’. It is a solution framed entirely by market perspectives, and, like the 2° target itself, has remarkably little ecological basis in its favor. To Stern, climate change is all about the market: “Climate change presents a unique challenge for economics: it is the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen” (2007:i). From this perspective, the remedy is, of course, cleverer market manipulation.

The 'carbon market' redistributes pollution via one of two main market-based mechanisms: offsets, and the trade and purchase of carbon 'credits'. The purchase of offsets allows high carbon-emitting states or private enterprises to pay lesser-emitting states (or companies) to store or 'offset' the carbon emissions through schemes such as tree-planting or wetland reconstruction. The carbon trading market allows low-emitting states (or companies) to sell a 'credit' for the right to pollute – the notional 'share' of emissions that they might be expected to produce but are not – to a higher-emitting party. This 'trading' scheme is often, but not always, twinned with 'caps'. Over time, caps are supposed to be progressively lowered to ensure that carbon emissions are not just shifted around the globe, but that the collective sum of permissible emissions is reduced.

Leaving aside the problems of actually assessing and implementing offset and trading schemes (which are legion), the marketization of carbon emissions represents the triumph of economic ideology over environmental principle. These schemes privatize the atmosphere; they normalize and institutionalize the notion that there is a 'right to pollute' and that there is a normative share of pollution that, if underused, can be transferred to someone else. Carbon trading introduces the notion that there are 'under-polluting' states and places. More critically, trade and offset schemes enable emitter states to shed responsibility and to 'globalize' a responsibility that is now state-specific.

Carbon trading has also been taken up in policy circles as a substitute for aid to poor countries: if poor countries can make money by selling their under-pollution credits, then foreign aid can be cut. 'Trade not aid' takes on a distinctively sinister character when what is being traded is pollution. This also frames the under-development of poor countries as an economic asset, providing a rationale for the continued domi-

nance of already-developed states. Feminists might be particularly wary of analyses that promote 'under-development' as an asset – women's docility or lack of agency has often been heralded as their most authentic positionality.

Competitive markets can and do structure many important economic activities, but the environment can not be seriously comprehended through traditional economic approaches. Despite recent efforts to put a price tag on 'ecological services', economic modelling can not comprehend intangible values or quality assessments – such as the integrity of ecosystems, the value of a coral reef, or the costs of diminished mangroves, let alone ecological or social equity (Schneider and Lane 2006). Moreover, the history of the marketization of natural resources shows mixed results in terms of actually protecting those resources. The past 300 years of global environmental history provides scant evidence that reliance on markets protects ecosystems. At best, what is most efficient for the market may have little to do with how ecosystems work best or how people interact with them.

At its root, a market-based economics rationality is an ecologically-impooverished ideology, not suitable for meeting environmental challenges. In many ways, it is arguably the very soul-less rationality of markets that got us into environmental trouble in first place. As Ulrike Röhr points out, "no one can seriously doubt that climate change [itself] is being driven by decisions based on economic considerations" (Röhr et al. 2008). This, then, is a good moment to be especially critical about the siren song of the 'markets' and to be especially cautious about the wisdom of using a market-based approach to solve problems that market-based approaches have caused.

Interdisciplinary feminist scholarship sheds light on the gendered underpinnings of this ideological cosmology. Working our way through the extensive feminist litera-

tures in ecology, economics, political economy and history, here's what we know: capitalism is gendered; 'markets' are gendered; women and men, in almost all societies and historical eras, are situated differently in relation to 'market mechanisms'; 'market mechanisms' are gendered; market 'winners' have tended mostly to be men; women have almost universally been on the down side of global marketization, and structurally constrained to be so; when the basis for sustaining life and livelihoods is commodified, everyone will be losers, but women are especially disadvantaged. A willful confusion of market policy and social policy, as in "what's good for markets is good for people/ environment," has never been good for women.

Environmental analysis still only weakly incorporates feminist scholarship, and vice-versa, but feminist assessments when taken seriously offer a radical reorientation of approaches to climate change. Ulrike Röhr (2008) makes the point that "gender [analysis] does not point to a hole or a gap in an otherwise intact 'blanket' of sustainable climate policies. Instead it indicates entire needed reorientations" (22), a climate change refrain that echoes poet Audre Lorde's famous dictum that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1981). Feminist analysis sheds light on the ways in which the notion that we can identify levels of acceptable danger, and hold global warming to that line – and, worse, offer this up as an appropriate global policy and to the crisis in which we are embroiled – is 'master's house' thinking.

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SUMMARY

International policy-makers are forging a consensus that a 2° rise in global temperature represents an acceptable level of danger to the planet. This is not based on climate science. This article explores how feminist analysis and perspectives on climate change can help to reveal the gendered political and ideological underpinnings of this approach to climate change.

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