

# The Women's Movement Against a Mining Corporation in Gunem, Central Java, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** The relationship between humans and nature is understood on a fundamental level in Rembang regency in Central Java. This understanding is related to the environmental condition and local communities, especially focused on the women in Rembang. The background of this research is the existence of a permit for the establishment of a cement factory by Rembang Regency Government and the Central Java Provincial Government for PT. Cement Indonesia. Society thinks that the permit does not consider the existence of people who depend on the nature in the environment surrounding the site of the factory. The problem focused on in this research is the women's knowledge of nature. This study discussed how the movement and the strategy of the Rembang mothers was to preserve the nature on the slopes of the Pegunungan Kendeng Utara, Rembang Regency, Central Java. This study used a critical paradigm and was analysed using social construction theory, social movements and ecofeminism. The data in this study was primary data obtained directly from the research subjects. The subjects of the study were 9 women, called the 9 Kartini, who were the actors of the cement establishment rejection. The collected data was the subject's answers to the open interviews. An observation is done by making records of the events that occurred during the field research. The observation also aimed to describe the phenomena that the researcher wants to observe. The construction of a woman as Mother Earth is the internalisation stage which becomes the base of the knowledge of the mothers in the Regency of Rembang. The construction of women as Mother Earth is formed through the process of internalisation, externalisation and objectification. Gender equality is a form of externalisation process for the mothers in Rembang. Their actions are a type of objectification process. The strategies of the movements are based on gender and ecological awareness, which is the ecofeminist strategy in Rembang.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Historically, the movement in Indonesia began in 1928 during the Dutch colonial period. These movements include movements by women. The first Women's Congress in Indonesia took place on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1928 and became a milestone for the unity of Indonesian women's movements pioneered by R. A Kartini. She used the strategy of a struggle through education because she thought that education was the main tool to use to free women from oppression (Kowani, 1978: p.1).

The strategy of the struggle of the Indonesian women's movement at the end of the Dutch colonial period was to improve the position of women in order to achieve an independent Indonesia. At the time, Japan's position was that the women's

movement was prohibited just like any other movement – it was forbidden. In the war of independence, the strategy of the struggle of the Indonesian women's movement was to defend Indonesia's independence. The women's movement in Indonesia has been widely observed, including the women's movement in Rembang Regency against the mining companies in Central Java (Mcgregor & Hearman, 2015).

The residents of Rembang filed a lawsuit against the environmental permit issued by the Governor of Central Java for the establishment of and mining by a cement plant ran by PT. Cement Indonesia in Rembang. In April 2015, the lawsuit was stopped by a panel of judges of the State Administration Court of Semarang because the time to file a lawsuit was considered to have passed the grace period. As a

form of protest, the women in Rembang occupied a tent that they called the "tent of struggle". On June 16th, 2015, the struggle had been ongoing for a year. The villagers in Kabupaten Rembang made an effort to reject the permit for the establishment of a cement factory because their environment was threatened by the presence of the factory. The community's refusal aimed to save the environment from the adverse impact of cement manufacturing. The interesting thing about the rejection action is that the action of the citizens was conducted by mothers who worked as farmers.

Earlier studies focused on the Rembang women's movement to describe the social movements of the Rembang community described in relative deviations. On the other hand, this research will describe 1) the linkage of women to maintaining natural sustainability and 2) the strategy used by the women's movement in fighting against the mining corporation. The data obtained was analysed using the theory of ecofeminism. The purposes of this study were 1) to gain awareness of the knowledge of Rembang women over nature, and how it was exploited by PT. Cement Indonesia and 2) to know the strategies of the movement ran by the women of Rembang used to fight the mining corporation.

The findings of the field data from the research subjects and observation results will be used to understand the existing realities through the critical paradigm. Critical paradigm is a form of structural dominance (Staggenborg, 2001). This paradigm helps the community to understand the root of oppression, such as the resistance of the Rembang women against the mining corporation owned by PT. Cement Indonesia. This research study used social construction theory, social movement and ecofeminism to analyse the situation, setting and context. The research subjects were women who were involved in the "9 Kartini" movement in Rembang. The subject was determined based on the criteria of the informant selection method.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann explained that the theory of social construction produces a basic conception of how individuals acquire the reality of knowledge and how society, in turn, shapes the reality of knowledge. Social reality consists of subjective reality, symbolic reality and objective reality (Dreher, 2015). Social construction explains the existence of dialectics between the self and society. This dialectic occurs as part of a process that has three "simultaneous moments" (Hirsch & Boal, 2000). The three "simultaneous moments" are externalisation, objectification, and internalisation. Externalisation is an adaptation to the sociocultural

world as a product of the human world. The objective is social interaction within the institutionalised or institutionalised world of intersubjectivity. Internalisation is about identifying themselves with the social institution or social organisation in which the individual is located (Sica, 2015).

Ecofeminism is a relatively new variant of ecological ethics. Ecofeminism first appeared in 1974 in the Franscoise d'Eaubonne book *Le Feminism ou la mort*. Franscoise d'Eaubonne reveals that there is a direct connection between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature (Christ, 2006). Franscoise d'Eaubonne claims that the two cannot occur separately. Ecofeminism, as a movement, does not limit its space only to the academic field. Ecofeminism is a forum for women to understand and formulate the vision of life on earth in the context of feminism and ecology (Gilleo, 1999). The damage and destruction of the earth in the view of ecofeminism is closely related to the domination of women. According to Karen J. Warren (1996), the basic assumptions of ecofeminism are 1) that there is an important linkage between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; 2) an understanding of nature is essential to gaining an adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; 3) feminist theory and practice should incorporate an ecological perspective and 4) ecological problem solving should include a feminist perspective (Eaton, 1999).

Ecofeminism is embodied in social movements. Social movement has a fairly broad definition because it has a wide range of applications (Friedman, 2016). Tarrow places social movements as form of political resistance that occur when ordinary people join a more influential group of people (Roberts, 1989). The group mobilises forces against a political elite, the authorities or a corporation. When this resistance is supported by a strong network and echoed by cultural resonance and action symbols, resistance politics leads to an ongoing interaction with the opposing parties, thus resulting in a social movement (Field, 2000).

Collective action has the impression of contradiction when the action is committed by people who lack access to institutions to file new claims or claims that are unacceptable to the authorities. Collective action for resistance is the basis of social movement because this action is often the only resource that ordinary people have when opposing other powerful parties such as corporations or the State (Tarrow, 1998). The action is then

repeated. Berger and Luckman (1996) suggest that humans construct a social reality that can be objectified in subjective processes. This process begins with the refraction of an action that allows the actors and other parties to notice that the action has regular and repetitive features. The actors assume that there will be a determinant reciprocity that will describe their own behaviour toward one another.

## 2 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Rembang mothers experience a simultaneous moment consisting of internalisation, externalisation and objectification when gaining knowledge of the earth as a mother. This corresponds to the statements of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966). The field data findings indicate the internalisation process experienced by Rembang's mothers. Murtini's mother analogised the earth as herself. According to Mrs. Murtini, the Earth remains accepting and silent if the earth is used as a place to dump the remnants of human reproduction, but the earth cannot be blamed when a natural disaster occurs. This is due to the impact of human acts that exploit nature. The argument presented by Mrs. Murtini is in accordance with the argument presented by Ibu Sukinah, commonly called Yu 'Na. Yu 'Na is one of the leaders of the ecophysical movement in Rembang as well as one of the 9 Kartini who do foot casting in front of the State Palace.

Internalisation also represents the earth as the mother. The mother will give birth to children, while the earth will produce water, animals and plants. The produce of the earth becomes the source of life for all living things. Yu 'Na said that if Rembang build a cement factory, then the agricultural land will be mined. The area of Rembang will feel the explosion of the cement making process which will impact on the produce of the earth.

Rembang's mothers keep on with their daily activities while doing the internalisation process. They work as farmers, so they see the reality that nature is a source of livelihood for society. When they learned of the plan to build a cement factory, Rembang's mothers assumed that their farmland would be lost and that the ecosystem would be damaged. Mothers in Rembang analogise the earth as a mother, with the water as blood, the soil as bone and the forest as hair. This reinforces the

internalisation of Rembang's mothers to produce a philosophy focused on Mother Earth.

External processes such as the statements of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) occurred in the movement of ecofeminism. This is reflected in the natural exploitation that will be done by PT. Cement. The eco-feminist movement (saving the environment) was spearheaded by Yu'Na, Ibu Murtini, Mrs. Karsupi, Mbah Arsa, Mrs. Gerwani, Ibu Gunarti and Mbah Tiar. The rescue measures undertaken by the mothers in Rembang were to prevent the process of building a cement factory. The mothers were demonstrating, hoping to get help from the government to thwart the construction of the factory.

The housework that was usually done by Mrs. Karsupi, like cooking, washing clothes, washing the dishes and feeding cattle, was done by her husband when Mrs. Karsupi was in the movement. Yu 'Na also experienced the same thing. When Yu 'Na fought for the sustainability of Kendeng's nature, her husband did the house work. This shows that gender exchange is one form of externalisation instilled in the Rembang mother's family. According to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), externalisation is an adjustment to what is sociocultural.

The mothers in Rembang experienced objectification in the form of the movement. Based on the findings of the data in the field, the involvement of the mothers in Rembang in the world of the movement is motivated by the analogy that the oppression that occurs in nature is the oppression of a mother. The movement is based on ecological and gender awareness. Oppression is done for reason of prosperity of Rembang society, but the cement factory will damage the nature of the Kendeng Mountains especially in Rembang. When fighting against corporations, the mothers did not experience any coercion.

The strategy adopted by Rembang's mothers to protest against the mining was to conduct demonstrations. The mothers in Rembang walked by foot from Semarang to Jakarta. Bung Melky said that the strategy of the ecophysical movement in Rembang is not only based on ecological awareness, but gender awareness as well. This is because mothers have the gender role related to doing the housework.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that: 1) Rembang mothers interpret the earth as a representation of themselves when constructing their knowledge of nature. This is evident in two ways. First, the subject is strongly influenced by the historical factors of values and doctrine. These factors seem to be more supportive of the formation of knowledge about the earth as a mother. The knowledge is based on the analogy that the earth and women have to be equally guarded. Second, they preserve nature for the survival of the next generation, so then the next generation will have no difficulty in getting to the source of life; 2) The strategy of the eco-feminist movement (women's rescue movement) is based on gender awareness and ecological awareness. Rembang's mothers used new strategies, like foot casting in front of the State Palace. The husband was in charge of doing the housework when his wife was away committing acts of ecofeminism.

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