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Patrícia Surmajová

The importance of women in mitigating the impacts of the environmental crisis; through the lens of ecofeminism

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BACHELOR THESIS

The importance of women in mitigating the impacts of the environmental crisis; through the lens of ecofeminism

Patrícia Surmajová

Thesis supervisor: Ivy Helman, M.A., Ph.D.

Department: Liberal Arts and Humanities - Social Sciences Modul

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Statement:

I declare that I have written the thesis by myself. All sources and literature used have been duly cited. The work was not used to obtain another or the same title.

In Prague ……………..

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Patrícia Surmajová

Acknowledgment:

Content

Abstract

This thesis firstly delves into the mainstream environmentalism, its historical and philosophical formations and its climate change mitigating efforts. I point out the shortcomings of the current state of the environmental movements and shift towards ecofeminism. Ecofeminism comes not only with criticism but also with different approach to this problematic. In this thesis, I explore how are women embedded and embodied with nature. This allows them to form a special bond with ecosystems and allows them to gain unique knowledge and experiences. Their insights and perceptions are in many regions already influenced by climate change, yet they are still overlooked on regional but also on global scale. By highlighting successful and unsuccessful environmental initiatives, I demonstrate why it is essential to understand and include women´s perspectives into mitigating efforts. This thesis provides theoretical insights into addressing gender differences within environmental movements. I aim to show that solving the environmental crisis without including women, who do have unique experiences and relationships with nature, is destined to fail.

Key words

Abstrakt

Tato práce se nejprve zabývá hlavním proudem environmentalismu, jeho historickými a filozofickými formacemi a jeho snahami o zmírnění klimatických změn. Poukazuji na nedostatky současného stavu environmentálních hnutí a posouvám se k ekofeminismu. Ekofeminismus přichází nejen s kritikou, ale také s odlišným přístupem k této problematice. V této práci zkoumám, jak jsou ženy zakotveny a ztělesněny s přírodou. To jim umožňuje vytvořit si zvláštní pouto s ekosystémy a umožňuje jim to získat jedinečné znalosti a zkušenosti. Jejich poznatky a vnímání jsou v mnoha regionech již ovlivněny klimatickými změnami, přesto jsou v regionálním, ale i globálním měřítku stále přehlíženy. Na příkladu úspěšných i neúspěšných ekologických iniciativ ukazuji, proč je nezbytné pochopit a zahrnout pohled žen do úsilí o zmírnění dopadů změny klimatu. Tato práce poskytuje teoretické poznatky a adresuje genderové rozdíly v rámci environmentálních hnutí. Snažím se ukázat, že řešení environmentální krize bez zapojení žen, které mají jedinečné zkušenosti a vztahy s přírodou, je odsouzeno k neúspěchu.

Klíčová slova:

ekofeminismus, environmentální hnutí, genderové nerovnosti, mocenské struktury, vtělení a zakořenění, hnutí zdola

1. Introduction

The doubt of whether the environmental crisis is real and needs to be addressed is, hopefully, not an issue anymore. Al Gore (2006) talks about the climate crisis as a "planetary emergency". It is a situation when human activities, such as using fossil fuels or deforestation, cause rapid climate changes. These changes can differ from melting ice caps and therefore rising sea levels to more frequent and intense floods or forest fires. It is clear to him that this crisis could have potentially catastrophic consequences if we do not take action now. According to Crutzen (2006), we can now talk about the time of "Anthropocene" as a current geological epoch. It is a long-lasting period when human activities have such a big impact on earth and its atmosphere, that humanity becomes the geological force. …"the Anthropocene marks the moment when human existence became the determinate form of planetary existence and a malignant form at that rather than merely the fact that humans affect their environment" (Povinelli, 2017, p.1).

When we are talking about the climate crisis or climate change, we have shifted our mindsets to acknowledge that humans are the reason why these changes have happened so quickly. In this thesis I delve into the state of the current environmental movement, which may be far from shallow ecology rhetoric and rather takes a path of deep ecology (Novák, 2017). It still fails not only with coming up with effective solutions that would be sustainable and effective for everybody but also with addressing women´s experiences and the need for inclusivity.

We as humans are responsible for the scale of climate change, but we are not responsible equally. "The debate on climate change acquires a different dimension when the disparities between regions are considered in terms of responsibilities for emissions and concentrations and vulnerability to the effects brought on by climate change" (Parikh, 1994, p.1). The debate on climate change takes on a different dimension when these regional disparities are considered because it involves addressing not only the scientific and environmental aspects but also the social, economic, and ethical implications of global inequality in both contributions to and impacts from climate change. However, we also need to talk about differences between the people who live in the same region. As I demonstrate in this thesis the responsibility and ways of experiencing climate change do not only differ

on a global scale of North and South, but between the men and women who live in these regions as well.

That is what ecofeminism sheds light on. Ecofeminism emerged as a connection between feminist and environmental movements, which recognized the interconnectedness of environmental and social issues and it committed to address the roots of gender and environmental injustice. It encompasses a comprehensive examination of systems of domination. It notably addresses the subjugation of women and environmental exploitation (Mellor,1997).

This thesis aims to present how and why mainstream environmentalism fails to address women´s experiences through the lenses of ecofeminism. I think that it is important to show that women have a special connection to nature which allows them to gain unique experiences and that their knowledge can differ from men´s therefore they need to be included in debates about mitigating the impacts of environmental crisis. And even after that, they are often excluded from decision-making processes or from environmental programs which, as I will show, leads to the failure of these efforts. The thesis stresses that the division on global North-South is not enough for effective solving of the environmental crisis and that women need to play a key role in those endeavours. I argue that environmentalism needs to take ecofeminist perspectives into consideration and address them. Therefore, there is no effective solution for the environmental crisis until there is a system change towards a society that values both people and the planet, where environmental well-being and social justice are intertwined.

2. Methodology

I built my argument in this thesis based on a literature review. As Mareš (2013) describes this type of thesis, it is a specific literature genre, which sums up and analyses the current knowledge about the research topic. My thesis will be a literature review; it is a comprehensive term for various forms of literature reviews in the context of scientific research. This type of study focuses on the recapitulation of existing knowledge on a given research topic. The author of a literature review draws on identified, existing studies in the field, analyses them, summarizes their results and comes up with some new arguments or perspectives about the topic (Mareš, 2013).

For the aim of my thesis, seemed relevant to me to write a literature review over empirical study. My own research quantitative or qualitative would not be able to cover the global context of the topic, as I do not have the resources to do extensive research that would map the situation both in the European and non-European context. Moreover, the ecofeminist perspective on which I build up my thesis often does not operate with statistic data or existing statistics can not be reliable, for example, in Egypt in 1970, women made up only 3.6% of the agricultural workforce according to national statistics, while interviews with women showed that 55-70% of them were involved in agricultural production (Pietilä & Vickers, 1990). Similarly, in Peru, according to 1972 census data, women constituted 2.6% of the rural labour force, while 86% were actually involved in agriculture (Pietilä & Vickers, 1990). This example works with old data, but we can still argue that data, mostly from outside of the West, can be inaccurate. It is the first hint that statistics often do not match reality and that an ecofeminist approach is needed in quantitative or qualitative research about these issues. Data collection techniques must be more sensitive and adapted to non-European, non-west regional contexts. Although data can be useful for understanding the extent and impact of environmental problems, it may not fully capture women's experiences and perspectives. Their voices and concerns may be marginalized or ignored in decision-making processes (Mellor, 1997).

The concept of my thesis is not only sociological but also philosophical and therefore I will only use some empirical statistical data from annual reports, only when it will be reasonable for supporting my arguments.

2.1 Search strategy

Searching for my resources I had two criteria. I tried to pick up the latest case studies or annual reports to demonstrate the current state of women´s situation in mitigating efforts and I also picked up older works if they were fundamental to ecofeminism, environmentalism, and their theories. Older works are mainly from relevant ecofeminist/environmental authors, or they discuss a theoretical concept that is relatively unchanging with time.

For online resources, I used platforms of google scholar, jstor, or taylor & francis online. For annual reports of organisations, such as UN or IPCC, I used their websites directly. Works were chosen either by the author´s name (when it is a key author for ecofeminism/environmentalism) or by key words which were**: *ecofeminism, women, climate change, grassroot movements, environmental movements, deep and shallow ecology, embodiment & embeddedness.* The search was performed using the search operators "AND" and "OR" with key words selected based on a study of the literature and searching the cited studies in those works.

2.1.1 Reasons why the resources were not used:
o they took place before the year 2000 and their results and data may not be longer representative and reliable
o they did not explicitly or implicitly mention gender, as it is a necessary variable for this topic
o they talked about women´s struggles but not in an environmental or ecological context

2.1.2 Summary of inclusion criteria:
o findings and annual reports after 2000
o relevance to ecofeminism/environmentalism
o studies mostly in English, as there are not a lot of them in Slovak or Czech
o sociologically and philosophically relevant articles, which are pertinent to the problem of the thesis (ecofeminism, decision-making processes, women, and their relationship to nature)

3. Environmental movement

Firstly, I demonstrate how the current environmental movement was historically formed and I present the main branches of the movement: shallow and deep ecology. One might think that these efforts are enough to combat the climate crisis, but if we take into consideration how long they have been forming, how long they have existed and how limited goals they have achieved, we must see that they are for some reason, such as omitting women, excluding local knowledge and experiences of people who already feel the consequences of environmental degradation, not sufficient. I later on address these shortcomings of environmentalism and show a different, ecofeminist approach to these issues.

3.1 Philosophical foundations of environmentalism

Although it can seem like concerns for the environment are the questions of the last few decades, the truth is that the roots of environmentalism are 200 years old, if not more. As Grove (1992) further states, European environmentalism dates back to the mid-18th century. The reason behind the emergence of environmentalism was the endangered natural balance of tropical islands, which symbolized broader global concerns. As the network of scientific experts grew, the pressure on governments to take action grew as well. The realization that capitalism and patriarchy are lethal for the environment was already well-known in the 17th century. While it is true that environmentalism has its origins in colonialism, the ecological changes which are the topic of environmental concerns were created by colonial rules as well. (Grove, 1992).

Expanding on this historical foundation, Devall´s and Sessions´s *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered"* (1985) delves more into environmentalism´s core principles, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living beings with their natural surroundings. It advocates for recognizing humanity's place within both local and global ecosystems, acknowledging that these ecosystems set limits that living organisms must adhere to. From this perspective, environmentalism branches into two main streams: shallow and deep ecology.

3.1.1 Shallow and deep ecology: Understanding different approaches to environmentalism

Shallow ecology refers to an approach to environmentalism that focuses narrowly on protecting the environment as a separate "thing" without considering the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world. Shallow ecology may prioritize short-term policy work, technical solutions, and a tactical orientation to politics, as opposed to framing proposals around core values and long-term strategies (Schellenberger & Nordhaus, 2009). Naess (1973) talks about shallow ecology as merely a cosmetic matter that seeks to protect nature for the sake of a more efficient and long-term ability to exploit its resources; the motivation for this protection is purely anthropocentric (human-centred). It can look like today we are far from this perspective however, Schellenberger & Nordhaus (2009) stress that the attachment of modern environmentalism to these types of solutions is a contributing factor to the failure of environmentalism to effectively address climate change. Solutions such as hybrid cars or more efficient appliances will not stop the climate crisis as they only focus on the surface of the problem and rather deal with manifestations of climate change than its causes, political orientation only to this way of problem-solving must shift towards a more holist approach which goes to the roots of the issues.

On the other hand, deep ecology demands not only addressing the consequences of ecological changes but goes to the roots of its causes. It blames anthropocentric humanism for excluding humans from the natural world and forgetting our interconnectedness with all living and non-living nature (Novák, 2017). It is considered a more expansive and transformative approach to environmentalism. This approach acknowledges the intrinsic value of non-human life forms. Deep ecology may also involve framing proposals around core values and long-term strategies, as opposed to a narrow focus on short-term policy work and technical solutions of shallow ecology (Schellenberger & Nordhaus, 2009). Within this framework, humans do not have a special position in the natural ecosystems, every living entity is deemed to possess intrinsic worth, and the abundance and variety of life forms are perceived as essential for the thriving and welfare of both human and non-human life on Earth (Mellor, 1997). Deep ecology addresses many environmental issues, such as overpopulation. Some deep ecology thinkers propose population control as a way to lessen human impact on the environment promoting smaller families through education, access to family planning services, and empowering women (who tend to have fewer children with increased education and opportunity) (Worldwatch Institute, 2012). Another more

challenging approach for mainstream environmentalism comes from Linkola. Linkola (2009) advocates for significant reductions in human population and consumption to ensure the survival of the planet. He believed the Earth's carrying capacity was significantly exceeded and advocates for population reduction, even through drastic measures.

We can see an agreement between deep ecology and ecofeminism in some points and it is no wonder that ecofeminism was based on deep ecology, but as I will argue later on, deep ecology was not able to fulfil the goals of ecofeminism and they diverge on many points.

3.2 Historical background of environmental movement: Tracing the evolution of environmental activism

In the Western context, we can talk about the historical formation of the environmental movement. Modern environmental movement was formed between the 1960s and '70s. I chose to follow Novák´s (2017) division and description which focuses mainly on the context of Czechoslovakia but the development of the movement can be generalised.

According to him, there are 3 historical waves:

1. Conservation

This type of movement prevails till the end of the 19th century. It is fuelled by romanticism, and it aims to preserve untouched nature, which started to gain intrinsic value interdependently of its use for humans. It was still driven by a desire to sustain natural resources for a longer period of time and this wave was not driven by a desire for political change. A lot of present organizations such as Sierra Club or National Trust have roots in this wave (Novák,2017). The USA joined the global movement for national parks, establishing a significant movement of its own. This shift in consciousness was spurred by the publication of works such as John Muir's "Our National Parks" and the advocacy of prominent figures like President Theodore Roosevelt. These early beginnings of the national park movement laid the groundwork for the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, the first of its kind in the world. Other big national parks in the USA, such as Yosemite or Sequoia were established shortly after. Overall, the national park movement in the USA has had a positive and lasting impact on environmental protection, fostering a national appreciation for nature, and creating economic opportunities (National Park Service (n.d.)). There might be different manifestations of this wave, big or small however, the motive stays

the same; conserving the country's natural landscapes and cultural heritage for future generations.

2. Political environmentalism

Political environmentalism emerged in the 60´s and 70´s, this is the time of many social movements. Its desire is a political change, it has a broader agenda with a systematic critique of modernity. This is the wave in which big mainstream movements like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and many more were formed (Novák, 2017). This era saw a significant shift in focus from conservation efforts to addressing systemic issues such as pollution, resource depletion, and environmental justice. As highlighted in (Pearthree, 2008), this period saw the rise of mainstream environmentalism alongside alternative discourses that paved the way for the Environmental Justice movement. The tensions and collaborations between mainstream environmentalism and Environmental Justice movement during this time underscored the complexities within the environmental movement. Additionally, the thriving environmental activism of the 1960s through the 1980s emphasized the importance of local and Indigenous activism in shaping environmental policies and practices while demonstrating that environmental activism in the 1970s was not solely a large-scale, elite endeavour but also a decentralized, community-based effort (Pearthree, 2008). As environmental equity movements gained traction and calls to extend the benefits of environmental protection to all groups in society emerged, emerged also criticism. As outlined by Tarlock et al. (1994), the critique of narrow focuses and limited aims of these movements. Assumptions that judicially recognized rights would naturally improve public health were questioned. This critique suggests that while crucial, the current approach to environmental equity may be too constrained, especially given the evolving science and ethics of environmental protection (Tarlock et al., 1994).

3. Radical environmentalism

Third wave of mainstream environmentalism was formed at the beginning of the 1990s. It reacted to the stagnation of the second wave as the movements became more bureaucratic and there was less and less potential for activism and participation. They prefer direct actions such as blockades or protests. These movements focus on critiques of hierarchal structures and capitalism and try for transformation towards a more just and equal world (Novák, 2017).

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Mainstream environmentalism is a plurality of movements, which often do not agree on fundamental principles such as what nature is or how to preserve it and due to that movements are often in dispute (Novák, 2017). For instance, while some groups advocate for the strict preservation of untouched wilderness areas, others prioritize sustainable development and human-centred conservation efforts. There is still a need to develop a general framework to unify different ideas, concepts and projects.

Mainstream environmentalism typically includes a range of perspectives, policies, and practices aimed at tackling environmental challenges and promoting sustainability. It often focuses on issues like pollution control, resource conservation, renewable energy, waste management, and biodiversity conservation, omitting the importance of local knowledge, unique experiences, and the connection between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women. (Mellor, 1997).

Today's movements like Extinction Rebellion (XR) and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) may diverge from ecofeminist ideologies and tactics. XR, for example, prioritizes non-violent direct action to raise awareness about climate change and biodiversity loss, yet faces criticisms of being too confrontational or exclusive in its approach. Similarly, ELF's direct-action tactics, while aimed at protecting the environment, raise ethical concerns regarding potential harm to individuals and communities.

The oversight of women's experiences and marginalized groups within these movements underscores a significant gap in mainstream environmentalism. In response to this gap, ecofeminism has arisen as a direct response, offering a holistic view on systems of domination. Specifically, it connects the oppression of women and the exploitation of the environment. This theoretical framework advocates for the fusion of ecological and feminist principles, serving as guiding principles for political activism and the cultivation of socially just lifestyles (Lahar, 1991).

4. Ecofeminism: A Critical Lens

4.1 Dualism and patriarchy: Examining the philosophical underpinnings of ecofeminism

We can clearly see that the division on the global South and global North was quite immediate. Environmentalism knew from its beginning that not all people are to be blamed equally. The historical context of the global North-South division is deeply connected with dynamics of ecological unequal change. This theory points out to structural exploitation embedded in international trade, where resources flow from the global South to North and therefore environmental and development disparities are being kept. What worsens the situation is the cultural hegemony of the global North which prioritizes capitalism over ecological integrity (Oulu, 2016). This theory clearly shows that power dynamics, capitalism and the legacy of colonialism contribute to environmental injustice.

However, that is only half of the story. Another problem in this injustice is the gender question, especially gender inequalities within the environmental movements. Gender dimension is often overshadowed by discussion of race, ethnicity or class. The neglect of gender as a crucial factor in environmental injustice and limited efforts in environmental movements show a broader pattern of overlooking systematic inequalities, which disproportionally affect global South (Buckingham et al., 2009). Environmental movements are a lot of the time part of these broader patterns and while they address division on global North and South, they stopped there and did not create a further link between the exploitation of nature and the gender question.

The idea that environmental problem-solving efforts have to have women and local people at their centre as they are the ones who are surviving these problems came with ecofeminist perspectives. In this chapter, I present how and why ecofeminism was formed, why it goes deeper than environmentalism and what are environmentalism's shortcomings. By illustrating this I argue that environmentalism needs to take ecofeminism into consideration if it ever wants to come up with effective solutions in our difficult situation of ecological crisis.

But what allowed the exploitation of nature and oppression of women in the first place?

The problem of separation of body and mind or more generally speaking separating two entities while highlighting one and suppressing the other is far older than environmental crisis debates. Plato and Descartes are two prominent philosophers who have contributed significantly to the concept of dualism. Plato, a Greek philosopher, believed in the existence of two separate realms: the material world and the world of forms. According to Plato´s dialogues such as Phaedo and Phaedrus, the material world is imperfect and constantly changing, while the world of forms is eternal and unchanging. Descartes, a French philosopher, also proposed a form of dualism known as mind-body dualism. Descartes argued that the mind and body are distinct entities that interact with each other but exist separately. (Mellor, 1997; Ruether,1992). He famously stated "I think, therefore I am," emphasizing the importance of consciousness in defining one's existence (Descartes, 2003).

According to Ruether (1992), *dualism* is the tendency to identify ontological dualism, such as spirit and matter, mind and body, with a good/evil dichotomy. This tendency is present in Western religious and philosophical thoughts, and it creates a hierarchy of better over worse, and of the rule of the higher over the lower. It leads to value judgments and a sense of separation or independence between these paired elements. This hegemonic Christian culture perpetuates sinful relations and portrays them as good, leading individuals to accept their roles within systems of sin as part of nature's order. Institutions such as family, school, church, and media play a role in socializing individuals to conform to these oppressive structures, reinforcing the separation between humanity and the natural world. Dualist thinking has resulted in the exploitation of the natural world and the oppression of women, as both are seen as inferior to the spiritual and intellectual realm. The problem with dualistic thinking is that it creates a false identification with gender and other social hierarchies. It splits reality into two opposing categories while highlighting one and suppressing the other. However, this split is not accurate, and our minds or capacities for thinking and feeling are not some detachable spiritual substances that can be separated from our bodies, which are merely the external vehicle of the 'soul' (Ruether, 1992). Therefore, dualistic thinking creates a false separation between the mind and body. Ecofeminism critiques dualism for creating these false separations and rather promotes a holistic worldview that emphasizes interconnectedness, embodiment, and ecological sustainability.

Patriarchy is built on the foundations of hierarchical dualism. Mellor (1997) defines patriarchy as a social system, where men hold the primary power and dominate in areas such

as political leadership, moral authority, social privileges and control of property. Patriarchy not only oppresses women but also leads to the destruction of nature by using dualism to separate culture from nature and women and deny humanity's material dependence on both. Patriarchal power dynamics revel in the mistreatment of women, animals and nature, perpetuating harmful hierarchal and dualistic thinking, which separates humans from the natural world and values them over nature and animals. According to Reeves & Baden (2000), are patriarchal origins frequently traced back to women's reproductive functions and instances of sexual violence, intricately entwined with capitalist exploitation mechanisms. Key areas where patriarchal oppression manifests include household duties, employment, governmental institutions, cultural norms, sexuality, and violent acts.

The connection between patriarchy and environmental destruction is based on similar power structures and ideologies. Patriarchy is not only a system of gender oppression but also a system of ecological destruction, as it promotes a worldview that is based on domination and control of nature. Ecofeminism argues that patriarchal societies tend to exploit nature and women and often consider them as resources, which they can control and use for profit or power, which parallels the historical exploitation of women's reproductive labour and bodies. We treat nature the way we treat women´s bodies, objectifying, violence, treating them as passive and for one use only. Holding to these harmful cultural norms, which prefer masculine values of domination means devaluing values traditionally connected with women such as caregiving, cooperation and sustainability. These paradigms need to be reconsidered and we must come up with a more holistic and inclusive approach if we want to combat the environmental crisis (Mellor, 2017).

In light of these principles, examining historical examples reveals the pervasive marginalization and objectification of both women and nature. Reduced to instrumental roles serving others, women have been valued for utility to men, not their inherent worth or autonomy. Similarly, nature has been seen as an external resource that should be used for human needs. Nature has been valued for its ability to provide raw materials, food and other types of resources for human consumption and economic gain, rather than being appreciated for its inherent worth and ecological significance (Plumwood, 1986). Additionally, there has been an attempt to impose a sharp separation on a natural continuum, whether between the characteristics of the sexes or between humans and non-human animals, maximizing the distance between each side in a polarity. Plumwood (1986) therefore sees ecofeminism as a

logical outcome of both environmental and feminist movements, intending to explore conceptual and practical links between domination of women and nature. By shedding light on structures of dominance and critically pointing to western philosophy traditions it comes with valuable insights for understanding dualistic assumptions and hierarchies.

Hierarchal dualisms are fundamentally written into the western patriarchal societies. And therefore, if we ever want to come up with effective solutions for the environmental crisis, we need to address these patriarchal social structures. There is no way out of the environmental crisis until there is a system change. These are the links that are made by ecofeminism but not by mainstream environmentalism. Environmentalism itself faces criticism for perpetuating the very dualism it seeks to overcome. Schellenberger & Nordhaus (2009) argue that environmentalism's current approach is failing, and a new paradigm is needed. They point to a lack of critical self-reflection within the movement, suggesting environmental leaders get stuck in groupthink. This collective thinking, they argue, reinforces the problematic separation of humans from nature, with humans positioned as superior. This critique echoes ecofeminism's concerns. Both approaches see the human-nature divide as problematic. However, this internal critique falls short in addressing issues of power and marginalization. It doesn't consider the link between the oppression of women and environmental degradation, nor does it directly challenge patriarchy or the hierarchical structures within environmentalism itself. While it calls for inclusivity and accessibility, it lacks a deeper analysis of the power dynamics at play.

Novák (2017) on the other hand shows that deep ecology stresses hierarchal structures and the domination of man over man, but they mostly point out to capitalism. And while capitalism might be part of the problem and it is important to acknowledge it, it is just one of the causes of the environmental crisis. Blaming capitalism without blaming patriarchy is just a partial addressing of the issue. Ecofeminism emphasizes the interconnectedness of systems of oppression, including capitalism and patriarchy, and argues that they reinforce each other.

4.2 Ecofeminism: A Holistic Approach to Social and Environmental Justice

Ecofeminist way of thinking can be seen for example in philosopher Val Plumwood, who argues that the oppression of women and the domination of nature are interconnected.

She challenges historical views that position women and nature as inferior, often drawing a connection between the female body and the natural world. Plumwood's philosophy influenced many thinkers, including Kathy Rudy (2012) and her contemplation of donating her body to animals, emphasizes respect for all living beings and acknowledges our shared vulnerability within the web of life. Rudy's act disrupts traditional views of humans as separate from the food chain and challenges societal norms that prevent humans from acknowledging their place within the interconnectedness of life. By considering her body as potential food, Rudy embraces her mortality and pushes for a revaluation of our relationship with nature, challenging the human-animal divide and recognizing our embodiment alongside other species. This act highlights the complex societal and legal barriers that prevent humans from considering themselves part of the natural cycle, even in death (Rudy, 2012). Ecofeminism recognizes that the suppression of the feminine is an all-pervasive human universal, and it seeks to create a more just and sustainable world by promoting the values of care, cooperation, and interconnectedness (Salleh, 1984).

Another example of how ecofeminism works is found in an article by A.E. King (2017) who explores how ecofeminism sheds light on the challenges faced by women in rural India regarding menstrual hygiene management. Limited access to sanitation facilities and sanitary products is just part of the problem. King highlights how the lack of proper infrastructure for menstrual waste disposal creates a burden on the environment, polluting water systems and causing air pollution from improper burning. This exemplifies how inadequate menstrual hygiene practices not only harm women's health but also contribute to environmental degradation. Ecofeminism, through an intersectional lens, examines how factors like gender, class, and ethnicity all intertwine to create these issues. By recognizing the interconnectedness of women's experiences and the environment, ecofeminism calls for solutions that address both the social marginalization of women and the environmental injustices impacting their well-being. This example of menstrual hygiene management in rural India demonstrates how ecofeminism offers a holistic approach to tackling complex challenges faced by women in marginalized communities (Kings, 2017).

4.3 Ecofeminist critique of mainstream environmentalism: Analysing the limitations of traditional environmental movements

I have shown why environmentalism is not sufficient to fully address the environmental crisis, for a deeper understanding I will further demonstrate how some

significant ecofeminists (Mellor, Plumwood and Salleh) criticize environmentalism for failing women and how ecofeminism differs from deep ecology.

Salleh (1984) recognised the shift which deep ecology made as: "Deep ecology itself is already an attempt to transcend the short-sighted instrumental pragmatism of the resource-management approach to the environmental crisis" (p. 339). The resource-management approach is too short-sighted and only sees the environment as a source of resources for humans. Deep ecology, on the other hand, offers a broader perspective that values nature for its own sake, not just its utility, but Salleh claims it is still not sufficient for solving the environmental crisis. Deep ecology is criticized for its logical inconsistency and methodological approaches as they are in conflict with its own principles. Deep ecology has an anti-class stance, but by not taking sexual oppression and social differences into consideration, it overlooks parallels between the exploitation of nature and women. Moreover, it uses generical terms such as "Man" which ignore important experiences of women, such as their month´s fertility circles or childbirth. Therefore, hindering the formation of new ways of thinking, leading to "alternative consciousness" (p.340), which deep ecology tries to promote. Until men accept the feminine within themselves and until women are allowed to love themselves the spiritual sphere of deep ecology stays superficial and it continues to supress the feminine inside us. Deep ecology does not take into consideration the dynamics of the "master-slave" relationship which is formed in gender relations. Its tries for biological egalitarianism stay therefore inconsistent (Salleh,1984). Efforts to artificially control the population to achieve species equality, Salleh (1984) critiques as rationalistic and technocratic and undermining efforts towards life-affirming values and women´s role as creators of life. Salleh (1984) advocates for ecofeminism, which comes up with practical and theoretical contributions and integrates the feminist critique to address the deep ecology´s shortages. She emphasizes "eradication of ideological pollution" (p.342) alongside environmental pollution, while taking into consideration the intrinsic value of the non-human world and women´s suppression as a foundation for social and political change (Salleh, 1984).

Another problem of mainstream environmentalism which is now strongly based on deep ecology is a headlong rush to integrate humans into the ecosystem, which can lead to misanthropy and anti-humanism, where deep ecology forgets the social background of environmental problems. How? By emphasizing the importance of non-human life and

ecosystems, it can sometimes overlook the ways in which human societies and their structures contribute to environmental degradation (Novák, 2017). As ecofeminism points out not all societies in all regions of the world have the same responsibility for the environmental crisis. It can lead to collective blaming or the excluding of marginalised communities and their specific problems from environmental discourses and problem-solving. Thus, while deep ecology comes up with valuable insights on our relationship with nature, it must be complemented by an understanding of social contexts in which environmental problems are created to provide complex and just solutions (Mellor,1997).

Ecofeminism raises specific concerns about mainstream environmentalism and green movement while emphasizing that environmental movement and its theoretics fail to adequately address many problems, one of them being men´s dominance and women´s subordination. Even though green thinkers and activists pay more attention to feminism than other political perspectives, they still overlook the fundamental role of gender inequality in creating the ecological crisis. Women's contributions to green politics are often marginalized, and their interests are not central to the male-dominated green political agenda. The presence of women in the green movement does not necessarily imply an ecofeminist perspective. Some women may engage in these movements for various reasons unrelated to ecofeminist ideology, such as personal environmental concerns, social justice advocacy, or community activism. However, they do so without explicitly integrating feminist analyses that connect gender oppression with environmental degradation, as it was in the North American environmental movement. Feminism is not assumed to be at the centre of green politics, and the German green party, for example, faced challenges in maintaining feminist momentum within the party (Mellor,1997).

The dominance of men in green literature and the under-representation of women contributors, with women often focusing on support and grassroots roles while men occupy more formal and influential positions, further highlight the marginalisation of feminist concerns. A deeper analysis of how women are marginalized and oppressed within societies is needed to understand the broader implications of environmental degradation. This oversight is attributed to men´s domination within green movements, which does not allow a complex understanding of the interconnection between gender inequality and environment destruction. A nuanced understanding of environmental justice requires recognizing how

gender intersects with race, class, and background while promoting leadership and diverse voices from women most impacted (Mellor, 1997).

Ecofeminism calls for a perspective, which would integrate feministic and environmental concerns, such as gender inequality and environmental degradation, division of labour and unsustainable development, bodily autonomy, representation of women or intersectionality and environmental justice, as mainstream environmentalism often lacks it. These concerns highlight the importance of incorporating ecofeminism into environmental activism to address the complex influence of gender, nature and social structures.

4.4 Why do we need ecofeminism? Exploring the intersections of gender, race, and class in environmental issues

Ecofeminism includes intersectionality to identify and stress a mutual ethical connection between the oppression of women and nature. Kings (2017) perspective shows, that women, mainly those that are marginalized have to bear the biggest part of environmental degradation´s burden. They have the responsibility of ensuring clean water, often traveling long distances due to water pollution or droughts, which affects their health and time for other activities. Women's engagement in agricultural work for livelihoods makes them vulnerable to crop failure or soil erosion due to climate change, directly affecting their ability to provide food for their families and generate income, leading to food insecurity and poverty. Moreover, women are disproportionately affected by land grabbing and deforestation which lead to displacement. It can have significant social and economic consequences including loss of livelihoods and increased vulnerability towards exploitation. Degradation of the environment, such as air pollution and water pollution, means health risks for women impacting their respiratory and reproduction systems. Another topic is the accessibility of menstrual sanitary products or proper sanitation facilities, which constitutes health risks and social stigma for women and girls (Kings, 2017).

These women are affected by their gender, age, location, race and class. Intersectionality allows ecofeminism to analyse complex relationship between humans and nature and understand how context-specific social structures can influence a person's vulnerability with respect to a changing environment. By considering multilevel discrimination, such as gender, class or race, ecofeminism reveals how patriarchy mingles with other forms of oppression and maintains inequalities (Kings, 2017).

For example, women of colour in those marginalized communities may face both gender-based discrimination and racial prejudice that further marginalizes them within their community. When advocating for environmental protections or access to resources, they must navigate multiple layers of oppression that compound their struggles. Acknowledging the intersection of different power systems and discrimination dynamics allows ecofeminism to focus on addressing complex problems of social and environmental injustices. Instead of viewing environmental issues in isolation, ecofeminism advocates politics and initiatives that address the root causes of social and environmental inequalities. (Mellor,1997).

Ecofeminism addresses intersections crucial for solving environmental problems and eliminating patriarchy by advocating for an intersectional approach that considers the interconnected systems of oppression faced by women and the natural environment, providing a holistic view on social and environmental injustices (Kings, 2017). Ecofeminism underscores this necessity by emphasizing the sociohistorical grounding of environmental discourse and advocating for a reflexive awareness of the material realities shaping women's lives. Additionally, it highlights the interconnectedness of social justice and environmental ethics. It criticizes anthropocentric worldviews prevalent in many environmental philosophies and advocates for a more inclusive and holistic approach to environmental ethics (Salleh, 1984). Ecofeminism's response to anthropocentric worldviews involves challenging dualistic thinking, emphasizing interconnectedness and interdependence, valuing diversity, drawing on feminist perspectives, and recognizing cultural and spiritual connections to promote a more inclusive and holistic approach to environmental ethics, while preferring care, empathy, promoting relational approaches to environmental questions, which nurture and sustain relationships with nature (Mellor, 1997; Philips, 2020). Environmental movements must embrace ecofeminist principles to create more inclusive and effective strategies if they want to combat climate change.

5. The role of women in environmental questions

I already discussed the current state of environmentalism, its shortcomings, critique and what can ecofeminism bring into the game. But why does ecofeminism believe that we should focus on women's experiences and knowledge? Using the theory of embodiment and embeddedness and then showing how environmental crisis falls specifically upon women I build my argument that women have some type of connection with nature that is different from men's. Moreover, the burden of environmental degradation falls in some regions mainly on them and therefore they are the ones who gain unique experiences and knowledge in these situations.

5.1 Concept of embodiment & embeddedness: Recognizing women´s unique relationship with nature

Environmental sociology highlights the unequal distribution of responsibility for environmental damage and underscores the unsustainable nature of current social structures (Novák, 2017). While mainstream environmentalism typically focuses on disparities between the global south and north, it often overlooks the fact that environmental changes affect people differently even within the same geopolitical region.

Ecofeminism introduces the concept of *embodiment*, which emphasizes how individuals experience and interact with their bodies, society, and nature. Twine (2001) describes embodiment as the physical experience of being in a body and this experience is socially constructed and marked by dualistic associations. This idea suggests that as humans we are deeply connected with nature and because of it we are naturally vulnerable. Our vulnerability is changing in our lives depending on our experiences, circumstances or life circles we are currently in. Essentially, it means that no matter how independent or removed from nature we become, we are still subject to its forces and rhythms and it is essential for our survival. Acknowledging both vulnerability and agency in relation to our embodiment is important, as it allows us to understand how our bodies may be affected by various technologies and social constructions. (Twine, 2001).

Women encounter distinct challenges related to embodiment, such as childbirth and caregiving, leading to unique experiences often unrecognized by men. Embodiment encompasses the physical expression and experience of human existence, incorporating biological and social dimensions. Although we all inhabit physical bodies, the ways in which

we are embodied vary (Mellor, 1997). However, Twine comes up with an alternative concept of essence that could be more adjusted to a different understanding of embodiment. This alternative suggests viewing the body in a way that is less susceptible to being used to create negative symbols or stereotypes. By reconceptualizing the body, he aims to challenge harmful biases or stereotypes (Twine, 2001).

Expanding on this notion, Phillips (2020) proposes that knowledge is not solely the outcome of rationality and objectivity, but that it is also formed by our embodied experiences and interactions with our environment. Embodiment emphasizes the importance of sensory experiences, emotions and physicality in forming our comprehension of the world and our relationships with others. Highlighting the interplay of mind and body it acknowledges that our physical encounters are crucial in forming of our perception, knowledge and relationships. Embodied knowledge comes from direct, lived and sensory experiences, enriching our understanding of the close connection between human corporeality and the broader natural world. By experiencing nature directly, we gain a deeper understanding of our interconnectedness with the environment. This fosters an "ethics of care" that prioritizes care and respect for the natural world, going beyond purely logical or self-serving reasons. This deeper connection can guide our behaviour and lead to a more integrated view of humanity's role within the larger web of life. Embodiment challenges the idea that knowledge is disembodied, transcendent, and complete, and it values emotional experiences as a means to develop knowledge of the more-than-human. Emphasizing that nature itself can serve as a model for knowledge that is organic, finite, and ever-changing (Phillips, 2020).

Embeddedness, on the other hand, underscores the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and their surrounding ecosystems. Human existence cannot be divorced from the natural world; instead, they are intricately intertwined. Human embeddedness in the environment is directly related to human embodiment, and the consequences of ecological impacts are experienced through human bodies. Ecofeminism emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing this embeddedness within both global and local ecosystems. It illustrates how social, ecological, and biological factors impact individuals, particularly women, in diverse ways (Mellor, 1997). It calls for an awareness of our shared bodily vulnerability or fragility, which can help us develop a more emphatic and inclusive perspective on non-human beings. This shift challenges the idea that

humans are in some way separated or superior to the natural world. Embodiment urges us to recognize deep connections between human bodies and the natural world and instead promotes more integrated perspectives. That can lead to the development of more nuanced forms of knowledge and ethical stances that are better suited for dealing with the current environmental challenges that we face (Phillips, 2020).

A specific example of embodiment can be found in Jabeen´s work from 2020 where she refers to embodiment as the physical manifestation or representation of certain qualities, characteristics, or experiences. Her approach to embodiment is explored in the context of post-colonial South Asia when she discusses how the embodiment of women and land is intertwined, "when women and land are treated in a similar way" (p. 1096). In her work, Jabeen contests the conventional ecofeminist belief in a symbolic connection between women and nature, particularly the land. This connection is often portrayed through shared terminology such as "fertile," "barren," "seed," "rape," "womb," "virgin," among others, which feminizes the land and simultaneously naturalizes women. However, Jabeen (2020) argues that in post-colonial South Asian contexts, women's bodies are treated more as literal land, complicating the idea of women-land embodiment. Women's bodies are not only symbolically categorized as fertile or barren, but they are also treated akin to land through practices like renting or leasing. This underscores the intricate relationship between women and land, where women's bodies become a means of survival within post-colonial oppressed societies. Jabeen (2020) brings complexity to the idea of women's connection to the land, highlighting a deeper understanding of why both women and the land face oppression. Their connection goes beyond symbolism and is rooted in real-life experiences and conditions in postcolonial societies, where the relationship between women, land, and ongoing oppression is very complicated.

Building on this exploration of embodiment, the UN´s synthesis report from (2022) shows, that the impact of the environmental crisis falls upon women differently than upon men. It is due to their embodiment and embeddedness that their increased vulnerability is a pressing concern, with women bearing a disproportionate burden of adverse climate change impacts, compared to men. Women´s close connection to nature, for example, due to their duties in water supplying and self- supplying agriculture allows them to form a special understanding of the local region and that forms their specific knowledge. But their embodiment and embeddedness are also related to their bigger vulnerability, which increases

with factors such as poorer education, social status, or limited access to sources. All of this limits the women´s adaptive capacities during extreme events like hurricanes and other forms of climate crisis (Osman-Elasha 2009; UN Women, 2022).

Of course, this connection between women and nature has not escaped criticism. While initially discussing the idea of women's special relationship with nature, Phillips (2020) acknowledges critiques that challenge this notion as reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes about female inferiority. Critics argue that attributing a special affinity with nature to women based on biological and embodied experiences perpetuates outdated notions of female weakness. Furthermore, Twine (2001) delves into later ecofeminist writings that thoroughly question the validity of claiming a special connection between women and nature. He argues against the idea of women being inherently "closer to nature," asserting that such beliefs stem from a dualistic Enlightenment perspective that devalues the body and nature as inferior to reason. Instead, he advocates for transcending this limited viewpoint to embrace a more holistic understanding of humanity's interconnectedness with nature and embodiment. By challenging traditional notions of superiority and inferiority, ecofeminism aims to raise awareness of the inherent closeness of all individuals to nature.

Even after we consider the critique, we cannot deny that we still do live in patriarchal societies and therefore women experience environmental degradation differently due to their gendered roles and their obligations, such as caretaking or maintaining households which ensure that they interact with nature in ways, which are sometimes miles away from men´s perspectives. They are embodied and embedded in ways that allow them to gain unique knowledge and experiences that manifest into their relationship with nature.

So, does it mean women´s relationship with nature and their experiences are more important than men´s when talking about mitigating environmental crisis?

Although it may seem like ecofeminism promotes the fact that women´s knowledge, experiences or relationships with nature are more significant compared to men´s, it would be a misinterpretation of ecofeminist ideas. Mellor (1997) acknowledges the significance of women's experiences and perspectives in addressing environmental challenges but emphasizes the need for a collective and inclusive approach that considers diverse viewpoints, including those of men.

While women's perspectives are valued within ecofeminism, that does not mean explicitly prioritizing them over men's in mitigating environmental crisis. Instead,

ecofeminism emphasizes the importance of including diverse voices and experiences to achieve a holistic and effective approach to environmental mitigation. Ecofeminism underscores the importance of recognizing women's roles and experiences in environmental discourse without diminishing the contributions or perspectives of men. It calls for a holistic understanding of the gendered dynamics shaping relationships with nature and influencing responses to environmental crisis (Jabeen, 2020).

Twine´s text rejects the notion that women's relationship with nature and their experiences are more important than men's in mitigating environmental crises. The aim is to transcend this perspective and promote awareness of everyone's closeness to nature and embodiment, without prioritizing one gender over another in addressing environmental challenges (Twine, 2001). There is a criticism of essentialism in claims for women's special affinity with nature based on biologically determined and embodied experiences. Emphasis is on the need to develop eco-centric connections within nature and revalue epistemological frameworks to include what is currently denied by hyper-rationalism. Ethics of care are also proposed to lead us away from anthropocentric ethics. Therefore, there should be a shift in the way humans, regardless of gender, relate to the more-than-human world and interact with nature (Phillips, 2020).

Ecofeminism advocates for including women in solving environmental crisis as they are a lot of the time at its centre however, that does not mean excluding men or degrading their importance.

5.2 Global scale impact: Assessing the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation on women

In understanding the distinctions between ecofeminism and other environmental movements, it becomes essential to delve into why ecofeminism places a significant emphasis on women's experiences and their relationship with nature.

Mellor (1997) states that there is a belief in ecofeminism that women have a special relationship with nature. This perspective suggests that women's lived experiences, such as oppression, abuse, and mothering, can make them more sensitive to the oppression and abuse of nature. One of the examples that Mellor describes is food-water- fuel crisis. The term "food-fuel-water crisis" is used to describe a complex and interrelated set of challenges that are often experienced disproportionately by women and marginalized communities. This

crisis encompasses issues related to food security, access to clean water, and the use of resources for fuel and energy production, all of which are influenced by and contribute to gender and environmental inequalities. These problems are caused by environmental degradation, loss of fertile land, and the damming of water courses, among other factors. Women, who are often responsible for providing food, fuel, and water for their families, are disproportionately affected by these issues. The crisis is exacerbated by the failure of commercial development to take into account the interdependence of ecosystems and the importance of sustainable resource management (Mellor,1997).

Building upon Mellor's insights, this chapter draws upon the findings and evidence presented in the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (2022) to further demonstrate how are women specifically affected by environmental degradation and how gendered roles shape vulnerability to climate change, particularly impacting rural women in developing nations who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, including tasks such as agricultural work, water, and fuel collection.

Water

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by water shortage and supply distribution caused by climate change. They bear the burden of water collection, which takes away their time from income-generating activities, childcare and education, as the environment degrades, the burden grows. This burden also exposes them to various risks including sexual abuse, domestic violence or physical injuries. Extreme events intensify water insecurity and disproportionately affect marginalized communities, such as ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples or women. The problem is not only fetching drinking water but also water used for economic activities. Women make up at least 11% of small-scale fishers and up to half of all workers in the fishery and aquaculture sectors. Salinisation-associated changes pose a disproportionate burden on women tasked with securing drinking water and fuel, particularly evident in regions like the Indian Sundarbans. Social norms and gender power relationships worsen these vulnerabilities as they hinder women´s access to water and to decision-making power in water management. Integrating gender inclusivity in adaptation efforts is crucial, as women possess valuable local knowledge and traditional practices that can inform effective adaptation strategies.

Food

Women are more vulnerable than men to climate-change-induced food insecurity due to gender inequalities, differential control over productive assets, and varied social roles. Historical factors like land ownership or dispossession and discrimination strengthen vulnerability, particularly among Indigenous livestock keepers. Adaptation actions are also influenced by gender and social inequities, affecting access to institutional support. Climate change disproportionately affects small-scale fishers, farmers and communities which more or less depend on local food sources. Women make 14% of the 2018 aquaculture workforce which is 20,5 million people in total. Notably, in Chile, women make up to 42% of the salmon workforce and in other regions such as Zanzibar or the Philippines, women dominate seaweed culture in family-owned businesses. Their contributions significantly influence family incomes, however many times they are not paid directly. Women, in particular, experience greater workloads and stress during climate change-induced extreme events like droughts, floods, and cyclones, which increase food insecurity and exacerbate existing gender inequities in access to resources and opportunities. Existing policies and adaptation mechanisms often fail to address gender power imbalances, leading to the marginalization of women and the feminization of food insecurity.

Health

The threat to food security is a direct threat to health. Food insecurity created by climate change can lead to various issues such as malnutrition, undernutrition or overweight, particularly in vulnerable communities. Food supply chains are more and more endangered and unstable as the extreme weather appears more often, especially putting pregnant women and children at risk. Women and girls face distinct risks to health due to climate change, including also higher mortality rates in extreme weather events, and increased mental health burden. Extreme weather events are also associated with increased violence against women, girls, and vulnerable groups. People's vulnerability towards health risks varies in different regions and gendered norms and unequal access to resources, information and power can, mainly in women´s case, worsen these vulnerabilities. During climate change-induced extreme events we go through loss and distress. Even these experiences are influenced by gender with women often facing bigger limitations due to their duties in household and society or social norms. These limitations limit their adaptive capacity, which in turn make them even more vulnerable to climate hazards. Addressing the health impacts of climate

change requires gender-responsive strategies that consider the different vulnerabilities and needs of various demographic groups and increase adaptive capacity to build resilience and protect the health and well-being of all populations, particularly women and girls.

Migration

Even though women suffer disproportionately more when dealing with climate change due to their economic cultural and gender circumstances, such as not having power over money and resources or their duties as caregivers and child bearers, they usually cannot afford to migrate because of these circumstances. Migration for them is riskier and more expensive and therefore they stay in the affected regions for longer periods. Women and children in vulnerable slum areas, like those in Bangladesh, suffer the worst effects of climate hazards but because of their circumstances, they cannot leave. This effect has two faces, on one side it even bigger the women´s work burden but they can also gain some type of freedom when men leave the houses. When men migrate for work in post-disaster settings there can occur bigger abuse and violence as the gender presets are changing. Addressing the gendered dimensions of migration in the context of climate change requires recognizing and addressing the social, cultural, and economic factors that shape migration decisions and outcomes.

Poverty

Climate change increases existing poverty and inequality, presenting significant adaptation challenges. Without strong adaptation measures, economic and non-economic losses and damages are likely to be concentrated among the poorest and most vulnerable populations. For instance, protected areas, particularly in territories of Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities like those in Amazon face increasing wildfires, which pose significant challenges for the local people and their systems. In Africa, we need to see the intersection between exposure and vulnerability to climate change. Rural Africa, with a high percentage of its workforce employed in agriculture (55–62% of the sub-Sahara), faces significant livelihood risks from climate hazards, particularly among poor and female-headed households. The problem is not only poverty but also other factors like age, gender or class which play crucial roles in the increase of vulnerability of these people. Shared Socioeconomic Pathway (SSP) 4 stresses that in some possible future scenarios, the number of people living in extreme poverty may increase significantly by 2030. Ensuring inclusive governance mechanisms, securing the right of possession of the land, and providing access

to resources and support systems are essential steps towards building resilience and reducing the negative impacts of climate change on the world's poorest communities.

These findings also confirm the UN´s synthesis report (2022), which states that vulnerability is shaped by various factors, including entrenched gender norms, disparities in resource access, and prevailing social, economic, and financial inequalities. Furthermore, the report highlights a disturbing trend of escalating gender-based violence in the aftermath of climate-induced disasters. Women and girls, especially in conflict-ridden regions grappling with extreme weather events, face heightened risks of experiencing gender-based violence. This perilous intersection of climate change impacts, environmental degradation, and conflict exacerbates the vulnerability of marginalized communities.

Drawing from the IPCC´s and UN's synthesis reports, which outline the multifaceted factors shaping vulnerability, including rooted gender norms and inequalities, alongside the troubling trend of gender-based violence post-climate disasters, I turn to the research of Haque, Kumar, and Bhullar (2023). They show that women demonstrate a distinct connection with nature, evident in their involvement in agricultural and environmental activities. Women exhibit a bigger concern for climate change compared to men and perceive meteorological changes, such as temperature fluctuations, more intensely. Their roles in securing food, water collection, and medicinal plant care further emphasize their intimate interaction with nature. Additionally, women tend to adopt managerial adaptation strategies over technical ones, potentially due to unequal resource access in agriculture. Instead of focusing on the use of specific technologies or infrastructures women rather involve changes in management practices, resource allocation or decision-making processes. This reliance on nature for adaptation underscores their unique relationship with the environment, particularly in contexts of poverty and limited resources. Women may be more inclined to adopt adaptive strategies that rely on their existing knowledge, skills, and social networks, rather than investing in expensive or resource-intensive technical solutions. Women's gender roles and responsibilities shape their direct engagement with nature, influencing their perceptions, adaptation strategies, and overall relationship with the environment (Haque, A. S., Kumar, L., & Bhullar, N., 2023).

While traditional environmental movements have often been dominated by homogenous male voices, excluding the perspectives and experiences of women, the findings presented in this chapter emphasize their deep connection with nature. The impact

of climate change falls directly upon women and vulnerable populations, particularly in relation to water availability, food insecurity, health risks, migration patterns, and poverty. Women bear more environmental issues as caregivers and nurturers. Having that role makes women understand ecology deeply and have a special relationship with nature, often leading to them being the first to notice when something is wrong with nature. Without incorporating these individuals, who are directly experiencing and surviving environmental degradation, and harnessing their experiences and knowledge, we cannot successfully combat the climate crisis. It is not only just but also strategically imperative for developing more effective and inclusive solutions Trying to come up with effective solutions without including local, native and many times marginalized people is like trying to navigate a ship without a compass.

6. Grassroots Movements and Women´s Participation

One might ask, will it really make a difference to involve women and local knowledge in mitigating efforts? In this chapter, I first demonstrate what grassroot movements are, how they differ from mainstream environmental movements and then I show various examples of why it is important to involve women in mitigating efforts. Those are either projects that failed when applying some types of solutions without discussion with local people or some projects that succeeded when they made an effort to understand the needs of local people or these solutions came directly from those people.

6.1 Grassroots movements vs. mainstream environmentalism: Understanding the distinctions

When we talk about grassroot movements, we talk about local, community-based initiatives driven by ordinary people, who are experiencing the decline of the environment and therefore have to cope with these changes. These movements usually have a decentralized, bottom-up structure, when individuals connect and work together to advocate for social, environmental or political changes on a local level. They have to rely on community participation and they emphasize collective efforts to bring about societal transformation (Mellor, 1997).

Weber (2000) talks about grassroot movements as "grass-roots ecosystem management" (GREM) that are the new type of environmental activism. He demonstrates various differences between GREM and mainstream environmental movements. Unlike mainstream environmentalism, which often operates on a larger scale with centralized decision-making, GREM focuses on place-based ecosystem management involving local stakeholders and agencies, prioritizing decentralization, collaboration, and citizen participation at the local level. While mainstream environmentalism may overlook the need for a holistic approach, GREM tries for an integrated perspective, involving ecological, economic and other community needs for sustainability in specific geographic locations. Local activism values expertise from within the community, it understands the importance of citizen perspectives, traditional wisdom and technical knowledge which it tries to include in problem-solving, contrasting with mainstream environmentalism's reliance on bureaucratic expertise often overlooking the specific needs of local communities. GREM challenges traditional environmental movements by introducing new ideas and approaches (Weber, 2000).

These movements empower women to address the interconnected challenges of gender inequality and environmental degradation in their communities. Grassroots activism allows women to voice their concerns, mobilize for change, and challenge power structures that perpetuate environmental harm and gender oppression. By participating in grassroots movements, women can contribute to shaping more sustainable and equitable societies while advocating for the rights of both women and the environment (Mellor, 1997).

These grassroot movements show how environmental activism can be effective and often they come with better, more sustainable solutions and they come further than mainstream environmentalism with its Western Eurocentric approach ever did. In the next chapter, I support this argument with specific examples.

6.2 Local-scale initiatives and community engagement: Examining the role of women in grassroots activism

I will mainly focus on women´s role in grassroot movements. The grassroot initiatives have different shapes and sizes. I do not argue that in order to stop the environmental destruction and ecological crisis we do not need to address big, international issues like the use of fossil fuels, the production of greenhouse gasses, the policy of giant companies or others. However, I shift my perspective towards local initiatives, smaller or bigger to aptly point out why focusing on everyday practises can be incredibly useful in mitigating efforts.

Some of the "smaller" efforts are demonstrated in the UN´s synthesis report from 2022. Women's contributions to subsistence farming have been pivotal, as highlighted by the Landesa Rural Development Institute's findings. They have been at the forefront of early innovations in this sector, fostering virtuous cycles from farm to fork and demonstrating a profound connection to the land and agricultural traditions. Moreover, women's roles extend to the preservation of biodiversity. While tasks like water and firewood collection can impact forest degradation, women's traditional knowledge and practices also play a crucial role in conserving biodiversity and land coverage. For instance, women in the Central African Republic have adapted their cooking methods to reduce firewood consumption, illustrating their commitment to sustainable resource management. Furthermore, grassroots organizations provide essential platforms for women to share their traditional knowledge, including water management techniques and tree preservation methods. This exchange of

expertise not only enhances water security but also underscores the valuable contributions women can offer to environmental conservation initiatives (UN, 2022).

Julia Russell´s Eco-home in Los Angeles is another "small" scale grassroot initiative. Her Eco-home is a practical, localized approach to environmentalism, showing that individuals can contribute and influence broader sustainability efforts. It is a project that exemplifies how grassroots initiatives can embody ecofeminist values through sustainable practices, community engagement, education, and an intersectional approach to addressing environmental and social challenges. It works as a demonstration home and community network, providing workshops and various information about sustainable living such as organic gardening or water conservation. It shows practical applications of ecofeminist principles in a grassroot setting (Lahar, 1991).

Another pivotal initiative, however this time much bigger in size is the Chipko movement. The Chipko Movement, also known as the "Embrace-the-Tree" movement, originated in the Garhwal Himalaya region of India in the 1970s. It was a grassroots response against deforestation and encroachment on forest resources by the State. Rooted in Gandhian philosophy, it shifted focus from resource distribution to ecological conservation. Women played a crucial role, leading non-violent protests and advocating for policy changes. Their involvement was not only physical but also instrumental in mobilizing local communities and raising awareness about the importance of forest protection and conservation. Strategies included non-violent protests, community participation, cultural preservation, advocacy, and ecological awareness. The movement also emphasized the cultural significance of forests, linking forest protection with local traditions and heritage, thus preserving the cultural identity of hill communities. The movement influenced policies on regional but also national levels like a 15-year ban on commercial felling in the Himalayan forests of Uttar Pradesh, enacted by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Moreover, it highlights the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the consequences of deforestation on soil fertility, water sources, and natural disasters like floods and landslides. By integrating ecological awareness with cultural preservation and community participation, the movement fostered a holistic approach to conservation that considered the broader environmental, social, and cultural contexts. In essence, the Chipko Movement left a lasting legacy on conservation efforts in India, exemplifying the power of grassroot movements in effecting meaningful change for environmental conservation (Mellor, 1997; Shiva & Bandyopadhyay, 1986).

Green Belt Movement (GMB) in Kenya is another successful example of grassroot movement which came from local initative, specifically Wangari Maathai, founded in 1977. Led by Maathai and local women, the project focused on tree planting and environmental conservation to address community needs. It demonstrates a bottom-up approach to community-based forestry initiatives. In this project women are actively involved in tree planting (successfully planting over 30 million trees), they maintain tree nurseries, and engage in community development activities. These initiatives not only contribute to environmental conservation but also help with household needs for wood fuel, soil conservation or building materials. The program provides resources for women, such as trees, workshops and training programs, helping them understand their decision-making power, property rights and reinforcing their roles as income earners and organizers within the community (Boyer-Rechlin, 2010).

Arora- Jonsson (2012) also talks about the importance of women in forestry. Their efforts usually focus on everyday immediate issues that are crucial for community life. Women address a range of issues, for instance, they address resource management, social structures, and community development matters all at once. Because forest management cannot be separated from its broader contexts. As they highlight the interconnection of problems, they can stay unnoticed by outsiders whose focus is mainly narrowed to single problems. She mentions the women´s network in Hariharpur, where women came together to protect the forests from intruders. This spontaneous action was rooted in women's networks that had formed around various issues, showcasing their grassroots organizing efforts in response to specific problems. That is the reason why women´s participation in mitigating efforts is so important. They address specific issues while understanding the interconnection of them, make cooperative work visible, thus they create a good environment for sustainable development.

Not all types of projects which include local knowledge and community, regional specifications, and understanding of intersectionality come directly from local people. Some projects are institutional, but because they take these factors into consideration they come up with effective solutions. For instance, a project undertaken by the Cooperative Research and Extension wing of the College of Micronesia to address food and nutrition security in Gargey Village, Yap Island. Those communities are particularly vulnerable towards poverty, food insecurity and other issues that worsen with environmental degradation. The reason behind their vulnerability is their low economic status and limited access to technologies

which would help them adapt. The project employs a three-pronged adaptation model focusing on *gender-focused capacity development* as the project prioritized the inclusion of women in capacity-building efforts related to soil health management. This ensured that women are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective agricultural practices, contributing to improved crop production and food security. *Sustainable land management practices*, including (volcanic) soil resilience techniques, compost preparation, and crop diversification. Women´s participation ensures that they are key stakeholders in decision-making processes related to agricultural practices. And *income-generation activities*, such as vegetable cultivation using alternative crop production methods. By participating in these activities, women not only contribute to household income but also gain economic independence and empowerment. The project also emphasizes the importance of traditional and native trees, crops (46 types) and nutrient-rich vegetables in improving food security. The project was successful, among other things, because it recognised the importance of gender equality and empowered the local community and their skills, knowledge, and needs, while protecting the native. Their goals, which were: better food resilience and security, straightening livelihoods and building resilience among atoll communities, were successfully achieved (IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, 2022).

Another institutional project is Nepal's Community Forestry Program, which is a government-sponsored initiative introduced in the 1970s. The government collaborated with international partners to address deforestation and involved local communities in sustainable forest management practices. It wanted to engage local communities, including women, in decision-making processes and forest management activities. The project is a part of a broader grassroot movement in Nepal, which addresses deforestation and promotes sustainable forest management practices. It does so by following strategy: participation of women in forest management activities, such as tree planting, forest protection and sustainable resource use, it recognises local knowledge of forest species, growing patterns and potential uses. Women in Nepal's Community Forestry Program are engaged in community-based conservation efforts, highlighting their importance as key stakeholders in sustainable forestry practices. Nepal's Community Forestry Program has been widely implemented across the country, involving local communities in forest management and conservation efforts, aiming to include women in decision-making processes (Boyer-Rechlin, 2010).

I highlighted a few outcomes of inclusive strategies on gender equality and environmental sustainability. Projects that have taken the women´s perceptions into account and used the holistic approach to the problem, came up with successful tactics and strategies which mitigated the environmental crisis impacts. In the next chapter, I will provide a few examples of projects that did not effectively involve women and their experiences or knowledge and therefore the initiatives ended up as less successful or even worse, they became destructive for the region.

6.3 Consequences of excluding women: Exploring the implications of gender disparities in local problem-solving

There are many different negative situations when local knowledge, region specifics and broader community concerns are not taken into consideration while trying to mitigate the climate crisis. One of them is a situation of maladaptation. It occurs when planning is short-term, one-dimensional and knowledge about the issue is very limited. Decisions tend to overlook risks, which these so-called solutions can bring and therefore the vulnerability of local communities grows, exposure and risks increase and existing inequalities exacerbate. Some of the examples of maladaptation is planting non-native or unsustainable plants and trees which can lead not only to loss of natural biodiversity but also to displacement of forest communities. Another example is afforesting naturally treeless areas, like peatlands. These afforesting strategies require draining the area and therefore it can lead to the loss of various native species and high gas emissions (IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, 2022). These "solutions" might seem effective in theory, but by not taking into account various regional specifics they end up being ineffective or destructive.

Somehow similar but at the same time different situation was highlighted by Vandana Shiva. It is a situation of maldevelopment when more developed nations impose agricultural practices on less developed regions. However, these practices and reproductive technologies are unsustainable as they only focus on economic developments and modern scientific knowledge, which are not sensible to local differences and community needs. The only concern is turning all resources and labour into commodities. These technologies interfere with women´s bodies having harmful effects on women´s health and well-being. Implementing these "solutions" leads to ecological degradation, loss of biodiversity, cultural diversity and further dependence on more developed countries. Ecofeminism draws attention on a deeper level of this problem. It is a consequence of North imperialism and hegemony

and its attempt to push its model of modernity on the whole world. In summary, maldevelopment, as conceptualized within ecofeminist discourse, represents a critical perspective on unsustainable development practices that prioritize economic growth and technological advancement at the expense of environmental integrity, cultural diversity, and social justice (Mellor, 1997).

A more specific example of a project on which I want to demonstrate why the lack of holistic approach and inclusivity is lethal is a project from rural north-western Sweden. In 1995 a village association was created as the region suffered from depopulation and needed a plan to revitalize the area. The project started holistically, addressing various issues, such as schooling, housing, and sustainable forest management, including conservation. The project sought to promote environmental awareness and sustainable practices in utilizing forest resources. It aimed to point out the interconnectedness between forests, community and politics, setting the forest into a social context. Many women emphasized connecting forest management with village development initiatives, such as a village shop, daycare or elderly care. However, the project failed to address the interconnection of all of these issues and shifted from a holistic approach to a narrow focus on economic prospects. Although this project looked promising it came into its shortcomings. Involvement of external actors, as part of the forests were partly managed by a state-owned company, shifted the focus only on economic benefits. Soon it was mainly about providing employment for village men marginalizing other issues. The lack of women in the village association led to their lack of interest in attending meetings as the meetings were primarily held by a few older men. Catering to the interests of village men, the project neglected the broader community concerns and perspectives, especially when the rules and regulations were set by male committees and outsiders, which were not good enough from women´s perspectives. Capable, literate women and women´s forums were seen as a threat to the village harmony and authority of the association and therefore men rather focused on collaboration with outsiders. This led to the perpetuation of the gender status quo, underlying gender inequalities in decision-making processes and reinforced existing power dynamics within the association by further legitimization of men´s authority. When outside forces started to have a bigger influence than the perspectives of local people the project failed its mission. Overall, the project's failure to address the broader community needs, gender disparities, and the influence of external actors without considering local power dynamics were key factors contributing to its lack of success (Arora-Jonsson, 2012).

To show that this problem is really global I add examples from Sub-Saharan Africa, including Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda, Rwanda, and the United Republic of Tanzania. Even though women make up half of the agriculture forces, they still have unequal access to resources as their land is usually quantitatively and qualitatively worse. Women often lack access to necessary agricultural inputs like high-yield crops, pesticides, and fertilizers, leading to lower productivity. As women are the ones who are engaging in agriculture, excluding women from agricultural decision-making, resource allocation and overlooking their specific knowledge and needs results in lower overall productivity, limited uptake of new agricultural practices and technologies, not effectively building resilience and missed economic opportunities (Rodgers, Y., & Akram-Lodhi, 2018). For instance, if the gender gap was closed, the GDP would boost from 67 million in Uganda to 419 million in Rwanda. Similarly in Ethiopia, the GDP could increase by 221 million dollars if crop production increased only by 1,4% (Rodgers & Akram-Lodhi, 2019). This clearly demonstrates why we need to address the oppression and exclusion of women in patriarchal societies, as they are lethal not only in environmental questions but also in all other important areas, such as economics.

Another example is from the disaster risk reduction (DRR) area. There have been several initiatives that firstly did not take women´s experiences and knowledge into account. As women´s vulnerability in climate-related disasters is often different not involving them in decision-making processes, strategies or monitoring processes means not fully understanding the issue. Projects that did not provide sufficient education, resources or support for women struggled and may not influenced women's potential contributions to disaster resilience. The lack of advocacy and awareness of women´s empowerment and gender equality only further multiplied the projects´ shortcomings (Robles & Benavidez, 2020).

For instance, the situation in Bangladesh following the 1991 Cyclone Gorky and the subsequent Cyclone Sidr in 2007 was dramatically different. In 1991 women could not leave their homes or stay in shelters without men and they had to follow traditional dress code even during cyclone all due to social norms. In this situation, gender perspectives and considerations were not included. As women´s vulnerability in climate-related disasters is often different not involving them in decision-making processes, strategies or monitoring processes means not fully understanding the issue. However, later on Bangladesh provided

sufficient education, resources and support for women and therefore it did not struggle that much to positively influence women's potential contributions to disaster resilience. For instance, women were trained as community mobilizers and safe, women-only shelters were created. Initial cyclone-related mortality lowered from 14:1 (women: men) in 1991 to 5:1 (women: men) in 2007 during Cyclone Sidr (Robles & Benavidez, 2020).

Another problematic situation happened in Haiti in 2010, when the initial response to the earthquake encountered major difficulties due to a breakdown in collective security and the prevalence of unsafe shelters. This situation contributed to an epidemic of sexual violence within the camps for displaced people. Not addressing gender issues and sexual and gender-based violence was also a problem in Fiji in 2012 (Robles & Benavidez, 2020).

However, what these projects have in common is that they later on engaged women and that helped them become successful. Some of the reasons were: women´s training as mobilizers and developing women-led warning systems as it was in Bangladesh or developing evacuation plans which are safe for women as it was in Fiji. Women´s groups that advocated for gender inclusivity and women´s role in DRR initiatives in Nepal achieved success when the Kathmandu Declaration on disaster risk management in South Asia was developed. Overall, shifts in those initiatives serve as a demonstration of the importance of integrating gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts to achieve sustainable and inclusive outcomes (Robles & Benavidez, 2020).

Water management is not an exception. Although women are usually the ones who are responsible for water management in the households and usually know the most about how the local water systems work, projects focusing on water management sometimes exclude them from its core which is a reason why women lose interest in active participation in those projects. It is not ignorance nor carelessness of women. As projects do not discuss with women about their time management, needs or insights, women simply do not have the time to take part in those initiatives with their already busy schedules. That was exactly the case in Macina Wells Project in Mali. Women were assigned with tasks such as the well cleaning by authoritative older men, who did not take into consideration women´s busy schedules. Women did not have time or motivation to fulfil these tasks as many of them seemed illogical and impractical to them. They were also excluded from decision-making processes and technical aspects of solutions. The ineffectiveness of initiatives, when men

are the only ones who are deciding and consulting on women's issues related to water needs, transport, and usage, was obvious also in countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, India, Thailand, and Indonesia (Maharaj, Athukorala, Garcia Vargas, & Richardson, 1999).

Similar neglect of considering the specific needs and safety concerns of women in water management, specifically irrigation management, occurred also in the Gardi project. Women farmers were expected to participate in night-time irrigation activities, which were unsafe for them especially if they lacked male members in the family. As the planning was not gender- sensitive it led to challenges and ineffectiveness. Conflicts and challenges also occurred in Pingot irrigation project in Bharuch district, Gujarat. The canal was originally designed for agricultural purposes, specifically to serve the needs of agriculture. However, it neglected water needs of women for domestic and agricultural purposes (women were trying to raise vegetables in this area), therefore it ended up facing challenges and conflicts. Luckily in this case a special government order permitted the use of canal water for homestead lands (Shah, 2002).

Another issue is the privatization of water services. In Cochabamba, Bolivia, and Conakry, Guinea it led to significant challenges for local communities. Privatization led to higher prices, which led to more difficult access to clean water, which resulted in a suspension of water services and the use of contaminated water (Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water, 2006). Both of these cities were under pressure from international institutions to privatize their water systems as a part of broader structural changes. The water supply of Cochabamba was handed over to a private consortium, Aguas del Tunari. After the privatization, the water prices increased dramatically, sometimes by as much as 200%. Of course, the dissatisfaction with the situation led to public protests, which thankfully resulted in the cancelation of the contract with Aguas del Tunari, and control of the water system was returned to the public (Bonnardeaux, 2009). A similar situation happened in Guinea, it was also undress pressures from international financial institutions to improve efficiency and attract foreign investment, which led to the privatization of water services. A French company Saur got a contract to improve water supply, reduce waste, and extend services. The privatization was not successful, it came across many problems, such as poor investment in infrastructure, lack of significant improvement in water distribution or higher prices. As the dissatisfaction grew not only among people but also within the government,

the contract was not renewed and water services returned to public control or other forms of public-private partnerships (Bayliss, 2001).

When women are marginalized their behaviour towards water use can change. That was the case in rural Tanzania, where high-status men tend to over-extract water and deprive others of irrigation water. Therefore, inequitable water distribution led to low-status women struggling with sharing water when it was scarce to secure their needs as the water distribution was already inequitable (Lecoutere, d'Exelle, & Van Campenhout, 2015). A lot of the time these movements have not only environmental but also patriarchal associations, as it was in this case.

These examples illustrate the negative impact of gender biases, exclusion, and lack of gender-sensitive approaches in water resources management projects and demonstrate the need to actively involve women in decision-making processes.

By integrating ecofeminist principles of inclusivity, local knowledge and holistic thinking into grassroots environmental initiatives, women can play a pivotal role in mitigating environmental degradation and fostering sustainable solutions, not only through local-scale projects but also by informing broader environmental policies and practices. Overall, examples shown in this chapter of either successful or failed projects underline why climate change mitigating efforts need women at their cores. Women bring important insights, knowledge and expertise which is crucial for effective land or water management, forestry and other areas. It is due to cultural norms, gender biases, focus on short-term economic benefits, limited access to resources and decision-making power, lack of gender-sensitive planning and implementation, lack of awareness and recognition of women's knowledge that they are many times excluded from mitigating efforts. Mainstream environmentalism with its general solutions must take regional differences, local people's perspectives and other mentioned factors into consideration, otherwise will all initiatives have the same story as the failed projects presented in this chapter.

7. Conclusion

In my thesis, I have demonstrated how and under what circumstances mainstream environmentalism was formed. By showing its historical context it is clear that it was formed in a colonial, patriarchal society and a lot of the time this background reflects into environmentalism practices. Ecofeminism acknowledges environmentalism's shortcomings and addresses multilevel issues from problematic historical and philosophical bases to gender and social injustice that is happening in environmentalism. I have shown how women and nature are connected and yet omitted in climate change solution-seeking. Ecofeminism acknowledges that we are all embodied and embedded in nature, but as I have demonstrated man and women are not embodied and embedded in the same way. Furthermore, women also experience climate change differently and so their experiences and knowledge are unique and many times more accurate. To prove that this is not only theory but reality, I have listed numerous projects that have thrived and succeeded when they have listened to women´s needs, implications and ideas and also numerous initiatives that have failed when they lacked women´s perspectives. Yet it is just a fraction of the reality. Without incorporating women, local people and marginalised groups the mitigating efforts will always be just partial solutions that sometimes even worsen the situation. These implementations are not only important on a regional and local scale but also on a global level, which has a lot to do with how many women are in decision-making, powerful positions. However, that is another big problem, which my thesis´s scale could not include.

As this thesis is based on a literature review, it surely has its shortcomings. I have formed my argument based on the literature I have read and the findings I have found. This literature has been already influenced by authors' personal and professional backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge and many other aspects, while evidence and findings could be influenced by various funding sources and organisations´ interests. Despite these facts, I tried to support my argument by gathering my information from multiple resources and authors to secure its reliability.

The topic of my thesis and similar topics are gaining more and more attention. However, there is still a need for more qualitative and quantitative research in this field, which would work with real women, who survive climate change on a daily basis, and not only national statistics or some general information and convictions. Examples of such

research can be in-depth case studies of women-led environmental movements in specific regions (e.g., developing countries, and indigenous communities). This could provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and successes of these movements in different contexts. Or policy impact analysis, which would research the effectiveness of existing policies that aim to integrate women's perspectives into environmental decision-making. This could help identify best practices and areas for improvement.

Problem is that research is often influenced by gender biases, patriarchal structures and societal norms, which are unfortunately often in favour of men. Ecofeminism works towards a systematic change to create a society where this will no longer be an issue. Ecofeminism envisions a society that embraces ecological wisdom with a deep respect for all life forms, social equality, and a deep respect for the interconnectedness of all living beings to live in harmony with nature. It seeks to challenge dominant paradigms that prioritize profit over people and the planet, advocating for a more sustainable and equitable world for present and future generations (Mellor,1997).

To at least come near this utopic idea we need policies that would allocate specific funds to support women-led environmental initiatives. Another must are programs that would train women to use various sustainable techniques and would provide them with resources, such as land, to develop leadership skills and expertise. This is related to education programs that would raise awareness about the importance of women's participation in environmental solutions. It is important to push for policies that ensure women are incorporated in all levels of decision-making processes and their voices are being heard. Until we create this type of change our solutions to climate change will always be shortsighted and as they will not grasp the whole reality they will never be fully effective.

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