

# Toward everyday practices of gender: Implications of feminist political ecology for gender mainstreaming in Korean ODA

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This paper suggests feminist political ecology (FPE) as a knowledge resource for policy makers, practitioners, and researchers involved in Korean gender equality-focused ODA (Official Development Assistance) programs. Since Korea joined the OECD in 2010, its government has endeavored to incorporate gender mainstreaming into Korean ODA programs. This has generally taken the "topdown approach," (i.e., shifting the practice of official institutions in ODA agencies of the donor country to recipient countries). However, social and cultural contexts of recipient countries have received little attention in assessing what the outcomes would be in these. This paper reviews feminist political ecology, which has examined multi-scalar gender politics and considers the importance of social and cultural contexts of developing countries, in order for Korean ODA programs to embrace things in a nuanced way regarding gender politics. This paper argues for the potential of FPE as an effective tool for these programs that relate to gender. It proceeds as follows: first, it critically examines characteristics of Korean gender equality-focused ODA. Then it reviews what FPE is about, including four themes of feminist political ecology: property rights, gender division of labor, women knowledge resource for policy makers, and practice on its review, the paper discusses ways in which feminist political ecology can generate insights for researchers and practitioners involved in the ODA programs of Korea.

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involved in the ODA programs of Korea.

**KEYWORDS** Feminist political ecology (FPE); Korean ODA; gender mainstreaming; gender politics; social and cultural contexts

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## Introduction

Since the 1970s, when women were integrated into development under the liberal feminist perspective based on WID (Women in Development), academia and practitioners involved in women and development have changed this into GAD (Gender and Development), following criticism that the WID approach singled out women as subjects of development and its emphasis on economic aspects overlooks other concerns regarding women's status. The GAD approach focuses on contexts where women are socially, culturally, politically, and economically positioned in relation to men. In this context, the Beijing 4th World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, where the term "gender mainstreaming" was used. This is defined as follows:

mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (United Nations, 1997, p. 28; as cited in Moser & Moser, 2005, p. 12).

Placing this definition in view of foreign aid, gender mainstreaming of ODA implies the need to incorporate gender-related concerns into all phases of ODA programs such as design, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The Korean government has endeavored to conform to the global imperative of gender mainstreaming, including its recently increasing investment in ODA. It has adopted a series of policies, such as legislation for gender equality in foreign aid disbursement. However, these endeavors tend to be focused on addressing the institutional environment, that is, building official systems to improve gender equality, rather than considering the contexts of particular regions and cultures. The failure to address the complicated webs of gender-related on-the-ground processes limits the effectiveness of Korean gender equality-focused ODA programs. Moreover, few studies have been conducted on the complex nuances of gender inequality in developing countries that are recipients of Korean ODA.

The objective of this paper is to suggest feminist political ecology (FPE) as a knowledge resource for policy makers, practitioners, and researchers involved in Korean ODA (Official Development Assistance) programs focused on gender equality. Studies undertaken in the tradition of feminist political ecology examine the ways in which iterative processes occur between lived experiences and social differences (class, gender, race etc.), given the environmental and economic changes that produce and reinforce gender inequality. In doing so, the studies often investigate gendered outcomes of micro-politics, that is politics in local contexts such as households, neighborhoods, and communities, concerning environmental and economic concerns, rather than gender policies at national or regional scales. FPE researchers link such struggles over resources at local levels to wider processes such as globalization, neo-liberalization, and climate change (Rocheleau, ThomasSlyter, & Wangari, 1996). Due to their focus on local contexts, FPE studies mostly comprise case studies. Researchers examine social, cultural, geographical, and environmental contexts at a particular place, capturing the rich and complicated dynamics of gender politics in given circumstances. Given its focus on micro-politics, everyday practices of gender, lived experiences and practices, and local contexts in particular places, insights of FPE should contribute to improving the effectiveness of Korean ODA programs, which focus on gender equality but lack perspectives regarding gender politics in different regional, social and cultural contexts.

The paper first examines the current status of the Korean ODA projects that focus on gender equality. This section first identifies a rationale for considering feminist political ecology in Korea's ODA policy and programs. Second, it reviews theoretical backgrounds and themes in feminist political ecology that emphasizes social and cultural

contexts. Then it articulates how Korean research on gender equality focused aid programs would benefit from feminist political ecology perspectives. It concludes by providing suggestions for research on such aid programs and discusses the potential of such studies. Data is derived from reports published by the Korean ODA agencies and OECD DAC, along with academic papers on gender politics, particularly on access to and control over resources.

#### Gender in Korean ODA

Korea joined the OECD in 2010. In the course of doing so, OECD DAC assessed Korea's foreign aid through a Special Review (OECD, 2008) and a Peer Review (OECD, 2012). The assessments pointed out that Korea's endeavors for gender needs not only increased funding volume, but also required institutional adjustments (OECD, 2012). In response to these suggestions, the Korean government has made efforts to incorporate gender issues across its ODA projects (Table 1). The amount that was allocated for gender equality-focused aid (principal & significant) has increased from 162 million USD in 2012-2013 to 291 million USD in 2015-2016. However, the proportions vis-a-vis total foreign aid remains at around 10%, compared with the OECD DAC average of well above 30% (12.7% and 37.6% respectively in 2015-2016, see Figure 1). With such increase, frameworks for gender equality-focused ODA programs have also been developed. On the International Development and Cooperation Basic Law (2013), "achieving poverty reduction, improvement of human rights among women, children, and the disabled, gender equality, sustainable development, and humanitarianism ..." (Article 3, Section 1, emphasis mine) were stipulated as basic missions for Korean ODA. In 2010, gender equality has been adopted as a crosscutting issue that encompasses all sectors of Korean ODA. Responding to these efforts, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), a leading organization in the country's endeavor for addressing gender issues among government agencies, defines gender equality goals as implementing developmental projects in ways to reflect women-specific demands and needs in designing and implementing developmental projects, and also to make women equally participate in project implementation and equally benefit from it, thereby both women and men reach their full potential for contributing to political, economic, social, and cultural development (KOICA, 2010).

This idea of gender equality underlies a series of practical guidelines and strategies that KOICA has employed, such as the "Gender mainstreaming guideline" in 2011 and "Gender toolkit" in 2014. Recently, in 2015, the Office for Government Policy Coordination has reinforced the gender equality approach in ODA programs by providing "Guidelines for employing gender perspectives" across government and non-government agencies involved in Korean ODA.

The ways in which Korean gender equality-focused aid programs are designed and implemented reflect the country's particular status in international society vis-a-vis foreign aid. It is the only country that experienced the shift from being a foreign aid recipient to a donor of foreign aid. Considering this, Korean ODA policies have the strong tendency to pass on the country's successful development experiences to developing countries (Kim, 2010; Lim, 2014). The Korea International Development Committee has explicitly stated that the first step in establishing the "Korea-type ODA Model" is to examine the comparative advantage of Korean experiences in social and economic development (Korea International Development Committee, 2017, p. 87). Based on this comparative advantage, ODA programs for socioeconomic development are implemented (Figure 2). As such, its ODA policies have emphasized passing on Korea's experiences of socioeconomic growth to developing countries along with appropriate funding.

This tendency of "passing on" developmental experiences is also observed in the gender-focused ODA programs. Kim et al. (2012) identify the ways in which Korea's gender policies may be transmitted while providing ODA to developing countries. To that end, they identify eight programs, namely, establishment of gender policy development, support of children and maternal health, raising women farmers, support of women victims of violence, support of women's business and employment, establishment of a women-empowered political system, raising women scientists, and gender impact appraisal. These are based on Korea's social and political experiences that have successfully incorporated women as a part of its rapid economic and social development.

For each program, Kim et al. (2012) identify steps for implementation in developing countries, based on Korean experiences and their comparative advantage. This approach implicitly assumes that Korean experiences regarding gender policies are exemplars for developing gender equality in countries as they pursue socioeconomic development.

Korea's gender and development policies have been implemented via a "top-down approach." As one of the four "Asian Tigers," the country achieved rapid economic growth. In doing so, the developmental state, a collective entity of bureaucrats and the business sector, exercised centralized authority for the effective mobilization of resources across the country (Woo-Cumings, 1999). Likewise, the government has mediated Korean gender policies significantly through the institutionalization of gender equality (Kim, 2010), although the role of women's rights movements is also undeniable in the framing of Korean gender policies (Kwon, 2011).

The top-down approach that has characterized Korean development policies is also to be found in the country's gender-focused ODA programs. Several examples are as follow. First, the research interests of Korea mostly focus on the formal institutional environments of recipient countries when gender-focused ODA programs are examined (Kim & Choi, 2013; Kim, Chang, & Kim, 2016), while real life gender issues are overlooked, as pointed out by Kim et al. (2012, p. 6). Second, the Korean developmental agencies focus their efforts at international development (or cooperation) on inviting government officials and women leaders and training them. For example, KOICA has invited 1030 women leaders, offered them training on various gender issues such as women rights, women's development, and related policies (Kim et al., 2012, pp. 287-288). The trained leaders are presumed to initiate and develop gender policies in their own countries and thereby the top-down approach is likely to be passed on to the recipient countries. Third, apart from the lack of evaluation on gender equality outcomes, researchers and policy makers largely utilize macro-level data about the recipient countries, both for developing and evaluating programs. Accordingly, policy recommendations are also limited to macro-levels, such as employing gender-differentiated statistics and developing indicators for gender policy evaluation (Kwon, Han, & Kang, 2015; Song & Kim, 2013). These particular types of data tend to be blind to what is actually going on in terms of gender struggles. While Kim, Jang, Kim, and Lee (2015) have made an effort to determine country-specific demands for gender-focused ODA policies by consulting with regional gender experts and leaders, whether or not the consultative groups represent regional women's demands on the ground has not been demonstrated in the study. For these reasons, the current approach of Korea to gender-focused ODA programs is limited in order to address the social and cultural contexts of the recipient countries.

Social and cultural contexts have been emphasized in Korea among those who are involved in gender-focused international development. Kim et al. (2011) point out that gender-focused policies of Korean ODA have adopted limited on-the-ground examination of contexts that differ across countries (p. 6). Lee (2017b) also notes, "context is everything in gender" (p. 21). She argues that women are not necessarily socially vulnerable only because they are categorized as "women," but rather individual women are positioned in a complicated web of other categories of social groups. However, Korea's gender-focused ODA programs have paid little attention to geographical, social, and cultural contexts on the ground. In view of these realities, this paper explores the potential of feminist political ecology to expand the scope of Korean ODA policies focused on gender equality.

#### Feminist political ecology

##### Development

Political ecology seeks to identify structures of political economy that determine access to and control over resources (Robbins, 2004; Watts, 2000). Political ecologists assume that ecological changes such as natural disasters are political rather than apolitical, and the benefits and costs of environmental changes are unequally distributed among actors. Thus, studies with political ecology frameworks examine a "broadly defined political economy" involved in human-environment interactions (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987, p. 78). In an effort to identify structures of political economy, political ecology studies have specifically examined actors involved in struggles over access to and control over resources, such as local people, non-governmental organizations, state agencies, and international agencies. The actors struggle over access to and control over resources at multiple scales

(Zimmerer & Bassett, 2003), rather than at a single one. Actors' simultaneous struggles at, say, local, national, and global scales to benefit from control over resources renders the political economy complicated. These complex processes become even more so as actors struggle not only materially (Robbins, Chhangani, Rice, Trigosa, & Mohnot, 2007), but also discursively (Watts & Peet, 2004), such as over scarcity of water (Truelove, 2011) or ideal uses of forestry (Sundberg, 2004). These struggles are often undertaken in order to legitimate the access to and control over resources for particular groups. Political ecology research mostly comprises case studies, rather than theoretical debates. Although there are studies on political ecology agendas in the First World, particularly since 2002 when McCarthy (2002) suggested the term First World Political Ecology, but in general the regional focus of examination has been the Third World (Nam, 2017). Themes in political ecology include degradation and marginalization, environmental conflict, conservation and control, and environmental identity and social movements (Robbins, 2004). In sum, political ecology, as a sub-discipline of geography, examines social relations of power that materially and discursively determine access to and control over resources, focusing on multi-scalar struggles among the actors. Empirical cases mostly derive from conservation and development projects in the Third World.

Gendered social relations of power in human-environment interactions have emerged as important research interests among political ecologists (Carney, 2004; Schroeder, 1999) as implicitly "male" resource or land managers, as observed by Blaikie and Brookfield (1987), but failed to capture various social formations involved in struggles over environmental change in the late 1980s and 1990s. Yet, they were scattered under the umbrella of political ecology, rather than being brought together as a body of scholarship. In 1996, Rocheleau et al. (1996) began feminist political ecology, by launching a book entitled, *Feminist political ecology: Global issues and local experiences*. This aimed to bring together empirical cases of women's activism and experiences around the globe and thereby provide a theoretical framework for feminist analysis of struggles over resources. Since the book was published, feminist political ecology has been prolific in exploring the relationship between gender and the environment, with the assumption that gender determines resource access, uses, and controls around the world significantly (Goldman & Schurman, 2000, p. 572).

Feminist theories on the relationship between gender and the environment provide theoretical backgrounds for feminist political ecology. Moeckli and Braun (2001) identify four strands in this: ecofeminism, feminist environmentalism, poststructuralist feminism, and feminist political ecology. These four categories are arbitrary and by no means are mutually exclusive. In particular, feminist political ecology studies are theoretically rooted in the other three. Ecofeminists emphasize women's natural and spiritual closeness to nature, unlike men who dominate and exploit women and nature simultaneously. According to this, women and nature are inherently connected. In addition, patriarchy connects women and nature in order to exploit them and socially and culturally relegate them as a bundle (Moeckli & Braun, 2001, p. 116). The connection could be biological, cultural, or ideological. Environmental degradation, for eco-feminists, thus needs to be understood as a result of patriarchal exploitation over both women and nature. In sum, they seek to emancipate both by inverting the patriarchal hierarchy, which devalues them. Feminist environmentalists, on the other hand, criticize ecofeminism for ignoring history and the materiality of resource use in a society, and for only focusing on ideas about women and nature (p. 118). Through a politico-economic lens, feminist environmentalists examine not only the broader social and political structures, but also the local and historical contexts wherein women's resource use is limited. In addition, this broadens the view about layers of conflict over resource use, enabling us to examine differentiation among women, based on other categories such as class (p. 120). Unlike feminist environmentalists, who examine the social structure of gender inequality, poststructuralist feminists focus on the category of polarized gender. For them, gender is socially constructed and reinforced through repeated practices of the category (Butler, 1988, calls it "performative"). Based on their view that such categories are porous, poststructuralist feminists argue that gender categories are cultural fiction, that is, meanings about gender categories are socially and culturally constructed, and they are stabilized and naturalized through repeated practice. Therefore, they are concerned about how the category of gender comes to be "constructed and stabilized within intellectual, political and

ecological projects" (Moeckli & Braun, 2001, p. 124). They are also concerned about how the idea of polarized gender regulates and reconfigures things and people in ways that reinforces the category of gender. These three perspectives on gender-environment relations are adopted in feminist political ecology, but with a slightly different focus. The view of feminist political ecologists is that understanding institutions and actors of property relations is important to fully comprehend gender-environment relations. It focuses on how struggles about access to and control over resources are gendered and how broader social structures result in the marginalization of women's access and control over resources on the ground. Specific research interests among feminist political ecologists are well illustrated in the excerpt below,

... by explicitly addressing livelihood strategies and the (limited) control, status, the power that accompanies gendered shifts in primary household providers ... occurs within complex and shifting social, political, and institutional fields ... to fully understand gender-environment relations, it becomes necessary to understand land tenure systems, legal structures, international NGOs, state agencies, development discourses, and cultural norms and ideologies [and] how these struggles often reflect gendered relations of power, resulting in outcomes that are experienced differently by men and women (Moeckli & Braun, 2001, p. 123).

Several key words in feminist political ecology emerge from the excerpts such as "livelihoods," "power," "gendered shifts," "household," "social, political, and institutional fields," "land tenure systems," "gendered relations of power," and "outcomes that are experienced differently by men and women." Feminist political ecologists are interested in how gendered power relations at multiple scales, from households to the global level, reconfigure gendered social institutions (including property rights) so that women are marginalized vis-a-vis livelihoods and their basic needs (such as sanitation and water access). Below, I explore the specific themes of feminist political ecology.

#### Themes in feminist political ecology

##### Property rights

Development scholars and practitioners agree that women tend to be worse off in access to and control over resources compared to men because formal (legal) and informal (customary) property regimes often prioritize men's rights over those of women in developing countries. As a result of the complicated processes of defining property rights between men and women, the latter tend to be insecure. Thus, many development programs address gender inequalities regarding property rights in a way to improve women's socioeconomic and political autonomy.

Scholars interested in gender struggles over resources have examined informal and customary property rights of men and women, with respect to formal and legal entitlements that are imposed by developmental programs. Property rights are institutions, defined as formal and informal rules in use. In developing regions such as Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, women often acquire property rights for resources, particularly land, through inheritance and marriage (Ali, Deininger, & Goldstein, 2014; Deere & Leon, 2003; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997). These informal entitlements tend to reflect male dominance in societies, curtailing women's access to and control over resources. In order to increase women's chances for acquiring property rights, communities, states, and international organizations have collaboratively and independently implemented land reform programs in order to formalize such rights. These programs demonstrate conflicting results in terms of gender relations with respect to property rights. On the one hand, programs for formalizing property rights have been advocated as an effective tool for increasing women's access to resources (Ali et al., 2014), particularly when customary rules constrain women's access to resources (Coulibaly-Lingani, Tigabu, Savadogo, Oden, & Ouadba, 2009). On the other hand, formalizing of property rights turns out to be irrelevant for expanding women's property rights, because of existing political and economic inequalities between men and women (Deere & Leon, 2003; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997). Control of resources is limited as ownership is acquired formally under persistent social norms of male dominance for different types of property rights, for example, ownership vs. usufruct (Agarwal, 1994). Also, resources are appropriated by actors who have little intention to improve women's rights such as the state, individuals, and private initiatives (Agarwal, 1997; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997). Indeed, customary rights are far from simple that they can hardly be sorted out through formalization of property rights. Rather, they are composed of complicated webs

of interests and ecological considerations, which have been historically formed (Howard & Nabanoga, 2007; Meinzen-Dick & Mwangi, 2009). Thus, arbitrary formalization cuts the webs of property rights in which socially vulnerable persons and groups such as women and youth are excluded. Also, rights over different resources, such as lands, trees, and crops overlap sometimes and differ at others, further complicating the webs of interests, and curtailing women's property rights (Rocheleau & Edmunds, 1997). Women's socioeconomic status, along with customary laws, in turn, impedes formalizing of property right processes, even when these would contribute to economic growth in developing countries by facilitating capital formation (Joireman, 2008).

Gender struggles over property rights at multi-levels have been examined, revealing the complicated nature of social relations in political economy. The assumption that a household has common goals as a socioeconomic unit has been challenged through intra-household examination of gender relations regarding property rights. Geisler (1993) demonstrates that different members of a household often pursue heterogeneous goals. Also, resources that are distributed, in particular for women such as microfinance in South Asia, have been controlled by male household members instead of the women beneficiaries (Goetz & Gupta, 1996).

#### Gender division of labor

Gender division of labor has been explored as a factor that determines the structure of political economy in developing countries. Haraway (1991) calls the process in which particular types of work are defined as those of women's, therefore, "feminized" (p. 166). Discussing "homework economy," citing Richard Gordon, she argues, "work is being refined as both literally female and feminized" (p. 166). The female work includes what has traditionally been regarded as only what women do. And this work is "feminized," which means to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as a reserve labor force; seen less as workers than as servers; subjected to time arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of a limited work day; leading an existence that always borders on being obscene, out of place, and reducible to sex (p. 166).

In other words, even if the contribution of women's labor via female work is significant, this is given fewer acknowledgements and regarded to have less at stake, therefore, it is paid less. The main concerns of feminist political ecology scholars include whether and how women's labor is exploited through social norms, formal rules and economic and ecological shifts. Households in developing countries have encountered shifts in production activities such as adapting to environmental changes (Awumbila & Momsen, 1995), employing contract farming (Raynolds, 2002), fair trade production (Lyon, Bezaury, & Mutersbaugh, 2010), or agro-forestry (Kiptot, Franzel, & Degrande, 2014). These structural shifts have resulted not only in increasing the workloads of women, but also the devaluing of women's labor that is often unpaid. Thereby women get less time to rest (Awumbila & Momsen, 1995) as they play "double-day roles" and are involved in more frequent and intensive productive activities than men (Feka, Manzano, & Dahdouh-Guebas, 2011; Peter, 2006). For example, Raynolds' (2002) study on gender division of labor in the Dominican Republic among small-scale households demonstrates that contract farming in the tomato processing industry has increased the demand for women's labor. However, women's labor in production tends to be unpaid, exploitative, and counted as domestic work, although the recent adoption of contract farming provided women with opportunities to resist and negotiate for payment for their labor. Shifts in property rights also increase women's labor burden. For example, in India the green revolution emphasized the productivity and the profitability of land use. In order to enhance such use, land ownerships were transferred from communities to the state or individuals. As communal lands diminished, women have had to travel longer distances to undertake subsistence agriculture and household provision, which they did even before the green revolution. As a result, the health conditions of women and children have deteriorated and their social networks have decreased (Moeckli & Braun, 2001).

Gender division of labor in resource management has also been a much explored issue, given the assumption that men and women play differentiated roles in production (Sunderland et al., 2014). Studies have identified various contributing factors. First, men, rather than women, tend to have more, and often exclusive access to technology and education. Studies have shown the former claim particular technologies which contribute to adding value to

products or lessening labor burdens, for example, in logging (Veuthey & Gerber, 2010) and irrigation (Laurie, 2005). These technologies are exclusively transferred to and shared among men, thereby facilitating and consolidating gender-differentiated roles in production activities. Due to lack of access to information, women tend to fail or be late in adopting new methods to gain political and economic capacities, compared to men. The impact of the lack of access to information goes beyond socioeconomic conditions. Atreya's (2007) study provides evidence that women are more exposed to pesticides as they are unaware of the damage these cause due to lack of education. Thus, gendered access to technology and education determines not only political economic status but also affects health conditions. Second, crops have been identified as gendered, that is, as men's crops or women's crops (for controversies on gendered crops, see Carr, 2008; Doss, 2002; Orr, Tsusaka, Kee-Tui, & Msere, 2016). For example, both men and women in Zambia perceived groundnuts to be a women's crop (Orr et al., 2016). But, men have been increasingly asked to participate in their production once this shifted from being a subsistence crop and came to be included in commercial farming (for cash generation). This is similar to other research findings, which show that men tend to be more involved in cash crops than women (Gladwin, Thomson, Peterson, & Anderson, 2001; Ohtsuka et al., 1999; Peter, 2006).

As such, gendered crops contribute to consolidating a gender division of labor in ways that enhance men's financial control. In contrast, particular resources or types of production, such as forestry in Ethiopia (Asfaw, Lemenih, Kassa, & Ewnetu, 2013), fair trade in Mesoamerica (Lyon et al., 2010), or privatization of rangeland in Kenya (Karmebäck, Wairore, Jirström, & Nyberg, 2015) have enhanced women's control over financial resources, thereby enabling them to earn cash from production activities. Thus, although women, rather than men, are more involved in particular types of crops that generate less or no cash such as food crops for subsistence, increasing evidence also suggests that women are in the course of gaining financial control by adopting new forms of production and property rights. Third, the gender division of labor is determined spatially. In developing countries, only men tend to be involved in farming and cash earning activities outside their homes, particularly in the South Asia where cultural norms impose women's domestic confinement (Ohtsuka et al., 2004). Even when women work outside, they tend to stay closer to their dwellings while undertaking larger workloads than men (Feka et al., 2011). While women are tied to dwelling spaces, men participate in communal work, according to evidence from ethnographic fieldwork in the Oaxacan (Mexican) indigenous community of Santa Cruz suggests (Mutersbaugh, 1998). Through economic, and also more importantly, social activities that exclude women, Oaxacan men acquire opportunities to acquire sociocultural tools that are identified as male domains in order to generate and facilitate value-added-commodity production. The spatial factor thus partly explains women's lower participation rate and economic benefits when they are equally active in their involvement in management, utilization, and marketing of agroforestry products (Kiptot et al., 2014). Thus, spatial segregation of production activities between men and women reduces women's opportunities to gain economic benefits.

#### Women's empowerment

Since the 1990s, the community participation approach has flourished in developmental projects, which include programs aiming for women's empowerment. Political ecology studies with an emphasis on gender have explored ways in which previously muted women's voices can be heard in making decisions about access to and control over resources. These studies have shown that particular characteristics of institutional arrangements, such as, the proportion of women in executive committees of resource management groups (Agarwal, 2009), the history of women's participation and women's education levels (Coleman & Mwangi, 2013), and programs tailored for women's specific needs (Das, 2011) have been positively correlated with enhanced empowerment of women. Based on a useful typology of participation (see Table 2), Agarwal (2001) identifies determinants of women's participation, in particular, in resource management: formal rules, social norms (gender segregation of public space, gender division of labor, gendered behavioral norms), social perceptions, men's entrenched claims and control over community structures, and personal/household endowments and attributes (pp. 1638-1640) in the South Asian context. These social contexts preclude women from participating meaningfully in decision-making processes when projects are regarded as too "modern" or "masculine" for "traditional women" (Laurie, 2005;



O'Reilly, 2006). Even external resources that are assumed to bring new knowledge and skills often result in reinforcing existing gender norms. For example, Ge, Resurreccion, and Elmhirst (2011) demonstrate that return migrants to Chinese rural communities repeatedly mark gender and kinship hierarchies rather than carrying the potential to enhance collective actions for sustainable water management. In this sense, Harris warns about apolitical espousing of community participation, stating "it is imperative to think about how and why to extend participation possibilities to women and other marginalized members of communities" (Harris, 2009, pp. 397-398, original emphasis).

Economic factors such as labor and property rights are inextricably intertwined with political influence in resource management. For example, a development project aimed at women's empowerment in Turkey illustrates how a gendered division of labor impeded women's empowerment (Harris, 2009). The project turned out only to reinforce male dominance in the rural community, because men dominated irrigation work while women had to work for rice production, which required more labor and generated less profit. When a gender-focused project is evaluated to have improved efficiency in production activities through community participation, the efficiency is "in fact a result of labor exploitation" (Ahlers & Zwartveen, 2009, p. 415) of women. Along with labor, scholars also reported that property rights and women's empowerment at household and community levels (Agarwal, 1994; Allendorf, 2007) have positive relationships. Ahlers and Zwartveen (2009) and Harris (2009) also pay particular attention to shifts in property rights and privatization of resources with respect to women's empowerment. At first sight, the privatization of resources through equal allocation of property rights for community members, including women, seems to contribute to the empowerment of community members, especially women who have been traditionally excluded from possessing property rights. However, individuated private property rights can facilitate the marginalization of women due to their lack of knowledge and gendered institutional arrangements (Ahlers & Zwartveen, 2009). Schroeder (1999) also demonstrates the Gambian case of three competing development projects. Under the first, which focused on women's empowerment, women were endowed with low-lying areas for gardening, but men reclaimed these lands after they had been rehabilitated by the women. Thereafter, the second and the third development projects in the area no longer bothered about gender inequality. Therefore, projects with a focus on gender equality by endowing property rights to women resulted only in undermining their empowerment by exploiting their labor and property rights. In addition, Ahlers and Zwartveen warned that individuated and private property would reduce processes of shifting of property rights from collective scrutiny and thereby increase the tendency of dispossession (2009, p. 417). Given the complicated political and economic aspects of empowerment, Alkire et al. (2013) have suggested the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), which is measured by ten indicators of political and economic rights of women (see Table 3). In sum, development programs that are implemented for improving production activities, or even for achieving gender equality in labor and property rights, result in decreasing or extending/consolidating gender inequality in forms that are historically and geographically varied. Ahlers and Zwartveen (2009) and Harris (2009) thus emphasize economic factors in women's empowerment by urging scholars to be cautious about "affirming notions of individuated property rights or markets as a priori starting points to discuss equity and empowerment" (Harris, 2009, p. 400).

#### Women's subjectivity

Feminist political ecologists have increasingly paid attention to how women's subjectivities are produced with respect to resources and social contexts when gender-focused development projects are implemented (Elmhirst, 2011; Mollett & Faria, 2013; O'Reilly, 2006). For example, Truelove (2011) analyzes multi-scalar inequalities associated with sanitation and water compensation practices of particular urban subjects in Delhi, India. Similarly, in Lampung province in Indonesia, the negotiation of upland forest access simultaneously involves processes of self-regulation and subject-making, not only for women but also for men, based on particular ideas of family and conjugal partnership among land-poor migrants (Elmhirst, 2011). Unlike these studies that examine how materiality (water and forest) produces subjectivities, Hovorka (2012) shows that they are produced simultaneously by examining privileging and othering in gender-specific relations. In Botswana, chicken and women are featured together, while cattle and men are seen to go together within specific hierarchical

arrangements through everyday practices and interactions. Yet, the emergence of contemporary urban commercial agricultural spaces empowers previously othered women and chickens through increased access to productive activities, visibilities, and value. Thus, women's subjectivities are produced along with a particular species in a positive way, due to industrial restructuring.

Similarly, O'Reilly (2006) demonstrates that water and women are simultaneously converted into "modern women" and "modern water" in rural Rajasthan in India through the "Our Water" project. This establishes an imaginary (i.e., an imagined model of reference for project participants) such as of "modern" women capable of participating and changing water use patterns. In order to encourage women's participation, the project contrasted this "modern" model with "traditional" women, referring to the latter as those who stuck to traditional ways of water use as backward and lacking the capacity to participate in the "modern" project. However, as shown by Laurie (2005), a number of modern projects are based on masculine imaginaries and recent projects that require community participation would be no exceptions. In addition, relatively modern and democratic societies that view traditional gender inequality in developing countries as problematic are still suffering from significant gender inequality. Then, it is highly likely that modern projects reflect the particular gender biases of modern societies. In a similar vein, NGOs support traditional women to participate in modern projects, particularly to complement their lack of capacity. Let alone the debate about whose interests are represented by developmental NGOs, do they have the capacity and the will for gender equality? An NGO case from rural India demonstrates that the organization's capacity decreases because inexperienced young employers replace skilled and senior ones due to cost reduction in the course of its restructuring. O'Reilly (2004) also reports a paradox where a rural NGO in India, which aims to improve women's status, actually suffers from distinctive gender division of labor within the organization. This case shows that NGOs in fact practice the gender inequality they claim to fight against and so their capacity and will to practice gender equality are of dubious value. Lastly, the inclusion of some groups of women could engender the exclusion of others in a community. In other words, only those women who are willing to accept new values, such as gender equality and modernization of rural areas, can be beneficiaries of modern projects and thereby participate in decision-making processes. Others who fail to comply with or resist accepting new values would be inevitably excluded. In sum, scholars of feminist political ecology have examined how women's subjectivities are produced through context-specific struggles over resource use in developmental projects. Recently, feminist political ecology seems to be turning toward a post-structural phase and gender is far from being an absolute category. Carr (2008) criticizes the mainstream approach to gender and development because it conceals variability and vulnerabilities through the lump-sum categories of women and men. Mollett and Faria (2013) in this regard shed light on how to urge political ecologists to theorize a "more complex and messier, notion of 'gender'" (p. 116) based on the idea of post-structural intersectionality.

#### Benefitting from FPE

Examining institutional arrangements of recipient countries and applying the top-down approach to development interventions would allow little to us for considering the gender dynamics discussed above. In fact, Korean International development and cooperation scholarship has recently expanded its scope to include various disciplines and multi-disciplinary approaches (Lim, 2018). Attention to anthropology, which emphasizes myriad contexts, is particularly notable, (Lee, 2004, 2017a). However, the feminist perspective is mostly absent from this theoretical development, which imposes a limitation in providing policy implications for Korean gender equality-focused ODA.

As discussed, feminist political ecology illuminates what is actually happening on the ground when gender-focused development interventions are made. The studies in the FPE tradition reveal that property rights, labor, political economy, subjectivity on the ground are culturally, geographically, and politically embedded in ways that disadvantage women compared to men. Further, they also reveal that gender-focused developmental interventions often end up reinforcing the marginalization of women who have been already marginalized under culturally-defined layers of social distinction (such as gender, social class, race, ethnicity etc.) rather than benefiting them. These findings suggest that policy makers and development practitioners need to be cautious in implementing

gender equality-focused Korean ODA programs.

In practical terms, feminist political ecology also has much to offer to gender equality-focused Korean ODA programs. First, it is mostly composed of case studies in developing countries, particularly in Asia and Africa. Considering that these regions account for 53% and 24% of the total amount of Korean bilateral ODA in 2015 respectively (ODA Korea), the research findings of FPE regarding gender politics will be an informative resource. Second, research findings of feminist political ecology will save time and effort for Korean ODA researchers and practitioners. The evidence used in feminist political ecology did not come from national and regional statistics or from government officials; it required extensive fieldwork by skilled ethnographic and regional experts for a significant time period. FPE literature is a collection of such efforts. Thus, consulting the literature provides insights learned from extensive ethnographic fieldwork for Korean ODA practitioners and researchers to begin gender equality-focused aid programs without having to use other resources. Considering that understanding social and cultural contexts is critical "before" developmental interventions are implemented (O'Reilly & Louis, 2014), the usefulness of FPE is vital. Third, and most importantly, feminist political ecology is most attuned to geographical, social, and cultural contexts, which determine the gendered political economy of development. As discussed in the section about FPE themes, researchers in this tradition have maintained their expertise in determining various types of gender inequalities. In doing so, they have examined "everyday practices" and "micropolitics" that form the political economy of gender struggles (Truelove, 2011). Thus, feminist political ecology would provide researchers with insights about gender politics on the ground, which have not yet been explored by Korean researchers and policy makers of ODA. More specifically, findings of FPE would inform each phase of the gender-focused program implementation regarding ways of applying gender perspectives in ODA programs that Kim et al. (2015) suggest, particularly in evaluation of gender equality-focused aid programs before, during, and after program implementation (Figure 3).

#### Conclusion

Empirical cases have been accumulated under the umbrella of feminist political ecology for about twenty years now, providing insights about how gender relations are mediated through different social and cultural contexts across regions. This paper suggests feminist political ecology as a resource for context-specific gender politics for policy makers and researchers who are involved in the provision of aid focused on gender equality by Korea. This seems to suffer from a lack of regional experts specialized in gender. Without a pool of such experts, such aid from Korea would remain insufficient, limiting the effectiveness of its ODA programs by failing to address geographically and culturally specific gender concerns at the ground level in developing countries.

Although this paper suggests that Korean ODA policies should consider FPE for a nuanced feminist approach, particularly focusing on human-nature relationships, it is far from being a complete framework. Scholars are still expanding its scope to include sustainability, climate change, displacement, etc (Lamb, Schoenberger, Middleton, & Un, 2017; Resurrección, 2017). Examining the gender equality-focused ODA programs of Korea from the perspective of feminist political ecology has potential to contribute to this theoretical development. Korea's particular transition from being a recipient to becoming a donor of foreign aid is unprecedented. Thus, the Korean ODA case will illuminate processes in which, as a former recipient country, it mediates gender policies and everyday practices of gender politics in today's recipient countries through foreign aid. This unique status of Korea will enrich feminist political ecology literature, not only by balancing donor and recipient countries as foci of analysis (Kim et al., 2011, p. 6), but more importantly, also by providing a unique context in international development.

The last point I would like to make here is somewhat different from what the paper has pursued so far. Along with ethnographic examination of ODA program cases, a general increase in research that examines gender equality-focused aid is required in Korea, given that gender equality is a significant imperative in international development (consider cross-cutting goals and the Goal 5 of SDGs, and numerous reports and database of OECD on gender equality found at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/>). Overlooking the big picture of aid from Korea that is focused on gender equality, by publishing, say, a "Korea Gender Equality-Focused ODA White

Paper," comparable to the 2017 Korean ODA White Paper (2017), would be a good start.

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### Sidebar

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