



## Feminist critiques of climate change politics

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## Conference of the Polluters? Feminist critique of climate politics

“Who is more committed to tackling climate change than us?”, asks Marcin Korolec, Polish minister of the environment in an interview for BusinessGreen of July 2013, and points to the biggest wood biomass plantation in Europe (the project of two American corporations, International Paper and GreenWood Resources). Until now, Paper International was buying timber from Polish Forests. Not only forests are on fire. The project will lease 10 000 hectare land from local farmers. Green jobs (the flagship project of green economy) in food production will be lost to create green jobs in industrial biomass plantation, ostensibly with the goal to reduce dependence on coal and emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere and replace it with renewables, and move to low emissions economy. These are the proclaimed goals of climate policies from Kyoto and Brussels. The implementation of these policies is based on three kinds of free gifts or rewards to companies, including the biggest polluters to encourage them to reduce emissions.

The first pillar of these policies are direct subsidies, non-returnable grants, and tax exemptions. In the new financial perspective 20 % of the EU budget is to be allocated for “climate mainstreaming”. Public funding to stabilize the climate will create new markets. The second type of free gifts to the biggest polluters of the atmosphere are permits to pollute up to an agreed upon cap, and credits to help them meet the cap. If the company's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions exceed the cap, then it has to buy permits from others who have achieved reductions of emissions. So far the polluters have been getting permits to pollute for free. In addition to permits, the emitters get tradeable certificates for energy efficiency, cogeneration, and renewables.

The system is based on the faith in market equilibrium, and on the economic theory of the right to pollute which assumes that competition on pollution permits market will lead to the optimization of the costs of dealing with pollution, and eventually will lead to reduction of discharges to the environment. It looks great in theory but so much the worse for reality. From a legal point of view the permits to pollute and eco-certificates are corporate property rights. Effectively, they are the rights to the air we breathe. To make profits on polluting the atmosphere and also on saving the climate is the corporate dream come true. This is precisely what new climate policy, including European Emissions Trading Scheme, described above, offers to corporations since 2005.

To make it easier for states and corporations to meet the caps on pollution, Kyoto protocol (1997) introduced the system of credits, or offsets in climate jargon, such as Clean Development Mechanism, and its spin-off programs. To explain how it works: a polluter from the US or the Netherlands can acquire land for instance in Tanzania, plant eucalyptus trees, and use it as an offset against pollutions in the country of origin. This enables them to meet the caps, refrain from reducing emissions, continue business as usual and make extra profit on trading credits and permits. (On the social costs of these arrangements see Ana Isla on selling sex and oxygen in Costa Rica.). As the authors of the Carbon Watch report point out, thanks to the offset system European Union can meet 2020 emission reduction targets without taking any action in member countries.

The third type of advantages to corporations, banks and financial firms are the markets to trade in pollution permits created with the visible hand of state and international

organizations. For the second ETS phase (2008-2012) Point Carbon and WWF estimated the revenue of energy corporations was in the range from 23 to 73 bn euro. The emissions permits and other eco-certification schemes open up new lucrative possibilities for material profits from virtual products.

Let's take the example of granddaughter company of the French multinational, Dalkia Łódź that has recently obtained emissions permits in return for investment in the modernization of the distribution infrastructure at 6 streets in Łódź. The costs of investment, as well as the estimated costs of eco-certificates are included in the end users energy bills, while the company profits in multiple ways: reducing delivery costs, minimizing its tax base, enhancing its assets, and generating profits from creative accounting. Eventually Dalkia can also generate new sizable income from trading in permits (rights to pollute) that it has received for free. Therefore it is not surprising that Dalkia, as well as many other companies covered under EU ETS scheme and the organizations that represent them, including Polish Confederation of Private Employers Leviathan or GreenEffort Group and similar organizations worldwide develop media campaigns and play the game of a good and a bad cop to ensure the sustainability of these arrangements.

To make the new markets in trading emissions permits possible, a huge new public-private climate change industry emerged. This includes experts in management of environmental resources, economists, lawyers, accountants, experts in financial engineering, bankers, experts in emission trading and eco-certification who calculate, valorize and verify emissions and offsets, and create, certify, account and trade new virtual products. The production and trade in permits and eco-certificates opens up new possibilities to speculate on nature. For financial markets, water, air, and biodiversity appear as a new frontier, „a nobody's land” to develop for profit, this time by way of new financial engineering. The Boell foundation report (Verolme et al, 2013) concludes that climate politics has been captured by the financial-energy complex.

The EU ETS will continue with the snow ball effect until it is melted down by the global warming - unless „a reset of climate policy” takes place. The discourse of global and Polish decision makers, including Polish environment minister Korolec, indicates that such a reset will indeed take place. However, what they have in mind is not necessarily ETS reform or its abandonment, but the globalization of emission trading.

### **Polish climate politics: economic nationalism and globalization of emission trading**

In Poland, the decision makers would not have been bothered with environmental policy if not for the requirements to conform with the EU Directives and if not for the funding that flows from the EU budget for environmental investment. In 1992, at the Earth Summit in Rio, Polish minister for the environment explained that Poland has to get rich first and only then it will take care of the environment. This is still the position of decision makers today. After the crisis of 2008, the inflow of foreign investment dried up and Polish government modified the national development strategy launched in 2009 with the goal for Poland to become a world leading economic power by 2030. With the change of plans, the previous rhetoric of harmonizing climate and energy policies by way of investment in new technologies for extraction and combustion of coal, in renewables, energy efficiency and in nuclear energy went into political disuse.

In the National Plan for Transition to Low Emissions Economy of 2011, protection of the environment has been defined as maximizing environmental utility. The national development strategy modified by the government in 2013 redefines energy security as „provision of optimal volume of energy at the lowest possible costs and diversification of sources”. “The future of Poland and Europe depends on coal”, said prime minister Donald Tusk at his party convention this year. “We will spend on the renewable only what’s necessary to protect the environment and ensure proper energy mix, but nothing more. We will not pull wool over people's eyes that windmills and solar batteries can ensure future energy supply for Poland... Our energy sources will be Polish energy sources that will ensure Polish energy independence for many years to come”. Polish energy sources include coal, gas, shale gas (the new El Dorado) and nuclear energy with a new fad, local nuclear power plants for cogeneration of energy and heat. This statement by Donald Tusk comes in the context of revival of national security discourse in Poland that provides a common frame for different segments of the political elite which has been governing the neverending neoliberal transformation. (There is still a lot to privatize...) In the national security framework, energy security was linked with demographic security (the increase in the fertility of Polish women), as well as military and economic security.

Politicians of the governing coalition are playing a piece for two hands. In an interview of July this year, minister for the economy, Janusz Piechocinski, calls for renegotiating the Climate Pact to modify the indicators for the new EU member states. He is supported by Polish energy and heavy industry. And the media underscore that Polish economy will pay a steep price for climate change policy. However, in the second ETS phase Poland has earned 800 million zlotys from the so called hot air (reduction of emissions which were not due to material efficiency gains, but to the downturn in economic growth and hence lower emissions). Energy firms based in Poland will be granted rights to pollute for free in big installations until 2019, while in the „old EU”, starting from 2013, free distribution of permits will be phased out and replaced with the auction system. These relative gains are not taken into account in public debate. But the interventions are useful to maximize the scope for negotiation with the Commission.

In turn, the minister for the environment is engaged in the critique of differential global allocation of responsibilities for mitigating climate change. (In Kyoto only developed countries committed themselves to reduce emission volumes by 6 %). Therefore, he is calling for a new global climate pact. But in the background of such statements are the World Bank projects that introduce new institutional arrangements that pave way for globalizing trade in pollution permits (EU ETS model).

### **NGOs in the market framework of climate politics**

The majority of Polish NGOs is either evangelizing the climate policies forged in Kyoto and Brussels in the frame of „bad” Polish government and coal industry versus „good” EU climate policy (Climate Coalition) - or find a niche in promoting renewable energy. The NGOs such as the Green Institute or the Spaces for Dialogue Foundation engage in the production of lyrical narratives on green city, energy democracy, or depoliticized new green deal. The documents

occasionally refer to neoliberalism, but the way they conceptualize responses to neoliberalism always draws on the very set of concepts that they claim to criticize, such as creative capital, education referenced to Europe 2020 strategy, which entails marketization of teaching and research in the name of enhancing competitiveness. They demand flexicurity, internalize reframing of social rights as services, or advocate eco-innovation as the solution to capitalist exploitation of workers and nature in the otherwise postmodern critique of capitalism.

These reports envisage photovoltaics at every rooftop of the green city of their dreams, but they do not see people who cannot afford to install the new green gadgets. There is a call for reconciling work with family roles and to share care work in the households. But there are no women who seek cleaning jobs in other women's homes for meager remuneration. 40% of all Polish households that live from hand to mouth on income that does not allow to meet basic needs are excluded from the green city.

The same national security frames are reproduced through academic discourse on climate change which includes descriptive presentations of policy process or is evangelizing EU ETS. For instance, in the legal interpretation of Polish emission trading law, dr Leszek Karski is presenting the techno-financial-juridical instrument of emission trading as exemplary case of global human rights law, one that serves humanity and social development, guarantees realization of human rights of current and future generations. The author finds emission trading scheme will deliver world peace, because it allocates a part of atmosphere to business in a peaceful manner, and hence prevents global wars over resources. No doubt this rhetoric will come useful to legitimate the establishment of global market for emission trading.

To conclude, Polish debate on climate follows the repertoire from Kyoto and Brussels (new technologies, renewables, cap and trade). Hardly anybody wants to see „the emperor without his clothes”. The critique of policies that privatize nature is not taken on board, and neither is the critique of neoliberalization of social policy. The questions as who profits from polluting and „saving” the atmosphere, and who pays for both, are not asked.

In all EU countries, energy providers have two price lists, one with higher prices for households, and the second one with lower prices for firms. In Poland, households pay for energy almost twice as much as firms (see [www.energy.eu](http://www.energy.eu)). This pricing arrangement is secured by the Office for Regulation of Energy which legislates that the end user should pay for the protection of the environment. Households pay for energy costs embodied in products and services, too. However, unlike any other public discourse in Poland, climate policy has generated an avalanche of reports and statements by politicians, domestic and international think tanks, and corporations, expressing concern about consequences of climate policies for low income households. This caring image is useful to disguise who benefits and who pays for marketized climate policy.

Today corporations and banks benefit from polluting as well as from ‘saving’ the atmosphere. Yet, it was not always the case. During the 1972 Stockholm conference on Environment and Development the Polluter Pays Principle was addressed to corporations. Market oriented climate politics are enabled with re-writing Polluter Pays Principle so that profit makers are

off the hook and the burden shifts to communities and households with the new neat formulation of 'end users' that helps to depoliticize climate debate.

### **A new narrative**

The Heinrich Boell Foundation report assessing the state of climate policy calls for a reset and a new narrative. This call is addressed to NGOs. In Poland, one of the conditions of the possibility for a new narrative on climate to emerge is the deconstruction of neoliberal normativity, in its many faces (left and conservative), and at different points of deployment, in social, environmental, education, health, municipal policies at the same time.

What we call climate is a multiplicity of (class based, gendered, racialized) relations between people and the air we breathe that are increasingly mediated by the relations of capital. If it is possible to delineate the visible horizon for a new emancipatory political project, then the dream should translate into building new commons as the project of becoming. The bricks for such project are shared frameworks of sense, knowledge resources, as well as networks of relations among social movements engaged in struggles over workers rights, in defence of rights of human beings and nature, women's rights, tenants' rights. The new narrative that integrates nature and care and accepts them as commons, can only come through building relations in struggle, in social-ecological conflicts, within struggles related to the care economy (which includes relations with nature). Taking the perspective of reproduction of daily life, people need nature and nurture to live, and institutions that will sustain social relations of mutuality. To live people need means to reproduce their own daily life and their dependents. All means of livelihood, even those perceived as immaterial labour, are mediated through relations with nature.

In modern European cultures, the duty to care was allocated to women. Reproductive work, whether carried out at home or for the state or market, was unremunerated or low paid. Emotional and material reproductive work constitutes the foundation of state and market – as well as the foundation of the commons. Without it the state would not have its taxpayers, the firms their workers and consumers. Beginning from the 1980s., at a different pace and with local specificities, in all countries of Europe care economy was being marketized. Health care, education, pensions, housing, cities and the state have been transformed to function accordingly to the logic of the market, analogically to the climate policies described above. Likewise, the market expansion transformed the internet commons. The new narrative cannot focus on climate policy as such, it has to connect different struggles where the main political stake is our life. (ech)



## Energy poverty and daily life

Polish government is working on a so called anti-smog programme. The aim? Elimination of coal stoves as environment unfriendly method of heating. Authorities of Kraków and Wałbrzych are already implemented local anti-smog programs of their own. Fines for coal heating are on the agenda, too. How it will influence on people's life?

About 1.3 million households in Poland heat their homes using coal stoves, 4.5 million use stoves which work on solid fuel – usually coal (GUS 2012). 16.3% of households have problems with keeping proper temperature in the house, and 12.5% with paying heat bills (Eurostat). Because of hypothermia 167 people died on winter 2012/2013 in Poland. We decided to ask three women from Wrocław and Kraków about their experiences connected with coal heating and their opinion on the changes in law.

Kasia from Bielany, close to Wrocław, lives in a big, two-floor house, built in 1970, which has 200 square metres. Five people live in the house: her grandmother at the ground floor, Kasia and her family upstairs. Kasia is the only person who brings regular income home. Her mother and brother have only temporary jobs. An old coal stove is installed in the house. Electric heating is much more expensive. „Sometimes we can buy the coal in August, when it is cheaper”, says Kasia. „In August a tonne costs 700 zloty, which means it is cheap – now we pay 450 for half a tonne. But sometimes we haven't got the money then... The coal's price is increasing all the time. For the whole winter we need ca 1,5 tonne. Nevertheless, we suffer...

The stove is in the basement, where our family keeps the coal.” The person who stokes the stove is Kasia's brother. – „If we want to do it in a proper way, we should stoke about five

kilograms every three hours. In fact, we stoke when we can afford it. In winter, most of the time, it is cold in our house. My grandmother lives on the floor. There is, you know, the basement and stove. Since she has been infirm, we have provided her with her own stove. It is so small that even when we don't have any money we can throw some wood and it is warm in her place".

Gas heating is much more expensive than coal. Kasia and her family can't afford it. They don't have money to invest in gas stove to prepay the refund. – „We can't afford it. It is very difficult to pay for such a house. Everything is growing old, falling to ruins, there is no money to redecorate, renovate. My grandpa died a couple of years ago. Grandpa cared for all of the house, he could do home repairs, but now it is hard".

Kasia's neighbors from the district of Bielany are in a similar situation. Most of them are old people, who stoke with coal or cheaper coal dust. – „These new houses which are being built in Bielany, you know - there is a lot of new real estates - they may be heated with gas or floor heating".

Daria lives with two children in an old, hundred-years-old tenement house on Nadodrze. It didn't see the promised "revitalization", like the most part of tenement houses in the district. It has been sold with the occupants to a new owner, who wants to dispose of the occupants at any cost. They decided to take strike action. Her flat is located in the house's main annex, it has 44 m<sup>2</sup> and 3.5m height. There are no more neighbors in any direction, and her flat is horribly cold. The tenement house hasn't been renovated or insulated, the windows haven't been exchanged. Daria heats her flat with electricity because she has no place to store coal or any other fuel because the new owner has blocked the storage place.

Only in one room there is a tiled stove for coal or wood. Until recently she stoked coal – earlier there was wood and briquette, but mainly wood. – „In the first winter we stoked with wood, normally, but second winter was heated with waste from some renovations from the other flat. Some floor boards old cabinets, windows, etc. It wasn't so cool because often this wood was with some lacquer or paint, and it stank a lot".

At the time she stored the coal in the basement and it was very exhausting to bring it to the second floor. She bought coal on the market in Ptasia street. It is likely that it come from pits, illegally mined by poor people.

- „The lorries have been coming, which had four compartments and we bought one or two of them. We heated with electricity because the stove was leaking and I was so scared, although we had a sensor of carbon monoxide. Even though, we must have the wood for tinder. It is a lot of work to do, especially when you buy low quality coal. Sometimes traders add stones to coal, in order to get the same weight. Then we bring out stones instead of ash. What is more, coal is very soiling, it stinks, and there is terrible mess around.

Neighbors upstairs have a small stove for wood, neighbors from the bottom have a fireplace. Another neighbor in front of us has tiled stove, one for two rooms which doesn't seem a good solution because warmth has been running away through the wall. Most of the people have to heat with coal because it is cheaper. Especially in this area. People heat their houses



with whatever they have. The worst thing is that it is difficult to find a coal of really good quality, calorific, not stones”.

**Maria lives with husband and two children in Kraków, in an old tenant house, which is the property of her parents.**

„We have always stoked stove. Yearly, we had to buy 1.5 tonne of coal. The heating took us one hour a day. We had to bring up the coal, clear the ash, load it, and stoke up. In March 2013, after the end of the heating season, we decided to demolish the tiled stove. Then the fungus had appeared. In 2010 the town helped out financially with the exchange of stoves and paid 2000 zlotys no matter what kind of stove was installed . In 2011 there was no subsidy. Now the town covered all the cost. It is based on competition rules, where the points are awarded depending on amount of stoves, and for localisation as well. There are more points for the centre of the town and for the more polluted districts. The clean districts don't get so many points. This year there were three calls for applications. First in January, second in June. We didn't get the subsidy. The third tour had been announced in September and we heard we got the subsidy, but nobody called us about it yet.

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The subsidy isn't available for everyone. First, there is a need to have money for funding the exchange of stoves, points, and luck in competition with others. (mm, azm.)



### **National Stadium: Raising the Temperature**

The 19th Climate Summit will take place at the Warsaw National Stadium. The slogan of the Polish presidency of the COP19 is 'I care' (about the climate). The Euro Championship 2012,

for which the National Stadium was erected, also had its 'green' slogan: 'Play green – EURO 2012'

In both cases the government's intention was to mobilize individual sense of responsibility for the environment and the climate. In the case of the European Championship the appeal was targeted to the football fans: keep the streets clean and use public transport. In the case of the COP19 the government seems to be saying that the change begins with each one of us: everyone should save energy and recycle. The emphasis on individual responsibility is invisibilizing real social-environmental and economic costs of the construction of the National Stadium and other spectacular investments.

The construction of the stadium required the input of resources, work and capital. All of these could have been invested in ways which would improve living conditions and would not harm the environment. The stadium is a massive electric installation which consumes the energy of a town of 7,000 inhabitants. The stadium turf needs to be permanently heated. At the same time, Eurostat data shows that 13.6% of Poles cannot afford adequate heating. Prior to the construction of the PGE Arena in Gdańsk, 30 hectares of allotments that people use for recreation and to grow their own vegetables were destroyed. The same happened in Poznań.

The construction was publicly funded, including the transfers from European taxpayers (via EU budget). The city of Warsaw went further into debt. The consequences of this will be felt by residents of Warsaw. The total cost of the Stadium – PLN 2.5 billion (ca. EUR 600 million) is two and a half times more than Warsaw's annual social spending. Its yearly maintenance cost, PLN 42 million, would be enough to build 12 public day care centers. Before the construction began, the largest marketplace in Poland had to be closed, leaving more than 4,500 sellers without a job or forcing them to seek less attractive locations. And those were not the only social costs of construction.

In 2011 a fatal accident took place on the stadium construction site. One of the workers fell 30 meters from the roof of the stadium. It was one of four fatal accidents during the construction of the Championship stadiums; all of the casualties were caused by neglecting safety regulations. When stadium was under construction, over a dozen workers' strikes took place, all of which were caused by wage arrears or lowering of the hourly rate. After the championship all these issues were swept under the carpet.

The social cost of the stadium's construction before Euro 2012 generated resistance. The campaign 'Bread, not Games' addressed the pressing issues of growing municipal debt, eviction of residents and exploitation. A Feminist Think Tank report entitled 'Why we got Games instead of Bread' explains that the dark side of the stadium's construction involves extracting value from the city, spinning up economic growth, and the intensification of surveillance. All these serve to protect the profits of the elites at the expense of the majority of the population.

The construction of the stadiums put many municipalities in debt and has been an excuse for further austerity measures; cuts have been made on most basic levels. In all four cities where stadiums were erected public transport fares went up and the number of connections were

cut. In Wrocław during the time of the construction, council housing rents went up, and funding for council housing declined. In Poznań, nursery workers heard that there would be no pay increase because of the Euro Championship. When the preparations were coming to an end, Warsaw authorities began to close school cafeterias.

The slogan of the Polish presidency: 'I care' is a hypocritical camouflage of local and national policies which have been shifting the responsibilities for care and reproduction of daily life to households and offloading it largely to women. The cost of damaging the environment are transferred to citizens as taxpayers. The story of the National Stadium is therefore a part of a larger picture. The energy embodied in such spectacular investments has not been used for common good. Instead the main goal was to promote economic growth, maximize profit, make cities and countries attractive for financial markets. The same is true of climate policy. (gm)

### **Computers: Embodied energy and embodied work**

The mainstream debate on climate change meticulously avoids to discuss the relations between the accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere and the accumulation of capital, although this is precisely what's at stake in stabilizing and reversing climate change. It does not see the climate from the perspective of people. Instead, on top of bickering about caps, the main topic are juridico-financial instruments, such as rights to pollute and emissions trading markets, and new technologies.

Information technologies are seen as one of the "magic solutions" to the climate crisis. But the role of new technologies in expanding and globalizing production that increases the demand for resources and energy, including the transportation of products from distant production sites to consumers, is not taken into account. Demand for energy is increasing with e-banking and e-state including the energy consumed by servers required for massive surveillance to enhance global controls over people. No wonder the energy consumption related to computerization and telecommunication steadily grows. As recent analyses show it is now reaching 14.7% of global electricity consumption.

Every computer and every mobile phone embodies energy which has been used to extract raw materials, produce the device, distribute it, use it, and then either store it as waste or recycle it. The concept of embodied energy was proposed by ecological economist Robert Constanza in the 1970s. Since then many research institutes and NGOs calculated the ecological footprint of computers – their demand for energy and raw materials

The researchers and activists point to other costs such as health damage as well as lost means of livelihoods. These costs are borne by local communities in every place where raw materials are being extracted (such as the case of coltan wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), the electronic devices are being produced and used, as in Poland for example,, and in places where recycling of toxic electronic waste is performed, as in rural areas of South-East China.

These costs include the loss of ability to work and to provide for the family, pollution of the drinking water and contamination of the soil to produce food for local market and domestic use, health damage due to exhausting work and increase the burden placed mostly on the shoulders of women, who are responsible for care and reproduction of daily life. Every electronic device not only contains embodied energy, but also embodied work, including reproductive work performed mostly by women.

Women are present on both sides of production chain. Some are investment bankers or senior corporate managers, but there are many more who work in electronic industry assembly plants across the world. They are low-paid, work in hazardous conditions, sometimes 16 hours per day. The research carried out Feminist Think Tank in the LG special economic zone near Wrocław. in the South West of Poland made visible how extracting energy from people and nature are interconnected. The Chinese-Taiwanese company Chung Hong (which supplies main boards to LG) is exempt from income tax, and real estate and land taxes, obtains subsidies to labor costs, and benefits from preferential energy prices for industry. Women who work in electronic smog are constantly forced to produce more and faster for minimal wages (that are subject to taxation). They are employed on temporary contracts or via job agencies, with hardly any social security entitlements while their labor rights are violated.

The example of computerization demonstrates that new technologies are not a “magical solution”. Fundamental changes in production, distribution and consumption patterns are required, in order to minimize pressures on nature and labor. But this cannot be done without institutional changes so that human livelihoods and regeneration of nature are put at the heart of climate policies. Without systemic changes there is no way to stop climate change (gm-ech)

### **Climate: a view from waste bins**

Our great-grandfathers and grandmothers did not produce rubbish. Clothes were worn intergenerationally, when they wore out – they would be patched, turned into children’s clothes, or used as cleaning cloths. Food was not thrown out, ashes were spread in gardens. Things were used by generations and they would last longer, as they were not mass-produced. The market, telling you to buy a new car or a new sweater each and every season, had not yet been born. Subsequently, everything went easy – too many things in circulation, mass-production that by definition has to produce impermanent things, free carrier bags and every product wrapped up in three layers of plastic, paper and whatnot. Before the

fashion for grandparents' furniture and hand-knitted socks kicked in, the rubbish bin problem emerged.

First they were simply there. Then they became overloaded. There were also the stinking shutes in tower blocks. Rubbish was dumped in the woods after waste collection was privatized. The idea that something should be done about it was addressed to the young generation. They would go home and tell Grannie, that plastic goes in here, and compost in there. And that they would perhaps think twice before littering the town with another can, box, carton, if they run around with a rubbish bag in the neighbourhood's greenery patch. Although it was the elderly people who used to fold sugar bags and wash jam jars – they would get some loose change for those at the local recycling shop and the wastepaper was collected at schools.

Nowadays, with the over-production of waste, rubbish selection and education in the field are indispensable. The "Rubbish Act" is an absolute must, but its implementation caused strong resistance. Why?

The resistance and protest did not come out of nowhere, but were provoked by the authorities' imperial style of decision-making – even over rubbish. The irreverent style of communication ignoring the voice of the affected, or lack of communication whatsoever, were responsible for the protests and disagreements.

The authorities' discourse for years has been saying that "folks are ignorant and won't segregate". The authority orders, the folk submit. In the segregating collection containers around my house there are potato peels in a plastic bag, and empty bottles are in the general collection container – have the folk dissed the decree and spited the authorities? For as long as the selective collection is another tsar's decree, we will not submit even under the threat of penalties.

It is still worse with institutional segregation. Despite a drastic increase of fees, public institutions do not segregate rubbish. Wastepaper from the city administration goes to the compost bin, leaves from the pavement removed by a contractor hired by the City Hall, go to the recycling bin. The citizens observe that the decree only affects the little people – the authorities are above the law. It is a clear message, that in reality it is not about selective collection, ecology, sustainable development or the quality of life in the city.

In Łódź an urban legend of rubbish trucks loading all the rubbish together was brought to light through a story by a local journalist. Wioletta Gnacikowska had asked about the fate of all the types of rubbish loaded onto one truck, and the answer she received was that it will be segregated on the landfill. The landfill for Bałuty (district in Łódź) is in Krośniewice, the sorting plant in Kutno, and the composting plant, where the biological waste should go – in Łódź – she wrote in the local Łódź edition of Gazeta Wyborcza from 12th October. Is it worth driving rubbish 80 kms to Kutno, then to Krośniewice another 16 kms, and nearly 100 kms back to Łódź's composting plant? - the journalist asks on behalf of citizens. And just like the citizens demanding an honest rubbish policy she does not receive any answer, apart from bureaucratic excuses from the company hired by the City Hall.

The “Rubbish Act” has more victims. The sudden change cut out some and let in others. Ex-employees of the communal waste collection service, who were pushed into self-employment by means of the previous reform (outsourcing of communal services) had to close down their businesses and fire their employees, and are now sitting in their private dump trucks with a bank loan attached. Among the economically-driven tenants there is a growing tendency to lock up rubbish storages in housing projects and reluctance to permit the activities of the traditional segregation supplied, free of charge, by the so called dump divers.

The economization of waste collection under the “Rubbish Act” struck painfully against social solidarity and traditional values, based on sharing usable things with others. Together with the rubbish revolution disappeared furniture “displays”, unruly containers for stale bread, cartons for commercial leaflets and old magazines as well as sacks of old, clean clothes – that were useful for their users, and the “divers” who made their living off collecting them. Now our junk is collected by companies which make money out of it, so they collect only what is profitable for them. The traditional sharing with the needy was in tune with husbandry, transfer of goods, appreciation of their use value, durability – which had nothing to do with the profit bottom line. They were annihilated along the way to economization of rubbish (id)

### **Selling sex and oxygen in Costa Rica**

In the article with the meaningful title „Who pays for the Kyoto protocol? Selling oxygen and sex in Costa Rica” Ana Isla gives consideration to the trap to expel poor people from their livelihoods, set up by the rich North, more precisely by the elite of eco-managers - under the pretext of caring for nature.

Concerned with the reduction of the greenhouse effect, the global managers of the environment grasped an idea that the reduction of emissions itself has a value that is economically valorized. It is possible to issue permits for emissions, and even to trade them. It is not far from this to the proposal that some people could buy emissions from others. Instead of investing in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions rich countries and companies from Global North can buy emissions permits from those who pollute less.

Next, the theory of „carbon sinks” emerged (nature as container absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>). Immediately, the value of South American rainforests was recognized. The states that controlled them opened them up to local landowners, global corporations or turned them into reserves, administered from the outside. Seemingly, everything is OK. When we watch carefully with Ana Isla, though, what has happened for example in Costa Rica, we discover that we are cheated once more: the profits from turning nature into ecosystem services have been captured by a few beneficiaries at the cost of the exploitation of the more numerous local populations.

In politics, the big owners matter, and not the little ones. The administration of the rainforests prefer and reward large landholdings. The people who owned nothing or small farmers who rented cottages (ranchos) have been transformed into the inhabitants of the slums (tugurios).

The rainforest became a company in itself, where trees are planted and logged in order to make profits – with disastrous effects for the ecosystem. But who cares? Growing there foreign species and then selling them generates profit, does it not? Capitalist transformation of the natural resources into market goods on the one hand, and patriarchal domination over the environment on the other, hit local communities simultaneously. Oxygen is sold to the rich North while expropriating it from inhabitants of the poorer South without giving them compensation or alternative sources of income. From the world where they farmed traditionally, with their livelihoods based on nature and the care work of women, they were exiled into a world where nothing else matters but money.

The expulsions have placed Costa Rican women on the margin of the world economy. The women ensure the survival of their families. When the only rule is buy and sell, women have to trade their bodies, as they have nothing more to sell. Their clients come from the countries where the headquarters of the institutions co-responsible for the Costa Rican debt are located.

What is especially striking is that not only the state and patriarchal capitalism is responsible but the ecologists as well and their powerful northern non-governmental organizations contributing to the exploitation of the local people. Domination of the creditors over the debtors is accompanied by the domination over women. The exploitation takes the form of trafficking of human beings – women and children. The profit from this trafficking, Ana Isla points, goes to the creditors. Costa Rican debt to banks is similar to the debt of women owe their pimps.

This argument should be sufficient to revise critically the concept and practice of making the the rainforests into CO2 sinks and the oxygen factories for the North, as well as the idea of “trading” natural resources as ecosystem services which serves in fact the practice of neocolonial exploitation.

There are other facts that prove the illusory profits of oxygen trade. The companies that operate in the rainforest areas do not in the least preserve nature, separated from its traditional inhabitants, in its pristine state; though maybe one could say that this would legitimate the “human costs” of these investments. Producing profits, they extract the raw materials from the earth, exploit the resources of biodiversity, replace traditional species with the more “economical” ones. This can result, in spite of the noble slogans, in the destruction of the rainforests on behalf of profit – the only value they serve. (id) *(Ana Isla. ‘Who pays for the Kyoto Protocol? Selling Oxygen and Selling Sex in Costa Rica, w: Eco – Sufficiency and Global Justice. Women write political ecology’, red. Ariel Salleh, London; New York, NY: Pluto Press, 2009). Also available at [http://www.gift-economy.com/womenand/womenand\\_tragedy.html](http://www.gift-economy.com/womenand/womenand_tragedy.html)*

## Women and climate: whose commons?

Global warming is framed as the tragedy of the commons. This metaphor refers to an article by Garrett Hardin (1968) who used the example of the pasture where herdsmen kept on increasing the numbers of their animals until the pasture was overgrazed – in order to argue the tragedy is inevitable. Hardin concluded that only population control and privatization will save the commons. He did not take into account that private property (such as mining corporations or industrial food production) as well as state property can lead to the destruction of nature, too. Hardin's main preoccupation was how to prevent population growth and "overbreeding". He proposed to suspend the food aid to Africa "to teach them a lesson in demographics".

The underlying assumptions of "the tragedy of the commons" metaphor generated critique, including the recent Nobel prize winner, Elinor Oström. Drawing on field research Oström investigated institutional arrangements by which local communities govern their commons (common property resources). Oström did not, however, take into account the influence of external conditions, such as structural adjustment programs, development policies of the state, or violence of enclosures.

In 1992 the Earth Summit introduced the concept of global ecology and global commons, supported by the image of a blue planet suspended in space which we all are compelled to protect. Global managers of the commons framed Amazon rainforests as "our commons" and as the green lungs of the Earth. At the same time, the Canadian, American or Siberian old growth forests cut to satisfy the voracious saw mills of production, consumption and profit generation were not seen as the global commons, but as private or state property. As Ariel Salleh writes, this approach justified the expulsions of local communities from their commons and livelihoods.

While atmosphere was conceptualized as global commons climate politics gave it a market form. Now nature has to be privatized - in order to save it. In fact, this is about opening new possibilities for investment and capital expansion. Similar processes have been taking place in social policy (e.g. financialisation of pensions and the transfer of people's savings to financial markets).

This year, Oström's book, "Governing the Commons, Institutions for Collective Action" was published in Polish with an introduction by Leszek Balcerowicz. This executor of the Polish shock therapy reforms used Oström's work on the commons to argue for fit and lean state. The neoliberal that Balcerowicz supports withdraws from the responsibility for social reproduction and environmental protection and throws it back on local communities while the state works for capital and becomes an investor in itself.

The metaphor of climate as commons is used to mobilize emotions and to mask the shift of the responsibility for climate change to individuals and the so-called end-user or taxpayer. Investors or companies are to make profits on trading in emissions or privatizing nature as "ecosystem services" and from subsidies and tax rebates for investments in energy efficiency or renewables. Let us look at the logo of COP 19 and its justification by Polish environment



minister, who calls on individuals to save energy while aligning with big business in privatizing the atmosphere.

### **Commons from a feminist perspective**

Commons are all sorts of resources which allow people to reproduce as social beings. These include the natural environment, languages, cultures, common institutions and laws and material infrastructure created by human beings. Common ownership of these goods does not rely on a strict, legal definition but on particular resources being a basis of livelihoods, a product of the common work of many people as they use them as a community as a whole (countryside, district, city, country planet). They are not simply “capital”, but something that creates relations.

Since human life ultimately depends on nature (air, water, soil and the whole biosphere), commons are a form of relations between people and nature. The way we use and distribute natural resources shapes everyday life, the future of our planet and all of us. Man is not “the Lord” of nature. Nature and human beings depend on each other. Ariel Salleh writes about meta-industrial work, that is care work, and the work it takes to maintain regenerative capacities of nature, that is mostly done by women from indigenous communities, whose work contributes to „storing” CO2 and protecting the climate.

Sylvia Federici or Ana Isla argue that commons include both nature and reproductive work. In a country like Poland this work is still organized around public institutions of health care, education, social protection and relies mostly on unpaid care work in the households. Caring for children, or for the elderly depends on access to public goods. Taking health as commons we mean healthy food, water and air, medical knowledge and access to clinics, hospitals, security of income, adequate housing, and possibilities to rest and restore the body. Similarly, it is hard to imagine nowadays caring of and raising children without access to such institutions as kindergartens, nurseries, and schools. The role of social reproduction is key to understand the strong commitment of women in defending the commons. The access to commons (including nature) determines social conditions of care work which rests mostly on their shoulders.

### **We must defend the commons**

It is not worth defending the climate policies of the richest countries and corporations which privatize nature. There are big stakes in defending the commons in the contexts of reclaiming rights and conditions for reproduction of daily life. The destruction of the commons always means destruction of community. Silvia Federici argues that destroying the commons is characteristic for capitalist processes of primitive accumulation which expropriate people, enclose the commons, and transform them into commodities. With these processes ecosystems are transformed into measurable and monetized property, everyday human activity into labour force and capital, and social trust is transformed into money and credit. The ongoing division and individualization of work enhanced control over people while creating social inequalities and invisibilizing exploitation of nature.

The commons offer a perspective to view history as processes that create communities which build social relations with nature. From this perspective the struggle of local communities against soil and water pollution e.g. by excavating shale gas (in Poland in

Żurawłów, in USA in Dakota) should be connected with other initiatives such as defending public kindergardens, schools or libraries in small towns, protests against privatizing hospitals, against taking away human rights (e.g. to pension or health care), for the freedom of Internet, in defence of the rights of workers and tenants, and many others (mm-ech)



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