

Interview with Niina Kautto by Louise Lap - Gender CC



Niina Kautto is an environmental and energy policy researcher originally from Finland and now residing in Australia. Her passion to protect our planet was ignited by growing up surrounded by Central Finland's forests and learning about environmental problems at junior high school in the early 1990's. That passion led Niina to study environmental sciences. At university, she learnt about international climate change negotiations and wanted to focus on renewable energy as its one key path to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. After completing her PhD on European bio energy policy, she has supported building of more sustainable and resilient cities. She works at the interface of climate science and policy in the urban sustainability space and enjoys the multidisciplinary nature of the work and the challenge of 'connecting the dots'. Niina says she is fascinated by the ways in which science

informs policy and influences decision-making, and contributes to creating sustainable solutions.

LL: What do you feel women can bring to the fight for climate action?

NK: The work of Gender CC on gender and urban climate policy is very relevant here. Cities around the world are increasingly leading in climate action but they are also vulnerable to a changing climate. Being involved in Homeward Bound has meant finding my 'gender lens' – I can see now more clearly the gender dimensions of climate change and that they are largely absent from climate change related policy initiatives. Limited participation of women in decision-making means that their knowledge and proposed solutions are often ignored. Including women and other underrepresented groups in decision-making allows us to ensure that their voices are heard, and that they are not disproportionately affected by climate change impacts, in urban areas and everywhere else. I believe that considering diversity in views and ideas gives us much better chances in solving the pressing problems we are facing.

LL: Is there another woman in the climate sciences who inspires you?

NK: One of them is definitely Christiana Figueres (former Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC). I admire her for her strong contribution to making the Paris Agreement happen, her relentless optimism – as she calls it – played a big role in that. Christiana was also part of the filmed faculty of our Homeward Bound leadership expedition. She spoke to us passionately about the need for radical collaboration and communication of the climate urgency in a compelling fashion. Each of the Homeward Bound women travelling with me to Antarctica also inspire me with their intelligence, kindness and passion. With this amazing network of women to collaborate with, I feel more hopeful about the future.