

Women's Initiative Forms Environmental Culture as an Effort to Overcome Climate Change

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Abstract

This research discusses the efforts of women in the community as a form of environmental culture in responding to the climate change crisis. The arrogance issue of patriarchal reason has distorted human ability to recognize the main problem of environmental damage. Humans are trapped in the illusion of the domination of reason which seeks to control nature as non-humans. As a result of this arrogance of reason, culture is formed hierarchically dominating nature (non-humans). We offer a change in cultural perspective through the environmental culture raised by Val Plumwood. This culture with an ecological and caring perspective is a form of the feminist ecological thought movement. We use the method of analysing feminist issues through feminist knowledge standpoints that interact with ecological research methods. We collect data through various media with a focus on telling the experiences of women in dealing with environmental problems. Our analysis comes to the conclusion that concrete initiatives and actions are needed that involve all ecological elements as a form of solidarity. In this way, we no longer glorify humans as the rulers of reason, but rather create critical and creative communities in realizing an environmental culture.

Keywords: Environmental Culture; Climate Change; Feminist Ecology; Val Plumwood; The story of the Women's Initiative for the Environment

Background

Feminists, especially ecological feminists, see that the problems of exploitation and environmental destruction that led to the climate crisis have the same patterns and/or go hand in hand with the patterns of women's oppression. Therefore, environmental issues are feminist issues. Amidst the various schools of ecological feminism, all of them share similarities on: (a) Exploring issues and connections between women and nature; (b) Applying feminist principles in responding to environmental issues while criticising environmental masculinity; and finally (c) Linking feminism and ecological perspectives, which means that an environmentalist must have a feminist perspective (Warren in Jagger & Young 2000).

The assertions of a number of environmental feminist scholars are supported by various research data and reports from various world organisations. The climate crisis, which is often considered a natural and neutral environmental issue, has a disproportionate impact in its intersection with gender and various other social categories. UN Environment in OHCHR (2022) states that

80% of people displaced by climate change are women. Statistics also show that in natural disasters, women and girls are 14 times more likely to die than men (Peterson 2007). As an illustration, of the 230,000 people killed in the Indian Ocean Tsunami, 70% were women. There are various factors that contribute to women's greater vulnerability to death in natural disasters. Numerous reports show that cultural and structural inequalities in society have resulted in the exclusion of women from access to information, education, exclusion from public spaces, women's poverty, and more, minimising their power to respond to disasters. This means that women's low life expectancy during disasters is not caused by biological factors but rather gender-biased social construction.

Referring to the gender division of labour, women are charged with the responsibility of social reproduction. Therefore, culturally, they have a greater dependence on natural resources. It is revealed that in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs), 8 out of 10 women are responsible for collecting clean water for household needs. Globally, more than 70%

of women are responsible for household water supply. The impact of the water crisis is experienced differently by each community, but women in developing countries face multiple challenges. Droughts mean women have to spend more time and energy just to get clean water, firewood, and other basic necessities. Women's vulnerability is exacerbated because they are not equipped to cope with the impacts of the climate crisis. The climate crisis does not only produce ecological disasters for women but also produces a multidimensional crisis that threatens to violate a number of women's basic rights. The real threats are loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, intensified competition over scarce resources, migration, conflict, political and economic insecurity, increased rates of domestic violence, child marriage, trafficking of girls, and others (UN Women 2022).

According to a number of feminist scholars, prevailing gender roles in society are to blame for women's increased vulnerability to the climate crisis (Agarwal 2000; Colfer 2017; Plumwood 2000; Mohanty 2003). Gender identity has positioned women as a disadvantaged group in society. Why is this? In patriarchal societies, women from the start do not have equal access to valuable resources but are attached to reproductive responsibilities in the household. These social roles and expectations of women often result in women's higher environmental concerns and initiatives compared to men (Slovic 1999; Finucane et al. 2000). Gender roles related to social care and reproduction mean that women tend to feel more responsible and more concerned about environmental quality (Zelezny et al. 2000; Dietz et al. 2002; Hunter et al. 2004). It is important to note that while women are at a disadvantage and often excluded from adaptation and mitigation due to their gender roles and positions, they are often at the forefront of efforts to build resilience in communities. Across the world, including in Indonesia, many women have spoken out against the climate crisis.

A number of women's collective actions in response to the climate crisis have patterns that are built on a feminist standpoint. The aspects that this research aims to show, namely social initiatives by the agencies; concrete experiences that form the basis of their actions; engagement/participation; and solidarity. These concepts are adapted from the thoughts of various feminist thinkers, particularly Val Plumwood (Plumwood 2002).

McLaren (2019) points out that participation that demonstrates women's agency needs to be examined

from a feminist lens in relation to their concrete daily experiences; the capacity of the self or individual to voice and encourage social change or transformation for themselves and/or others. Agency is also related to community solidarity and empowerment. The climate crisis has asymmetrical adverse impacts on women, but if read and intervened with a feminist perspective, this situation can be used as a momentum to change gender norms and practices. Evidence from the field suggests that the impacts of climate change are resulting in significant socio-economic shifts including traditional gender norms in relation to women's economic activities, social relations, and leadership. In some parts of the world, climate crisis, crop failures, and resource scarcity are forcing rural men to migrate or change professions. Meanwhile, women, who are left behind in the village, inevitably have to do the work traditionally done by men (United Nations Environment Programme, UN Women, UNDP and UNDP/PA/PBSO 2020). The climate crisis situation is miserable and not ideal, but women have shown many examples of meaningful participation. They are resisting and building resilience to the climate crisis. At the village/site level, women's leadership and collective initiatives have shown significant changes in environmental conservation, resource conflict prevention, community economic empowerment, and solidarity strengthening.

Using a feminist lens, this research aims to show that although women experience multiple vulnerabilities due to gender and climate situations, they cannot be seen as mere victims because various data show that women have strong resilience for themselves and their communities. Women are important agents and carriers of solutions to climate change. They play an important role when they are integrated in climate change adaptation and mitigation processes. It is also identified that women have concerns and knowledge related to climate threats so that they often carry out initiatives as well as joint work to preserve the environment. Without falling into gender essentialism, this paper aims to show that the situation and condition of society have an impact on the formation of women's subjectivity. How women know, how women make decisions, and how women are involved in responding to the climate crisis, are related to the examination of certain socio-political positions occupied by women, whether they bring certain privileges or otherwise put them at a disadvantage.

Research Methodology

This research prioritises women's knowledge and experiences in taking initiatives to address climate change issues. The first method we used was data collection through the experiences of several women from various mass media. The collection of success stories of these women is related to their initiatives in making changes related to environmental issues and climate change. This method is part of feminist case studies as mentioned by Shulamit Reinharz (1946-) in her book entitled *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (1992). The method starts by gathering a spectrum of analyses based on various sources, one of which can be archival research (Reinharz 1992) - which we used in this research. Feminist case studies refer to research that focuses on one major issue by compiling various examples (Reinharz 1992).

Our first step was to select several cases of women's success in taking praxis initiatives to overcome problems caused by climate change in the area where they live. These cases illustrate experiences that can help us structure analyses in an effort to understand a complex theory (Reinharz 1992) on the issue of feminism and climate change. Some of the female figures who illustrate the cases in our research are: 1) Melati and Isabel Wijzen (Initiators of the Bye Bye Plastic Bags Movement); 2) Rubama (Aceh Natural Forest and Environment Foundation); 3) Masnuah (Founder of Puspita Bahari Fisherwomen Community); 4) Siti Aisyah (Founder of NTB Mandiri Waste Bank); 5) Westiani Agustin (Founder of Biyung Indonesia - a social enterprise that focuses on women and environmental issues); and 6) Yuktiasih Proborini (Disabled and environmental activist; Founder of Sejiwa Foundation). We collected various articles that tell the story of environmental care initiative programmes, which go hand in hand with the empowerment of women's groups. The selection of these figures is intended to show concrete experiences and different situations behind the initiatives and solidarity movements that women carry out.

The stories of these women environmentalists become illustrative points that we formulate in the analysis of this research. One of the characteristics of feminist case studies is to place the experience and presence of women's solidarity to answer various problems, which in this research focuses on the environment. Illustration of women's experiences will illuminate processes of women's involvement, which is often uncharted in the broader view of the issue (Reinharz 1992). This approach is also emphasised by Sandra Harding (1935-) through the concept of standpoint

feminism (1993) as an important effort to examine the situation of women's involvement - in this research we relate how women respond to environmental crises. Of course, this principle goes hand in hand with the idea of solidarity and feminist activism.

The feminist standpoint comes as an attempt to accommodate and recognise the viewpoint of the silenced 'others'. This awareness of marginalisation is usually the starting point that women's groups do not come from favourable epistemological, power, and socio-political positions. The excluded groups then choose defensive ways to speak out and fight back. Standpoint feminism is the foundation of feminist politics (Harding 1993). It does not simply tell the story of individual concrete experiences but can also illustrate the power of the community/collective. Standpoint feminism departs from the examination of identity, how one experiences the world. Furthermore, women's agency in the framework of standpoint feminism does not stop at the capacity to save oneself, but has a social intention to support and empower the surrounding community, as well as to bring about social transformation.

Our analytical framework brings together feminist issue analysis methods with ecological research methods. Ecological research generally has the following main perspectives: concern for the environment, the relationship between the environment and humans, and the impact of humans on environmental health and sustainability (Given 2008). The overall concern of the issue arises from the interconnectedness of actors, events, practices, and policies that ultimately critically seek to demonstrate concern for the well-being of future generations - the relationship of the earth and the creatures that live on it (Given 2008). The intersection of feminist issue analysis with ecological problems is one form of intersectional - an interdisciplinary form that tries to understand the relationship between ecological problems and gender issues in society to produce a solution (Given 2008).

Based on the confluence of feminist issue analysis with its knowledge standpoint, as well as ecological methods, we underline four important ideas in feminism, namely: the importance of concrete/everyday experiences as the basis for collective actions; feminist solidarity; women's agency and involvement in fighting climate crisis; and women's resilience which is closely related to empowerment. This research also shows the forms, patterns of women's engagement, and initiatives for climate justice undertaken by young women's groups;

grassroots activism; and women with disabilities groups. We come to the understanding that climate justice is not possible without also fighting for gender justice.

Understanding the Concept of Environmental Culture

We take Val Plumwood's (1939-2008) concept of environmental culture as his response to the environmental crisis and climate change (Plumwood 2002). Basically, technological development can facilitate human life and the environment. However, often human decisions in utilising technology do not consider its impact on the environment - which in this case includes non-human life situations. Plumwood argues that our response to environmental crises, including climate change, will determine the degree to which we value our lives as humans in our environment (Plumwood 2002).

The word "culture" in the concept offered by Plumwood is a reminder to recognise different perspectives in understanding ecological issues. The term culture also marks in contrast cultural and social change that basically recognises our (human) attachment to ecological conditions (Plumwood 2002). Plumwood believes in a deconstructive strategy of nature/culture dualism that affects the separation of mind from body; and reason from emotion. We need to systematically use the term culture as a way to focus attention on the depth of understanding of culture amidst patriarchal dualist understandings of culture. The culture/nature dualism radically excludes nature from human life-nature becomes inferior and manipulable (Plumwood 1993).

The supremacy of human reason in the patriarchal pattern of rationalism has radically placed a hierarchy between humans and non-humans. Rationalism is glorified and restricts the understanding of human reason as the best. As a result, the non-human environment experiences systemic discrimination. Elizabeth Anne Grosz (1952-), an Australian philosopher, points out that Western knowledge thinking fails to understand the process of knowledge production, especially when there is a denial of the body (1993). This crisis of reason is a consequence of the privileging of purely conceptual history, ignoring the experience of the body as knowledge (Grosz 1993). Starting from this understanding, we can understand Plumwood showing that the ecological crisis is a crisis of reason that closes itself off from different bodily experiences (Plumwood 2002).

The typical rationalism of human/nature dualism has created a culture with a distance between humans and non-humans - as the Other - thus justifying control over (non-human) nature. It is also what removes the role and rights of 'the Other' over the earth by eliminating them rationally (Plumwood 1993). There is a denial of the working logic of 'the Other' so that they are not considered to have the ability to survive in a world without the presence of human rationality. We are trapped in the assumption that nature is "dependent" on humans - a denial of nature's independence. This pattern even goes as far back as the children's upbringing by eliminating the existence of nature (the Other) as part of their life. Children are accustomed to understanding the process from "cared for" to "carer" (as adults) (Plumwood 2002) - and this is how we come to understand that nature ultimately becomes a task of our "care". Human/nature dualist rationalism denies that it is we humans who need nature because of its radical independence-its ontological existence is not dependent on humans.

The formation of a rationalist culture eventually succeeded in distorting various human lives. The patriarchal cultural tradition has played a role in the history of Western thought; hence, this dominant dualistic reasoning also endangers ecological conditions. We are accustomed to the logic of subjugation of other cultures - as a form of competition and comparative advantage in the dominant rationalist culture (Plumwood 2002). The roots of the ecological crisis are inadequate knowledge (ignorance), unjust political structures (interests), and an unequal ethical, philosophical, and spiritual worldview of humans (illusion) - these three mutually reinforce the dominant rationalist culture.

In the process of one's journey to maintain their existence, there is a conflict to prove who is the strongest. Humans are used to seeing those outside their culture as 'the Other'. As a result, they use humans with different cultures and even nature (non-human) as a comparison in the survival competition. Those who are strong will dominate, exclude, and exploit 'the Other' - under the alibi of an ecological adaptation process (Plumwood 2002). The logic of competition and survival even forgets how we care for nature in return for what we use (in the process of survival) - a form of failure of rational culture to implement ethical ecological conditions in the long run. If this continues, we will soon face extinction - as a form of ecological crisis (Plumwood 2002).

The ecological crisis arises from a dominant rational culture that does not even hesitate to say this is part of the evolutionary process (Plumwood 2002). There is an arrogance and inability to recognise that it is humans who are dependent on nature, and this shows the failure of reason to work - and jeopardises our survival as humans. However, Plumwood does not see this as a fault of reason. Asserting reason without any concern for different experiences will make it work in a way that is unclear. It is human arrogance and insensitivity that has evolved within the framework of "ratio", thus reinforcing the narrative of domination over nature (non-human) and disengaging the human connection with nature (non-human).

The offer in environmental culture is an offer to change the perspective of reason. Plumwood invites us as humans to no longer ignore ecological conditions. The neglect of nature will also contaminate reason from emotions, attachments, and manifestations of care. Rationality should no longer be used to dominate but as an effort of liberation - close to life (Plumwood 2002). The effort to change the perspective of the use of reason can start by listening to and sharing knowledge about 'the Other' through the storytelling of their experiences. This also changes our perspective on "culture" and no longer places human domination over nature (non-human). By doing so, we also learn to take initiatives that do not dominate, but involve all ecological aspects to take collective responsibility for the care of life - while building a sense of solidarity.

Stories of Women's Initiatives to Address Climate Change

The Story of Melati and Isabel Wijzen, Founders of Bye Bye Plastic

Melati and Isabel Wijzen are sisters who have been environmentally sensitive since the age of 12 and 10 respectively (byebyeplasticbags.org). They started the Bye Bye Plastic Bags movement in 2013, with the goal of freeing Bali from the threat of plastic bags.

They started the movement by picking up rubbish at 115 points on the island as the tides brought tonnes of plastic waste to Bali. They got thousands of people on board to help collect rubbish from Bali's seas, rivers, and streets. They realised that the movement needed support from the Balinese Government, so they put together a petition and managed to collect one hundred thousand signatures. This support led them to meet the then Governor of Bali, I Made Mangku Pastika, and they agreed to make Bali without plastic bags by January

2018 (cnnindonesia.com 2021a). Melati and Isabel are concerned about environmental issues, especially pollution through plastic bag waste because plastic waste pollutes the beaches, sea, and streets in Bali. They were inspired to start the movement as teenagers by finding out the problems in their neighbourhood, namely about plastic waste. To date, Bye Bye Plastic Bags has 30 permanent core members consisting of 9-year-olds to university students (sampahlaut.id 2020).

Melati and Isabel have become the voices of youth to campaign for the movement for young people to start small steps for their neighbourhood. In the Time 100 Talks programme, they discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic, political, climate, and environmental developments in the world (cnnindonesia.com 2021b). In addition, they have been invited as speakers at TED Talk London on the waste crisis in Bali and invited to the World Marine Debris Conference in San Diego. In 2018, they were also included in Time magazine's list of the most influential teenagers in the world. They were also selected as CNN Heroes Young Wonders (cnnindonesia.com 2021b).

Their movement in 2018 even involved 20,000 volunteers and managed to collect 65 tonnes of waste. They also worked with 350 businesses in Bali to slowly reduce the use of plastic bags, disposable cups, and straws (sampahlaut.id 2020). Through Bye Bye Plastic Bags, they created a pilot village by helping local shops and 800 families to use bags from alternative materials. After 3 years of starting Bye Bye Plastic Bags movement, Melati gained global support from 13 countries. In the past 4 years, Bye Bye Plastic Bags has successfully engaged 57,500 people in 430 locations to prevent 115 tonnes of plastic from polluting the oceans (cnnindonesia.com 2021a). In addition, Bye Bye Plastic Bags also supports the empowerment of women on the slopes of Mount Batukaru through the Mountain Mamas project. This project is carried out through women's economic empowerment by making bags from recycled waste materials that have been collected.

The Story of Rubama, a Natural Forest and Environmental Activist from Aceh

Rubama has a background in tourism education at Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), in the field of ecotourism. Rubama's work related to the environment often encourages her assisted villages to become nature and cultural tourism villages. Gampong Nusa and Damaran Baru Village in Aceh are examples of this. In late 2005, Rubama, along with a resident of Gampong Nusa,

attended a training on waste management in Calang, Aceh Jaya District, organised by an NGO (Mongabay 2018). She put this knowledge into practice and disseminated it to the women's group of Gampong Nusa. Together, they turn plastic waste into creative products. Rubama also created a waste bank programme, where children sell their waste.

Another Rubama's environmental initiative is to encourage the involvement of women in Damaran Baru Village in the management and conservation of forest areas. Rubama believes that women have long been involved in forest conservation. This is reinforced by the knowledge she gained through dialogue with women at the village level. She recognised the women's anxiety about the flood-prone environment caused by illegal logging. Rubama recalled that the beginning of her involvement was to assist villagers in the Gayo highlands. In 2015, Damaran Baru Village was hit by a flash flood that destroyed a number of houses. Village women were worried and needed to intervene, but on the other hand they lacked the courage to protect the forest because they did not have permits and information about the rules related to illegal logging.

Rubama and her organisation facilitate village women to legally access and preserve the forest. Together with the women, Rubama mapped the village's potentials and challenges (Boang Manalu, Subono & Putri 2022). Through information and knowledge, women in Damaran Baru Village have been empowered to protect their environment, understand their rights, and know the law as a tool to resist illegal loggers. Women's involvement in environmental protection demonstrates a uniquely female approach. They use negotiation skills or conversational methods to educate illegal loggers. Not by violence but by peaceful means. Rubama's involvement in facilitating women forest rangers has also led to the development of an ecotourism education village in Damaran Baru-Aceh.¹

The Story of Masnuah, a Fisherwoman Warrior

Climate change is a global challenge that affects people from all levels of life. However, the impacts are more pronounced for a group of fisherwomen in Demak, Indonesia, who are struggling amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This picture is more or less revealed in a UN Women's article (2021) entitled "How the fisherwomen of Java rise above climate change and an increase in gender-based violence". According to Masnuah, Chairperson of Indonesian Fisherwomen's Association (Persaudaraan Perempuan Nelayan Indonesia), without the pandemic

and climate change, fisherwomen already have their own vulnerabilities. These include social and economic vulnerabilities, lack of protection against accidents at sea, increased school dropout rates among fisherwomen's children, and high cases of domestic violence.

Masnuah said that sea waves are becoming more unpredictable, tidal floods are increasing, and rising sea levels have submerged two villages in Demak. Tragically, before the issues caused by climate change can be fully addressed, Demak residents are facing another emergency, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further exacerbated social inequality. The pandemic has caused fish prices to plummet (Anggita 2021).

During the pandemic, Masnuah and Puspita Bahari did advocacy work against violence. What was difficult was that the victims and their companions had no money for transport. Masnuah's work is not easy because there are many challenges ranging from stigma against women's organisations, limited funds, double workload, social restrictions, and others.² Nevertheless, Masnuah has taken initiatives that have had an impact on her community and neighbourhood. Masnuah applies feminist solidarity by empowering the fisherwomen community through economic, political, and legal empowerment. The fisherwomen were given a number of trainings on processing and selling seafood; they received training on legal advocacy for their communities; they were recognised in their communities and by the state through legal recognition on their ID cards as fisherwomen. Masnuah also always collaborates with various agencies, such as LPSK (Witness and Victim Protection Agency), Legal Aid Institute (LBH), media, and others to fight for justice for fisherwomen. Masnuah's initiative to respond to climate disasters and pandemic is to mobilise community solidarity. Masnuah's collective actions with PPNI related to disasters include raising donations for villages drowned by tidal floods. She also actively voices this issue in various forums and media so that their problems are heard and receive wider attention. Another important action by Masnuah in responding to disasters, especially in the COVID-19 era, is to build food security for vulnerable groups by organising barter between farmers and fisherfolks groups. Masnuah believes that through solidarity, people can participate in helping vulnerable communities such as fisherfolks (Anggita 2021).

The Story of Siti Aisyah, Founder of NTB Mandiri Waste Bank

Waste Bank NTB Mandiri, which Aisyah Odist founded, is one of the waste management centres

that has implemented household waste management as an entrepreneurial motivation for housewives. By developing and increasing public awareness in waste management and changing people's perspective, waste that is considered having no value can have economic value if managed properly (Alfina & Herlina 2022). The beginning of Aisyah's involvement in waste management and processing was due to her concern about her environment, Lombok. In an interview with *Imajie TV*, Aisyah stated that she sees Lombok as a place that is beautiful and full of potential, but has serious problems that must be addressed. Although Aisyah is aware that waste is a big issue, she believes that even the smallest participation can have an impact. She also believes that with love (care), the waste problem can be solved (Kompasiana 2016; *Imajie TV* 2021).

Seeing the condition of her neighbourhood, Aisyah took the initiative to educate people about waste and change their practices towards waste. Aisyah teaches the community to turn waste into economically valuable items, such as crafts, bags, and others. Aisyah seeks to change not only people's perspectives, but also their practices. Her work as an environmental activist is accompanied by the work to empower women and disabled groups. She often conducts training for these groups using her personal funds. Her hope is that her knowledge can empower other groups and be disseminated for greater impact. Aisyah's environmental activism is rooted in her commitment to empowering her community (Mongabay 2019). Aisyah's form of agency is her success in encouraging the transformation of a village in Lombok from a slum village to a tourist village.

The Story of Westiani Agustin and the Cloth Sanitary Pads Movement

Ani, as she is affectionately known, has long been active in environmental education programmes. She is the founder of *Biyung Indonesia* - a social enterprise that focuses on women and environmental issues. In various organisations and activities related to environmental issues, she participates in creating educational programmes about efforts to protect the environment. Her collective action related to the environment stems from the reflection that women have contributed to the production of waste through disposable sanitary pads. She wants to change the consumption of disposable sanitary pads to reusable cloth pads. Since 10 years ago, she has switched to cloth pads (*Jogjapolitan* 2022). Ani's collective action departed from the spirit of feminist

solidarity. She invited women's groups in one of the villages in Jambi and Papua to produce cloth sanitary pads for their own circles. She also empowers women with disabilities in Jogja, Sukoharjo, Jakarta, and Jambi to make cloth sanitary pads that can be used and sold.

The vision of *Biyung's* social programme is "women helping women". According to Ani, the production of sanitary pads is done by women and used by women, so in this process there is a relationship of mutual need, help, and empowerment (*jogja.suara.com* 2020). Ani's social action with *Biyung* is not only about environmental conservation and women's economic empowerment. This programme is also intended as a space for sharing knowledge from the community to other women to be able to make their own pads. This movement also shares knowledge about menstruation and reproductive health, especially for women with disabilities.

The Story of Yuktiasih Proborini, a Disability and Environmental Activist

Yuktiasih Proborini became an environmental activist because of her reflection on her concern when she saw organic waste and food scraps being wasted. To reduce the waste problem, she decided to cultivate magot. She learned about magot from her youngest son. The magot she raises is the Black Soldier Fly or BSF. She collaborates with a university in Semarang to use their land, and also works with the Environmental Agency (*Dinas Lingkungan Hidup/DLH*) to source the waste to be processed. As a magot farmer, she often provides training that is not limited to the women's community. For example, to *Laudato Si'* (religious) community and the disabled community.

The owner of *Sejiwa Foundation*, Yuktiasih Proborini, shared her reasons for making transparent masks. The first thing that came to mind was that not everyone understands sign language. People with hearing impairment can pay attention to their interlocutor's lips to communicate. "So, what they see are their lips when they speak, making it easier for the other person to understand", she said when interviewed by *Jawa Pos Radar Semarang* at the *Sejiwa Foundation Secretariat*. When the initiative emerged, Yuktiasih was part of a community of people with disabilities throughout Indonesia. She then gathered people with disabilities in Semarang and facilitated them to make products with economic value (*Jawa Pos* 2020).

Assisted by her friends, Yuktiasih initially managed only 30 kilograms of fabric, but in the following months

the demand for transparent masks boomed until finally they managed 1.2 tonnes of fabric for transparent masks. Together with the community, Yuktiasih made not only masks, but also clothes that could then be sold by friends in the deaf community. Yuktiasih's movement shows how she uses her experience as a woman with a disability to make innovations that adapt to the situation of climate change (pandemic) and sensitivity to the needs of friends with disabilities (hearing impaired).

Learning from Women’s Experiences: A Feminist Ecology Proposal

The six stories of women’s activism that we have presented in the previous section are our sources in showing how environmental culture work can transform dominant reasoning into caring reasoning, especially in ecological care. The pattern of work in environmental culture offers a unique encounter: assertive and caring (Plumwood 2002). Assertive in rejecting institutional and systemic violence; at the same time caring and respectful through intentions and communications that recognise and understand the existence of ‘the Other’. This is also what we can show from the six stories of activism of women who managed to mobilise ecological awareness projects not only in relation to personal concerns, but also efforts to involve local communities to the government level. They have deconstructed the

dominant understanding of reason and replaced it with a definition of reason that is closer to ecological care.

The activism of these women environmentalists fights against the distortion of reason and culture through efforts to create environmental culture in their environment. The rejection of anthropocentric logic in the name of rationality - as a characteristic of environmental culture (Plumwood 2002) - is evident in each of their movements. They do not make the movement as a form of control and profit-seeking, but embody what Plumwood has offered, namely an ecological movement that favours and gives an active role to each ecological element (2002). These women's movements make us aware of the shortcomings of human understanding of nature (non-human) so that they do not hesitate to offer a corrective reasoning that no longer ignores the voice of ‘the Other’. With critical communication, women’s environmental activism invites us to reflect on the mastery of reason in ecological space. Based on the experiences of these women, we found several steps that can bring about an intensional relationship with critical communication through: initiative, concrete experience (action), engagement, and solidarity. These four steps constitute a reasoned approach to ecological care. These four steps can be seen in the following table:

Table 1

No	Name	Initiative	Concrete Experience	Involvement	Solidarity
1.	Melati and Isabel Wijsen (Young Group) Bye Bye Plastic Bags	<p>Collective action that started from young girls’ concerns about their neighbourhood.</p> <p>Empowerment that they do not only change individual practices, but also the neighbouring community. This initiative expanded into a local movement, amplified at the national level, and received global support.</p> <p>In the last 4 years, Bye Bye Plastic Bags has successfully engaged 57,500 people across 430 locations to prevent the use of 115 tonnes of plastic that can pollute the oceans.</p>	<p>In 2013, Melati and Isabel Wijsen started Bye Bye Plastic Bags movement. The initiative was undertaken due to concerns of the threats of plastic around them (Bali), especially related to marine pollution by plastic waste. Their work started from the initiative that it does not need to wait to grow up to make change.</p>	<p>Their initiative and work started out as simple day-to-day labour.</p> <p>work, namely collecting rubbish at 115 points and raising awareness as well as support through a petition that included 100,000 signatures. As of 2018, they have been able to engage 20,000 volunteers and collected 65-tonnes of waste.</p> <p>They involved local businesses and the government. They also received global attention, thus, being named as the most influential teenager by Time magazine.</p>	<p>Bye Bye Plastic Bags supports the empowerment of women on the slopes of Mount Batukaru through the Mountain Mamas project.</p> <p>This project empowers women’s economy by making bags from recycled materials.</p>

No	Name	Initiative	Concrete Experience	Involvement	Solidarity
2.	Rubama (HAKA Foundation)	<p>Sharing information on plastic waste management into creative products.</p> <p>Building Gampong Nusa into a natural and cultural tourism village (ecotourism) by referring to the experiences and agreements of the assisted village women.</p> <p>Activities that are carried out derived from joint mapping related to existing potentials and challenges.</p>	<p>Having a concern towards Aceh's forest environment. Through her work as a in the field, Rubama recognised the women's anxiety about the flood-prone environment caused by illegal logging. From her experience having emphatic dialogues, Rubama mapped the strengths and needs of the village women and facilitated them through relevant programmes.</p>	<p>Independent plastic waste management that involves the community and village officials in Gampong Nusa, Aceh.</p> <p>Independent development and management of the potential of Gampong Nusa Village Nusa, Aceh.</p> <p>Joining forces with HAKA Foundation that focuses on the advocacy around the protection of forest area, habitat, and implications on species populations.</p>	<p>Engaging women in meetings and village activities.</p> <p>Empowering women in forest management, supervision, and conservation in Damaran Baru Village Aceh. This also includes the formation of a group of forest rangers that made up of local village women.</p> <p>Facilitating village women Damaran Baru Village to organise Social Forestry Decree, as well as becoming members and being part of the policy-making process.</p>
3.	Masnuah (Fisherwoman)	<p>Taking the initiative to empower fisherwomen's economy and reduce and respond to domestic violence in the community.</p> <p>The initiative came about because she saw how climate change makes women increasingly vulnerable.</p> <p>Less catch means higher fishing costs as you have to go deeper to get fish, and the weather is erratic, making fisherwomen more vulnerable. Their work is highly dependent on the sustainability of the sea.</p>	<p>Establishing Puspita Bahari community, which plays a role in emancipating fisherwomen through education and advocacy.</p> <p>Reflecting on her experiences and that of her community, fisherwomen live in a cycle of violence and poverty.</p> <p>Reflecting on Masnuah's observations and experiences as a fisherwoman, she sees that the vulnerabilities of fisherwomen are linked to economy, education, gender, and coastal culture, which is patriarchal.</p>	<p>Starting her engagement of economic empowerment of fisherwomen; responding to domestic violence; then moving on to political recognition struggle, namely recognition of fisherwomen's identity on their IDs.</p> <p>In the last few few years, Masnuah has also been a driving force in the COVID-19 solidarity for the fisherwomen.</p> <p>Currently, she is fighting for environmental justice for several villages that are sinking due to climate change's tidal flooding.</p>	<p>Economic empowerment of fisherwomen through trainings on seafood processing; establishing fish processing centres.</p> <p>Helping to provide basic necessities to fisherfolks' families during COVID-19 pandemic. Initiating the fisherfolks and farmers barter movement for food security.</p> <p>Currently, Masnuah is also actively mobilising awareness and showing visibility of the community around the drowned beach.</p>
4.	Aisyah Odist (Waste bank NTB)	<p>Aisyah synergises with the community as partners of the Waste Bank. Household wastes are collected, sorted, processed, and managed into valuable products.</p> <p>The Waste Bank system implemented by Aisyah is an innovation that pioneered the adoption of this system in the NTB provincial government's policy on waste management and environmental conservation.</p>	<p>Her involvement in the campaign on waste management processing derived from her concern and love for Lombok. Her work and commitment to waste come from her belief that care and love for the environment is the the answer to the environmental crisis.</p> <p>To her, the ignorance of the society towards environment caused by the lack of adequate awareness or knowledge that humans have the capacity to change the environment, and that our neglect towards the the environment can result in disasters.</p>	<p>Aisyah was involved as the initiator of Waste Bank NTB Mandiri and Kampung Wisata Kreatif Sampah (Kawis Krisant), which is located in Ampenan, Mataram.</p> <p>This movement has successfully engaged women and disabled groups. Aisyah also endeavours to strengthen the movement through partnerships with a number of NGOs; private sector; and government.</p>	<p>In recruiting the workshop activity team, Aisyah gave priority to women and people with disabilities. Her activities involve waste artisans, who are women and disabled people.</p> <p>Waste products are sold and empower the community's economy.</p> <p>Aisyah is always open and sharing knowledge if there is a community that wants to get involved in waste management. Consistently, Aisyah builds awareness of her community about the principle of zero waste.</p>

No	Name	Initiative	Concrete Experience	Involvement	Solidarity
5.	Westiani Agustin (Biyung)	<p>Like the slogan, which is "Women Helping Women", Biyung not only provides an alternative to accommodate menstrual blood for women. With her various her experience while running Biyung, Ani who originally wanted to bring the issue of environment to the society through cloth sanitary pads, eventually expanded the educational spectrum.</p> <p>Biyung even had conducted trainings on how to make cloth sanitary pads for various women's groups.</p>	<p>Ani's activities as an environmental activist stem from her reflection on the amount of waste that is produced by women when having menstruation for 5-7 days/per month. According to her, with cloth sanitary pads, women can be involved in the effort of preserving the environment.</p> <p>Since 10 years ago, she herself switched to cloth sanitary pads. Homeschooling project for her two children in 2016 became the beginning of the establishment of her programme that she named Biyung.</p>	<p>Although Biyung has not collaborated with government agencies, Ani and her community have collaborated with institutions such as Samsara Association and Perempuan Bumi Community.</p> <p>In April, as a response to the pandemic, Biyung together with Samsara Association distributed 143 kits of sanitary pads and contraceptives to four housing estates in Yogyakarta, such as Ledok Tukangan RW 3, Jlagran Kulon RW 1, Sembungan Bantul, and Gedong Tengen.</p>	<p>In the socialisation of cloths sanitary pads through Biyung, it is not uncommon for Ani to encounter the fact that women still have difficulty in accessing sanitary pads as a product that is fundamental to health.</p> <p>In order for the products to be accessible by women from all levels of life, especially those who are in the villages and vulnerable to financial problems, Ani together with Biyung organised workshops that share knowledge of sanitary pads production and health of the female body.</p> <p>Ani assists women's groups in Jambi and Papua, as well as a number of disabled communities in Yogyakarta, Sukoharjo, Jakarta, and Jambi to make cloth sanitary pads.</p>
6.	Yuktiasih Proborini (Environmental activist; disability activist)	<p>Starting a magot farming business to recycle waste. She took the initiative to using fabric waste from factory to make reusable and transparent cloth masks for people with hearing disabilities.</p> <p>Recommending disabled entrepreneurs to receive capacity building through networking with the community of businesswomen.</p> <p>Encouraging disabled entrepreneurs to have a business licence number (NIB) in order to get facilities from the Co-operative Office.</p>	<p>Her involvement as an environmental activist started from her reflection on the amount of household waste produced every day. She has several times provided trainings on magot farming, not limited to the women's community.</p> <p>Her role as facilitator and initiator of transparent mask originated from her observations and her reflection that medical masks do not accommodate the needs of the disabled group with hearing impairment.</p> <p>The idea of making transparent masks was also intended to empower the economy of people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Representing the community of disabled entrepreneurs and MSMEs in the advocacy to Kemenkraf so that women with disabilities be involved in the development programmes under the said Ministry.</p>	<p>Farming magot and conducting a number of experience sharing activities to the community related to waste management waste with magot.</p> <p>Building disability solidarity to make transparent masks. This initiative aims to include disability in the industry and make disability and environmental friendly products.</p>

Source: Compiled from various articles by the authors using Plumwood concepts

Based on the table, we can see that these women's efforts have challenged systemically entrenched dominant behaviours. We indeed need to continue to nurture creative and counter-hegemonic movements such as those offered by Plumwood (1993) in an effort to live together in an ecologically ethical manner. Small community movements need to be listened to and taken seriously if we want to make social, political, and cultural changes at the root of humanity (Plumwood 1993). Women's movements in each of their neighbourhoods can influence the ecological movement and efforts to overcome the crisis caused by climate change. Humans are no longer just conquerors of nature (the Other) and

ethical subjects, but are engaged together with care in ecological awareness.

In the table, we have presented four steps to achieve environmental culture that have been pursued by women in each of their communities and neighbourhoods. These four processes of initiative, concrete experience (action), engagement, and solidarity become a series of activities that are closely related to the nuances of ethical concern for the quality of life of humans and nature (non-human). The six activities of women environmental activists seen in the table have changed the perspective of their communities. They do not just make changes in

individual quality (exclusively), but also affect collective changes in the quality of behaviour and thoughts.

This proves how these women with their activism actually encourage interspecies dialogue and mutual development as has been raised by Plumwood (2002). The existence of integration, democratic patterns, ethical responses that do not reduce the presence of nature (non-human), reflection, critical dialogue (communication), and respect for interagency intentionality are seen in the efforts made by the women we discussed earlier. It is their success that we need to learn from in order to create a new culture: environmental culture. We need to achieve a new culture in dealing with climate change so that we are no longer trapped in a hierarchical mindset that views humans as superior to nature - as non-humans. Thus, we as humans can eliminate the arrogance of reason in responding to the climate change crisis through caring for different experiences as well as generating solidarity as a form of ecological awareness.

Conclusion

The issue of environmental crisis due to climate change shows how humans have arrogantly separated their presence from nature (non-human). As a result of this dominant patriarchal pattern of reasoning, we make nature 'the Other' and close our ears to their stories. Women eventually occupy the position of 'the Other', including in ecological awareness efforts. Feminists in the area of ecological thinking consider this as a loss of concern in human ecological consciousness, especially with patriarchal logical reasoning. Val Plumwood, as one of ecofeminist thinkers, also highlights the issue of the dominance of patriarchal reasoning as the cause of the ecological crisis.

Based on Plumwood's thoughts on environmental culture, this research highlights women's experiences of overcoming environmental crises and climate change through initiatives, concrete experiences, engagement, and solidarity. What Melati and Isabel Wijsen; Rubama; Masnuah; Siti Aisyah; Westiani Agustin; and Yuktiasih Proborini are doing shows an ecological awareness that carries a caring reason. They do not only provide tangible evidence in their respective communities, but also have a wider impact.

This mutually positive endeavour is full of feminist and ecological values. Humans are invited to no longer see themselves merely as ethical subjects - with the potential to dominate in the name of rationality - but as part of the ecology itself. It is this collective engagement that we

need to support and nurture so that slowly, together, we grow an understanding of caring reason. This caring logic will slowly replace the logic of patriarchal domination. Ecological awareness can only be realised if we eliminate the hierarchy between humans and nature (non-human) by presenting a more caring culture through environmental culture.

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End Notes

- 1 See Jurnal Perempuan issue 112 under research.
- 2 See Jurnal Perempuan issues 95 and 107.