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The Agency of Women in the Climate Crisis: A Decolonizing Feminist Method

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss the relationship between the promotion of women's agency and vulnerable groups with the changing trends in the orientation of social research methods towards decolonization in the strands of the feminist approach. All the world communities, especially the marginal groups who have intersectional vulnerabilities, are starting to redefine their experiences in this climate crisis. It is proven that their concrete resilience is genuine, innovative, creative, and able to preserve their lives in a sustainable manner. Our attention should be deeper towards their simple efforts to free themselves from the "oppression of global powers". This research was conducted in two villages of the Exclusive Economic Zone (KEE) *Banyuwangi*, East Java, called *Wringinputih* and *Kedunggebang*. The framework used is postcolonial feminist and applies a feminist political ecology (FPE) method. Fieldwork adopts focus group discussion, field talk, and participatory observation. The doubts of marginal communities about their agency in the climate crisis is a challenge for postcolonial feminist researchers. In fact, by using a feminist postcolonial approach, the practices of forest landscape governance (FLG) clearly record the involvement of women and marginalized groups. Here it is the novelty of the article, a decolonization method in FLG.

Keywords: decolonizing feminist methods, women and climate crisis, the agency of subaltern, feminist political ecology

Introduction

Essentially, criticism of the positivism discourse in the development of science has long been touted by Harding (1998). The challenge to science that develops by negating the perspective of vulnerable groups outside academic institutions is increasingly popular; generally referred to as a decolonisation effort. Therefore, it is necessary and important to trace the connection between the recognition of women's agency towards decolonisation in the strands of feminist approaches.

Both gender justice and local women's perspectives are absent from ecological governance and climate crisis concepts (Hayhurst & Centeno 2019). Kurauchi et al. (2005) corroborate the position of local communities in natural resource governance in Southeast Asia: Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and China. While some communities are able to enjoy prosperity, opportunity, and environmental sustainability, many are struggling as a result of severe ecological degradation.

Hayhurst and Centeno (2019) give the example of Nicaragua, where the impacts of climate change place a heavy burden on women. In the context of efforts to respond to climate change, gender practices operate as an oppressive process that reinforces women's identities with certain traits that are considered absolute. There are concerns that in responding to environmental degradation and adaptation, society is reinforcing the everyday enforcement of patriarchal practices, including the stereotyping of traditional gender roles of women and girls. Without a rigorous analysis, this situation could exacerbate the gendered division of labour, potentially reinforcing assumptions about women's "natural relationship with nature". Research findings in Nicaragua prove that there is a link between domestic violence and deforestation.

Narratives and hidden interests of women in climate crisis issues are not just allegations to justify feminist perspectives, but an ongoing praxis on the ground. Research findings on the women's environmental community (Komunitas Perempuan Peduli Lingkungan/ KPPL) from Pal 8 village in the Kerinci Seblat National Forest Park (Taman Hutan Nasional Kerinci Seblat/TNKS) show that despite the strong desire of local women to be involved in forest governance, they are constrained by unequal perspectives on forest landscape policies (Hendrastiti & Kusujiarti 2022).

Research in Essential Ecosystem Areas (Kawasan Ekosistem Esensial/KEEs) promoted by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan/KLHK) shows similar trends. The results of a study in Teluk Pangpang, Banyuwangi show a lack of recognition of the voices and interests of women communities.[1] In practice, the KEE scheme was less participatory, with local women's groups unable to participate in the programme cycle, especially in the planning process. In a preliminary study in March 2022, the authors found that operational regulations at the village level had not been drafted, and some communities expressed their inability to understand the programme's outcomes. Fieldwork also showed how much was hidden behind the KEE agenda.[2]

Nexus: Postcolonial Feminism, Ecological Crisis, Agency

Currently, the trend of decolonising social sciences is rapid, including on the issues of climate crisis and women's agency in the context of feminist approaches. The interconnectedness of feminism, climate crisis and women's agency has been an interesting intersection of contemporary feminist studies (Enarson et al. 2017; Kurauchi et al. 2005; DeLoughrey and Handley 2011).

Enarson et al. (2017) state that the gender analysis lens in ecological crisis and disaster studies is varied and dynamic.[3] For example, the social vulnerability approach that locates social vulnerability in disasters by pointing to social dynamics rooted in gender, class, race, culture, nationality, age, and other power relations (the context of intersectionality). In addition, there is a socio-political ecology approach that emphasises broad meanings and focuses on interactions. Interaction here is not limited to the interaction of human and non-human systems, but includes all social systems. The intersectional context of interaction, especially in the context of disasters, includes gender relations, and a portrait of gender discrimination. This factor relates to the neglect of the human rights of women and girls.

The study by Kurauchi et al. (2005) explains the unique political, economic, and social situation of local women's groups in natural resource governance, namely: 1) incomplete or unclear subsidiarity; 2) limited downward accountability; 3) lack of human resource capacity in democratically elected local governments; 4) donor-driven decentralisation; 5) limited ownership and benefits from natural resources by local communities; and 6) inadequate coordination between government and non-government actors. The study makes clear the interconnectedness of governance and women's absence.

DeLoughrey and Handley's investigation (2011) on ecological governance and women shows that there is a link between climate crisis and ecosystem restoration. They believe that a postcolonial approach is important for this kind of research. For a colonised nation, the most important and concrete value is land. Land is their source of livelihood and a symbol of their dignity. In the language of DeLoughrey and Handley (2011), the phenomenon of imperialism is geographical violence. Land tenure patterns occur in almost every part of the world. Imperialism explores land, maps it, and eventually controls it. For natives, the history of colonial slavery begins with the loss of their geographical locality and identity, namely land. DeLoughrey and Handley (2011) frame postcolonial writing ecologically, positioning it as a process of historical recovery, identification, and myth-making. Ecological postcolonialism is also intended as an effort to restore the position of women as environmental agents, who promote struggles that are unique to the historicity of the Global South community. The concept of territorial narratives is used to question colonially imposed narratives.

Following DeLoughrey and Handley's model, landscapes and seascapes are elements to be considered in the historical process and not just observations of human experience. The involvement of non-human agency creates additional challenges as nature's own processes of regeneration and change often contribute to the erasure of postcolonial histories. In discussing the climate crisis, we must enter into a "deep dialogue with the earth's landscape and ecology".

Resurreción and Elmhirst (2013) clarify the description of Enarson et al. (2017); Kurauchi et al. (2005); and DeLoughrey and Handley (2011). They believe that compromises between theory, policy, and practice on gender, the environment, and natural resource governance are not easy. There are intertwined elements of politics, negotiation, and contestation of social relations. They believe that it is important to utilise a ground-breaking critical feminist perspective to examine the relationship between gender and natural resource management in contemporary policy contexts. According to these thinkers, the challenges of applying postcolonial feminist ecology are decentralised governance, poverty eradication, and gender 'mainstreaming'.

The work of Resurreción (2017) and Elmhirst (2011) points to the importance of shifting the study of ecological crisis issues to postcolonial feminist epistemology. Postcolonial feminists represent an anti-monolithic approach and recognise non-Western knowledge as multifaced knowledge that recognises non-Western people and communities as subjects of knowledge. This perspective was popular in the 1990s (Saunders 2004; Brah & Phoenix 2004). With this postcolonial perspective, the agency, stories, and narratives of communities from the Global South become the basis for knowledge development (Brook 1997; Spivak 2008; Mohanty 2008).

Postcolonial feminism is a framework towards deconstruction for decolonisation. It deconstructs the universalism of Western feminist theory and challenges liberal feminism, socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, and structural feminism that have marginalised the agency of women from the Global South. Mohanty (2008) warns of the dangers of homogenising non-Western women as reflections of oppressed groups. Spivak (2008) emphatically states that postcolonialism is a major innovation in the humanities and social studies that focuses on communities that are considered subaltern, having no identity, and hidden.[4]

Postcolonial feminist thinkers critically examine the assumption that women's identities from the Global South are not monolithic (Narayan & Harding 2000; Mohanty 2008; Saunders 2004). These theories focus on the micro-level struggles of women activists from the Global South that influence the macro-level women's movement. Women's struggles at the local level are related to the formation of their identities, the different realities they face, the representation of issues raised, and the politics of their bodies.

According to Spivak (2008), a system of oppression and sharp subordination relations have resulted in the formation of a society that is 'apathetic', 'silent', and places them only 'in the shadows'. In the context of ecological issues, Tierney's (2019) study states that disasters and pandemics can create space for vulnerable women to express their voices. Disasters can reveal hidden structures and inequalities. Research in Aceh, for example, shows that in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster the community was faced with a dire situation that required outside intervention. Interestingly, this situation provided an opportunity for Acehnese women to express their agency and engage in wider public participation (Kusujiarti 2017).

Experiences from various subaltern communities show the importance of collective actions at the grassroots level as resistance to inequality. Pollock and Subramaniam's study (2016) notes that state power and global inequality trigger social movements to fight power structures that are intertwined with the influence of foreign science and technology. Power relations become the main issue in fighting for justice, including ecological justice. Theories and methodologies embedded in hegemonic structures fail to accommodate the perspective and knowledge of subaltern groups. As a result, their culture, language, and national identity are not taken into account as relevant aspects to ensure full engagement.

Decolonialisation theory and methodology are essential to postcolonial feminist approaches (Hendrastiti 2014). One of the methods in decolonising knowledge about women in the Global South is to centre local women's narratives, practices, histories, and knowledge, including narratives and knowledge of their environment; this approach is also often referred to as feminist political ecology.

Research Methodology

The environmental crisis has become a major concern of various disciplines and theories, including political ecology, ecofeminism, and ecocriticism approaches (Dar & Bhatt 2019). This issue needs to be researched through a trans-disciplinary approach as environmental crises are complex and intersect with culture, power, and literature. How local institutions reform and reproduce themselves and the gender relations embedded in the context of intersectionality are the scope of postcolonial feminist political ecology.

Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) is a methodological framework that facilitates the study of gender issues and environmental crises (Rocheleau et al. 1996; Sundberg 2015). FPE emphasises the study of women's involvement as central environmental agents. Unfortunately, recognition of their agency in ecological change and contribution to nature conservation has not been fully accepted. The deprivation of such recognition certainly hinders the development of efforts to recover the environment from damage and disasters.[5]

The struggles of subaltern groups for ecological justice, survival, and sustainable life are represented in everyday life. Their struggles are summarised in the narrative of daily activities, especially in the context of gender relations (Hendrastiti & Kusujiarti 2020). FPE explores the interconnections between environmental institutions, knowledge production, and women's

positions to outline how different groups respond to environmental issues and policies in different ways. Postcolonial approaches extend FPE with a focus on environmental practices (Hayhurst & Centeno 2019; Mollett 2017).

In feminist methods, both researchers and participants become research subjects and they have their own political perspectives on the research focus. Misbahul (2016) noted from a feminist pedagogy conference that the study of intersectionality or the encounter of various structures needs to be the basis of analysis in feminist research. Intersectionality focuses on the confluence of power relations from various dimensions that contribute to perpetuating structural domination, oppression, and discrimination against women.

The results of KEE research using indicators of authority, access, economy, and employment reveal that women's perspectives have not been taken into account as an important issue in FLG (Setiahadi et al. 2020). Women's involvement in natural resource management, in general, is encouraged to preserve the environment and life around them.[6] The data for this paper comes from two villages: Wringinputih Village, Muncar, Banyuwangi Regency and Kedunggebang Village, Tegaldlimo, Banyuwangi Regency. Both are in East Java Province. Since 2015, both villages have been included in the Essential Economic Zone (KEE). Teluk Pangpang KEE in Banyuwangi Regency covers karst ecosystems, mangrove wetlands[7] and peatlands outside of Nature Reserve Areas (Kawasan Suaka Alam/KSA) and Nature Conservation Areas (Kawasan Pelestarian Alam/KPA).[8] The research was conducted between February-June 2022 as part of a preparatory research grant from the Forest Landscape Governance (FLG) Recoftc-Explore Programme, Bangkok.

Both research villages are located in mangrove forest areas. Fishermen from the villages and from outside the villages, including fisherwomen actively search for clams, shrimps, and crabs using small motorised canoes. Lately, fishermen have been catching very little; this situation has been exacerbated by the KEE restriction that prohibits small canoes from entering the mangrove forests. According to the fishermen, their catches are usually sold to the local markets, bought by close neighbours, or for their own consumption. In particular, the experiential narratives in this paper come from the experiences and perspectives of fisherwomen in both villages.

The data collection method for this research was Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Through FGDs, the research team prioritised rapport with participants. One of the most convenient ways was to draw and make applications with colourful paper to visualise their positionality in the mangrove forest KEE programme. This activity also illustrated the changes in their situation due to the climate crisis.

Another method is field talks. Field talks are an alternative to getting a narrative from the subject. Field talks are seen as more natural, closer, and in-depth to understanding the subject's thoughts and perspectives than interviews. The subject was not "directed" to answer what the researchers need and want. Instead, the researchers learn to understand how the ecological crisis phenomenon occurs, and how locals respond to the situation. With field talks, the ecological crisis becomes a broad and comprehensive conversation. The field talk method is in line with ecological and political approaches that emphasise broad and comprehensive meaning and focus on interaction.

Fieldnotes are a model of qualitative research. In postcolonial feminist studies, fieldnotes are adopted because of the documenting power of the situation or "moment". The situation of "imperialism", which is rooted in different dimensions of gender, social class, education, belief, ethnicity, language, political orientation, and cultural background (intersectional), should not be overlooked. For example, in the writing of this journal article, all information was in a layered file/storage: notes of the discussion process, verbatim narratives from the subjects, documentation of the situation during the discussion, and a fusion of narratives and sketches (photos, drawings, figures, matrices) made by the researchers during the discussion.

In fact, at each stage of the method applied above, there has been a moving analysis. The findings of moments of "oppression" and moments of decolonisation on the issue of ecological crisis, all changes in daily living situations, and all responses to ecosystem changes (both dramatic and slow) form the basis of the analysis in the research. The FPE framework strengthens the research's analysis from three spectrums (Sundberg 2015), namely 1) gendered environmental knowledge and practices; 2) natural gender rights and unequal vulnerability to environmental change; and 3) gender-based environmental activism and organisations. Complementing the rules of qualitative analysis, the findings of moments of "imperialism" and moments of decolonisation in postcolonial feminists in the field are then analysed and reflected upon with previous research findings, to identify similarities, differences, and novelty. By comparing the research findings, there will be awareness, uniqueness, struggle strategies, living space

achieved from the struggle/resistance, and future plan of the subjects are revealed.

Subaltern Voices, Deconstruction of Knowledge, and Decolonisation of Feminist Methods

The Phenomenon of Women's Agency

One interesting aspect of Teluk Pangpang KEE when viewed from the PFPE framework is the assessment of women's involvement. Since its introduction in 2015, local communities have not understood the KEE programme as a solution designed to address a citizen-based ecological crisis situation; or a replicated global agenda for Indonesia, especially for East Java, which is mandated by the programme. This is because the introduction and distribution of information related to the programme was not done in an inclusive and equitable manner. It was acknowledged by FGD participants that there were women present at the socialisation, but they did not fully understand, and were instructed to disseminate to other women's groups.[9]

The community sees a "struggle" for influence in the KEE programme.[10] Although there is coordination in the management decree, implementation in the field does not show collaboration between institutions. Local civil society states that the community only receives the programme; they are positioned as an object rather than an equal subject. As long as the KEE programme does not improve the lives of local communities, they no longer question the programme. The issue of response to the mangrove crisis is unclear. The management decree for the KEE programme does exist, but the community does not see the implementation of the division of labour. Let alone issues of equality and recognition of the existence of women's groups; it is unclear whether there is any justice in the programme for local communities.[11]

It appears that there is an information gap between KEE and the community, which is reflected in the dialogue that shows the community's desire to be involved, for example, in tourism development. They know that mangrove tourism is designed at the village or regional level and not for individual interests. The community once proposed an *agro silvo* fisheries programme, but to date the programme has stalled.

The design is top-down as women are positioned in the tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis), while in the dialogue, women participants still question the target beneficiaries of ecotourism. What about women's groups? Are they included as target beneficiaries of the programme? Women participants said that the Pokdarwis existed even before the KEE programme. This means that until now, women are still positioned as objects rather than equal stakeholders. "...we are still considered as objects or tools of development and not being involved in the planning" (P2 2022, March FGD). According to the FGD participants, only the Fisheries Service, which regulates and accommodates the catch of marine products, will serve as a space for women's involvement.

FGDs in Kedunggebang Village started with sharing stories about what they were proud of in life. There were three people who told stories and chose pictures of objects symbolising their identity; for example: the first participant's story and a picture of a house as a symbol of duty and responsibility for the welfare of the family. The second participant shared her pride of being the guardian of all family members and drew a picture of a fence for his role. The third participant talked about her pride of being a tailor. Ms. Dv narrated herself as someone who, since childhood, has been good at helping her mother sew clothes, put on buttons, or *ngesum*, or other jobs. The older she gets the more skills she has, and that makes her proud. Her symbol was a shirt.[12]

Then, the next participant, Ms. Pn, ... it took her awhile to start her story. While laughing, she admitted that she had nothing to be proud of in her life. Everyone in the room encouraged her to remember what actions were valuable. One of the participants said:

> "... you paid for your children's tuition fees by collecting shells, right?" Then, while blushing, she asked again: "... should I be proud of that? Everyone in the room half-screamed "... yes! ..." (Pn 2022, March FGD).

She began to tell us about her daily activities searching for clams and crabs in *Tanjang* forest. She also demonstrated how to do the search, with both hands pulled forward and moved to the side repeatedly as a sign of paddling a canoe while searching for shells. She also told us about the proceeds from selling the shells, which she saved and used to send her children to college. When asked what the symbol of her pride was, she once again grimaced and was confused, "... what is it?". Once again Mr. Kr gave her an idea "... trophies!...". Incidentally, in that room there were three trophies displayed on the sideboard of the owner of the house. With a big laugh Ms. Pn agreed to Mr. Kr's suggestion on the trophy symbol.

Furthermore, when the dialogue entered into the issue of KEEs in Kedunggebang Village, everyone was thinking, looking left and right, smiling and mumbling, hesitating when asked about the KEE programme "... what

can I say?... they said". It seemed as if they just realised that they had never even referred to mangrove forests as KEEs. Then the researchers guided the participants with a question, "How do you call the forests where you look for shellfish…crabs… where birds nest ...?" They responded, "oh that ... usually they are called *cacalan*, *tanjang*, mangrove area". The participants were also reminded about places that are cared for and preserved, what do you call them? "*sing perlu diuri-uri*", which was interpreted as something that needs to be preserved. Other participants agreed that the area needed to be protected. Furthermore, in the dialogue, we referred to the mangrove forests as "*sing perlu diuri-uri area*" (*KSPD*). Participants did not object to the term (Im 2022, March FGD).[13]

In the dialogue, Ms. Pn bravely and firmly stated that this language issue was very important. They do not understand many of the terms and language used by "those people above": "... What were they saying? We did not understand, what did they mean, what did they ask us to do?..." (Pn 2022, March FGD). In the paragraph above, the communities have called the *tanjang* area a *diuri-uri* area, a location where they make a living that is maintained and cared for. Language issues and information distribution that do not recognise the local context result in a complete exclusion of local communities as well as women in environmental management and conservation.[14]

The narratives of women's agency in mangrove forests were reflected through FGDs. Language issues are important for equitable engagement and access. There is also a gap between local knowledge and that of the KEE. According to Ms. Pn, some shellfish seekers cut down a few mangrove roots to make way for canoes. Unfortunately, *Perhutani* considers this action to be damaging the nature. For this action, *Perhutani* arrested and imprisoned the local community members on charges of cutting mangrove roots in the conservation area. According to the fisherfolks' version, the arrest was due to a misunderstanding; the language used by the officials was too high and could not be understood by them. On the other hand, the officials did not know why the fisherwomen cut mangrove roots "...to make way for clams and crabs" (Pn 2022, March FGD). Based on the FGDs, the researchers noted that the local communities are aware about environmental preservation, but the unequal communication flow and not recognising the context and needs of the local communities have led to misunderstanding and criminalisation of the people who carry out their daily work. Why would they destroy the mangrove forests on which they depend their livelihood on?[15]

As a comparison, the experience of growing women's agency in the solution of ecological crises occurred in the highland village of Kerinci Seblat National Park (Taman Nasional Kerinci Seblat/TNKS), Sumatera (Hendrastiti & Kusujiarti 2022). The research shows how a postcolonial feminist framework reveals the agency and movement of local women in expressing their rights to be involved in managing natural resources. The women's group who sought to gain rights and access to the forest were the lower strata of the village's social class. This group was also initially criminalised and had to access the forest secretly from the TNKS. However, with the initiative of the women and facilitation from local environmental organisations, The TNKS women fought for legal access to the TNKS. When women are fully involved and there is equal and open communication between the community and the TNKS, it turns out that women can show that their daily knowledge of the forest environment has a significant impact on the preservation of forest areas. This is evidenced by the absence of flooding and forest replanting. In addition, women also get economic empowerment from processing forest products (Boang Manalu, Subono & Putri 2022). The research shows that when women are equally involved, they can negotiate with the communities, formal institutions, and local governments to show how their knowledge and experience play an important role in conserving the resources around them.

Postcolonial Feminist Method as Decolonising Method

One of the highlights of this research method is rapport: the experience of recognising subaltern voices. The rapport required in postcolonial feminist methods is a process of equality between research subjects. Participants proved willing to engage in discussions when they were safe, felt they were on an equal footing, and were connected to the researchers (who came from outside the community). Feminist momentum in the practice of postcolonial methods is not time-dependent, although time can be a prerequisite of the relationship and connection between subjects. The experience of being treated as the 'other' is the biggest obstacle to equal rapport.

Based on the author's observations, most subaltern communities tend to stand still and wait; not progressive at first, they tend to watch and learn how they are treated (as written by DeLoughrey & Handley 2011; Enarson,

Fothergill & Peek 2017; Candra 2019). They also know that they are usually put in an unequal situation, being the listeners, not speaking or keeping quiet because they do not understand what the power holders and decision makers are talking about. Yet, when they are given a safe space and treated as equal subjects, we will be able to understand what barriers they experience, what they need, and what they know and have practised. In this research process with decolonial feminist methods, the researchers can practice rapport in an inclusive and equal way.

Based on our research, we realised that the rapport period in postcolonial feminist research requires gatekeeper(s). The researchers benefit from the support provided by gatekeepers. Gatekeepers also become mediators to accelerate language alignment and intersectional equality between local communities, especially women, and the researchers. Another interesting point is that gatekeepers can also learn about situations and methods of approaching subjects and dialogue practices that are more equal and open. They have the opportunity to discover social phenomena that were not previously revealed during the dialogues. Through stories and dialogues in a safe space, many previously unknown stories were articulated and expanded mutual understanding.

We learned that there are various local terms used to refer to mangrove forests, including *alas etan kono*, *sembulungan*, *segoro etan*, and *tanjang*. Interestingly, none of these commonly recognised terms refers to the *tanjang* area as a KEE. For example, KEE is a programme in the *tanjang* location.[16] This means that there is a gap in understanding between the government's programme and the local community's understanding. According to the authors, the success of a nature conservation programme involving local communities must at least depart from the local cultural context. Equal and understandable communication must be considered in the implementation of the programme.

The relationship between women and *tanjang* reflects the identity of ecological relationships. That they are subjects of the group to which they are part of, and the identity of their relationship with *tanjang*. The drawings they made reveal how they place themselves (positionality) towards *tanjang*; how close, how far, is there a connection with *tanjang* project, is there a connection, and so on.

The FGD dialogue method is effective for establishing rapport as there is a reason for everyone to share who they are, their agency in the family, in the community, and their presence in the wider social sphere. It also looks at their ecological relationship with the KEE programme, and the presence/acceptance of the programme in their daily lives. This is at least the beginning of findings about responses to the climate crisis in the form of mangrove exclusive economic zones that are not part of local community life.

This FGD dialogue is a measuring tool for how effective the social internalisation of the programme is for the communities. There is a tendency that communities only accept programme implementation because there is a project attached to it. The engagement orientation is not on the sustainability of *tanjang* and the safety of living space but simply a project motive.

While the discussions revealed that communities are trained to campaign for the benefits of KEE, and expressed their gratitude for the programme, there are still narratives that show a disconnect between global/national agendas and local communities' interests. For example, there is a narrative of UDD (*uang dewe-dewe*) in running the programme. To procure seedlings and plant mangroves, UDD is a narrative of self-help funds to save mangrove forests. They thought the provision of mangrove seedlings and planting was supported by government funds because it was a government programme. The narrative is accompanied by dissatisfaction as people have to work and spend their own funds to achieve the success of the programme's goals.

The above narrative has multifaceted meanings, firstly, that communities must undertake activities to make the mangrove conservation programme a success. Secondly, communities are benefitted by the mangrove conservation programme because there are opportunities to develop or start a business. Thirdly, over time, knowledge and awareness will emerge that mangrove forests will save people's living space. There is a narrative in the dialogue:

> "... it is said that *tanjang* forest can break the waves and prevent flooding, abrasion ..." (P2 2022, March FGD).

The phrase "it is said" reflects that the function of *tanjang* is actually taught by outsiders to the communities... not genuine local knowledge from coastal communities, which was passed down from their ancestors.[17]

The FGDs also uncovered how local women understand their position towards *tanjang* forest. In fact, women were outside the circle of the KEE programme scheme. One woman hesitantly asked while putting up

a post-it "... I am here, in the circle, because I join *PKK*; and *PKK* activity programme is included in the KEE. But only a few women are included. Women who look for clams and crabs are not involved in *PKK*" (Tr 2022, March FGD). Through the FGDs we found that women's programmes in the KEE only involved elite village women. If the meeting had been attended by more women who look for clams and crabs, it would have shown how women were positioned in relation to the KEE. [18] Women's voices in the FGDs showed an existing picture of the social strata of women's groups. Although not all FGD participants were part of subaltern groups, the presence of women clams and crabs seekers clarified the intersection of social classes in the two mangrove forest villages.

In relation to this issue, de Souza (2019) notes that there has been a shift in feminist solidarity away from the main intra-movement articulations of feminist groups. In Latin America, feminist movements - joined by a large number of grassroots organisations labelled anti-capitalist, and trade union movements - are demanding that violence against women be linked to other forms of exploitation, such as capitalist exploitation and the precarisation of work to issues relating to gender violence and reproductive rights. The agenda of inclusivity and connectivity between issues of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and race, legitimises not only the right to freedom of expression, but also an assertion on the materiality of women's bodies and the need to reclaim women's rights over their bodies.

Summarising the analysis of subaltern women's agency on the issue of ecological crisis within a postcolonial feminist framework, we see that there is knowledge related to language and gendered bodies. There is a different context of language and meaning shared by subaltern communities and those in power. For subaltern women, their actions and thoughts are embedded with gender identity. Yet, environmental conservation programmes often construct the subject as a gender-neutral body, failing to recognise women's experiences, needs, and knowledge at the local level. To ensure inclusive engagement and equitable environmental management, the intersections between gender, geography, social class, and other factors must be recognised in order to generate adequate and equitable responses. As narrated by ecological feminist thinkers, especially postcolonialist thinkers, subaltern voices are important sources of knowledge to respond to the climate crisis.

Closing

Women's agency on the issue of ecological crisis exists. It is the narrative and language of the subaltern communities that is different. The postcolonial feminist framework and feminist political ecology (FPE) methodology become a bridge that allows subaltern communities' narrative to be heard, intersectional positionality to be drawn, and henceforth recognised. Based on field talks, the agency of subaltern communities is formed because individual and group consciousness exists in the form of knowledge "imperialism"; from the story that is a challenge to the recognition of knowledge.

The recognition of knowledge production from subaltern communities is a decolonisation of social discourse, including the strands of feminism itself. The idea of designing development programmes, especially participatory responses to ecological crises, would be meaningless without decolonising the frameworks and methodologies of social research, especially on environmental issues. This article does propose a presumptive premise of recognising the agency of subaltern women; however, in reality, the production and reproduction of knowledge from subaltern women's communities continues, and is seeking recognition from the scientific public. The decolonisation that occurs is actual and practical and takes a political path because it has to deal with the regulation of engagement.

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End Notes

1 Field research conducted as part of a Preparatory Proposal Grant from Recoftc-Explore, March 2022.

2 Today, this biodiversity is in crisis and endangered; not only because of dramatic universal changes to the ecosystem, but also because of many human pressures that are accelerating its extinction. KEE scheme was designed to maintain the sustainability of the mangrove forest sites, inviting local participation and safeguarding community welfare. Fieldwork showed how much of a hidden phenomenon *Teluk Pangpang* KEE agenda is. KEE is an option to save the ecosystem in this climate crisis situation. The design of KEE lacks efforts to improve the livelihoods of the communities around the area. Therefore, the context of a decolonisation study of KEE area is crucial to further respond to its local socio-political impacts for stakeholders.

3 The concept of gender is an innovation of feminist scholars, so its discourse base is often referred to together with the concept of gender.

4 It turns out that the practice of colonialism continues, metamorphoses, and mutates into imperialism and is embedded in indigenous patriarchy (Candra, 2019). Candra's research (2019) in Manggarai, NTT shows that the marginalisation of women is legitimised by local culture and customary traditions through patriarchal patterns. Local narratives and stories refer to the legitimisation of this patriarchal pattern, while revealing

the voices of subaltern groups that there are complex social phenomena, which are the root of the vulnerability and resistance of the marginalised groups.

5 Ecological and political relations within the FPE framework can reveal hidden phenomena of gender diversity and relational inequality through three main areas ((Sundberg 2015): 1) Gendered environmental knowledge and practices; 2) Natural gender rights and unequal vulnerability to environmental change; and 3) Gender-based environmental activism and organisations.

6 Gender perspective applied in the research promotes alternative solutions for better forest landscape sustainability, focusing on the rights and involvement of women and other marginalised groups.

7 Lakes, rivers, swamps, brackish, and tidal areas with no more than six metres of water.

8 Since 2016, the implementation of some government affairs in the forestry sector has been delegated to the Governor as the representative of the government. According to Permen LHK No. P.66/Menlhk-Setjen/2015, one of the authorities to designate and manage KEEs is included in this delegation framework (Setiahadi 2020). The process of designating and managing essential ecosystem areas according to the Permen LHK is carried out in stages, namely: 1) Identification and inventory of essential ecosystem areas, 2) Facilitation of the patterning (designation) of essential ecosystem areas, 3) Designation of essential ecosystem areas, 4) Development of action plans for essential ecosystem areas, 5) Facilitation of the implementation of essential ecosystem area action plans, 6) Monitoring and evaluation of the management (Setiahadi 2020).

9 In the dialogue, there was a narrative about (1) the determination of the location of KEE programme is in *tanjang* location. Unfortunately, (2) communities were still confused about why KEE is needed, what is the function of the programme, what are the benefits of the programme, for whom is the success of the programme, and (3) communities also wondered about the difference between KEE programme and the old *tanjang* forest area. The important information was that in 2022 there will be no more socialisation, either from the KEE management forum or government institutions (village, district, province). Communities' responses regarding livelihoods show that there are concerns about the loss of livelihoods. In KEE programme, the conservation principle is felt more strongly, as is the position of the communities and their livelihoods. This issue also involves a clash of approaches, or a clash of orientations regarding environmental conservation. Physical environment comes first, people second. Unclear information has led villagers around the mangrove areas to ignore KEE boundary. They carry on their normal activities in *Tanjang* area, no different from before KEE programme.

10 The community sees the "sectoral ego" of stakeholders, for example between the Social Affairs Office, BKSDA, NGOs, and the Fisheries and Marine Affairs Office.

11 Public relations with KEE programme include: (1) KEE was established by Governor's Decree No. 188; this decree provides a legal umbrella for its socialisation. However, communities felt that socialisation was lacking. One example was the "stalled dialogue between the communities and the village head and authorities". As a result, law enforcement and programme implementation were not well received by the communities. KEE programme is like a programme that runs "on its own", while the communities carry out their own activities as well. Women's activities, including women's productive activities, have no connection to KEE.

12 Ms. Dv dan Ms. Pn, both middle-aged women, were invited because they were active in several mangrove forest assistance activities.

13 The term KEE is not used daily. Because the programme's location is in *tanjang* area where people carry out their activities, they continue to use the term *tanjang*. Something has changed, namely that there are now many obstacles, because of the different methods and ways of looking for clams, crabs, and shrimps in *tanjang* area. This change in method has become a gap between the programme's authority and the communities. This difference is not simple because this difference becomes an intersectional clash of interests (gender, class, ethnicity, language) stemming from language differences.

14 Communities understand the importance of *tanjang*. *Tanjang* is important for livelihoods. For fishing communities, in particular, tanjang is useful for protecting the village from floods and tsunamis. Did the fertility and replanting of *tanjang* increase the number of clams and crabs? The dialogue participants hesitated; apparently the answer is no. Once the situation of *tanjang* forest improves, the population of clams and crabs does not automatically increase. Some fisherfolks feel that clams and crabs are now difficult to find; not because the numbers are decreasing but because the mangrove roots prevent small fishing boats from passing through, making it difficult for them to penetrate the roots in the forest.

15 When asked who the fisherfolks are? Are all fisherfolks only from villages around *tanjang* forest? Are there fisherfolks from outside the area? They answered that the fisherfolks are from the local village and from outside the village; all of them can get sea products.

16 The method used was drawing and sticking colourful post-its on HVS paper. In this article, the focus of analysis is on female participants.

17 What future research needs to look for is the composition of the communities, indigenous, and migrant.

18 Mr. An, a village leader who runs many village programmes, said that he was far from KEE programme (Mr. An's position was outside the circle). Mr. Im put up post-its in the programme area because he was invited several times and participated in socialisation at the Village Hall and other places. Mr. Im was involved in some of the implementation of KEE programme. However, he did not claim to be at the centre of KEE locations in the village.