

The Governmental and Environmental Policies: Ecofeminism Resistance in the Wadon Wadas Civil Society Movement

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the role of ecofeminism in the Wadon Wadas movement's resistance to the Bener Dam project in Central Java, Indonesia. The study aims to highlight the gap between national development policies and their implementation, with a focus on environmental and gender issues in large-scale infrastructure projects. It also explores how the women's voices in the Wadon Wadas movement reflect broader injustices in the development process. A qualitative approach was used, involving direct interviews with Wadas Village residents and snowball sampling to gather insights from key informants. The data was analyzed using a social theory perspective to deepen the understanding of the findings. The results show that the Wadon Wadas movement, led by women, embodies ecofeminism by linking environmental protection with the fight against gender marginalization. The resistance against the Bener Dam project highlights a significant disconnect between national development goals and the real-life experiences of local communities, especially women. The study also reveals that the government's top-down approach, with limited community involvement, exacerbates tensions and fails to support sustainable development. The research suggests the need for more inclusive and adaptive policies, like the Dynamic Socio-Spatial approach, to better balance development with environmental and social justice.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Government Policy, Political Ecology

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the construction of the Bener Dam, a major national development project in Indonesia, has drawn significant attention to Wadas Village in Central Java (Farha et al., 2022). While the project aims to provide irrigation, flood control, and water resources for the surrounding areas, it has faced strong resistance from local communities, particularly a group of women known as Wadon Wadas (Eriza Reziana & Alex Sobur, 2023). These women have led protests, raising concerns about environmental degradation, the loss of agricultural land, and the potential displacement of residents. This conflict highlights broader tensions between development policies and the need to protect local environments and communities (Widayati, 2023). The Wadon Wadas movement underscores how national development agendas often fail to consider the voices and rights of marginalized groups, particularly women, who are disproportionately affected by environmental changes.

The identity of contemporary social movements is increasingly shaped by civil society groups that reject the exploitation of nature, a byproduct of development policies enacted by both the private sector and the government (Sibuea, 2022). In Central Java, this resistance has taken various forms, such as the civil movement against a stone mine in Pati Regency, located in the Kendeng Mountains, intended for the construction of a cement factory. The conflict among Kendeng residents, who opposed the mine, gained strength with the formation of the Kendeng and Kartini Kendeng farmer unions. Similarly, in Purworejo Regency, the construction of the Bener Dam has sparked opposition from local communities (Astoni, 2022b). This dam project requires andesite stone from nearby Wadas Village, leading to strong resistance from residents who have organized under the banners of Gempadewa and Wadon Wadas (Pariyatman, 2022). Viewed through the lens of ecofeminism, these movements represent not only a struggle against environmental degradation but also a fight against the marginalization of women, who are disproportionately impacted by such development projects

(Findlow, 2023). These women-led movements highlight the critical intersection of environmental justice and gender equality, challenging development paradigms that often neglect the voices and rights of marginalized communities (Sulistiyati, 2023).

Previous research on environmental justice and women's movements in Indonesia has shed light on the crucial role of women in advocating for the environment and challenging development policies that threaten local communities. (Asriani, 2016) discussed the need for developing training tools specifically designed to support environmental justice, highlighting how empowering women's voices at the local level is vital for sustaining nature and addressing resource governance issues. Similarly, (Hari, 2023) examined the Kartini Kendeng movement, a women-led resistance in Central Java against cement factory developments, drawing attention to the use of social media as a powerful tool for ecofeminist activism. (Clara, 2018) further explored the transformative impact of the ecofeminist movement led by the Women's Journal Foundation, emphasizing how the movement empowers women by raising awareness of ecofeminism and encouraging practical environmental actions.

While there has been substantial research on environmental justice and women's movements in Indonesia, there is still a significant gap in understanding how to effectively integrate these movements into broader national development strategies. Existing studies have illuminated the role of women in resisting environmentally harmful projects and advocating for their communities, yet there is limited exploration of how these grassroots efforts can inform and shape national policies (Astoni, 2022b). The disconnect between local activism and national development agendas remains an area that requires further investigation, particularly in terms of how environmental and gender concerns are addressed within large-scale projects. Additionally, while ecofeminism has been recognized as a valuable theoretical lens, there is a lack of research on its practical application in policy-making and

development planning. The marginalization of women's voices, especially in the context of national projects like the Bener Dam, highlights a broader issue of how development policies often fail to fully consider the environmental and social impacts on local communities. This gap suggests a need for further studies that bridge the divide between theory and practice, ensuring that national development policies are not only sustainable but also equitable and inclusive.

The problem is important because it highlights the critical disconnect between national development policies and the lived experiences of local communities, particularly women who are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and social displacement. As Indonesia continues to pursue large-scale infrastructure projects like the Bener Dam, it is essential to address the marginalization of women's voices and ensure that development strategies do not perpetuate environmental and social injustices (M. H. Pariyatman et al., 2022a). By bridging this gap, we can move toward more sustainable and equitable development practices that respect and incorporate the needs and rights of all stakeholders, ultimately leading to more resilient and inclusive communities.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the role of ecofeminism in understanding the resistance of the Wadon Wadas movement, identify the gap between national development policies and their implementation, particularly concerning environmental and gender issues, and explore how the voices of women in the Wadon Wadas movement reflect broader injustices in the development process. The urgency of this research lies in the pressing need to address the growing conflicts between national development projects and the protection of local environments and communities. As Indonesia continues to advance its infrastructure initiatives, it is crucial to develop more inclusive and equitable policies that integrate environmental justice and gender equality, ensuring that the rights and voices of marginalized groups, particularly women, are not overlooked. This research is timely and essential for guiding

future development strategies in a way that promotes both sustainability and social equity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach to thoroughly explore and answer the research questions. A qualitative method allows for an in-depth examination of the Wadon Wadas movement and the broader issues of environmental justice and gender equality. Data collection is conducted through direct interviews with the residents of Wadas Village, providing firsthand insights into their experiences and perspectives. Additionally, a snowball sampling technique is used to identify and interview key informants, ensuring that the most relevant and knowledgeable sources contribute to the primary data. The interview data are then analyzed interpretatively using a social theory perspective, which helps to contextualize and deepen the understanding of the findings, ultimately strengthening the analysis and conclusions of the study. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the complex social dynamics at play.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The conflict in Wadas Village arises from a combination of political development strategies, land procurement issues, and social dynamics. It began with the implementation of the National Strategic Project (PSN), specifically the construction of the Bener Dam (Astoni, 2022a). This project is part of a broader initiative under President Joko Widodo, which continues the vision of accelerating economic growth first outlined in the Master Plan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development (MP3EI) during President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's administration (Sejarot & Hariri, 2023). The Bener Dam, located in Purworejo Regency, Central Java, is designed to support the National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN) program,

which aims to boost tourism and the economy in key regions such as Yogyakarta, Dieng, Solo, Semarang, and Karimun Jawa (Sudaryatno et al., 2020). However, the construction of the dam requires a significant amount of andesite stone, which the government plans to extract from Wadas Village.

The proposed mining of 15.5 million cubic meters of andesite stone from Wadas Village has sparked strong opposition from the local community, particularly because this land is vital to their livelihoods (M. H. Pariyatman et al., 2022). The Wadas community, composed primarily of farmers, relies on this land for agriculture and views the government's plan as a direct threat to their way of life. The conflict intensified when the Central Java Regional Government issued Environmental Determination Permits (IPL), officially designating the Wadas hills as a mining site to support the dam's construction. This decision was met with widespread resistance, as the community feared not only the loss of their land but also the potential for environmental disasters, such as landslides, which have historically affected the region. In response to these developments, the residents of Wadas Village began organizing a resistance movement to oppose the mining project (Salsabila et al., 2023).

The movement gained significant traction in 2018 when tensions escalated, and the community's opposition became more organized and vocal. The turning point in the conflict occurred during land measurements conducted by the project initiators in 2021 and 2022, which led to direct confrontations between the residents and state security forces (Ulum, 2022). These events further galvanized the community's resolve to protect their land and prompted the formation of the "Wadas Village Nature Care Community Movement" (Gempadewa). This organization, along with its subgroups such as Kamudewa for youth and Wadon Wadas for women, became central to the community's resistance efforts. The Wadon Wadas group, consisting mainly of the women of the community, emerged as a key force in the resistance movement (Iqbal, 2022).

These women have taken a leading role in the protests, standing at the forefront to defend their land, livelihoods, and environment. Their involvement is particularly significant when viewed through the lens of ecofeminism, which links the exploitation of nature with the oppression of women. For the women of Wadas, the struggle against the mining project is not just about protecting their immediate environment but also about challenging broader patterns of exploitation and asserting their rights and agency in the face of powerful development interests (Iqbal, 2022). The Wadon Wadas movement's resistance has not only been a grassroots effort but also a direct response to the actions and policies of both the national and local governments. The issuance of Environmental Determination Permits (IPL) by the Central Java Regional Government, which designated Wadas Village as a mining site, catalyzed the conflict, sparking widespread opposition among residents. Despite the community's objections and the visible risks of environmental degradation, the government's persistent push for the Bener Dam project, a part of the National Strategic Project (PSN), highlights a broader pattern of prioritizing large-scale development over local concerns (Widyana et al., 2024).

The local government's involvement, particularly in facilitating land measurements and supporting state security forces during confrontations, has further exacerbated tensions, leading to accusations of heavy-handedness and repression. This complex dynamic between governmental authority and grassroots resistance underscores the need for a critical examination of development policies that often sideline the voices and rights of affected communities, setting the stage for a deeper discussion on how these policies might be reformed to better balance development goals with social and environmental justice.

Ecofeminism and the Wadon Wadas Movement

Ecofeminism is a theoretical framework that intertwines ecological concerns with feminist principles, highlighting the deep connections between

the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women. Rooted in the broader feminist discourse, which challenges social constructs that marginalize women in various aspects of life—such as economic production, politics, and social roles—ecofeminism extends this critique to environmental issues. It argues that both women and nature are subjected to similar forms of domination and exploitation by patriarchal systems that prioritize control, profit, and industrialization over equity and sustainability (Madhavi & Nageswar Rao, 2023). By recognizing this parallel, ecofeminism advocates for a more holistic approach to justice, one that simultaneously addresses the needs and rights of women and the environment. This perspective has become increasingly relevant in contemporary discussions on environmental justice, offering a critical lens through which to understand and combat the intertwined oppressions of women and nature (Pompeo-Fargnoli, 2018).

Historically, ecofeminism emerged as a distinct discourse in the late 20th century, gaining prominence alongside broader feminist and environmental movements. It has become a dynamic and influential paradigm, with scholars like Vandana Shiva contributing to its development by emphasizing the sacred relationship between women and nature (L, 2023). Shiva and other ecofeminists argue that the protection of both women and the environment is essential, viewing this as an ethical responsibility that challenges the destructive forces of capitalism and industrialization. Ecofeminism critiques the power structures that lead to environmental degradation and the subordination of women, promoting instead a vision of life that respects and nurtures both (Yogiswari, 2020). This perspective has not only enriched feminist discourse but has also provided a powerful critique of modern development practices, making it a vital framework for those seeking to address the ongoing challenges of environmental and gender justice (Ayu, 2023).

The Wadon Wadas movement in Central Java represents a significant embodiment of ecofeminism in action. This grassroots movement emerged in

response to the construction of the Bener Dam, a major national development project that threatens the environment and the livelihoods of local communities in Wadas Village(Iqbal, 2022). Comprised primarily of women, the Wadon Wadas group has been at the forefront of resisting this project, raising concerns about the environmental degradation it would cause, the loss of agricultural land, and the potential displacement of residents. The key objectives of the movement include protecting their land and natural resources from exploitation, preserving their way of life, and ensuring that their voices are heard in the decision-making processes that affect their community. By centering women's leadership in this struggle, the movement not only challenges the environmental threats posed by the dam but also highlights the critical role of women in defending their communities and natural surroundings(Eriza Reziana & Alex Sobur, 2023).

The application of ecofeminist principles in the Wadon Wadas movement is evident in its approach to resistance, which intertwines the protection of the environment with the empowerment of women. Ecofeminism, which advocates for the recognition of the intrinsic connections between the exploitation of women and nature, provides a foundational framework for understanding the motivations and strategies of the Wadon Wadas activists (Astoni, 2022a). These women are not only fighting to protect their land from environmental destruction but are also asserting their rights and agency in a context where both the environment and women's voices are often marginalized. The movement's emphasis on community solidarity, sustainability, and the respect for nature reflects core ecofeminist values, demonstrating how environmental and social justice can be pursued in tandem.

The Wadon Wadas movement challenges both environmental degradation and gender-based marginalization by positioning women as central figures in the fight against the destructive impacts of development. This dual focus on environmental and gender justice highlights the unique

ways in which women experience and resist the consequences of patriarchal development models that prioritize economic growth over ecological and social well-being (Ulum, 2022). The movement not only opposes the immediate threat of the dam but also critiques the broader systems of power that allow such projects to proceed without meaningful input from affected communities, particularly women. By mobilizing around ecofeminist principles, the Wadon Wadas movement underscores the importance of integrating gender considerations into environmental activism, ultimately pushing for a more equitable and sustainable approach to development that honors both the earth and its inhabitants.

Analyzing the Wadon Wadas resistance through the lens of ecofeminism reveals the strong connections between environmental justice and gender issues within the movement. Ecofeminism, which links the exploitation of nature with the oppression of women, provides a valuable framework for understanding the motivations and actions of the Wadon Wadas activists (Permatasari & Siswadi, 2022). Their resistance to the Bener Dam project is not just about protecting the environment but also about challenging the patriarchal and capitalist systems that prioritize economic development over the well-being of local communities (Yogiswari, 2020). By framing their struggle as both an environmental and feminist issue, the women of Wadon Wadas emphasize the interconnected nature of these forms of oppression and advocate for a more holistic approach to justice that addresses both environmental and gender inequalities.

The Wadon Wadas movement clearly illustrates how ecofeminism can be a powerful tool in resisting development projects that overlook the needs and rights of marginalized communities, particularly women (Pawitri et al., 2020). The land they fight to protect is not just a source of livelihood but also a crucial part of their identity and cultural heritage. The women in this movement lead through traditional rituals and cultural practices that assert their connection to the land and their community (Ahmadi, 2018). These

actions highlight the significant role of gender dynamics in shaping the movement's strategies and goals. By placing women at the forefront, the Wadon Wadas movement not only challenges environmental harm but also pushes back against broader societal norms that marginalize women's voices. This approach contributes to a more equitable and sustainable model of development that respects both gender equity and environmental sustainability.

Government Policies and Environmental Sustainability in the Bener Dam Project

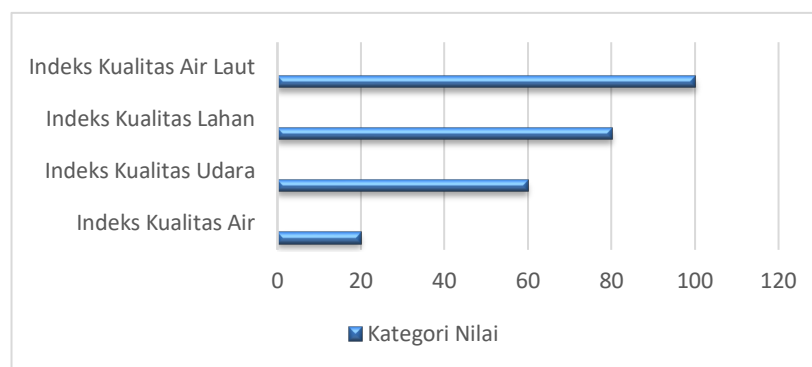
Balancing national development goals with environmental sustainability is a fundamental issue in the context of development in Indonesia. National development often faces the challenge of achieving sustainable economic growth without compromising environmental quality (Apresian et al., 2020). This is particularly relevant in large-scale national strategic projects, where the impact not only affects the economy but also the ecosystems and the lives of surrounding communities. Maintaining this balance is crucial, especially considering that Indonesia is a country rich in natural resources but also vulnerable to environmental degradation if development is carried out without careful consideration of environmental aspects (Saputra & Widiansyah, 2022).

The Bener Dam, as one of the national strategic projects, holds significant strategic importance in the context of national development. This project is designed to support irrigation needs, provide clean water, and generate hydroelectric power in Central Java (Sodikin & Muhammad, 2024a). Covering several districts, the Bener Dam is expected to make a significant contribution to improving the welfare of the community by providing infrastructure that supports agricultural productivity and ensures adequate water availability (Ariyanti, 2023).

In the context of national strategic projects like the construction of the Bener Dam, it is essential to consider the impact on the environment, including

the quality of water, air, land, and seawater. The Environmental Quality Index (IKLH) offers a comprehensive overview of the overall environmental condition. To clarify the impact of national strategic projects such as the Bener Dam on the environment, here is a data visualization of the 2023 Environmental Quality Index in a graph. This visualization highlights how various elements of the IKLH (water, air, land cover, and seawater) may be related to the potential impact of such projects (Ppid.menlhk, 2023).

Chart 1. Indonesia Environmental Quality Index 2023



Source: (Ppid.menlhk, 2023)

The chart 1 illustrates that the 2023 Environmental Quality Index (IKLH) data provides crucial insights into the environmental conditions in Indonesia. While most components show positive results—air quality reaching 88.67 points and seawater quality at 78.84 points—the water quality index is notably lower, at 54.59 points. This figure highlights significant challenges, particularly in the context of large-scale infrastructure projects like the Bener Dam, where water quality is especially vulnerable to change.

The Bener Dam, as part of the National Strategic Project (PSN), has substantial potential to affect water flow and quality. Dams alter the natural flow of rivers by holding water in one place and releasing it in a controlled manner (Beukering et al., 2008). This process causes sediment to accumulate at the dam's base, leading to decreased water clarity and increased contamination risks. These changes impact not only the river ecosystem but also the quality of water used by local communities (Irawan, 2013).

Additionally, there is a risk of pollution from construction materials used during the dam's construction. Substances like cement, chemicals, and heavy metals can enter the water flow, posing serious threats to the health of surrounding ecosystems and water quality (Jozi et al., 2015). Without proper management, this pollution could exacerbate already low water quality conditions, underscoring the need for rigorous monitoring and effective mitigation measures (Matys Grygar et al., 2018).

Furthermore, land cover around the project site is a critical factor that must be considered. The land quality index, at 61.79 points, underscores the importance of maintaining balanced land use to prevent erosion and soil degradation. Soil erosion from excavation and changes in landform can increase water turbidity, introduce excessive nutrients that could trigger eutrophication, and ultimately harm aquatic ecosystems (Sodikin & Muhammad, 2024).

Moreover, the dam's alteration of river flow can disrupt existing aquatic ecosystems. The natural habitats for aquatic flora and fauna could be disturbed, leading to changes in the population of species that play a crucial role in maintaining water cleanliness. The loss of these species could affect ecosystem balance, increasing the risk of further pollution in the future. The downstream decline in water quality is another significant impact that requires attention (Bergkamp et al., 2000). Water released from dams often has different temperatures, oxygen levels, and nutrient content compared to natural river water, which can negatively affect downstream ecosystems. This impact has the potential to degrade the quality of water used by humans and other living organisms, adding to the challenges that need to be addressed in this project (Schmutz & Moog, 2018).

The Bener Dam project demands serious attention to every environmental aspect, particularly water quality. Strict monitoring, effective mitigation strategies, and responsive policies must be implemented to ensure that this development does not compromise environmental sustainability and

the well-being of local communities. Water quality, being a vital element, must be a top priority in every decision related to this strategic project (Hendriarianti et al., 2022).

The National Strategic Project (PSN) is a priority development initiative during President Joko Widodo's era, regulated by Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2016 on the Acceleration of National Strategic Projects. This regulation emphasizes that PSN is a program implemented by the Central Government, Regional Governments, and Enterprises, which has strategic importance in achieving equitable and sustainable development to improve employment opportunities and community welfare. According to Presidential Regulation Number 109 of 2020, which amends Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2016 for the third time, there are 10 programs and 201 projects focused on 12 sectors. One of the key sectors of PSN is dam construction, with a total of 57 dam projects planned for construction and improvement. These projects are spread across various regions of Indonesia, although the majority remain concentrated on the island of Java.

Based on the regulations outlined in Presidential Regulation Number 109 of 2020, which amends Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2016 for the third time, I have studied and analyzed the national strategic policy related to the National Strategic Projects (PSN), particularly those associated with dam construction, including the Bener Dam. The Bener Dam is one of many important infrastructure program that supported by the National Strategic Project aimed at supporting irrigation, clean water supply, and hydroelectric power in Central Java. This development is expected to enhance the welfare of the community by providing infrastructure that supports agricultural productivity. However, the project also poses significant environmental and social challenges, particularly for the local communities directly affected (Hari & Naiborhu, 2023).

It plays a significant role in national development, but also presents challenges that cannot be ignored. Particularly, the Bener Dam project

illustrates how large-scale infrastructure can serve as an essential tool for improving community welfare, especially through supporting irrigation, providing clean water, and generating hydroelectric power in Central Java. While these goals seem positive, the project is not without significant environmental and social impacts. These impacts are primarily felt by the local communities directly affected by changes in river flow, loss of land, and potential pollution. Ignoring environmental and social aspects in the implementation of this project could result in long-term damages that far outweigh the expected economic benefits (Hendriarianti et al., 2022). Therefore, rigorous analysis and policies are required to ensure that this project adheres to environmental sustainability principles and maximizes benefits for the community without causing long-term harm (Irawan, 2013).

In this context, government policies at both the central and local levels must reflect a commitment to sustainable development principles. This includes drafting strict regulations, conducting comprehensive environmental impact assessments, and implementing best practices in infrastructure development. Without proper balance, the risk of environmental degradation may increase, ultimately hindering the very development goals that the project aims to achieve. Therefore, analyzing the role of the government in balancing national development with environmental protection in the Bener Dam project in Wadas Village becomes highly relevant and important for further discussion in this research.

When examining the government's role, it is crucial to assess how the adopted policies have been implemented and to what extent these policies have succeeded in maintaining a balance between development and environmental sustainability. Success in balancing these two aspects will be a key indicator in evaluating the long-term impact of this project on the environment and community welfare.

The analysis of policy implementation aimed at balancing development and environmental sustainability in Wadas Village reveals that the

government's approach tends to be repressive, with minimal community involvement in the decision-making process. This situation reflects a failure of the policy to fully integrate sustainable development principles. Previous studies, such as those conducted in the context of dam projects in Colombia (Siciliano et al., 2018), show that the lack of effective community involvement often leads to prolonged social conflicts and significant environmental degradation. These findings highlight the importance of community engagement from the planning stage through to project implementation to minimize resistance and conflict.

Other studies on the social impact of dam projects in countries like China and Brazil also confirm that the success of a project largely depends on community participation (Fernández et al., 2017; Gerlak et al., 2020). A participatory approach not only enhances transparency but also allows for a better understanding of environmental impacts, ultimately reducing potential conflicts. This participatory model could serve as a reference for the Bener Dam project to improve local community involvement at every stage of development.

To create a more effective model, this research proposes an Inclusive-Adaptive approach (Gerlak et al., 2020). This model emphasizes the importance of including local communities through continuous consultation and dialogue, as well as adapting policies based on direct feedback from affected communities. This approach is rarely found in previous studies, which tend to focus more on impact evaluation after the project is underway and often overlook the evolving social dynamics during the project's progress.

Additionally, a review of related research documents on the Ranchería Dam project in Colombia reveals that Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) often fail to prevent social and environmental conflicts due to overly technical approaches that are unresponsive to local social-spatial dynamics (Carmona & Silva, 2020). This is highly relevant in the context of the Bener Dam in Wadas Village, where there have been protests from local communities

who feel excluded from the consultation and decision-making processes. The EIA in the Ranchería project was used as a government tool to legitimize the project rather than to genuinely prevent negative impacts, especially due to the static definition of the "area of influence" that ignored the dynamic interactions between communities and their environment (Carmona & Silva, 2020).

By adopting and modifying this model for the Bener Dam project, this research introduces the Dynamic Socio-Spatial approach as a new model (Carmona & Silva, 2020). This model emphasizes the need for flexibility in defining the area of influence and full integration of local communities into the project, where any changes in the ecosystem or social dynamics must be considered in the impact evaluation. This approach aims to avoid homogenizing the affected area and provides greater recognition of the complex social, cultural, and environmental relationships surrounding the project.

By adopting this approach, the government and related parties can enhance the legitimacy of the project while minimizing resistance from local communities. The implementation of the Dynamic Socio-Spatial model is expected to reduce conflicts arising from community dissatisfaction with compensation or unexpected environmental impacts, as has occurred in similar projects in Latin America. Thus, this model not only offers technical solutions but also strengthens a deeper understanding of social dynamics that might be overlooked by conventional EIA approaches. This research critiques traditional EIA approaches that have proven ineffective in preventing social conflicts in the Ranchería project and proposes the adoption of a more inclusive and adaptive approach for the Bener Dam project. If implemented correctly, this approach could serve as a model for other large infrastructure projects in Indonesia, demonstrating a genuine commitment to sustainable development principles.

Role of Wadon Wadas in the Resistance Movement

The community of Wadas Village, in response to the government's plans for andesite stone mining, has formed several organizations to strengthen their resistance. Among these, the Wadon Wadas group has emerged as a critical wing of the resistance, particularly focused on empowering women and ensuring their voices are central in the fight against the mining project. In every protest organized by the Wadon Wadas group, the women of Wadas have consistently stood at the forefront, symbolizing their deep connection to the land and their determination to protect it. For these women, the mining of the Wadas hills threatens not just their immediate living space but also their long-term livelihoods, making their resistance both a personal and collective struggle (Widayati, 2023).

The identity and continuity of social movements, as described by theorist Alberto Melucci, are rooted in structured, collective, and open patterns that enable the formation of network alliances to strengthen the movement. In the case of Wadas Village, the residents have organized their resistance into a more structured form through the establishment of Gempadewa. This organization not only unifies the residents under a common cause but also facilitates the creation of subgroups like Kamudewa for the youth and Wadon Wadas for women. As one of the leaders of Wadon Wadas mentioned in an interview, these groups are all part of the larger Gempadewa organization, reflecting a collective effort to resist the mining project (Mandela & ., 2023).

Gempadewa's formation can be seen as an organizational manifestation of the residents' awareness and determination to defend their land. This movement is not merely a reactionary effort but a proactive stance against what they perceive as an existential threat. The residents' resistance is rooted in a deep-seated connection to their land, which has been cultivated and protected for generations. As one of the Wadon Wadas leaders, Mrs. Insin, explained, their land is their lifeblood, and any attempt to mine it threatens

their ability to sustain themselves and future generations. This sense of responsibility and connection to the land is central to the political motives driving the Gempadewa movement (Sodikin, 2023).

The resistance led by Gempadewa and its subgroups, particularly Wadon Wadas, reflects broader social and cultural concerns that go beyond mere opposition to the mining project. The residents' efforts are informed by a desire to preserve their way of life and protect the natural environment that has sustained them for generations. This resistance is not just about holding onto their land but also about maintaining the ecological balance and preventing environmental disasters, such as landslides, that could result from the mining activities. The residents' collective memory of past landslides, particularly the devastating event in the 1980s, underscores their fears and strengthens their resolve to oppose the mining project (Sejarot & Hariri, 2023).

The Wadas residents' resistance is deeply intertwined with their cultural and historical identity as farmers who have long depended on the land. This connection to the land is not just economic but also cultural, as it represents their heritage and the skills passed down through generations. The concept of "the ethics of human and nature linkages" is particularly relevant here, as it reflects the residents' awareness of their responsibility to protect the land and its natural resources. This ethical stance is a key component of their resistance, as it underscores the importance of maintaining the integrity of the environment for both current and future generations (M. H. Pariyatman et al., 2022a)

In their resistance, the residents have consistently refused offers of compensation for their land, emphasizing that their connection to the land cannot be reduced to monetary value. As expressed by residents like Mrs. Insin, the land is not merely a means of production but a vital part of their existence and identity. This resistance to commodifying the land is a significant aspect of the Gempadewa movement, highlighting the residents' commitment to defending their rights and preserving their way of life against external

pressures.

The Gempadewa movement, and specifically the Wadon Wadas subgroup, represents a broader political struggle against the exploitation of natural resources and the marginalization of rural communities. The mining project, seen as a form of state-sanctioned development that disregards local needs and rights, has catalyzed a movement that is deeply rooted in the community's social and cultural values. The political motives behind the movement are not driven by external ideologies but by a genuine desire to protect their land and maintain their traditional way of life. This aligns with Antonio Gramsci's concept of an "organic movement," where the struggle is rooted in the lived experiences and immediate needs of the community .

In many agrarian conflicts in Indonesia, women's movements have emerged as powerful forces against the exploitation of natural resources. The Wadon Wadas group embodies this tradition, where the defense of nature is closely linked to the defense of women's rights and roles within the community. This connection between women and nature, often highlighted in ecofeminist discourse, is evident in Wadon Wadas' struggle, where the preservation of the land is seen as essential to maintaining the community's social and cultural fabric. Through their resistance, the women of Wadas are not only protecting their environment but also asserting their place within it, ensuring that their voices are heard in the broader political struggle against the mining project.

The state must play a central role in accommodating the interests of all segments of society, particularly in regions impacted by development projects like mining. It is imperative that government actions are not repressive but supportive and responsive, recognizing that the land belongs to the community by right and heritage. The inhabitants of these areas, such as those involved in the Gempadewa movement, hold not only legal but also ancestral claims to their land, which are integral to their identity and way of life. The government's duty is to facilitate a dialogue that respects these ties and seeks

a balanced solution that honors the rights and desires of the local people without imposing top-down development models that could lead to displacement and cultural erosion.

Based on this analysis, it is recommended that the government should adopt a consultative approach by instituting frameworks for inclusive decision-making processes that involve all stakeholders, especially the indigenous and local communities directly affected by development projects. Implementing comprehensive impact assessments that consider social, environmental, and cultural impacts prior to approving large-scale projects can prevent conflicts and ensure sustainable development. Moreover, establishing grievance mechanisms that are accessible and effective can help address any violations of community rights, ensuring that the development is not only economically viable but also socially just and environmentally sound. These measures would demonstrate a genuine commitment to democratic governance and sustainable development, fostering trust and cooperation between the state and its citizens.

Ecofeminism is not a movement without reason; it is a testament to the real-world impact of communities, particularly those led by women, who are deeply committed to environmental stewardship. The experiences of groups like Wadon Wadas in the Gempadewa movement clearly demonstrate that when women are empowered, they play a pivotal role in advocating for and protecting their natural surroundings, thus ensuring the sustainability of their community's resources. It is essential for both national and local governments to recognize and support these efforts through targeted educational programs that raise awareness about the interconnections between gender, environmental health, and community well-being. Provision of adequate resources, infrastructure, and opportunities for these communities to expand their initiatives is crucial. By doing so, governments can ensure that the principles of ecofeminism are not only upheld but are also integrated into broader environmental and social policy frameworks, encouraging more

comprehensive and inclusive environmental governance.

CONCLUSION

The resistance movement in Wadas Village, spearheaded by the Wadon Wadas group, represents a significant case study in the intersection of environmental justice, gender equality, and community-led activism in Indonesia. This movement, rooted in the villagers' deep connection to their land and the environment, highlights the complex dynamics between national development projects and local communities. The Bener Dam project, while intended to support irrigation, clean water, and hydroelectric power in Central Java, has inadvertently brought to the forefront the critical issue of balancing development with environmental sustainability and social justice. The Wadon Wadas group's efforts underscore the importance of considering local voices and the long-term impacts of large-scale infrastructure projects on both people and the environment.

The Wadon Wadas movement exemplifies the application of ecofeminism in real-world scenarios, where the exploitation of nature is closely linked to the marginalization of women. The group's resistance is not only a fight to protect their land from environmental degradation but also a broader struggle against the patriarchal and capitalist systems that prioritize economic growth over the well-being of local communities. By positioning women at the forefront of their resistance, the Wadon Wadas movement challenges traditional power structures and advocates for a more equitable and sustainable approach to development. This case highlights the critical role that women play in environmental activism, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

Furthermore, the movement's resistance against the Bener Dam project sheds light on the shortcomings of current development policies, particularly in how they often fail to fully integrate principles of sustainability and community involvement. The government's approach, which has been

criticized for being repressive and excluding local communities from decision-making processes, underscores the need for more inclusive and adaptive policy frameworks. The proposed Dynamic Socio-Spatial approach offers a potential model for addressing these gaps, emphasizing the importance of flexibility, community integration, and continuous feedback in managing large-scale projects. Implementing such models could help mitigate conflicts and ensure that development projects contribute positively to both the environment and the people most affected by them.

In conclusion, the Wadon Wadas movement is a powerful reminder of the importance of aligning national development goals with the needs and rights of local communities. As Indonesia continues to pursue ambitious infrastructure projects, it is crucial that the government adopts policies that are not only technically sound but also socially and environmentally just. The lessons learned from Wadas Village can serve as a valuable guide for future projects, ensuring that development is pursued in a manner that respects the environment, empowers local communities, and upholds the principles of justice and equity. The ongoing struggle of the Wadon Wadas group highlights the potential for grassroots movements to influence national policy and contribute to more sustainable and inclusive development practices in Indonesia and beyond.

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