

Grassroots Ecofeminist Resistance: Legal and Political Advocacy of "Wadon Wadas" Against Structural Misogyny and Extractive Policies

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Abstract

In Indonesia, rural and environmental conflicts often push women physically and intellectually to the periphery because development policies ignore women's environmental knowledge and create their own

margins. This study examines the legal and political protection strategies of the Wadon Wadas women's group in Purworejo, Central Java, which seeks to protect its living space from andesite stone mining and to deconstruct misogyny in structural development and environmental conservation. Using a qualitative approach that integrates Feminist Participatory Action Research with Critical Discourse Analysis, the study draws on in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and analysis of mining and spatial planning policy documents. It identifies three core indicators of exclusion. First, women are systematically excluded from formal decision-making structures for spatial and land-use planning, including village deliberative forums, traditional land boards, and technical planning committees. Second, resource management frameworks are based on a household norm that treats men as the sole heads of households, so women's rights to land, forests, and water are not recorded in policy documents or fund allocation and are treated as if they never existed. Third, no formal mechanism recognizes or documents women's indigenous and local ecological knowledge, which is passed down through generations but excluded from official land-use assessments. These policies, pursued in the name of progress, have long produced vulnerabilities in women's living spaces and bodies since mining began. It finds that through body politics, culturally grounded manganan and angonan rituals, and cross-gender solidarity networks, Wadon Wadas has created new cultural and political definitions of environmental advocacy. It demonstrates that gender equality, environmental justice, and sustainable construction cannot be separated in public policy. Effective and transformative environmental advocacy draws on women's embodied experiences and local knowledge. The study recommends integrating women's gendered ecological knowledge into sustainable development decision-making and formally incorporating gender perspectives into spatial planning and mining policies.

Keywords

Ecofeminism; Extractive Politics; Gender Advocacy; Structural Misogyny; Wadon Wadas

A. Introduction

Agrarian and environmental issues have been prominent in Indonesia's development patterns, especially with the Indonesian government's accelerated implementation of infrastructure-focused programs such as the National Strategic Project (*Proyek Strategis Nasional/PSN*).¹ Dams, tollways, and even mining all have construction infrastructure that serves economic growth. In pursuit of these projects, the government ignores the impacts on the various communities that have to vacate their homes, land, and livelihoods.² This project focused on the economic growth rationale, which reflects the Indonesian government's historical disregard for rural and agrarian communities and stems from the colonial-era cultivation system.³ The government of today is not very different from the New Order government, which was reliant on timber and mining concessions.⁴ Throughout every era, rural agrarian communities have been viewed as a hindrance rather than as stakeholders with legitimate claims to their land, and the rationale for land use serves the interests of the nation rather than those of rural

¹ Suhadi and Aprila Niravita, "Urban Agrarian Reform: Opportunities and Challenges for Land Rights Among Low-Income Communities," *Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 32, no. 2 (2024): 348–73, <https://doi.org/10.22219/ljih.v32i2.35842>.

² Arditya Wicaksono et al., "Empowering Communities: Knowledge Transfer and Participatory Approaches to Revitalization Land Registration in Indonesia," *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning* 20, no. 4 (2025): 1499–1513, <https://doi.org/10.18280/ijstdp.200413>.

³ Iwan Permadi and Herlindah, "Electronic Title Certificate as Legal Evidence: The Land Registration System and the Quest for Legal Certainty in Indonesia," *Digital Evidence and Electronic Signature Law Review* 20 (2023): 54, <https://doi.org/10.14296/deeslr.v20i.5636>.

⁴ Tania Murray Li, "Commons, Co-Ops, and Corporations: Assembling Indonesia's Twenty-First Century Land Reform," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 48, no. 3 (2021): 613–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2021.1890718>.

communities.⁵ The various infrastructures disproportionately serve the existing inequitable social systems, as is the case for poor women. The burden most women carry is the invisible and overwhelming responsibility of ensuring the family's livelihood through the sustainable use of land, water, and forest resources. Yet, women have no representation in land-use decision-making processes.

Women in rural Java manage their households' food security and maintain home gardens. They also gather firewood, collect water, and manage informal systems of knowledge related to soil and plant medicine.⁶ These systems of informal knowledge and labor are critical to the households that manage them, yet they are rarely recognized in analyses of the formal land economy. These systems are lost when land is converted to other uses, particularly when utilized for extractive purposes.⁷ The absence of recognition of labor in formal plans is indicative of structural misogyny, which this article attempts to analyze. This type of structural misogyny is not confined to Indonesia alone, but rather spans across post-colonial countries that are primarily focused on economic growth based on the development of infrastructure. In these countries, extractive development is framed as in the national interest, enabling rapid land conversion.⁸ The negative consequences of land

⁵ Adator Stephanie Worlanyo and Li Jiangfeng, "Evaluating the Environmental and Economic Impact of Mining for Post-Mined Land Restoration and Land-Use: A Review," *Journal of Environmental Management* 279 (2021): 111623, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2020.111623>.

⁶ Rachael Diprose, "Brokerage, Power and Gender Equity: How Empowerment-Focused Civil Society Organisations Bolster Women's Influence in Rural Indonesia," *Journal of International Development* 35, no. 3 (2023): 401–25, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3770>.

⁷ Puji Lestari and Ganda Febri Kurniawan, "Intersectionality and Political Representation: Challenges and Policy Implications for Marginalized Women in Indonesia," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 16, no. 2 (2025): 1–38.

⁸ Aprilia Niravita et al., "Community Involvement in Spatial Planning: A Study of Public Participation in Lerep Tourism Village Perspective of Indonesian Spatial Planning Law," *UNNES LAW JOURNAL: Jurnal Hukum Universitas Negeri Semarang* 7, no. 2 (2021): 237–56, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15294/ulj.v7i2.45745> 237.

conversion on women and other marginalized social groups are also conveniently ignored during the formal planning of infrastructure development projects. This article aims to situate the infrastructural development in the Wadas case within these global and regional patterns of post-colonial extractive development.⁹

Research on the Wadas conflict has addressed three interconnected aspects: state-led extraction and ecological politics, grassroots-level socio-political degradation, and the development of women-led resistance. Putri et al. place the planned andesite mining in the Bener Dam within the framework of state capture, defining mining site selection, licensing, and the formal assessment of environmental impacts as the capture of state policy.¹⁰ Through the narrative of green developmentalism, the legitimation of environmental dispossession is offered. Their analysis illustrates the extractive logic of the dominant elites, which had measurable effects, including the disruption of the community (the creation of the mine's supporters and the opposing community), the erosion of solidarity, and the coercive and violent security response (the intimidation of community members, the arrest of community members), which further contracted the village community's democratic space. The structural analysis is complemented by Rahmawati's mapping of the Wadon Wadas movement, which identifies land grabbing, violence, and the state's aggression against the community, along with threats of violence against the community and the environment, as the movement's primary issues. It places the community as the primary actor against the government. In contrast to other Indonesian ecofeminist movements (such as Kartini Kendeng or Mama Aleta Baun), where the primary opposing force is the corporation, in the Wadas case, the government is the primary opposing force. Collectively, these studies illustrate that the Wadas resistance cannot be understood as the resistance to a single infrastructure project,

⁹ Ane Permatasari, Rendi Eko, and Budi Setiawan, "The Governmental and Environmental Policies : Ecofeminism Resistance in the Wadon Wadas Civil Society Movement," *Politicon* 6, no. 2 (2024): 301–28.

¹⁰ Sheha Putri et al., "Political Ecology of Environmental Conflict in Wadas Village, Purworejo Regency," *Sosial HUmaniora* 3, no. 2021 (2026): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.70214/334wp808>.

but rather as a struggle over the right to determine development, the associated risks, and the legitimate means to acquire it.

According to Puji Lestari et al. (2026), the Islamic political ecosystem in Indonesia and Malaysia has paved the way for women to participate formally in politics. In the past, it was extremely difficult for women in these countries to enter the political sphere; riding this new wave of change, they have finally gained formal status and made their voices heard. Yet when these women came forward to fight for educational equity, they hit an intractable deadlock. The original path to political participation had allowed them to act, but when they set out to realize their own demands, they discovered the road ahead was fraught with unavoidable strains. These female Muslim politicians in office have long been pulled between two forces, unable to break free. On the one hand, they must uphold their pious religious identity, meet the requirements of their faith, and ensure that every action they take does not violate the religious doctrines and rules they believe in, or they will lose recognition from their religious communities. On the other hand, they must comply with the rules of political power. Yet, this set of rules is fundamentally patriarchal at its core, prioritizing men's interests and discursive power in all matters, and forbidding women from overstepping any boundaries. Caught in the middle, they dare not loosen their grip on either side, yet cannot fully align with either, and can only seek an almost non-existent balance within the taut tension.¹¹

Though these accounts substantiate the political-ecological and mobilizational dimensions of the conflict, parallel scholarship on gender and climate governance in Indonesia indicates that the structural conditions that enable such contestation are largely unaddressed in policy. Pratiwi, McQuaid, and Vanderbeck examine ten national climate policy documents. Their analysis indicates that gender is treated as a "listing practice" in that there is no recognition of women's agency or

¹¹ Puji Lestari and Ganda Febri Kurniawan, "Faith, Gender, and Political Struggle in Muslim Women's Educational Justice Advocacy across Indonesia and Malaysia," *Social Sciences and Humanities Open* 14, no. July (2026): 103392, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2026.103393>.

leadership, no recognition of the structural conditions that place women at risk, and that the community and grassroots knowledge and the ecological knowledge that community groups mobilize, as exemplified by Wadon Wadas, is placed lower in the hierarchy than the technocratic institutional structures that prevail. This “speaking rather than listening” to the women the policies are intended to support is one reason Wadon Wadas and similar organizations have had to resort to legal and political advocacy outside institutional structures, rather than relying on formal gender-mainstreaming advocacy.¹² When taken together, these studies indicate a research gap that this study intends to fill, which is that while the political-ecological aspects of the Wadas conflict and the Wadon Wadas mobilization, and the marginalization of women’s structural agency in national climate policy, have been documented, no research has explored how Wadon Wadas has leveraged grassroots ecofeminist resistance to pursue legal and political advocacy against the structural misogyny and the extractive policies of the state.¹³

The relevance of recognizing this gendered aspect of agrarian conflict is not limited to a single example or community. It shows a widespread phenomenon in the Global South, where patriarchal social systems combine with extractive political systems, resulting in multiple layers of dispossession. In agrarian societies, women are usually the principal subsistence farmers and the custodians of household ecological knowledge. Thus, environmental degradation means women bear the burden of increased work as options for their survival narrow, as livestock and crops are affected by water scarcity, compacted soil, and fenced land. Furthermore, the ‘formal’ legal and political means of opposing extractive initiatives (e.g., challenging permits, administrative litigation, and public consultations) are often designed for male participation, thereby marginalizing women’s knowledge and forms of

¹² Andi Misbahul Pratiwi, Katie McQuaid, and Robert M. Vanderbeck, “Gender, Vulnerability, and Power in Indonesia’s Climate Policies,” *Climate Policy* 3062 (2026): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2026.2645652>.

¹³ M Wildan Humaidi, “Wadon Wadas: Women’s Resistance in Agrarian Conflict of Andesite Mining Construction Policy in Purworejo Regency,” *PALASTREN: Jurnal Studi Gender* 16, no. 1 (2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.21043/palastren.v16i1.14695>.

resistance. This reproduces the same dilemmas the conflict generated, and the 'formal' means of addressing them also marginalize women's knowledge of conflict and resistance. This marginalization of women's participation is further compounded by how development narratives are constructed.¹⁴ Women's protests are made to appear nonsensical and irrational. Environmental and social impact assessments (and attendant infrastructure projects) are written in a language that is devoid of women's deep connections to the land and the community.¹⁵ When women try to articulate these connections during official consultations, they are typically labeled, in ways both obvious and subtle, as emotional, ignorant, or obstructive. This framing serves to dismiss the validity of their claims while helping the discourse ignore and fail to question the technocratic assumptions underpinning the development narrative.

The research uses Wadas Village in Central Java's Purworejo Regency as the focal point for examining community-based movements, specifically the Wadon Wadas movement, which exemplifies women's resistance to andesite stone mining for the construction of parts of the Bener Dam, an approved national strategic project. Starting from when the mining operations were announced in 2018, the village has lived through a lengthy struggle involving protracted and disputed land measurements, arrest, intimidation, and the military altering the village's normal way of life. In Wadas, even farming is done under the military's eye, in a confrontational manner.¹⁶ There have been both national and international responses to the struggle following mass

¹⁴ Firdaus and Ratih Agustin Wulandari, "Implications of Low Women's Representation: Strategies and Challenges Towards Gender Equality in Indonesian Politics," *Indonesian Journal of Religion and Society* 5, no. 2 (2023): 138–53, <https://doi.org/10.36256/ijrs.v5i2.383>.

¹⁵ Subhra Rajat Balabantaray, "Women's Leadership and Sustainable Environmental Initiatives: A Macroscopic Investigation from Ecofeminism Framework," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation* 04, no. 04 (2023): 1039–46, www.allmultidisciplinaryjournal.com.

¹⁶ Damian Etone, "Theoretical Challenges to Understanding the Potential Impact of the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism: Revisiting Theoretical Approaches to State Human Rights Compliance," *Journal of Human Rights* 18, no. 1 (2019): 36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2019.1579639>.

arrests and the military's land measurement operations. Several human rights organizations have responded, and the struggle has been reframed from a local/administrative issue to a contest between the right to self-determination and the state's right to develop national infrastructure.¹⁷

Within this struggle, the Wadon Wadas movement has worked separately yet in alignment with other Resistance networks in the village, such as the Gempadewa movement, and has articulated a women's perspective on the resistance, focusing on the destruction of farmland and water resources, and the cultural practices associated with both.¹⁸ The movement's activities include culturally oriented protests, such as communal rituals at water sources and at the physical borders of land earmarked for excavation, as well as formal advocacy through administrative and/or judicial challenges to mining permits. This combination means the Wadon Wadas movement offers an important opportunity to study women's environmental advocacy distinctly in both the informal and formal contexts offered by the state.¹⁹

The existing literature on the intersection of gender and the environment is extensive and serves as the basis for the current research. Theorizations of ecofeminism, including the foundational work of Vandana Shiva, identified a structural parallel between the domination of nature and the domination of women, claiming a shared logic of exploitation and instrumentalization occurs within patriarchal capitalism when women and nature are subordinated and treated as controllable, extractable resources.²⁰ This legacy of thought has strongly

¹⁷ Ridwan Arifin et al., "Indonesian Sustainable Development Policy: How the Government Ensures the Environment for Future Generations," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 1355, no. 1 (2024): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1355/1/012005>.

¹⁸ Putri et al., "Political Ecology of Environmental Conflict in Wadas Village, Purworejo Regency."

¹⁹ Puji Lestari et al., *Environmental Issues in Women's Political Campaigns: Legal Advocacy and Sustainable Development in Indonesian Local Politics*, *Indonesian Journal of Environmental Law and Sustainable Development*, vol. 4, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijel.v4i1.22408>.

²⁰ Sabarina Husein, Herdis Herdiansyah, and LG Saraswati Putri, "An Ecofeminism Perspective: A Gendered Approach in Reducing Poverty by Implementing

influenced Global South scholarship. In the Global South, subsistence economies place women in direct, immediate relations with the environment. Hence, environmental destruction becomes a violence against women's subsistence and security and a denial of their epistemic authority as custodians of ecological knowledge.²¹ In the Global South, the absence of ecological systems directly impacts the formerly sustainable subsistence economies on which women relied for their livelihoods and destroys women's ecological knowledge and expertise. Environmental scholarship that followed the initial ecofeminism phase has, in part, sought to defend against essentialist and homogenizing ecofeminism, notably in Agarwal, who advocates a social construction of women's relationships with the environment through the gendered division of labor rather than a biological one.²² This approach asks that a materialist feminist political ecology perspective be given the predominant focus on the social and gendered relations of environmental systems, drawing attention to land relations, tenure systems, and the social and environmental relations of class and labor. This distinction remains the most important component in current research on Wadas, where Wadon Wadas' environmental knowledge and activism are shaped by specific social and material contexts rather than viewed as a representation of an intrinsic feminine disposition.²³

The lines of inquiry that focus on Indonesian agrarian studies and on infrastructure project-related land conflicts in Indonesia since 2000 have many parallels. Researchers have documented the spike in

Sustainable Development Practices in Indonesia," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 22, no. 5 (2021): 210–28, <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss5/14>.

²¹ Rajat Balabantaray, "Women's Leadership and Sustainable Environmental Initiatives: A Macroscopic Investigation from Ecofeminism Framework."

²² Tri Indah Annisa and Nur Azizah, "Agensi Perempuan Dalam Krisis Air Di Komunitas Pesisir Urban," *Peradaban Journal of Religion and Society* 4, no. 2 (2025): 233–47, <https://doi.org/10.59001/pjrs.v4i2.482>.

²³ Wuri Handayani, "Gender Communication: Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Differences in the Age of Gender Equality," *Informasi* 53, no. 1 (2023): 161–74, <https://doi.org/10.21831/informasi.v53i1.63478>.

land-related conflicts in Indonesia after the 2012 Land Acquisition Act and the subsequent introduction of the Presidential Regulation on Speeding Up National Strategic Projects (PSN).²⁴ Many researchers have documented the deadlines built into land acquisition processes, the lack of administrative appeals, and the resulting situation in which the community is profoundly disadvantaged, hostile, and time-constrained in negotiations.²⁵ Researchers have documented various forms of community resistance, including administrative appeals to the State Administrative Court, street protests, and the formation of coalitions with civil society and legal aid organizations. These documented forms of resistance provide a foundation for understanding the legal context of the Wadas case. Unfortunately, most scholarship on agrarian conflict lumps together the various affected communities. Most of the time, resistance is analyzed through a collective-village action framework, without examining the differentiated social orders of the various community members, particularly women, within these movements. Male community leaders are relied on to narrate resistance, with women participating decoratively or being completely overlooked.²⁶

This tendency may reproduce the same marginalization of women's agency present in the analyzed policy processes within the relevant scholarly literature. This demonstrates the necessity of researching women's resistance as a core, not peripheral, analytical focus. The legal implications of the State's designation of the Bener Dam as a National Strategic Project are significant because PSN status means the project will undergo streamlined administrative processes, rapid land acquisition, and a presumption of public interest that

²⁴ Danie Saputra Priyatna Danie, "Evaluation of Revenue Collection Fees for Acquisition Duty of Right on Land and Building at the Bandung City Revenue Management Agency in 2020-2023," *Jurnal Dialektika: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial* 22, no. 2 (2024): 368–80.

²⁵ Husein, Herdiansyah, and Putri, "An Ecofeminism Perspective: A Gendered Approach in Reducing Poverty by Implementing Sustainable Development Practices in Indonesia."

²⁶ Andri Rusta et al., "Political Violence Against Women: Challenges Faced in General Elections and Politics," in *KnE Social Sciences*, vol. 2024, 2024, 265–76, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v9i23.16719>.

severely constrains the grounds on which impacted communities may legally challenge the project. This constrictive legal framework is a partial explanation for why the Wadas community and others have found formal legal processes inadequate and have prioritized other cultural and physical strategies.²⁷

Some research has focused on Indonesian women's environmental movements, specifically the anti-cement factory movement in the Kendeng Mountains and the anti-reclamation movement on the northern coast of Jakarta.²⁸ This research has shown that women employ cultural tools, communal rituals, oral testimony, and protest tactics (such as pouring cement over their feet and standing in the way of heavy machinery) to engage strategically with the law and politics. This research has been important for showing that women's environmental activism has its own mode of politics, is not marginal or peripheral to the politics of environmental movements, and can create national-level concern and debate about environmental issues caused by extractive industries.

However, these studies have tended to be more descriptive in showing the different types of tactics women have used for protest and have failed to provide a detailed structural analysis of the misogynistic assumptions present in the development discourse that these women have protested against. When structural misogyny is discussed, it has been treated as background context, and the text and institutional formats that development plans use to constrain and suppress women's knowledge have been given little attention. This research aims to fill that gap by considering the discursive aspects of spatial planning and mining policies as data. They will be analyzed with the same level of detail and rigor as the ethnographic data about women's activism.

²⁷ Permatasari, Eko, and Setiawan, "The Governmental and Environmental Policies : Ecofeminism Resistance in the Wadon Wadas Civil Society Movement."

²⁸ Lestari et al., *Environmental Issues in Women's Political Campaigns: Legal Advocacy and Sustainable Development in Indonesian Local Politics*.

One related topic concerns the literature on legal advocacy and social movement theory in Indonesian environmental litigation.²⁹ This includes analyses of strategic environmental litigation and citizen lawsuits challenging the absence of environmental permits, and evaluations of the sufficiency of environmental assessments for the extraction industry and infrastructure projects. This literature has documented the community's legal options. This is the judicial review of environmental permits and of citizen lawsuits under the Environmental Protection and Management Law.³⁰ It has assessed the potential of legal options for community resistance to the initiation and alteration of working conditions in the extractive industry. It has demonstrated positive and negative aspects of the legal options. This literature focuses almost exclusively on legal options and, as a result, has not sufficiently addressed the informal, cultural, and embodied forms of advocacy, which are especially important in women-led movements and where women advocate for the culturally, financially, and socially less privileged. A legal advocacy framework, however thorough, does not explain the embodied and ritualistic protests, nor the negotiation of legal frameworks, that the Wadon Wadas movement invests considerable resources into.

The literature illustrates three relevant gaps that this study aims to fill. The first gap concerns feminist eco-theory and Indonesian agrarian conflict.³¹ The feminist eco-theory tradition has been useful for highlighting the structural connections between gender and eco-oppression; however, it has rarely been applied to grounded case

²⁹ Ridwan Arifin and Siti Hafsyah Idris, "In Dubio Pro Natura: In Doubt, Should the Environment Be a Priority? A Discourse of Environmental Justice in Indonesia," *Jambe Law Journal* 6, no. 2 (2023): 143–84, <https://doi.org/10.22437/jlj.6.2.143-184>.

³⁰ Ratu Triani Ayune Wulan Suci, "Law Enforcement on Management of Limestone Mining Without Permits According to Law Number 3 of 2020 Concerning Mineral and Coal Mining," *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 3, no. 3 (2022): 379–402, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jllr.v3i3.56286>.

³¹ Emma Foster, "Ecofeminism Revisited: Critical Insights on Contemporary Environmental Governance," *Feminist Theory* 22, no. 2 (2021): 190–205, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700120988639>.

studies. Thus, using the Indonesian Wadas case, this study aims to bridge the existing gap between theory and case study. The second gap in the literature concerns the gendered dimensions of the Indonesian agrarian conflict. Despite comprehensive documentation of the legal and institutional frameworks of the Indonesian agrarian conflict, the literature lacks gender analysis.³²

This gap in the literature has failed to identify the gendered forms of resistance, the gendered experiences of dispossession, and the vulnerability of women in the resistance. The third gap concerns women's environmental activism in Indonesia. While existing studies have documented women's environmental activism, they have not moved beyond description to examine how structural forms of misogyny intersect with policy and discourse. The existing studies of women's environmental activism in Indonesia describe structural forms of misogyny in policy and project documents, and activism; however, they have viewed misogyny as a background phenomenon. These accumulated research gaps point to a specific issue that has never been fully clarified in existing academic discussions of the Wadas case: all current studies have failed to explain how the ecological knowledge held by women, their daily labor arrangements, the tenure relationships tied to resources, and the intergenerationally passed-down ritual activities interact with and influence one another, ultimately shaping their response choices to extractive resource development projects. It should be noted that many previous discussions took for granted that women's resistance to resource development was primarily an instinctive choice derived from their gender identity. This study rejects such a simplistic equivalence. The novelty of this study lies in integrating gender, ecological knowledge, and the social and material dimensions of rural resistance into a single analytical perspective to examine the responses of local women in Wadas to resource development projects. To explain this integrated approach, it places three categories of content that were originally discussed separately into a single framework for analysis, and

³² Lestari and Kurniawan, "Intersectionality and Political Representation: Challenges and Policy Implications for Marginalized Women in Indonesia."

no longer treats issues as isolated. Gender-related differences, local people's understanding of the ecological environment, and the social relations and tangible material conditions involved in rural people's resistance to development content that was rarely studied together in the past have been combined in this research, specifically to unpack how women in Wadas have responded to the local resource extraction projects.

Through this integrated research approach, this study provides a more locally grounded explanation of women-led environmental resistance than previous studies, avoiding generalized, one-size-fits-all narratives that apply to specific local contexts. Furthermore, it advances past discussions of gender and conflict in agricultural regions. Most prior related discussions only positioned women on the margins of development processes, or simply framed them as victims of development. This study overcomes the limitations of such analytical frameworks, broadening the scope of relevant academic discussions. and instead, carefully explores how these women's resistance did not emerge out of thin air, but was deeply embedded in every practical condition of rural life, from the material support for their farm work and family care, to the local social and cultural traditions passed down for generations, all of which are closely bound to their choices.

Conducting research from this perspective allows scholars to break free from the previously inescapable rigid framework: the binary opposition that forces a choice between unconditionally accepting development or resisting it to the end. This approach gradually and concretely demonstrates that these local women do not merely select between "accepting" and "resisting"; instead, relying on the place-based ecological knowledge they have accumulated through years of working on this land, and leveraging the collective action power built with neighbors, relatives, and friends, they navigate, adjust, and respond practically to every change in the local environment. Following this line of reasoning, this study develops a clear direction for its investigation.³³

³³ Suraj Das and Anindya J. Mishra, "Dietary Practices and Gender Dynamics: Understanding the Role of Women," *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 8, no. 1 (2021): 3–5, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-021-00081-9>.

Without ecofeminist theory, it is difficult to understand the role the cultural repertoires utilized by the Wadon Wadas movement, such as ritualism and bodily protest, play as tactical political approaches to the otherwise “colorful” traditional legal wrapper activity. Similarly, without gender-disaggregated studies of agrarian activism, it is difficult to understand the impact of women’s participation on the trajectory, tactics, and outcomes of land conflicts compared to those led by male rural leaders. Additionally, it is difficult to determine whether the Wadon Wadas movement creates “new” forms of solidarity and endurance.³⁴ Finally, without the systematic analysis of the development discourse, it remains difficult to argue that the planning and environmental policies based on structural gaps of feminism and “neutral” gender discourse sustain structural misogyny. This study also seeks to fill that gap using a close reading of relevant policy documents.

The scientific contribution of this research is far more than simply piecing together the two research methods of Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The true core lies in using this integrated framework to unpack the logic of the environmental protection struggle in Wadon Wadas: the resistance of this group is not only rooted in their real-life experiences but also in their constant confrontation with the mainstream development narrative, which they continually question and negate.

Specifically, the role of FPAR is to pull women out of the position of mere subjects of research observation, they are no longer treated as passive research objects to be documented. Instead, it recognizes that the local knowledge they have accumulated from their own circumstances, their personal experiences, and the action strategies they have developed collectively can all serve as valid sources for generating credible research knowledge. These women’s experiences, which might otherwise have

³⁴ Serena Tagliacozzo and Ilaria Di Tullio, “Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) as a Framework to Devise Gender Equality Measures for Disaster Research,” *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 60 (2021): 102294, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2021.102294>.

been overlooked, are incorporated into the research as formal raw materials for knowledge production.

What CDA is tasked with, meanwhile, is sorting out those intertwined and conflicting voices: there are the mainstream narratives about development circulating in public discourse, advocacy voices for environmental protection, and diverse propositions from the resistance movement, all of these mixed claims are twisted into a single force. CDA's function is to unpack the pathways through which this force operates, clarifying how it gradually shapes people's recognition of women's demands, and ultimately determines whether their claims can hold their ground and be acknowledged by the public as legitimate and reasonable

Combining these two methods yields a unique conclusion that cannot be obtained by using either method alone. The struggle launched by these women is not merely a collective action undertaken by a group based on their daily experiences of interacting with nature; it is, more profoundly, a battle for discursive power. The stake in this battle is whose knowledge, whose understanding of development, can be universally recognized as reasonable and credible. This struggle extends from the level of action to the level of definition, and what is at stake is nothing less than the qualification of "whose voice counts."

This integrated analytical framework fills a gap in previous research. Most prior academic works on Wadon Wadas approached the topic from a single perspective: some discussed gender issues, others focused on agricultural conflicts, and others unpacked environmental protection struggles in isolation. Few scholars have connected these dimensions to examine them as a whole, and this research's integrated approach goes beyond all previous studies. In addition, this research presents a complete analytical framework that, step by step, clarifies how the ecological knowledge women have derived from their lives gradually develops into a dissenting voice capable of confronting the mainstream development narrative. This voice can puncture the stereotypical descriptions of development embedded in mainstream contexts and re-establish the discursive power that rightfully belongs to women on the land they are rooted in, they themselves should define what

development is and what consequences it will bring. The power to define the meaning of development in their own lives is thus handed back to women.³⁵ This combination allows consideration of the embodied experiences of women in Wadas, as well as the textual and institutional discourses that define the boundaries of those experiences. This dual approach diverges from methods that employ either ethnographic description or document analysis alone, as it provides a means to link the discursive definitions of development to their impacts on women's bodies, labor, and livelihoods. Further, it enables findings from one method to inform and articulate the other method's analytical focus.

This study provides a more nuanced description of environmental movements, combining body politics, community ritual, and legal advocacy. It considers these aspects to be dependent, integrated parts of resistance rather than separate categories, as most existing studies of resistance do. In these examples, we see women strategically move between registers, invoking community rituals in one instance and legal advocacy in another. This perspective accounts for the documented tendency of women's resistance to combine legal and ritual forms. In documenting the Wadas' case, this study situates it within the theory of Global South ecofeminism, a branch of ecofeminist theory largely grounded in South Asian and Latin American contexts and comparatively underdeveloped in Southeast Asia (especially Indonesia).³⁶ By situating the Wadas case within the Southeast Asian Global South, this study helps formulate and strengthen ecofeminist theory on the forms and structures of misogyny in the development of Javanese customary and community rituals, including *manganan* and *angonan*. This theory posits the community rituals of Javanese women

³⁵ Kaisha Crupi and Naomi Joy Godden, "Feminist Evaluation Using Feminist Participatory Action Research: Guiding Principles and Practices," *American Journal of Evaluation* 45, no. 1 (2024): 51–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10982140221148433>.

³⁶ Burhanuddin Muhtadi and Eve Warburton, "Inequality and Democratic Support in Indonesia," *Pacific Affairs* 93, no. 1 (2020): 31–58, <https://doi.org/10.5509/202093131>.

as ecofeminist community knowledge and as a form of community activism, and adds to the decidedly sparse ecofeminist literature from Indonesia.³⁷

This study aims to achieve three interrelated objectives to contribute empirically and theoretically. The first objective focuses on the Wadon Wadas movement's legal and political advocacy strategies to protect their living space from andesite mining. This objective analyzes the movement's strategies regarding the position of its women members in the local community and the Indonesian legal-political system, as well as the formal barriers they face when seeking legal remedies. The second objective is to identify and interrogate the structural misogyny in the spatial planning and socio-economic development frameworks for the Bener Dam and the associated mining project. These frameworks are considered planning instruments and therefore focus on discursive frameworks subject to linguistic and institutional analysis, rather than on planning frameworks considered neutral.³⁸ The third objective is to build a theory on the combination of women's resistance practices and the political advocacy of body rituals, such as the community-based rituals of *manganan* and *angonan*.³⁹ This objective focuses on the potential of these practices to shift the Wadas conflict, on the environmental advocacy of these rituals, and on their potential application to other similar conflicts in Indonesia. When considered collectively, these three objectives converge on the following central research question: How do women in Wadon Wadas build and perform resistance against an extractive form of development? What do these

³⁷ Tri Nurmega Oktarina and Anisa Yulianti, "The Role of Women in Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection: A Discourse of Ecofeminisme in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Environmental Law and Sustainable Development* 1, no. 2 (2022): 107–38, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijel.v1i2.58137>.

³⁸ Hunggul Yudono Setio Hadi Nugroho et al., "Mainstreaming Ecosystem Services from Indonesia's Remaining Forests," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 14, no. 19 (2022): 4–7, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912124>.

³⁹ Calcagni Mariana, "From Peasant Women to Social Change : The Politicization of Identities and Materialities toward Socio-Ecological Transformations," *Grassroot - Journal of Political Ecology* 32, no. 1 (2025): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.2458/jpe.5930>.

resistance efforts illuminate about the structural misogyny of Indonesia's development discourse and the possibilities of achieving a more gender-equitable framework of environmental governance?

This study examines the feminist resistance of the women of Wadon Wadas. This study incorporates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR).⁴⁰ CDA will analyze the policy documents related to the Bener Dam mining project. At the same time, FPAR will explain the resistance. This study adopted the FPAR method, whose core goal is clear: to enable women from Wadon Wadas to no longer be only passive subjects recruited to answer questions and provide information, but to actively participate in every step of the entire research process, holding a voice from the advancement of the research to the formation of its conclusions.

These women are not token participants; every task they undertake falls squarely on the key nodes of the research: first, they share their own personal experiences related to the research topic, articulating their real ordeals embedded in daily life; next, they clarify their understanding of the environmental changes unfolding around them and the resistance actions launched to protect their homeland, putting the most intuitive local perceptions on the table; afterward, they collaborate to examine various issues identified during the research, putting forward perspectives rooted in their identity as local people; finally, they assist in interpreting and verifying the final research conclusions, ensuring the study's outcomes align with their real lives rather than being fabricated out of thin air by scholars.

This participatory model, which immerses all members in the research, breaks the long-standing convention that only scholars' knowledge counts as a valid basis for research. It positions these women's personal experiences and the indigenous ecological knowledge they have accumulated through day-to-day life as a critical foundation for generating new research knowledge, truly placing local people's voices at the core of the study.

⁴⁰ Crupi and Godden, "Feminist Evaluation Using Feminist Participatory Action Research: Guiding Principles and Practices."

That said, the research does not overstate these women's level of participation, nor does it claim they undertook the full responsibilities of independent co-researchers at every single link of the study. After all, different fields have their own specialized expertise; the research also included much professional work not directly tied to their daily lives, which they did not need to take on across professional boundaries. FPAR incorporated only the research phases directly relevant to their experiences, knowledge, and forms of resistance, precisely to ensure their participation could deliver real impact, rather than be a tokenistic, performative gesture for show.

In addition to the content recounted by the women themselves, the study incorporated data on practices such as mujahadah and kitchen mutual aid and triangulated it with information from advocacy organizations. This means cross-referencing information from different sources to verify content authenticity, avoiding biases that can arise from relying on a single source. Information from these external organizations is used only to supplement the women's own accounts and experiences, helping the study obtain a more complete background context. It never overshadows their original narratives, let alone replaces these women's real experiences and feelings with external claims. The FPAR applied in this study is a set of research methods that truly enables collective participation and collaboration. The women's voices, experiences, interpretations, and their verification work have all tangibly influenced the entire course of the research; from start to finish, they are participants in the study, not bystanders standing outside of it. This study is committed to presenting women's situated experiences and going beyond the (re)analysis of data from an external perspective. This study utilized multiple data collection methods. The first method was in-depth semi-structured interviews with the women of Wadon Wadas. This helped the researcher gain insight into the women's motivations and strategies and provided an interpretation of the conflict. The second method was participatory observation of daily rituals in the village, protests, and other forms of resistance. This helped the researcher to document performative and cultural resistance. The last method involved analyzing mining policy documents, environmental impact

assessments, and other documents related to the Social Protection Network (SPN). These documents were analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis to understand how structural misogyny is embedded in and rationalized through linguistic and institutional frameworks. The data collected through interviews and observations were thematically analyzed to determine resistance.⁴¹ The focus of the document analysis was to identify how omissions and the marginalization of women were framed. Integrating these three types of data enables the study to move from the textual analysis of development discourse to the lived, physical experiences of the women who engage with and contest it. This enables the study to address criticisms of development discourse through both discursive evidence and ethnographic fieldwork with the Wadas community.

B. Structural Misogyny in Spatial Planning and Development Discourse

Interviews elucidate a consistent discursive pattern among state actors relating to land, ecological risk, and community protests within highly technical and administrative frameworks. These frameworks neglect the relational, embodied, and gendered aspects of land, which are particularly important to the residents of Wadas. In defending the choice of Wadas for the andesite quarry, Governor Ganjar Pranowo relied exclusively on a rational engineering and costing decision.⁴² It was determined that the quarrying of the material from the nearby site of Loano was insufficient. Therefore, the engineers of the Ministry of Public Works determined that Wadas was the site of the next closest sufficient deposit. This decision, according to the Governor, was a logical one. The other deposits, which were determined to be too large a

⁴¹ Irwansyah Irwansyah, *Penelitian Hukum, Pilihan Metode & Praktik Penulisan Artikel* (Yogyakarta: Mirra Buana Media, 2021), 37.

⁴² Rizky Akita, "A CINDERELLA STORY(?): How Local NGOs Coalition Advocate for the Displaced Community of Kampung Tambakrejo with the Practice of Policy Entrepreneurship," *Nucl. Phys.* 13, no. 1 (2023): 104–16.

distance to be considered, were the subject of a geologist's search. In this reasoning, the andesite below Wadas is considered an awaiting resource. In this reasoning, there is no place for the agricultural labor, the water, or the ecological knowledge dispersed among women, which this land sustains. Absence of such knowledge is of itself very significant, and is the focus of a critical discourse analysis of this interview.

This framing extends to how officials describe community objections. When the Wadas residents' issue was raised, the Governor, when asked if Wadas residents had the chance to engage in any of the decision-making processes, repeatedly took to the language of "representasi." He noted that the opposition was not due to any legitimate substantive concern but to a lack of representation, and that it was rather speculative to assume that representation was absent.⁴³ This reframing of the symbiotic nature of the exclusion of residents, especially women, from engagement on matters of land, water, and livelihood, as the missing representation was rather discursively creative. In the same interview, he referenced a framework of economic, social, and ecological justice. This framework, which appears to overlap with the evaluative framework of this study, supports the remainder of this analysis of dislocation and conflict. Its primary focus here is on reinforcing a decision rather than supporting genuine engagement, thereby demonstrating that justice vocabularies may be co-opted by the very structures they are meant to challenge and account.⁴⁴

Head of Village, FS, claims that over 100 people attended a focus group meeting he hosted in 2016, and that information and resources were freely available at the Village Office. FS claims the Village Office acted as an extension of the central government. Unlike FS, we see participating in the closed information regime, selective information distribution, and the contested spatial risk classification documented by

⁴³ Dian Eka Rahmawati, "Ecofeminism and Local Women's Social Movements in Indonesia: Issues and Actors in Environmental Conflicts," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 1566, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1566/1/012037>.

⁴⁴ Tagliacozzo and Di Tullio, "Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) as a Framework to Devise Gender Equality Measures for Disaster Research."

LBH Yogyakarta.⁴⁵ These examples illustrate that the same planning process can be legitimized or delegitimized by different actors, and that the Head of Village's account omits women's experiences of information exclusion.

Fahri Setyanto's account demonstrates how the dismissal of landslide risk, which directly affects the safety of women's homes and their farming lands, is communicated in a way that avoids engaging the community. Setyanto claimed that the Wadas village area is not in a landslide-prone region and that the landslide-prone region is in the Bener sub-district. He made this claim with absolute certainty, even though it is documented in LBH Yogyakarta, which will be explained in the following section, that the spatial plan (RTRW), which was used to classify Wadas as a landslide-prone area, was revised to grant permission for the mining operation.⁴⁶ This does not indicate only the discrepancy of facts; it shows how administrative changes can serve a communicative purpose that, in a retrospective sense, makes technical safety appear to residents, especially women who maintain and manage the safety of the household and subsistence, to be a displaced concern regarding which slopes would be affected by erosion or landslides after heavy rainfall.⁴⁷

The account of the Environmental Agency of Purworejo Regency demonstrates the discursive function of bureaucratic distance in shifting responsibility for Community Engagement. Head of the Pollution Control Division, Daniel Eko Arianto, stressed his lack of understanding of the socialization process and insisted that it was the responsibility of BBWS and the Province. However, he assured that the

⁴⁵ Moh. Shohibuddin et al., *Pergulatan Intelektual Mewujudkan Tata Kelola Agraria Yang Adil, Demokratis, Dan Mensejahterakan*, 2022, 329.

⁴⁶ Rebecca Elmhirst et al., "Gender and Generation in Engagements with Oil Palm in East Kalimantan, Indonesia: Insights from Feminist Political Ecology," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 6 (2017): 1137–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1337002>.

⁴⁷ Emilda Firdaus et al., "Has Women's Participation in Local Government Been Strengthened? A Legal Political Analysis in Riau Province?," *Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 1–14, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15294/jils.vol9i1.4540>.

site of the mining activity had been reviewed and had passed the geotechnical and environmental requirements.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he explained that the geological survey of Wadas had already met the requirements that would have required digging several meters deep, and more. This combination exemplifies the confident assertion of technical adequacy and the disclaimer of responsibility for the community process. This demonstrates that planning discourse can be processually satisfactory while remaining unaccountable to the community.⁴⁹ This is particularly clear to women who manage household subsistence, whose knowledge and needs will be especially underrepresented in consultations and environmental impact assessments.

As for Chair Agasi of the Purworejo Regional Legislature, his concerns regarding the appropriation of natural resources and the management of state revenues focused on the possibility that quarry materials would be used for purposes other than dam construction. In this context, the lands of Wadas are viewed primarily as resources to be managed and administered, rather than as lands that are inhabited and have gendered and ecological significance. Furthermore, of the eight informants in this study, not a single government or legislative official, when not prompted, voiced concerns about women's ecological knowledge, subsistence, or safety. When combined, these arguments create a development discourse that focuses on administrative and revenue management, which, in turn, removes identity concerns and gendered discourse from the substance and the relation between land and the resistance concern, and places it on an external, jurisdictional focus.

⁴⁸ Alexander Kennedy, "The Role of Indonesian Constitutional Law in Sustaining National Resilience Amid Global Challenges," *Jurnal Lemhannas RI* 12, no. 4 (2025): 485–508, <https://doi.org/10.55960/jlri.v12i4.957>.

⁴⁹ Rosita Candrakirana et al., "Legal Framework of Community-Based Water Resource Management to Achieve SDGs and 'No One Left Behind,'" *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum* 24, no. 1 (2024): 107, <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jdh.2024.24.1.3892>.

C. Legal and Political Advocacy Strategies of Wadon Wadas

In addition to navigating the discursive landscape, Wada's residents and their legal representatives have undertaken formal legal and political processes. However, the outcomes have highlighted the systemic constraints these processes impose on communities, positioning them as objects of development rather than subjects. Sudirman, the Chair of Gempa Dewa, has noted a pattern of the selective control of access to information throughout the different phases of the conflict. Following the 2018 BBWS socialization session, which was apparently attended by nearly the entire village, access to information began to be restricted, and the village authorities grew more closed about the information they provided.⁵⁰ Sudirman has stated that this restriction of information has been related to the escalation of the conflict. He has noted that disconnected communication most often initiates major conflict; thus, the restriction of communication has been the major source of conflict, and communication has been the thing most often denied to the residents of Wadas during the conflict.⁵¹

Hearing that a local mining project was about to be launched, residents of the Wadas community did not stage a disturbance. Instead, they chose to safeguard their rights through legal means, compiled a joint petition, and submitted it to the competent authorities of the village and the government one by one. Signatures on the petition were not collected casually; they gathered ID card-based signatures from nearly 400 residents. With solid identity information, they formally submitted the entire community's stance of opposing the project to the higher authorities.

Their decision to submit a petition was not random. They knew that pre-established public participation channels existed, and they wanted to use this official channel to clearly state their opposition to

⁵⁰ Humaidi, "Wadon Wadas: Women's Resistance in Agrarian Conflict of Andesite Mining Construction Policy in Purworejo Regency."

⁵¹ Humaidi.

government decisions involving local development and land use. To accomplish this, the residents followed a comprehensive process: first, they organized all the neighbors who also wanted to oppose the project, then collected everyone's signatures and identification information door to door, and finally submitted all the materials to the relevant authority in charge of the matter. After going through the entire process, the worries that everyone had originally hidden in their hearts—the fear that the project would occupy their land, that it would cut off their livelihoods, that it would destroy the environment they had lived in for their entire lives—these scattered private concerns merged into a unified formal demand of the entire community, clearly opposing the still-planned mining project and all the negative impacts it might bring to land, livelihoods, and the environment.

Yet according to residents of the Wadas community, after this weighty petition was submitted, there was no follow-up. They never received any actionable response from the competent authorities. This empty, fruitless outcome punctured a thin layer of illusion: the official regulations explicitly stated in black and white that the public has the formal right to express opposition, and had opened a door for ordinary people to participate in public affairs, but the entire community could not influence the decision-making process with this petition. There was a huge gap between the opportunity written into the regulations and the actual influence they could wield.⁵² Even though the petition left written evidence confirming the entire community's opposition, its effect ended there. It failed to halt the mining project, which continued as originally planned, and it did not secure a real solution for the community. No one came forward to address their concerns. The outcome of this rebuff directly changed all of the community's subsequent strategies for safeguarding rights and resisting the project. The previous approach of relying on official channels was no longer feasible, so they had to switch to other methods. This incident in Wadas

⁵² Sudaryat Sudaryat, Deviana Yunitasari, and Sonny Dewi Judiasih, "Policy and Implementation of Gender Equality in Indonesian Mining Companies as an Approach to Achieve the Goals of Indonesian SDGS," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024): 15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2400602>.

also clearly proves that whether a legitimate rights-protection effort launched spontaneously by ordinary people can yield results depends not only on whether they can make use of the official public participation mechanisms, but also on whether the competent authorities truly prioritize the rights and interests of the affected community and provide responsible responses. In the absence of an official response, community members utilized the traditional methods of political-legal action. They staged a series of protests at the offices of the district head, the National Land Agency, BBWS, and, finally, the Governor of Semarang, a reflection of the systematic movement through the available institutional hierarchy and the subsequent reliance on prolonged street protest, as described in the Indonesian agrarian resistance literature, and fits the generally documented patterns of institutional protest escalation in Indonesia.⁵³

According to staff member Ilh, LBH Yogyakarta's account outlines Wadas's formal legal strategies into two types. According to Ilh, LBH Yogyakarta filed a lawsuit against the Location Determination Permit, and under Indonesian LARR, the renewal of the Location Determination Permit would not meet the requirements for participatory renewal, because the residents' formal objection should have called for a government Investigation team to be formed.⁵⁴ Ilham noted that this was never done, and the government relied on the signatures of the attendees of the meeting, which the residents walked out of. This gap between the administrative record and the lived reality of participation is the kind of procedural fiction that legal formalism seeks to address, but, as we will discuss further in the next chapter, the court's reasoning limited the extent of that formalism.

Ilham's account, along with the previous one, shows how litigants confronting the recalcitrance of planning authorities encountered

⁵³ Elmhirst et al., "Gender and Generation in Engagements with Oil Palm in East Kalimantan, Indonesia: Insights from Feminist Political Ecology."

⁵⁴ Mateja Held, "The Rule of Law in Spatial Planning and Building," *EU and Comparative Law Issues and Challenges Series (ECLIC)*, no. 8 (2024): 239–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358530600585032>.

interpretive barriers. He noted, for instance, that the renewing of permits was not considered an opportunity for the kinds of legal challenges that would make it flexibly responsive to changing social and planning balances.

LBH's account argues that there is a second prong to the regulation strategy. This prong challenges the legal rationale for treating the Wadas quarry and the Bener Dam as a single project for the purposes of obtaining a construction permit. Ilham noted that there is a separate, specialized regulation governing Indonesian mining activities. However, the government's rationale for fast-tracking the land provision was based solely on the quarry's inclusion in the Bener Dam presidential regulation for the National Strategic Project. This is despite mining activity at Wadas. Ilham also pointed out that the 2020 Job Creation Law continued to limit the scope of community involvement in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment process.⁵⁵ This trend coincides with the erosion of local participation observed in Wadas.

These formal legal approaches, however, occurred within the context of village-level political fragmentation that the advocacy strategy could not address. Ilham described this in granular detail at the hamlet level. The percentage of residents who opposed the mine decreased over the years from approximately 75% to 25-35%.⁵⁶ This was partly due to the state's promotion of village-level intermediaries, including a pro-mining Village Head and absentee landholders, who had moved out of Wadas and were more easily persuaded to sell their land. Ilham's analysis of the hamlets shows that there was strong resistance in Randu Parang and Kaligendol (approximately 80% each) and near-complete agreement in Karang, Krajan, and Kaliancer. These hamlets served as access roads to the mining site. This shows that the proximity of hamlets

⁵⁵ Fahrurrozi Muhammad, "Enforcing Omnibus Law: Formalizing Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Indonesia Using Behavioural Science," *Indonesian Law Journal* 14, no. 2 (2021): 95, <https://doi.org/10.33331/ilj.v14i2.70>.

⁵⁶ Diandra Masayu Nastabilla, Raihan Yogi Prakoso, and Raihan Yahya Alhafizh, "Women Support Women: How Coastal Women in Demak Step Out from Poverty," *Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi Terapan* 7, no. 1 (2022): 37–46, <https://doi.org/10.20473/jiet.v7i1.32653>.

to the mining site controlled the geography of resistance and agreement rather than the prevailing sentiment in the community.⁵⁷

The fragmentation of villages by local-level projects enforced by government policies, coupled with differential economic incentives, is a well-documented phenomenon in the literature on agrarian conflict. As collective opposition is methodically broken down at the village level, legal and institutional advocacy strategies can address some aspects of this problem, particularly by contesting certain administrative decisions and exposing procedural irregularities.⁵⁸ However, it is difficult for legal institutions to respond to the gradual breakdown of collective opposition at the village level. Within the fields of agrarian studies and conflict resolution, the limitations of legal and institutional advocacy strategies have long been recognized. One of the strategies used to address this limitation is “body politics and ritual practice.” This strategy aims to extend resistance to areas beyond the reach of administrative and legal procedures.

D. Body Politics, Ritual, and Cross-Gender Solidarity: Redefining Environmental Advocacy

As shown in the previous section, formal legal and administrative channels have proven only partially effective for women in Wadas. When faced with this situation, women in Wadas have supplemented, and at times bypassed, formal channels through ritualistic and embodied resistance.⁵⁹ This type of resistance follows a unique political logic that is not only difficult for the women themselves to discern but also for the advocacy organizations that work in the community. Dimas Perdana of

⁵⁷ Suci, “Law Enforcement on Management of Limestone Mining Without Permits According to Law Number 3 of 2020 Concerning Mineral and Coal Mining.”

⁵⁸ Indriati Amarini et al., “Digital Transformation : Creating an Effective and Efficient Court in Indonesia,” *Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 31, no. 2 (2023): 266–84, <https://doi.org/10.22219/ljih.v31i2.28013>.

⁵⁹ Lori Heise et al., “Gender Inequality and Restrictive Gender Norms: Framing the Challenges to Health,” *The Lancet* 393, no. 10189 (2019): 2440–54, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)30652-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30652-X).

Walhi Yogyakarta has observed a wider range of resistance tactics in similar situations in Central Java and noted that women in these contexts engage in tactics not captured by conventional legal and political spheres.⁶⁰ He describes women performing *mujahadah*, ritualistic gatherings of prayer that occupy a space of both spirituality and collective resistance and are not easily placed in the context of a conventional protest. He notes that this type of resistance is outside the conventional understanding of advocacy and belongs to the local wisdom that must be cultivated within the organization.⁶¹ This is important for analysis because it is from an advocate's perspective. Even Walhi's staff understands that these resistance practices are not easily articulated in legal and institutional advocacy frameworks typically used by the organization. This confirms that a theoretical gap exists, which this study aims to explore within the existing literature.

Dimas detailed how women's informal public spaces serve as loci for political organization and the circulation of information. These spaces operate in parallel to, and are largely hidden from, both official village governance systems and state surveillance systems designed to monitor official public spaces. He described women's public space as the kitchen, during community cooking or *rewang* (assistance) at community celebrations. He suggested that these informal domestic and community labor spaces be recognized and strategically used as public spaces for state resistance. This is because the state's control systems are designed for formal public spaces, and are much less concerned with the informal, women-dominated spaces of everyday social interaction, where women organize and circulate information and strategies largely beyond the state's awareness.

This embodied and spatial repertoire is complemented by Dimas's explicit organizing philosophy, which prioritizes culturally legitimate community spaces as the foundation for resistance rather than imported

⁶⁰ Sunarto, Iwan Hadi Saputro, and Puji Lestari, "The Political Preference of Students in the Indonesian General Election, 2019," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 13, no. 3 (2020): 482–99.

⁶¹ Puji Lestari et al., "Beyond Legal Frameworks: Uncovering the Hidden Impact of Gender Violence in Indonesia's 2024 Political Recruitment," *Jurnal Suara Hukum* 7, no. 2 (2025): 351, <https://doi.org/10.26740/jsh.v7n2.p350-378>.

activist frameworks. As a comparable example from other advocacy contexts, Dimas referenced the integration of ecological justice into the framework of Friday prayers and the restatement of ecologically oriented justice and human rights discourse in Religious Homilies, thereby helping to create an environment where critical discourse on environmental issues is more likely to occur within spaces that the dominant control logic of the state is likely unable to monitor or constrain, since the ministerial speech is of a different register and a different system from politics. This is structurally similar to the functions that *rewang* and *mujahadah* serve for the women of Wadas: both modify existing culturally legitimated community practices, thereby raising political awareness and fostering solidarity, without the level of visible, organized activism that would unduly provoke the state.

The relative lack of direct testimony on these practices is not simply a limitation of this study; it is analytically significant. This study's data on the practices of *mujahadah* and kitchen-based solidarity came from an allied advocacy organization rather than direct interviews. This absence of data illustrates the pattern expected by this study's theoretical framework. Women's forms of ecological knowledge and resistance are likely to be invisible, even to advocacy networks that support the community. This is even more the case with the state planning discourses discussed in the previous sections. This is a significant gap, indicating that Feminist Participatory Action Research with Wadon Wadas members should be undertaken in the future. This gap in the research should be considered a limitation of this study, which it acknowledges but has not addressed.

Cross-gender solidarity in the Wadas movement extends beyond domestic and ritual spaces to encompass digital and international solidarity. Although local resistance can be scaled up without losing its context, it does not leave that context intact. Dimas pointed out that Gempa. Dewa was able to gain sympathy from large online communities and international media, even though international media framed their visibility. Social media exposes movements to digital repression, such as hacking and violent digital repression. In the context of social media,

Dimas describes the visibility and international scope of the digital movement, using international media, digital buzzers, and hacking as means of creating violence and digital repression of movements and social media. This movement shows that Wadon Wadas's self-representation and advocacy starts in the intimacy of a kitchen and social media, creating a scalable, digital form of social media activism.

From February 7 to 8, 2022, the Indonesian government suddenly escalated its handling of the protests by villagers in Wadas Village. Prior to that, the two sides had merely stuck to their own positions regarding the development project: the government maintained that its development plan was reasonable, while the villagers argued that their livelihoods could not be destroyed, and the dispute remained at the stage of each side airing its grievances. But when it came time to enter the site to conduct land surveys, the conflict erupted into a head-on confrontation between villagers and government personnel.

On February 8, the Purworejo Land Office and the Serayu Opak River Basin Organization (BBWS Serayu Opak) jointly carried out land survey work for the planned andesite quarry. When the staff of these two units entered the site to perform their work, a group of police officers accompanied them throughout the process; these officers were from the Central Java Regional Police and the Purworejo Police, and the contingent was considerable.

The day after the incident, that is, February 9, 2022, the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) of Indonesia issued its first public response. This initial statement mentioned that several villagers from Wadas Village had been arrested by the police, and it explicitly alleged that the police had perpetrated acts of violence against the ordinary villagers opposing the quarry project, as well as the legal representatives who safeguarded the rights and interests of these villagers.

After this preliminary response, Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights did not stop following up on the case; it continued to conduct long-term monitoring and independent investigations. After all investigative work was completed, Komnas HAM reached a final conclusion: in the incident on February 8, the scale of police force

deployed by the government far exceeded actual demand, and excessive force that completely crossed the necessary limits was used when arresting the villagers participating in the protests.

This final investigation report also documented in detail the villagers' experiences: many sustained visible external injuries, and many more suffered psychological distress that led to long-term psychological trauma that is difficult to recover from. Among all the affected villagers, the experiences of women and children were particularly distressing, with their rates of injury and trauma being the most prominent. The report also clearly pointed out that the rights the villagers should have enjoyed, including the right to personal safety and the right to seek fair justice when facing injustice, all failed to receive the due protection they deserved.

The investigation results reached by this independent institution had complete, independently verifiable grounds, which were sufficient to help all people see the true nature of the entire incident, it was not just an ordinary conflict between local villagers and government authorities, but a critical qualitative escalation in the government's strategy for responding to all voices opposing the quarry project, with its tactics growing increasingly forceful.

This incident also became a landmark in the villagers' path to safeguarding their rights in Wadas Village. After experiencing violent law enforcement by the police and having their formal appeal channels ignored, the villagers became increasingly convinced that the originally officially designed channels for participating in expressing opinions and legal opposition mechanisms had failed to protect any of their rights at all, and they could not even safeguard their most basic personal safety. Since then, the community's resistance has grown increasingly fierce, and they no longer pin their hopes on resolving the issue through formal channels. Thousands of police arrived at the temporary police camp on the grounds of the Bener sub-district police station, surrounding Wadas village and conducting land measurements and staking. This was the first time a power cut for the entire Wadas village accompanied police field camp operations. The next day, land surveyors

from the Purworejo Land Office arrived, along with fully armed police.⁶² Using police trucks, patrol vehicles, and motorcycles, land surveyors proceeded to the forest. During this, the police surrounded and detained members of the community who were performing *mujahadah*, an act of devotion that constitutes resistance and was described in the previous section as a key practice of resistance performed by women, at the mosque. It was also noted that the police chased younger members of the community into the forest. Police entered houses where women, the elderly, and children were, resulting in the detention of at least 25 members of the community, including the legal council members of LBH Yogyakarta, who were transported in police vehicles to the police station.⁶³

Figure 1. Public Virtue Research Institute, 2022



Source: Available on X or Twitter: @wadas_melawan

⁶² Suhadi Suhadi, Asmarani Ramli, and Tri Andari Dahlan, “The Development of Argicultural Land Conversion: Legal Culture and Comparative in Indonesia and Nigeria,” *Lex Scientia Law Review* 8, no. 2 (2022): 1034, <https://doi.org/10.15294/lslr.v8i2.13999>.

⁶³ Rezal Helwin Bramantara, “Equality before the Law Principle in the Implementation of Legal Aid in Indonesia,” *The Indonesian Journal of International Clinical Legal Education* 3, no. 2 (2021): 209–22, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijicle.v3i2.46177>.

The Public Virtue Research Institute has framed this episode as indicative of a decline in democracy across Indonesia. The institute's chair argued that the residents' refusal of the project should be seen as an exercise of the right to a healthy environment. They argued that the excessive deployment of personnel and the use of force were undemocratic and constituted ecological policing of democracy and the socio-ecological justice framework, and that the case should be seen as part of the state's coercive apparatus to limit the space of dissent. The director of the institute cited the raid as part of a greater history of environmental dispossession that has been increasing since 2021 and that the continued expansion of the interests of capital during the declared COVID-19 emergency, which included the restriction of almost all forms of civic and social activity, created a contradictory governance style during the coronavirus pandemic, which combined developmental authoritarianism, harsh anti-labor legislation, and a deliberate weakening of environmental protections.⁶⁴

Within the scope of this study, the February 2022 raid holds importance for two related reasons. One, it illustrates that the technocratic and administratively deflected discourse observed among government informants in the first part of the study was not limited to words; it was operationalized through violent state power against the residents of Wadon Wadas, targeting their devotional and communal practices of resistance. Rather than targeting a formal protest or demonstration, the raid on a mosque during the gathering for *mujahadah* showed that state intrusion was not limited to targeting a non-confrontational, culturally legitimate communal gathering, and that even spaces that the residents considered to be comparatively safe from state surveillance were, in fact, susceptible to state intrusion. The second important reason that the state raid on the gathering showed the

⁶⁴ Wina Waniatri, Muslihudin Muslihudin, and Sri Lestari, "Dampak Sosial, Ekonomi Dan Lingkungan Pertambangan Pasir Di Desa Luragung Landeuh Kuningan, Jawa Barat," *Jurnal Ilmu Lingkungan* 20, no. 2 (2022): 279–90, <https://doi.org/10.14710/jil.20.2.279-290>.

presence of women, older people, and children among those whose homes were raided, and among the detained, is that it provided evidence of the gendered and intergenerational impacts of enforced developmentalism, and also supported the argument that the enforced structural misogyny of Indonesia's Development is not limited to verbal forms, and is, in fact, enforced through violent means.

E. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Wadas conflict demonstrates a single, coherent dynamic: structural misogyny does not operate as an isolated feature of state discourse but as a condition that formal legal advocacy alone cannot dismantle, and one that women have therefore had to answer by redefining what environmental advocacy itself consists of. This study does not treat the three issues mentioned as isolated entities, but instead regards them as interconnected stages in a sequence of responses by the Wadas community in the face of resource development. These three issues are specifically: the erasure of indigenous gender-related ecological knowledge by the expert system; the inherent structural limitations of channels such as legal litigation and submitting appeals to official authorities; and the emergence of ritualized, on-site participatory, network-dependent solidarity actions. The study's findings show that after the community encountered repeated obstacles in formal legal and administrative channels and was unable to advance their appeals, the original protest actions gradually extended in new directions. They began to gather strength by holding rituals, conducting on-site offline gatherings and guarding actions, and voicing their demands and supporting each other online. The sequential emergence of these forms of protest cannot be interpreted as a simple, direct causal relationship in which the failure of official channels would necessarily give rise to new forms of protest; rather, it is more akin to an ongoing process of adaptation. As the situation faced by the Wadas community kept changing, different forms of protest emerged one after another, and worked in coordination with each other. Interpreting these events through this perspective makes it possible to sort out how

women's ecological knowledge, legal rights-defending actions, and the power of collective solidarity were linked in different protest scenarios, without forcing these elements to fit into fixed, necessary correlations. Read this way, Wadon Wadas's turn to communal ritual and informal solidarity is not a supplementary or symbolic gesture but a strategically necessary response to the specific insufficiencies of formal legal and discursive channels, a conclusion given further weight by the state's own decision to treat *mujahadah*, rather than conventional protest, as a target requiring coercive suppression.

Wider implications extend beyond the Wadas case from this conclusion. For one, spatial planning and mining regulations cannot bring real participatory legitimacy merely by improving procedural compliance. Gendered and household-level ecological Understandings communicated through participatory means must be made sufficient through the frameworks of Environmental Impact Assessment and land acquisition. Additionally, the judicial review framework must be empowered to consider participatory sufficiency as a continuing obligation. For legal aid and environmental advocacy organizations, the main conclusion is that formal litigation is most effective when intentionally aligned with the cultural and relational solidarity that communities maintain, on their own terms, through informal means, since this informal solidarity sustains resistance when litigation reaches its structural limits. For researchers, the fact that the evidence in this study on women's ritual and domestic organization is comparatively thin and secondhand is itself a finding and should be acted upon. It suggests the need to conduct further research with women of Wadon Wadas and related groups, using Feminist Participatory Action Research and other methods, to document this organization and advance the theory of women's organizations, so that it can be applied to similar contexts across the rest of Southeast Asia.

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This study was conducted with full academic objectivity; all contributors affirm the complete absence of any personal, financial, or institutional bias throughout the research process.

Publishing Ethical and Originality Statement

The authors hereby certify that the manuscript is original, has not been published elsewhere, and is not currently under evaluation by another journal. The research complies with established publication ethics, and all contributing authors have approved the final text for publication.

Generative AI Statement Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Grammarly solely to assist with language polishing, grammar refinement, and improving the readability of the text. The authors carefully reviewed, edited, and verified the generated content, and took full responsibility for the final contents, intellectual integrity, and accuracy of the publication.