

The Gender Dimensions of the Climate Crisis and the European Green Deal

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed deep-seated inequalities as it caused most infections and deaths among the most impoverished and marginalised communities around the world. At same time as many countries were dealing with multiple waves of infections, an extreme heatwave hit Western North America in June and July 2021, followed by massive flooding in parts of China, Germany, Belgium, Nigeria and Somalia in the same month, and devastating wildfires in Greece in the next. It has long been clear that the climate crisis, like the COVID-19 crisis, affects us unequally. The IPCC's 2014 report (Field et al., 2014, p. 6) summarized that "people who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalised in society are especially vulnerable to climate change and to some adaptation and mitigation responses". Repeated warnings from scientists about the urgency of the climate crisis have long been ignored, but are now gaining increasing attention due to an uptake in climate protests across the globe. The recent IPCC Report (2021) on the state of climate science was unambiguous about the fact there is no time to lose. It warned that even if we manage to limit global warming to 1.5C as agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, there are already many irreversible long-term impacts of the climate crisis such as sea level rises, ocean acidification and Arctic ice melts.

Gender oppression is one of the injustices that shapes and is being shaped by the climate crisis. Since the 1990s, feminist actors have actively lobbied international climate-related policy processes to recognise impacts on women in particular, which has resulted in increasing recognition of this such as in the Paris Agreement also recognises the importance of gender mainstreaming. Yet references to women or gender are often inserted in policy documents without strategies for addressing inequalities effectively (Allwood, 2020; Huyer et al., 2020). A powerful policy framework for eco-social transformation is Just Transition, originating in the labour movement, which centres workers as agents of change. The ILO's (2015) Just Transition Guidelines emphasise that the gender dimension must be considered, but there has been little elaboration of this. This paper outlines why the climate crisis is a feminist issue and why we need to pay close attention to gender inequality in drafting Just Transition strategies, and assessing climate policy. It presents an overview of some key areas of gender inequalities such as in the production and consumption of energy as well as access to health and working conditions in the health sector, which unless addressed explicitly, are likely to be deepened by the climate crisis.

The second part of this paper analyses the European Green Deal, the EU's flagship program for climate action. In closely analyzing the Climate Law, Adaptation Strategy and the Just Transition Fund, it finds that while it makes some references to social inequalities, it largely fails to recognise complex gendered inequalities in incomes, wealth and power, and does not offer policies for addressing them at the root.

The climate crisis is a feminist issue

Environmental and climate justice activists have insisted that we must not just take the unequal impacts of the climate crisis as natural, but examine their history. As Lawrence and Lybourn-Langton (2021, p. 12) put it, the history of environmental breakdown must be understood as part of a history of cumulative injustices which have resulted in an unequal distribution of power and wealth. Some estimate that just 25 corporate and state-owned fossil fuel producers account for 51% of industrial greenhouse gas emissions since 1988 (Griffin, 2017). Taking an even longer and geopolitical perspective, data suggests that 29% of cumulative production-based global CO₂ emissions in the period from 1751 to 2017 came from North America, 22% from Europe and 29% from Asia (Our World In Data, 2019). In contrast, only 3% are attributed to the African continent and 3% to South America (ibid). While a few have profited from wealth acquired through environmental destruction, the negative impacts have fallen disproportionately on the shoulders of the world's majority of poor people, women, people of colour and people in the Global South.

Gender, power and social reproduction

Gender can be understood as an unequal relation of power which is reproduced on an everyday basis through the capitalist organisation of paid and unpaid work, the distribution of ownership and wealth, state policies and cultural practices. Directing attention to social-reproductive labour, which describes the labour of daily and generational reproduction of our collective existence, helps understand the complex interconnections between women's oppression and ecological degradation. This work, as many feminists have repeatedly pointed out, is performed disproportionately by unpaid or underpaid women. Worldwide, women are estimated to perform 76.2% of the total amount of unpaid care work, dedicating on average 3.2 times the time that men dedicate to such work (International Labour Office et al., 2018). In Europe, women spent on average 3.9 hours per day on unpaid care work, and men 2.6 hours before the pandemic, a gap which widened during the pandemic (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). Women are also overrepresented in the public sector workforce, with an average of 59.6% across OECD countries (OECD, 2019). Gender pay gaps in the labour market are in part a reflection of the devaluation of social-reproductive labour, as the particularly low pay in the health and social care sector suggests. Europe, the gender pay gap across all sectors was 15.3%, and 11.2% in public services in the EU-28 in 2018 (latest data available) (EPSU, 2021, p. 13). A feminist perspective urges us to examine the history of the climate crisis as part of the history of capitalist social reproduction. As Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser (2019) argue, our capitalist social and economic institutions have exploited women's unwaged and low-paid social-reproductive labour just like they have exhausted our soil and poisoned the water and air.

Environmental justice, racism and gender

How women are affected by environmental breakdown depends on a range of factors, including how much (or little) they earn and own, where they live and whether they have access to public benefits and services. Climate activists and scholars have repeatedly highlighted that the climate crisis continues to hit the most impoverished more negatively, many of which are migrant women, LGBTQ+ women, disabled women and women of colour as gender intersects with other systemic power inequalities such as class, race and disability (Djouidi et al., 2016; Gay-Antaki, 2020; MacGregor, 2010).

Poor working mothers have often been most exposed to environmental harms, and to the effects of extreme weather events while many have also been at the forefront of justice struggles. The 1982 Warren County (North Carolina, USA) protest against the dumping of toxic chemicals which was led by a group of black mothers, is widely considered a crucial moment of the modern environmental justice movement (Fears and Dennis, 2021; Laurent, 2011; Schlosberg and Collins, 2014). In Europe, it is well documented that Roma communities in Eastern Europe disproportionately suffer from exposure to toxic waste, limited access to water and vulnerability to floods as a result of so-called environmental racism (EJOLT, 2021; Harper et al., 2009). While Roma men and women are more disadvantaged in all areas of life than women and men in the general population, Roma women have been found to be worse off than Roma men (European Union, 2018), making them even more exposed to climate related risks. Furthermore, data has consistently shown that the share of non-EU migrant women at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU is twice as high than non-migrant women (45.4% compared to 21.2%), followed closely by the second most at risk group which are non-EU migrant men (44.4% compared to 18.8% non-migrant men) (Eurostat, 2021a). Though specific research on the impact of the climate crisis on migrant women and men in Europe remains scarce (and there is an absence of data on transgender and non-binary people in particular), research from around the world has consistently found that the most marginalised are most exposed to environmental harms, negative health outcomes and income loss in the wake of climate disasters (Daalen et al., 2020; Field et al., 2014).

A feminist response to the climate crisis must critically examine political discourse and policy proposals in relation to their potential for addressing the climate crisis and the deep-seated power inequalities it results from. It must pay attention to differences between genders, and to the situations of the most disempowered and impoverished. The urgent task of our time is to forge solidarities between women and different marginalised groups, and to organise for political change which protects our planet and improves the lives of all.

Just transitions, gender and power

A very brief history of the just transition perspective

An influential policy paradigm for eco-social transformation comes from the trade union movement. The term 'Just Transition' originated in the US labour movement of the 1980s where it was used to advocate for social protection, education, and training opportunities for those affected by job losses resulting from environmental protection policies (Just Transition Centre, 2017). The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) started actively promoting this concept in a statement to the Kyoto conference in 1998. A core assumption of the Just Transition perspective is that workers wellbeing and environmental protection are not to be traded off against each other, but must go hand in hand. Yet since the emergence of the concept, there have been constant debates over whom and what it should include. Many different political programs have been launched under this name. The ILO and others have advocated for a narrow approach which focuses on the workers most dependent on the extraction of fossil fuels as well as others facing the most immediate structural changes (Galgoczi, 2019; ILO, 2015). Others have pushed for broadening the framework to include strategies for addressing the underlying social inequalities which shape the unequal impacts of the climate crisis, linking it to wider environmental and global climate justice concerns (Guillén and Petmesidou, 2021; Laurent, 2020; McCauley and Heffron, 2018).

What could a feminist just transition look like?

How gender inequality can be addressed as part of just transitions is part of the debate over the framework. The ILO's Guidelines for a Just Transition suggest that "policies and programmes need to take into account the strong gender dimension of many environmental challenges and opportunities". Therefore, they argue, "specific gender policies should be considered in order to promote equitable outcomes" (ILO, 2015, p. 6). These suggestions for considering gender inequalities provide little explanation of what is meant by the 'gender dimension' or 'gender policies', and what should be done.

As explained in the introduction, the climate crisis is a feminist issue because it is a result of unequal relations of power through which some have profited from environmental degradation and global warming while the majority of people are exposed to its devastating effects. Due to the campaigners for Just Transition, many now recognise that we need to transform how we work to halt further environmental breakdown. Yet focusing on workers in the most-polluting sectors alone is not enough for a just eco-social transformation. The modern organisation of work, characterised by women's lower wages and disproportionate responsibility for unpaid social reproductive work, drives gender inequality which in turn makes many women disproportionately exposed to the negative effects of the climate crisis. Racial, class and

disability injustice which also manifest in many inequalities in income and wealth, further make some women even more vulnerable. A feminist Just Transition perspective needs to examine these existing inequalities in their different geographical contexts, and assess climate and related eco-social policies with regards to their potential of abolishing them.

The question of ‘green job creation’ provides an example of how a feminist perspective can help develop better Just Transition policies. Many understand ‘green jobs’ to refer solely to sustainable jobs in industries which are currently big polluters, such as the energy sector, construction or transport. Workers in these industries are disproportionately men, making them the main beneficiaries of job creation policies. Many trade unions and feminist climate activists have argued that these policies need to be complemented by investment in existing low-carbon jobs in the female-dominated service sector – in particular the care sector and other essential public services which are disproportionately performed by low-paid migrant women (Cohen and MacGregor, 2020; Green New Deal UK and Build Back Better, 2020). As Cohen and MacGregor (2020, p.11) put it, “socially just green economy needs to focus not just on reforming and reducing carbon-intensive industries but also investing in already low-carbon social infrastructure (i.e., services and facilities that meet needs and contribute towards a good quality of life).”

A feminist Just Transition perspective needs to ask not only how weather-related changes and climate policies affect people differently because of forms of gender oppression. It must also interrogate which women - and which non-binary and gender non-conforming people, as well as which men - are most affected, what historical systems have produced their particular vulnerabilities and how to address them at the root.

Evidence of gendered injustice and the climate crisis: distributive and procedural dimensions

Many just transitions activists as well as other environmental and climate justice activists commonly distinguish between two dimensions of justice (McCauley and Heffron, 2018): Distributive and procedural justice. Distributive justice is concerned with the distribution of resources, which is currently highly unequal and unjust. This includes the exposure to environmental harm, access to environmental, economic and social goods, and the impacts of climate policies. Procedural justice is concerned with the involvement of affected people and communities in environmental decision-making. This section will outline distributive and procedural justice in more detail, giving examples of existing research on gendered inequalities

It is important to note here that these dimensions are not exhaustive. Many climate justice activists have also called for more attention the dimension of reparative justice. This is concerned with compensation and reparation for the historical legacies of colonial and imperial exploitation and harm that shape the capacities of individuals, communities and political authorities for responding to the climate crisis (Schlosberg and Collins, 2014; Sealey-Huggins, 2021). People in the global South are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, and have also been at the forefront of resisting colonial extraction and environmental harm which is rarely recognised in climate discourses that focus on the figure of the ‘vulnerable woman’ (Gay-Antaki, 2020). Reparative justice requires not simply one-off payments but a restructuring of local and global relations of power and ownership (Sealey-Huggins, 2021). This crucially also includes improving the rights of migrants across the globe (Táiwò and Cibralic, 2020). It is

one of the shortcomings of this report that reparative justice is not analysed in detail in the section on the European Green Deal below – something which requires further attention from activists, academics and trade union organisers alike.

Distributive justice:

Seeking distributive justice as part of a just transition requires a close analysis of existing material inequalities and their impacts on the climate crisis. A feminist perspective must pay particular attention to how gender, racial and economic injustice shapes the distribution of environmental goods and bads, and how these injustices can be addressed at the root. Since the climate crisis affects all areas of life, more research must be dedicated to understanding how existing material inequalities are produced and what can be done. A feminist just transition perspective on distributive justice must also interrogate how the current organisation of work produces unequal material outcomes. In other words, it must always ask who is doing which work and under what conditions. The following three paragraphs give some examples in the areas of energy, health and food.

Example 1: Energy work and unequal access to energy

The energy industry has been at the centre of Just Transition debates. As mentioned in the introduction, the distribution of global greenhouse gas emissions has been concentrated among a small number of fossil fuel producers. The European Environmental Agency (2021) estimates that only 211 individual facilities in Europe were responsible for over half of damage to health and environment caused by air pollution in 2017, of which the most damaging ones were thermal power plants based in Germany, the UK, Poland, Spain and Italy. The workforce in the conventional energy sector is heavily male-dominated across the world, and in Europe. In 2019, three quarters of workers in European ‘electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply’ were men, and more than our fifths in the extractive fossil fuel industries (Eurostat, 2021b). Trade unions’s commitments to a just transition have reiterated the need for adequate social protection, reskilling opportunities as well as the creation of green, decent jobs for all workers in a decarbonising energy industry (ETUC, 2018). To avoid furthering the gendered segmentation of the labour market, many have also emphasised the need for providing decent training and employment for women in the renewables sector.

Looking at the consumption side of energy, another gendered pattern appears. Data from the European Energy Poverty (2021) observatory shows that one in fourteen (7.3%) households in the EU-28 was unable to keep their home adequately warm in 2017, but one in five households (19.1%) of those in the bottom income decile. Since more women are low-wage earners than men, rising energy prices affect women more. Due to gender roles and the distribution of unpaid work, women further tend to spend more time at home and are thus more dependent on home energy use (European Institute for Gender Equality., 2012). Evidence shows that energy poverty in Europe is already disproportionately affecting older women, single mothers and ethnic minority families (Clancy et al., 2017; Doe, 2015). Rising energy prices are in part attributed to the liberalisation of the energy industry over the last twenty years, which has slowed

efforts to create more sustainable energy and affordable energy (Weghmann, 2019). This highlights the need for a creation of decent jobs in the renewable sector, increased public ownership and control, wage policies that address women's lower incomes and redistributive public benefits.

Example 2: Healthcare work and health inequalities

Another area of large distributive inequalities is health. People with pre-existing health conditions and on low-incomes are more likely to be exposed to environmental harms and the negative health impacts of climate disasters. Poorer communities in Europe suffer from higher levels of air pollution which is associated with multiple health problems including death (EEA, 2019). Furthermore, the needs of women and LGBTQ+ people are rarely considered in climate disaster prevention policies and in the aftermaths of disasters. Evidence on weather-related mortality during the 2003 heatwaves in Europe shows that women over 75 had higher mortality rates (D'Ippoliti et al., 2010; Trigo et al., 2009). Women, transgender, intersex and non-binary people are particularly likely to become displaced in the event of climate disasters and suffer from sexual and gender-based violence, and well as limited access to adequate healthcare (Goldsmith et al., 2021; Thornton and Voigt, 2007; UNHCR, 2020).

These negative health impacts further create large workloads for those tasked with responding to them which are majority women. In the EU, 78% of all 14.7 million health workers were women in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020). Health and social care workers, including nurses and midwives and assistants in health and elderly care, have lower average incomes compared to the rest of the workforce in all EU countries and earn less than comparably skilled workers in other sectors (Müller, 2018, pp. 14–16). The health and social care sector also has a high concentration of migrant women, both intra-EU and non-EU migrants (Fasani and Mazza, 2020). This sector has suffered from austerity policies in the last decade which led to understaffing and compromised the occupational health and safety of staff (and women in particular), resulting in less preparedness for the COVID-pandemic (Franklin, 2020). Low-earning women are thus likely to be simultaneously more exposed to environmental harms and more frequent extreme weather events and disproportionately burdened with responding to them as health and social care workers. A feminist just transition thus also requires public investments in the health and social care sector which have suffered from austerity in the last decade (Müller, 2018), improvements in occupational health and safety measures with particular focus on gendered risks (Franklin, 2020), attention to sexual violence prevention and shelters and a redistribution and reduction of unpaid care work.

Example 3: Agricultural work and unequal access to food

The agricultural sector is another example of complex gendered inequalities in production and consumption shaped by the climate crisis. In most regions globally, except Europe and South America, more women than men are employed in agriculture (World Bank, 2018) and thus more exposed to increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and greater frequency of extreme weather events. An IPCC report predicts that future climate change will lower the productivity of food production and thus increase food prices for consumers, impacting low-income consumers the most (Mbow et al., 2019, p. 439). This has a clear gendered dimension too: Due to women's lower incomes and gendered responsibility for managing household consumption such as food shopping and cooking, women are more affected by rising food prices. Evidence from Europe shows that so-called 'food insecurity' is already more prevalent among people with lower incomes, lower education levels, women, older people, renters, one-person and lone-parent households, disabled persons and those outside the labour market (Garratt, 2020; Grimaccia and Naccarato, 2020).

Overall, these only represent a few areas of distributive injustice, need to be explicitly addressed as part of a just transition. The multiple ways in which working conditions drive inequalities needs to be given particular attention. When analysing climate policies, we need to ask to what extent recognise existing distributive inequalities including those related to working conditions, and whether they have any potential for transforming them and redistributing power.

Procedural justice:

Just Transition organisers have always emphasised that it is not just the outcomes, but also the processes which must be fair for workers and their communities (Just Transition Centre, 2017). Many Just Transition advocates have called for an extension of collective bargaining between trade unions and business representatives as well as governments and transnational institutions (Galgoczi, 2019; ILO, 2015). A feminist Just Transition perspective takes procedural justice to also require a distribution of power towards women and other marginalised groups. Women's representation in democratic decision-making has been slowly increasing but remains low, with only 31% women in parliaments in the European Union and 25% of all parliamentary seats worldwide in 2020. Some evidence suggests that a higher representation of women in parliaments leads to the adoption of more stringent climate policies, and consequently lower emissions (Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi, 2019). Other research focused specifically on gender-sensitive climate policies found that a near-equal representation of women in national and EU governmental climate policy units alone has little impact (Kronsell and Magnusdottir, 2016; Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2015). One of the reasons for this may be that it is primarily white wealthy women who have gained access to high-status political representation and policy work. A recent report from the Council of Europe evidences that women of colour, poor women, migrant women, Roma women and LGBTQ+ women (needless to say these groups overlap) are underrepresented because of multiple obstacles to political participation (Gjermeni, 2021). These include high rates of harassment, the burden of unequally distributed unpaid care work and a lack of support by political parties and organisations.

This suggests the need to invest in groups that have the potential to bring together different marginalised groups most affected by the climate crisis such as climate justice organisations, women’s organisations and trade unions. Trade unions have a central role to play in organising for a feminist just transition, as many of the distributive inequalities mentioned above are caused by the gendered organisation of work. Women’s membership in European trade unions stood at 42% in 2006 and has been growing since (ETUC, 2021), but representation in leadership positions remains much lower (Ledwith, 2012). This varies greatly however, as some unions in female-dominated sectors, like many public service unions, have majority female membership and have put gender inequalities at work on the agenda for a long time. Many trade unions, such as the German ver.di union, have campaigned for an eco-social transformation, and emphasised that gender inequality must be tackled directly too (Ver.di, 2019), providing examples for others. In developing campaigns for more political power, it is crucial to focus our efforts on redistributing power to the most marginalised women in particular as it is them who are most affected.

The box below provides some guiding questions for assessing climate policies:

Feminist questions for assessing climate policy:

- How do policies recognise gender oppression and its relationship to the climate crisis, including how it affects women differently depending on inequalities of class, race, disability, or other injustices?
- How do policies transform or reinforce the poorer working conditions and opportunities in paid employment experienced by women, and resulting gendered inequalities of income and wealth?
- How do policies transform or reinforce the conditions of social reproductive work, especially the gendered division of unpaid and low-paid care work?
- How do policies change the distribution of ownership between the public and the private sector, and with what consequences for the working conditions of women?
- How do policies address or reinforce structural racism (affecting women of colour), including environmental racism and dependencies of the global South on the global North?
- Do political processes move in the direction of democratising decision-making by redistributing power to women, people of colour and other marginalised groups?
- How do political processes involve collective actors such as trade unions, climate justice movements and feminist organisations in decision-making?

(Adapted from Williams’s (1989) questions for assessing social policy).

Analysis of the European Green Deal

With the European Green Deal launch in December 2019, the EU declared that Europe should become climate-neutral by 2050. The European Green Deal (EGD) is the flagship programme of the EU, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2C as per the Paris Agreement and securing “sustainable growth”. The aim of this section is to analyse key instruments of the European Green Deal from the feminist just transition perspective and existing gendered inequalities outlined above. Distributive and procedural elements will be considered in turn.

The main climate action initiatives under the Green Deal include:

- The **European Climate Law**, which enshrines the 2050 climate-neutrality objective into EU law.
- The **2030 Climate Target Plan**, which sets out the measures for achieving a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, including a reform of the EU emissions trading systems, renewable energy targets, energy efficiency standards, CO2 standards, a renovation wave of buildings as well as a reduction of emissions in agriculture, land use and forestry.
- The **‘Fit for 55’** package, which proposes a range of legislative proposals to achieve a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. These include a revision of the EU emissions trading system, revision of the renewable energy directive, a revision of the energy tax directive, a social climate fund, and more.
- The **EU Adaptation Strategy**, which sets out a framework for adaptation measures at different levels of the EU.
- The **Just Transition Mechanism**, which aims to provide targeted financial support for the regions and sectors most affected by the transition towards a carbon neutral economy. This consists of the Just Transition Fund, the InvestEU scheme and a new Public Sector Loan facility which in total aim to mobilise €65-75 Billion Euros. Projects eligible for funding are determined through the submission of territorial transition plans by Member States to the Commission.

A central shortcoming of the European Green Deal is that the social justice dimension remains underdeveloped. It is first and foremost an economic growth strategy. The EGD presents itself largely as a gender-neutral plan, barely mentioning gender (Allwood, 2020). The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) is frequently hailed by the European Commission as the policy framework through which a “strong social Europe for just transitions” can be achieved. In the EPSR, gender equality one of twenty key principles. The linking of the EPSR and the Green Deal was welcomed by some as a promising sign of a holistic just transition perspective (Sabato and Fronteddu, 2020). Indeed, the EPSR Action Plan, presented in March 2021, includes several references to the Green Deal as a tool for addressing social inequalities, such as energy poverty and housing inequalities, and green job creation and notes that taxation should be in line with climate and environmental objectives (European Commission, 2021). Gender equality in the EPSR Action Plan is delegated mostly to the EU Gender Equality Strategy, which, remains similarly silent on the topic of climate change besides noting that there are gender dimensions to climate policies (European Commission, 2020). Since many legislative documents and proposals of EGD instruments have become available, a close analysis of their considerations of gender injustice and the potential of their policy proposals for a feminist Just Transition is timely. In the next three sections, the Climate Law, Adaptation Strategy and Just Transition Fund will be examined.

EU Climate Law

Aims and instruments:

The EU Climate Law is the centrepiece of the European Green Deal, setting a binding 2050 climate neutrality objective for all member states. This was adopted on 28 June 2021 by the Council of the EU, and by the European Parliament on the 24 June 2021. In addition to the 2050 climate neutrality objective, the Climate Law also sets an intermediate climate target in Article 4 of reducing emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 with a limit on the contributions of net removals of 225 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. The scope of this law is narrow, and it is to be complemented by a range of policy measures proposed by the European Commission which are still under discussion. This section is concerned with the degree to which the law recognises and seeks to address gendered social injustices.

Distributive justice and gender:

Economic growth and social inequality

The preamble of the Climate Law states that there is a need for a “just and inclusive transition, leaving no one behind” (p.2) but the Law makes it explicit that the primary goal is a “modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy”. The Climate Law demonstrates a firm commitment to economic growth as it stresses the possibility of decoupling resource depletion from economic growth, which is highly contested among economists with many arguing that this may be impossible to achieve and incompatible with limiting global warming to 1.5C (Antonakakis et al., 2017; D’Alessandro et al., 2020; Haberl et al., 2020). The primary reliance of GDP as an indicator for progress is further indicative of the masculine economic metrics this law is based upon, which feminist economists have consistently criticised for not valuing “nonmarket goods and services that are critical to sustaining human beings and the natural environment” such as unpaid care work (Heintz et al., 2021, p. 482). At the same time,

a narrow focus on GDP demonstrates little concern for the conditions under which paid work is performed, and for the under- and unpaid work which sustains the economy too. Despite the discursive reference to a ‘just and inclusive transition’, the Climate Law does not commit member states to effectively reducing deep-seated distributive inequalities. As the focus lies on economic growth goals, gender equality concerns are largely absent from the text like they have been in previous EGD documents (Allwood 2020).

Food and energy poverty

Food and energy poverty are the only instances in which distributive inequalities are mentioned in the Climate Law. On food, it includes a fleeting reference to the importance of “food security and affordability” (p.20) but does not make any commitments to addressing the underlying causes of food poverty such as high food prices and gendered income inequalities (Grimaccia and Naccarato 2020). Similarly, while energy poverty is mentioned, the multiple causes of energy unaffordability such as high energy prices, inefficiently insulated housing stock and low incomes are not (Doe 2015). Gendered and racialised inequalities are stark again here: Older women, single mothers, ethnic minority families and those living in Eastern Europe are disproportionately affected by energy poverty (Clancy et al., 2017; Doe, 2015). The Climate Law does not recognise these groups, and only makes a commitment to reducing energy poverty in the transition to “safe, sustainable, affordable and secure energy system relying on the deployment of renewables, a well-functioning internal energy market and the improvement of energy efficiency” (p. 7). This could be interpreted as a continued commitment to energy liberalisation policies of the EU which have delayed the de-carbonisation of energy supply and done little to alleviate energy poverty (Weghmann 2019). Yet much is still under discussion with regards to energy poverty. In July 2021, the European Commission proposed a revision of the Directive on Energy Efficiency and as part of its ‘Fit for 55’ package which recognises the increasing risk of energy poverty for lower and middle-income households. This Directive suggests that improving efficiency through tightened energy efficiency standards and commitments for energy efficiency improvement measures for those affected by energy poverty, and alleviating negative distributional impacts of pricing measures through the proposed Social Climate Fund. It remains to be seen how the discussion on this revised Directive proceed. The Climate Law itself however does not make any commitments to reducing inequalities limiting access to food and energy.

Wages, wealth and unpaid work

The Climate Law has little concerns for workers’ issues. It mentions employment only once as part of a list of twenty different issues which measures at Union and national level should take into account,. Notably absent are considerations of addressing inequalities in income and wealth, which make marginalised women more exposed to effects of the climate crisis, including the effects of mitigation policies such as carbon prices. There is no shortage of proposals for improving work while tackling the climate crisis. Trade unions at national and EU levels have put particular emphasis on the need for investment in decent public sector jobs and improved labour and social protection for workers, including reductions of gender pay gaps, as part of a just transition (EPSU, 2020; ETUC, 2018; Ver.di, 2019). Public job creation of good ‘green jobs’ in low-carbon sectors like social care have been suggested as policies that could improve and expand low-carbon work and reduce gender inequality at work (Cohen and MacGregor, 2020; Green New Deal UK and Build Back Better, 2020; Ver.di, 2019). Many are further arguing

for reductions in working time as a demand-side strategy for reducing emissions, resource use and gender inequality in unpaid care work (Autonomy, 2019; Gough and Meadowcroft, 2011; Nässén and Larsson, 2015). But the Climate Law, the backbone of the European Green Deal, does not explicitly commit member states to investment in fairer and better work as part of its commitment to decoupling economic growth from resource use.

Procedural justice and gender:

Public participation and gender representation

The Climate Law sets out a range of procedural measures for implementation which includes specifications on the assessment of progress, the Advisory Board, citizen and community engagement, as well as public participation. It commits the Commission to assessments of collective progress every five years starting from 2023, as well as assessments of national measures with recommendations every five years. It furthermore requires that all new draft measures and legislative proposals have to be assessed in relation to their consistency with the climate-neutrality objective, which is a crucial clause. Concerning the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change, it specifies that this will be composed of 15 senior scientific experts from different disciplines and that gender and geographical balance should be ensured. Further, Article 9 of the Climate Law sets out that the Commission should facilitate an inclusive and accessible process at all levels, including with social partners and with attention to gender equality. This is another fleeting reference without clear commitments to redistributing decision-making power to women, and in particular those who are most underrepresented in politics.

Trade union participation

The crucial role of trade unions in securing a Just Transition are not mentioned explicitly anywhere in the Climate Law. This suggests that their understanding of a 'just and inclusive transition' is far from the original just transition framework which centred workers as agents of change. Trade union's understanding of health and safety issues in the workplace, as well as As noted above, many national and European trade unions have been campaigning for an eco-social

transformation. In the Climate Law, there are only two brief references to the social partners are without any specification of their roles. The Climate Law thus lacks any concrete commitments to the participation of trade unions in the implementation of the EGD.

EU Adaptation Strategy

Aims and Instruments:

The EU Adaptation Strategy is another major component of the European Green Deal. It was approved by the European Commission on 24th Feb 2021 and finally adopted by the European Council on the 3rd of June 2021. It is a strategy for a faster and more systemic adaptation to the ongoing impacts of climate change, though its lack of binding targets (in contrast to the Climate Law) has made many question its effectiveness.

Distributive justice and gender:

Unequal social and geographical risks

In contrast to the European Climate Law, the Adaptation Strategy presents a more explicit picture of the existing inequalities in exposure to environmental harm, as well as distinct capacities for adaptation. Importantly, the Strategy recognises that “men and women, older people, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, or socially marginalised have different adaptive capabilities” (ibid, p.9). However, rather than making any commitments to reducing the underlying causes of these differences, the Strategy suggests simply that “adaptation measures need to consider their situation” (European Commission, 2021, p. 9). A feminist Just Transition perspective holds that adaptation measures must also seek to address the injustices that make women and other marginalised groups less able to adapt. As mentioned above, there is an increased risk of gender-based violence against women and LGBTQ+ people during climate disasters which adaptation policies need to address too (Goldsmith et al., 2021; Thornton and Voigt, 2007; UNHCR, 2020). Though data on this is limited, there is evidence that low-income households in Europe have been more likely to be displaced by climate disasters due to less secure housing, insurance and state support (Martinez, 2020). Some risk groups can be identified here, though they may vary geographically. For example Southern and South Eastern Europe, the regions most affected by extreme weather events, also have higher numbers of unemployed persons, and very high poverty risks for women and non-EU migrants who are thus more exposed (EEA, 2019; Eurostat, 2021a). This suggests that investment in secure housing, unemployment and social assistance benefits and gender-based violence prevention for all - including migrants - are important components of climate change adaptation, none of which are currently recognised in the Adaptation Strategy.

Employment, adaptation and worker’s rights

The Adaptation Strategy includes a small section on employment-related impacts, which states that the EU will promote economic diversification strategies and reskilling policies to support “green growth sectors”. The strategy emphasises that there is a lack of knowledge about the effects of the climate crisis on workers, and that the EU should consider new initiatives for worker’s protection where relevant. (European Commission, 2021, p. 10). The ETUC has criticised the Strategy for this lack of tangible measures to address impacts on jobs and improve workers rights, pointing out that much is known about the impacts on workers already (Taylor, 2021). A look at the Strategy’s impact indicators is telling as working conditions, job standards and quality as well as education and training systems are not considered as part of the impact indicators with the justification that “climate change will affect working conditions, but the impact is not considered significant in the context of the other impacts” (p.117). This demonstrates little consideration for the workers in the many public services which are essential to adaptation effort, including agriculture, water management, fire fighting services, and health (EPSU, 2017). The Adaptation Strategy recognises increasing pressure on the ability of public health systems, such as through unknown diseases (European Commission, 2021, p. 7), but does not add make any commitments to increasing the capacity of public health systems, nor improving the conditions of health workers and their working conditions who are majority female. Unpaid work is not mentioned at all in the Adaptation Strategy, despite its important role in shaping gendered income and wealth inequalities and the evidence that

women's unpaid workload increases during economic crises, compensating for goods and services which are no longer available or affordable (Heintz et al. 2021, p. 473). The climate crisis is likely to increase women's unpaid work, especially if funding will be directed away from key public services such as care services to deal with the costs of climate change, and if food and energy prices increase further. Investment in affordable public services that reduce women's unpaid care work such as childcare and elderly care services should thus also be considered as adaptation policy. The Adaptation Strategy of the European Green Deal however gives no attention to the gendered distribution of work and makes no commitments to transforming the organisation of work.

Procedural justice and gender:

The Adaptation Strategy places emphasis on support for planning and implementation of local adaptation. In all of this, it does not mention the role of trade unions nor recognise gendered inequalities in decision-making power. As such, it leaves it open to member states whether and how such involvement should take place and fails to suggest concrete measures to improve procedural justice in the process of adaptation.

EU Just Transition Fund

The EU Just Transition Fund is the first pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism, which focuses on supporting the most affected territories and workers concerned as well as eco-social investment. The Just Transition Fund (JTF) provides 7.5 billion additional funding for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, and 10 billion from the European Union Recovery Instrument to invest in a range of different activities of the most affected territories. The second and third pillars are, respectively, the InvestEU scheme and the public sector loan facility of the European Investment Bank. In order to access the funds, countries have to submit territorial just-transition plans to demonstrate the need for funding and explain how they will spend it. Allocations from the European Union Recovery instrument and MFF resources have been made to countries already, with Poland (20.0%), Bulgaria (6.73%), Czech Republic (8,53%) and Germany (12.88%), Italy (5,35%) and Romania (11.12%) receiving the most substantial amounts of the fund under the condition that they adopt national commitments to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

Distributive justice and gender:

Recognition of gender inequality

The JTF aims to support a whole range of activities with multiple possible distributive impacts. Like the Adaptation Strategy and the Climate Law, it recognises the problem of energy poverty and emphasises the need to invest in affordable clean energy. A recognition of gender inequality was initially absent in the first proposal of the Commission but was added by the Parliament. The final version of the JTF proposal now states that gender equality should be promoted, and that those disproportionately affected such as workers with disabilities should be given special attention (European Parliament, 2021, p. 13). This is a positive recognition of gender inequality as well as other marginalised groups, yet it is unclear whether the Fund can fulfil its promises.

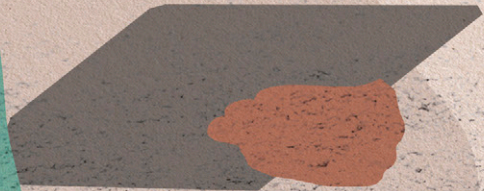
Investment in social support activities including care services

One of the main issues with the JTF, which puts its commitment to gender equality into question, is its wide scope and low funding. The JTF supports three different types of activities: Economic revitalisation, Land restoration and Social support. Under each, a long list of specific activities is listed. For example, social support activities include the upskilling and reskilling of workers and jobseekers; job-search assistance to jobseekers; active inclusion of jobseekers; technical assistance; other activities in the areas of education and social inclusion including, where duly justified, investments in infrastructure for the purposes of training centres, child- and elderly-care facilities as indicated in territorial just transition plans. In light of the great range of activities to be supported, the funds appear dramatically insufficient to cover them adequately. Claeys and Tagliapietra (2020) estimate that “providing an adequate amount of social support to the most affected citizens would already absorb most of the funds devoted to the JTF”. This possibility of funding child- and elderly-care facilities through the JTF was not part of the first draft proposal but added by the Parliament which signals some recognition that changing the gendered division of labour must be part of just transitions. Yet due to the limited funds of the JTF and many competing policy priorities, it remains to be seen whether member states will make use of it for child and elderly care investments.

Procedural justice and gender

The JTF offers little in terms of redistributing decision-making power as gender inequality is not mentioned in relation to decision-making, and the role of trade unions is not specified in the proposal. The only reference point is that the territorial transition plans require a description of the involvement of partners in the “preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the territorial just transition plan” (3.1), which does not specify who these partners should be. This has been criticised by the European Trade Union Confederation which emphasised that trade unions need to be given a “a much greater role in designing and delivering a just transition” (ETUC, 2020).





Conclusion

Since the climate crisis has affected the most marginalised hardest, the focus must be on developing strategies that abolish existing inequalities of gender, class, race and other injustices. We need a system change to address the climate crisis, as the slogan of climate strikers goes. Just Transition offers a framework for eco-social transformation through its emphasis on distributive and procedural justice for workers and their communities. Since the organisation of employment and unpaid work, the distribution of income, wealth and political power are unequal along gendered lines, a Just Transition must be feminist – in the sense of seeking to abolish these inequalities at their root. Developing policy proposals for doing so is a challenge of our time, which requires more research, political struggle and policy experimentation.

As the analysis of the European Green Deal shows, current policy packages lacks ambition for a Just Transition that seeks to address gender oppression and related injustices. While the Climate Law claims that the Deal will bring about a ‘just and inclusive transition’, it is primarily a ‘green growth’ strategy, provides insufficient funding for achieving its primary goal of reaching net-zero by 2050 and relies too heavily on market-based strategies rather than supporting the necessary scale of public investment. The close analysis of the Climate Law, Adaptation Strategy and EU Just Transition Fund confirms that the policy package does not seek to abolish gender inequalities. While there are some references to distributive inequalities that disproportionately affect women such as energy and food poverty, the European Green Deal does not seek to implement policies that address these issues at the root. This is shown in the absence of commitments to improve women’s incomes through labour and social rights, prevent gender-based violence and redistribute and reduce unpaid care work. Further, the EGD fails to recognise the importance of investment in low-carbon jobs in the female-dominated health and social care sector. How the European Green Deal is implemented at national and local level will depend on the political priorities of different actors – where it will be crucial for progressive coalitions to critically assess existing proposals and push for Just Transitions strategies which explicitly seek to achieve distributive and procedural justice for all workers and their communities.



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