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A feminist approach to climate change governance: Everyday and intimate politics

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Abstract:

Neoliberal climate governance, which focuses on shifting responsibility for mitigating climate change onto individuals through their consumption of techno-scientific solutions, ignores and obscures the experience of differently situated subjects. This paper examines the consequences of both framing climate change as a problem of science, and inducing individual behavior changes as a key point of climate policy. We build on climate governance literature and emerging feminist theorizing about climate change to understand how differently situated bodies become positioned as sites of capital accumulation in climate governance. We use the feminist lens of the ‘everyday’, which directs attention to embodiment, difference and inequality. These insights provide points of leverage for feminist scholars of climate science and policy to use to resist and contest the production of neoliberal climate subjects. We argue that a focus on the ‘everyday’ reveals the mundane decision-making in climate governance that affect individuals in varying, embodied ways, and which allows for climate governance to proceed as an ongoing process of capitalist accumulation.

I. Introduction

The range of political mechanisms intended to shape society’s ability to prevent, mitigate or adapt to the risks posed by climate change has widened in recent decades (Jagers and Stripple 2003). Also known as climate governance, regulation relating to climate change now happens at a variety of scales and through multiple state and market mechanisms (e.g. regional cap-and-trade schemes, urban climate change programs, green consumerism) rather than through international negotiations alone. This diversity of actions has drawn much attention from scholars interested in better understanding policy design and effectiveness (Gainza-Carmenates et al. 2010; Kuik et al. 2008). Yet, these analyses often fail to question the implications for framing climate change as primarily a scientific problem, and the ways climate governance often prioritizes market-oriented behavioral change as the solution (Macgregor 2014, Swyngendouw 2010). While much of the literature on environmental governance interrogates the assumptions underlying climate governance mechanisms (and the depoliticized nature of these interventions), we suggest that more can be done to investigate the ways in which climate governance is

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disconnected from the ways it is experienced, enacted and contested. Specifically, we argue that scholars can gain a more politically potent understanding of neoliberal climate governance by engaging more directly with feminist theoretical interventions regarding the techno-scientific framing of climate change as a problem, and the embodied subjects whom are now framed as responsible for the solutions.

To do this, we start with a brief overview of the literature on neoliberal natures, which provides a well-established critique of climate governance from which to begin. We then review the feminist literature to show how a closer articulation with two aspects of feminist theory—feminist understandings of the production of knowledge and feminist attention to everyday practice—can further push the critique of climate governance in two important ways. First, an engagement with feminist theory shows that dominant approaches to climate change policy often construct knowledge of the problem through narrowly defined scientific and technocratic means, rendering the issue as both universal and distant, instead of differentiated and embodied. Here we include a brief review of feminist literature that deals directly with climate science and policy. Second, a focus on the everyday and intimate spaces of decision-making shows how climate policy actually work to fix capitalist logics onto differently situated bodies, which individualizes the responsibility for mitigating climate change and also serves to erode more collective forms of action. Here we draw specifically on the rich body of feminist scholarship that highlights how attention to differently situated bodies, embodied experience and the ways that global processes and the intimacy of embodied social relations constitute one another (e.g. Kobayashi & Peake 1994; Pratt & Rosner 2012). We suggest, that turning the feminist lens of the ‘everyday’ towards the subjects of climate governance reveals the troubling contradictions and contraindications inherent in the contemporary framing of climate change problems and policy interventions. We hope to demonstrate that the insights offered by a feminist framework sharpens the critique of neoliberal climate governance to more carefully identify the forms of knowledge and the actual spaces through which mainstream climate governance reproduces uneven power relations.

II. The Neoliberal Nature of Climate Governance

It has been more than a decade since McCarthy and Prudham (2004) argued that neoliberalism should be understood as a coherent, yet polyvalent, set of “ideologies, discourses, and material practices...[that is] a distinctly environmental project” (2004:276). Put simply, neoliberalism is the dominant political philosophy of the past thirty years that “argues for the desirability of a society organized around self-regulating markets, and free, to the extent possible, from social and political interventions” (Gregory et al. 2009, 497). Bound up in forms of market deregulation, and state reregulation to facilitate open markets, neoliberalism has facilitated a massive expansion in privatized and marketized social relations, of which nature is now prominently understood as central to the neoliberal project (Heynen et al. 2007). Castree (2010, 1743) summarizes this shift when he states: “The biophysical world becomes increasingly commodified – creating profits and jobs...The successful interpolation of people as ‘individuals’ allows them to exercise producer and consumer choice over how they relate, through the market, to the biophysical world.” It is the viewpoint of critical scholars, therefore, that the primary goal of neoliberal environmental governance is the continued facilitation of capitalist expansion, favoring economic elites, as opposed to more just or effective forms of environmental protection.

The infusion of neoliberal logics into climate change has received significant attention during the past several years. This requires, first, a shift in focus from climate *policy* to climate *governance* to reflect the influence of neoliberalism, where action on climate change extends far beyond the state to include a variety of non-state actors (e.g. corporations) and market-based regulations (e.g. carbon trading) (Rabe 2007). In their examination of carbon control as a key feature of eco-state restructuring under neoliberalism, for example, While et al. (2010: 82) write that “governance responsibilities are passed to markets and non-state actors (McCarthy & Prudham 2004)...with an overriding emphasis on efficiency, cost-effectiveness and transference at the expense of ecological integrity (Bailey 2007: 416).” Similarly, in their examination of the European Union emissions trading scheme, Bailey et al. (2011: 700) state that market-based forms of carbon governance “focus on [market] efficacy and efficiency but have little to say on issues of social justice.” This intensely market-oriented logic of neoliberalism, aimed at achieving emissions reductions in the most economically efficient (i.e. inexpensive) means possible, has resulted in the creation of several new market-based instruments of climate policy (Boyd et al. 2011; Lansing 2011; Robertson 2011).

It becomes apparent from this analysis that ‘business-as-usual’ approaches to climate governance include an emphasis on technocratic ways of knowing climate change, as well as individual action and behavioral change as a viable and primary solution to the problem (Lahsen 2005; Rice 2014). With respect to the first, technocratic regimes of climate governance emphasize expert (i.e. scientific and technical) understandings of climate change, with a focus on instruments/methods of analysis capable of measuring and modeling the climate change problem in its generalizable forms and processes. Hulme (2008: 6) argues that, “Climate is defined in purely physical terms, constructed from meteorological observations, predicted inside the software of Earth system science models...wholly disembodied from its multiple and contradictory cultural meanings.” Erik Swyngedouw (2010) has argued that the technocratic underpinning of neoliberal climate policy is characteristic of a wider “post-political” condition where, “scientific expertise [is] the foundation and guarantee for properly constituted politics/policies” (2010: 217).

Scholars have further noted the ways that neoliberal approaches to climate governance encourage individual action and behavioral change, often at the expense of more centralized, collective, or state-based forms of action. The idea that individual choices—such as purchasing a hybrid vehicle, washing your clothes in cold water, or drinking from a reusable water bottle—can solve the problem of climate change has become a familiar and believable notion for many. Elizabeth Shove (2010) has identified this as the ‘ABC’ approach to climate governance—attitude, behavior, and choice. Shove is quite critical of this approach, writing that “The popularity of the ABC framework is an indication of the extent to which responsibility for responding to climate change is thought to lie with individuals whose behavioral choices will make the difference...[Yet], it obscures the extent to which governments sustain unsustainable economic institutions and ways of life” (2010: 1274). Rice (2014), through her examination of urban climate programs, has argued that this is an essential feature of neoliberal climate governance, where personal choices and behavioral change become the centerpiece of many climate policy initiatives, seriously limiting the degree to which larger, more structural changes to the carbon intensive economy can be realized.

This discussion of neoliberal climate governance is meant to highlight particular aspects of its logic with which we (and feminist scholars more broadly) are concerned. Using the scholarship on neoliberalism summarized here as our starting point, we will show next that feminist theory can push this critique further by revealing how climate governance constructs particular kinds of subjects and subjectivities. The ways of being and knowing that are produced through contemporary climate governance, in our view, produce a profound dismissal of non-science based forms of knowledge and a failure to consider the everyday spaces in which action and responsibility are negotiated and enacted under highly uneven power relations. This feminist critique shows that climate governance, while framed in terms of climate protection, actually works to extend capitalist free-market economies onto individual bodies and deemphasize collective forms of action.

III. Feminist analyses of climate science and technocratic knowledge (re)production

Feminist scholarship increasingly challenges the disembodied and masculinist science behind climate change discourse and policy-making at broad scales, and illuminates the implications of climate change in local places. Much of this work is influenced by feminist philosophies of science, which challenge the masculinist underpinnings of positivist science that frame scientific knowledge as valid only if it is produced through objective and value-free research (e.g. Barad 2007; Code 2006; Grosz 2008; Haraway 1988; Harding 1986). Feminist geographers have long asserted that knowledge in the academy is a product and function of male dominance, beginning with Rose's (1993) identification of masculinism as a foundational epistemological position from which claims to knowledge relating to teaching, research and career advancement are asserted. Feminist analyses of climate change politics, therefore, challenge the discursive framing of climate change policy and science, which masks how power is reproduced through such discursive political and economic tropes (e.g. Arora-Jonsson 2011; Bee et al. 2013; MacGregor 2010; Manzo 2010; Nelson 2008; Sultana 2013).

For example, in her analysis of the 2 degree Celsius warming target established by the G8 in 2009, Joni Seager (2009), argues that a 2-degree benchmark, or any benchmark for that matter, as an acceptable level of harm, refracts "through a prism of privilege, power, and geography" (2009:14). In particular, she suggests that the notion that the warming of the globe can be stopped at a certain point is based in masculinist notions of controlling or dominating the environment (Keller 1982; Merchant 1980; Plumwood 1993). Building upon Seager's critique, Israel and Sachs (2013) explore the techno-scientific framing of climate change and the resulting emphasis on managing the climate through environmental and social engineering. They call for feminist research and political projects that value the materiality and partiality of climate science, but also oppose and intervene in the production of logics of domination and control so commonplace in climate change discourse and policy (Israel & Sachs 2013).

Several scholars also draw on feminist philosophies of science to explore the implications of decoupling situated experience from the "impersonal, apolitical, and universal imaginary of climate change, projected and endorsed by science" (Jasanoff 2010: 235). Rachel Slocum, for example, suggests that the framing of climate change as a global problem in Western scientific terms has simultaneously served to portray the issue as both spatially and temporally distant

while reproducing a false dichotomy between nature/culture. (Slocum 2004). The false nature/culture binary have a variety of implications for climate change science and governance. The first is that it facilitates a notion of control of nature by humans that is bolstered by masculinist narratives of control and dominance. Second, the notion of separate spheres in nature and society perpetuate a problem that has its roots in this false dichotomy, and it draws our attention to the ways in which climate change, and its governance is a thoroughly embodied experience.

Other feminist scholarship has recently turned its attention towards reconceiving the nature-culture binary by locating global climate change on the body and the space of the intimate. Drawing on recent work by feminist post-humanist and new-materialist scholars such as Stacy Alaimo (2008; 2009), Rosi Bradiotti (2002) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994), Neimanis and Loewen Walker (2014) investigate the corporeal and embodied implications of climate change. The authors suggest that a trans-corporality of climate change--or the contact space between human bodies and their environment--ruptures the ontological myth that human bodies are discreet in time, space, and nature. Climate change thus becomes an embodied 'social-nature' (Haraway 1991, 1992). Thus, the notion of trans-corporeality in the context of climate change highlights how climate and bodies are mutually produced and co-constituted, which resists the masculinist discursive abstraction of climate change as a spatially and temporally disembodied scientific project to be mastered. Instead, trans-corporeal climate change places the problem, and thereby its solutions, within and on our bodies; it recognizes its existence as an extension of our bodies, and reimagines climate change as something visceral, material, embodied and part of the everyday (Neimanis & Walker 2014).

Through a critique of the universal, masculinist ways in which knowledge production is typically understood and valued, we can see that climate change is only partially knowable, and our understanding of climate change is constructed through various subjectivities known to different subjects. At the same time, pluralistic forms of knowledge and ways of being in the face of a changing climate are not incorporated into epistemological, ontological or political understandings of climate change. As Sandra Harding (1997) writes, focusing on the "kinds of daily life activities socially assigned to different genders or classes or races within local systems can provide illuminating possibilities for observing and explaining systemic relations between "what one does" and "what one can know" (1997: 384). In other words, paying attention to everyday, routine, and often mundane activities provide different opportunities for 'seeing' how social relations are shaped by power, and how responsibility and action are placed on differently and unequally situated bodies. Feminist theorizing about knowledge production and nature-society relations are therefore useful for drawing attention to the embodied consequences of such narrow framings and interpretations of climate policy and science.

In the next section, we elaborate on the key points of feminist insights on the 'everyday' to illustrate how a feminist lens can be used to inform a research agenda attentive to locating the subjects of climate governance, re-locating the implications of climate governance toward the embodied spaces of the everyday, and shifting responsibility for climate governance back to collective forms of action. We use the notion of the 'everyday' to draw attention to issues of embodiment, difference and inequality in the lived experience of differently located subjects. To locate the social and spatially differentiated subjects of climate governance in everyday sites and

spaces, is to reveal the fiction of the individual who bears responsibility for action in the neoliberal logic of climate governance. In so doing, we refocus the gaze away from individual responsibility, and toward the role of capitalism in producing and perpetuating climate change in and through climate governance.

IV. Everyday climate governance: Locating the limits of individual action

Employing a feminist epistemological lens to explore climate governance emphasizes the importance of more closely considering the mundane, everyday spaces and practices of climate governance that produce and regulate subjects and subjectivities, and affect people's daily lives. Feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987) theorized the 'everyday' as a fundamental site of experience, organized and determined by broader relations of power. Smith's articulation pointed scholars away from abstracted processes of social life towards the "problematic of the everyday world" that arises from "our ignorance of how our everyday worlds are shaped and determined by relations and forces external to them" (Smith 1987: 110). The everyday, therefore, is the time-place where knowledge, action, and experience come to matter.

Drawing on Smith's work, feminist geographers explore the mundane, taken-for-granted activity of everyday life in homes, neighborhoods, and communities as a means to explain how global processes and relations of power structure daily life and the social relations of intimacy (Dyck 2005, Gibson-Graham 2002, Wright 2009). Mundane practices and everyday experiences are often overlooked as unspectacular, when, in fact, they are the actual stuff of power and politics. Gillian Rose (1993) writes, "For feminists, the everyday routines traced by women are never unimportant, because the seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures which limit and confine women...The everyday is the arena through which patriarchy is (re)created—and contested" (1993: 17). For example, Bee (2014; 2013) illustrates the importance of examining women's everyday spaces and experiences as a means of understanding how gendered relations of power shape women's capacity to adapt to climate change. Cracking open the neoliberal logic of climate change, therefore requires careful consideration of how power works through everyday spaces and practices—in homes where individuals negotiate living practices, in markets where people make routine decisions, or in city council chambers where the daily rhythms of urban life are often spatially structured. Furthermore, it requires a more careful consideration of the fiction of the generic individual as one who is fully willing and able to make choices that will solve the global climate problem, rather than socially situated and differentiated.

Bringing the feminist lens of the everyday to bear on climate governance allows us to identify three points of leverage for feminist scholars of climate science and policy to use to resist and contest the production of neoliberal climate subjects. First, by locating power in the everyday decision-making of the state-capital nexus, we demonstrate how climate policy is not a grand, global narrative, but rather a series of small-scale decisions made at varying scales that affect individuals in disparate ways. Following from this we assert that a focus on the everyday reveals a wide field of uneven power relations that differently positions individual's vis-à-vis climate policy and the mandates to consume or modify consumption practices. Lastly we suggest that solutions to climate change that over-determine behavior change allow climate governance to

proceed as business as usual, and ultimately make climate governance “safe for capitalism” (Guthman, 1998:150). In what follows, we elaborate on these three key points of intervention.

1. Everyday states

A feminist approach to climate governance emphasizes the ways that political power is exercised not only through international summits and negotiations that receive widespread attention, but also in the everyday decisions made by elected officials, state workers, and community members. In this vein, scholars have called for increasing engagement with “how the techniques, discourses, and everyday practices of environmental governance actually operate” (McCarthy 2007: 188). Mitchell (2002) argues that the state is actually an ‘effect’ of everyday practices of planning, information exchange and expertise. This ‘prosaic’ understanding of politics requires a close examination of the “mundane, but frequently hidden, everyday world of state officials, bureaucratic procedures, meetings, committees, report writing, decision making, procrastination, and filing” (Painter 2006: 770). City managers, for example, choose between various alternative transportation projects based on available funding and constituent demands, and university officials determine whether they will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions using carbon offsets or energy efficiency upgrades based on the recommendations of faculty and students.

Feminist scholar Aihwa Ong (2006) suggests that governments selectively use “overlapping or variegated sovereignties” (2006: 19) in which sovereign state power is used to produce value for capital. In other words, the state’s presumed role as a regulator of modes and means of the economy often overlaps with, or obscures the way in which regulation is often used to facilitate capital accumulation (Trauger 2014). Similarly, environmental governance scholarship illustrate how the meaning of neoliberalism emerges through its facilitation of the development of markets, often through appropriating commonly held resources for private gain, rather than as a mode of governance that favors an absence of regulation (McCarthy & Prudham 2004). Neoliberalism, according to Ong, then allows for the creation of “sites of transformation where market-driven calculations are being introduced in the management of populations” for capital (Ong 2006:4).

With respect to climate governance, many urban climate programs emphasize changing individual behaviors by promoting, for example, riding a bike to work, changing out incandescent light bulbs to compact florescent light bulbs, insulating single family homes, or setting thermostats at particular levels (Rice 2014). Such policies emphasize the individual, market-based choices that are endemic to neoliberal governance, which do little more than facilitate the flow of capital. Thus, the construction of a rational, ‘green’ individual, facilitates the growth of capital accumulation, in the buying of hybrids, solar panels and LED light bulbs. Through this process, well-meaning individuals who believe they are acting in the interest of combating climate change end up reproducing the market-based logic that produced it in the first place—that is, the engagement with consumerism as a solution continues to facilitate capital accumulation and expansion.

2. Respons-able bodies

When viewed through the feminist lens of the everyday, neoliberal climate policies have substantially uneven effects on different people. Over the past decade, local city governments, primarily in the global north, have begun to design and implement their own climate change policies, engaging new spaces of climate governance that are closely linked to people's everyday lives (While & Whitehead 2013). The primary mechanisms of action utilized by local city and regional governments are typically land use and transportation planning, energy efficiency and green building ordinances or codes, and educational outreach campaigns to promote low carbon lifestyles (Bassett & Shandas 2010; Bulkeley & Betsill 2003). These programs and policies lie in close proximity to people's everyday lives, as they seek to influence and regulate mobility, the way people live in their homes. As such, offsetting carbon emissions become the responsibility of individuals, thereby relocating responsibility from the state to the body.

A feminist analysis of these processes draw attention to the implications of such processes for power relations, differently situated social positions, and the everyday. The emphasis on individual choice regarding energy efficiency, for example, is predicated upon the assumption of socio-economic privilege that ignores the already low-carbon livelihoods of numerous individuals, and households, not by choice, but by necessity. Questions of urban mobility, furthermore, fail to acknowledge the role of social differences such as gender, race and class in accessing available and preferable transportation options. For example, campaigns to promote public transportation ignore the differences between those who are able to choose to take the bus, versus individuals who are solely dependent upon public transportation and whose carbon footprint is already low (Rice 2014). Thinking through the 'everyday' in this way suggests that urban interventions in climate change, aimed at these types of behavioral changes, are already enmeshed in a matrix of difference and power relations, in much the same way as other forms of production of capital in the world system.

Perhaps the most problematic contradiction of neoliberal climate governance is that the focus on individual action in neoliberal climate governance deemphasizes the wider political economic context under which climate change is produced. An extensive body of feminist scholarship has focused on the identities and mythologies that are produced by and for the interests of global capital (Bee 2011; Brickell 2012; Kelly 1999; Ong 2010; Wright 2006;). Yet as Mountz and Hyndman (2006) illustrate, such intimacy in the interest of global capital is not only encapsulated by thinking about how the body, as part of the economic milieu, becomes a material part of the political economy of capital flow, and in the case of climate governance, part of the climate apparatus.

3. Accumulation as usual

Capitalism as we know it is only possible through the interventions of the state in the form of subsidies and patents, military interventions and taxes and tariffs, which facilitate the accumulation of capital for a powerful minority (Harvey, 2003; Ong, 2006; Barkan, 2013; Trauger, 2014). Thus, regulatory frameworks that seek to implement individualized behavior changes, particularly those marked by consumption or capital investment should always be viewed as site of capital accumulation. For particular individuals, being enrolled, through climate governance mechanisms, in a circuit of capital in the interest of mitigating climate change, is a form of accumulation by dispossession. The 'business as usual' forms of climate governance that

do not critique or identify capitalism as a cause of climate change, miss a key point of intervention, as well as a profound source of injustice when responsibility for climate mitigation is assumed by the dispossessed.

Feminist theorizing calls attention to the way the body is enrolled as an instrument of climate governance, and it also directs our attention to the way bodies become enrolled in circuits of capital. Locating the subjects and sites of climate governance (whether it is being produced, enacted, negotiated, contested, or rejected) requires seeing these processes as part of the global flow of capital, which then become implemented and take form in locally specific places and on bodies (global-intimate). Cindy Katz (2001) asserts that situated practices and processes of global capital flows cross geographies through what she calls ‘contour lines’, enabling the formation of new political imaginaries or ‘counter-topographies’, which transcend place, scale and space. Situating these processes allows us to trace the contour lines and counter-topographies of climate change, which move across places, scales and space. This is part of the feminist project of situating the global within the intimate space of the body and the everyday, which shifts the universal, depoliticized discourse to one of the particular and the political-economic.

Harvey (2003) asserts that accumulation through dispossession is an ongoing process of the expansion of the capitalist global economy; however, feminist scholar, Hartsock (2006) argues that most Marxist accounts of contemporary capitalist accumulation do not account for gender as a central organizing principle in the everyday circulation of capital (See also Whatmore 1991). She argues: “Primitive accumulation is very clearly and perhaps at its very core a gendered set of processes, a moment which cannot be understood without central attention to the differential situations of women and men” (2006: 183). Keating et al. (2010) extend this analysis to look at “contemporary globalization as a moment of capitalist accumulation profoundly marked by gender” (2010:154), which draws our attention to the various ways dispossession works to concentrate capital in the hands of a very few, extracting it from differently and unequally situated individuals. This work by feminist scholars disrupts the notion of a universalized individual who reacts to capital accumulation in undifferentiated ways, as well as provokes a wider insight into how capital accumulation is always experienced in intersectional ways.

In sum, by shifting the focus to forms of power located in everyday and mundane spaces of neighborhoods, homes, and more localized forms of social organization, the often routine and mundane aspects of decision-making around climate change are made visible. This visibility enables us to re-imagine how climate governance is conceived, embodied, enacted, and/or resisted at scales often made insignificant or invisible by neoliberal approaches to climate change. This also shows how climate politics affects our everyday lives and works to demystify power and politics in ways that reveal both the limitations and potentialities of particular approaches to climate governance. Lastly, it exposes how the shifting of responsibility for climate governance from the state onto differently situated bodies through various consumption politics and transportation ‘choices,’ absolves the state of its presumed responsibility for regulating corporations. Climate governance, as ‘business as usual’, facilitates the accumulation of capital and dispossesses those who do not or cannot ‘choose’ to consume or invest capital under the guise of addressing or mitigating climate change.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that research on neoliberal climate governance has much to gain from an integration with several aspects of feminist theory. First, feminist theory critiques universalizing and totalizing narratives that erase important aspects of social and spatial difference, which is useful to bring to bear on the totalizing nature of much climate change discourse. The neoliberal logics of climate governance, particularly when based solely in technical and scientific ways of knowing, downplay experiential, embodied and non-scientific forms of knowledge. Feminist scholars demonstrate the importance of a pluralistic politics of knowledge for effective climate governance.

Secondly, more needs to be understood about the everyday and more mundane decisions, encounters, and activities that actually make up climate governance. A feminist approach provides a more nuanced, multi-scalar accounting of how the practices of power actually work, while also calling attention to a more diverse, heterogeneous, and intimate landscape of climate governance than may be evident from large public displays at international climate meetings. While feminist critiques of technocratic knowledge in climate science and policy are emergent (Israel & Sachs 2013; Jasanoff 2010; Slocum 2004), feminist engagements with policy that individualizes and marketizes actions and inactions have yet to be fully developed (MacGregor 2014). We further this nascent critique by integrating feminist scholarship on climate change with the climate governance literature to understand how differently situated bodies become positioned as sites of capital accumulation in climate governance.

Lastly, the detachment of neoliberal climate governance from everyday spaces and subjectivities ignores and obscures the lived experiences, knowledges, access, responsibilities, and roles that make up the actual subjects and subject positions that are gendered, classed, raced, and otherwise differently situated. This detachment simultaneously permits the construction of the ideal neoliberal citizen, the citizen-consumer, whose individual actions in the private spaces of the home and the market become appropriate solutions to climate change (Macgregor 2014). As MacGregor (2014) argues, a consideration of the ways in which the neoliberal enclosure of the public sphere has displaced any engagement with climate change into the private sphere is appropriate for a feminist analysis. Consequently, the apolitical fictitious actor, devoid of actually existing subjectivity, whose actions within the market and the household are assumed to offset carbon emissions, become little more than sites of capital accumulation. We argue that a feminist epistemology is useful for understanding why individual action and behavior change are not sufficient to combat global climate change, and in fact, may actually reinforce the unequal power relations and logics that underlie the problem in the first place.

In terms of the implications for actually existing climate governance, we feel the importance is two-fold. One, it deemphasizes the need to be narrowly concerned with climate science controversies—scientific expertise is only one piece of the knowledge and action puzzle necessary to understand the problem and address it. Secondly, we believe it can relieve individuals of their self-doubt and constant evaluation if they are “doing their part” to fight climate change. Instead, individuals should direct their concern back toward engendering collective forms of action that acknowledge and deal with the deeply entrenched inequalities of climate change.

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