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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Development, Deprivation of Living Space, and the Samin Women's Movement in the North Kendeng Mountains, Central Java

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Abstract: The expansion of extractive development has intensified environmental conflicts in many indigenous communities, particularly where economic interests threaten ecological sustainability and local living spaces. The resistance of Samin women in the North Kendeng Mountains, Central Java, represents a significant environmental movement in which women have actively challenged cement industrialization and limestone mining. This study analyzes how Samin women construct ecological resistance by integrating the perspectives of ecofeminism, new social movement theory, and environmental justice. Using a qualitative case study approach, we collected data through in-depth interviews with key actors in the movement, field observations, and document analysis covering government regulations, environmental assessments, legal documents, and media reports. The findings indicate that the Samin women's movement emerged in response to environmental injustice arising from extractive development that threatened water resources, agricultural livelihoods, and cultural sustainability. Through the philosophy of *Ibu Bumi* [Mother Earth], women transformed ecological knowledge and cultural values into political agency. Their resistance developed through symbolic actions, legal advocacy, and collective networks involving local communities, civil society organizations, academics, and broader environmental movements. This study argues that the Samin women's movement is not merely opposition to cement plant development but represents a multidimensional struggle for ecological justice, cultural identity, and the protection of community living spaces.

Keywords: development; living space; ecofeminism; environmental justice; North Kendeng Mountains.

1. Introduction

Development is the principal vocabulary through which governments describe their commitment to national progress, particularly in infrastructure. In practice, however, such goodwill is often seen as running counter to environmental preservation and the livelihoods of local people. The destruction of ecosystems that have sustained community life is one reason communities have rejected ambitious projects undertaken in development's name. Resistance movements have also, in several places, been led by women at the forefront of environmental protection. From 2015 onward, women of the Samin indigenous community mounted sustained resistance to the construction of a cement plant in the North Kendeng Mountains, Central Java. Their actions ranged from long-distance protest marches to a demonstration in front of the State Palace in April 2016, at which nine women encased their feet in cement (BBC News Indonesia, 2016). In Indonesia, the Samin women's movement in the North Kendeng Mountains represents a broader pattern of grassroots environmental resistance to development projects that threaten ecological sustainability and local communities' living spaces. Similar struggles have emerged in other regions, including indigenous resistance to mining in Papua in connection with the Freeport conflict, and community opposition to oil palm plantation expansion in Sumatra and Kalimantan. In Papua, resistance to Freeport's mining operations has been pursued by indigenous communities through demonstrations, advocacy campaigns, legal action, and demands for recognition of *hak ulayat* [customary communal land rights], prompted by concerns over environmental degradation and the unequal distribution of mining benefits (Saturi, 2015). Resistance to oil palm expansion in Sumatra and Kalimantan has involved local communities and indigenous groups opposing deforestation and land dispossession through land occupation, community mobilization, and environmental advocacy (Utama, 2025). These movements share concerns about environmental degradation, unequal access to natural resources, and the marginalization of local communities within state- and corporate-driven development agendas.

The Samin women's movement nonetheless differs from other environmental conflicts in Indonesia in its pronounced ecofeminist character and cultural foundation. Whereas the Freeport conflict has centered on indigenous rights, resource extraction, environmental damage, and economic inequality, and oil palm resistance has emphasized land grabbing, deforestation, and agrarian conflict, the Kendeng movement places women as central actors who frame environmental protection through the philosophy of *Ibu Bumi* [Mother Earth]. The movement transforms traditional ecological values into collective resistance, with women using symbolic actions such as encasing their feet in cement to demonstrate how industrial development can immobilize them and threaten their sources of life. Unlike many resource conflicts that primarily contest the ownership and distribution of natural resources, the Kendeng movement extends environmental resistance into a struggle over ecological identity, cultural survival, and intergenerational sustainability.

A comparable pattern appeared in India in 1730, when members of the Bishnoi community at Khejarli, near Jodhpur in Rajasthan, resisted the order of the Maharaja of Marwar to fell khejri trees (*Prosopis cineraria*), which their religious precepts hold sacred. Led by a woman, Amrita Devi, villagers embraced the trees to shield them; 363 Bishnois were killed. The episode is widely regarded as a precursor of later tree-protection movements (Hananto, 2021). Women's environmental resistance can be examined theoretically through ecofeminism. For d'Eaubonne (1974), ecofeminism addresses injustice in the relationship between humans and nature—injustice

produced by male power, hierarchical systems, domination, politics, and human indifference to sustainable life and the environment.

In this study, the deprivation of living space refers to the process by which communities lose access to, control over, and continuity in the ecological, economic, social, and cultural spaces that sustain their daily lives. Living space is understood not only as physical territory but also as access to natural resources, traditional livelihoods, cultural identity, and the relationship between communities and their environment. In the North Kendeng Mountains, the expansion of extractive industries and cement plant development is perceived as a threat because it may reduce community access to agricultural land, water resources, and the ecological systems that have sustained local livelihoods for generations.

Previous studies of women-initiated environmental conservation movements have taken three main approaches. The first focuses on government policy-making as influenced by women's positions, feminist activism, and environmental justice (Buckingham, 2004). The second examines the importance of public participation through transformative leadership in natural resource management grounded in gender, race, and class equality (Moraes & Perkins, 2007). The third holds that women's environmental movements can have significant effect through the strengthening of relevant knowledge, networks, and skills (Asriani, 2016). None of these three studies, however, examines an ecofeminist movement rooted in the traditional values of a local community. The local wisdom of the Samin people, who call themselves *Sedulur Sikep* and inhabit the North Kendeng Mountains, serves as their principal instrument for conserving nature and preserving ancestral traditions. The group has consistently rejected karst mining that would damage the environment and the prospects of future generations.

This article addresses gaps in previous research on women's resistance to the deprivation of living space by the holders of capital and by policymakers. It examines the form taken by the Samin women's movement, the motivations underlying Samin women's resistance, and the factors that enable women to influence the state and accelerate the movement. Addressing these three questions is intended to help the public understand the importance of pursuing economic activity while maintaining ecological balance, and to inform government policies capable of encouraging a more coherent and accountable model of development grounded in sustainability.

In environmental terms, women hold distinctive experiences and attachments that cannot be disregarded. Women's involvement with nature is not only biological participation but also encompasses discourses of food sovereignty, the body, and the spiritual. Beyond regarding nature as part of themselves, women see nature as fundamental to their collective. These women recognize that the right to live on their land matters. Out of their concern for conservation, they have deconstructed conventional understandings of femininity as a source of power, holding that femininity is not passivity or weakness but a capacity to sustain the sources of life.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism emerged as a critical perspective examining the interconnected relationship between environmental degradation and the unequal power relations experienced by women and nature. This perspective argues that ecological crises cannot be separated from the hierarchical systems, domination, and development practices that exploit both marginalized communities and the environment

(d'Eaubonne, 1974). Rather than treating environmental problems as merely technical, ecofeminism offers a critique of the social and political structures that place humans above nature and reproduce unequal relationships among gender, power, and ecological sustainability (Fahimah, 2017).

The development of ecofeminist thought has moved beyond the assumption that women are biologically closer to nature. Contemporary ecofeminism emphasizes that women's relationship with the environment is constructed through social experience, cultural practice, and everyday involvement in managing natural resources (Maulana & Supriatna, 2019). Women's participation in environmental movements should therefore be understood not as a natural responsibility but as a form of ecological knowledge, political awareness, and collective agency developed through interaction with their surroundings.

Ecofeminism also challenges patriarchal models of development that position nature as an object of economic exploitation. The domination of nature and the marginalization of women are understood as interconnected processes produced by unequal power structures (Rahmawati & Firman, 2019). In this framing, women are not merely victims of environmental degradation but also significant actors capable of creating alternative approaches to environmental protection through care, sustainability, and community-based knowledge (Asmarani, 2018; Mahadewi, 2019).

Women's involvement in environmental movements demonstrates their capacity to participate in ecological decision-making and to challenge destructive development practices (Priyatna et al., 2017). This is particularly significant in indigenous communities, where environmental protection is closely bound to cultural identity, local wisdom, and collective survival. Through knowledge, networks, and social participation, women can strengthen environmental movements and influence broader political processes (Astuti, 2012).

In the North Kendeng Mountains, ecofeminism provides an analytical framework for understanding how Samin women transform the philosophy of Ibu Bumi into collective resistance to cement industrialization. Their movement represents not only environmental activism but also an effort to defend agricultural livelihoods, cultural identity, and intergenerational ecological sustainability. Ecofeminism is therefore used in this study to analyze how women's experiences, traditional values, and ecological awareness become sources of political resistance to development practices that threaten their living space.

2.2. New Social Movement Theory

New social movement (NSM) theory provides an analytical perspective for understanding transformations in collective action within contemporary society. Unlike traditional social movements, which emphasize economic redistribution and class-based struggle, NSM theory focuses on identity, culture, autonomy, environmental protection, and quality of life (Fisher & Kling, 1994). This perspective shows that social movements emerge not only from material interests but also because communities seek to defend social meanings and cultural values threatened by dominant political and economic systems.

The emergence of new social movements reflects changes in how communities organize resistance. Contemporary movements tend to involve flexible networks of varied actors, including local communities, activists, academics, and civil society organizations. These movements operate beyond formal political structures, developing alternative forms of participation, symbolic resistance, and cultural

expression (Gentry, 2004). Collective action thus becomes a space in which communities construct identities and challenge dominant narratives.

According to Case and Caragata (2009), new social movements are closely bound to the social networks and everyday practices that allow communities to create alternative values and forms of resistance. Unlike conventional movements, which rely heavily on hierarchical organization, NSM theory emphasizes decentralized participation and the formation of collective identity. This helps explain why contemporary environmental movements frequently involve diverse actors united by shared ecological concerns rather than by a single economic interest.

Environmental movements represent one of the principal expressions of NSM because they challenge models of development that prioritize economic growth while disregarding ecological sustainability and community rights. In Indonesia, new social movements have developed through various forms of citizen participation, advocacy, and collective action responding to social and environmental problems (Nofrima & Qodir, 2021). They differ from older social movements in being driven not solely by class struggle but by broader demands relating to recognition, identity, and justice (Purboningsih, 2015).

The Samin women's movement in the North Kendeng Mountains reflects the characteristics of a new social movement because resistance to cement plant development extends beyond economic concerns. The movement involves the protection of cultural identity, ecological values, and local autonomy. Symbolic actions such as protest marches, demonstrations, legal advocacy, and the encasing of feet in cement in front of the State Palace illustrate how cultural symbols become political instruments. NSM theory therefore helps explain how Samin women transform environmental concerns into collective resistance through networks, identity formation, and symbolic action.

2.3. Environmental Justice

Environmental justice provides a framework for understanding the unequal distribution of environmental risks and benefits among social groups. This perspective argues that environmental problems cannot be separated from power relations, social inequality, and participation in environmental decision-making (Harner et al., 2002). Environmental injustice occurs when particular communities bear greater ecological burdens while exercising limited influence over the decisions that determine the future of their environment (Schroeder et al., 2008).

The concept of environmental justice has expanded from concerns about environmental inequality into broader discussions involving indigenous communities, rural populations, and conflicts over natural resources. Martínez-Alier (2003) argues that many environmental struggles represent an environmentalism of the poor, in which marginalized communities defend natural resources because their livelihoods, identities, and survival depend directly on ecological sustainability. This perspective is particularly relevant in the Global South, where development projects often generate tension between economic expansion and community rights.

Environmental justice also highlights the relationship between extractive development and unequal ecological consequences. Martínez-Alier et al. (2016) argue that environmental conflicts often emerge because local communities experience environmental degradation caused by models of development that prioritize capital accumulation. In this context, resistance movements are not merely reactions to environmental damage but struggles for recognition, participation, and control over natural resources.

Environmental injustice frequently affects vulnerable communities that depend directly on ecological systems. Studies indicate that environmental risks are often borne disproportionately by communities with limited economic and political power (Nesmith & Smyth, 2015). Such communities also develop environmental subjectivity through their experiences, knowledge, and everyday interaction with ecological change (Bruno & Jepson, 2018).

In the North Kendeng Mountains, environmental justice explains the conflict between cement industry development and the protection of community living spaces. The potential destruction of karst ecosystems threatens water resources, agricultural land, and local livelihoods. Although cement production is promoted as a component of economic development, the ecological risks are borne mainly by communities living around the extraction area. The resistance of Samin women therefore represents a demand for environmental justice through recognition of local knowledge, meaningful participation, and the protection of ecological sustainability.

From an ecofeminist perspective, the nature of justice is an important subject for elaborating the idea of environmental justice. Access is a fundamental issue for the equitable distribution of resources. Access to justice comprises at least two basic components: the ability to obtain information about the environment, and knowledge of the right to participate in decision-making (Asriani, 2016). Figure 1 sets out these components.

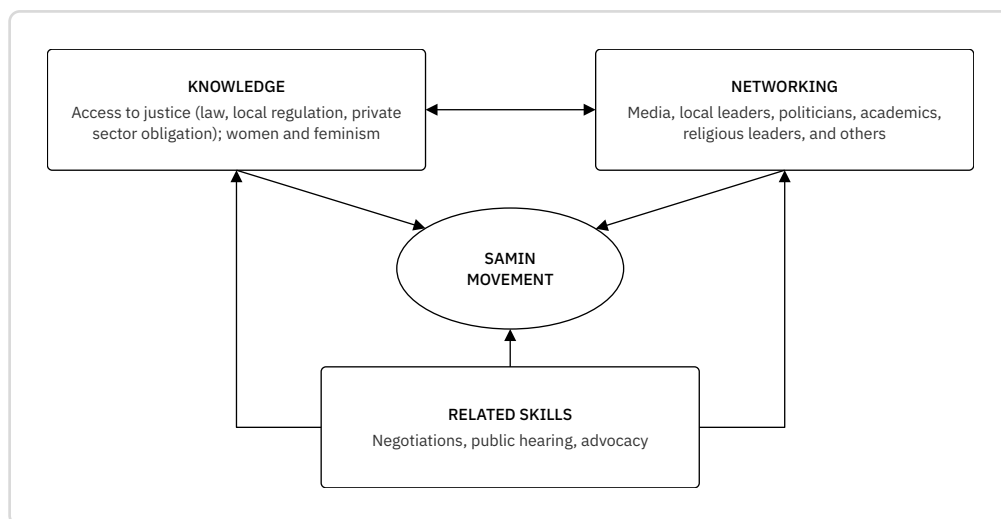


Figure 1. Environmental Justice Instrument Design

Source: Asriani (2016)

3. Methods

This article uses a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Sugiyono (2016, as cited in Raharja & Wibowo, 2021), qualitative research examines phenomena in their natural settings, with the researcher functioning as the principal instrument. The study describes the ecofeminist movement through which the Samin community has sought to maintain environmental sustainability in the North Kendeng Mountains, Central Java. Data collection focused on interviews with parties involved in the movement. We examined how the Samin people opposed and rejected the establishment of a cement plant, including through Gunarti, a follower of the Samin movement and a leader of the women's movement who also opposed its construction. Each stage of the research maintained a clear focus in order to remain within the study's limits and not depart from its main purpose. We conducted a literature review, followed by observation, interviews, and documentation, to obtain

valid data. In addition to interviews with informants, the study drew on *Kajian Lingkungan Hidup Strategis* [Strategic Environmental Assessment] (KLHS) documents from phases I and II, the *Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah* [Regional Spatial Plan], and scholarly articles from Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis, and SINTA. The study also draws on reporting of ecofeminist movement activities in the mass media, including Kompas.com, Mongabay Indonesia, BBC News Indonesia, and Tribun Jateng.

The study describes the forms taken by the ecofeminist movement in the North Kendeng Mountains, Central Java. Data were then analyzed and interpreted to assess the movement's effect on environmental sustainability. The location was selected because of the ecofeminist dimension of the conflict there, which arose from the construction of a cement plant that threatened the living space of surrounding communities. We conducted two in-depth interviews with key informants selected purposively for their central roles, historical involvement, and extensive knowledge of the North Kendeng environmental movement. Although the movement involved many participants, qualitative research emphasizes the depth and relevance of information rather than the number of respondents. The selected informants were therefore considered capable of providing comprehensive insight because they represented key actors directly involved in organizing, sustaining, and articulating the movement's values and strategies.

The interviews involved Gunarti, a principal figure in the Samin women's movement who played a significant role in mobilizing women's resistance to cement plant development, and Mbah Lasiyo, a traditional leader of the Samin community who offered broader perspectives on Samin cultural values and environmental philosophy. To strengthen data validity, interview findings were triangulated with field observations, informal discussions with community members, legal documents, KLHS reports, government regulations, scholarly articles, and media reports on the Kendeng movement.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. North Kendeng Mountains: From Ecological Contestation to Environmental Justice Struggle

The Indonesian government's ambition to accelerate infrastructure development has increased demand for cement as a principal construction material, encouraging the expansion of cement industries into areas containing limestone. Development projects based on natural resource extraction often generate conflict, however, when economic interests intersect with environmental sustainability and the living spaces of local communities. One such contested area is the North Kendeng Mountains, which has become a center of conflict among local communities, government institutions, and cement corporations.

The North Kendeng Mountains extend along the northern part of Java and cover several areas, including Grobogan, Blora, Rembang, Pati, and Kudus regencies. The landscape contains limestone formations, caves, underground rivers, and groundwater systems that have historically supported agriculture and community livelihoods. Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 26 Tahun 2008 tentang Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah Nasional [Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 26 of 2008 on the National Spatial Plan] recognizes several areas within the Kendeng Mountains as protected forest because of their ecological functions. [Figure 2](#) shows their distribution.

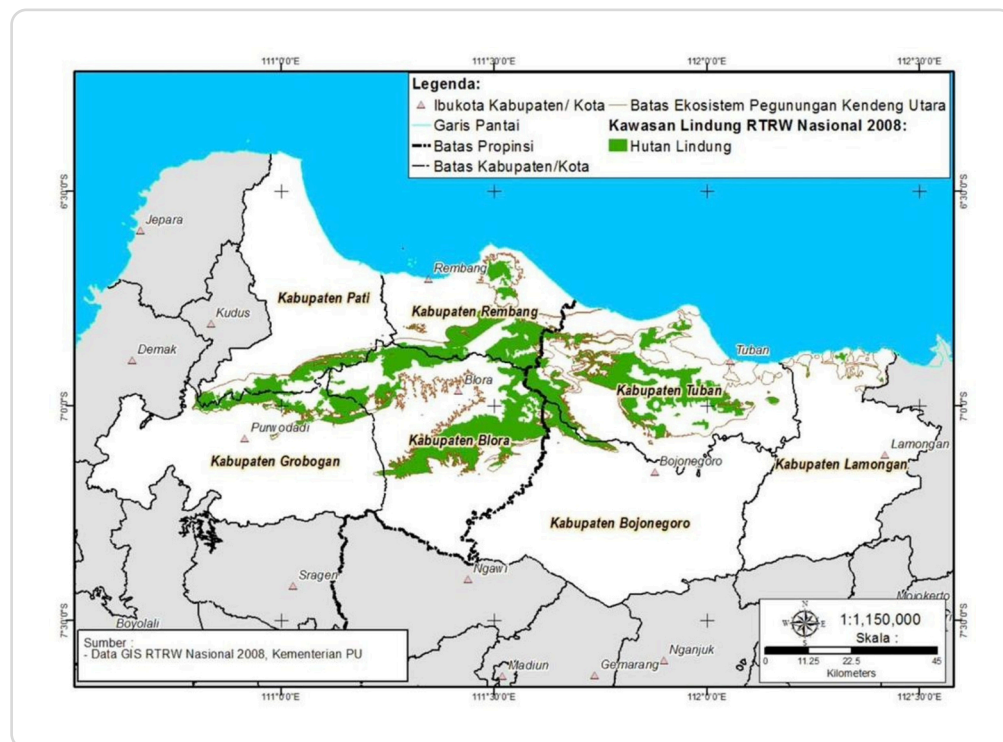


Figure 2. Distribution of Protected Forest in the Kendeng Mountains, 2008

Source: Geographic information system data of the Ministry of Public Works (2008).

The existence of protected areas shows that the North Kendeng Mountains cannot be understood only as a source of limestone for industry but also as an ecological system supporting community survival. In Pati regency, the Sukolilo karst area was designated through Keputusan Menteri Energi dan Sumber Daya Mineral Nomor 0398 K/40/MEM/2005 tentang Penetapan Kawasan Karst Sukolilo [Decree of the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources No. 0398 K/40/MEM/2005 on the Designation of the Sukolilo Karst Area] as a class I karst area in which mining is restricted. That decree was subsequently revoked and replaced by Keputusan Menteri Energi dan Sumber Daya Mineral Nomor 2641 K/40/MEM/2014 tentang Penetapan Kawasan Bentang Alam Karst Sukolilo [Decree of the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources No. 2641 K/40/MEM/2014 on the Designation of the Sukolilo Karst Landscape Area], which established the area as a protected geological zone. Similarly, Cekungan Air Tanah Watuputih [Watuputih Groundwater Basin] (CAT Watuputih) in Rembang regency was listed through Keputusan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 26 Tahun 2011 tentang Penetapan Cekungan Air Tanah [Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indonesia No. 26 of 2011 on the Designation of Groundwater Basins] as a designated groundwater basin, from which conservation obligations follow. These instruments indicate the ecological importance of the Kendeng landscape as a source of water security and agricultural sustainability (Pratama, 2018).

The ecological function of the Kendeng Mountains has nonetheless been challenged by cement industry expansion. In 2006, PT Semen Gresik proposed limestone mining and cement plant development in Sukolilo, Pati regency. The plan drew resistance from residents who considered it a threat to water resources, agricultural land, and the socio-ecological balance of local communities. Resistance was strengthened through legal action: in 2009, residents won a lawsuit at the administrative court against the exploration permit issued to PT Semen Gresik, and

the company subsequently withdrew from Pati. The rejection rested on several concerns, including the absence of adequate Analisis Mengenai Dampak Lingkungan [Environmental Impact Assessment] documentation, potential environmental damage, social conflict, and violations of good governance principles arising from limited transparency in decision-making ([Kompas.com, 2009a](#)).

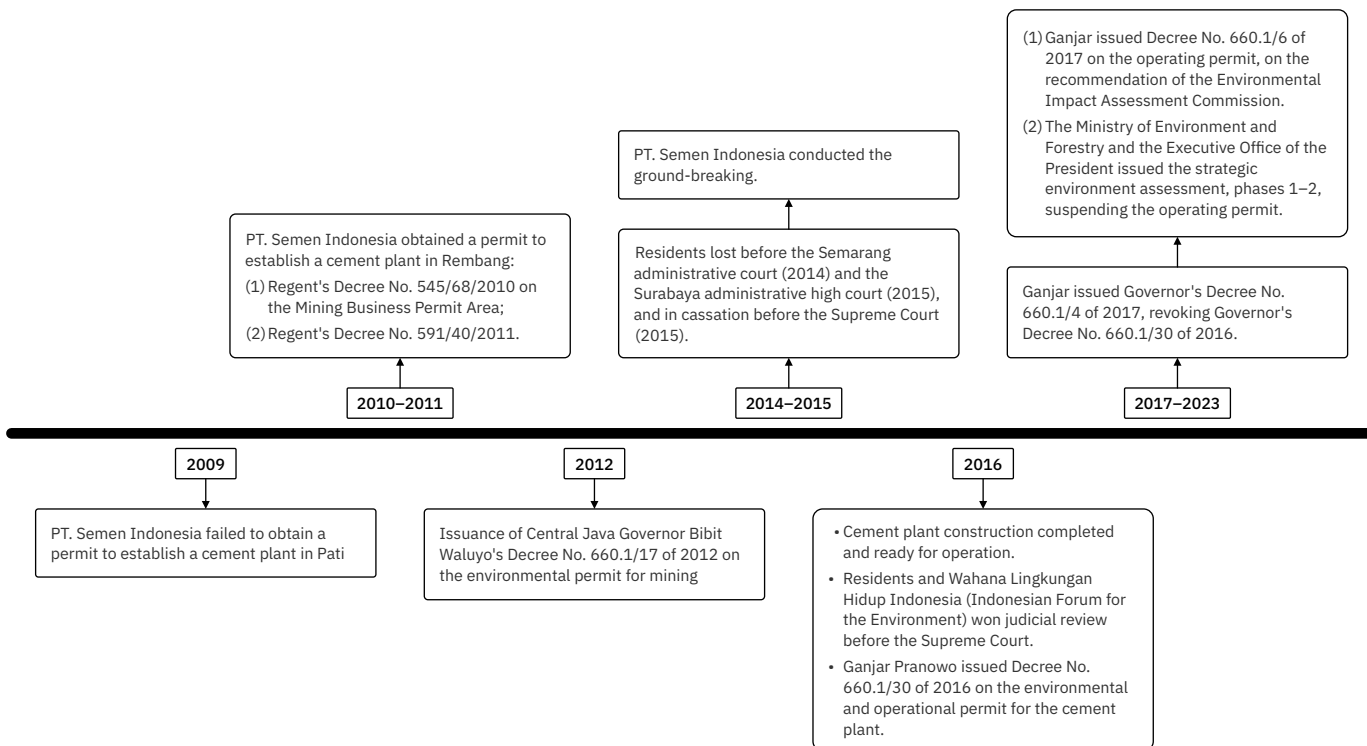
A separate conflict developed around the plan of PT Sahabat Mulia Sakti, a subsidiary of PT Indocement Tunggal Prakarsa Tbk, which from 2010–2011 pursued cement plant development in Tambakromo and Kayen districts, Pati regency. After the regency government issued the environmental permit in December 2014, residents represented by Jaringan Masyarakat Peduli Pegunungan Kendeng [Kendeng Mountains Community Care Network] filed suit challenging the decision. The Semarang administrative court granted the residents' claim in full on 17 November 2015 in Decision No. 05/G/2015/PTUN-SMG, finding public participation in the environmental impact assessment inadequate. That decision was subsequently overturned by the Surabaya administrative high court, and the residents' appeal in cassation was rejected by the Supreme Court on 6 March 2017, so the litigation ultimately concluded in favour of PT Sahabat Mulia Sakti ([Fachrudin, 2016](#)).

The conflict expanded to Rembang regency when PT Semen Gresik, renamed PT Semen Indonesia in December 2012, continued cement plant development after its earlier rejection in Pati ([Kompas.com, 2009b](#)). The issuance of Keputusan Gubernur Jawa Tengah Nomor 660.1/17 Tahun 2012 tentang Izin Lingkungan Kegiatan Penambangan dan Pembangunan Pabrik Semen oleh PT Semen Gresik (Persero) Tbk di Kabupaten Rembang, Provinsi Jawa Tengah [Decree of the Governor of Central Java No. 660.1/17 of 2012 on the Environmental Permit for Mining and Cement Plant Construction by PT Semen Gresik (Persero) Tbk in Rembang Regency, Central Java Province] became a central point of conflict among communities, corporations, and government institutions. Although residents challenged the permit through several legal mechanisms, construction continued and generated prolonged contestation. [Figure 3](#) sets out the sequence of policies and regulations.

[Figure 3](#) indicates that the Kendeng conflict was not merely an environmental dispute but a contestation involving policy authority, corporate interests, and community rights. The legal dynamics grew more complex when the Supreme Court, through Putusan Peninjauan Kembali Nomor 99 PK/TUN/2016 [Judicial Review Decision No. 99 PK/TUN/2016] of 5 October 2016, granted the residents' claim and annulled the environmental permit for mining by PT Semen Indonesia. Subsequent policy decisions permitting cement operations to continue generated debate about environmental governance and community participation ([LBH Jakarta, 2017](#)).

From an environmental justice perspective, these dynamics demonstrate unequal power relations in the control of natural resources. Cement development provides economic benefits for infrastructure agendas and industrial actors, but ecological risks—including damage to groundwater systems, agricultural disruption, and loss of environmental security—are borne mainly by local communities. Community resistance therefore represents a demand for recognition and fair participation in determining the future of their ecological space ([Martinez-Alier et al., 2016](#); [Schroeder et al., 2008](#)), a demand pursued through legal challenges that exposed defects in the permits themselves ([Albar, 2019](#); [Suprijanto, 2017](#)).

The importance of protecting the Kendeng ecosystem was further emphasized through the KLHS initiated by Kantor Staf Presiden [Executive Office of the President] and Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan [Ministry of Environment and



Source: Processed by the authors from various sources (2023).

Figure 3. Dynamics of Cement Plant Construction Policies and Regulations

Forestry]. The first phase focused on the CAT Watuputih area, while the second covered the broader Kendeng Mountains across Central Java and East Java. Its recommendations emphasized protecting CAT Watuputih, revising spatial planning policies, and strengthening transparency and public participation in environmental governance (Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan, 2017).

The struggle over the North Kendeng Mountains therefore illustrates a broader problem of environmental injustice and deprivation of living space. For local communities, karst protection concerns not only the preservation of natural resources but also the maintenance of agricultural livelihoods, cultural identity, and intergenerational sustainability. The conflict became the foundation for a broader ecological movement, led particularly by Samin women, who transformed environmental concerns into collective resistance.

4.2. Samin Women's Movement: Ecofeminism, Cultural Identity, and Ecological Resistance

The relationship between women and environmental protection in the North Kendeng Mountains cannot be separated from the ecological threats experienced by local communities. Cement plant construction and limestone mining were perceived as threats because the karst ecosystem functions as a water storage system supporting agriculture and daily community needs. Environmental degradation in the area would affect not only natural resources but also the social, economic, and cultural systems that have sustained local communities for generations.

This ecological vulnerability was an important factor behind women's involvement in the Kendeng movement. Although rejection of cement plant development was initially undertaken collectively by local communities, women gradually became central actors because environmental destruction was closely

connected to their everyday experience. As farmers and managers of household sustainability, women experienced directly the importance of maintaining water sources, agricultural land, and ecological balance.

The central figure in the Samin women's movement was Gunarti, a Samin woman and farmer who actively mobilized resistance to cement industrialization. Gunarti explained that the Samin community recognizes the philosophy of Ibu Bumi, which views the earth as a source of life that must be respected and protected. This philosophy emphasizes that nature should not be treated merely as an economic commodity but as part of the relationship among humans, culture, and future generations.

From an ecofeminist perspective, Ibu Bumi represents the way women transform cultural values into ecological resistance. The involvement of Samin women suggests that women are not passive victims of environmental destruction but actors who produce ecological knowledge and challenge development practices they consider harmful to community sustainability. Their resistance emerged from daily interaction with nature and from concern for the future of their children and communities.

Gunarti expanded the movement by approaching women's groups in several villages around the Kendeng Mountains. Through religious gatherings, social meetings, and community discussions, she explained the ecological and economic consequences of cement plant development. These efforts strengthened collective awareness among women and led to the establishment of Kelompok Perempuan Peduli Lingkungan Simbar Wareh [Simbar Wareh Environmental Care Women's Group], a women's environmental organization whose name joins those of two threatened water sources, Sumber Simbarjoyo and Goa Wareh.

The formation of Kelompok Perempuan Peduli Lingkungan Simbar Wareh illustrates the transformation of environmental concern into organized collective action. From the perspective of new social movement theory, the Samin women's movement developed through shared identity, cultural symbols, and community networks rather than through formal political institutions. Its struggle combined environmental advocacy, cultural expression, and symbolic action to challenge dominant development narratives.

Samin women and the wider Kendeng community pursued various forms of resistance. They organized demonstrations at the Central Java governor's office demanding revocation of the mining permits granted to cement companies (Nurdin, 2017). The community also conducted a long-distance protest march from Pati regency to Semarang as a symbolic action representing their commitment to protecting their living space (Parwito, 2015). Jaringan Masyarakat Peduli Pegunungan Kendeng continued collective actions demanding that local governments cease supporting cement plant development (Gozali, 2017). Residents also installed banners of rejection around the affected areas to strengthen public awareness (Wibisono, 2018).

The most influential symbolic action occurred when nine Kendeng women encased their feet in cement in front of the State Palace in Jakarta in April 2016 (BBC News Indonesia, 2016); the action was repeated in March 2017 (BBC News Indonesia, 2017). It expressed their conviction that cement industrialization would restrict and threaten their lives by damaging the ecological foundation on which they depended. The protest transformed a local environmental conflict into a national issue by attracting public attention and expanding solidarity networks.

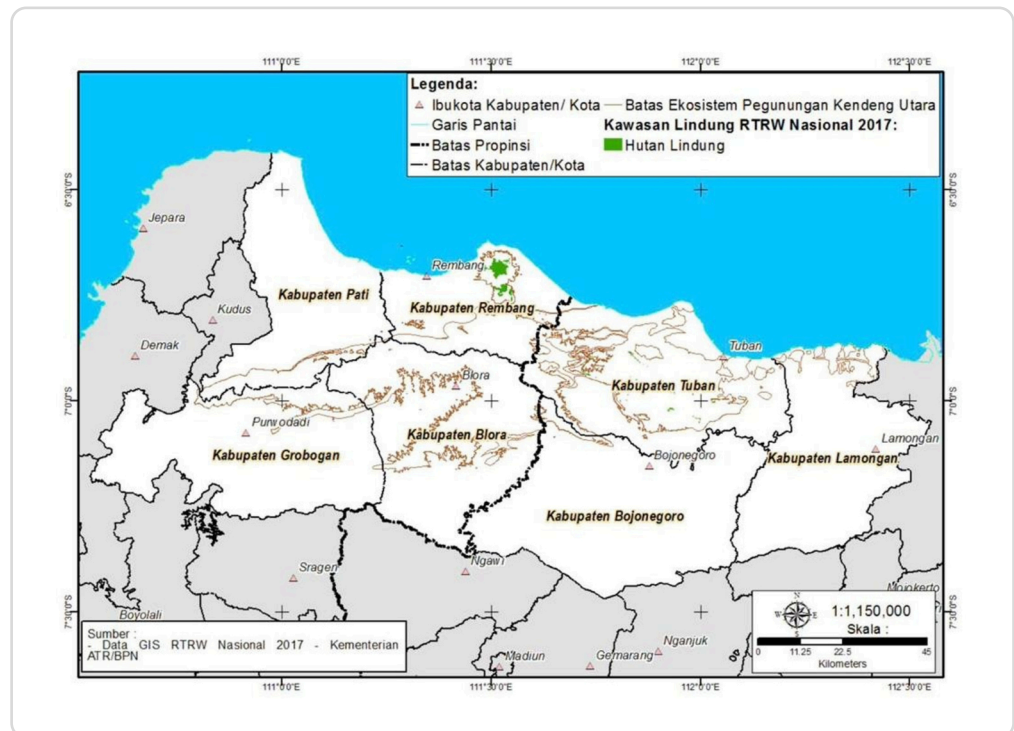


Figure 4. Distribution of Protected Forest in the Kendeng Mountains, 2017

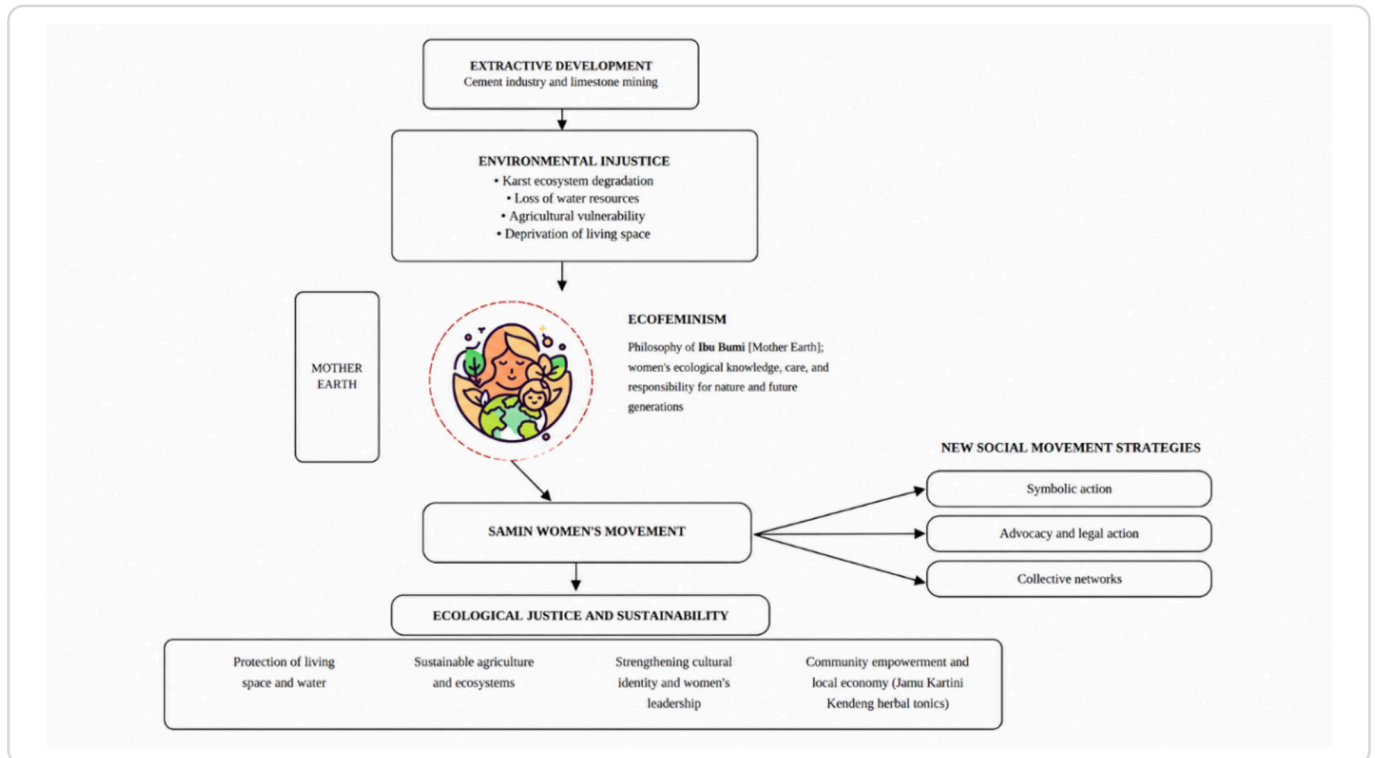
Source: Geographic information system data of the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (2017).

From the perspective of new social movement theory, this action represents symbolic resistance in which the body becomes a medium for political expression. Rather than relying only on institutional channels, Samin women used cultural symbols and moral narratives to communicate ecological injustice. Their actions suggest how marginalized communities can challenge powerful actors through identity-based movements and public mobilization.

The movement also expanded internationally when Gunarti brought the concerns of the Kendeng community to Germany, HeidelbergCement AG being the majority shareholder of PT Indocement Tunggul Prakarsa Tbk. Through international advocacy and shareholder meetings, the Kendeng movement demonstrated the capacity of grassroots actors to build transnational environmental networks and to challenge corporate responsibility beyond local contexts. Figure 4 shows the extent of protected forest in the Kendeng Mountains in 2017.

A comparison of Figures 2 and 4 indicates a reduction in the extent of designated protected forest between 2008 and 2017. The decline suggests that the environmental concerns raised by local communities rested on ecological conditions rather than on social opposition alone. Environmental degradation increased the risk of flooding, water scarcity, and agricultural disruption. Environmental assessments indicate that damage to the Kendeng ecosystem could generate significant economic losses through reduced water availability, agricultural productivity, ecosystem function, and public health.

Beyond protest, Samin women developed cultural and economic strategies to sustain ecological awareness. The community organized the Kupatan Kendeng ritual on the theme Eling Ibu Bumi [Remember Mother Earth] as a cultural expression of the relationship between humans and nature (Omah Kendeng, 2023). Women also created economic initiatives through the production of Jamu Kartini Kendeng, a line of traditional herbal tonics including Sari Beras Kencur, Sari Jahe, Sari Temu Lawak, and Sari Empon-Empon, made using agricultural products from the Kendeng area.



Source: Processed by the authors from research findings (2023).

Figure 5. Samin Women's Ecological Resistance Movement

These initiatives suggest that the Samin women's movement was not only a movement of resistance but also an effort to construct alternative models of sustainability. Through cultural practice, economic empowerment, and environmental advocacy, Samin women showed that ecological protection can coexist with community-based livelihoods.

The Samin women's movement therefore represents an integration of ecofeminism, environmental justice, and new social movement practice. Environmental injustice created the conditions for resistance, ecofeminism shaped women's ecological awareness through Ibu Bumi, and new social movement strategies transformed local concerns into collective action through symbols, networks, and advocacy. The findings indicate that the movement developed through a process in which ecological threats were transformed into collective resistance. It cannot be understood only as a spontaneous reaction to cement plant development but represents an interaction among environmental injustice, women's ecological consciousness, cultural identity, and collective mobilization strategies. Figure 5 conceptualizes the relationship among extractive development, women's agency, and movement strategies.

Figure 5 illustrates that the Samin women's movement emerged from environmental injustice caused by extractive development practices that threatened the Kendeng karst ecosystem and community living spaces. These ecological threats encouraged the formation of women's environmental awareness based on the philosophy of Ibu Bumi, in which nature is understood as a source of life rather than merely an economic resource. Through an ecofeminist perspective, Samin women transformed their ecological experiences and cultural values into political agency. This awareness developed into collective action through new social movement strategies, including symbolic resistance, legal advocacy, and the establishment of wider networks involving communities, environmental organizations, academics, and

media actors. The movement therefore suggests that women's environmental resistance aims not only at rejecting cement industrialization but also at creating alternative visions of ecological justice, cultural preservation, and sustainable community-based development.

5. Conclusion

Infrastructure development often affects communities' living spaces, and particularly their environmental sustainability. Plans to build cement plants in support of infrastructure development depend on karst rock, or limestone, as the principal raw material, so areas containing limestone are prioritized for large-scale cement plants. One such area in Indonesia is the North Kendeng Mountains, on the northern side of Java. Cement plant construction in Rembang has been seen as damaging to the social system and to environmental sustainability around the range. Communities pursued not only legal avenues but also direct action, including protests and cultural actions, and rejection was voiced especially by women in the face of state and corporate power.

The rejection undertaken by communities in the North Kendeng Mountains, and by women in particular, displays three characteristics. First, women's resistance reflects a commitment to environmental sustainability, so that the future of their children and grandchildren need not depend on the presence of cement plants. Second, women's resistance is an effort to preserve the values of Ibu Bumi [Mother Earth] culturally for future generations in the vicinity of the North Kendeng Mountains. Third, the Samin women's movement constitutes a rejection of cement plant development undertaken for the sake of environmental protection.

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