

Rural Women's Agency

Editorial

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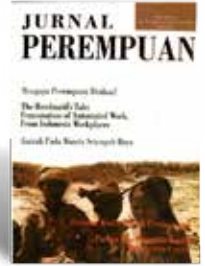
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Rural Women's Agency

Rural women and rural area constitute an ecosystem that is inseparable from the nature. The lives of rural community, including the women, have a close relation with its surrounding natural environment. First, the natural environment is the backbone of rural economy, particularly in agricultural sector. Second, the natural environment is the source of basic daily needs such as water and food. Aside from that, the natural environment has also been part of the local cultural such as handicrafts or as part of local beliefs and rituals. Subsequently, the disruption or change of the natural environment will definitely bring impact to the lives of rural community.

For women, the impact of the environmental changes are obvious due to their reproductive tasks in the households. For example, draught of the peat lands would decrease water and food supplies that must be managed by women in the rural peat area. Environmental destruction in rural peat area also urge men to migrate out to find a job, then women must act as the heads of the households as well as housewives.

One of the roots of inequality in the rural community stem from the weak access and control over land and forest governance. For women, the inequality is also intertwined with gender-based discrimination such as domestication of women. Women's domestication widens barriers of women's access to land, natural resources, information, law, and politics. UN Women's data (2018) finds that women ownership over agricultural land is less than 13%. In the meantime, despite the positive trend on agrarian reform policy in the recent years, gender-justice perspective has not been integrated into the agrarian policy in Indonesia. As the consequence, women still tend to be neglected within the policy which supposedly could give community's access to land and natural resources.

In general, rural women remain to be the responsible person in caregiving works, household care, family economic management, whilst being excluded from public realm. The similar pattern could be seen in rural areas. Rural areas are the main provider of source for natural resources, provider agricultural and plantation areas, labor force's provider, and with its forest area they also function as the lungs of the earth. However, similar to Simone de Beauvoir's criticism about women's position as "the second sex", rural community are also often identified as second-class community, whose meaning is closely linked to underdevelopment, vulnerable to poverty, and often being underestimated in policies on investment and development.

Diana Tietjen Meyers in *Gender in the Mirror: Cultural Imagery & Women Agency (2002)* analyzes how subordination over women influence the formation of women's gender identity, and restricting women from making emancipatory decisions. Rural women are also tended to be seen as persons without subjectivity, nor agency. But Meyer argues that even in its subordinate position, women still have agencies. Therefore, the view of rural women as subject with agency is presented in this JP 103 edition.

Jurnal Perempuan's research about rural women's experiences in five provinces, namely West Papua, East Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, Bengkulu and Aceh, shows diverse women's agency on land and forest governance in rural environment. Women agency appear in their power to persuade family and community, in their power to involve in public space, also in their power to change the perspective of official authority, also in their power to carry out collective action/ solidarity among groups in natural resources management. Rural women also possess contextual knowledge that is compatible to the rural livelihood, for instance the ability of Papuan women to choose a model of shifting agriculture as a sustainable model economy of agriculture.

The ignorance of science towards women's experience is one of the reasons for the rise of feminist's studies. Feminism found the concept of knowledge, that was born from the criticism toward the scientific approach, by looking at the complexities of interconnectivity among women, society and nature, such as in the concept of feminist political ecology. However, Carolyn E. Sachs in *Gendered Fields: Rural Women, Agriculture and Environment (1996)* found that feminist's studies tend to focus on urban feminist movement. Articulation about feminist movement in rural areas is still very limited, because science also tends to view rural community as an object, object of policy, object of poverty or object of development.

Therefore, in order to provide space about and for rural women, JP 103 presents various experiences of rural women and their agencies in dealing with the subordination of patriarchy and capitalism. JP 103 takes us to understand the agency of rural women as a process to train and to make use of the ability to construct themselves and make decisions on matters concerning the lives of rural women as well as the lives of rural communities in Indonesia. **(Atnike Nova Sigiro)**

Abstracts Sheet

Iwan Nurdin & Julian Aldrin Pasha
(Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia)

The Lack of Gender Mainstreaming on the Presidential Regulation No. 86/2018 on Agrarian Reform

DDC: 305
Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 24 No. 4, November 2019, pp. 227-235, 2 table, 15 ref.

The situation of agrarian injustice in the rural area carries multiple layers of burden on women. Such situation could be addressed with the agrarian reform's agenda. This is the reason why the society welcome the announcement of agrarian reform agenda as Joko Widodo administration's priority program. After being in power for four years, finally the government had issued the Presidential Regulation No. 86 year of 2018 on Agrarian Reform. The enactment of this Agrarian Reform's policy cannot be separated from the role of social movement organizations in urging for agrarian reform agenda, including in urging for an agrarian reform policy with gender justice perspective. This paper seeks to see how women's movement and the agrarian reform movement have been trying to advocate gender perspective in the formulation and the implementation of the Presidential Regulation (Perpres).

Keywords: agrarian reform, rural development, rural women, land redistribution.

Hatib Abdul Kadir & Gilang Mahadika
(Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia)

Economic Practices of 'Mama-Mama Papua' using Shifting Cultivation System: Study Case in Sorong and Maybrat Regencies- Western Papua

DDC: 305
Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 24 No. 4, November 2019, pp. 237-247, 4 image, 15 ref.

This research examines women's role and their decision-making related to swidden farming. This research was conducted in two different regions, Sorong (lowland) and Maybrat (highland) in West Papua. Key informants in this research were indigenous Papuan women, their husbands, and relatives. The aim of the research is to demonstrate that in the realm of traditional agriculture, women play important roles, starting from production, plant nursery, to the crop distribution to market. Nonetheless, the role of women tends to disappear, when the system of agriculture changes to sedentary farming by using chemical substances and other modern and farming technologies

Keywords: shifting agriculture, taking decision, traditional market, agriculture commodities.

Abdullah Abdul Muthaleb
(Flower Aceh, Banda Aceh, Indonesia)

Rural Women and Information on Natural Resources: Rural Women in Aceh's Struggle for Agency

DDC: 305
Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 24 No. 4, November 2019, pp. 249-257, 2 table, 10 ref.

Rural women have the potential to mobilize herself and her community towards a sovereign and just rural community. However, rural women frequently face form of discrimination that impede them to achieve their maximum potential. In the midst of forest and land degradation, those gender-based discrimination also prevent women from participating in land and forest governance that is vital for the rural community's livelihood. An example of form of gender-based discrimination experienced by women in several regions in Aceh is discrimination in accessing public information. This article describes and analyzes several Aceh women's experiences in using the rights-based approach on access to information. The women in this article have used the Law on Public Information as the basis for their advocacy towards the land and forest governance in their residential area. These experiences of the rural women have shown shows that women have not only interests upon the information on natural resources, but they also possess capability, perseverance, and will to obtain such information.

Keywords: rural women, natural resources, access to information, public information.

¹Titiek Kartika Hendrastiti & ²Pramasti Ayu Kusdinar
(¹Universitas Bengkulu & ²Akar Foundation, Bengkulu, Indonesia)

Involvement of Women Village Leaders in Developing Dialogues on Forest Conflict Resolution

DDC: 305
Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 24 No. 4, November 2019, pp. 259-270, 2 image, 32 ref.

This article is a study of feminist ecological politics in rural women's leadership and their involvement in resolving conflicts over protected forests. On the one hand, structurally, there is a complex linkage between social, cultural, adat, and religious practices that prevent women from becoming leaders. On the other hand, after they won the leadership contestation in the village, their task was able to go beyond reconciliation and introduce an alternative discourse on sustainable forest conservation. This study examines three main areas namely: (1) ecological sustainability knowledge, understanding and practices; (2) the practice of equal access to natural resources, and responses to vulnerability to environmental change; and (3) equality practices in village development activism. The narrative of feminist ecological political studies from two villages in Kepahiang and Rejang Lebong Districts shows that women village heads are able to penetrate structural barriers, social exclusion, and dismantle economic class barriers.

Keywords: rural women's leadership, feminist political ecology, forest conflict

¹Catharina Indirastuti & ²Andi Misbahul Pratiwi
(¹Kemitraan-Partnership for Governance Reform, Jakarta, Indonesia & ²Jurnal Perempuan, Jakarta, Indonesia)

When Wetlands Dry: Feminist Political Ecology Study on Peat Ecosystem Degradation in South and Central Kalimantan

DDC: 305
Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 24 No. 4, November 2019, pp. 271-284, 1 table, 9 ref.

Indonesia tropical peatlands area is 47 percent of out of the total global peatlands. But unfortunately, sustainable peatland governance has not been widely applied in the management of peatlands, instead of being home to biodiversity, peatlands in Indonesia have ended up dry, burning and turned into monoculture plantations. The problem of peat ecosystem degradation is the result of unsustainable - historical environmental governance politics. This study shows the political complexity of peatland governance and its impact on women with a feminist political ecology lens. This research was conducted in several villages in Central and South Kalimantan, the largest tropical peat areas in Indonesia. This study found that 1) Rural women were realized that there are problems with peatland governance, both practically and politically; 2) women and girls have multiple impacts from peat ecosystem degradation ie, women are deprived of living space, women find it difficult to get water and food sources, women take over the role of the head of the family because men migrate but are not always recognized as the head of the family, and women are impoverished because they lose their independence and must work as oil palm workers. This study uses a feminist political ecology study as an analytical tool to see the multi-layered oppression experienced by rural women due to peat ecosystem degradation.

Keywords: rural women, peatland village, peat ecosystem, feminist political ecology, resource governance

Dewi Komalasari
(Jurnal Perempuan, Jakarta, Indonesia)

Women as Agent of Social Inclusion: Experience of the Women of a Local Belief Community in Salamrejo Village

DDC: 305
Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 24 No. 4, November 2019, pp. 285-294, 1 image, 1 table, 23 ref.

Minority religious groups are vulnerable towards discrimination and social exclusion. Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon that is closely related to the denial of the enjoyment of civil and political

rights as well as economic and socio-cultural rights. Social exclusion also excludes the excluded people from development process in the village. This article discusses the social exclusion experienced by community of local belief's groups, the Association of Ekasing Budi Murko (PEBM) in Salamrejo village, in Kulon Progo, Special Autonomy of Yogyakarta. The economic empowerment approach has been used to promote inclusion among communities in the village. The establishment of Cooperative Business Group (KUBE) and also other economic works have encouraged women's role as agent for social inclusion. Business activities established by PEBM have opened room for interaction between women from local belief's community with other women in the village.

Keywords: social exclusion, social inclusion, local belief, women's empowerment, women's agency

Andi Misbahul Pratiwi & Abby Gina Boangmanalu
(Jurnal Perempuan, Jakarta, Indonesia)

Rural Women's Agency on Forest and Land Governance in The Midst of Change: Case Study in Five Provinces

DDC: 305
Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 24 No. 4, November 2019, pp. 295-306, 2 table, 12 ref.

Women in rural areas face serious problems as a result of ecological social changes in the village--which are almost mutually interconnected with the expansion of extractive industries and rural development paradigm. Forests and land become as the identity that cannot be left behind in seeing changes in rural areas. Sustainable forest and land governance are one of the ways to reduce the risk of environmental damage & degradation, land use change, deforestation, and loss of food resources and livelihoods of rural communities. One of the principles of sustainable forest and land governance is transparency and participation. In this study we found, explain, and analyse 1) how the social ecological changes in the villages through the experiences of women who is a trailblazer or local champion in 5 provinces (West Papua, East Kalimantan, Aceh, Central Sulawesi, Bengkulu); 2) the struggle of rural women in seizing the right to information and participation in the process of forest and land governance; 3) women's agency in creating positive socio-ecological changes in the village area. This research found that women's agencies are not single and are produced from various forms of power, namely the power/ability to influence and reduce barriers, to change at the household and community level, the power to organize and change existing hierarchies, the power to increase individual awareness and the desire to change, the strength of collective action and solidarity.

Keywords: rural women, forest and land governance, women's agency, environmental degradation, sustainable environment.

Involvement of Female Village Leaders in Developing Dialogues on Forest Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

This article is a study of feminist ecological politics in rural women's leadership and their involvement in resolving conflicts over protected forests. On the one hand, structurally, there is a complex linkage between social, cultural, tradition, and religious practices that prevent women from becoming leaders. On the other hand, after they won the leadership contestation in the village, their task was able to go beyond reconciliation and introduce an alternative discourse on sustainable forest conservation. This study examines three main areas namely: (1) ecological sustainability knowledge, understanding and practices; (2) the practice of equal access to natural resources, and responses to vulnerability to environmental change; and (3) equality practices in village development activism. The narrative of feminist ecological political studies from two villages in Kepahiang and Rejang Lebong Districts shows that women village heads are able to penetrate structural barriers, social exclusion, and dismantle economic class barriers.

Keywords: rural women's leadership, feminist political ecology, forest conflict

Introduction

Various studies show that forest governance is full of masculinity nuances and negates women's leadership. Studies on local woman leadership in managing conflicts and forest governance is still limited (Bose et al. 2017; Sam 2016). Issues on local women participation in decision making processes and natural resources governance, particularly forests, then became research's priority (Evans et al. 2017; Bose et al. 2017). Unfortunately, there are not many studies on local women participation in forest governance; the limited number has caused barrier that hide the interconnection of social, cultural and political relations in forest governance, which is very complicated to understand.

The involvement of local women in forest governance remains problematic (Evans et.al 2017); citing studies by Kusumanto in Southeast Asia, Mai et al. in South Asia, and Mutimokuru-Maravanyika and Matose in Africa, Evans et al. (2017) found that key opportunity for local women participation in decision making processes lies in the existing gender relations in the territory of the local community.

Policies that regulate land ownership, traditional territories, and access to farmland for indigenous women

who live around forests are also not clear (Bose et al. 2017). It happened because there is not much information on women's position within their families and communities in the context of forest governance. A study by Bose et al. in Latin America found existing gender inequality in land ownership, right to land, and women's access to forests. Despite the massive and continuous movement to fight for women's rights to land, but threats of deforestation, monocultural plantations, land grabbing, and extractive industry still shadow local women's livelihoods and living space.

The nuance of policies on forest governance in many countries are usually masculine. In many countries, women tend to become victims of the unfair policies and forest-related conflicts (Bose et al. 2017). Gender analysis usually finds the real intertwined of women subordination at all levels (micro-meso-macro) that influence the proportion of women participation. Adapting the typology of women's participation in forest governance from Agarwal, the gender analysis "*Colfer's Gender Box*", and the gender justice framework from Fraser, the study by Evans et al. (2017) addresses women's tenurial rights over forests. The degree of women's involvement based on the gender analysis shows gender inequality faced by local women, particularly constraints at the micro,

meso and macro levels. Gender analyses and decision-making processes are more obvious. It is very difficult for women to be involved in macro-level decision-making processes. The analysis framework of Agarwal (Evans et al. 2017) shows that women are given public space only

for forest product use and sale. Women's involvement at its highest degree is during community organization. It is understandable that forest governance decision making is not women's public area, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 below:

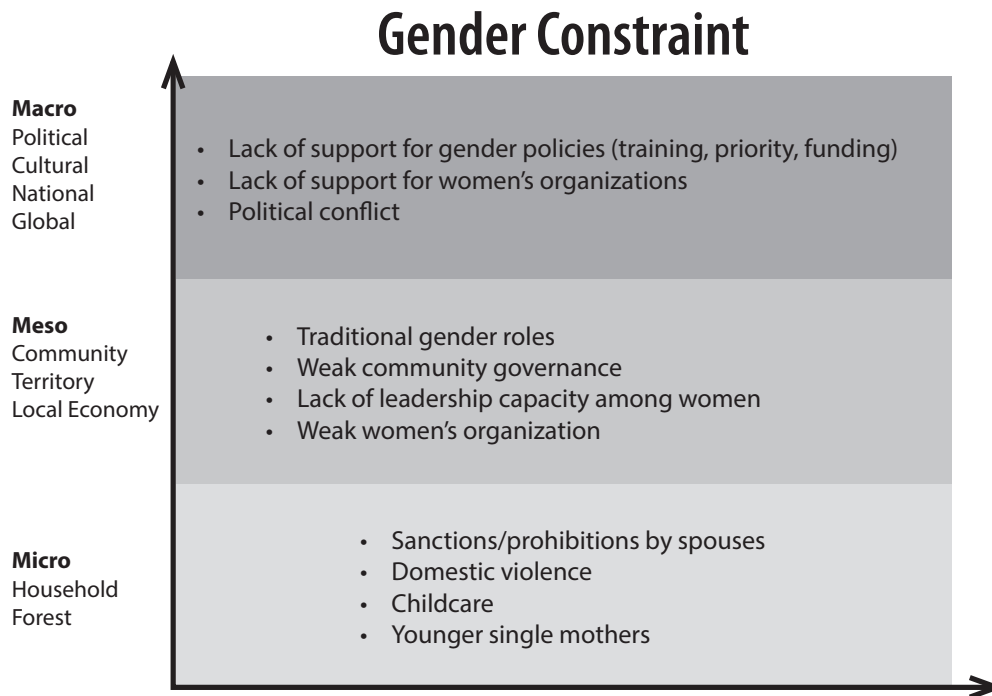


Figure 1. Degree of Gender Analyses and Types of Constraints

Source: Evans et al. (2017, p. 40) - Gender level of analysis and type of constraints imposed; cited from Colfer (2013).

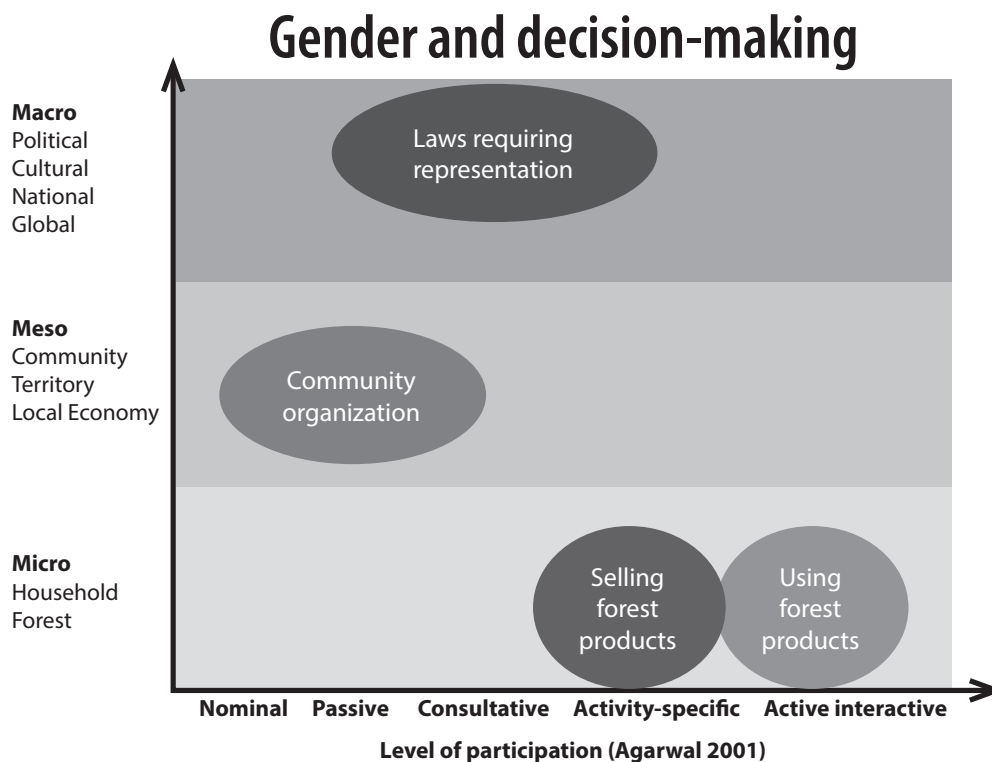


Figure 2. Gender and Decision Making

Source: Evans et al. (2017, h. 41) - Gender and Decision Making, adapted from Agarwal (2001).

Women's leadership is a strategic acceleration key to fair forest governance. A study by Bose et al. (2017) in Latin America has been made a significance reference on women's leadership in forest governance. In Columbia, for example, because illiterate and poverty rates among rural women are high, the incidence of injustice in land ownership by women remains significantly high; and the number of legal products on women's access to land is inadequate. The World Economic Forum's global gender gap index puts Nicaragua in its top 10, and the promotion of woman representation is 50 percent. Unfortunately, regulations with a gender justice perspective have not been able to give a happy news, and the protection has not been able to be provided for local people's land and territories. The legitimacy of women's leadership remains problematic; gender ideology has been used to hide (male) leaders' poor accountability.

A study by Bose et al. (2017) in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and a study by Sam (2016) in the Caribbean on women's leadership and forest governance show similar phenomena to the cases of women's leadership in forest governance in Columbia. The studies in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica and the Caribbean clearly show that with their knowledge about the environment and experience in managing natural resources, women have successfully improved the development agenda. The study by Bose et al. (2017) also shows that women's leadership has created a balance between development priorities, the enabling environment, and business start-up and expansion, which are protected and formulated in sustainable policies. Findings from the study that took place in many countries explain the linkage between women's experience in managing their daily lives and formal authority they have as female leaders in a state administrative unit at the lowest level. The study conducted in the Latin America shows that local female leaders succeeded in penetrating the boundaries of cultural, tradition, religious, and political practices contributing to reducing gender inequality and producing sustainable policies.

In the context of Indonesia, studies on women and forest governance, conflicts in and the conservation of national forest parks and nature parks are rarely conducted. A study on the Kerinci Seblat National Park conducted by Novra, Syaukat, Sanim & Sinaga (2007), for example, addresses the impacts of the local government's expenditure policy on the deforestation and degradation of the national park. Novra and Farhan (2009) found that the local economy, which relied on non-timber activities carried out in villages surrounding the Kerinci

Seblat National Park in Jambi province, has the potential to protect the national park from degradation. While a study by Mamat Rahmat et al. (2006) found that the Integrated Conservation and Development Project in the Kerinci Seblat National Park (ICDP) had managed to reduce people's dependence on forest resources, a study by Hidayat et al. (2011) assessed that the project funded by the World Bank had failed because the locals living in the buffer zones and the ICDP had different interests. The studies did not address women's role in forest governance, conservation and conflicts at all.

The aforementioned studies indicate that discourses on the management of national and nature parks are still nuanced by masculinity. Findings from those studies are proof of the lack of women's and women-related issues' presence in forest governance. Socio-economic and policy political reciprocal relationships between communities and forest conservation are packaged in a framework that makes women's involvement relative in nature. Governance-related conflicts occurring in the territories of the national and nature parks are systematically structured in the form of a masculine discourse orchestra.

In consistent with the context of this article, we discuss conflicts in the Kerinci Seblat National Park, Rejang Lebong district, and the Bukit Kaba Nature Park, Kepahiang district. The protection forest is the largest national park in Indonesia, which is located on the island of Sumatra and spreads over four provinces (i.e. South Sumatra, Jambi, Bengkulu, and West Sumatra). Both villages are two interesting examples illustrating the good practices of women's leadership: female leaders involved in governance from villages adjacent to the national forest park.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this research is feminist political ecology (FPE). The political ecology approach was developed by Watt (Elmhirst 2011, p. 129) to study poverty, social justice, the political aspects of environmental degradation and conservation including the accumulation of environmental degradation due to the neoliberal system and the issues of land size reduction and land grabbing. The political ecology approach focuses on the relationship between the nature and communities, particularly in relation to access and control, environmental health, livelihoods, and environmental conflicts.

The approach is strengthened when feminist researchers or study activists promote the incorporation of gender justice in the core of the political ecology methodology. There is intersectionality between feminist goals, strategies, and practices and the political ecology approach, involving knowledge, power and practices. This comprehensive research methodology to study the environment, Feminist Political Ecology (FPE), has increasingly flourished since a paper by Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari (1996) was published.

FPE has become a strong approach and been used for many gender and environmental studies. By making women's involvement a political subject, an agent of environmental change, or a guardian or originator of knowledge about the environment, FPE becomes a revolutionary model for political ecology studies (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari 1996; Sundberg 2015).

According to FPE, gender diversity and gender relations are determined by political ecology relations which are explored through three main areas: (1) knowledge about and the practices of gender environment; (2) gender rights and unequal vulnerability to environmental change; and (3) gender environmental activism and organizations (Sundberg 2015).

Looking at several studies on women and ecology, FPE has increasingly been used as a methodology and developed. The developments of FPE as a methodology are traceable through studies conducted by Elmhirst (2011) and Sundberg (2015), which discuss FPE. A study by Sreerekha (2018) is a good study that discusses FPE as an alternative discourse for development planning. The application of the methodology can be seen in a study by Sultana (2007), which used FPE to analyze the issue of water for domestic needs and sanitation; Evans et al (2017) used FPE to analyze women's involvement in social forestry in Nicaragua; Kimura and Katano (2014) used FPE to dissect the issue of organic farming.

In developing the discourse, a study by Nightingale (2011) helped to understand FPE in the context of its intersectionality with material production, classes, castes, and environment in Nepal. The study by Nightingale is closely related to a study by Gradska and Morell (2019), which offered a lesson that FPE methodology showed its encounter with postcolonial feminism. A study by Elmhirst (2011b) developed FPE to explain migration in Lampung for access to resources. In addition to the abovementioned studies, a study by Mollet and Faria (2013) allows us

to understand problems that may arise when gender issues are involved in FPE. Nightingale and Rankin (2014) strengthened FPE as a political transformation context in environmental and developmental studies. Velicu (2018), and Kubisa and Wojnicka (2018) proved that FPE was a feminist intellectual movement in order to achieve sustainable development with environmental equity in Eastern and Central Europe.

This study uses feminist ethnography as the methodology. The authors use feminist ethnography to reveal women's life experience, the conflicts, and natural resource governance. The experience shows that feminist ethnography is the best way to comprehensively describe human behavior, and the creation of a social phenomenon¹, while FPE finds indifference to women's experience as a key factor in denying knowledge. This is where the two methodologies have a scientific encounter.

Ethnography is closely related to knowledge production (Cerwonka & Malkki in Pole 2005; Neuman 2006; Atkinson 2010; Denzin & Lincoln 2010). During the field study, ethnography was used to collect knowledge, which was not only based on rational experience, but also on emotional one. It means that an emotionally connected dialog is a phase to produce knowledge and recognized as science in a humanity feminism study.

The methods used in this research to collect data were interviews, non-participants' observation, short live-in, focused group discussions coupled with dioramas and role playing. The latter two methods helped to obtain information on the formulation and redefinition of the concept 'conservation', and women's involvement in conflict resolution. The meaning of women's agency, including women's leadership, is easier to grasp and understand. The feminist methodology, according to Jones (2010, p. 35), allows researchers to flexibly conduct their studies and is more like a toolbox rather than a single approach to data collection tools. In essence, what is needed is an instrument to uncover women's everyday realities.

The FPE methodology makes the field narrative a proof of women's experience, showing women's knowledge about the ineffectiveness of gender justice in the environmental system. The FPE analysis of the three abovementioned elements also showed intersectionality between sexes, socio-economic classes, and control over land and forest resources (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari 1996; Elmhirst 2011a; Sundberg 2015).

Description of the Kerinci Seblat National Park and the Bukit Kaba Nature Park: Histories, Characteristics, and Their Relations to Human

The total areas allocated for conservation and protection forests in Indonesia are 18 million hectares and 30 million hectares, respectively (Hidayat et al. 2011, p. 37). The Kerinci Seblat National Park is one of 51 conservation forests that we can find in Indonesia. The national park was established as a conservation zone through Decree of the Minister of Forestry Number 192/Kpts-II/1996. As the largest park on the island of Sumatra, it has a total area of 13,750 square kilometers, and geographically spans four administrative areas: West Sumatra, Jambi, South Sumatra and Bengkulu provinces (Wikipedia Indonesia).² Given the considerable threat to conservation, in 2004, UNESCO put the Kerinci Seblat National Park together with the Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park and the Mount Leuser National Park in the category of endangered World Heritage Sites (endangered rainforests) (Hendry 2017).

Since its establishment as a national park, the Kerinci Seblat National Park has become a location with many conflicts. Research conducted by Novra, Syaikat, Sanim and Sinaga (2007) suggested that there was a conflict related to the governance of the protection forest between the national and local authorities. The study found that the local government's targets to promote sustainable development including: (a) economic growth, economic distribution equalization between sectors, a reduction in the unemployment rate; (b) people's participation in development and improved access to resources; (c) land and forest destruction and national park degradation reductions, do not appear to have been achieved.

A study on the Kerinci Seblat National Park conducted by Novra and Farhan (2009) in Kerinci district, Jambi province, found that people in eight of 146 surrounding villages relied on non-timber livelihoods. Actually, non-timber activities protected the national park from degradation. The problem is that the study did not address female villagers' access and participation.

There are interesting studies by Rahmat et al. (2006) and Hidayat et al. (2011) that evaluated the Kerinci Seblat National Park Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP). The studies showed that ICDP could not reduce people's dependence on natural resources in the national park. The mega project funded by the World Bank was considered a failure. There was a conflict of interest between the community and the national park's agenda set by the state. The local community was not involved in the schematic development of the national park, leading

to an unbridgeable gap between the national park and the interests of the people living in the buffer zones. A sophisticated design that the national government had come up with was not in line with the interests of the local government; the agenda of the national park as a conservation area was failed to be implemented by the local government due to limited finance and human resources (Hidayat et al. 2011).

In the context of the conflict of interest, the argument concerning land size suggests that the forest area in Bengkulu province is 924,631 hectares³, 44.59 percent or 412,324.6 hectares of which are the territories of the national parks – the Bukit Barisan Selatan and Kerinci Seblat National Parks. The conflict of interest between the national and local governments was marked by the increasingly smaller productive area that could be used for community livelihoods (Hidayat 2011).

Further, a study by Hendrastiti and Santoso (2009) showed the presence of a conflict of interest within the Kerinci Seblat National Park. One of the national park's policies was not supportive of forest conservation. Additionally, regional autonomy, forest sustainability, and the safety of the people did not intersect with each other in the governance of the national park. A conflict between indigenous people and the natural resource governance policy really broke out on the ground. The locals were "accused" of encroaching and stealing wood by state authorities. Within the community itself, there was a social shift from non-timber to timber needs. It was not only to meet daily needs, but there was also demand from "outside markets".

A study by Hendrastiti and Santoso (2009, pp. 247-288) suggested that national park degradation was part of a community impoverishment process and negated women's position. Women's involvement in managing forest sustainability and post-conflict reconciliation was an undocumented fact. Women's access to protection and conservation forests was considered poor. Traditionally, women took part in managing and maintaining forests. The relationship between forests and women was a warm and reciprocal one with links to food and sustainability.

The second location studied, the Bukit Kaba Nature Park in Kabawetan, had had a long history of governance-related conflicts since the Dutch colonialism (Kusdinar 2017). After a long search, the Akar Foundation found several episodes of conflicts in the nature park. In 1854 there was an expansion by the Dutch colonialist government to remote areas in Indonesia, including to fertile areas in Kabawetan. By mobilizing workers of (Sundanese ethnicity) from West Java and Javanese

people, the government gave permission to open a coffee and tea plantation named N.V land Bovus Maatschaapy in 1908.

Actually, plantation management operations at the foot of Bukit Kaba were not exceptionally done. Between 1908 and 1919 plantation concessions were not "open" for indigenous peoples. Until 1942, due to political instability, plantations were neglected. Political transition at that time highly affected tea businesses in Kabawetan, leading to most plantation workers changed their livelihoods. The workers' families started to open their own land for alternative farming, particularly coffee farming.

The nationalization of plantations in 1950 was not a critical issue. In 1954 or 1955 the participants of the transmigration program began to enter Kabawetan. That was when the *first* land conflict emerged, a tripartite conflict between the families of the workers who had used to work in the Dutch plantation, the migrants, and the indigenous people with *margo* land inheritance. On the government side, they received the plantation concession from its status as *onderneming* land to state land after the independence.⁴

The second land governance conflict occurred when the company expanded its plantation, penetrating the land that belonged to the indigenous people. The conflict intensified with overlapping management when the *margo* land was claimed by the state as part of the Bukit Kaba Protection Forest through Regulation of the Minister of Bureaucracy Reform Number 4 enacted on 8 September 1962. According to a record that the Akar Foundation has, the confirmation of the land as state land is stipulated in Decree of the Minister of Forestry Number 166/Kpts-11/86 enacted on 29 May 1986 on Change in the Status of the Bukit Kaba Protection Forest to a nature park, c.q. a recreational park. A regulation on the management of nature parks was strengthened by Decree of the Minister of Forestry Number 784/Men-Hut-11/2012 on the designation of the Bukit Kaba Nature Park on 27 December 2014. The state re-strengthened its position on 23 May 2014 through Decree Number 3981/Men-Hut-VII.KUH/2014, regulating the designation of a forest area in the Bukit Kaba Nature Park (Kusdinar 2017).

The third conflict occurred in 2007. This conflict involved the community of migrants in Sengkuang, Kabawetan sub-district versus the Bukit Kaba Nature Park (Kusdinar 2017). Eighth villages were involved in the conflict about the governance of the nature park. Overlapping regulations on the governance of nature parks had put community members as encroachers. They

faced the state, which was represented by the Natural Resources Conservation Agency. During the conflict, people had to leave their smallholdings, which were located in an area claimed by the nature park, although they actually planted their crops on *margo* land. The conflict peaked in 2011 when the residents were evicted from the land.

The conflict did not stop; in 2016 Circular Number 158/KBWT/IX/2016 was sent out, containing an appeal to the locals not to receive or buy agricultural and plantation products from the nature park's forest. The impact of the circular was worsened by an incident that took place in February 2017, in which a resident of Bandung Jaya village who farmed the *margo* land was arrested by the police and detained for three days at a local police station. It was the female village chief of Bandung Jaya who managed to get him out of police custody (an interview in September 2019; Kusdinar 2017).

This is where conflicts and women's leadership met. The conflict was actually very complex. In simple words, multi-parties were involved in an acute conflict: (1) the migrants; (2) the indigenous people; (3) the state with the nature park and the Minister of Environment and Forestry; (4) affirmation that the concession was the colonialist's *onderneming* legacy and the metamorphosis of large foreign investment, and (5) the local government of Kepahiang district.

Feminist Political Ecology Analysis

This study on women's agency within the Kerinci Seblat National Park has been conducted since 2018. As described above, studies on the Kerinci Seblat National Park are dominated by physical studies on the conservation and protection forests. Even in socio-economic studies, woman intersectionality (FPE) is rarely used.

Studies on agency that put women as subjects are hardly found on the list of studies on the Kerinci Seblat National Park. The results of FPE studies on women's agency in conflict resolution and conservation fill gaps in four areas. *First*, they close a theoretical gap about women in forest conflicts; and *second*, they fill a gap about women's agency and women as the subjects of forest management and put female leaders as the subjects of the national park. *Third*, they fill a methodological gap; developing FPE in the context of national parks. FPE's contribution to the "post" approach to view national park management will be useful for the management of the national park ecosystem while accepting poor group

involvement. *Fourth*, equality is put into practice in rural development activities.

Women's Experience in Addressing Forest Governance Related Conflicts

A simple narrative of the agency of women in the Kerinci Seblat National Park is "represented" by the existence of a female village chief in Pal 8 village, Bermani Ulu Raya sub-district, Rejang Lebong district. The victory of the female village chief (hereinafter referred to as *Mrs. Village Chief*) at the village chief election was not easy. To trace her win at the rural political contest, like with other female leaders, we need to look back at the social capital that she had invested for so long.

A generation is needed to track social work that Mrs. Village Chief had invested in from one generation to another, which became her social capital when she ran for election to Pal 8 Village Chief. It was Mrs. Nur – Mrs. Village Chief's mother – who had committed to activism around the village and subdistrict since her migration to Pal 8 village. Posts she held included a volunteer at the family planning center and the center for mothers' and children's health at the village and subdistrict levels. She was also listed as an activist at the Family Welfare Movement at the village and subdistrict levels, in addition to a formal post she held at the village government office as the head of affairs. Every day, beyond her official post, Mrs. Nur often helped other people, helping those who lacked without expecting returns. In general, Mrs. Nur's activism touched on reproductive health, a very important and critical issue in the village. This made her known to villagers. Mrs. Nur always gave her daughter understanding that she would have nothing to lose when she regularly helped people. She did not expect at all that her social investment would contribute to her daughter's victory at the village chief election (an interview in June 2018).⁵

Mrs. Village Chief won the election by defeating her strong political opponent, the incumbent village chief who lived in Hamlet 1 and the second candidate from Hamlet 1. She was the only female challenger in the village chief election, and from Hamlet 3. Although she was the only candidate who did not openly conduct her election campaign and did not prepare campaign props, she had her own way. She chose to take a "personal approach", as she called it. She went to the residents one by one, to the good people she had helped, starting from those in the same ethnic community to all indigenous people and the migrant community of different ethnic origins. She used persuasive methods, avoiding aggressive methods, and did not offer money at all.

Since Mrs. Village Chief won the political contest at the village chief election, and thereby took office as a village chief, she has been sticking to her principle not to change. Mrs. Village Chief still helps people like she used to. For example, when a resident organized a ceremonial event, she came to cook with other women rather than sitting on a chair and acting like an official. Mrs. Village Chief entered the kitchen tent, peeled off onions and cut other vegetables, and joked around like other women in that village who came to participate in a "*rewang*" (T.N. – a "*rewang*" is a tradition in Indonesia in which people help their neighbor when s/he organizes a party) (Observations in 2018 and 2019).

The narrative of women's leadership in Bandung Jaya village is as interesting as that in Pal 8 village. "Mothers' Land" warriors, that is how Kusdinar (2017) from the Akar Foundation started her narrative of women's leadership in unraveling forest tenurial and governance related conflicts. As a third-generation female migrant from Java to Sengkuang in Kapahiang district, brought by her family through the transmigration program introduced during the Old Order era, she is a Javanese diaspora. Her philosophy of life still adheres to Javanese transcendence; her knowledge came from her mother and family.

Her life experience directly confronts the issue of child marriage, gender-injustice based violence against women, polygamy, and limited access. From the various incidences she has experienced and seen, she understands that public space for women is very small. Small public space is fertile ground for the development of discrimination against women. The female village chief has long perceived the unequal rights to life, access, and control that women can enjoy, particularly in the public policy sphere (an interview in September 2019).

Immediately after being elected, a difficult task had been waiting for her: resolving forest conflicts. Challenges for conflict resolution that were put on her desk at that time were: (1) how community members' needs for a place to live, living space, and security could be accommodated. People's lives were the main task of the village leader; (2) How the forest area could be included in the territory of the nature park while providing a decent life for the residents of eight villages; (3) How to make sure that authorities around the forest did not lose their face and could still perform their duty to protect the state land; (4) How to make sure that external parties could invest while maintaining environmental sustainability and providing the residents with livelihoods (an interview in September 2019).

The experience of rural female leaders in resolving conflicts cannot be separated from their experience participating in local political contests. The experience of collecting social capital and making it a political investment is key to their knowledge of how to deal with conflicts. To be involved in the mainstream of conflict resolution, the position of women as a formal authority in the village is very important. Authority that female leaders have in their grip is their “weapon” to play their roles and adopt strategies to deal with pressures and land grabbing politics and maintaining environmental sustainability. Their knowledge in preserving the nature must be the basis for female leaders’ arguments for negotiations and lobbies in the conflict contestation room. That experience is as unrivalled as that experienced by women in Latin America, as described by Bose et al (2017).

Ecological Sustainability Knowledge, Understanding, and Practices

The narrative of ecological sustainability knowledge, understanding and practices in Pal 8 village shows that Mrs. Village Chief of Pal 8 used the three aspects to build her village. With authority she had in her hand and a new village financing scheme, the Village Fund Allocation (ADD), she built village government offices, farm roads, early childhood education (PAUD), a retention basin, and a soccer field.

During a fieldwork in 2018, a house renovation program was being implemented for underprivileged families. Initially, the President helped with the renovation of two houses, but then some other residents were jealous and wanted to get their houses renovated as well. Mrs. Village Chief made an effort to allocate the village fund to be used for house renovation; as a result, 39 households benefitted from the program. For her success, Mrs. Village Chief was one of the village chiefs from Rejang Lebong district who was invited to a socialization meeting on village funds by the President. When she was asked what other infrastructure that she wanted to have in her village, Mrs. Village Chief said she wanted to have a multipurpose building that would be able to be used for community activities in Pal 8 village.

Pal 8 village is located on the edge of the Kerinci Seblat National Park, adjacent to the Madapi Recreational (mahogany, Amboyna pine, Sumatran pine) Forest. As a territory that has been in the frenzy of forest governance conflicts for so long, women must be a part of it, and Mrs. Village Chief is one of the key authorities at the local

level. There was a change in the national legislation, Law 41/1999 on forestry, allowing citizens to use forests in a just and sustainable manner. Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry Number P.83/MENLHK/SETJEN/KUM.1/10/2016 on Social Forestry strengthens the regulation on the access of people living around forests to forest area management.

In response to the opportunity to make villages surrounding world heritage forests as agroforestry villages, women in Pal 8 village established an environmental care female community (KPPL) in 2017. Mrs. Village Chief became the local authority accelerating the establishment of the local women’s movement to utilize and manage the Kerinci Seblat National Park. In KPPL, Mrs. Village Chief is a member. With her discretion as a member of the KPPL, Mrs. Village Chief opened up an opportunity for other women to become a leader. KPPL is supported by the Woman Community for Heritage Site Rescue in (KPPSWD) Rejang Lebong, NTFP EP Indonesia, LiVe, and the Kerinci Seblat National Park Management Office.

In Bandung Jaya village, all conflicts related to the Bukit Kaba Nature Park were addressed by the female village chief of Bandung Jaya. One of her key strengths was the “idea of participation”. Participation is a powerful instrument in resolving multi-stakeholder conflicts. Practicing participation, she always invites residents, instruments, local philanthropists, and external parties concerned to get involved. Women receive the biggest portion of her attention and are always invited to give suggestions in every meeting. At the very least, the female village chief has taught us about participatory conflict resolution and rural development and supports the national authority plan.⁶

The second instrument used by the female village chief in exercising her leadership is her identity as a woman. Feminism awareness showcased is the promotion of rural development through, *first*, the organization of women. Through the family welfare movement, *arisans* (T.N. – an *arisan* is a form of Rotating Savings and Credit Association in Indonesian culture, a form of Microfinance), communal Quran reading meetings, farmer group meetings, the female village chief answers questions about women’s vulnerability in public space. She has guaranteed she will expand women’s public space in many opportunities where they can be involved. The farmer group has provided room for rural women to practice agroforestry and to have a fruit demonstration plot as an alternative to the main crop (i.e. coffee) and other timber crops. The family welfare movement can carry out an activity about

medicinal plants to empower women in order to allow women to stay close to home (an interview in September 2019).

This organization of women is a move beyond the normal leadership discourse because during a conflict, women need strength and empowerment. In the period when security officers threatened the lives of residents from eight villages surrounding the nature park, women were not safe from the chase either. The narrative of the conflict did not record the dangerous situation that the women faced, but from what the female village chief told us, we can tell that the security officers made the threat against everyone, including women and children. In fact, the members of the *arisan* group, farmer group, and communal Quran reading group also received the threat. This is where the issue of feminism awareness becomes the core and lantern of women's leadership.

The narrative of the experience also shows female leaders' struggle for equal access to natural resources and response to the vulnerability of the locals, particularly women, to environmental change. We can measure the reflection of their activism from Figure 1 above, where gender constraints and gender and decision making are at the meso level. This achievement certainly has something to do with their formal position as village heads. A comparison between studies conducted by Evans et al. (2017) and Bose et al. (2017) in many countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa and the FPE studies in Pal 8 and Bandung Jaya villages show that female leaders' position in formal authorities is really strategic. Environmental management and sustainability and conservation can be entrusted to local leaders. The development agenda can be maximized and the inclusion of the locals for safety and protection can be introduced, while tenurial conflicts can be resolved in a participatory and transparent manner.

Equality in Rural Development Activism

The history of the establishment of the environmental care female community (KPPL) in Pal 8 village is a significant foundation for the FPE framework. Initially, female organizational founders and other women were invited by the NGO LiVe to participate in training on conservation. The participants of the training began to protect forests from degradation. They found a new empowerment or public room, which became an opportunity for women to strengthen themselves. The training was an encounter between their vision and knowledge about rights to preserve forests through the

utilization and farming of non-timber crops, honey bees, and torch ginger.

The woman organization stage was relatively unhindered. Large social capital became KPPL's strength for their internal organization. Key to the social capital was full support from the local authority, in this case the village chief. In the context of Indonesia, support from the village chief is the main development to organize female communities.

The configuration of local politics in Pal 8 village is easy to guess because the village head is a woman. *First*, women's leadership at the local level is key, and social capital for conservation. Women's leadership is also social solidarity, which glues citizens, particularly between women. *Second*, when a village chief is also a member of KPPL, there is no doubt that she has the same commitment, ideology, perspective and interest. Village chiefs contribute to strengthening, mobilizing and expanding support from institutional channels. The *third* strength is that the management of KPPL is separated from the village authority, allowing this small organization to grow fast.

Women's activism in Bandung Jaya village is stronger. Negotiation is a strategy that always brings good luck, a powerful weapon for female leaders. Based on field records, negotiation is feminist leaders' method to win a battle. By bluffing opponents into thinking that a thousand residents would come to protest security officers' ferocity, the female village chief won and succeeded in preventing the residents from being chased and arrested. Instead, in another negotiation room, she agreed on regulating residents who farmed near the boundaries of the nature park, *margo* land, and community smallholdings. She understood that the agreement was on no way a defeat in the negotiations, but rather to maintain the ecological status and function of the forests. The community would still be able to work on their smallholdings because hardwood plants must be maintained and cared for (A note by Kusdinar 2017 & an interview in September 2019).

Rural development is also designed outside the custom or mainstream, for example a design of a clean village. No less resourceful in educating adults about sanitation, which was usually ignored, the female village chief invited elementary school age children to join her in collecting plastic waste along the main village road every Sunday morning. As a reward, the children would be taken to swim, watch a certain event in the town, or have a picnic. The program, which had been implemented

since 2017, succeeded in changing the face of the village: the main road became cleaner. Women also took part in the activity with their children. In fact, women often worked together to collect plastic waste on Thursdays (market days). Sanitation has become a part of the villagers' public life.

Another interesting activity she initiated was she invited other women to think together how to manage used sanitary pads and pampers. She also implements cleaning and healthcare programs and maintains clean water supply and sanitation. The Pamsimas (Drinking Water Provision and Community-Based Sanitation) program, which cost Rp 50 million, was funded independently by the villagers who contributed Rp 500 thousand per household. As a result, now they already have a water reservoir in each house. To maintain its sustainability, the female village chief and the Village Consultative Agency (BPD) co-drafted a rural regulation on participatory water management in 2017. Moreover, a rural regulation on healthy (gooseneck) latrines was drafted in 2016, allowing all villagers to have their own latrines. For this achievement, the village won a title out of all villages in Bengkulu province and thereby received Rp 10 million as the award.

Female leaders' power engagement has proven to be able to raise their villages' critical issues (i.e. welfare, healthcare, water, waste), develop participatory and transparent management of village funds, and develop a tourist village and village government owned enterprises. Changes in the lives of the residents, particularly the women, are a guide for women's leadership path. Local female leaders have proven that "there is always a way".

The findings of Nightingale and Rankin (2014) can be used as reference to look at the activism of the two female village leaders. Both use strategies to change the political "game" (political transformation) to save the environment. Relying on innovations and initiatives originating from their thoughts, experiences and knowledge, so many amazing development agendas emerged. Looking more closely at the activism they chose, we will see intersectionality; it relates not only to gender, but also to socio-economic classes, ages, cultures, religions, and political views.

The FPE study framework from Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari (1996) and Sundberg (2015) provides a "reading" room to see female village leaders' involvement in protecting the environment and developing their villages. Both female leaders have crossed the borders and shown the best aspects of governance: transparency, inclusion, participation, intersectionality, and equality.

Conclusion

Local female leaders choose to fight injustice that disadvantages women with non-confrontational strategies. They understand that there is the concept of masculinity dominance that needs to be overcome; fighting face-on in an unfavorable way. Intuition is not always irrational and harmful. Instead, they use various ways to invite elites and men to participate, and have masculine thoughts manifested in their daily behavior. Participatory decision making has proven to have strong power, everyone is involved and bound.

Equality is established outside formal regulations thanks to female leaders' efforts. It is the daily equality that is built by female leaders at the local level. They hold the key method of how to call out the "power within" to lead. Women's knowledge to address forest conflicts builds upon their everyday experience for ecological sustainability. It is the knowledge about ecological sustainability that becomes the basis for power-sharing practices to end forest conflicts, together protect the nature, and find a win-win solution.

Villages recognized locally and nationally as having good practices are villages that have successfully built public accountability. The title is a gamble from the leadership of individual local women and other women. In complex narrative, this phenomenon is called a feminism discourse.

Female village leaders did not learn about feminism from books and journals. Nor they learned about leaders' role in forest conflict resolution and forest conservation. The context of feminism manifesting in village leadership includes instinct and experience to survive in a masculine environment. There is a feminist awareness to maintain their capacity as leaders. The feminist awareness they show is a struggle to seize the deprived living space and limit the lives of marginal communities to increasingly difficult and unlivable places. Women's critical issues are within the reach of their thinking because the life experiences of the marginalized provide in-depth knowledge.

In the context of feminism, women's leadership requires proof of their capacity to regulate power, proof of residents' participation, and a pledge to serve. Female leaders need to work harder, to prove their capacity. They work harder to mobilize human resources and optimally utilize natural resources while maintaining the social cohesion of their residents.

The balance in exercising power is believed by female leaders as a discourse that can save women's position.

Intersectionality is a guiding instrument that they have learned since they were young. The power within practice enables female leaders to build social capital from potential the residents, particularly women, have. Gender justice rights and inequal vulnerability to environmental change is one of the issues that strengthen solidarity among women in the form of organizing the community.

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Endnote

1 By Malinowski, ethnography was strengthened as a professional fieldwork until it became a methodological approach to social anthropology. Until the second half of the 20th century, ethnography was strengthened and used widely in psychological and sociological studies. The Chicago School is an institution that supports the developments of ethnographic methods across anthropology (Jones & Watt 2010, pp. 1-12). Further, Jones said that the basic values of ethnography are: participation, participatory observation, in-depth culture setting, reflection and representation, thick description, participatory ethics, strengthening or empowering, and understanding. To put all these into practice, an ethnographer needs to live in the location being researched, immerse himself/herself in the culture, and be a part of the community that becomes the research subject (Jones 2010, pp. 17-18).

The suitability of this research with ethnography can be explained by Jones (2010, pp. 22-24) describing collaboration between the developments of ethnography and social movements and conflicts. Studies on civil protests and fights for civil rights, equality, sexual rights, anti-discrimination that questions representation and visibility, methodologically can only be accommodated by ethnography. It is through ethnography that social science is able to clarify interests, oppression, representation, and political power.

2 https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taman_Nasional_Kerinci_Seblat.

3 Based on Decree of the Minister of Forestry Number 748/Menhut-II/2012 (Mongabay 2017).

4 The chronology of the management of the colonial heritage tea plantation: PT Trisula Ujung Mega Surya in 1965. Between 1975 and 1979 the plantation was occupied by the provincial government of Bengkulu and managed by PT Kabawetan. In 1980 the tea plantation was leased to PTPN XXIII. Subsequently, between 1988 and 1989 the land and the tea plantation were taken over by a private company named PT Kepahiang Indah, which managed both the tea and coffee plantations. At that time the land under management was expanded and the company began to take over people's land (Kusdinar 2017).

5 Mrs. Nur died in May 2019.

6 Every deal is documented in pictures. The Android technology allows Mrs. Village Chief to keep the proof of agreements between the residents, government officials, and other meeting participants. The authors saw all pictures about the residents' participation that she has kept well (The Minutes of an Interview in September 2019).

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