

Women and Green Economy: Saving Future Planet or Embedded Gender Inequality?

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ABSTRACT

In the past decades, the idea of a green economy has arisen in response to environmental issues worldwide and institutionalized in the SDGs conception. The global pattern is that the green economy emerged from the grass-roots initiative, mainly driven by women. It is intriguing how the industry that could potentially save the future of the planet is driven by women who mostly face structural and cultural barriers in participating in the economic process. This paper is aimed to investigate the matters by focusing on under what condition the dominant actors of the green economy initiative in a female-dominated field. We pinpoint the reality of Surabaya's green economy as the primary case study. Surabaya, the capital city of East Java, Indonesia, is no different from the rest. The green economy initiative is most driven by grassroots in the form of small-medium enterprises, and it is a female-dominated field. Having employed the gender analysis in the process, we argue that the green economy is perceived as "less-economical," and the business model generates less income than the conventional. Thus, the dominant narrative is that women are suitable to participate since the wage earner is widely associated with masculinity and men. It potentially creates another layer of discrimination against women in general.

Keywords: *Green Economy, Women, Surabaya, Gender Relations*

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a worldwide goal to act together to maintain the earth's condition and its nature. This goal has three pillars, and there are economic, social, and environmental. However, throughout the journey of this sustainable development effort, there are still no results that meet expectations in efforts to eradicate poverty, reduce disparities in living standards, consumption and production patterns that are in harmony with the carrying capacity of ecosystems, sustainable management of renewable resources and agree to achieve sustainability of renewable resources. Therefore, the green economy concept was created to increase human welfare without causing environmental impacts or social inequalities.

Implementing the Green Economy in Indonesia has the concept of efficiency in resource utilization, poverty alleviation efforts, internalizing environmental costs, providing adequate employment opportunities, and ensuring sustainable economic growth. In principle, the green economy in Indonesia focuses on efforts to minimize environmental damage and economic development following the environment's carrying capacity. Green Economy is one of the efforts to solve climate problems which has various impacts and benefits for society because it can significantly support the transition towards sustainable production and consumption patterns. Green economic practices emphasize long-term planning because applying this economy can reduce carbon dioxide emissions, ecosystem degradation, and structural problems such as poverty (Musango et al., 2014).

Gender inequality in sustainable development policies or programs is often a

neglected role of women in a green economy on an international scale. This issue exacerbates existing inequalities as we tackle economic and climate issues. So to eliminate the role gap between genders, a gender equality perspective is needed in environmental policies at every level. One way is by encouraging women's participation in the green economy. As the move to a green economy will create a massive demand for skilled workers, it must be ensured that all women have equal access to the relevant sectors and emphasize the importance of green jobs for women as a step towards a sustainable economy.

Women play an essential role in the transition and implementation of the green economy because green economy campaigns started from the smallest sphere, namely the family. Such as, we can use environmentally friendly goods, manage our household waste mindfully, not use plastic-based containers, and recycle waste that is still appropriate. Then individual women will transmit the concept of the green economy to the surrounding environment, which will become a community and have great potential to apply the green economy massively, both as producers and consumers. In developing a green economy, women can create handicrafts from recycled materials such as ornaments, bags, shoes, and many more. Empowering women is very important in developing the green economy concept in Indonesia. This ensures that the community feels the benefits because the long-term impact increases household income, quality of nutrition, education, and health. With the green economy concept, a series of production processes to the final product can provide sustainable benefits for economic resilience and ecosystem balance.

The green economy in Surabaya has experienced rapid development since the implementation of international cooperation between the City Government of Surabaya and the City of Kitakyushu, Japan. This transition has successfully transferred the green economy concept to providing green infrastructure and the social community. This community is not only limited to social aspects but also extends to business aspects in the form of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). In addition, the Surabaya City Government also pays full attention to small and medium businesses that run businesses in environmentally friendly fields. According to the point of view of the concept of gender, if there is an area that is essential for the interests of many people in the public sector, then the dominating majority is male. However, in the green economy aspect of the community in Surabaya, it is women who dominate and initiate it, even though women are considered to have structural and cultural barriers. For this reason, this research was written to answer whether green economic activities dominated by women create a new layer of gender inequality or not.

MATERIAL THEORY RESEARCH

A. The Scope of a Green Economy

Green politics originated from a social movement concerned with the environment and protection against threats to humans, according to environmentalists (Boyd & Harrison, 2018). This concern arises at a time when industrialization is happening so massively, and the awareness that this change is bringing the world more and more filled with pollution that threatens human life. Another research also explained that *a green economy* is an economic concept with different implications from

the economy in general because it prioritizes the future of natural resources, environmental welfare, and reducing the risk of using natural resources (Loiseau et al., 2016). An example is cassava-based plastic, which is more easily decomposing and has a better environmental impact. Practice green *economy* is an economic practice that emphasizes long-term plans because this economic practice can reduce poverty, carbon dioxide emissions, and ecosystem degradation (Musango et al., 2014). In their book entitled Introduction to International Relations, Jackson & Sorensen (1999) argues that Green Politics appeared to criticize the views of liberalism and saw real issues during the cold war, which resulted in excessive environmental damage.

The development of a 'green' economy affects the development of society. The 'green' economic philosophy is aimed at improving the population's welfare due to environmental conservation and rational use of natural resources. The 'green' economy is an environmental philosophy (Ehresman & Okereke, 2014). As one of the components of sustainable development, the 'green' economy influences the provision of justice and social responsibility, reducing social inequalities and stratification of society and equitable access to limited natural resources. A 'green' economy in the social aspect is directly related to social areas such as health care, ensuring a high quality of life, education system, and population awareness. The social dimension in the green economy is divided into 2: human and employment.

Within humans' scope, we can recognize the terms women and men. Generally, women are imaged or self-imaged as emotional creatures, easily give up (submissive), passive, subjective, weak in mathematics, easily influenced, physically weak, and have a low sex drive. Meanwhile, men are imaged and self-imaged as rational, logical, independent, aggressive, competitive, objective, adventurous, active, and have a strong physical and sexual drive. As a result, women are stereotyped as imperfect creatures (the second class) and insignificant creatures (subordinate), so they are always marginalized (marginalization) and exploited. Their position is to only deal with domestic and household issues. However, women still do not have full sovereignty because men in patriarchal cultural conditions control them, so they often face acts of physical, sexual, and economic violence and harassment. Therefore women often get discrimination in every job they have. Female workers often look weaker and less productive, so they often get lower wages, no opportunities for further development, and an uncomfortable working environment.

B. Women and the Theory of Change

Theory of Change is a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context (Center for Theory of Change, 2022). It explains the change process by outlining causal linkages in an initiative, i.e., its shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term outcomes. The ultimate goal of the theory of change is to help an organization achieve its goal or desired impact effectively and sustainably (Youmatter, 2020). This theory is used to support the Strategic Plan by UN Women, which consists of twelve key thematic components of a theory of change for gender equality and women's empowerment. These areas are interdependent, interrelated, and of high priority, including the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women, or it can be explained how women have a double burden, namely

given jobs that are accepted by one gender more than the other gender, in this case, women often experience it. This makes women feel that they pay more attention to things that are not given enough attention, such as damage to nature and the surrounding environment.

So, inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities, and in access to resources, there are considerable differences in access and opportunities for women and men to exert power over the economic structures in their society. There are significant differences in the access and opportunities for women and men to exert power over the economic structures in their societies. In most parts of the world, women are either almost absent or underrepresented in economic decision-making. Since it is often within such policy frameworks that individual men and women make their decisions, among other things, about how to divide their time between paid and unpaid work, the actual development of these economic structures and policies directly impacts women's lives. In many areas, women continue to work in agriculture and fisheries; they are also increasingly involved in micro, small, and medium enterprises and are becoming more dominant in the growing informal sector, which does not adequately meet the family's needs. On the negative side, economic hardship pushes them into the workplace and become preferred workers, often with low pay and poor working conditions, because they are perceived as more easily subordinated. Conversely, some enter the workforce by choice as they become more aware of their rights. Gender-segregated employment remains the dominant pattern of the economy, and the gap between women's and men's pay for equal work and work of equal value persists in both the private and public sectors. Women are increasingly the owners and managers of small and medium-scale enterprises but remain underrepresented in economic decision-making at national and international levels. Regrettably, most attention to women and their participation in the economy, especially the green economy, is absent in formulating policies in multilateral institutions.

Last, there are gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and the safeguarding of the environment. Considering the different roles and responsibilities of men and women is critical to the success of natural resource management policies and programs. Women have a unique understanding of natural resources because they gather resources like wood, water, forest products, and subsistence agriculture. This knowledge can only be recovered if women are included in policy and program design. Therefore, increasing women's participation in decision-making ensures greater sustainability and success of projects while safeguarding natural resources and enhancing shared benefits.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method in this study is divided into several techniques: data collection techniques, research scope, data analysis techniques, and research types. First, the technical data collection used in this research is a literature study (*library research*) or technically by collecting data and research sources through indirect observation, such as reading books, newspapers, reports, websites, journals, and articles to gain understanding and knowledge related to the topics to discuss in a study. Then this technique is supported by previous research on the Green Economy. This research

is based on previous research with the same scope but with a different discussion in 2021 (Mahayasa & Saadah, 2021).

The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative. This technique is used because the events studied are in the form of explanations from various media sources, statements from important parties that are directly related to this research, and the final result is not in the form of a calculated number but an explanation from the author of the research results on the variables studied. Analysis with this qualitative approach will provide an opportunity for the author to be able to explain the data found and explain each variable with more detailed analysis (Dude, 2008), meaning that the author displays data found from various sources from journals and the official website which will be accompanied by concrete evidence that explains whether layers of gender inequality in green economic activities exist or not. The type of research the author uses is a qualitative method with an analytical descriptive form.

The qualitative method is a research method that further explains a phenomenon and uses theories and/or concepts appropriate to the phenomenon to make it easier to understand. While descriptive research is research that is characterized by exposure or contains further explanation of the information on the phenomenon studied.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Green Economy Business Seen as a Side Job

In the previous explanation, green economy businesses are often used as a choice in choosing a job. Some of the reasons include that only some can do or even understand green economy business, this business is less promising, and only a few people know how important it is to do business that is friendly to the environment. Based on previous research, researchers conducted interviews with six female green economy entrepreneurs in the city of Surabaya. Through the interviews, it was discovered that the six informants only made green economist businesses a side job, and three of them used the waste around their homes as a business. Then, the income earned is only as additional income from the main job. Then, one informant stated that the business she was doing was only to fill her spare time from her activities as a housewife, and one informant stated that she was doing green economy business as a form of action for environmental sustainability.

From the results of this study, one of the six informants, a female green economy entrepreneur in Surabaya, does business for reasons unrelated to the main goal of the green economy itself, namely for the sake of environmental sustainability. The business is only seen as an attempt to increase the primary income with minimal awareness that this business should also involve awareness to protect the surrounding environment. The goal of the green economy was sparked based on anxiety about climate change due to human efforts that pay little attention to the environment. As a result, many natural disasters need to be prevented immediately – one of which is by doing environmentally friendly businesses or a green economy. However, green economy efforts will be challenging due to society's lack of understanding and awareness regarding climate change. Not only that, the community's interest in being able to do this business was not much or even dominated by women. This happens because of the relationship

between households and women. The household is one of the primary sources of waste generation, and women are close to all activities (Sunarsih, 2014). Other studies also say that it is the motherly nature of a woman that makes them more concerned about the environment (Hunt & Abbiss, 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that women dominate the green economy.

However, it is challenging. This green economy business, which is still a side job, shows how unequal the contribution of women in economic business is within the scope of the family, especially in terms of government. This gender inequality produces patriarchal views, such as the view that women's nature is not breadwinners. Gender inequality is an obstacle to raising women's awareness of their role in economic endeavors.

B. Women's Position in Green Economy Due to Gender Inequality

In the research, it was found that among women starting green initiatives in the field of SMEs, the majority did not see the business as a business but only as a side business (Mahayasa & Saadah, 2021). An environmentally friendly business is seen as a part of seeking additional income by utilizing recycled waste around the house and as a form of activity to fill free time between the busy lives of homemakers who have to take care of household chores, such as cleaning the house, taking care of children, and preparing for household needs. Women who carry out a green economy as an environmentally friendly business to maintain environmental sustainability are only a minority of voices. This further undermines the role and position of women in the green economy process.

Smith (2012) states that in every green economy path that includes women workers, there will always be feminization in global agricultural workers, where women are the most vulnerable to the effects of exploitation as cheap labor. Not to mention if these environmentally friendly economic activities include international economic activities, there will be an increased risk of vulnerability that women workers will face in the future. This feminization of workers is supported by the statement that as business people engaged in waste processing, they never calculate income in a day, which indicates the lack of awareness of business actors regarding the business they are in, wherein a business, detailed recording is required. to read the business conditions. This relates to the logic of low-cost workers being unable to measure and record business income and expenses in detail. The majority of informants from this study stated that their husbands are office workers with a more certain income compared to the income from the environmentally friendly business they are engaged in (Mahayasa & Saadah, 2021). This issue makes them unmotivated to develop their eco-friendly business to a higher level, especially to become a company that leads and initiates changes in the green business sector.

From a gender perspective, this issue is interesting because the determining factor is business logic and the gender relations formed. Utomo (2012) said that the gender culture believed by Indonesian people still considers the role of men as the primary breadwinner. The division of gender roles in Indonesia is limited to men as those in charge of the family economy, and women have reproductive and child-rearing roles. Blackburn (2004) supports this pattern by linking it to the concept of nature, where

women act as domestic workers in marriage, which automatically positions men as the main wage earner in the family. These two aspects form a gender culture in the green economy processing in Surabaya City, where the perspective of the society that considers the green economy as a side business and a gender culture that experiences inequality makes women unable to become the main actors in developing green economy businesses.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the explanation above, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the role of women in green economic activities. The application of a green economy itself is a form of achieving the 11th point of sustainable development (SDGs), namely creating sustainable cities and settlements. On the implementation of the green economy by women in Surabaya, the authors conclude that most of the green economy in Surabaya dominate by women. This green economy is run mainly by women's side businesses to meet their needs. Of the six women as green economy business actors interviewed in the study of Gender Inequality in Green Economy Practices in Surabaya, only one person had goals following the objectives of implementing a green economy. The other five women only run a green economy business as a side business to help their husbands earn a living without knowing what they are doing in a green economy business. This is happening due to the lack of education about the green economy to the public, so their knowledge is minimal, not to mention the view attached to women as domestic workers who can only work to take care of household chores, such as cleaning the house, taking care of the children, and preparing household needs. As workers in the economy, conventional even women often get unfair treatment, such as lower wages than men, lack of opportunity for growth, and uncomfortable environment work because women are considered weak and do not have full sovereignty because men in patriarchal cultural conditions control them. Some explanation above is the later forming of a gender culture in the process of the green economy in the city of Surabaya, which prevents women from being the main actors in the development of green economy businesses because the perspective of the society that sees the green economy as a side business and a gender culture that experiences inequality.

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