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## **Gender and Climate Justice in Bangladesh - The Sustainable Development Goals and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 Through a Postcolonial Lens**

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# Gender and Climate Justice in Bangladesh –

The Sustainable Development Goals and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 Through  
a Postcolonial Lens

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the trajectories for climate and gender justice in Bangladesh, in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100). The study is based on a case study approach, using qualitative text analysis as a method of analysis. The theoretical framework builds on theories of postcolonial feminism, primarily by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, intersectional theories and previous research examining the links between climate and gender in Bangladesh. The selected material, the SDGs and the BDP 2100 is analysed through four themes; ‘Discursive Marginalization’, ‘Consciousness and Subject’, ‘Intersecting Challenges’ and ‘Sustainability and GDP’. What are the trajectories for climate and gender justice in Bangladesh, in relation to the SDGs and the BDP 2100? This research finds that although gendered vulnerabilities linked to climate change are acknowledged, it lacks representation and agency from a postcolonial perspective. Moreover, it finds that BDP 2100 does not acknowledge gendered (or social) dimensions in how Bangladesh is impacted by climate change, which poses a problem for how to formulate sound and inclusive policies.

Keywords: climate, gender, justice, Bangladesh, BDP 2100, SDGs, intersectionality, postcolonialism, post-development

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## 1.0 Introduction

The issue of climate change and how to tackle it has risen on the global political agenda. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and became a milestone for climate diplomacy when a global framework, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), was established. It was followed by the adoption of the Kyoto protocol in 1997 where 150 countries signed the agreement. The purpose of the UNFCCC was to stabilise carbon emissions to the levels of the 1990s by the year 2000. The commitments and progress is discussed annually through the conference ‘Conference of the Parties’ (COP). In 2015, COP 21 became another landmark for global climate change cooperation when the Paris Agreement was adopted by 196 UN member states. Its goal is to limit global warming to under 2 degrees Celsius, with the ambition of 1,5 degrees. Earlier that year, all UN member states signed the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Agenda is described as a call to action to ‘end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030’ (UN, 2015). COP 26 was originally planned to be held in 2020 but was postponed due to the ongoing pandemic, and will be held in Glasgow in November 2021 COP 26 is for example expected to discuss the process of reaching net zero emissions as soon as possible (Bulkeley and Newell, 2015: 28-33; UNFCCC ‘Glasgow Climate Change Conference’, n.d.; UNFCCC ‘The Paris Agreement’, n.d.; UN, 2015).

Mitigation and adaptation policies of climate change often fail to involve and include women and girls, despite the links of climate and gender, according to CONCORD Sweden, the Swedish branch of a European platform for civil society organisations, in a recently published report. The links are important to consider in order to achieve real progress in how to respond to climate change, as well as to include aspects of justice since women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change. The report emphasizes that the gendered dimensions and effects of the climate crisis needs to be further explored and are not sufficiently accounted for in global agreements, where they seek to analyse challenges and issues that could be hindering global efforts, to achieve climate justice. Moreover, CONCORD discusses how climate denial movements and far-right nationalists taking up public and political space impacts the trajectories for climate and gender justice, as well as patriarchal structures. Moreover, it relates to a discussion of climate debt since the poorest half of the population only is responsible for around a tenth of global emissions. Furthermore, some scholars claim that the Global North has been able to develop and the expense of exploitation of the Global South. Thus, there are intersecting dynamics that need to be examined when analysing how to achieve sustainable development as well as climate and gender justice (CONCORD, 2020: 4-10; Kronsell, 2019).

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, thus climate change is not only affecting people unequally around the globe, but also within societies. Hence, inequalities already facing women and girls are said to be exacerbating through climate change, which is why climate and gender justice are often said to go hand in hand. Thus, in these regards it is not only an issue of adaptation, on how to prevent climate change and its impacts, but to look at and take account for how its impacts are affecting societies unequally (Corcoran-Nantes

& Roy, 2018:163-179; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014: 417-433; Djoudi et al., 2016: 248–262; Macgregor, 2014: 617-633, Bee et al. 2015: 339-350, Concord, 2020, Rahman, 2013:72-73).

The purpose of this study is to examine the trajectories for climate and gender justice in Bangladesh, that serves as a case study. In order to evaluate the trajectories, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100) will be the main sources of analysis, and aims to broaden our understanding of how climate and gender justice are expressed and portrayed in agreements of this kind.

Bangladesh's efforts in relation to the SDGs have been evaluated on two occasions, the first one in 2018 and a second time in 2020 with key challenges and ways forward were identified by the Bangladesh Planning Commission, itself. There are also several reports available on the progress of the SDGs on a global level, such as the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), a forum that meets annually to evaluate and review the progress of the SDGs. During Bangladesh's evaluation in 2020, Bangladesh themselves identified some key challenges, for example how an increase in GDP had not resulted in reducing income inequality and how climate vulnerability continues to be a threat to their economy (GED et al., 2018; 2020; UNDESA, 2020).

By examining the trajectories for climate and gender justice in Bangladesh it would broaden our understanding of the interconnectedness and implications for development and prosperity, visible through the BDP 2100 and the SDGs. Thus, the thesis will stress that the development of Bangladesh needs to be understood in terms of the historic, postcolonial and current context,

which the theoretical framework contributes to. Furthermore, by examining both national and international agreements, the thesis aspires to examine potential conflicts of interest and contradictions.

The theoretical framework builds on theories of postcolonial feminism by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, combined with previous literature of intersectional research that links to climate and gender justice. Moreover, the framework critically discusses the concept of sustainability and how development is described in the dominant discourse. The selected material, the SDGs and the BDP 2100 is analysed by a qualitative text analysis through four themes derived from the theory and literature; ‘Discursive Marginalization’, ‘Consciousness and Subject’, ‘Intersecting Challenges’ and ‘Sustainability and GDP’. The main research question that this thesis seeks to examine is; What are the trajectories for climate and gender justice in Bangladesh, in relation to the SDGs and the BDP 2100?



## 2.0 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework consists of postcolonial theories with an intersectional approach, discussed in relation to climate and gender justice. Climate and gender justice is treated as a single concept, resting on the assumption that they are indivisible. The concept of justice varies depending on the focus of study. Additionally, this thesis does not intend to quantify justice nor to measure justice as a sole component. Rather, climate and gender justice is used as a broader concept, where injustices are discussed through a postcolonial lens. However, in order to illustrate the interlinkages of climate and gender justice, this thesis will adopt an analytical model in order to conceptualize how climate and gender justice is expressed in the selected material. The theoretical framework that the model builds upon will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **2.1 Definitions of Concepts - Climate and Gender Justice**

Climate and gender justice is treated as a single concept in this thesis, thus it does not intend to discuss *if* they are linked, rather *how* they are linked, which is further discussed in this following section. Terry Cannon (2002) discusses how women are affected by climate change by exploring the links between gender and climate through examining poverty, specifically in the case of Bangladesh. Cannon argues that reducing poverty is crucial in order to reduce inequalities since being female is strongly linked to being poor, thus vulnerability and poverty are also strongly connected. Moreover, he argues that the improvement of women's lives as well as to reduce gender inequalities are crucial to reduce women's unequal vulnerability, which is now increasing through the hazards of climate change (Cannon, 2002: 46-49). Thus, these links are central in order to comprehend the complex consequences of climate change. Geraldine Terry (2009) even

claims that there can not be any climate justice without gender justice. Terry examines how this claim has evolved, and argues that even though mitigation policies with an integrated gender perspective might be a conceptual challenge, it is necessary for achieving justice (Terry, 2009: 5-18).

A gendered perspective of the impacts of climate change are highlighted in a UN Women report from 2015, that also demonstrates the links to migration. The report examines women of Bangladesh who stay behind when their male family members migrate, thus are left to look after children and household. This report illustrates gendered dimensions within the Bangladesh society, pointing to the intersecting challenges for mitigation and adaptation policies (UN Women, 2015). At the local level, Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes and Snigdha Roy examine the participation of women in Bangladesh in relation to policy making. They argue that within the contemporary development discourse, women are often portrayed as victims of climate change, thus failing to recognize women's agency. They emphasise how Bangladeshi women have a crucial role in climate change mitigation policies, however, the participation in policy making as well as the implementation of it is not guaranteed (Corcoran-Nantes & Roy, 2018:163-179).

## **2.2 Intersectionality**

In order to fully understand the specific context and conditions of Bangladesh, this thesis addresses issues from an intersectional perspective, in order to capture the complexity of the concepts that are studied. Intersectional approaches emerged from critical race theory, in particular through theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectional analysis builds upon the

assumption that there are several discriminatory mechanisms or power structures working simultaneously and examines how they intersect (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Osborne, 2015: 141).

Hence, in the case of Bangladesh, intersecting challenges relates to a global hierarchy, as a nation of the so-called Global South and their rights, capabilities, resources and responsibilities. Hence, it calls for recognition in terms of Bangladesh's colonial past and how their development should be viewed in the light of these intersections (Corcoran-Nantes & Roy, 2018:163-179; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014: 417-433; Jerneck, 2018: 627-647).

Natalie Osborne discusses intersectionality linked to social justice and how this approach is vital in order to understand power, oppression and vulnerability related to the impacts of climate change. Osborne claims that race, class and gender historically have been analysed separately in relation to how the impacts of climate change are shaped by multiple factors, but that the intersectionality of these factors needs to be addressed and acknowledged. Moreover, Osborne discusses intersectionality in the light of a critique of Western feminism where white men are portrayed as the oppressor and women as the oppressed. Osborne argues that this ignores the fact that women of color have also experienced oppression and exploration of white women, thus it relates to some of the postcolonial feminist assumptions that Mohanty discusses as well as Spivak's concern of agency and representation. Furthermore, Osborne stressed the need for an intersectional approach since women are not a homogenous group, thus class, caste and religion all play a crucial role in order to understand the vulnerabilities facing women in Bangladesh (Osborne, 2015: 131-135).

These intersecting mechanisms are also discussed by Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell. They argue that by looking at gender perspective in relation to climate change as a single variable, it fails to fully take account for the additional intersecting mechanisms, causing inequalities or injustices. Kaijser and Kansell argue that there is a tendency for simplification, where gender aspects are reduced to man-women binaries, thus risking to reinforce categorisations where women are framed as vulnerable victims (Kaijser & Kansell, 2014: 421). Osborne agrees with this claim by arguing that intersectionality disrupts these binary perspectives, since it acknowledges that a person may belong to multiple disadvantaged groups or identities. Thus intersectional perspectives allow us to conceptualize intragroup differences (Osborne, 2015:136-137).

### **2.3 Post-development Theory and GDP**

The dominant discourses of development and sustainability is challenged by critical ecologist scholars. Some argue that the concept of development and sustainability entails colonial aspects and rests upon Western ideas of progress and prosperity. Moreover, critical scholars argue that GDP is not sufficient as a measurement of development and progress. Additionally, they challenge what the claim is a ‘myth of eternal growth’ as well as new definitions, attempting to widen the concept of growth such as green growth, sustainable growth or inclusive growth. Thus concepts of post-growth, degrowth, post-development have evolved as alternative models and measurements for development (Villalba, 2013:1427-1433; Gudynas, 2011: 441-447).

Ashish Kothari et al. critically discuss growth and claim it to be a western cultural construction. Federico Demaria et al. adheres to that critique by claiming that green growth calls for a ‘decolonization of the imaginary’, thus there is no ‘better’ growth. Rather, society needs to

transform into one where growth and development are not the central metrics (Kothari et al., 2014: 363, 366; Demaria et al., 2019: 432). Bengi Akbulut et al. argues that there are connections between post-growth and environmental justice movements, and that an alliance between the two movements is both possible and necessary. Moreover, they refer to a noteworthy letter to the European institutions signed by over 200 scientists and later almost 100,000 citizens, titled ‘Europe, It’s Time to End the Growth Dependency’ in 2018 (Akbulut et al. 2019: 1-9).

These critical views can contribute to postcolonial theories as well as the intersectional approach in the analytical framework, since they all challenge the neoliberal narrative of what development and progress is, which will be further depicted throughout this thesis.

## **2.4 Postcolonial Feminism**

The analytical framework is built upon postcolonial feminist theory, particularly on the theories developed by Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Postcolonial theory rests upon several assumptions, with a key assumption that our current world should be understood through the historic relationship of imperialism and colonial rule. Thus, it can be argued that the prefix ‘post’ rather highlights the ongoing impacts of colonial rule and how it continues to shape our way of thinking rather than something of the past. Postcolonial feminism shares a need to go beyond simply analyzing impacts of patriarchy and gender equality, since white women are still privileged over women of color. Rather, it emphasizes how struggles against patriarchy and social inequality needs to be situated in relation to racial, ethnic and

sexual privilege. Thus postcolonial feminism is committed to an intersectional approach (Nair, 2017:69-75).

In 'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles' Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) revisits some of main arguments in the original article 'Under Western Eyes' first published in 1986. Mohanty critiques Western feminist scholarship, claiming that the struggles and lives of 'Third World women' are colonized by the discourse itself. Mohanty uses the term 'discursive colonization', thus that the language used by Western feminists recolonizes women and reestablishes the periphery. Moreover, she argues that Western feminism rests upon Eurocentric assumptions as well as is based on false universalism. In this later article, Mohanty discusses the discursive power and how the complexity and agency of 'Third World women's bodies and lives is what she wants to draw attention to. Mohanty argues that this is undertheorized and left out in our production of knowledge about globalization. Hence, Mohanty's theories of the discursive marginalization will be further adopted in this thesis (Mohanty, 2003: 501- 510).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is considered to be one of the most influential postcolonial thinkers. Her acclaimed article 'Can the subaltern speak?', first published in 1988, discusses not only if subaltern women can speak, but if they can be heard. Spivak discussed issues of self-representation, power of language and how 'the third-world subject' is represented within Western discourse. Spivak discusses representation and consciousness, where she discusses representation as a way to speak 'for' rather than to represent themselves, which makes the subject not to be seen as a representative consciousness. Spivak's theories provide a framework

for understanding the intersecting mechanisms at play that are needed in order to depict the power dynamics in Bangladesh in terms of justice and development (Spivak, 1988: 237- 242).

## **2.5 Application of Theoretical Framework**

The SDGs and the BDP 2100 will be analysed through four themes salient within the theoretical framework. Four themes have been developed in order to operationalize the material, which will be further discussed in the chapter that follows. Mohanty's and Spivak's theories mainly deal with issues of power dynamics through discourses, thus the two first themes are related to their work and theories of postcolonialism. The last two themes are based on theories of an intersectional approach as well as on post-development theories. Although intersectional approaches are a part of postcolonial feminist theories, these four have been developed in order to capture the extent and scope of the research questions.

The first theme is 'Discursive Marginalization' which is primarily salient in Mohanty's work. It seeks to capture how silences and colonization could be reconstructed by how the language is used and thus within the discourse itself. Furthermore, this theme seeks to examine how 'center-periphery' relations are expressed in the selected documents. The second theme 'Consciousness and Subject' is mainly salient in Spivak's work. Spivak discusses the subaltern woman and misrepresentation, and the consciousness of the subject in relation to self-representation. This theme will be used to capture how agency and representation is expressed in the texts analysed. Thus, in order to explore the intersecting dynamics of gender and climate, this theme seeks to examine how women as agents of power are expressed in the selected documents, which relates to issues of justice.

The third selected theme is ‘Intersecting Challenges’ and refers to the intersectional approach previously discussed in this chapter. How are these intersecting challenges expressed in the SDGs and the BDP 2100? Moreover, it seeks to explore if and how conflicts of interests are to be found in the two selected documents and if and how they are accounted for. Furthermore, it seeks to examine how links of gender and climate justice are expressed and accounted for. The final, and fourth theme is ‘Sustainability and GDP’ which seeks to explore critical discourses of sustainable development and post-development theories. This theme seeks to challenge the norm of neoliberal ideals surrounding development and prosperity and to expand on what alternative solutions may imply. The four themes seek to depict how the selected material accounts for justice and by extension what that implies for the trajectories of achieving gender and climate justice in Bangladesh.



### 3.0 Research Design

This thesis examines the trajectories for climate and gender justice in Bangladesh. This thesis will adopt a case study design since it intends to analyze the single case of Bangladesh, and will solely be able to discuss the trajectories for climate and gender justice in the specific context of Bangladesh. Thus, a case study enables in-depth examination of the Bangladesh context where Bangladesh is treated as an *exemplifying case*, since it seeks to broaden our understanding of how intersecting challenges impacts the trajectories for climate and gender justice, which is illustrated through the case of Bangladesh (Bryman, 2016: 60-64). This thesis has a qualitative approach since it aims to examine how words are used, expressed and framed, rather than the mere existence of them. Moreover, a qualitative approach enables a text analysis through an analytical framework, where the concept of justice will be discussed through a postcolonial lens (Bryman, 2016: 21-33).

#### 3.1 Case Selection

Bangladesh is facing numerous challenges in the light of the climate crisis and is often portrayed as one of the most vulnerable nations when it comes to the effects of climate change. Bangladesh lies on the largest delta in the world and the impacts of climate change such as droughts, floods and extreme weather is threatening the livelihoods and existence of 160 million people (ICCCAD, n.d.) Furthermore, as a state in the so-called Global South, they constitute the most vulnerable states while at the same time causing it the least, which is often discussed in relation to climate debt and justice. Moreover, Bangladesh is facing issues related to sustainable consumption and production due to their high share of export in the ready-made garment (RGM) industry, which relates to issues of gender issues, labour rights and sustainability.

Simultaneously, Bangladesh have their own development target of increasing their GDP by 8,2 percent for 2020-2021, together with several other goals through the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100) adopted in 2018, a long term vision that are related to UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Corcoran-Nantes & Roy, 2018:163-179; Syed, 2020, GED, 2018; The United Nations, 2015; Bangladesh Post, 2020).

Bangladesh has been selected as a case study for this thesis due to the intersecting challenges that they are facing, as a state of the Global South and being particularly vulnerable to climate change. As discussed, the consequences of climate change are impacting the Bangladesh society unequally, where women and girls are affected the most. Thus Bangladesh constitutes a prominent case to examine trajectories for justice.

Two documents have been selected as research units; the BDP 2100 and the SDGs. They have been selected in order to operationalize what the thesis intends to examine, and are consequently included in the research question. Thus, the thesis does solely intend to examine trajectories for climate and gender justice in relation to the two documents, and does not consider other circumstances, nor other agreements or plans that could impact or influence the trajectories for climate and gender justice in Bangladesh (Bryman, 2016: 21-33, 407-411). Additionally, these agreements are chosen in order to capture the complexity of development issues in the so-called Global South where Bangladesh faces both national challenges as expressed in the BDP 2100, as well as on a global level through the SDGs. Furthermore, BDP 2100 is directly or indirectly linked (GED, 2018) to the SDGs, thus these two documents supplement each other. By examining these two plans it aims to broaden our understanding of how climate and gender justice are expressed and portrayed in agreements of this kind.

### 3.1.1 The Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established in September 2015, and is a 'plan of action for people, planet and prosperity' (UN, 2015). The Agenda aims to end all forms of poverty, promote human rights and to tackle inequalities and climate change. The goals are integrated and indivisible, i.e. the Agenda and the SDGs can only be considered achieved if all of them are met. In contrast to its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals, which had a focus on poverty reduction, the SDGs established a notion of universality and an aim to 'leave no one behind'. Moreover, the three dimensions of sustainable development are considered equally important; the economic, social and environmental (UN, 2015).



*(The Sustainable Development Goals, UN 2015)*

### **3.1.2 The Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100**

The Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100) is a holistic plan of development in Bangladesh, adopted in 2018. Its vision is to ‘Achieving a safe, climate resilient and prosperous delta’. It consists of six overarching goals that directly or indirectly relate to the SDGs and they are; Ensure safety from floods and climate change related disasters; Enhance water security and efficiency of water usages; Ensure sustainable and integrated river systems and estuaries management; Conserve and preserve wetlands and ecosystems and promote their wise use; Develop effective institutions and equitable governance for in-country and trans-boundary water resources management; and Achieve optimal and integrated use of land and water resources. The ‘Higher Level Goals’ of the plan are to: Eliminate extreme poverty by 2030; Achieve upper middle income status by 2030; and Being a Prosperous Country beyond 2041. Its overarching goals are thus related to food and water security, as well as to ensure environmental sustainability with economic growth (GED, 2018). Furthermore, the BDP 2100 is a result of a collaboration between two groups of Dutch and Bangladeshi experts, where the BDP 2100 is considered to be a successful transfer of a Dutch Delta Approach. Thus, the BDP 2100 is an example of policy transfers of climate adaptation. How these policy transfers are expressed in the BDP 2100 could be of interest for further examination through a postcolonial lens (Hasan et al., 2020: 161-162).

### **3.2 Method of Data Collection**

The research units have been selected through a purposive sample approach, specifically through a typical case sampling. They are considered to be typical since they represent two policy documents that Bangladesh has committed to, thus impacting the trajectories for justice, which is

a focal point of examination. The trajectories for justice can be considered to exemplify a dimension of interest, which this sample method is suitable for. Moreover, a typical case sample method is suitable for a case study since it applies to a single case and does not intend to be generalizable and applicable to a larger population (Bryman, 2016: 407-411).

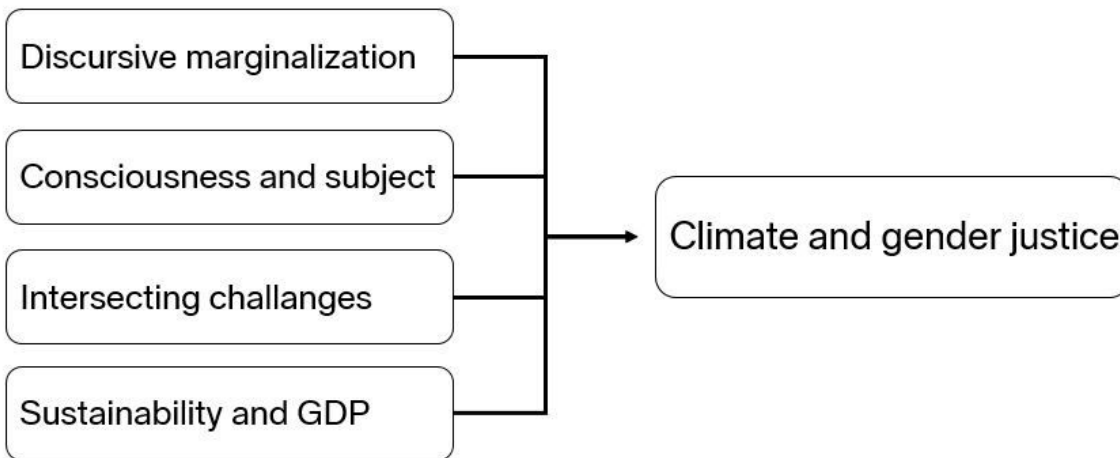
### **3.3 Method of Data Analysis**

This thesis adopts a thematic text analysis as a method of data analysis, where the two research units will be examined and categorized through four key themes that have been selected as they capture central concepts of the theory and previous research. The categorization of the data will then be followed by an analysis through the four themes. A thematic text analysis as a method enables the analysis to be more flexible with the findings. However, this calls for a systematic reading of the documents, through the lens of the themes and concepts that have been formulated on beforehand, in order to increase the reliability of the study (Bryman, 2016: 41, 157, 587-588).

This thesis is based on an analytical framework of primarily postcolonial feminism that will be used as a theoretical lens in order to interpret and analyse the findings of the research units. Four themes have been developed, that are derived from postcolonial literature, building on key concepts found in the literature and in postcolonial theory, and are the following: ‘Discursive Marginalization’, ‘Consciousness and Subject’, ‘Intersecting Challenges’ and ‘Sustainability and GDP’, previously discussed in the theoretical framework.

The analytical framework will adopt the following model, based on the themes previously presented. This model seeks to illustrate and capture how these themes are discussed in the

selected material in relation to the theoretical framework and provides a framework of how to analyse the research units in relation to justice. Hence, it aims to illustrate how these themes contribute to and affect climate and gender justice.



*Model of analytical framework*

### **3.4 Criticism**

A criticism worth raising is the role of the researcher, in particular when choosing to use postcolonial feminism, as a scholar of Western academia. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty critiques western feminist academia and do themselves reflect on their role as researchers. For example, Spivak is herself part of the American academia and discusses how that affects her position and by extension her analysis and interpretations in her research. Thus, it relates to the adoption and interpretation of postcolonial theory in this thesis and what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses in particular when she discusses the subaltern women. Spivak argues that subaltern women are not speaking with one voice, hence there is a risk reproducing a Western idea of subaltern women as voiceless. Moreover, Spivak stresses

self-representation as a way of not being misrepresented, thus by speaking for themselves (Spivak, 1988: 271 - 313). Hence, the role of the researcher is of importance when it comes to what themes are selected and how the material and findings are interpreted. In particular in relation to the 'speaking for' issue that Spivak raises. Thus, as a white feminist researcher from western academia, the findings and conclusions should also be seen in relation to that and how that may influence the interpretations of this thesis.

## 4.0 Results and Analysis

The following chapter will depict the results from the selected material and analyse its findings through the four themes previously presented. The themes seek to illustrate and capture the aspects of justice based on the literature discussed in the theoretical framework. The result will be analysed in direct connection to the theme, followed by a final discussion in the next chapter.

### 4.1 Discursive Marginalization

Chandra Talpade Mohanty claims that marginalization and recolonization can be (re-)produced through discourse. Moreover, Mohanty argues that the dominant discourse silences issues of power, agency and justice. In relation to the SDGs, several of its goals recognise ‘developing countries’ and how to strengthen and support them in various ways in order to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Moreover, it does acknowledge a difference in capabilities and abilities to achieve the goals in the agenda, however, this section seeks to expand on how this is expressed, and what implications that may have to achieve climate and gender justice (Mohanty, 2003: 501, 509, 520).

The first goal reads: ‘End poverty in all its form everywhere’ with one of its targets states that it aims to ‘...ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights in terms of economic resources...’ (UN, 2015). Corcoran-Nantes and Roy claim that *vulnerability* needs to be included in the vocabulary when discussing gender-specific implications of climate change and that vulnerability of women is strongly correlated with poverty. Mohanty mainly discuss how to make unpaid labour, primarily carried out by women, visible. She argues that this is crucial as a feminist anticapitalist critique and calls for more



inclusive policies. One of the goals targets do recognise the need to create gender-sensitive development strategies, albeit it is not disclosed how this is to be done. Although gender and poverty are clearly linked, being vulnerable does not necessarily mean that you are poor, while being poor can be considered a vulnerability (Corcoran-Nantes & Roy, 2018:163-179; Mohanty, 2003: 529).

Goal number 16 pledges to ‘Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’. This goal raises questions about the level of inclusiveness and the structure of the institutions. A target reads ‘Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance’ and to ‘Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime’ (UN, 2015). These targets reveal a hegemonic discourse where cooperation is possible (and desirable), within the set framework of the current institutions. Thus, as Mohanty would argue, it rests upon Western values and ideals attached to these institutions, and ideals that to some extent could be viewed as responsible for creating the same inequalities that they are now attempting to regulate.

Goal number 17 is considered to be important in order to achieve the goals and pledges to ‘Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.’ Moreover, it highlights the need for partnership within several areas such as to strengthen domestic resource mobilization, of cooperation within technology, capacity-building,

trade and systemic issues (UN, 2015). The targets connected to goal number 16 does to some extent recognise that international cooperation and knowledge sharing is to be done on mutually agreed terms, in relation to technology for example. Moreover, there is a need to assist lower income countries financially- both from a justice perspective but also due to the Global North's climate debt. However, yet again the agency lies with the West, as the hegemonic actor, which is reproduced in the discourse and visible in the targets of this goal. Moreover, at large it still assumes that 'developed' countries should pass on their knowledge and know-how to 'developing countries'. Ironically, this goal and targets suggest that the development path of the Global North is desirable, when it has proven not to be sustainable and where we constantly exceed our planetary boundaries and resources (Rockstrom et al., 2009).

The Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100) discusses the impacts of climate change and delta challenges, mainly through two scenarios; the Business As Usual scenario (BAU) and the Extreme scenario (EXT). These scenarios are applied to predict issues related to global warming, where a BAU scenario would entail a temperature rise of 1,4 to 1,9 °C and around 2°C in the EXT scenario by 2050. The BAU scenario would also lead to increased rainfalls, flooding and monsoons (GED, 2018: 8-12). The BDP 2100, although it intends to serve as a holistic plan, mainly focuses on challenges from an economic and environmental perspective, thus with little attention to the social aspect of sustainability. However, the economic and environmental do indeed have social impact and consequences, albeit rarely analysed on its own.

Thus, by not taking the social aspects into account, how are the policies that will come out as a result of the BDP 2100 supposed to include those aspects if they are not part of the definition of

problems. In regards to justice, by not including or raising gendered (social) aspects of natural disaster and climate change induced risks, it is not merely an issue of justice, but of accountability. Moreover, by not including or discussing the social dimensions explicitly in the strategies or plans, the people affected the most are left without agency or voice, thus are once again assigned to the margins (BDP 2100, 2018).

#### **4.2 Consciousness and Subject**

The SDGs stress the need to include communities in processes of decision-making. Although, it can be argued that since the so-called Global North is the dominant agent in this context, as Western institutions strengthen their position as the center, and the Global South as the periphery since it is not an issue of reconstructing institutions in a just or inclusive manner, rather it is to include other participants, while upholding and maintaining the structure and system that initially formed them. Thus, it relates to Spivak's main argument - they can speak but are they heard?

Moreover, this theme relates to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's arguments of representation and agency. As discussed in the previous section on how discourse recolonises and upholds the marginalized, it relates to issues of self-representation and the construction of the 'subject'.

The first goal of ending poverty and to '...ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights in terms of economic resources...' (UN, 2015), does in this context relate to how agency in these issues are expressed, rather than what the discourse may conceal. Vulnerable and poor is used interchangeably and yet again, agency seems to be reserved for the Global North. Furthermore, several of the goals are in line with what Spivak discusses in

relation to representation, and claims that it is often an issue of speaking ‘for’ rather than ‘of’ (Spivak, 1988: 271 - 313).

The previous section discussed how the BDP 2100 exercised discursive marginalization by not recognizing the impacts of social aspects in regards to climate change. Moreover, to expand on that discussion, representation and agency found in the BDP 2100 are scarce. Thus, it adds to the argument that climate and gender justice can not be achieved if not recognised or part of how challenges are identified and formulated. The BDP 2100 does not mention gender, women or justice. However, it does discuss ‘vulnerable’ but in connection to vulnerable sectors, ecosystems and coastal regions. Moreover, BDP 2100 discusses vulnerable communities and how to safeguard livelihoods and increase economic resilience. The gendered aspects of how climate change impacts communities unequally are not mentioned, thus is not discussed in relation to strategies or responses (BDP, 2100).

Goal number 5 reads: ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’ (UN, 2105). This goal has several targets that strive to ensure equal participation and opportunities as well as to equal rights to economic resources and sound policies that promote gender equality. Goal number 10 aims to ‘Reduce inequality within and among countries’ (UN, 2105). The targets include how to increase incomes, change legislation and to encourage development assistance. Additionally, a target states that it aims to ensure representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in order to ‘deliver more credible, accountable and legitimate institutions’ (UN, 2015). However, Spivak would argue that increased representation merely suggests a further strengthening of current institutions, since representation is only to be

expected within the current institution's scope rather than to de- and reconstruct them. Moreover, Spivak uses two forms of representation where one theory '...of representation points, on the one hand, to the domain of ideology, meaning, and subjectivity, and, on the other hand, to the domain of politics, the state, and the law' (Spivak, 1988: 271-313).

Although inequalities and differences in capabilities are to some extent recognized in several of the SDGs it lacks agency and representation. In relation to Spivak's argument, the speaking 'for' is noticeable as communities and 'developing' countries are invited to participate, but steadily to institutions and policies that are already in the making. Rather, it would be desirable if the SDGs, and other policies such as the BDP 2100 would include the most affected in an earlier phase and to enable participation in formulating and identifying challenges and ways ahead.

#### **4.3 Intersecting Challenges**

This theme seeks to examine and discuss how intersecting challenges are accounted for in the SDGs and BDP 2100. In particular how it relates to gender and climate justice and what implications that may bring for the trajectories.

The BDP 2100 discusses a number of strategies in order to handle the impacts of climate change. They identify several areas where they seek to protect agriculture, to sustainably manage land and water resources. Moreover, it discusses food security where rice production is a recurring topic. The document highlights rice production as an opportunity since the combination of the soil and water at the delta makes a highly fertile land. As a consequence, Bangladesh's rice production has increased from 12 million tonnes in 1973 to 36, 3 million tonnes in 2018. Moreover, it discusses rice production as a potential export good since it now meets the

requirement of self-sufficiency. However, rice production is vulnerable to climate change as there are related risks to future floodings, where studies predict a 17 percent decline due to climate change, which could lead to a reduction of 4,5 million tonnes rice by 2050. Thus, since some communities' livelihoods are dependent on rice production, it poses an economic risk, connected with the issues of food security (BDP 2100, 2018).

Additionally, the BDP 2100 brings up the risk of losses in agriculture where Bangladesh is predicted to be particularly affected due to climate change. The water quality is another area with connected risks due to industrialisation, as the water quality risks to deteriorate. This illustrates the intersecting challenges since it exposes how fragile the conventional development path is when they have an ambitious development goal, while at the same time being scarce with its resources and adapting to the impacts of climate change (BDP 2100, 2018).

There are several of the SDGs that illustrate intersecting challenges and links to the challenges highlighted in the BDP 2100. Goal number 6 aims to: 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all', Goal number 14 reads: 'Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development' and Goal number 15 reads: 'Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss'. Hence, these all entails challenges when carrying out what is stated in the BDP 2100, combined with the obligations in the SDGs, and to ensure a sustainable development (UN, 2015; BDP 2100, 2018).

To some extent, it can be argued that a majority of the SDGs entails intersecting challenges, that all needs to be addressed and accounted for. The BDP 2100 highlights how Bangladesh intends to develop, on a national level, where some conflicts of interest naturally are to be found both in the BDP 2100, and in relation to the SDGs. However, when the SDGs can be criticized for its wide scope and ambitious agenda, the BDP 2100 in contrast is rather technical, and by extension; more realistic. In relation to what Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell argues, Bangladesh's efforts should be viewed, and evaluated in the light of how these intersections interact (UN, 2015; BDP 2100, 2018).

Moreover, the BDP 2100 discusses the notion, established in the SDGs of 'leave no one behind'. Rather interestingly, 'leave no one behind' in the UN context implies to not leaving states in the so-called Global South behind in issues related to sustainable development and prosperity, whereas in the BDP 2100, it brings a national perspective by highlighting that they have an obligation to support vulnerable regions and communities. Thus, interpreting it as national commitment and translating it to a national context (UN, 2015; BDP 2100, 2018).

#### **4.4 Sustainability and GDP**

This section discusses the findings in relation to concepts of sustainability and GDP. As discussed, some scholars argue that the concept of sustainability rests upon Western ideals and ideas and that euphemisms of *growth* should be avoided, while GDP as a measurement of progress could be expanded on. Two renowned alternative theories that go beyond GDP are 'Doughnut Economics' by Kate Raworth, that in part expands on Johan Rockström et al.'s theories of progress within the planetary boundaries. In short, it challenges GDP as the sole

instrument to measure progress, and provides a framework that combines nine planetary boundaries with social boundaries. Social boundaries could be gender and social equality and a planetary boundary is climate change or biodiversity loss (Villalba, 2013:1427-1433; Gudynas, 2011: 441-447, Rockstrom et al., 2009; Raworth, 2017).

The BDP 2100 uses several euphemisms for growth; sustainable growth in regards to resources and urbanization as well as green growth. The BDP 2100 states the impacts climate change constitute a threat to economic growth, and argue that it motivates why Bangladesh should implement the plan, as it reduces the negative effects. The adoption of the BDP 2100 would secure an average GDP growth rate of about 9 percent, and to reach upper middle income status by 2030, which are two of their goals. However, as discussed in the previous section on intersecting challenges, GDP growth needs to be problematized since there is not an abundance of resources and growth should not be at the expense of sustainability, regardless if it is labelled as green or inclusive growth (BDP 2100, 2018; UN, 2015).

Additionally, the SDGs uses several of these euphemisms, such as goal number 8 that aims to: 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'. (UN, 2015). A target implies that the least developed countries should be able to sustain a higher growth rate, in accordance with national circumstances. In addition, goal number 12 aims to 'Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns' (UN, 2015), with targets discussing resource management and sustainable practices.



This theme relates to justice in regards to development, and to develop sustainably. For example, it can be argued that Bangladesh is entitled to the same development path as many of the states in the so-called Global North. However, since we now know that we can not continue to develop at the expense of our planet, climate and environment, sustainability and development need to be reconceptualized. Akbulut et. al examines the links between post-growth and environmental justice movements, although in the context of Ecuador. They describe how indigenous communities call for justice, representation and inclusion in relation to the ongoing struggles over land in connection to the establishment of mining projects. Hence, the Western understanding of sustainability and development is contested by several critical scholars, and where post-growth and environmental justice movements could play an important role to link climate and gender justice with issues of growth and concepts of sustainability (Akbulut et al.; 2019).

## 5.0 Conclusion

This thesis explored the trajectories for climate and gender justice in Bangladesh, in relation to the SDGs and the BDP 2100 through a postcolonial lens. The main findings suggest that while both documents lack a postcolonial approach or response to the intersecting challenges that are present, the trajectories could be considered positive. The SDGs do acknowledge differences in capabilities, abilities and a need for gendered-sensitive strategies. However, the SDGs could be criticized for the way communities of the so-called Global South are portrayed in the document in terms of lack of agency and subordinated to the Global North. Moreover, it can be argued that intersecting challenges are not accounted for, in particular the ones that relate to climate debt, postcolonial structures, or justice. The SDGs do to some extent recognise the gendered dimension of climate change, but do not link it to issues of justice in particular. On the national level, the BDP 2100 does not mention justice or gendered dimensions in their strategies of how to handle the impacts of climate change. These silences could be discussed at further length and be theorized in more depth. However, the social dimension of sustainability was largely left out, thus the trajectories for climate and gender justice are slim in that regard, since it is not recognized or acknowledged as a problem. However, in regards to justice, it can be argued that this should be handled on the global level rather than the local. Thus, the Global North has been able to develop, often at the expense of the Global South, thus the responsibility does not primarily lie with Bangladesh. However, by using these arguments, it can be argued that it discards their agency and self-representation.

Bangladesh should be able to transition to an upper middle income country, to eradicate poverty and to develop in a sustainable way. Although, what is sustainable and for whom? In this regard,

justice is about to be able to develop, and to develop sustainably. The colonial structures remain intact if states of the Global North are formulating their national policies in a way that is affecting states of the Global South. For example, the report by CONCORD Sweden recommend that Sweden should formulate policies, with a strong feminist focus and include climate justice. However, they are not referring to national policies, but international efforts and operations. Thus, although with good intentions, it would lead to Sweden, instead of finding a way to compensate through a climate and gender justice perspective, which could entail to have lower growth or even a ‘negative’ development, still upholds colonial structures. Sweden is only used as an example, but if states of the Global North continue to exploit countries of the Global South for resources, production or cheap labor, to uphold their development and prosperity, a ‘justice’ perspective that includes aspects of climate and gender is not enough.

There are multiple interpretations of justice that could be further explored. Moreover, further research could expand on the trajectories by adding research units beyond the scope of this thesis, i.e. other policy documents that relate to sustainable development in Bangladesh. Additionally, climate and gender justice could be examined on a global level, by examining the SDGs alone and to discuss conflict of interests and built in challenges. The intersecting challenges discussed in this thesis could be discussed through the lens of other theories, for example through an institutionalist approach. Additionally, intersecting challenges could be examined by expanding on other critical theories such as post-development theories, or alternative models such as Kate Raworth’s ‘Doughnut Economics’ or Johan Rockström’s models of ‘Planetary Boundaries’ (Rockstrom et al., 2009; Raworth, 2017).

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