

# **Ecofeminisms Critical Perspectives on Theory and Activism**

Virtual panel

Swiss Association for Gender Studies

Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, 16:00–18:00 CET

## **Speakers**

**Geneviève Pruvost, Fatima Alvarez Castillo  
and Sophie Lewis**

Ecofeminism is a heterogeneous field of theoretical and political practice. A realm of emancipatory praxis before being an academic set of theories, it raises distinct issues in different world areas and their entanglements. This panel will bring together approaches that deploy and expand ecofeminist insights as critical tools of transformative knowledge and approaches that take critical stances towards some aspects of current ecofeminist projects.

Chairs: Bettina Dennerlein (UZH) and Sébastien Chauvin (UNIL)

Discussant: Nolwenn Bühler (UNIL)



**Geneviève Pruvost** is a researcher and a sociologist of gender, work and environmental struggles and rural ways of life. She is the co-director of a master program in environmental humanities at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris). Following research on female appropriation of legal and illegal violence, she has been working on/with radical ecology (« Considering ecofeminism : Subsistence feminism and vernacular ecofeminism », *Travail, genre et société*, 2019; « A critique in practice : Everyday life in the « ZAD », Notre-Dame-des-Landes (2013-2014) », *Politix*, 2017 ; « Participatory, Self-Managed, Collective Building Projects : When Every Act is Politicised », *Sociologie du travail*, 2016). Her last book, *Quotidien politique. Féminisme, écologie et subsistance* (2021) develops a materialist ecofeminism based on the centrality of subsistence in past and contemporary societies from the global North to the South.



**Fatima Alvarez Castillo** is a Filipino mother and grandmother who has been trying to do something since she was 22 years old so that the Philippines, and sometimes she hoped, the world, would be kinder and more just to the poor and powerless. Among her efforts are in teaching, research and activism. She is presently still trying to come to grips with the election to the presidency of the son of Marcos whose brutal dictatorship in the 1970s to the 80s tortured and killed several of her students, and her brother. She apologized to her children, grandchildren and students, who are also shocked with the election result, for the failure of her generation to prevent this from happening.



**Sophie Lewis** is a writer and para-academic living in Philadelphia. Her first two books, both published by Verso Books, are *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family* (2019) and *Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation* (forthcoming in 2022). Sophie's essays and articles appear in peer-reviewed journals like *Feminist Theory* and literary journals like *n+1*, *Harper's*, and the *LRB*. Sophie earned her PhD in human geography at Manchester University, following an MA Politics from the New School, and a BA in English literature from Oxford University, followed by an MSc in Environmental Policy. Dr. Lewis teaches short courses on radical theory at the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research, open to all and online. She also has a visiting affiliation, albeit an unpaid one, with the Center for Research on Feminist, Queer and Transgender Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. You can support her writing, if you wish, at [patreon.com/reproutopia](https://patreon.com/reproutopia).



**Nolwenn Bühler** (PhD) is an anthropologist of biomedicine and health, specialized in gender studies. She currently works as a SNSF senior researcher at the University of Lausanne and as a research manager at Unisanté, University Center for Primary Care and Public Health, Lausanne. Her current research explores reconfigurations of public health research, health inequalities, and notions of environmental/viral exposure in the context of various projects. She is the author of *When Reproduction Meets Aging: The Science and Medicine of the Fertility Decline* (Emerald 2021) and has published in *Reproductive Biomedicine and Society*, *BioSocieties*, or *Tecnoscienza: Italian Journal of Science and Technology*.

## Abstracts

### **Ecofeminist conceptions of the household as a revolutionary agora**

Geneviève Pruvost

The modern reduction of the household to the nuclear family is a long-term process that has been fundamental for radical Marxist and anarchist feminists in the 1970-1990s (d'Eaubonne, Mies, Federici) to understand the emergence and expansion of capitalism.

This branch of ecofeminism has proposed a different historical and anthropological perspective on emancipation, connecting the invention of a lonely housewife doing equipped domestic work in the global North with the invention of the nuclear family, colonization, the eradication of vernacular knowledges and the destruction of the living environment. In comparison with other modes of social organization in some peasant societies in the past and in the global South, this process has led to a loss of autonomy for women and an accentuation of patriarchal domination. Indeed, it has dispossessed women of the power conferred by vital subsistence work and deprived communities of the benefits of intertwined households (which had been inhabited by relatives but also non-relatives, plants, animals, living materials, and spirits).

This rereading of the economy of the household enables imagining utopic feminist futures based on equal small communities and Earth care.

### **“Indigenous women in the Philippines in the struggle for national liberation: a take on ecofeminism in the context of state repression”**

Fatima Alvarez Castillo

Enabled by local compradors and politicians, global corporations rape forests, turn inside out the bowels of the earth, push back and to extinction cultures and languages of indigenous peoples. The nature and logic of corporate capitalism is anti life. Human beings who stand in the way of the operation of this logic are removed or emasculated.

Over centuries, the multiple, simultaneous, interacting structures, experiences and memories of marginalization, oppression and denial of their humanity have created among indigenous peoples a desire to be invisible and forgotten.

But then Land is Life, and women - bearers and transformers of life - chose to be visible and heard in defense of it. In various forms, tactics and

strategies, Philippine indigenous women have woven a tapestry of forms of struggle for land and life. How they are weaving this tapestry, distinctively from men, drawing from indigenous paradigms and historical materialist epistemology to become a crucial force in the struggle for national liberation is the subject of this paper.

## From xenofeminism vs. ecofeminism to “xecofeminism”

Sophie Lewis

In 2018, in a context of resurgent “goddess”-oriented environmentalism (embodied by Donna Haraway’s monograph *Staying with the Trouble*) on the one hand, and, on the other, the recent publication of the Xenofeminist Manifesto, political scientist Alyssa Battistoni proposed the term “xecofeminism” to denote a feminist method of skepticism vis-à-vis the putative binary of “xeno” (alien) versus “eco” (family). In this paper, I revisit the project of hybridizing and abolishing that opposition between xenos and oikos in feminist theory and praxis, seeking to bring the xecofeminist horizon into sharper focus via a brief meditation on two examples of generative disagreement between the earlier Haraway and the later. Firstly, in the mid-eighties, the Cyborg Manifesto famously declared a preference for cyborgs over goddesses, whereas Haraway’s work from the mid-2010s hangs its ethico-political injunctions explicitly on invocations of “chthonic” deities from cultures all around the Earth. Secondly, beginning in 2015, Haraway has advocated “kinmaking”—in contrast to babymaking—even though, two decades prior, she announced: “I am sick to death of bonding through kinship and ‘the family’” (this appears in the postscript to chapter 6 of *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium*, 1997). Do we ultimately have to “choose” a Haraway, when we read Haraway against Haraway? Or is xecofeminism also about embracing the cyborgicity of being part-eco, part-xeno?

This event is free but **registration is required** (via adjacent QR code)



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