

Global traces of ecofeminism: An exploratory study of grassroots movements in Greece, India, Italy, Lebanon, and Spain

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Abstract: Scientists are largely in agreement that the climate change we are witnessing today has resulted from human activities that escalated significantly following the industrial revolution. However, while this manmade problem is affecting people around the world, its effects are not being felt equally.

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This article was one of the outputs of the project on Ecofeminism that received support from the Global Campus Cross-Regional Alumni-led Initiative (2025).



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Drawing from the ecofeminist theory, the authors explore how the environmental movements and women's struggles for equality are intertwined and how they are both opposed to patriarchal capitalism. The authors examine the ecofeminist practices of local ecofeminists or ecofeminist movements in Greece, India, Italy, Lebanon, and Spain by looking at existing literature and engaging with ecofeminists in each country through one-on-one interviews, and a group discussion. The findings suggest that although ecofeminism is not a common terminology, the idea of human rights being tied to the rights of nature is an innate part of all these regional movements, and has predated the coining of the term. Further, there is a common thread of ecofeminists taking a community-based and collaborative approach towards countering the oppressive forces of patriarchy and capitalism. More recently, there has been an increased uptake of ecofeminist practices by institutions and political parties in Greece, Italy, and Spain. The paper concludes by proposing the need for more systematic research from a comparative perspective to understand how and why ecofeminism as a concept is mobilised (or not) in cross-regional context.

Keywords: ecofeminism; climate change; environmental justice; gender equality; grassroots activism

1. Introduction

The term “ecofeminism” was first coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*. It was based on her belief that the struggles of environmentalism and feminism are not so different, which gave us the term “ecofeminism” (Ranc 2022). At its root, the idea was that the patriarchy is responsible for both environmental harm (through extraction of natural resources for capitalist pursuits) and the subjugation of women.

Over the past three decades, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has drawn on increasing evidence to conclude that “human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land” (Lee et al. 2023, 5). The largest growth of greenhouse gas emissions occurred in carbon dioxide (CO₂) from fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes (Lee et al. 2023, 4). However, even though it is a problem affecting the whole planet, its effects are felt differently based on one's location, and gender (Lee et al. 2023, 6).

The environmental justice movement that emerged in the early 1980s stemmed as a way to protest the racist policies that led to the dumping of toxic waste in poor, majority African-American neighbourhoods (Schlosberg and Collins 2014, 360). This concept shifted the idea that the environment was something detached from daily life. Later, environmental justice was broadened to include climate change and other issues affecting environmental justice, recognising how the impact of climate change

would fall disproportionately on already vulnerable populations due to economic and social inequalities (Schlosberg and Collins 2014, 362). And women often constitute a vulnerable group owing to their biological, as well as socio-economic situation.

Val Plumwood has discussed how ecofeminism has contributed to theorising the links between women's oppression and the domination of nature, by engaging with four forms of exploitations; race, class, gender, and nature (Plumwood 1993, 1). In her book, she endeavours to demonstrate how ecofeminism can be a critical ecological feminism that could be a powerful political tool.

The ecofeminist movement has gone through various developments over the years. In her book *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible* (Ecofeminism for another possible world), the Spanish philosopher Alicia Puleo discusses the evolution of ecofeminism over the years (Puleo 2016). It started with classical or spiritual ecofeminism, which recognised the intimate link between women and nature. However, in the 1980s, this expanded into a multicultural ecofeminism that criticised the western development models and its effects on indigenous populations. This was followed by a period of gendered environmentalism that resulted in the application of environmental and gender perspectives in the international agendas. This period also saw the development of constructivist ecofeminism which looked at the link between women and nature, as something that was sustained by the social construct which formulated a gendered division of labour, the invisibility of care work (which is work that disproportionately falls upon women), and the natural processes of nature. Since the turn of the century, ecofeminists have focussed on the sustainability of life.

Much of the key developments in international policy regarding both gender and environment over the past few decades have been informed by constructivist ecofeminism (Buckingham 2004, 147). This could be seen when the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development included a set of objectives under Chapter 24 titled, "Global Action for women for sustainable development and equitable action" (United Nations 1993, para. 24.1-24.12). Later in 1995, "women and environment" was identified as one of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action 1995 (United Nations 1995, 246-258).

It is against this backdrop that the authors of this paper seek to delve into the diverse ways in which ecofeminist movements have evolved in Greece, Lebanon, India, Italy, and Spain. The paper aims to explore diverse narratives and experiences in order to better understand and unravel the challenges faced in the domains of human rights and environmental justice and how they confront them from an ecofeminist perspective. It tries to ascertain the commonalities between these diverse movements,

and how feminist ideologies contribute to environmental activism, and how environmental concerns play a role in feminist work in these regions.

1.1. Methodology

The paper is an exploratory study, drawing from a project on ecofeminism that the authors worked on. The authors – based in five different countries – have sought to highlight the history of ecofeminist movements in each country where they are based: Greece, Lebanon, India, Italy, and Spain. This has included an initial literature review of the history of movements that combine women's rights and ecology. Further, each author reached out to grassroots ecofeminist activists and movements in their respective countries for interviews. In the case of Greece, this resulted in a focus group discussion. In others, one-on-one interviews were conducted. The participants in these countries included scholars, activists, journalists, and politicians.

1.1.1. Focus group discussion

In Greece, the author held a focus group discussion with 11 participants, which included members associated with the Mouries Collective, Vrysoules, Kyklos (an ecofeminist queer group), EU Climate Pact, Agriouloudes-Wildflowers, and independent practitioners and researchers.

1.1.2. Interviews

In Lebanon, the author interviewed Nagham Khalil, an ecofeminist researcher from the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Jibal, who specialises in rural community development. In India, two interviews were conducted with Chinmaya Shah and Geeta Bisht (a local community member) of INHERE, an environmental NGO in the Himalayan region of Uttarakhand. In Italy, the author interviewed Barbara Tiberi from Berta Laboratoria and Monica Lanfranco, the director of the Journal Marea. In Spain, an interview was conducted with Dalila Argueta, an ecofeminist from Honduras, who now works with other environmental defenders living in exile.

The objective of the interviews and group discussion was broadly to understand the participants' responses to the following set of questions –

The ambit of their work;

- 1) How they understand or conceptualise ecofeminism; and
- 2) Their message, goal, hope for the future.

The researchers conducted the interviews to find the answers to the above-mentioned questions. The literature review and the interactions with local ecofeminists are shared in their respective sections below.

1.2. Scope and limitation

The project was an exploratory study of grassroots ecofeminist activists and movements in the authors' countries, and involved working in different countries with a diversity of ecofeminist movements. As a result, the interactions with the ecofeminist activists did not always follow a uniform pattern. They were conducted in a narrative interview format (Kartch 2017), which was often in the regional language.

This also meant that the interviewers did not exclusively stick to the common set of questions and the focus was more on capturing the lived experience of these regional figures working at the intersection of feminist and ecological rights.

Further, while approaching individuals for an interview, importance was placed on reaching out to local ecofeminist organisations or activists, which limited the extent to which this represented ecofeminist movements in the country as a whole. To some extent, the authors have tried to address this limitation through literature review of the history and development of ecofeminist movements in the country.

As an exploratory study, this research would not result in a thorough comparison. However, the authors hope to highlight some of our findings from this collective exercise, and engage in a discussion that considers the commonalities between these movements. This is addressed further following the analysis of ecofeminist movements in specific countries.

2. Ecofeminism in Greece

Eliana Otta, who is part of the Mouries Collective, envisions an imaginary ecofeminist world where “no technological development would happen until everyone would have guaranteed access to the minimum required resources to exist. Food would be grown in small, non-monoculture crop farms, following traditional and local-based solutions of agroecology, leadership would be organised through the ‘ruling by obeying’ Zapatista motto, and communities would be understood as embodied, felt, sensorial, micro expressions of the cosmos which allows humans to exist.”

To her, ecofeminist resistance in this context would mean “to understand the entanglements between body and territory and that whatever happens to one happens to the other, and to find collective, feminist ways to act accordingly, from a non-anthropocentric perspective” while “attempting to create situations where people can share vulnerability and intimacy, while creating bridges between worlds usually represented as opposed; theory-effect, body-mind, art-activism, politics-spirituality, indigenous-western, rural-urban, nature-culture.”

Notwithstanding the early traces of feminism found in the late nineteenth century and the different development stages of the feminist movements thereafter, it was only during the last few decades that feminists and gender politics grew strong in Greece, even as they made great strides. However, ecofeminist narratives and their diffusion in public discourse is very recent, still sporadic, and without established pathways of expression. Ecofeminism, whether outspoken or just as a lived experience, is mostly promoted by women activists from within the wider environmental movement and women of various origins who still honour and connect to traditional cultural practices. Respect for nature and collective care practices appear to be a common denominator in all their work.

As local environmental struggles give rise to local resistance, cases of women residing or originating from the mountainous areas of central Greece, engaging in self-organisation against big extraction companies gave birth to stories of true resistance and inspiration. Vrysoules, a group of women mostly coming from the periphery of Ioannina have formed an activist group that through traditional dancing and singing would take action and speak out against oil industries and specific extraction activities in their area, engaging in targeted cultural actions at point zero of extraction sites or in front of decision-making public offices. The intergenerational group has sung and danced for the salvation of the Greek mountains and waters. While the group as a whole has halted their activity in 2023, individual members remain active and engaged in various other environmental protection actions.

In the urban setting of the city of Athens, the ecofeminist group Mouries Collective has been active since May 2021. The preservation and honouring of ancestral and traditional practices like “coffee reading” and “mourning rituals,” along with the wish for a fusion of cultural activities with nature, are elements that initially brought the members of the collective together. Their exchanges allowed for an ongoing creative process through which different types of actions are envisioned, implemented, and supported. Activities that bring the city people closer to the nature that surrounds them by supporting somatic and experiential workshops are elevated in their work. The group members place a focus on ecofeminist reading circles, historical walks to green areas, rivers and other neglected elements of urban nature, cultural activities interlinked with the more than human.

“Care, reciprocity, and the flourishing of all beings, not just humans” is central in the fight for collective liberation according to ecofeminist Maria Juliana Byck. She is a social practice artist and a member of Mouries Collective, who envisions a shifting focus on “slowness, for deep listening, and for practices that nourish rather than consume... leadership that would be emergent and relational, not individualistic or hierarchical. It would rotate, it would listen, it would pause. And community would mean more than just human community, it would include trees, watersheds, animals,

spirits, ancestors. Community would be about mutual thriving, about holding grief and joy collectively, about moving at the speed of trust.”

Political initiatives that centre ecofeminism in their strategy and action plans may be rare but enthusiastic exceptions started to emerge in Greek politics soon after the pandemic. Stemming from the aspirations of the younger generation involved in the local green/queer politics and the field of human rights, *Kyklos – Ecofeminist Quinima* was born in May 2023 based on the values of direct democracy, respect for diversity, and care. The initiative was an effort to establish ecofeminism within an institutional setting. The group mainly focussed on the dissemination of their message with the aim to attract new members and form a political party that would run for national elections. Lack of extensive outreach, public engagement, and time limitations imposed on core members have rendered the initiative inactive. Nevertheless, individual members have been organising in various other forms – through civil society groups, think tanks and movements – and continue on the ecofeminist exchange.

Ecofeminist literature in the local language is scarce and the texts available are mostly translations of foreign literature. On the other hand, there is an increasing number of Greek female researchers and scholars that focus on the topic of ecofeminism, demonstrating a higher level of interest and engagement in academia.

Quite importantly, the ecofeminist discourse is being enhanced through various other practices, wide in terms of actors who are implementing them and their respective localities. Discussions and activities focussed on the politics of care, traditional weaving, and plant wisdom, have been centralising exchanges around the status of women within and beyond the domestic space and in relation to the environment, without calling their work ecofeminist. The climate justice grassroots movement showcases an increasing interest in holding space for ecofeminist perspectives and climate emotion workshops that underscores somatic expressions for release and connection.

The increasing environmental disasters (wildfires, floods) that disproportionately affect women and children in all circumstances and the traditional societal pressure in a deeply patriarchal society, such as Greece, demand an immediate and intensified ecofeminist resistance.

3. Ecofeminism in India

Historically, there has been a strong relationship between gender and environment in India, as reflected in the resistance of Bishnoi women in the eighteenth century and the following Chipko movement in the 1970s (Somokanta 2024), where women gathered to save trees – an image etched in our collective memory worldwide. However, the Chipko movement is

beyond the universal essentialist view of women saving the trees/nature, instead it is a representation of the act of “reclamation” (Moore 2011) where women fight for the trees that belong to their land. Women assert that they have the right to their natural resources against commercial deforestation controlled by “outsiders.”

Vandana Shiva, one of the world renowned figures on ecofeminism and the creator of India’s first seed bank, argues how contemporary globalisation and consumerism has undermined women’s traditional ecological knowledge through intellectual property regimes. She highlights the example of biopiracy¹ where the United States Department of Agriculture and the company W. R. Grace obtained a patent from the European Patent Office for the use of neem as a pesticide, despite its long-standing use in India for over 2,000 years (Shiva 2008, 16). Later, this patent was eventually revoked after a decade-long legal challenge supported by large-scale mobilisation.

Ecofeminism is not a commonly used term in India. However, feminist ideology guides many ecological interventions. One of them is the Seed Bank initiative in the Himalayan region focussed on preserving indigenous seeds that have been a part of local traditions. It is believed that by spreading awareness about the local seeds, they are spreading generational knowledge that mostly belonged to elderly women. These seeds are not just a cultural asset but also have health benefits. While the capitalist approach is imposing certain types of food on everyone, this initiative aims to preserve local agricultural diversity as well. The initiative started with preserving 22 variations of dal from the region and now has managed to preserve 64 varieties, encouraging the farmers to grow local, which also contributes to regenerative practices and reduction in transportation emissions.

Another intervention involves women mobilising in remote villages – in areas outside the reach of government interventions – for economic growth by encouraging entrepreneurship. In this case, the farmers are provided with basic machines to grind their own spices and sell the final products themselves, instead of being dependent on middlemen. Through this approach, they exercise their agency over their own yield and save time.

In the interview with Chinmaya Shaha and Geeta Bisht from INHERE, they were asked what ecofeminism means for the local ecofeminist community in Uttaranchal. Their response centred around the philosophy of spiritual ecology, layered with the assertion of agency as an indigenous community of Uttarakhand over their ancestral land, which historically

1 Biopiracy can be defined as unethical and illegal collection of indigenous plants by corporations who patent them for their own use.

served as a space for sustaining community ties, and aiding economic independence. While promoting ecological and economic well-being, they are aware that there is a long way to go in transforming gender relations, as women are more occupied at the farms and men go to the cities for jobs. Here, the women in the community aspire to strike a balance in economic aspirations with their male counterparts, even as they work to carry forward their legacy to future generations. This could be done through ideating business ideas that repackage old traditions in modern forms. An example of this would be the use of tulsi (holy basil) and lemongrass to prevent crops from being destroyed by animals like monkeys. Similarly, the use of *Rhododendron* flowers native to the Himalayan region to make juice and tea called Buransh.

The reason for the increased focus on eco-entrepreneurship is because women form the majority of the informal workforce here. This is primarily concentrated in the agricultural sector. Therefore, focussing on entrepreneurship helps them formalise their labour, while continuing traditional conservation practices. Geeta Bisht observed that the traditional link that the community members felt towards the forest have eroded in recent times. Earlier, communities used to contribute to forest conservation by helping to extinguish forest fires. However, this bond has suffered under the capitalist extractive economic system. The effort to rekindle this bond represents ecofeminism in the Himalayan context.

In rural contexts, many women already practice a circular economy where their homes, farmlands, and livestock constitute one self-sustained unit. During the course of the interview, it becomes clear that their ecofeminism is not based on the idea that women are inherently closer to nature because of their biology. Instead, the women's overrepresentation in conservation efforts is critically analysed. The intersectional realities of a post-colonial and patriarchal society, that harbour inequality in land rights and everyday gendered responsibilities are acknowledged. Thus, ecofeminism allows us to look at environmental conservation from the lens of justice and equality. Therefore, the local communities aim to ensure that conservation efforts do not reinforce existing social hierarchies, or come at the cost of women's economic independence.

4. Ecofeminism in Italy

Ecofeminism is a recognised political and theoretical framework within the Italian context. It is not uncommon for women who were active in the feminist movements of the 1970s, as well as members of a younger generation engaged in environmental and gender issues, to identify themselves as ecofeminists or ecotrans*feminists.

Nevertheless, despite the diversity of experiences that have emerged and dissipated over the decades, and the abundance of theoretical

contributions, there appears to be neither a consolidated network nor widespread public recognition of the movement as such.

On the one hand, within the realm of feminist associations and collectives, a 2023 report on the Italian feminist movement notes that only a small portion of groups (1 percent of the surveyed sample) are engaged in ecological and climate-related issues, primarily at the local level (Semia 2023). Although environmental and climate concerns are not central to most feminist activities, they play a significant role in shaping relations within the territories and in enhancing the groups' capacity for action. Some feminist collectives value the ecofeminist approach for its intersectional potential, seeing it as a tool for a structural and systemic critique. Consequently, feminist groups are often embedded within local environmental networks and collaborate with more explicitly ecological organisations.

On the other hand, within the domain of environmental activism, several associations, collectives, or initiatives could be described as ecofeminist, even if they do not explicitly adopt the label.

From a political standpoint, as highlighted in *Ecofeminism in Italy* (Marcomin and Cima 2017), the recognition of the intersection between gender and environmental struggles began in 1985, following the formation of the first Green Party electoral lists, and intersected with the anti-nuclear and pacifist movements. Theoretical and practical contributions grounded in ecofeminist approach emerged through various channels, including seminars, workshops, conferences, and dedicated online platforms. Numerous articles authored by Italian women scientists, politicians, academics, and others were published in the feminist journal *Marea*, which has featured several thematic issues devoted to ecofeminist discourse.

As Monica Lanfranco (Director of the journal *Marea*, journalist, and feminist) has articulated:

“What convinces me in the connection between feminism and ecology is the strong interweaving of thought and practice, being and doing, ideals and concreteness. There is nothing less virtual: feminist and ecological politics are rooted in and derive meaning from the body: its needs, desires, but also its limits and boundaries.”

According to Lanfranco, one notable moment of female leadership in territorial environmental struggles occurred during the 2007 protest against the expansion of the United States military base in Vicenza, known as the “NO Dal Molin” movement. In that context, women reflected on their roles, the specificity of their approaches – non-violent and more creative – and their collective power as a network.

In Italy, it is also possible to find an ecofeminist approach even in the local institutional sphere, as is the case of the City of Bergamo, which hosts a “Women Council”: a space for debate, participation, and proposals to envision a local government more inclusive and aware of gender and ecological issues, focusing on the concept of “care”, in the management of the city. (The work of the Women Council, including its programmatic proposals for 2024–29 is published in Italian at ‘Consiglio delle Donne | Sportello Telematico – Comune di Bergamo’ Municipality of Bergamo n.d.).

Turning to a more recent grassroots initiative rooted in the “Fridays for Future” mobilisations and the broader eco-activist scene in Rome, this analysis focuses on a significant experiment that took place in 2022. That year, a collective named after the Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceres (who was murdered in 2016), launched an innovative eco-transfeminist action characterised by civil disobedience and resistance within the urban context.

The Berta Cáceres Laboratorio emerged from a wider network known as ecosystemic: a cross-sectoral coalition of various activists and organisations – such as Extinction Rebellion and Non Una di Meno – active in environmental and social struggles across Rome and its surrounding areas. Within this network, a diverse group of individuals across gender identities, generations, and backgrounds collectively decided to occupy an abandoned public building near Caffarella Park and Appia Antica Regional Park in Rome. As one activist stated, “Berta immediately became a way to embody our ideas in a concrete experience.”

The occupation began in March 2022, with its most active phase occurring between May and July, before being forcibly evicted by the police on 5 July 2022. Despite its premature end, the intergenerational experiment left a significant mark on those involved. Without access to public electricity or water, the occupants installed solar panels and developed systems for food and water recovery. The experiment gave rise to “Taberta” (a portmanteau of Taverna and Berta), a space offering an anti-speciesist vegan menu designed to support the occupation and foster the trans*feminist project. Berta Laboratorio hosted daily meetings, workshops, and events, and was frequented by citizens, associations, and activists who contributed to and participated in an ongoing, intersectional project open to collective input and transformation, till it lasted.

5. Ecofeminism in Lebanon

While the genocide in Gaza committed by Israel since 7 October 2023 continued for more than two years, a much less visible attack on the ecosystem and environment – both in the occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon – has been happening on a daily basis.

The environmental degradation that has resulted from Israel's military activities is estimated to have resulted in emissions greater than that of the annual emissions of 36 individual countries (Neimark et al. 2025). The pattern of uprooting olive trees and conducting white phosphorus strikes on land that provides for the livelihood of many people is another strategy for the coloniser to make life unliveable on the land that they want to colonise. According to Environmentalists against War, within a year of the Israeli operation, more than 100 square kilometres of Lebanese land had been burned (Walsh et al. 2024).

Lebanon's socio-economic situation today has been exacerbated by the environmental degradation due to the geopolitical situation of the region, the multi-layered crisis, and the corruption in the political system. Both floods, prolonged droughts, as well as forest fires and food and water insecurities increase the vulnerability of the people, and their livelihoods, who are exposed to the effects of occupation, geopolitical conflict and neoliberal developments in the region (Daou and Kobaissy 2022).

Naghham Khalil *نغهم خليل*, is part of the Jibal NGO team – a Lebanese NGO founded in 2017 that promotes and advances social and environmental justice. Her research will provide a glimpse of ecofeminism from the perspective of Bedouin communities in the Lebanese Beqaa valley. Nagham, who holds a Master's degree in landscape ecosystem management and specialised in rural community development, has done participatory research on identity with women in the Bedouin community who work on the land. She describes ecofeminism as a framework through which we can perceive reality, notably through acknowledging the intersection of environmental justice and social justice. Consequently, she sees the agricultural lifestyle of the Bedouins as an instance of ecofeminism, as they used to live between the Arabian Peninsula and the mountainous areas of Lebanon and Syria (which was called Mount Lebanon before the French and British colonised the "Middle-East"), to adapt to the climate and its effects on the environment:

"When the Bedouin women used to have a nomadic lifestyle, they had a strong relationship to the land and to the climate. In periods where it would be too hot in the Arabian Peninsula, they would move to mount Lebanon where the climate was more moderate. The Bedouin communities did not expect the climate to adapt to them, instead they adapted to the climate."

It was only under the French mandate that these Bedouin communities started settling, despite not being granted citizenship rights. Therefore, they were marginalised, as they were not granted full access to society. Living opposed to their philosophy of "the land is for everyone," they were oppressed into borders, and women became absent subjects in their community, while they used to be the centre of their communities as nomads. As Nagham says, "this oppression of women came in parallel with the oppression of the environment. When borders were drawn between

the lands, women started to be more oppressed and natural resources degraded and abused.” Land ownership introduced the capitalisation of the land, instead of treating it as a common resource.

Nagham explores a solution, an approach to tackle environmental justice challenges through a participatory method, the photovoice method. This method allows research subjects to actively participate in the research, and thereby have a transformational effect on their communities. It is an approach that does not “harvest” data from subjects, but creates it together with them, and is therefore an ecofeminist approach to research itself, attempting to avoid biases as much as possible and collectively growing insights in complex phenomena such as “identity.” The participants were asked by Nagham to take pictures of how they perceive their identity as Lebanese Bedouin women who cultivate the land. The pictures are a tool for conversation and for advocacy towards political and social actors, giving a voice to the most vulnerable. The research taught Nagham, as the researcher but also as a woman, that Bedouin women approach their work and life through an ecofeminist perspective without labelling it in that sense.

This lack of labelling contemporary daily struggles as ecofeminist struggles is in line with the experience of other researchers who interviewed feminists in the MENA region: “[w]hile eco-feminism is perceived as a new paradigm in MENA, local struggles led by women and men over rights to land, water, health, housing, livelihoods and overall ecology, are decades long” (Daou and Kobaisy 2022, 24).

Labelling these struggles as instances of ecofeminism has the advantage of connecting other ecofeminists from different areas and regions, to grow the movement of ecofeminism, and to raise awareness for the inequalities that are intrinsically part of the effects of capitalism and climate change on women. This would provide new tools to advocate for environmental and social justice in a context of the climate crisis that affects the MENA region disproportionately.

6. Ecofeminism in Spain

Ecofeminism as a concept had found cultural expression in Spain even before the term was officially coined in 1974. We see this in the book *El metal de los muertos* (The Metal of the Dead) (1920) by Concha Espina and also in the play *Mineros, 1932-37* (Miners) by Carmen Conde and María Cegarra. These literary works took a critical look at the extractive activities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Southern Spain and represented the suffering of humans and the earth from the mining activities in the region (García-Caro 2023, 159). They depicted women in active roles in these narratives. Further, these female authors took a critical view of the capitalist patriarchy as a destructive force that needed to be resisted.

In Spain today, the green party and various organisations are centring their work in an ecofeminist framework that draws on constructive ecofeminist principles (Grundell and Campillo 2017). Parties such as EQUO (which is a part of the electoral coalition of the current coalition government in Spain) have then taken it a step further and created a space for reflections about ecofeminism. These have brought other feminist networks to participate in these discussions about infinite economic growth, relying on the ecofeminist writings of Petra Kelly, Alicia Puleo, Yayo Herrero, and Karen Warren.

In her book titled *Ecofeminismos – La sostenibilidad de la vida (Ecofeminism – The Sustainability of Life)*, Yayo Herrero describes the ecofeminist movement as one that critically analyses the belief systems that perpetuate the ecocidal, violent, racist, and colonial actions and undermines the risks this poses to people and the world (Herrero and Gago 2023, 19–20). The movement also looks to suggest alternate lifestyles that are not in conflict with life on the planet. It acknowledges the plurality and diverse forms of the ecofeminist movement. And also recognises that it might be named differently, depending on culture and context in which it emerged.

The website of the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge of the Government of Spain provides a wealth of resources, including an online course on ecofeminism. Further, the confederation of environmental groups that came together as “Ecologistas en Accion” and identify as being “ecofeministas,” and recognise the disproportionate role that women play in society towards care work (‘Ideological Principles • Ecologists in Action’ n.d.).

Dalila Argueta is an ecofeminist based in the Basque Country. The first time someone asked her if she were an ecofeminist, she did not understand what the term stood for. But once they explained the term, she realised that she had been one all her life. Hailing from Guapinol in Honduras, Dalila firmly believes that the defence of her community land is intricately linked to the rights of the people who live there, as everything that sustains humans comes from the earth.

In Guapinol, the Honduran Government gave her community’s land away for an iron mining project. Since 2017, environmental defenders have been subject to persecution and intimidation by the military and the police. More than 35 families including Dalila’s have been living in exile since 2019. However, those who stayed behind have faced the brunt of the situation, with eight of her colleagues being assassinated, and eight others being imprisoned for two and a half years.

However, Dalila noted that women in her community had been more responsive to the call for the defence of their land. She observed that this could be due to the gendered roles that women play in society, often starting with care work right from their childhood. But she also pointed

to the similarity in the way earth was referred to as a feminine body that creates and sustains life.

As she continues her work in activism in Spain, she also tries to spread awareness about this within the society in Europe, about the consequences of the current extractivist practices and the need to move towards a way of life that does not require the sacrifice of ecosystems in other far away countries. In the Basque Country, Dalila joined the Basoa project as a way to create a safe space and a space of rest for other environmental defenders like her (Patterson 2022).

When asked about her message for others, Dalila responded noting the need to look within ourselves, about how we cannot work to protect the world outside, without understanding how to take care of one's own land, their being and their rights. And we needed to find a way to do this without harming other people.

7. Findings

This section synthesises the main findings from each country that would help discuss the commonalities among the grassroot movements in the five countries.

7.1. Greece

While ecofeminist narratives have been relatively recent in Greece, these have been mostly promoted by women from environmental movements. Ideas of respect for nature and collective care practices are at the core of the work of these activists, and they emphasise the need to move at the speed of trust. Thus, ecofeminism has found expression as a political tool.

The movements in Greece have come together to work in a collaborative way and revive traditional practices and find ways to keep this alive in today's generation with activities like nature walking, coffee reading, and mourning rituals. These activities also have the effect of bringing city people closer to nature. Activities like traditional dancing and singing have been used by activists as a way to help bring the community together to resist extractive activities by capitalist enterprises.

There have also been emerging political movements (like Kyklos) that centre ecofeminism in their strategy and action plans. And although literature in the local language is scarce, it is an emerging field of interest among female researchers.

7.2. India

There has been a strong relationship between gender and the environment in India spanning centuries. It was also about women asserting their

rights over the natural resources that stood in their ancestral land, against commercial deforestation by “outsiders.”

Although ecofeminism is not a commonly used term, it drives many ecological interventions including the Seed Bank initiative that works to preserve indigenous seeds, which is also a way of passing down traditional knowledge that is held by the women in the society. In the current context, where big corporations have tried to patent seeds to increase their profits, this ecofeminist practice becomes a way to mount an opposition to the capitalist system, while also ensuring biodiversity.

Another intervention is that of encouraging entrepreneurship among women, which helps them exercise agency over their produce. Ecofeminism in this context helps women come out of the invisible workforce to cultivate and gather these products on the farm, and to formalise their role in the economy while empowering them. It also becomes a means to assert their agency over ancestral land, and rekindle the ties that community traditionally had with the forest, which has become strained in the extractive capitalist economic system.

7.3. *Italy*

Ecofeminism is a recognised political and theoretical framework, especially among feminist movements from the 1970s. However, only about 1 percent of the Italian feminist movements are primarily engaged in ecological and climate-related issues. Some feminist collectives value the ecofeminist approach for its intersectional potential to highlight both environmental and social injustice. They see ecofeminism as a tool for structural and systemic critique.

The ecofeminist approach has been incorporated in the local institutional sphere, such as the City of Bergamo (which hosts a Women Council); and among other grassroots movements. The experience of Berta Cáceres Laboratoria seems to represent a grassroots experiment of the ecofeminist approach in practice, within the context of a broad network of local environmental activism.

Thus, ecofeminism shows more uptake in the academic and political circles in Italy, which has gradually led to its incorporation at the local institutional level.

7.4. *Lebanon*

Analysing the experience of women from Bedouin communities from an ecofeminist perspective helps us see the intersections between environmental justice and social justice. Their traditional nomadic lifestyle was one that had adapted to the climate and its effect on the environment.

Although colonialism compelled them to settle, these communities became oppressed within their societies as a result. Further, women's position within their communities was relegated to the sidelines. Borders, land ownership and capitalisation not only resulted in the degradation of the land, but also in the oppression of the women in society.

Further, the research by Nagham using an ecofeminist approach also demonstrates how it could help centre the voices of the marginalised and empower them in the process.

7.5. *Spain*

In the early twentieth century Spain, feminist authors and playwrights were already looking at the extractive activities of that period through their art, highlighting the suffering these activities caused both to humans and the earth. Thus, the early ecofeminists in Spain were using this framework, long before it was conceptualised by scholars.

Today, many political and environmental organisations are centring their work in the ecofeminist framework. This includes the political party EQUO, and environmental movements such as Ecologistas en Accion, who adopt ecofeminist principles. This indicates an internalisation of ecofeminist practices within political and environmental groups.

Prominent ecofeminist activists look at it as a tool to critically analyse the harm caused by capitalism, while advocating for a collaborative approach by emphasising on the need to ensure the sustainability of life on the planet.

8. Discussion

While the nature of the research might prohibit a thorough comparison between the five regions in the study, the authors have found certain commonalities between grassroot ecofeminist movements in these regions. This section would elaborate on our general observations regarding the commonalities in these five countries.

8.1. *The use of the term “ecofeminism”*

One of the initial points that come through from our project is that although “ecofeminism” is not a common terminology, the ideas of human rights being tied to the rights of nature is an innate part of all these regional movements. This could be the general idea of “respect for nature” or the more indigenous way of life that was intricately linked to nature itself.

While the term “ecofeminism” might be a relatively recent term, the practices and ideas noted in most countries including Greece, Lebanon, and India (and the experiences documented about Honduras by the

ecofeminist in Spain) demonstrate that many practices that we identify with ecofeminism like the respect for nature and the practice of care, predate the conception of the term in Western academic sphere.

Nevertheless, the lack of a common terminology might also limit the literature ecofeminists can access on the topic, as well as restrict the contribution of those from other parts of the world, towards the evolution of a movement that is largely seen to have Western roots.

8.2. *Ecocentrism*

Further, in regions like Lebanon, India and Honduras, we see a general way of life that has been more ecocentric. Religious and cultural practices in these countries have traditionally placed life and nature at the centre. This stands in stark opposition to the pursuit of infinite economic growth on a finite planet that western capitalism promotes.

Moreover, the interviews also point to a disruption of this way of life. This could be attributed to colonialism in the context of countries like India, Lebanon and Honduras. However, a similar disconnect is also observed as a result of capitalism and urbanisation in countries like Greece, Italy, and Spain. The capitalist colonial project looks at nature as a resource that can be extracted for the benefit of a few, to the detriment of the rights of the people living in these resource-rich regions.

8.3. *Essentialism v. constructivism*

Early proponents of ecofeminism were criticised for its essentialist perspective. This criticism stemmed from the fact that they attributed the link between the similarities of oppression of nature and women to biology.

In contrast, most of our interviewees conceived ecofeminism from a more constructivist perspective, which looked at the social roles of women that results in their oppression within the patriarchal society.

This could also be indicative of the fact that, ecofeminism at its core – no matter what term is used to describe it – was always more complex than the early critics perceived it, when they criticised it for being essentialist.

Moreover, as observed in the findings from all five countries, the ecofeminist approach has helped to demonstrate how the environmental justice and social justice movements intersect, as they are both trying to counter the injustices wrought by the same systems.

8.4. *Ecofeminism in politics*

Ecofeminism's response to the hyperindividualism in today's capitalistic society is to come together in solidarity and engage in community-based approaches and collaborative practices. This is seen in the movements countering extractive corporations in Greece or Italy, the seed banks initiative in India or centring the voice of the women within the Bedouin communities.

Within the European context, the countries have seen the emergence of the green party and the formulation of their principles that are rooted in ideas of ecofeminism. This, to some degree, has shown the incorporation of ecofeminist practices within government institutions, such as the local institution in Bergamo, Italy and the resources on ecofeminism in the Spanish Ministry's website.

This political expression of the movement in the West is an encouraging starting point, which could help ensure that ecofeminist principles would find expression in our national policies regarding sustainable development and our response to the climate change crisis. Thereby, bringing to fruition Val Plumwood's promise of ecofeminism proving to be a powerful political tool as a basis for a connected and co-operative political practice for liberation movements.

9. Way forward

While this paper was limited in its scope due to its exploratory nature, it still manages to highlight some of the key similarities among grassroots movements in countries spanning three continents. In the process, it reveals the areas of comparisons that emerge from the interviews and the group discussion. A more systematic comparative study of movements across these countries and in different countries of the world is required to draw broader conclusions.

Nevertheless, this study does point to an innate understanding among ecofeminists, across different parts of the world and different backgrounds, of the problems wrought by the patriarchal capitalistic world we inhabit today that oppresses both women and nature. The ecofeminist approach also provides an analytical framework through which we can study these intersectional concerns of environmental justice and social justice. Lastly, ecofeminist responses to the current situation calls for recentring our focus towards sustainability of life itself, and values the practice of care. Therefore, future comparative research on this topic would help build on these findings.

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