

A MOSAIC OF CZECH ECOFEMINISTS IN 1989-2000

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore Czech ecofeminist groups in the decade following the Velvet Revolution (1989-2000) within their relations with domestic and foreign activists and thinkers. This research draws upon oral history interviews with members of activist groups and archival research (documents, books, pamphlets, newspapers, zines, etc.). Its significance lies in filling a gap in the scholarly literature on Czech ecofeminism in the 1990s, the contribution to understanding broader influences and sources that Czech ecofeminists used beyond national borders. I analyze the interactions and differences between institutionalized (non-profit organizations) and alternative (anarcha-feminist) platforms for ecofeminism, illuminating Czech ecofeminists' interests, topics, and development trajectories. The early 1990s were significant for ecofeminist groups as they established contacts with international activists, tried to find their voice in the public sphere, and engaged in politics. Despite significant connections with foreign activists and sources of inspiration, Czech ecofeminists drew from local sources and strived to distinguish themselves from "Western feminists." I identify the influences of spiritual and social ecofeminism, which were most prominent among formal and informal ecofeminist groups. In the second half of the 1990s, ecofeminism manifested in the anarcha-feminist groups focused heavily on women's spirituality (witchcraft and permaculture). Despite the increased use of the term ecofeminism in the late 1990s, collaboration with international ecofeminist organizations, and heightened mobilization around anti/alter-globalization protests, nominal inclinations towards ecofeminism gradually faded. This decline occurred both within non-profit organizations, which after 2000 began to focus more narrowly on either environmental or feminist issues as part of their professionalization, and within the anarcha-feminist groups, where emerging groups shifted their focus from women's spirituality and ecofeminism to LGBTQ+ and animal rights.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Marie Jiříčková, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 10 June 2024

Signature

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INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 2022, I participated in a university occupation strike organized by Univerzity za klima (Universities for Climate). I co-organized the strike at the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University in Prague. The strike demanded that the government prioritize solving the climate crisis and that the universities become sustainable.¹ I had not perceived the demands and the discussion around it as a part of feminist activism until some banners at the strike caught my attention. Banners like “Mother Earth wants climate justice” and “Destroy Patriarchy, not the planet” intrigued me, sparking thoughts about the connection between feminism and environmentalism in the Czech Republic. During the strike, the most prominent ecofeminist programs took place at the faculty, and a workshop titled “Why Climate Justice Must Be Feminist?” reflected on reports addressing the differing impacts of the climate crisis on women and children, who, for example, are less flexible for migration and are at higher risk during environmental disasters.² I quickly realized I wanted to explore this further and understand if there is something like “Czech ecofeminism.”

After many conversations and writing a short article on strike ecofeminism and its vision,³ I decided to research the 1990s as the period when ecofeminism in the Czech lands first gained recognition. I refer to Czech ecofeminists as a mosaic of women to emphasize their interconnections and variety. Despite the apparent fragmentation of Czech ecofeminist groups

¹ The specific demands made to the government included: taking actionable steps towards achieving a net-zero future, withdrawing the Czech Republic from the Energy Charter Treaty, and guaranteeing that the transformation of the state and society is sustainable, democratic, and fair. Additionally, universities were urged to designate sustainability coordinators and integrate education on the climate crisis and environmental issues into their curriculum. Univerzity za klima, ‘Požadavky – stávka – Univerzity za klima’, 2022, 1, <https://univerzityzaklima.cz/pozadavky-okupace/>.

² Global Gender and Climate Alliance, ‘Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence’, 2016, 3,7.

³ Marie Jiříčková, ‘Vize ekofeminismu v českém klimatickém hnutí’, *Filozofický časopis Flux* 2023, no. 4 (29 May 2023).

and their ideas, I observe many overlaps with various movements and perspectives across multiple dimensions: cultural, intellectual, social, historical, and political. In the mosaic of Czech ecofeminists active in the 1990s, I found their first significant feature: the relationship with international activists, organizations, and sources. As a result, I'm exploring questions: What were the goals, values, activities, and organizations of Czech ecofeminists, and how did they interact with international networks and sources between 1989 and 2000?

This work aims to describe the historical development of Czech ecofeminist groups from the ground up, as it has not yet been covered in any literature. I reconstruct the forms of Czech ecofeminism in the 1990s through archival materials; I extract themes and meanings from the narratives of narrators, which were and are essential to them through the post-positivist paradigm of oral history. I extract themes and meanings from the narratives of narrators, which were and are essential to them. This makes the work a broader narrator's reflection of the entire era in a retrospective view. As I will elaborate further in this thesis, the literature on ecofeminism often focuses on the intellectual and philosophical academic understanding of ecofeminism. However, in my research, I draw from what was essential to the historical actors, what they based their actions on, and what their active practices were. I attempt to capture the essence of their public activities and interests and how they shifted during the 1990s. I investigate the evolution and trajectory of Czech ecofeminist groups, suggesting that the first such groups arose before 1989, intertwining with the Velvet Revolution and drawing from experiences abroad, collaborations with international activists, and domestic environmental, anarchist, and feminist movements in the following decade. The dynamics of Czech ecofeminist groups' development are marked by institutionalization and the establishment of the non-profit sector.

I identify two relevant types of Czech ecofeminism: social ecofeminism (emphasis on care), drawing mainly from the Czech socialist past, and radical ecofeminism (feminine spirituality), primarily from foreign inspirations. The narratives reveal that motherhood and womanhood were important ecofeminist tropes with practical impacts for active women seeking their space in the Czech public sphere. My research has also established connections between institutionalized platforms for ecofeminism (organizations and associations) and alternative and informal ecofeminist groups in anarchist circles.

Notably, between 1995 and 2000, topics of witchcraft and feminine spirituality became more prominent in Czech ecofeminist groups, linked to the growing confidence of Czech ecofeminists, personal stays abroad after 1989, and new literature. However, a significant effort was also made to distinguish themselves from “Western feminists.” International relationships influenced these groups, which is evident through network establishment, informal support, and economic assistance (funding). However, ecofeminism was not simply a “Western import”; Czech ecofeminists adapted ecofeminism to their needs and context.

When searching for the narrators for my oral history research, I found many women still active in the public sphere who shared experiences from the 1990s. Therefore, the historical context in the 1990s is crucial for understanding Czech ecofeminist groups and their activities. Just as the alarming environmental situation in the late 1980s spurred the first Czech ecofeminists into action and protests, after 1989, the transformation of cities (gentrification), the increase in automobile usage, the arrival of large foreign companies (such as supermarkets), the completion of the nuclear power plant Temelín, the privatization of state enterprises, and many other events and processes even on the regional level of cities were crucial for mobilization and practices of Czech ecofeminists. These were instances where Czech ecofeminists felt the

need to stand up because these issues had and were meant to impact them, their children, and, ultimately, the whole of Czech society.

Setting the Stage: Historical Context

The history of a mosaic of Czech ecofeminism in the 1990s has its roots in the events leading to the Velvet Revolution of 1989. This peaceful protest movement, led by students and dissidents, culminated in the end of the one-party rule of the Komunistická strana Československa (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), which had been in power since 1948. There is scholarly consensus about the significance of the dissidents, the underground, and the student movement during the late 1980s and 1989, but the role of ecological activists in these critical events is still under-examined.⁴ Before 1989, Czechoslovakia did not have a modern political or environmental movement similar to Western societies. According to Arnošt Novák, there were apolitical conservation activities like the Brontosaurus Movement and the Československá společnost ochrany přírody (Czechoslovak Union of Nature Conservationists), which focused on “small ecology” tasks such as cleaning forests and feeding wildlife. However, a few months before November 1989, the first informal ecological groups began to emerge.⁵ In March 1989, carbon emissions in Prague’s air peaked. People in Prague reacted loudly to this situation, especially the Pražské matky (Prague Mothers), which I will later refer to as an ecofeminist group, demanding information about the air quality. Furthermore, the first and one of the largest demonstrations against the government started in Teplice on 11

⁴ In the historical works about the 1970s-1980s and the Velvet Revolution, the students, undergrounds, and dissidents received the most attention from Czech historians. See Jana Wohlmuth Markupová, “‘Sametová’ zkušenost: studentští revolucionáři z listopadu 1989, Václav Havel a (nepolitická) politika”, *Soudobé dějiny (Contemporary History)* 26, no. 2–3 (2019): 257–87; Přemysl Houda, *Normalizační festival: socialistické paradoxy a postsocialistické korekce* (Charles University in Prague, Karolinum Press, 2019); Miroslav Vaněk, ed., *Ostrůvky svobody: kulturní a občanské aktivity mladé generace v 80. letech v Československu* (Praha: Ústav Pro Soudobé Dějiny AV ČR [u.a.], 2002).

⁵ Arnošt Novák, *Tmavozelený svět: radikálně ekologické aktivity v České republice po roce 1989* (Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON), 2017), 11.

November 1989, where the ecological situation had been alarming for a long time, and environmental activists had been drawing attention to it. Thus, demonstrations with an ecological emphasis had started there before the famous 17 November 1989 in Prague.⁶

In June 1990, Czechoslovakia held its first free elections since 1946, resulting in the victory of Občanské Fórum (Civic Forum) in the Czech lands and Veřejnost proti násilí (Public Against Violence) in Slovakia.⁷ Immediately following the Velvet Revolution, formal ecological groups like Hnutí Duha (Rainbow Movement) and Děti Země (Children of Earth) were established. During this period, many foreign ecological organizations came to Czechoslovakia to establish regional branch offices (such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth). In the early 1990s, ecological activities transitioned into the public sphere and became more confrontational. These groups addressed issues such as nuclear energy, global environmental problems, and consumerism criticism, employing informal action methods, including protests and non-violent blockades.⁸

As historian James Krapfl notes, the initial euphoria and hope of the Velvet Revolution were later replaced by frustration and feelings of failure as the challenges of building a new society became apparent. This is particularly true in the case of remembering economic transformation.⁹ This “economic transformation” involved extensive privatization of state-owned enterprises, deregulation, and establishing a legal framework for a free-market economy. Václav Klaus, the federal Finance Minister, was crucial in driving these reforms. The introduction of coupon privatization was meant for ordinary citizens to become

⁶ Miroslav Vaněk, *Nedalo se tady dýchat: ekologie v českých zemích v letech 1968 až 1989*, vol. 9 (Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1996).

⁷ James Krapfl and Andrea Patrasová, *Revoluce s lidskou tváří: politika, kultura a společnost v Československu v letech 1989-1992* (Rybka Publishers, 2016), 233–60.

⁸ Novák, *Tmavozelený svět: radikálně ekologické aktivity v České republice po roce 1989*.

⁹ Krapfl and Patrasová, *Revoluce s lidskou tváří: politika, kultura a společnost v Československu v letech 1989-1992*.

shareholders in formerly state-owned companies, aiming to quickly create a class of private owners and stimulate the economy.¹⁰ However, this transformation to a market-oriented economy was not the only option. According to Václav Remeš, at the beginning of the 1990s, it is possible to observe a gradual transformation of the program for establishing political democracy into a program for creating a liberal economic order, that is, the transformation of the democratic revolution of 1989 into the liberal revolution of 1990-1992.¹¹

Novák describes that the societal transformation towards neoliberal capitalism brought significant public issues that shaped the Czech environmental movement. Environmental organizations became heavily involved in politics, garnering both supporters and opponents. Scholarly works consistently characterize the tendency of the Czech environmental movement towards gradual deradicalization, professionalization, and institutionalization.¹² Key topics for environmental movement included the demolition of the North Bohemian village of Libkovice for coal mining and the completion of the nuclear power plant Temelín.¹³ The construction project of a nuclear power plant was started in 1979. Construction began in 1987, and right after the Velvet Revolution, after 1989, it was decided to reduce the number of production units to two. Environmental groups started protesting against the finishing of the nuclear power plant; for instance, Greenpeace's campaign Stop ČSSRnoby!¹⁴ After three years of intense

¹⁰ Václav Remeš, *Trh bez přívlastků, nebo ekonomickou demokracii?: spory o podobu vlastnické transformace v porevolučním československu* (Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd ČR, 2021), 196–225.

¹¹ The shift in value orientations is clearly demonstrated by comparing the self-governing movement in 1968 and 1989. The concept of self-organization and self-governance no longer featured in contemporary ideas of happiness at the beginning of the 1990s and was no longer linked to aspirations for improving one's position. Remeš, 312–21.

¹² See Bohuslav Binka, 'Zelený extremismus', *Ideje a mentalita českých environmentálních hnutí 1* (2008); Adam Fagan, *Environment and Democracy in the Czech Republic: The Environmental Movement in the Transition Process* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004); Ondřej Císař, Jirí Navrátil, and Kateřina Vráblíková, 'Staří, noví, radikální: politický aktivismus v České republice očima teorie sociálních hnutí', *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 47, no. 1 (2011): 137–67.

¹³ Novák, *Tmavozelený svět: radikálně ekologické aktivity v České republice po roce 1989*, 12–13.

¹⁴ Unknown, 'Historie a současnost', Skupina ČEZ - O Společnosti, accessed 7 May 2024, <http://www.cez.cz/cs/o-cez/vyrobní-zdroje/jaderna-energetika/jaderna-energetika-v-ceske-republice/ete/historie-a-soucasnost>.

political and public debates, in March 1993, Václav Klaus signed, finishing two production units.¹⁵

Another relevant movement for Czech ecofeminists in the 1990s was the anarchist movement, which had its roots in the peace movement in the 1980s and was associated with the punk subculture. In the fall of 1989, the Czechoslovak Anarchist Association (ČAS) was founded.¹⁶ Anarchists in the 1990s were also involved in the development of political squatting. Particularly in the 1990s, the existing squats were Bud'ánka (1991), Sochorka (1991-1992), Ladronka (1993-2000), and Milada (1998-2009), which represented a cultural and social alternative place.¹⁷ What resonated with anarchists was how anarchists might be connected to lifestyles and subcultures. These debates led to the separation of the more radical and narrowly focused Federation of Social Anarchists (FSA) from ČSAF in the autumn of 1997.¹⁸

The feminist movement in the Czech Republic after 1989 has been a frequent subject of many works and discussions since the 1990s.¹⁹ For instance, in 1996, Alena Heitlinger examined the Czech feminist movement after 1989 and claimed that Czechs were so far skeptical of emancipatory and ideological thoughts, which they associate with communist ideology.

¹⁵ Axelrod, Regina S. "Temelín: Nuclear Power and Building Democracy." *Perspectives* 15 (2000): 31-44.

¹⁶ The magazine *A-kontra* was created in 1991, and *Autonomy* began to be published later that year. 1992, the Anarchist Federation was established, and in 1995, the Czech Anarchist Federation (ČAF) was established. Later, it was renamed the Czechoslovak Anarchist Federation (ČSAF), and in 2014, the name became Anarchistická Federace. *Anarchistická Publicistika 1990 – 2013* (Praha: Nakladatelství Československé anarchistické federace, 2014); Ondřej Slačálek and Václav Tomek, 'Anarchismus', *Svoboda proti moci* (Prague: Vyšehrad, 2006) 471 (2006).

¹⁷ Arnošt Novák, "Růže má své trny, svoboda má své squaty" Politický squatting v Praze', in *Nečekáme nic od reformy: Kapitoly o českém anarchismu* (Praha: Herrmann & synové, 2024), 371–400.

¹⁸ The FSA recently joined AntiFa, which led to its gradual decline and eventual extinction in 2007. For further reading, see Ondřej Slačálek and Jan Charvát, 'Setkávání na okrajových scénách průsečíky politického a subkulturního radikalismu v polistopadovém Česku', *Český lid* 106, no. 1 (2019): 107–26.

¹⁹ See Marianne A Ferber and Phyllis Hutton Raabe, 'Women in the Czech Republic: Feminism, Czech Style', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 16 (2003): 407–30; Hana Hašková and Alena Marcela Křížková, 'Vyjednávání ženských prostorů po roce 1989', *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 42, no. 5 (2006); Megan Martin, 'The Growth of Czech Feminism: Analyzing Resistance Activities through a Gendered Lens, 1968 to 1993', *Gender rovné příležitosti výzkum* 10, no. 01 (2009): 37–44; Blanka Nyklová, 'Krajinou současného českého feminismu', *Gender rovné příležitosti výzkum* 14, no. 01 (2013): 52–63.

Therefore, they tend not to support feminism.²⁰ However, According to Havelková, Šiklová, and others, a lack of feminist movement lies in Czech (Czechoslovak) history, when many equalizing policies were implemented “from above,” e.g., voting rights and social status were promoted during the First Republic through figures like T. G. Masaryk, or during state socialism by the Communist Party through policies aimed at the emancipation of women in the labor market, along with the provision of social services that facilitated women’s employment.²¹ As Fellegi explains, the lack of a Czech feminist grassroots movement lies in “*the existence of common enemies, the egalitarian character of Czech society, and the mandatory equalization and political oppression during the socialist era, which led to a natural alliance and solidarity between Czech men and women.*”²²

Although it would be an oversimplification to perceive it in the case of Czech feminists as merely a debate between “East and West feminism,” because for Czech women, according to Parente-Čapková, “the radically different Other” can include women from both the West and the East, however, the criticism of “Western feminism” was similar to that of post-socialist countries.²³ Furthermore, Kristen Ghodsee mentions that the Western feminist-imposed notion that Eastern European women worsened during the post-1989 transition may not always be true: “*Women’s success or failure in the post-1989 period may have less to do with their gender per se and more to do with the social class to which they belong.*”²⁴ At the same time, after

²⁰ Alena Heitlinger, ‘Framing Feminism in Post-Communist Czech Republic’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29, no. 1 (1996): 77–93.

²¹ Jiřina Šiklová, ‘Feminism and the Roots of Apathy in the Czech Republic’, *Social Research*, 1997, 258–80; Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová, *Politics of Gender Culture Under State Socialism* (Routledge, 2015); Zuzana Fellegi, ‘Feminism and Understanding of Gender Roles in the Czech Republic’, 2019, 52–63.

²² Fellegi, ‘Feminism and Understanding of Gender Roles in the Czech Republic’, 54.

²³ Viola Parente-Čapková, ‘„Vzdorné psaní, strategický esencialismus a politika lokace. Feministická (literární) teorie a postkoloniální studia.”’, *Konstruování genderu v asijských literaturách: případové studie z vybraných jazykových oblastí. Praha: Česká orientalistická společnost*, 2005, 30.

²⁴ Kristen Ghodsee, ‘Feminism-by-Design: Emerging Capitalisms, Cultural Feminism, and Women’s Nongovernmental Organizations in Postsocialist Eastern Europe’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 3 (2004): 748.

1989, Czech women reflected not only on a perceived lack of necessity for feminism in the Czech lands but also on a fundamental difference between themselves and Western feminists, a debate that arose across the Eastern European region. Šiklová, in the 1990s, that importing Western thought was not a goal for the Czech women's movement. She refers to a certain "unfamiliarity" of criticism of patriarchy for Czech women, who tend to see men as natural allies and the necessity of adjustments of feminism to the specificities of the Czech context.²⁵

Among the processes that influenced both the feminist and environmental movements and, therefore, Czech ecofeminists are internationalization with Western states and Europeanization after 1989. Throughout the decade, the Czech Republic and Slovakia sought to integrate more closely with Western Europe and international organizations "behind the Iron Curtain." A significant milestone was their accession to the Council of Europe in 1993. In 1999, the Czech Republic became a member of NATO, marking an important step in aligning with Western defense structures and distancing itself from its former Soviet sphere of influence.²⁶ Slovakia and the Czech Republic followed suit in 2004, joining the European Union.

Many international and domestic activists from the environmental and anarchist movements were involved in the anti/alter-globalization protests at the decade's end, notably during the Global Street Party in Prague on May 16, 1998, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank summit in Prague on September 27, 2000.²⁷ These protests culminated the

²⁵ Jiřina Šiklová, 'Different Region, Different Women: Why Feminism Isn't Successful in the Czech Republic', *Replika: Wwww. Replika. C3. Hu* 13 (1996): 91–91.

²⁶ Josef Prochazka, 'The Defense Policy of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic Since 1989: Stages, Milestones, Challenges, Priorities, and Lessons Learned', *Connections* 8, no. 2 (2009): 17–34.

²⁷ The term "anti/alter-globalization protests" refers to demonstrations opposing the negative impacts of globalization worldwide. "Anti-globalization" protests focus on the harmful effects, such as economic inequality, exploitation, environmental degradation, and cultural erosion, arguing that globalization benefits wealthy nations and corporations at the expense of poorer communities. "Alter-globalization" protests advocate for alternative forms of globalization that are fair, equitable, and sustainable, promoting fair trade, environmental protection, human rights, and social justice. Both anti-globalization and alter-globalization movements often converge in large-scale protests at international summits, such as those of the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and G8, where they seek to draw attention to their causes and push for systemic change.

decade's growing discontent with globalization, neo-liberal capitalism, and consumerism, based on many years of experience with a strong welfare state. Although Marta Kolářová's research shows that feminist criticism in the Czech anti/alter-globalization discourse was marginalized during the demonstrations (overall masculinity of critical actors and alternative media, relations with the non-profit sector), the history of Czech ecofeminism shows the involvement of (eco)feminists during these protests.²⁸

Another significant milestone in the early 1990s was the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, known as the Velvet Divorce. By the end of 1992, growing nationalist sentiments and political disagreements between Czech and Slovak leaders Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar led to the decision to split the country. On January 1, 1993, Czechoslovakia officially divided into two independent nations: the Czech Republic and Slovakia.²⁹ Although my research period is still partly within the Czechoslovak federation, I focus primarily on Czech ecofeminist groups emerging on Czech territory. Therefore, I will work with the term Czech, not Czechoslovakian.

The term "Wild 1990s" has become commonly associated with this decade in the Czech Republic.³⁰ Many of my narrators repeatedly recall the freedom and new opportunities of the 1990s, with the reflection of the young age they were at the time.³¹ The book *Věčná devadesátá* reveals the era's ambivalence, yet for the actors, there was always a yearning for a better world, a better society. Many trends, such as consumerism that seem new to the 1990s have their roots in the past and extend into the present. According to the authors, more than twenty years after

²⁸ Marta Kolářová, *Protest proti globalizaci: Gender a feministická kritika* (SLON, 2009).

²⁹ Jan Rychlík, *Rozdělení Československa 1989-1992* (Vyšehrad, 2022).

³⁰ Veronika Pehe, "The Wild 1990s: Transformation Nostalgia" among the Czech Student Generation of 1989', *East Central Europe* 46, no. 1 (2019): 111–34.

³¹ Anna Hradilková, Oral History Interview, interview by Marie Jiříčková, trans. Marie Jiříčková, 18 April 2024, 10; Jitka Poláková, Oral History Interview, interview by Marie Jiříčková, trans. Marie Jiříčková, 16 April 2024; Adéla Purschová, Oral History Interview, interview by Marie Jiříčková, trans. Marie Jiříčková, 5 March 2024.

the end of the 1990s, there is a growing critical perspective on this period, viewing it as a time of corruption, rising racism, crime, and more.³²

Tracing Ecofeminism: Movement Origins and Key Literature

There are relatively few historical studies of ecofeminism, especially in the Eastern European context. The reason behind this could be twofold: first, the very fact that feminist studies mainly emerged in Anglophone academia, and second, because grassroots women's movements under socialism after the Second World War were restricted.³³ Therefore, the literature on ecofeminism from the region consists of historical studies that mainly trace the philosophical and intellectual roots or local histories of communities without broader historical conceptualization. To structure this part, I divided the secondary literature concerning ecofeminism in theological, sociological, and historical contexts into three sections: scholarship emerging from other world regions or broadly received internationally, Eastern-European literature, and Czech literature. This chapter aims to present a brief history of ecofeminism and build on the insights of scholars for my understanding and use of the term ecofeminism within this research. I argue the scholarly gap lies in a lack of historization and research on Eastern Europe. My thesis aims to address this gap and contribute to filling it, overcoming a purely national perspective and understanding the development of Czech ecofeminist groups as part of broader processes.

The term “movement” is a complex and challenging one to apply to ecofeminism in the Czech Republic. As Mario Diani suggests, social movements are intricate and highly heterogeneous network structures, encompassing both formal and informal groups and organizations with

³² Jana Patočková et al., *Věčná devadesátá: proměny české společnosti po roce 1989!* (Cpress, 2023).

³³ The lack of a grassroots feminist movement does not necessarily imply missing policies for women's emancipation in the region. For further reading, see Kristen Ghodsee and Julia Mead, ‘What Has Socialism Ever Done for Women’, *Catalyst* 2, no. 2 (2018): 101–33.

varying levels of organization. In this context, actors do not merely act as individuals but as part of a web of exchanges. This understanding of social movement within the web of social interaction is particularly relevant for the international ecofeminist movement, which is in a constant state of evolution and transition, as Aneel Salman points out.³⁴

In conceptualizing social movements, people's perceptions play a significant role. As Nick Crossley describes, if people "believe" in the movement's existence and act accordingly, their behavior puts the movement into practice.³⁵ This perception-based approach is constructive in the case of new emerging movements, which are developing, networking, and making their place in society. In the case of the international ecofeminist movement, this perception is shared by the people in the movement and scholars.³⁶ Therefore, I use the term "international ecofeminist movement" to emphasize and reflect the shared perception of its existence, a perception that unites both the people within the movement and scholars.

However, the term ecofeminist movement can be inaccurate in the case of regional groups, particularly in the Czech Republic. Even on an individual level of narrators, there is no collectively shared perception of the Czech ecofeminist movement; they reflect the smallness of particular groups that could be part of such a movement. In most cases, they perceive their practices within the environmental, anarchist, or feminist movement. In my thesis, if I use the term Czech ecofeminist movement, I point out the potential of becoming a movement, the early stage of ecofeminist groups and ecofeminists, which did not become the broader social movement within the Czech society. However, the absence of a unified mass movement does not mean there is no reason to historically examine individual ecofeminist groups,

³⁴ Aneel Salman and Nuzhat Iqbal, 'Ecofeminist Movements—from the North to the South [with Comments]', *The Pakistan Development Review* 46, no. 4 (2007): 854.

³⁵ Nick Crossley, *Making Sense of Social Movements* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2002), 676. I don't comment on formatting issues

³⁶ For instance, the international foundation Women Engage for a Common Future explicitly addresses the term ecofeminist movement. Unknown, 'Building the Ecofeminist Movement – WECEF', accessed 14 May 2024, <https://www.wecf.org/building-the-ecofeminist-movement/>.

organizations, and individuals. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, even without evolving into a mass ecofeminist movement, they provide a fascinating reflection of the time and offer a new perspective on women's activism in the Czech Republic in the 1990s.

In current postcolonial studies and debates, the use of the term ecofeminism in relation to the practices of Indigenous communities is scrutinized, as it imposes “Western and Eurocentric” values and meanings, thereby maintaining a colonial and oppressive relationship on a cultural level. According to Musa Dube, decolonization thus remains incomplete. While colonialism brought the exploited areas into crises after its legal end, colonial imperialism continues to be reinforced through economic, religious, intellectual, and cultural dominance. This is ultimately highlighted in Dube's study, where ecofeminist literary criticism highlights how and why African women writers rewrite and reappropriate imposed colonial knowledge systems, structures, and religions, utilizing African indigenous knowledge systems and historical experiences of the continent and its people.”³⁷ López-Serrano further points out that Western imperialism simultaneously appropriates indigenous knowledge related to the human-nature relationship, thereby culturally appropriating these communities. She emphasizes that Indigenous feminism cannot exist without this decolonization.³⁸

To some extent, the postcolonial approach could also be applied to the Eastern European context, as the debates between “East and West” feminists were part of public discourse in the 1990s, as I present in the introduction, despite these debates reflecting the nature of the term between emic and etic perspectives, where in the Czech context, ecofeminism refers to an external term - etic, the historical actors themselves use this term. Therefore, I do not avoid it.

³⁷ Musa W Dube, ‘African Eco-Feminisms: African Women Writing Earth, Gender and the Sacred’, in *Ecofeminist Perspectives from African Women Creative Writers: Earth, Gender, and the Sacred* (Springer, 2024), 3–33.

³⁸ Lucía López-Serrano, ‘Indigenous Ecofeminism? Decolonial Practices and Indigenous Resurgence in Lee Maracle's Works’, *Canada and Beyond: A Journal of Canadian Literary and Cultural Studies* 12 (2023): 85–101.

Additionally, it serves as an analytical tool that simplifies my communication about activism connecting women's/feminist and environmental issues rather than as an identity label originating from local cultures.

The term ecofeminism emerged in the Czech lands in the 1990s, more than a decade later than in the USA. By then, ecofeminism in the USA had already developed, and ecofeminist thinkers focused on global issues and intersectionality. This context influenced how ecofeminism emerged in the Czech Republic during the 1990s.³⁹ In my research, I tried to overcome the challenge of proper use of the label “ecofeminist.” I am focused on how a person/group is recognized as ecofeminist based on ideas or activities without paying attention to which type of ecofeminism. In my writing, my use of the term ecofeminism is differentiated by how the person/group perceives themselves. For a person/group with a reclaimed identity, I use the term ecofeminist without brackets. For a person/group recognized as ecofeminist from the ideas or activities of me or another researcher, I use the term (eco)feminist to highlight differences in subjective understanding of the identity.

Ecofeminist thinking encompasses various directions, characterized by adjectives that attempt to define the term according to the predominant elements within ecofeminist philosophy. These include cultural, radical, social (socialist/materialist), liberal, and critical postcolonial ecofeminism, each author employing different categories and nomenclatures. In the context of my research, particularly within the Czech context, it is essential to distinguish between radical (spiritual) and social ecofeminism briefly.

According to Mellor, some ecofeminist groups draw on cultural and spiritual feminism and base their thinking on the relationship between women and nature versus society and men,

³⁹ Colleen Mack-Canty, ‘Third Wave Feminism and Ecofeminism: Reweaving the Nature/Culture Duality’, in *Different Wavelengths* (Routledge, 2014), 198, 200.

while others draw on social feminism and a constructivist view of gender; for them, the topic of work is essential.⁴⁰ Her understanding might serve as a primary distinction between radical and social ecofeminism. David Pepper puts radical ecofeminism in one group with cultural ecofeminism, which is in the correspondence of Mellor, as he perceives both radical and cultural ecofeminism as essential in connecting women with nature, attributing the mystical aspects of the goodness of Mother Nature. On the contrary, social (or socialistic, materialistic) ecofeminism, according to David Papper, is based on the ethics of care and lacks attributes of values to the sexes.⁴¹

According to Kiczková, social ecofeminism claims that society is dichotomized into a feminine-associated private sphere (emphasizing contextual sensitivity, relationality, and emotions) and a masculine-linked public sphere (highlighting competitiveness, bureaucracy, and politics). In her classification, social ecofeminism emphasizes the importance of care and nurturing, and care is considered essential for supporting people and safeguarding the environment. This perspective recognizes that the capacity to care is inherent in both women and men, avoiding essentialist views. If women dominantly bear the responsibility of care, it is due to historical and societal factors. The encroachment of the public sphere threatens the ecologically preferable private sphere. The ethics of care transcend hierarchical dominance and reshape the dynamics of relationships, be they among humans or between humanity and nature. Social ecofeminism offers a critique of the sociocultural constructed gender hierarchy.⁴²

Tracing the origins of the ecofeminist movement is challenging; the connections between women's movements and environmentalists have been long established. For instance, the US

⁴⁰ Mary Mellor, *Feminism and Ecology* (John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 40–70.

⁴¹ David Pepper, 'Some Fundamental Issues in Radical Environmentalism', in *Modern Environmentalism : An Introduction* (London ; New York : Routledge, 1996), 106–12, <http://archive.org/details/modernenvironmen0000pepp>.

⁴² Zuzana Kiczková, *Príroda, vzor žena!?: hľadanie alternatív v ekofeminizme* (Aspekt, 1998), 150–53.

pioneers of ecofeminism advocated for both women's rights and environmental justice for marginalized people decades before the term "ecofeminism" was first used by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974.⁴³ However, the consensus is that a more distinguished and specific ecofeminist movement emerged in the late 1960s, mainly in the 1970s, and quickly became one of the interests of (feminist) scholars dealing with post-colonial topics, environmentalism, and gender, as discussed below.

The main corpus of scholarly works about ecofeminism came after the first ecofeminist conference, "Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Eco-Feminism in the Eighties," held in March 1980 at Amherst, Massachusetts.⁴⁴ The activist and scholarly traditions were closely intertwined, as evidenced by the conference organizers' agreement to start a series of peaceful protests in front of the Pentagon the following year, raising voices against militarization and nuclear power.⁴⁵ Ynestra King organized conferences and protests and became the principal author of the US ecofeminist tradition. In her understanding, ecofeminism emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and ecological issues, sees women as crucial agents of transformative change, and provides a critical analysis tool for traditional definitions of rationality, modernity, and progress.⁴⁶

For a better idea of ecofeminist practices, two particularly notable and emblematic ecofeminist movements stand out. The first movement was the Chipko Movement in India in the 1970s, led by women protesting against commercial logging in the Garwhal Himalayas by hugging

⁴³ Susan A Mann, 'Pioneers of US Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice', *Feminist Formations*, 2011, 20–21.

⁴⁴ Although the Women and the Environment conference at UC Berkeley in 1974 could be perceived as the first one, it had little impact. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Heather Eaton, 'Ecofeminism: An Overview', 2002, 1–2; Noël Sturgeon, 'Ecofeminism', in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2007), 239, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeose003>.

⁴⁵ Susan Buckingham, 'Ecofeminism in the Twenty-first Century', *Geographical Journal* 170, no. 2 (2004): 146–54.

⁴⁶ Ynestra King, 'Engendering a Peaceful Planet: Ecology, Economy, and Ecofeminism in Contemporary Context', *Women's Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 3/4 (1995): 15–21.

trees. The Chipko Movement has met with great support and favorable reactions, but some Scholars have criticized the movement for essentialism, a characteristic of the 1970s.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, ecofeminism has continuously been accused of essentialism since then. Ynestra King, an activist and scholar at Goddard College in Vermont, responds to such accusations: “*Ecofeminism is not ‘essentialist,’ as our understanding of the woman/nature connection is historical and specific, and corresponding symbolic representations are based on historically and culturally constructed understandings of women and nature.*” Scholars⁴⁸ This quote is essential for understanding some types of ecofeminism and its conceptualization of the connection between the oppression of women and nature. For instance, social ecofeminists' core comprehension lies in the understanding that both nature and women are socially and culturally constructed and, therefore, changeable.

The second movement was the Love Canal Movement, which began when mother Lois Gibbs, concerned about her children's health, started a series of demonstrations. The movement led to the re-localization of residents in the polluted area near Niagara Falls and brought the topic of environmental health to the forefront of attention.⁴⁹ Other impactful ecofeminist movements were the Green Belt Movement in Kenya and the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in the early 1980s in England. The forms of protests and activities were and are very diverse. The groups target issues such as sexism in society, militarization, nuclear weapons, genetically modified foods, health in polluted areas, violence against animals, and globalism.⁵⁰

Most works conceptualizing ecofeminism were written in the 1980s as a reaction to these movements/protests and peaked in the early 1990s; essentially, they consist of philosophical

⁴⁷ Niamh Moore, ‘Eco/Feminism and Rewriting the Ending of Feminism: From the Chipko Movement to Clayoquot Sound’, *Feminist Theory* 12, no. 1 (April 2011): 3–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700110390592>.

⁴⁸ King, ‘Engendering a Peaceful Planet: Ecology, Economy, and Ecofeminism in Contemporary Context’, 18.

⁴⁹ Lois Gibbs, ‘Citizen Activism for Environmental Health: The Growth of a Powerful New Grassroots Health Movement’, n.d.

⁵⁰ Salman and Iqbal, ‘Ecofeminist Movements—from the North to the South [with Comments]’.

works discussing ecofeminism's ideas, origins, and intellectual and theological background. The leading scholars who contributed to the development of ecofeminist thinking include activists and scholars.

Australian philosopher Val Plumwood, an ecofeminist activist and scholar who contributed significantly to the movement and theories of ecofeminism, published articles about environmental issues and relations between humans and nature from the 1970s and during the 1980s. In 1993, she published *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*.⁵¹ Vandana Shiva, starting as an activist in the Chipko movement during the 1970s, became an icon of the ecofeminist movement, and later on, she reflected on her activist experience as a scholar and devoted her life to ecofeminist ideas. In 1993, she wrote, together with Maria Mies, the book *Ecofeminism*, which is an example of collaboration between the perspectives of the “global North” and “global South” and examines topics such as consumerism, the myth of “catching up” development, women's emancipation, environmental ethics, among others.⁵² One of the main contributors to the ecofeminist philosophy was philosopher Karen Warren. From the mid-1980s, she discussed environmental ethics and ecofeminist philosophy.⁵³ Sociologist Mary Mellor, in her *Feminism and Ecology*, links the connections between feminism and the Green movement, from which the ecofeminist movement “takes a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women.”⁵⁴ An interesting application of ecofeminist thinking is the book published in 1980, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, by historian Carolyn Merchant.⁵⁵ She uses the concept of

⁵¹ Val Plumwood, ‘Feminism and the Mastery of Nature’, 1993.

⁵² Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (Bloomsbury Collections, 1993).

⁵³ Karen Warren, ‘Introduction to Ecofeminism’, *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, 1993, 253–67.

⁵⁴ Mellor, *Feminism and Ecology*.

⁵⁵ Carolyn Merchant, ‘The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution’, 1980.

ecofeminism to look at the past and describe the historic shift of perception during the Scientific Revolution that justifies the domination of science over nature and man over women.

The literature mentioned above is not a historical analysis of the ecofeminist movement. However, the authors impacted the international ecofeminist movement and ecofeminist philosophy. To sum up the main tendencies in scholarship about ecofeminism until the late 1990s, in the “ecofeminist canon” of classics, there was an increasing tendency to write about ecofeminist thinking after the 1980s, mainly written by philosophers and sociologists.

Compared to the “canon” of ecofeminists theorizing itself, works published after 2000 offer a better analysis that historicizes the movement. An example is the work of Niamh Moore, who exceeds the descriptive historical approach and instead interprets ecofeminist history as an “outsider” and offers a more analytical approach. Nevertheless, no comprehensive historical study has described the development and dynamics of the international ecofeminist movement with an emphasis on practice. Historical works deal primarily with the historical evolution of the relationship between women and nature and the genealogy of ecofeminist thinking rather than looking at “the reality” of the movement. Only relatively local studies examining individual countries’ movements that capture ecofeminism in the second half of the 20th century can be found.⁵⁶

There is a lack of research on European examples of ecofeminist activities and a lack of efforts to contextualize the specifics of the movement there. The ecofeminist practices are not recognized because the term ecofeminism, which is external, as explained earlier, and for Europeans, is connected with colonization. In Europe, no indigenous and “ancient” cultures are

⁵⁶ Further reading for context in India: Parameswaran and Gowri. „A History of Ecofeminist-Socialist Resistance to Eco-crisis in India”. *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 24, č. 2 (2022): 4. Pakistan: Salman, Aneel, a Nuzhat Iqbal. „Ecofeminist Movements—from the North to the South [with Comments]”. *The Pakistan Development Review* 46, č. 4 (2007): 853–64. USA: Saabach, Pascale. „Ecofeminist art in the United States (1970-1980): birth of a movement”. *Revista de História da Arte e da Cultura* 4, č. 2 (2023): 4–26.

uproaring against colonizers, at least not in a traditional sense. Therefore, ecofeminist activities are less visible. However, women fighting against “oppressors of nature/local community” can be found. For instance, in England, on Mother’s Day in 1987, women with gardening tools protected their village from developers and exploitation of nature.⁵⁷ Thus, researchers in the area face the challenges of recognizing ecofeminist practice and reflecting on the term.

Moreover, in the Eastern European context, there are no equivalents of the philosophical and sociological works concerning ecofeminism that became common in the 1980s and 1990s in Anglo-American literature. In other words, no “classics of ecofeminism” are comparable to the “Western” context. To find some short references, one must look at works about activism and feminism in this region; the word “ecofeminism” is often avoided or dismissed.⁵⁸ Contextual background of the environmental changes in the area before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain is offered in the book *Environmental Transitions: transformation and Ecological Defense in Central and Eastern Europe* by P. Pavlínek and J. Pickles.⁵⁹ There are interesting works concerning women’s movements in the region; however, none capture ecofeminism’s historical development and dynamics.⁶⁰

On a global level, the literature focusing on ecofeminism in Eastern Europe lacks historicization; the central focus is the intellectual roots, not practice. An example of a work concerning environmental policies in Eastern Europe that tries to present some possibilities of

⁵⁷ On Mothers Day in 1987 in the New England town of Brattleboro.

⁵⁸ Barbara Einhorn and Charlotte Sever, ‘Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5, no. 2 (2003): 163–90; Duncan Fisher, ‘The Emergence of the Environmental Movement in Eastern Europe and Its Role in the Revolutions of 1989’, in *Environmental Action in Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2016), 89–113; Kerstin Jacobsson and Steven Saxonberg, *Beyond NGO-Ization: The Development of Social Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2016).

⁵⁹ Petr Pavlínek and John Pickles, *Environmental Transitions: Transformation and Ecological Defense in Central and Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2002).

⁶⁰ For instance a biographical dictionary written by a collective of authors: Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary of Women’s Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries* (Central European University Press, 2006).

a different conceptualization of ecological issues in the region is an exciting study by Ilishko: “Re-Imagining Ecofeminist Theology for Eastern Europe.”⁶¹ He focuses on the particularities of the post-socialist states. In the case of Latvia, he presents the challenges and usefulness of ecofeminist thinking in this region as a constructive framework for alternative environmental policies. This study analyzes ecofeminism in Eastern Europe to justify the ecofeminist arguments for creating ecological policies. However, they dismiss actual ecofeminist practices and historical authors and thinkers who could be considered ecofeminists. Therefore, the philosophy of ecofeminism might seem to be a “Western import” of thoughts because some European authors and concepts are not acknowledged even though they could be regarded as examples of specific forms of ecofeminism that are products of regional context.

In the Czech context, no coherent study of ecofeminism or the ecofeminist movement exists, so more general works on women’s activism must be considered. The evolution of women’s history in Czech lands starts with a national awakening from the mid-19th century and the mythological history of outstanding women.⁶² After establishing the Czechoslovak state after the First World War in 1918 and the enactment of the equal status of women in the constitution, the focus of women’s history moved through the women’s role in the state, religion, and activism until the end of the Second World War. After 1948, during the state-socialism period, historians focused on women’s everyday life experiences, family history, and labor relations.⁶³

The brief opening of borders to the West in the second half of the 1960s helped to bring new

⁶¹ Dzintra Ilishko, ‘Re-Imagining Ecofeminist Theology for Eastern Europe’, *Feminist Theology* 16, no. 2 (2008): 230–37.

⁶² For instance, historian Anna Císařová-Kolářová writes at the beginning of the 20th century about the role of women within the religious protestant practice. Less scholarly-rooted S. K. Neumann publishes a popular four-volume piece, *Dějiny žen (History of Women)*, which describes women’s history from prehistoric times and discusses topics of everyday life (sexuality, catering, obstetrics). Anna Císařová-Kolářová, *Žena v Hnutí Husitském*, vol. 1 (Sokolice, 1915); Anna Císařová-Kolářová, *Evangelické matky* (Kalich, 1941); Stanislav Kostka Neumann, *Dějiny ženy I-IV. Žena středověká a renesanční: populární kapitoly sociologické, etnologické a kulturně-historické* (Melantrich, 1932).

⁶³ Milena Lenderová, ‘Dějiny žen mezi women’s a gender history’, *Historica - Sborník prací historických*, no. 37 (2010): 46–48; Denisa Nečasová, ‘Dějiny žen či gender history?’, *Dějiny-Teorie-Kritika*, no. 01 (2008): 81–102.

ideas into the academy.⁶⁴ Czechoslovak historical practice evolved, and women's historians wrote in the developing fields of social history, demography, and family history.⁶⁵ According to the Czech historians Nečasová and Landerová, the shift from women's history towards gender history has not yet been incorporated into historical practice in the Czech Republic.⁶⁶ Nečasová further summarizes that the feminist approach to history still has a negative essence, which is supported by the statements of leading Czech historians about the "ideology of feminism" destroying history.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, feminist scholars and younger generations of historians are incorporating gender as a tool of analysis in their works. To name a few contemporary scholars promoting new methodological and theoretical approaches. For instance, Kateřina Lišková, rooted in sociology, writes books about gender and sexuality, and in recent works, she examined women's sexuality under state socialism in Czechoslovakia.⁶⁸ From a social and cultural anthropological background, historians Lucie Storchová and Jana Ratajová wrote about women in the early modern period in Central Europe with the perspective of women's history.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Gender Studies Centre established in 1991 presented a new approach to women's history through new types of primary history, for instance, the project *Paměť žen* (Women's Memories), dedicated to documenting women's experiences during state-socialism

⁶⁴ The *Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir was translated in 1966 during the period of the Prague Spring, which was significant by opening society and regime towards foreign influences. However, for instance, in the iconic text by Joan W. Scott, Gender as a useful analytical category has not yet been translated at all. Lenderová, 'Dějiny žen mezi women's a gender history', 49.

⁶⁵ Some women's history scholars pushed historical knowledge from these different perspectives, such as Pavla Horská. Lenderová, 49.

⁶⁶ Nečasová, 'Dějiny žen či gender history?'; Lenderová, 'Dějiny žen mezi women's a gender history'.

⁶⁷ Nečasová, 'Dějiny žen či gender history?', 100–101.

⁶⁸ Kateřina Lišková, 'Sex under Socialism: From Emancipation of Women to Normalized Families in Czechoslovakia', *Sexualities* 19, no. 1–2 (2016): 211–35; Andrea Bělehradová and Kateřina Lišková, 'Aging Women as Sexual Beings. Expertise between the 1950s and 1970s in State Socialist Czechoslovakia', *The History of the Family* 26, no. 4 (2021): 562–82.

⁶⁹ Jana Ratajová and Lucie Storchová, *Žena není přišera, ale nejmilejší stvoření boží: diskursy manželství v české literatuře raného novověku* (Scriptorium, 2009).

through oral history methods.⁷⁰ Essential researchers in the field of Czech feminism include, for example, Hana Havelková⁷¹ and Jiřina Šiklová.⁷²

Another helpful source for contextualizing Czech ecofeminists in my thesis was a book by Arnošt Novák: *Tmavozelený svět: radikálně ekologické aktivity v České republice po roce 1989*, which is crucial in contextualizing the radical environmental movement, in which some ecofeminist groups and activities could be included.⁷³ His framework does not allow the inclusion of every existing group, and his research choices excluded groups I am interested in. After all, in the Czech Republic, the authors do not consider the specific practices of ecofeminist groups and their ideologies; the scholars focus on the intellectual dimensions of the movement and the description of its ideas. On the one hand, this implies the very invisibility of ecofeminists, the lack of labeling as such, and relatively small ecofeminist groups without broader impact and networks. On the other hand, I argue that researchers permanently overlook groups of women in the history of the environmental movement in the Czech Republic after 1989. Although Novák conducted 8 out of 26 interviews with women, he did not reflect on or focus on female figures. Even though he transparently explains his effort to describe only a part of the movement, I am convinced that including women's groups and gender analysis would enrich the debate, and here I see the contribution of my thesis.

⁷⁰ In 1991, Jiřina Šiklová established Gender Studies, o. p. s. in her apartment. This organization became a pioneer in introducing the concept of gender to academia. Their library contains a vast collection covering gender and women's studies, feminism, fiction, and periodicals. Moreover, the archive conserves historical materials and contributions from Czech women's movement activists. 'Gender Studies', accessed 22 February 2024, <https://genderstudies.cz/gender-studies/historie.shtml?x=237046>.

⁷¹ Hana Havelková, the philosopher who established a gender studies program at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, devoted some of her books to gender under state socialism. Hana Havelková, 'Jako v loterii: politická reprezentace žen v ČR po roce', *Vyjednávání ženských prostorů po roce 1989*, n.d.; Havelková and Oates-Indruchová, *Politics of Gender Culture Under State Socialism*.

⁷² Šiklová, 'Feminism and the Roots of Apathy in the Czech Republic'.

⁷³ Novák, *Tmavozelený svět: radikálně ekologické aktivity v České republice po roce 1989*.

The exceptions in the Czech context are student theses, primarily written after 2005, that examine concrete associations, although the historical dimension is at the margins of the interest. The most relevant work about ecofeminism in the Czech Republic is a thesis by Zora Javorská.⁷⁴ She describes the relationship between the environmental movement and ecofeminism and discusses individual organizations' contemporary goals and activities. I am critical of Javorská's thesis for the lack of deep analysis of organizations and the interpretative part; she draws from websites and pamphlets, and thus, it is a very unidirectional analysis summarizing the proclamations of organizations. This critique is not to undermine her work but to highlight the need for more comprehensive research. However, based on her thesis, I started my research by contacting the groups she mentioned.

Most fruitful for my writing is Kateřina Černá's thesis, which processes interviews to supplement the context, not for historical research, but for sociological research.⁷⁵ Thanks to the fact that she attached some of the interviews, I can use them as supplementary sources. In addition, the interpretation of the interviews presents a comparable study for my thesis because she examines actors' subjectivity and self-understanding via the prism of ecofeminism. Still, again, this is a synthesis and analysis of ideas without connection to practice and historical dimensions.

Generally speaking, a small amount of secondary literature combines ecofeminist ideas with the practice of the environmental movement, considering a historical dimension. The main difference between scholarship emerging from other world regions or broadly received internationally and Eastern European literature is the difficulty in finding ecofeminist movements in the terms used within Western contexts. Although the tendency of scholars to

⁷⁴ Zora Javorská, 'Skryté výzvy ekofeminismu a jeho praktická aplikace v environmentálním hnutí' (Masarykova Univerzita Fakulta sociálních studií Katedra environmentálních studií, 2008).

⁷⁵ Kateřina Černá, 'Ekofeministické hnutí u nás? Tři případové studie', 2006.

examine ecofeminism through philosophical or sociological lenses is shared across academia, the absence of historicization of ecofeminism in Eastern Europe is more significant due to the lack of an ecofeminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s, which was in the US and post-colonial states. In recent years, however, studies analyzing the historical development of the ecofeminist movements have begun to emerge, which I want to follow up on. Furthermore, studies drawing from historical actors' perspectives are missing, which I aim to address in my thesis critically. Finishing with Joan Kelly-Godol's quote: "*Women's history has a dual goal: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women.*"⁷⁶ This thesis tries to restore Czech ecofeminist groups to the Czech history of the 1990s as a part of the broader context of developing historiography in the Czech lands. It was necessary to first "find" Czech ecofeminists to achieve this objective.

Finding (Eco)feminists

As I have already analyzed in the literature review, there are no historical studies of ecofeminism within Czech historiography, and one of the reasons for this is the lack of incorporation of other types of archival materials not only in the state's archives. In this subchapter, I reflect on my archival research, particularly on alternative sources I work with, such as zines from subculture production. Also, I reflect on my oral history research through the post-positivist and feminist oral history and present the theoretical and methodological challenges and my approach to conducting interviews.

The question of primary sources adds another challenge to women's history. The accessibility and presence of primary sources in archives shape historical practice and subsequent research. The apparent lack of primary sources for Czech ecofeminists made me wonder how to find

⁷⁶ Joan Kelly-Gadol, 'The Social Relation of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 4 (1976): 809.

other sources that have not been used yet. I found out about the alternative archive, which can be seen as a result of the archival turn in history.

The archival turn crossed and influenced various disciplines, such as literature, art, cultural studies, and history, from the end of the 1980s.⁷⁷ The term archival turn suggests epistemological change when scholars started to understand archives not solely as an institution but as status or practice. By criticizing traditional government and religious archives and announcing a new approach in which everyone can be an archivist, the archive becomes a tool for empowerment, as Römken and Wiersma suggest.⁷⁸ Archiving can open or cement history interpretations; collaboration and discovering new possibilities are crucial for the latest history practice. Therefore, historians of women's history realized the need to create more archives to transform history and produce feminist knowledge.⁷⁹

I started my research with the National Archive in Prague. I requested seven unclassified cartons of documents from two NGOs: Zelený kruh (Green Circle), which has existed since 1989, and Agentura GAIA (Agency GAIA), which has functioned since 1989.⁸⁰ The state's archive had no other documents for ecofeminism organizations and groups active in the 1990s. To find links to ecofeminism in the Green Circle, which has an agenda to network different environmental associations, I had to read against the grain, i.e., "*criticize assumptions and compel engagement with alternatives,*"⁸¹ and interpret historical texts and sources in ways that challenge the dominant or conventional narratives, see the information about which sources are silent. In an example from the NGO Green Circle, I discovered that two women

⁷⁷ Renée Römken and Antia Wiersma, 'The Archival Turn: Archiving as a Tool for Empowerment', in *Yearbook of Women's History: Gender and Archiving*, vol. 37 (Uitgeverij Verloren, 2017), 9–20.

⁷⁸ Römken and Wiersma.

⁷⁹ Römken and Wiersma, 1,9.

⁸⁰ NAD 1745, Zelený kruh kar. 1, 'Fond: Spolky a občanská sdružení po roce 1990' (Zelený kruh, o. s., n.d.), Karton 1-2, Národní archiv; NAD 1776 Agentura GAIA, kar. 1, 'Fond: Spolky a občanská sdružení po roce 1990' (Agentura GAIA, o. s., Spolky a občanská sdružení po roce 1990), Karton 1-3, Národní archiv.

⁸¹ Andrew Wiget, 'Reading against the Grain: Origin Stories and American Literary History', *American Literary History* 3, no. 2 (1991): 228.

held prominent positions in the executive office during a significant transition period within the male-dominated organization's leadership. The source from the National Archive does not provide information regarding their identity, interests, and expectations compared to the male figures, who are directors or committee members.

To fill the gap, I had to look at another possible source, and at that time, “my archive” became much more than documents in traditional archives. I used websites, oral history, and zines from anarchist production, and due to these cross-finds, I found in the environmental movement in the 1990s. For instance, Adéla Purschová, an ecofeminist, later left the Green Circle and co-founded the first self-proclaimed ecofeminist NGO. Her ideas and beliefs had already been formulated while working at Green Circle. What follows is a new, separate point, but the documents are silent about workers in the office. Documents tell us about representatives, thinkers, and directors, even though stable workers preparing agendas can be as influential within the organization as visible ones.⁸²

While “finding ecofeminist groups,” I realized how crucial imagination and the ability to think outside the box are in finding sources. One of the most prominent archival theorists, Antoinette Burton, speaks about the necessity and radical possibility of reimagining archives to transform History and incorporate different histories and perspectives of marginalized people.⁸³ She talks mainly about domesticity, which has the potential to be rediscovered. For ecofeminists, this includes the reproductive work behind environmental movements and all grey areas of women’s activities, knowledge about which is not stored in traditional archives.

⁸² A about this collection: it is in the National Archive thanks to the which? other ecofeminists who decided to archive everything for the sake of her who? organizing and being director of Green Circle 1993-1996.

⁸³ Antoinette M Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2003), 2.

The aspect of who counts as a historical subject worth archiving is crucial while thinking about archives. As Kirsty Reid and Fiona Paisley point out, “archival work is political” not just by the purpose of the archive (especially state one) but by the dimension of power position of the archivist deciding what to archive. Moreover, the histories of women are overlooked due to the relegation of women into the realm of the private and, therefore, considered by state archivists unimportant for storing.⁸⁴ I am aware I am not examining histories of subalterns or oppressed ones; women’s associations after 1989 were allowed but still marginalized. However, in contrast to male figures of the environmental movement, the leading women are invisible. After this recognition and realization, I decided to look around for alternatives.

Alternative archives are sometimes more challenging to find; volunteers often run these archives without institutional support. This is the case of the Archive of Czech and Slovak Subcultures, which I discovered by chance. Due to supplementary grants and different activities of the leading archivist, Miroslav Michela created a collection of zines from the post-socialist period. The archive started to function in 2015, and not only funding but also collections of zines are based on volunteers. The main goals of the archive are preserving and presenting marginalized historical sources, producing its own zines and subcultural publications, and contributing to the public discourse.⁸⁵ Compared to the traditional archive, I see two significant differences that characterize the Archive of Czech and Slovak Subcultures: the creation of sources by publishing own zines made by the community around the archive and the focus on marginalized stories as an agenda of the whole archive. The establishment of this archive reflects the proliferation of debates on the archival turn and the expanding

⁸⁴ Kirsty Reid and Fiona Paisley, ‘Sources and Methods in Histories of Colonialism’, *Abingdon: Routledge*, 2017, 2,7.

⁸⁵ Miroslav Michela, ‘Archiv českých a slovenských subkultur – archiv českých a slovenských subkultur’, accessed 22 February 2024, <http://ziny.info/>.

definition of the archive. Based on the grassroots anarchist movement, the archive creates an alternative space with alternative histories.

Zines must be described as a source to show the specifics of the archiving in the Archive of Czech and Slovak Subcultures. By scholarly definition, zines are independently created and self-published magazines and pamphlets that combine aspects of personal diaries and magazines. Non-hierarchical and non-profitable structures or institutions usually spread zines.⁸⁶ However, this definition of the ideal type of zines is only accurate to some sources found in the Czech and Slovak Subculture Archive in Prague, which is focused on archiving zines.⁸⁷ The umbrella catch-all term for all zines is impossible due to the uniqueness of every self-made magazine. After all, in my research, the zines from anarcho-feminist production fulfill most of the specific nature of zines: DIY nature, self-made production, and non-profitable interests.

Due to the nature of the zines and the specific distribution secured by friends and volunteers, zines present a challenge for archiving. Zines are not part of any hierarchical and profitable structures or institutions with the need for archiving. These aspects make zines a great non-mainstream “method of feminist empowerment and resistance.”⁸⁸ From these definitions, it is clear how unique source zines are. In zines, the authors are more likely to share their thoughts without filtration of other structures, which is typical for profitable structures. However, the subcultural nature presents challenges as well. I found it extremely difficult to find the real names of authors and proper dates of publications, and the distribution is almost impossible to capture. The researcher’s experience in the archive is both encouraging and challenging to process. In a small room without a catalog, I depended on the archivist and his willingness to

⁸⁶ Dawn Bates and Maureen C McHugh, ‘Zines: Voices of Third Wave Feminists’, in *Different Wavelengths* (Routledge, 2014), 179.

⁸⁷ Michela, ‘Archiv českých a slovenských subkultur – archiv českých a slovenských subkultur’.

⁸⁸ Bates and McHugh, ‘Zines: Voices of Third Wave Feminists’, 180.

open the archive. These barriers in accessibility are understandable; after all, I managed to access documents, and this embodied experience kept me motivated to look through materially interesting zines (made from collages with visible craftsmanship). Including zines in my research next to the (eco)feminist non-profit organizations shows the importance of recognizing and honoring different feminist generations for “*imagining and working to build possible worlds in the present.*”⁸⁹

As my last written primary source, I utilized informational magazines from ecofeminist organizations, fragments of which I obtained from the activists themselves because the entire series of these magazines and newsletters are not available in the libraries or archives (although in the future, some of them will be stored there). Since 1990, the organization Prague Mothers has published a monthly newsletter ten times a year, called initially the *Měsíční zpravodaj Pražských matek* (Monthly Newsletter of Prague Mothers) and renamed to *Přes práh* in 1994.⁹⁰ Similarly, Jihočeské matky (South Bohemian Mothers) published a magazine called the *Měsíčník Jihočeských matek proti jadernému nebezpečí* (Newsletter of South Bohemian Mothers Against Nuclear Danger).⁹¹ These magazines served the members and supporters of the organizations and acted as primary tools for disseminating information.

After difficulties finding ecofeminists in archives, oral history research was one logical next step. The oral history method is essential in research cases without primary written sources. I do not consider oral history a data collection method but a paradigm and methodology of historical research with its corpus of theories. I am drawing here upon the work of scholars who are part of the so-called post-positivist turn in oral history that emphasizes memory and

⁸⁹ Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Temple University Press, 2013), 10.

⁹⁰ Pražské matky, ‘Měsíční zpravodaj Pražských matek’ (Pražské matky z. s., 1990).

⁹¹ Jihočeské matky proti jadernému nebezpečí, ‘Zpravodaj jihočeských matek proti jadernému nebezpečí.’ (Jihočeské matky proti jadernému nebezpečí, 1991-, 1992).

subjectivity, and later, the turn to intersubjectivity, mainly by Alessandro Portelli, Luisa Passerini, Michael Frisch, Ronald J. Grele, and Lynn Abrams.⁹² Alistair Thomson talks about the post-positivist turn in oral-historical research, which was a response to criticism of the unreliability of memory by traditional, factual historians.⁹³ Oral historians have begun to respond to such criticisms by emphasizing the primacy of the subjectivity of their sources, focusing on the construction of memory and its meanings, which overlap with and track individual cultural forms in narratives. Post-positivism, in this sense, means rejecting finding one objective truth in history; historians should emphasize the subjective nature of their primary sources and highlight the meaning behind narratives.⁹⁴ Oral-historical narratives thus make it possible to see cultural representations in the actors' perspective of their own life story when narrators constantly "negotiate" their self-construction in dialogue with culture, which, as Lynn Abrams describes, represents "*wider social forces or the public-political world or the discursive field.*"⁹⁵ By asking why someone re-tells a story in a certain way, historians can grasp the meaning of the contemporary perspective of narrators, their socio-economic situation, and their relation to the past.

Although women's history as a field of history is not exclusively linked to the development of oral history, both disciplines arise from similar changes in the field of history, and their fundamental development also occurred in the post-war period and the 1970s with a turn to the study of historical subjectivity and later intersubjectivity.⁹⁶ Moreover, I perceive my oral

⁹² Alistair Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *The Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (2007): 49–70.

⁹³ Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Monash University Publishing, 2013), 54.

⁹⁴ Hlavními představiteli tohoto směru orální historie jsou Alessandra Portelliho, Luisa Passerini, Michaela Frische, Ronald J. Grele a Lynn Abrams.

⁹⁵ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 16.

⁹⁶ Abrams, 153–56.

history research as part of feminist oral history, which has its tradition but is marginal in the Czech academia.⁹⁷

My research is based on oral history interviews with members of activist groups that can be considered ecofeminists who were active in the 1990s. In the post-positivist paradigm of oral history, the researcher does not try to solicit a representative sample of narrators, as is the case primarily in sociological qualitative research. Instead, the oral historian aims to cover the broadest possible historical subjectivities/identity field. When choosing the narrators, I tried to affect different forms of agencies, i.e., the different capacities to act and influence the world; for instance, I tried to find women from various social and cultural backgrounds, different levels of engagement in these groups, cities, etc.⁹⁸ My primary criterion for choosing Czech ecofeminists was their practical engagement with activities related to feminism and ecology. The selection of narrators is based on their public engagement, including publications, interviews, and other projects where they align with ecofeminist ideas. The theoretical differences between ecofeminist thinking were not the main focus when selecting my narrators.

Given the limited number of potential narrators, a sociological sampling method is not employed; instead, I used the “snowball” method using given contacts of interviewed narrators.

After contacting them via email or phone, I conducted the interviews in the Czech Republic.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach with prepared areas of questions,

⁹⁷ I was particularly inspired by the works written by feminist oral historians Penny Summerfield and Lynn Abrams. Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Routledge, 2013).; Lynn Abrams, ‘Heroes of Their Own Life Stories: Narrating the Female Self in the Feminist Age’, *Cultural and Social History* 16, no. 2 (2019): 205–24. About feminist oral history in Czech Republic see: Radmila Šváříčková-Slabáková: Radmila Šváříčková-Slabáková, ‘Potřebujeme znát feministickou orální historii?: O autorkách, metodách i výzvách orálněhistorického feminismu’, *Časopis MEMO*, no. 2 (2020): 52–73.

⁹⁸ Alessandro Portelli, a folklorist and oral historian, discusses the concept of the “horizon of shared possibilities” in this context. The horizon of shared possibilities is the imagined potential for action, which shapes an individual's subjective capacity to act based on social norms, assumptions, and perceptions of reality. This means that when individuals perceive reality differently, they may act according to their perception rather than objective reality. See Portelli, Alessandro. “Philosophy and the facts: subjectivity and narrative form in autobiography and oral history.” *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (1997): 79-88.

allowing for additional inquiries based on information revealed during the conversation. Firstly, I always started with general questions targeted at their life experience to put their narrative into the context of their lives before and after. After that, I had five areas of topics: their recalls of 1989 and 1990s and their daily life during the 1990s, their genealogy of engagement into activism and its reflection, their perception of feminism and ecofeminism, particular events, and contemporary perspectives. During interviews, I carefully listened to their responses and then asked unprepared and more spontaneous questions to capture the uniqueness of every narrator's narrative and understand the individual historical experiences.

The peculiarities of oral history research come from ethics concerns. Compared to classical archival research, the researcher has to be concerned with the effects on narrators, such as re-traumatization, the revelation of private information, and the impact of the resulting publication on the narrator. Therefore, I adhere to the ethical research guidelines stipulated by the Central European University's Ethical Research Policy.⁹⁹ Narrators were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, which provided information about the project and the possibility of withdrawing consent during data processing.¹⁰⁰

After all, I did interview eight women: Dana Kuchtová, a founding member of South Bohemian Mothers; Petra Francová and Anna Hradilková as founding members of Prague Mothers; Marie Haisová and Adéle Purschová from Green Circle and Agency GAIA, Jitka Poláková as a member of the ecofeminist group Luna, Lenka Hřibová from environmental circles in Brno and as an of permaculturist, and Petra Jelínková from the younger generation of ecofeminists active after 2000, but experiencing the 1990s in their adolescence. Overall, the age of the

⁹⁹ Checklist on Ethical Issues in Research (Annex 3 to the Ethical Policy on Research). See 'Ethical Research Policy | Official Documents', accessed 17 January 2024, <https://documents.ceu.edu/documents/p-1012-1v2201>.

¹⁰⁰ See Attachment n. 1.

women ranged from 42 years old, and the oldest woman was 73 years old; locally, they mostly came from Prague but also from České Budějovice, Brno, and northern Bohemia.

In my case study of finding Czech ecofeminists active during the 1990s, I discovered how traditional national archives lack information about women's activists. The alternative Archive of Czech and Slovak Subcultures presents a unique opportunity and contribution of a new archival approach drawing from archival turn in which a collaborative and creative approach towards archiving is welcomed. I find it extremely useful to use knowledge produced during and after the archival turn in Czech history to bring together new historical and feminist practices. Furthermore, the oral history research served me both in filling the gaps in the archive and gaining a broader understanding of meaning from the contemporary perspective in which the interviews were conducted.

Chapter overview

In the first chapter, I focus on formal and informal ecofeminist groups' internal dynamics and historical development. I outline the essential historical development of individual groups, their activities, and their engagement in the public sphere and introduce the key figures in Czech ecofeminism and its various specificities, including the emphasis on education and the historical experience of participants who, as women (mothers), find their place in the non-profit sector. This chapter also sketches interactions with domestic environmental and feminist movements. In the second chapter, I focus on interacting and interconnectedness with foreign actors and activist networks. Besides literary sources in zines and organizational magazines, I reflect on the participants' experiences, the historical evolution of interactions with international actors, and the adaptations implemented by Czech ecofeminists. The conclusion addresses interactions with international ecofeminist organizations and events around the 1990s.

1. CHAPTER: CZECH ECOFEMINISM?

„And back then, they were encountering in someone’s kitchen, there was a few women, volunteers, who simply decided, they need to do something.”¹⁰¹

Each of us can imagine the situation: women on maternity leave meet at one of their homes with their children, and in addition to debates about the daily worries associated with raising children, the discussion will come up about children’s health, their future, and life, in by which they live and will live. Suddenly, there are other stories connected with the care of the environment for their children, fear of their health being affected by polluted air, water, etc. At that moment of the imagined scene, women leave their kitchens to “fight for a better world.” In a similar story, Czech women organized themselves at the end of the 1980s and fought for their children, families, and nature. They also continued their efforts during the 1990s because the fight for a better environment did not end after the Velvet Revolution 1989; quite the opposite. Although this dynamic of mothers-activists was not the only one among (eco)feminists, I introduce this image of “ecofeminism from the kitchen” as the start of trying to capture ecofeminism in the 1990s in the Czech Republic because it brings a different perspective from more famous students’ protests, expands our imagination of what protest and activism could look like.

In this chapter, I aim not to describe every supporter of ecofeminism and every organization but to capture some general trends, situate them within the broader context of the period, and interpret the experiences of (eco)feminists in the 1990s. I focus primarily on the networks within formal and informal ecofeminist groups, examining their development, topics, and

¹⁰¹ Dana Kuchtová, Oral History Interview, interview by Marie Jiříčková, trans. Marie Jiříčková, 7 March 2024, 5.

activities while highlighting individual historical experiences and their connections to the environmental movement.

First, I describe the (eco)feminist groups and their historical development. Then, based on my archival and oral history research, I interpret the historical trends, including the influence of the nonprofit sector's development, alternative space for "ecofeminism from the squat," and the experiences of these women as they found their place and voice in a male-dominated space after 1989. I present a mosaic of Czech ecofeminism in the 1990s, characterized by groups of women becoming active in the public sphere. This mosaic is vibrant with diverse themes, activism methods, and its participants' interconnectedness.

I aim to highlight the specific features of Czech ecofeminism in the 1990s. I argue that Czech ecofeminists draw from two types of ecofeminism: social and radical, with leftist notions and criticism towards capitalism. The specific features include focusing on social issues, fostering societal change through education and advocacy, and the shared experiences of women entering public life and finding their place within the nonprofit sector. Additionally, I also analyzed two Slovak ecofeminist zines from Bratislava, as Slovak and Czech anarchist networks were connected.¹⁰²

1.1. Institutionalized Platforms for Ecofeminism

As I already outlined in the introduction, my research focused mainly on three organizations from the 1990s that are often described as ecofeminists due to their agendas and activities connecting feminist and environmental issues. South Bohemian Mothers, Prague Mothers, which started to be organized in the late 1980s, and the Agency GAIA, founded in 1997. However, the activities of Agency GAIA pre-date the official existence and were developed in

¹⁰² Slačálek and Tomek, 'Anarchismus'.

Green Circle when Maria Haisová, founder of Agency GAIA and director of Green Circle from 1993 to 1996, organized a Club for Women. All three organizations have elements of ecofeminism and move between social and spiritual ecofeminism, although not all members describe themselves as (eco)feminists.

Prague Mothers date their existence from 1988, and as I noted in the introduction, their activities were crucial during demonstrations in 1989. In their protest on May 29, 1989, the Prague Mothers took to the streets of Prague with strollers to show to whom they were demanding clean air. The main points of their petition included protests against the construction of the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Waterworks, nuclear power plants, and urban pollution, which 428 mothers signed.¹⁰³ During the protest, around 30 mothers sang and collected signatures on a petition calling attention to the dire state of the environment and demanding transparency of information. The main organizers were Anna Hradilková, Terezie Hradilková, Rút Kolínská, Monika Šatavová, and Michaela Valentová.¹⁰⁴ Other strong figures of the group were Jarmila Johnová and Petra Francová.

Post-1989, the group of mothers/women continued their political protests, even as the environmental situation in Czechoslovakia improved. After the Velvet Revolution, there was a surge in supporters, expanding their influence on all parts of Prague. The movement was professionalized, and magazines and informational newsletters were published. Prague Mothers had become part of the network of environmental organizations under the umbrella of the Green Circle. They institutionalized themselves as an association. The articles of association from 1991 define “*the Earth as a complete and unique living system, from which*

¹⁰³ The letter was sent to the Národní výbor hlavního města Prahy, Hlavní hygienik hl. města Prahy a Ústav zdravotní výchovy v Praze (National Committee of Prague, the Chief Hygienist, and the Institute of Health Education in Prague). Vaněk, *Ostrůvky svobody*, 263–64.

¹⁰⁴ Ekolist.cz, ‘První demonstraci zorganizovaly Pražské matky před třiceti lety’, Ekolist.cz, 28 May 2019, <https://ekolist.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/zpravy/prvni-demonstraci-zorganizovaly-prazske-matky-pred-triceti-lety>.

man has no business to separate himself, the existence of other life forms defines human rights. Humans must use their exceptional abilities to care for life and not to dominate it.”¹⁰⁵ The articles also emphasized education, particularly for families with children, considering the family unreplaceable. Notably, the statutes also highlighted the need to think about future generations.¹⁰⁶

From the extract above, Prague Mothers declares the holistic approach toward nature typical for ecofeminism. There is also a criticism of hierarchical structures in which humans suppress nature, although there is no explicit mention of patriarchal structures. During the period of state socialism, equality between women and men was declared in the workplace, in a Communist Party, etc., and the Czech women’s activists hesitated to align with feminism, as I elaborated in the introduction about “East and West” debates among feminists in post-socialist countries. Therefore, in the Czech Republic, there was an incomprehension of criticism of patriarchy.¹⁰⁷ The narrators reflected that they wanted to avoid accusations of criticism of the male population. Furthermore, targeting the agenda of organizations to all people is a strategy in many movements, especially among Czech environmental activists, who hoped that after 1989, all people would prioritize solving ecological problems, and they saw hope in the new economic regime.¹⁰⁸ Prague Mothers targeted an audience of people in general; however, in the 1990s, the women/mothers were still prior members and audience. The shift of audience happened lately, and in 2020, the Prague Mothers was renamed *Pěšky městem* (On foot through the city), which was explained as an effort to have a label that links to the practice of organization, the focus on urban planning and public space.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Pražské matky, z. s., ‘Stanovy Hnutí Pražské Matky’, 1991, art. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Pražské matky, z. s., art. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Šiklová, ‘Different Region, Different Women: Why Feminism Isn’t Successful in the Czech Republic’.

¹⁰⁸ Arnošt Novák, ‘Česká Environmentální Přímá Akce v Mezinárodním Kontextu’, *Mezinárodní Vztahy* 48, no. 3 (2013): 91.

¹⁰⁹ *Pěšky městem*, z. s., ‘Pražské matky se mění na Pěšky městem – Pěšky městem’ (*Pěšky městem*, z. s., 12 October 2020), 1, <https://peskymestem.cz/prazske-matky-se-meni-na-pesky-mestem/>.

Although, Prague Mothers are careful about claiming to be feminists. Still, there are efforts to continue in feminist tradition from the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938), for instance, when trying to get a house that women's associations for feminist-related activities previously owned.¹¹⁰ Together with anarcho-feminists, they organized the Women's Street Party to get the house back.¹¹¹

Moreover, in my research, I found that, to some extent, this narrative by members of Prague Mothers about their disinterest and lack of focus on feminism is a certain learned and repeated trope. In the interviews I conducted with them and in others I read, the initial response to the question about feminism is more or less the same for everyone: *"It came to us later; we focused on something else; feminism was not a topic for us."* However, upon more profound analysis of the continuation of these interviews, an interest in feminist and women's issues emerges, even when describing activities in the 1990s. Anna Hradilková connects this with her family, expressing happiness that her daughter, growing up in the 1990s in a "different time," is already more confident and able to assert herself. She also points out problems other members of Prague's mothers faced because their husbands did not want them to be so active outside the family. This complements her otherwise conservative and Christian stance that women have the right to be in public life and power, just like men. At the same time, she describes a specific discord among the members of Prague Mothers, which likely led to them not expressing much on the topic of feminism and using the same narrative. However, it was an issue for many of them, or they would not be so afraid of the term publicly. *"This discussion would completely overwhelm us, and we wanted to avoid it simply because we didn't have a unified opinion."*¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Růt Kolínská, 'Dům Ve Smečkách 25', 1992.

¹¹¹ Ludmila Böhmová, 'Proč tolik žen odmítá "hnutí"? Anarchofeminismus jako příběh dvojí emancipace', in *Nečekáme nic od reform. Kapitoly českého anarchistického hnutí* (Praha: Herrmann & synové, 2024), 413.

¹¹² Hradilková, Oral History Interview, 11.

Apart from raising awareness against cars and efforts for a safer city, Prague Mothers' robust agenda included Maternity Centers, whose establishment was initiated by Rút Kolínská. She was inspired by Czech-German Alena Wagnerová, who had founded Maternity Centers in West Germany in the 1980s.¹¹³ The first center was established in 1992 in Prague, and additional centers were gradually founded in many other cities. The agenda of these centers has lately separated from the Prague Mothers. As Steven Saxonberg says, the centers have gained some influence on the government as a non-feminist and 'conservative' group.¹¹⁴ Another project worth mentioning was citizen counseling sessions, in which Petra Francová played a vital role. Terezie Hradilková established early intervention centers for families with disabled children; Lída Böhmová founded SIRIRI o. p. s. to help developing African countries.¹¹⁵ I mention other non-profit organizations of the founders here because they nicely illustrate the Prague Mothers as a specific starting point for many women and a nest of social, feminist, and ecological organizations. According to their website, they perceive their most significant achievements in the 1990s: contributions to the creation of environmental legislation after 1989, the initiation of emission monitoring in Prague, the speed limit in municipalities to 50 km/h, the initiation of the smog ordinance, and the anchoring of priority for pedestrians on crosswalks.¹¹⁶

The Prague Mothers newsletter targeted mothers and parents, addressing environmental issues such as acidic and polluted air, healthcare, education, nutrition, infrastructure, automobile transport, and cooperation with other associations. It also covered topics on ecological

¹¹³ In 1995, Rút Kolínská published the book inspired by the book "Mutter im Zentrum Mutterzentrum" from 1985. See Kolínská, Rút. *Mateřská Centra*. Prague Mothers, 1995.

¹¹⁴ Steven Saxonberg, K Jacobsson, and S Saxonberg, 'The Influence of "Conservative" Women's and Family Organizations in Hungary and the Czech Republic', *Beyond NGO-ization, The Development of Social Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2013, 97–115.

¹¹⁵ Pražské matky, z. s., 'Pražským matkám je třicet. Jde jim stále o to samé' (Pěšky městem, z. s., 5 2019), <https://peskymestem.cz/tiskove-zpravy/>.

¹¹⁶ Pražské matky, 'Měsíční zpravodaj Pražských matek'.

household products, including reprints of letters to politicians, and provided invitations to events like Earth Day, protests, lectures, and workshops.¹¹⁷

Although ecofeminism was not central to Prague Mother's attention, there were links to ecofeminist thought. Although the two primary authors cited by Czech ecofeminists—Hana Librová and Erazim Kohák—were not part of the ecofeminist groups, they were prominently featured in formal and informal ecofeminist magazines in the 1990s.

Philosopher Erazim Kohák (1933-2020) was an essential figure for Czech ecofeminism; when he returned to Czechoslovakia and became a professor at Charles University in Prague after 1989, he was writing to the newspapers with the experience of “Western life.” During the 1990s, he focused on environmental ethics and, in 1998, published *Zelená svatozář: kapitoly z ekologické etiky* (The Green Halo: A Bird's-Eye View of Ecological Ethics), in which he discussed, among other topics, the concept Gaia.¹¹⁸ The articles emphasize the critique of globalization, unlimited growth, and exploitation of nature. In a reprinted interview with the name “Chodit světem pomalu” (Walk the World Slowly), Kohák presents the myth of catching up with the West, which is, according to him from Chrušcov. Kohák further criticizes the concept of never-ending growth: “*Everywhere, where the meaning of life becomes the constant escalation of the standard of living, we will hit a limit beyond which there is only boredom and further increases in consumption become meaningless. ... If we do not want to deprive ourselves of the world, we must move through it slowly.*”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Stanislav Medřický, *Katalog vystavujících organizací: 1. výstava nestátních, neziskových, veřejně prospěšných organizací, Praha 1. a 3. prosince 1994* (Praha: Výstavní výbor I. výstavy nestátních, neziskových, veřejně prospěšných organizací, 1994), 85.

¹¹⁸ Erazim Kohák, ‘Zelená Svatozář, SLON’, 1998; Erazim Kohák, *The Green Halo: A Bird's-Eye View of Ecological Ethics* (Open court, 2011).

¹¹⁹ Erazim Kohák, ‘Chodit Světem Pomalu’, no. 15 (29 June 1992).

There is an article by sociologist and environmentalist Hana Librova directly entitled “Ecofeminism,” in which she rejects feminism but highlights ecofeminism. According to her, feminism is the masculinization of women, whereas in ecofeminism, feminine spirituality and culture have their place. The main argument is presented against “classical feminists,” who reject biological differences between sexes and want to go on a journey of rationality, objectivity, abstraction, etc., and join the “exploiting man’s elite.” The ecofeminists are presented as respecting nature in women and feminine natural behavior, who do not want to be equal with men (in the sense of same as men) and be in men’s world, but they want to find a balance and ¹²⁰

The group of **South Bohemian Mothers** from České Budějovice also dates back to 1989. However, it was officially established in 1991 and was registered as a civic association in 1992. According to their articles of association, they are an “*independent non-political environmental organization, whose mission is protecting nature and landscape. The association strives to correct the environment and man’s relationship to it and promote a nature-friendly alternative lifestyle and sustainable development.*”¹²¹ The association aims to educate children and adults about life and the truth, protect nature, and promote ecological and aesthetic education. The second point of their way of working mentions “*stopping risky non-ecological technologies, especially nuclear energy.*” Their articles of association focus on families as an irreplaceable factor in raising children and the civic dimension.¹²² The feminist criticism towards systems or power structures is not there; they remained feminists in the practices.

In some periods and interviews, the members of South Bohemian Mothers subscribed to ecofeminism but were hesitant to label themselves. The priority was environmental issues, but

¹²⁰ Hana Librova, ‘Ecofeminismus’, *Měsíční zpravodaj Pražských matek* 16 (1992).

¹²¹ Jihočeské matky, ‘Stanovy občanského sdružení Jihočeské matky’, 1992, article n.1.

¹²² Jihočeské matky, article n. 2.

as they reflected, feminism came after dealing with politics in which women's voices were marginalized. Dana Kuchtová describes what they achieved from the feminist perspective: “Women can focus on any topic, not least the social and health fields. (..) I think we simply contributed with our courage to the topic of technology or women and nuclear energy. (...). And that we also often succeeded in getting people to think that why couldn't the women say it? They say it correctly.”¹²³

Compared to the Prague Mothers, South Bohemian Mothers were quite narrowly focused on one topic, namely nuclear energy, precisely because of the regional nature of the group existing in the shadow of the nuclear power plant Temelín. Apart from blockades and protests in front of Temeleín, they held lectures, spoke at foreign conferences, and promoted alternative energy sources. To a lesser extent, they focus on other topics and projects that can affect the environment, such as incinerators, recreational parks, and large poultry farms.¹²⁴

The Green Circle was established in 1989. Its office was on Lublaňská Street, which became an office space for many other environmental organizations, including Prague Mothers.¹²⁵ According to the articles of associations, the Green Circle is an “*association of non-governmental and non-profit organizations, movements, groups, and individuals working on an informational basis.*”¹²⁶ In the 1990s, 200 ecological movements and initiatives were brought together from the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

¹²³ Kuchtová, Oral History Interview, 12.

¹²⁴ Alison E Adams and Thomas E Shriver, ‘Collective Identity and Gendered Activism in the Czech Environmental Movement: The South Bohemian Mothers’ Struggle against Nuclear Power’, in *Critical Aspects of Gender in Conflict Resolution, Peacebuilding, and Social Movements* (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2011), 163–89.

¹²⁵ Medřický, *Katalog vystavujících organizací*, 78.

¹²⁶ NAD 1745, Zelený kruh kar. 1, ‘Fond: Spolky a občanská sdružení po roce 1990’.

Crucial person for Czech ecofeminism was a Marie Haisová.¹²⁷ During Marie Haisová's tenure as director of Green Circle (1993-1996), she created several programs such as "Women in Public Life and Politics," "Green City," and "And Community Planning." She organized a campaign to save the house for environmental organizations in Prague. Together with Eva Hauserová, back then the spokesperson for the Green Circle, founded the Women's Club, and together they organized expert seminars. It is unclear from the archives exactly when the ecofeminist Women's Club within the Green Circle was founded, but other clues suggest it was likely around 1995.¹²⁸ A Green Circle leaflet mentions an invitation to an all-day pre-holiday sabbat for the Women's Club, stating that women "*will learn a new method of communication, developed in the women's movement in the West, and we will use it to seek and refine the further program of our club.*"¹²⁹

Agency GAIA was the only examined non-profit organization proudly affiliated with ecofeminism. It existed from the beginning of 1997 until it was deleted from the registers of the association in 2021. The nature of Agency GAIA was based on Marie Haisová's ideas. Her ideas and organizational activities were tightly connected. During the association's active period (1997-2010), they focused on the return of trees to the streets, research on women's attitudes towards the environment, globalization, and the theme of consumerism under the names of the programs "Green Means Life," "Women and the Environment," and "Alternatives to Consumerism."¹³⁰ They also organized several women's conferences; in 2000, they invited the eco-feminist Vandana Shiva to Prague, which I will discuss in Chapter 2.¹³¹ Compared to

¹²⁷Marie Haisová is an environmental, social, and feminist activist leader active during the 1990s and 2000s. She is one of the propagators of ecofeminism. Right after 1989, she was working in Václav Havel's presidential office. In 1990-1992, she co-founded the Czech-American Earthlinks Foundation and made environmental programs for schools. Marie Haisová, *Quo vadis, femina?: vize žen o trvale udržitelném životě* (Gimli, 2007).

¹²⁸ NAD 1745, Zelený kruh kar. 1, 'Fond: Spolky a občanská sdružení po roce 1990'.

¹²⁹ NAD 1745, Zelený kruh kar. 1.

¹³⁰ Haisová, *Quo vadis, femina?: vize žen o trvale udržitelném životě*, 266.

¹³¹ Haisová, 265.

other organizations and projects, they were characterized by avowed ecofeminism and a holistic approach.

Compared to the aforementioned organizations, which had multiple leaders, this organization appeared to be one woman's domain: Marie Haisová. However, Marie Haisová collaborated with Adéle Purschová and Hana Pernicová. To better understand her as one figure of a particular type of Czech ecofeminism in the 1990s, I examined her specific article in 1999 entitled "Quo Vadis, Marie?"¹³²

Marie Haisová's perception of the world is based on ecofeminist philosophy, which Vandana Shiva influenced. Her philosophy matches the definitions of radical/spiritual ecofeminism and, to some extent, of essentialism about the behaviors of the sexes. Marie Haisová describes feminine values, such as the ability to cooperate or love nature, as more "biologically given." Her critique of modern rationality centers on a system of repression rooted in hierarchical value thinking, where stereotypical masculine values dominate.¹³³ To sum up her activities, according to her Wikipedia account and her websites,¹³⁴ Marie Haisová "*passes on her knowledge and experience through lectures and discussions on management, equal opportunities, sustainable living, and alternatives to the consumer lifestyle. She is a coach and mentor of a holistic approach to life and supports the ecofeminism philosophy.*"¹³⁵ She includes the feminist movement of men as well; patriarchy affects them as well, and they might want to change in society as well. However, she does not acknowledge the concept of gender, even though by then, it was well-known among feminists.

¹³² Marie Haisová, 'Quo vadis, Marie?', in *Feminismus devadesátých let českýma očima*, ed. Marie Chřibková, Josef Chuchma, and Eva Klimentová, Vyd. 1, Nové čtení světa 1 (Praha: M. Chřibková : Výhradní distribuce, Kosmas, 1999).

¹³³ Zora Javorská, 'Skryté výzvy ekofeminismu', *Gender rovné příležitosti výzkum* 11, no. 02 (2010): 19–20.

¹³⁴ Marie Haisová, 'Marie Haisová', accessed 30 December 2023, <https://mariehaisova.webnode.cz/>.

¹³⁵ Unknown, 'Marie Haisová', in *Wikipedie*, 1 November 2023, https://cs.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Marie_Haisov%C3%A1&oldid=23337945.

All these organizations strongly emphasize education in terms of rhetoric (as a part of their articles of association) and practical application. Most of their activities were aimed at educating women in the fields of ecology and environmental topics. Additionally, from today's perspective, many of these women have continued to engage in environmental education. For example, Lenka Hřibová studied teaching and now runs her alternative kindergarten, Petra Francová taught at a university, and Dana Kuchtová studied teaching and, after a career in politics, returned to her work and now runs an orphanage.

In 1993, Hana Havelková discussed typical jobs for women in Czech society in the 1990s: teachers and office workers (over 80 % of teachers were women at the beginning of the 1990s).¹³⁶ Francová describes the practical aspect of being mothers who care about the education of their children: “*Well, we tried because most of us had young children when the education system started to change, so we all wanted to have our children in better schools. Many of us were involved in founding Waldorf schools and such.*”¹³⁷ However, the emphasis on education comes not only from the profession and social norms for women but also from their activism and efforts to change the world. For instance, Lenka Hřibová talks about eco-education as a part of the practice that works and is somehow influential for the community: “*I couldn't completely make a living just from that alternative kindergarten, you know. I also have some education-related projects, and I always joke a little that I'm influencing the teachers more.*”¹³⁸ In her understanding, parents should let their children be themselves because children are born in connection with nature, and parents and teachers must learn to recognize this connection.

¹³⁶ Hana Havelková, “‘Patriarchy’ in Czech Society”, *Hypatia* 8, no. 4 (1993): 89–96.

¹³⁷ Petra Francová, Oral History Interview, interview by Marie Jiříčková, trans. Marie Jiříčková, 3 April 2024, 9.

¹³⁸ Lenka Hřibová, Oral History Interview, interview by Marie Jiříčková, trans. Marie Jiříčková, 2 April 2024, 11.

Another emphasis by Czech (eco)feminists was on social issues and caregiving, with many women revisiting these topics professionally. References to this can be found in numerous journals. Francová, active in the “Pražské matky” (Prague Mothers) group, was a key figure in social issues and participated in the Prague Committee for Social Affairs. Reflecting on her social economist career, she calls herself the “grandmother of the field.”¹³⁹ Due to their focus on education, social issues, and leftist politics (support for left-wing parties and criticism of the diminishing role of the state), I would categorize many of their activities and the women involved within the stream of social ecofeminism, even though they never used such a label themselves.

1.2. Alternative Spaces for an Ecofeminism

After reading about the (eco)feminists in the non-profit sector, I wondered if there was something beyond NGOs, beyond institutionalized forms of ecofeminism, because of the possibility that these NGOs originated from alternative, non-visible, non-archivable circles of people who started to share the same topics and ideas.¹⁴⁰ To explore a different direction of ecofeminism in the 1990s, which was less visible in the public sphere than in NGOs, I began working with zines produced by authors affiliated with anarchism. I refer to this subchapter as “Alternative Spaces for Ecofeminism,” which provides a complementary narrative to Czech ecofeminism, primarily associated with mothers or women, which I named “ecofeminism from the kitchen.” During the 1990s, younger generations also engaged with ecofeminist thought. In my research, “ecofeminist underground” and grassroots ecofeminist groups represent a form of ecofeminism not as closely tied to the concerns of mothers and parents. This variant, which

¹³⁹ Francová, Oral History Interview, 10.

¹⁴⁰ After all, this already follows from works devoted to institutionalizing feminism. S. Lang describes transforming women’s movement into NGOs in the 1990s in Germany. For further reading, see Sabine Lang, ‘The NGOization of Feminism: Institutionalization and Institution Building within the German Women’s Movements1’, in *Transitions Environments Translations* (Routledge, 2013), 101–20.

I call “ecofeminism from the squat,” highlights the involvement of younger activists from anarcha-feminist circles. The ecofeminists from both the “kitchen” and the “squat” were not isolated from each other. The interconnections between these two forms and partly two generations of women can expand the understanding of Czech ecofeminism in the 1990s.

After outlining the factual and contextual aspects of anarcha-feminist production, I will analyze specific zines dedicated to ecofeminism, emphasizing Czech authors' sources of ideas, their understanding of ecofeminism, and their uniqueness and interconnections with institutionalized organizations and the environmental movement.

Some anarchists opposed the division of forces within the movement because they were against all forms of oppression. They believed that feminism was an integral part of anarchism, which should not be explicitly addressed. As a result, it was challenging for the early anarcha-feminists to establish their position.¹⁴¹ Still, there were some feminist zines, and in the 1990s, most of them bore traces of ecofeminism, which, especially after 2000, became less present. Regarding the anarcha-feminist production of zines, these zines were at the edge of anarchist interests. This is visible from the lack of specifically feminist zines compared to other primarily male-produced zines during the 1990s.¹⁴²

There was a zine called *Wicca*,¹⁴³ which was published from 1993-1996, together with brochures produced by the group *Wicca-Tuhaň* community in Tuhaň. The authors of *Wicca* label the zine as “*radical woman-man feminism that highlights differences between sexes and emphasizes women’s spirituality.*”¹⁴⁴ *Wicca* originated and was distributed from the cultural-social center and squat Black Hand, operated between 1992 and 1998 in an old school building

¹⁴¹ Poláková, Oral History Interview, 1.

¹⁴² *Anarchistická Publicistika 1990 – 2013*.

¹⁴³ ‘*Wicca*’ (Š. H., 1995 1993), Archiv českých a slovenských subkultur v Praze.

¹⁴⁴ Simone W., ‘Editorial’, *Wicca* I., no. 5 (1995): 9.

in Dejvice. *Esbat* was a zine; a more precise definition would be a short informational newsletter that began to be published by a women's group called Luna. This group emerged from the Prague autonomous scene around squat Landronka in 1995 when *Wicca* ceased to publish.¹⁴⁵ The narrator, Jitka Poláková, also reflected Kulturně-sociální centrum (Cultural-social Center), which was established on October 14, 1993, in Praha 6, Dejvice. The center became a place for various alternative activities, from kitchen workshops to theater and maternity center activities. The center collaborated on ethical issues with Nadace Black Hand for Alternative Culture, Prague Mothers, and animal rights groups.¹⁴⁶ Luna's activities ceased abruptly in 1998 due to a tragic death within the group.

It is worth mentioning that there was a specifically Slovak zine called *Nox*, which had on its cover the words "ecofeminist zine"; unfortunately, only one copy of the first issue of the zine is in the archive, and I could not figure out more information except that it was published in Bratislava in 1996/7.¹⁴⁷ The second Slovak zine with ecofeminism in a subtitle was *Čierna Vdova*, dedicated to ecofeminist literature.¹⁴⁸ Together with *Wicca* and *Esbat*, there were four specifically ecofeminist zines dedicated to ecofeminism; after 2000, the following zines' topics differed and were more rooted in feminism than environmentalism or spiritual anarchism.

Wicca, as the first feminist zine, was crucial for trendsetting for anarchy-feminist groups. Overall, *Wicca* had five issues during the four years. The authors describe it as a "*magazine for anarchy, witchcraft, and feminism, (...) for nature, spirituality, and the natural anarchy that every free-spirited creature has within.*"¹⁴⁹ Topics varied from deep ecology, biodiversity, modern paganism, and ecofeminist spirituality through poetry, informal texts about events,

¹⁴⁵ *Anarchistická Publicistika 1990 – 2013*, 135–43.

¹⁴⁶ Medřický, *Katalog vystavujících organizací*, 141.

¹⁴⁷ 'NOX' (Unknown, Bratislava, 1997 1996), Archiv českých a slovenských subkultur v Praze.

¹⁴⁸ 'Čierna vdova - ekofeministický literární fanzin' (Unknown, Bratislava, 1997), Archiv českých a slovenských subkultur v Praze.

¹⁴⁹ Yankee: úvod, *Wicca*, i. 2, 1994, p. 2.; Simone W.: Jděte cestou paměti, *Wicca*, č. 2, 1994, s. 3.

reviews, and translations of excerpts to issues related to feminism, violence against women in war, interruptions, patriarchy, etc. Visually, *Wicca* is filled with illustrations of powerful Women portrayed as beautiful rebels and witches, mothers, and often together with nature (trees). The primary sources for the articles were translations from Germany, the USA, and Britain, and I will analyze the international perspective in the last Chapter 2. The interconnections with the producers of zines can also be seen in the fact that in the last issue of *Wicca*, there was an interview with female members of Luna about their group.¹⁵⁰

According to the Luna members, publishers of *Esbat*, their group was formed based on the need to have their activities within the autonomous scene, which men dominated. Narrator Jitka Poláková described that they (women) were like “secretaries” who were good at making banners and all work around events, but not equal partners to debates within anarchist groups. Therefore, the Luna group was established to create space for women.¹⁵¹ Beyond publishing a zine, Luna organized public and cultural events, advocating feminism against racism and nationalism. The topics in *Esbat* were menstruation, violence against women, reproductive work, consumerism, cosmetics, anticonception, and “Third World” topics.

Analyzing Slovak ecofeminist zines *NOX* and *Čierna vdova*, I realized the most visible difference compared to Czech ones: an explicit subscription to ecofeminism already in the subtitle of the zine. Slovak zin *NOX* is a name by the ancient Roman Goddess of night and power. The uniqueness is that only one author made the whole issue; therefore, it is similar to a personal reflection/diary on specific topics; it is more poetic and artistic, even though the poems are common forms in zines. Even though the author subscribes to ecofeminism, she highlights that to return to nature, we do not need -is my (like ecofeminism), and women, men, and animals are all equal. The connection to anarchism is visible in articles about Direct Action

¹⁵⁰ Yankee: Holky ve scéně spěj, *Wicca*, i. 5, 1995, p. 11.

¹⁵¹ Poláková, Oral History Interview, 1.

and critics of punk as a macho dancing, antifascist call, and review of Czech anarcho-communist S. K. Neumann's book *History of Women*, which author of zine reviews from postcolonial theory and anthropology.¹⁵² Similarly, as Czech anarcho-feminists collaborate with the Gender Studies Centre in Prague, *Čierna vdova* works with *Aspekt*, a feminist journal.¹⁵³

It is evident from the abovementioned that ecofeminism is a vital topic in anarcho-feminist zines produced in the 1990s. My interpretation lies in the connection of anarchist groups with environmental ones. I argue that these strong ecofeminist references in the 1990s in anarcho-feminist zines are due to the popularity of ecofeminism and the strong connection of anarchist groups with environmentalists, which partly faded away after 2000 due to the professionalization of the activist movement.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, it is fruitful to look at environmental zines as well. The environmental zines were mostly periods without individual subscriptions to anarchist organizations and publishing projects. However, the main zine claimed allegiance to green anarchism. It was published first under the name *Provazníček* in 1995 and from 1996 to 2000 under the name *Zelený Provazníček* in Dvůr Králové and Labem.¹⁵⁵ The extensive part of environmental zines was stand-by rights for animals. The zine *Different Life* existed from 1993 to 1996 and was focused on human and animal rights and ecology. In Slovak lands, a zine called *Diego* was published in Košice in 1993, and *Legal Freedom* with the subtitle "eco punk." Then, there was a zine

¹⁵² Neumann, *Dějiny ženy I-IV. Žena středověká a renesanční: populární kapitoly sociologické, etnologické a kulturně-historické*; 'Wicca - Feministický fanzin'.

¹⁵³ As is visible, for instance, in the use of the article present in *Aspekt*. Unknown, 'Ekofeminizmus podľa Charlene Spretnak (in: *Aspekt*)', *Čierna Vdova*, 1997, 2–3.

¹⁵⁴ Císař, Navrátil, and Vráblíková, 'Staří, noví, radikální: politický aktivismus v České republice očima teorie sociálních hnutí'.

¹⁵⁵ 'Zelený provazníček' (R. S., Dvůr Králové and Labem, 1999 1996), *Archiv českých a slovenských subkultur v Praze*.

called *10 000 Dalšíh stromov* in Bratislava, published from 1992 to 1996, which was replaced by *Kruh života*, published from 1996 to 2000.¹⁵⁶

These zines share ecofeminist topics such as animal rights, postcolonial perspective, globalization, and spirituality (deep ecology). On a practical level, in anarcha-feminist zines, there are references to the *Zelený Provazníček*; therefore, there is a clear connection to the anarcha-environmentalist. On a symbolic level, there is a similar visuality of women as bearers of traditional agricultural approaches. Strong connections are through the concept of Mother Nature/Earth; for instance, there is a title, “Mother of the Forest,” or an article about Indians. Even the Wiccan influence is there in a poem Olga Scheinpflugová: *Vykoupená čarodějnice*. The feminist topic of menstruation is transformed by the cycles in nature, and some issues about pornography are without a clear connection to ecological topics.¹⁵⁷

Like the Prague Mothers and South Bohemian Mothers, femininity and the female role offered a particular possibility of legitimizing opinions that women are “closer” to nature and should be heard more. For example, the Prague Mothers changed their name in 2021 because it seemed to them that it would rather delegitimize them. However, from the prevailing articles, it appears that women were trying to rehabilitate mothers as political actors in questions of environmental issues in the 1990s.

An interesting person who was shifting across groups and spaces is Eva Hauserová. She was a writer, permaculturist, poet, and ecofeminist.¹⁵⁸ She supported all ecofeminist activities; for instance, I found her short text in *Wicca* and a note that the authors thanked her for the materials

¹⁵⁶ *Anarchistická Publicistika 1990 – 2013*; Michela, ‘Archiv českých a slovenských subkultur – archiv českých a slovenských subkultur’.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Zelený provazníček’ i, no. 3 (1997); ‘Zelený provazníček, i. 2, 1996’, *Zelený Provazníček* i, no. 2 (1996); R. S., ‘10. 000 Dalšíh Stromov’ I, no. 4 (1997): 4,22.

¹⁵⁸ She expressed her ecofeminists ideas for instance in books for women about feminism in general. Eva Hauserová, *JsI přece ženská-: malý, lehce feministický rádce*, Vyd. 1 (Praha: Grada, 1998); Eva Hauserová, *Na koštěl se dá I lítat: aneb Nemožné ženy dokážou I nemožné* (Praha: Nakl. Lidové noviny, 1995).

about ecofeminism.¹⁵⁹ Luna, as a group, published her nine-page long brochure about ecofeminism.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, she worked at Green Circle and collaborated with the Agency GAIA.¹⁶¹ In a sense, she established a particular understanding of ecofeminism in Czech, which emphasizes spirituality, femininity, and the close relation of women to nature. Her ecofeminist stance is illustrated, for example, by this excerpt: “*Men continue to cling to characteristics typical of predatory market capitalism, which are unacceptable not only for women but also for the future of humanity. What should we do with men who will increasingly compete fiercely for success and recklessly devastate natural resources?*”¹⁶²

1.3. From Being a Mother to an NGO Employee

In both narratives of members of South Bohemian Mothers and Prague Mothers, I found the motif of activism, which starts from the kitchen and the strong effects of motherhood. Mothers gaining the legitimacy to raise their voices is the motive of many antiwar protests, in which the very fact of being the mother of a soldier has strong relevance for society; the imagination of mourning mothers as a symbol is clear and understandable. In the case of the narrators, they describe mainly the emotional apprehension of children’s health problems and fear of their future, which is connected to their responsibility for the proper development of children. Anna Hradílková puts it, “*I traveled away with them (the children), because I had such terrible anxiety, (...) that it is my responsibility where they live, and that Prague is actually dangerous for the children,*” and continues with the fact that her children and children of her friends had a respiratory sickness, eczemas, headaches, which urgency and visibility led to the first letter of Prague Mothers to the politicians.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Simone W., ‘Editorial’, 1995.

¹⁶⁰ Eva Hauserová, *Kapesní průvodce ekofeminismem*. (Praha: Luna, 1997).

¹⁶¹ NAD 1745, Zelený kruh kar. 1, ‘Fond: Spolky a občanská sdružení po roce 1990’.

¹⁶² Hauserová, *Na koštěti se dá i lítat*, 93.

¹⁶³ Hradílková, Oral History Interview, 3.

The trope of motherhood in these ecofeminist groups is long-lasting. Anna Hradilková describes this feeling: *“The strength in the fact that we are simply mothers who worry about children, that seems to have support even in that society, yes, no one can argue against that. (..) So it gave us a lot of confidence, and we tried to go this way.”*¹⁶⁴ Even women outside formal organizations and, for instance, from anarcho-feminist circles, had similar experiences; Lenka Hřibová told the story where her son’s defective kidneys may have been caused by bad air during her pregnancy, specifically car exhaust, thereby explaining and framing her environmental awareness and later efforts.¹⁶⁵ Although there is no symbol of mourning mothers, as in antiwar protests, there is a cultural symbol of active mothers, protectors with strength who helped women to emancipate and be active in public space.

To explain some standpoints for these women, in South Bohemian Mothers’s case, they care about the future due to the long-term perspective of nuclear energy; Dana Kuchtová says: *“There was a huge concern for children. And about what will happen to their future (to ours, too, of course). However, since nuclear energy is a topic of millennia ahead, it will be with the next generations. And why women were active is because they actually realized that it’s about the future, the children, and what’s going to happen here.”*¹⁶⁶ This combination of responsibility for children’s present and future logically led to the care for the environment. I am not alone in this observation of the role of motherhood due to the ecological situation. From the West German perspective, Yanara Schmacks presents the main argument essential for a whole region, claiming that the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986 transformed the perception of motherhood, and many groups of “mothers” emerged with a political anti-nuclear agenda.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Hradilková, 5.

¹⁶⁵ Hřibová, Oral History Interview.

¹⁶⁶ Kuchtová, Oral History Interview, 1.

¹⁶⁷ Yanara Schmacks, “‘Motherhood Is Beautiful’: Maternalism in the West German New Women’s Movement between Eroticization and Ecological Protest’, *Central European History* 53, no. 4 (2020): 811–34.

The Czech Republic is generally known for long maternity/parental leaves, which could play a role in the conception of motherhood in the Czech context. In the 1980s, maternity leave was extended up to three years of age, and almost exclusively, only women could receive benefits.¹⁶⁸ The transition process after 1989 did not change the social norms, and women were, in reality, on the “second shift.” However, the narrators recall the enthusiasm for trying new things and taking advantage of new opportunities, for instance, in the new non-profit sector.¹⁶⁹

The flourishing non-profit and non-governmental sectors influenced both formal and informal ecofeminist groups of the 1990s. The practical element is that the NGOs offer specific time and place flexibility and, therefore, the opportunity for emancipation during maternity. However, it had another side of the coin, illustrating Petra Francová: “*Prague Mothers were never popular in the family. Because I was constantly calling, I went to most of the meetings (..), so it took me away from the family. So, like my husband, he tolerated me; he wasn't excited by it, but my children weren't enthusiastic either. Because it just took the mom out of them that way.*”¹⁷⁰ Another significant example is Maria Haisová story about her emancipation effort to get an education, which was in a way to the family: “*Well, when I came home, I didn't have my room in the bedroom at all, and I could only study when the children were fed, bought, everything at home was cleaned.*” These experiences were significant and exemplary for all the women I spoke to. The opportunity to change something from the mother's perspective conflicted with social norms in which mothers are primary carers and only put their energy into the family.

According to the narrators, what was first seen as an advantage – to speak from a mother/woman's perspective – changed during 1990-1991 into the weapon of opponents. Dana

¹⁶⁸ Fellegi, ‘Feminism and Understanding of Gender Roles in the Czech Republic’.

¹⁶⁹ Poláková, Oral History Interview; Marie Haisová, Oral History Interview, interview by Marie Jiříčková, trans. Marie Jiříčková, 13 December 2023; Hradilková, Oral History Interview.

¹⁷⁰ Francová, Oral History Interview.

Kuchtová says: *“I felt that in the 1990s, at the very beginning, there was a certain openness. And later on, I think it became more and more evident that, in short, the mothers were not completely competent in the professional debate; it was a bit of a stigma that the men were not used to taking women as equal partners.”*¹⁷¹ Each narrator reflected on their negotiating position with men and the experience of both insults stemming only from the man. Hřibová also describes conflicts in regional politics with men: *“There were two of us women and about seven guys in that traffic commission. And I say, why does the bike path have to go around a children’s playground like in a park? What’s the problem? I mean, have you ever babysat a two-year-old? Then, I discussed it with the deputy mayor, a woman. She understands me completely there. But I couldn’t explain it to the seven guys.”*¹⁷² Furthermore, as an opponent to South Bohemian Mothers in 1999 was established group Jihočeští tat’kové (South Bohemian Daddies). Addams concludes that South Bohemian Mothers *“faced extensive obstacles including post-communist patriarchal institutions and sexism; the South Bohemian Daddies, a male-dominated pro-nuclear countermovement; and pervasive anti-environmentalist sentiments.”*¹⁷³

The narrators repeatedly reflected that it was hard to represent themselves in the sense that they would not be taken seriously. They often stand up for themselves and ignore the men advising them to have a male spokesman. In the case of the broader environmental movement, it was even more challenging for women to be visible as Maria Haisová recalls a story when she planted trees, and then on television, one of her colleagues decided to propagate her project without her noticing; she said to him: *“And you think that after those months when I was able*

¹⁷¹ Kuchtová, Oral History Interview, 3.

¹⁷² Hřibová, Oral History Interview.

¹⁷³ Adams and Shriver, ‘Collective Identity and Gendered Activism in the Czech Environmental Movement: The South Bohemian Mothers’ Struggle against Nuclear Power’, 163.

to organize it here, that I can't say anything about it?"¹⁷⁴ The idea of finding voice was across the narrators' experience despite the group in which they organized.

The narrators expressed anger towards politics, but there was also a reconciliation with the neo-liberal and free-market system. Illustrating the environment of their attitudes, there is exciting research done by Elaine Weiner, who, at the end of the 1990s, interviewed 75 Czech women about the transition period. She talked about women managers as 'winners' of transition and female factory workers. She described how 'neoliberal meta-discourses' in the 1990s convinced people that social and economic inequalities were non-existent or were the fault of individuals. Even though women faced discrimination in the labor market, they directed their anger toward themselves, not the system. Moreover, they saw discrimination as a sacrifice for the next generations.¹⁷⁵ This shift towards the next generations was especially typical for my narrators. For active participants in the events of 1989 and active contributors to the creation of laws and the new state, especially Prague Mothers, the idea of future generations was central, and many things the narrators perceived as a need for the future. Although they have not come to terms with capitalism and consumerism, they partly take the blame for consequences on themselves (not the system).

However, at least from the perspective of the 2020s, the narrators did not hesitate to criticize some aspects of neoliberal economics. The internalization of failure was explicitly in cases of more minor demands, not in cases of the whole system. Anna Hradílková, for instance, blames the first governments for creating agricultural agglomerates owned by a few people. For narrators, retrospectively, Czech ecofeminists and activists in the 1990s were among the first critics of the "new regime" after 1989. For instance, both eco-anarchists and institutionalized

¹⁷⁴ Haisová, Oral History Interview.

¹⁷⁵ Kristen Rogheh Ghodsee and Mitchell Alexander Orenstein, 'Resistance Is Futile', in *Taking Stock of Shock: Social Consequences of the 1989 Revolutions* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 169, 170.

organizations were active in protests against supermarkets. Jitka Poláková talks about the fact that the topics they raised are still relevant, and back then, they were pointers: *“Some people describe feeling like they were ahead of something, and then it died down. And during this, they often seem to have entered some structures.”* In the 1990s, she was in the anarchist movement and described her personal de-radicalization in the case of globalization: *“Globalization (...) I think about it quite differently today than I did back then. I think that it simply has its negatives, but also its positives. Back then, we considered a fact like that simply a threat.”*

Although both organizations have a name of organization containing the word “mothers,” all of the narrators reflect their experiences of being women as a part of some inequality, for example, in public spaces, just due to their gender (women) or role (mother), they hesitate to label themselves ecofeminist or feminist. This hesitation from the label “feminist” can be explained, apart from the debates about “Western feminism” as a part of the depoliticization of civil society. Eriada Çela describes this phenomenon when discussing civil society in post-socialist states that initially, after 1989, both men and women were involved in civil society. Still, men moved into parliamentary politics over time, where there was more “power” than in the non-governmental sector. Consequently, the non-governmental area becomes a field for active women, leading to its partial devaluation and depoliticization. Politicians tend to perceive this sector primarily as “humanitarian,” believing it should not be political.¹⁷⁶

1.4 Conclusion

I started this chapter with the image “ecofeminism from the kitchen” at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s; I found the narrative of frustration about the 1990s, which can be

¹⁷⁶ Eriada Çela, ‘Women’s Political Citizenship in Post State-Socialist Countries’, 2015.

summarized in Dana Kuchtová's reply: "*You have arguments, but in that debate, a priori, the question comes up, what are you doing here? Take care of the children, go to the kitchen (...). It was not easy at all just standing in those debates.*"¹⁷⁷ I interpret this delegitimization of political action by mothers and women as part of designing ecofeminism in the late 1990s and 2000s. This frustration is similar even to "ecofeminism from the squat," when anarcho-feminists were discouraged from their activities and criticized for their inclinations towards spiritual anarchism/ecofeminism.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, they tried to repeatedly show and present in ecofeminist zines that they were in alliance with men and that even men can be feminists.¹⁷⁹

As I introduced above, Czech ecofeminist groups operated in both formal and informal settings, with their themes and critiques of the system reflecting elements of social ecofeminism (especially among the more conservative Prague Mothers and South Bohemian Mothers) and spiritual ecofeminism (among GAIA Agency and anarcho-feminist groups). Despite their different expressions, these groups were interconnected and communicated with each other. While some parts of the anarchist movement were more reserved towards non-profit organizations, anarcho-feminists were more engaged. Poláková describes her relationship with these institutions, reflecting a generational difference that did not lead to conflict: "*We respected them a lot as if you simply took it that they had something behind them, that they were people who came from a dissident background, for example.*"¹⁸⁰

To schematize the relationships between all the mentioned groups, on one side are the more conservative Prague Mothers and South Bohemian Mothers, who primarily draw from social ecofeminism. On the other side are the anarcho-feminist groups, which heavily draw from spiritual ecofeminism. In the middle is the Agency GAIA, which aligned more with spiritual

¹⁷⁷ Kuchtová, Oral History Interview, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Poláková, Oral History Interview.

¹⁷⁹ Redakce, 'Rozhovor s Feministou', *Wicca*, no. 3/4 (April 1995); Simone W., 'Proč Wicca?', no. 2 (June 1992).

¹⁸⁰ Poláková, Oral History Interview, 5.

ecofeminism and was institutionalized and connected to resources similar to those of the more conservative groups. Similar positions also had Eva Hauserová as a connector between groups and ideas. Common spaces include the Green Circle organization, Gender Studies Centre, various alternative and maternal centers, and supporters attending the same events. Although some researchers of Czech activism in the 1990s emphasized a divide between institutional and informal activists, my research contradicts this. Czech ecofeminists were interconnected across groups and institutions. Ludmila Bohmová, in her study on anarcho-feminism, states: “*The greater intermingling of the anarcho-feminist and liberal feminist movements (Gender Studies Centre, Prague Mothers) is not only a phenomenon of the 1990s but also of the first decade of the new millennium. This is one of the distinctive features of the second generation of anarcho-feminism.*”

The chapter titled “Czech Ecofeminism?” explores whether discussing something like Czech ecofeminism is possible. From the above argument, I contend that speaking of Czech ecofeminism as a current within activist groups and organizations is accurate. Although not all women identify as (eco)feminists, many organizational practices embody various forms of ecofeminism. The most prominent types of ecofeminism in the 1990s were spiritual and social, with themes such as an emphasis on education, criticism of consumerism, and the critical recognition of the interconnectedness of different movements. Due to their small numbers, Czech ecofeminists also utilize contacts and networks across movements.

2. CHAPTER: INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS OF CZECH ECOFEMINISM

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the most well-known critical discourses related to Czech feminism in the 1990s was that it is foreign to Czech society, or at least there is an inevitable difference between “Eastern” and “Western” feminists.¹⁸¹ However, as I have already demonstrated, feminism, at least in the context of women’s and gender history within Czech academia, did not suddenly appear in the 1990s. It has a tradition comparable to other countries, with specific trends and challenges developing, particularly within the Czech context.¹⁸² The accusation of being a Western import also emerged against NGOs in the 1990s, especially after 1992, when Václav Klaus became prime minister. After 1993, there was a debate about the nature of Czech society between Václav Havel and Václav Klaus. Václav Havel supported NGOs and civil society. Václav Klaus started criticizing NGOs for undermining the democratic system by allowing small radical groups (such as feminists and radical environmentalists) to push their views, which had failed in democratic elections, thus bypassing democracy.¹⁸³ He added that foreign-funded NGOs operate within the Czech Republic to influence its policies and society in opposition to Czech interests.¹⁸⁴

Not least, these repeated accusations of feminism and NGOs as “Western imports” or foreign influences in the Czech Republic led me to consider the international dimension that came into

¹⁸¹ Šiklová, ‘Feminism and the Roots of Apathy in the Czech Republic’; Zuzana Fellegi, ‘Feminism and Understanding of the Gender Roles in the Czech Republic’.

¹⁸² Blanka Knotková-Čapková, ‘On Feminisms in Czech Political Contexts’, *Alternatif Politika* 8, no. Special (2016): 61–81.

¹⁸³ Václav Klaus, ‘Snahy o hledání třetí cesty nekončí’, *Lidové noviny*, 7 March 1994.

¹⁸⁴ Martin Myant, ‘Klaus, Havel and the Debate over Civil Society in the Czech Republic’, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 21 (1 June 2005): 248–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523270500108758>.

play after 1989 for Czech ecofeminism. I realized it was necessary to at least partly reconstruct the relationship between ecofeminist organizations, groups, and individuals and capture how they established connections, exchanged ideas, and pursued solutions beyond the nation's borders. My effort is deeper than confirming or disproving some general assumptions about Czech ecofeminism; already in the previous chapter, Czech ecofeminism was shown as a broad mosaic of groups and figures that follow different branches of ecofeminism (primarily social and radical) who added their specificities of the Czech context. In this chapter, I aim to explain the specific measures and strategies employed by Czech ecofeminist groups when engaging with international activists and foreign sources of ideas.

Firstly, I analyze the transfer of ideas and thoughts among ecofeminists, identifying sources of inspiration in both alternative and institutionalized settings for ecofeminism in the Czech Republic. I will examine the international relationships that Czech ecofeminists enriched, similar to what Simon Avenell describes in the case of environmental networks in Japan, “*by making international resources such as ideas about the environment available in domestic struggles, they blur the boundaries between a state's relations with its own nationals' and, in the process, challenge the previously-impermeable barrier of nation.*”¹⁸⁵ Secondly, I examine the practices within the context of the international networks of activists, identifying the relationship of Czech ecofeminists towards international activists. Lastly, I present two international ecofeminist organizations that actively co-organized events with Czech ecofeminists in the latter half of the 1990s. This collaboration demonstrates the mobilization and active engagement with ecofeminism during that period, contrasting with the gradual decline of Czech ecofeminism after 2000.

¹⁸⁵ Simon Avenell, ‘The Borderless Archipelago: Toward a Transnational History of Japanese Environmentalism’, *Environment and History* 19, no. 4 (2013): 403.

I argue that international sources of ideas were crucial, especially for Czech ecofeminists who were inclined to radical, spiritual ecofeminism. I examine witchcraft (new paganism), permaculture, and, in general, alternative spiritualities, which I argue were hugely shaped by international literature and activists from abroad and, to some extent, adjusted to the needs of Czech ecofeminists. Furthermore, some foreign support was essential for Czech ecofeminists to find support missing in the Czech Republic, especially concerning practical issues such as funding. The activists from abroad, mainly from Germany, Great Britain, and Austria, are, in contemporary Czech activists' narratives, described as "mentors" and, from the mid-1990s, something to distinguish themselves from. The late 1990s were significant for Czech ecofeminists due to closer collaboration with international ecofeminist organizations, preparations for anti/alter-globalization protests, increased internationalization and radicalization, and the more prominent use of the term ecofeminist/ecofeminists.

2.1. Alternative Ideas: Witchcraft and Permaculture

Reading ecofeminist newspapers, zines, and pamphlets, I found various alternative sources of inspiration for the content of these media. The topic of witchcraft was not addressed in my oral history research; none of my narrators today promote modern witchcraft, and they did not reflect on it until I specifically asked. I believe it was partly a trend related to the development of alternative spiritualities in the 1990s, which is not particularly significant for the narrators today.¹⁸⁶ However, the Czech ecofeminist zines *Wicca* and *Esbat* and Slovak zines *Čierna Vdova* and *Nox* focus on witchcraft and modern paganism significantly and considerably.

¹⁸⁶ Olga Nešporová and Zdeněk R Nešpor, 'Religion: An Unsolved Problem for the Modern Czech Nation', *Sociologický Časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 45, no. 6 (2009): 1215–37.

Therefore, it is worth capturing these “Glosses on Witchcraft,” as they call it in one issue of *Wicca*, to understand the specific features of the Czech ecofeminists in the 1990s.¹⁸⁷

There are no significant differences between the zines in the case of witchcraft and ecofeminism. They all drew their articles from similar authors: Susan Griffin, Charlene Spretnak, Paula Gunn Allen, and Judith Plant. The spiritual anarchist authors translated in the zines are Starhawk and Margot Adler.¹⁸⁸ Much inspiration is from the USA; however, there is, for instance, a note about the German ecofeminist organization FrauenLesben.¹⁸⁹ Slovak and Czech ecofeminist zines often draw on similar sources, Anglophone and German, while national identity is not prominently displayed here.

In *Wicca* and *Čierna Vdova*, the understanding of ecofeminism is based on Charlene Spretnak and her critiques of patriarchy. She prefers matriarchy because women understand the circle of life, and she believes society needs to recognize women’s rights as human rights, as well as the rights of Mother Earth, and listen to both.¹⁹⁰ In their understanding, ecofeminism is an “*alternative that offers a vision of a new world organized on new principles - no more wars and nuclear weapons, racism, gender discrimination, nuclear holocaust or the destruction of rainforests, but tolerance, respect, and love.*”¹⁹¹ Especially the authors writing against globalization and consumerism are connecting with “Western culture and Christianization, which destroyed old traditions.”¹⁹² Based on Judit Pants’ book *Healing the Wounds*, authors of *Wicca* present that women and men are essentially different, but both can be feminists.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ Olga V., ‘Glosy o Čarodějnictví’, no. 2 (June 1994).

¹⁸⁸ Anthony Fiscella, ‘From Benign Anarchy to Divine Anarchy: A Critical Review of “Spiritual Anarchism”’, *Essays in Anarchism and Religion Volume III*, 2020, 255.

¹⁸⁹ Charlotta, ‘FrauenLesben a Leto v Nemecku’, 1997.

¹⁹⁰ Charlene Spretnak, ‘K ekofeministické spiritualitě’, *Wicca* 1, no. 5 (n.d.); Unknown, ‘Ekofeminizmus podľa Charlene Spretnak (in: Aspekt)’.

¹⁹¹ Charlotta, ‘Čo pro mňa znamená ekofeminizmus’, *Čierna Vdova*, 1997, 2.

¹⁹² Simone W., ‘Proč Wicca?’

¹⁹³ Simone W., ‘Editorial’, *Wicca*, no. 1 (October 1993).

Spiritual anarchism, which works well with radical/spiritual ecofeminism, offers new arguments against commercialization, globalization, and consumerism, for instance, that the pre-industrial, pre-modern tradition, which was, according to them, replaced by Western modern culture.¹⁹⁴ Czech and Slovak women produced the zines in an industrial and modern world with a state-socialist history. Yet, these articles discuss the pre-Christian period, Viking Gods, and paganism. They also criticize technocratic and masculine rationality and favor women's intuition throughout the zine.¹⁹⁵ The Czech ecofeminists are fascinated by alternative literature by Western authors, criticizing Western modernity or, more generally, criticizing civilization.

When it comes to witchcraft, in *Wicca*, for instance, the author, who goes by the nickname Druid, explains in the article "Renaissance of Witches" that modern witches are women connected to the cosmos and love everything alive.¹⁹⁶ The author draws from the book *Ich, die Hexe* by practicing witch Sandra that witchcraft is a religion of ecology, where the God is a woman.¹⁹⁷ There is an ambiguity in understanding witches as strong women oppressed because of their criticism of the system and connection to the different forms of knowledge, as well as the witches as Gods with the ability to do magic. Druid writes: "*To be a witch means to identify with all the victims among your predecessors. (...) The witchcraft movement is a movement of the future and envisions the future from a woman's perspective as a giver of life (...) salvation lies only in a change of attitude towards the Earth, as humans are a part of nature, not its masters.*"¹⁹⁸ In *Čierna vdova*, the topic of witchcraft is vital in translated articles about the witches and their helpers (animals) and the brooms of witches and their symbolic value of

¹⁹⁴ For the definitions of spiritual ecofeminism, see Chapter 1.

¹⁹⁵ Judith Plant, 'Healing the Wounds' I., no. 3–4 (1995); Judith Plant, *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1989).

¹⁹⁶ Druid, 'Renesance Čarodějek', *Wicca*, April 1995.

¹⁹⁷ Sandra and Stefan Esser, *Ich, die Hexe*. (München: Goldmann, 1991).

¹⁹⁸ Druid, 'Renesance Čarodějek', 1.

paganism.¹⁹⁹ However, with a few exceptions, the prevailing narrative calls for solidarity and signing up to witches as rebellious women rather than magic and instructions on practicing spells. The idea of seeing the future from the perspective of women is based on radical ecofeminism, which connects specific values to the feminine and masculine perspectives.

In an article about “Stromy a dřevo” (Trees and Wood), the unknown author discusses Nordic mythology, specifically “*the god Odin emerging from the sacred tree Yggdrasil.*” In an article about modern paganism, German mythology is mentioned again.²⁰⁰ I illustrate the lack of regional sources; authors could use more “Slovan” mythology and Slovan pagan Gods like Perun or Goodness of Earth Mokoš.²⁰¹ For the most part, zine authors did not draw from Eastern Europe and its authors; instead, they translated and responded to texts that did not reach Czech and Slovak society before 1989. The fascination with foreign sources and inspirations is visible. Another specificity is the alternative nature of foreign sources in newspapers and zines (compared to Czech sources, where some authors were mainstream in Czech media).

Furthermore, my research found that these alternative sources influenced even the more “conservative” organization Prague Mothers in the late 1990s. In Jarmila Johnová review of a book about Celtic healing herbs written by Ellen Evert Hopman, she quotes: “*What if history were different, and instead of burning defenseless women and men, the Inquisitors would focus on the production and individuals who infect water, air, Earth and its children.*”²⁰² Even though one of the leading figures of Prague Mothers, Jarmila Johnová repeatable claimed that she is not a feminist,²⁰³ she agrees with some arguments of modern witchcraft and, in fact, the

¹⁹⁹ Marabu, ‘Dopravný prostředek: metla, bosorky a ich pomocnici’, *Čierna Vdova*, 1997, 27–30.

²⁰⁰ Unknown, ‘Stromy a Dřevo’, *Wicca*, no. 5 (1996): 3; Simone W., ‘Pohanství Dneška’, *Wicca*, no. 3/4 (April 1995).

²⁰¹ Zdeněk Váňa, *Svět slovanských bohů a démonů* (Panorama, 1990).

²⁰² Jarmila Johnová, ‘Druidský herbář a svatý rok’, *Přes práh, Časopis pro ochranu rodičů, dětí a přírody ve městě VII*, no. 6 (June 1997): 12.

²⁰³ Jarmila Johnová, ‘Proč nejsem feministkou’, *Přes práh, Časopis pro ochranu rodičů, dětí a přírody ve městě VI*, no. 4 (April 1996): 11–12.

connection between the patriarchal oppression of women in the past and the lack of prosecution of the culprits of environmental disasters. Another example of the spread of modern witchcraft is an interview with the witch Rebekou Floyd from California, living in the Czech Republic, who describes that a “*witch is for her a wise woman and women’s spirituality is a powerful, revolutionary idea. Living in a community means change; living in abundance means being content with what we have, the opposite of consumerism.*”²⁰⁴

On the contrary, in some articles mentioning Nordic mythology and related topics, Rudolf Steiner is referenced as an example of the longer tradition of alternative trends in Czech society that preceded the 1990s.²⁰⁵ At the beginning of the 20th century, Rudolf Steiner visited Czech lands several times. He promoted his thoughts about anthroposophy, Waldorf pedagogy, and biodynamic agriculture, which were popular in certain circles.²⁰⁶ Although anthroposophical organizations in the Czechoslovak state ceased to operate after 1939,²⁰⁷ Rudolf Steiner’s ideas were nothing “foreign” after 1939, as evidenced by the rapid development of Waldorf kindergartens and later elementary Waldorf schools.²⁰⁸ As I emphasized in the previous chapter, education was one of the main areas in which Czech (eco)feminists were active; for instance, in the Prague Mothers newspaper, alternative schooling, such as Waldorf or Montessori schools.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ ‘Rozhovor s čarodějnicí Rebekou Floyd’, *Přes práh, Časopis pro ochranu rodičů, dětí a přírody ve městě VIII.*, no. 10 (December 1998): 10.

²⁰⁵ For instance, in Unknown, ‘Stromy a Dřevo.’

²⁰⁶ Between 1907 and 1924 he came to Bohemia twelve times and addressed the boards of lectures for the public and members of Theosophical and later Anthroposophical Society. For further reading, see Tomáš Zdražil, *Počátky Theosofie a Anthroposofie v Čechách: Rudolf Steiner-Praha, Opava a Třebovice* (Ioanes, 1997); Józef Szymeczek, ‘Activities of the Theosophical Society and the Order of the Star in the East in the Czech Lands until 1939’, *Studia Religiologica. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* 53, no. 1 (2020): 52–54.

²⁰⁷ Zdražil, *Počátky Theosofie a Anthroposofie v Čechách: Rudolf Steiner-Praha, Opava a Třebovice*.

²⁰⁸ Thomas Stehlik, *Waldorf Schools and the History of Steiner Education: An International View of 100 Years* (Springer, 2019), 87.

²⁰⁹ Helena Červinková, ‘Montessori vzdělávání u nás’, *Přes práh, Časopis pro ochranu rodičů, dětí a přírody ve městě VII*, no. 8 (October 1997): 16–18; Petra Francová, ‘Waldorfské školství’, *Měsíční zpravodaj Pražských matek IV*, no. 5 (May 1994): 13–14.

Another vital topic emerging in Czech ecofeminist circles in the 1990s was permaculture, which interconnects witchcraft and paganism with ecology.²¹⁰ After British permaculturists had their first permaculture courses in the Czech Republic, the first Czech permaculture center, called Permakultura CS, was founded in Brno in 1996. Lately, more than thirty projects and communities have been influenced by the ideas. Permakultura CS also popularized permaculture by publishing books, and one of the chairpersons was Eva Hauserová. According to Kolářová, women lead Permaculture CS; the core organizers were generally middle-aged or senior women. There are also male permaculturists such as Jaroslav Svoboda, but in the enforcement of eco-communities, eco-gardening, and agriculture, collective efforts of the women-led part of the permaculture branch are prominent. Kolářová argues that this women-led branch of permaculture was not as successful in gaining members as it was successful in a frame of the “family homestead,” an individualized form of permaculture connected to self-interests.²¹¹

Lenka Hřibová, who was at the tone of the first British permaculture courses in Brno and later attempted to create an eco-community, describes the broader scope of permaculture: “*And you realize what a child’s natural needs are and what happens in the system. So, it seems that many things don’t necessarily have to do with agriculture or cultivation, like permaculture. And I think that systemic thinking is good because it’s not about individual elements, but always about the whole.*”²¹² Although permaculture ultimately remained on the edge of Czech ecofeminism, partly because Czech ecofeminism developed in larger cities where garden plots

²¹⁰ Permaculture is an approach and international grassroots network that emerged in the 1970s in Australia. The central concept is that humans can solve environmental crises by reducing and replacing energy from polluting industries through a holistic design that follows natural ecosystems. Humans should create harmonious communities that work with nature rather than against it to meet human needs while preserving and regenerating the environment. Permaculture practitioners were encouraged to link with the earth, observe it, and create alternative, non-disruptive ecological places. Kevin Morel, François Léger, and Rafer Sass Ferguson, ‘Permaculture’, *Encyclopedia of Ecology, 2nd Edition* 4 (2019): 559–67.

²¹¹ Marta Kolářová, ‘Climate Change and the Transition Movement in Eastern Europe: The Case of Czech Permaculture’, *Sociologický Časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 56, no. 3 (2020): 377–78, 382.

²¹² Hřibová, Oral History Interview, 6.

were not possible, the ideas of permaculture still found their way into zines and articles in magazines of ecofeminist organizations.

Kolářová's understanding of the permaculture lifestyle and her division into two sides, collective and individualized form, was confirmed by my research. One form of permaculture combines the spirituality of women and Earth again and anarchist ideas about community and environmental efforts for sustainability. This form, which was/is typical for women in the Czech Republic, failed, and an individualized form, often promoted by men and aimed at individual events, "won." In the broader context of Czech society in the 1990s, permaculture is an example of the transition from collective understanding to individualized society.²¹³ I argue that the women-led branch of permaculture was connected with ideas of spiritual ecofeminism with an emphasis on collectivity and eco-communities. However, this direction of both permaculture and ecofeminism was marginalized and, to some extent, replaced with an individualized form of both. Since ecofeminism has a holistic approach, it was challenging to emerge ecofeminism in the narrowly specific field of women's NGOs, and therefore, ecofeminism slowly disappeared after the 2000s.

2.2. Collaboration with International Activists

International cooperation for activist groups began immediately after 1989. My research found that the influence and collaboration with foreign activists and organizations were crucial, especially regarding practical issues. In my oral history research, I identified three distinct stages concerning the practical relations of my narrators with foreign activists, which partly follow a chronological order but vary for each activist. In this subchapter, I argue that the years from 1989 to 1992 relate to tropes of hope and enthusiasm, encapsulated by the phrase

²¹³ Kolářová, 'Climate Change and the Transition Movement in Eastern Europe: The Case of Czech Permaculture'.

“learning from abroad.” The narratives describing 1993-1995 describe initial problems in the public sphere, gaining confidence in international networks and distinguishing themselves from international activists, with increasing dependence on foreign financial sources. Since 1993, the narrators depended on financial support from abroad, professionalized their activities, and faced criticism for their connections with international networks. In the last stage, 1996-2000, the influence of international activism is rising due to the anti-nuclear and anti/alter-globalization movements. There is increasing mobilization in the anarchy-feminist movement, and “ecofeminism” is most present in the public sphere during this period, compared to the beginning of the 1990s. Another trend is that the institutionalized platforms for ecofeminism began narrowing their interests, explicitly choosing international networks and support. The radical feminists, on the other hand, were way more open to the different foreign sources of inspiration.²¹⁴

The first phase, “learning from abroad,” dominated in 1989-92, during which the narrators described mainly the practical aspects of organizing, with advice from activists from Germany, Austria, and England. The perception of foreign activists was mostly positive, as Anna Hradilková says: “*Very nice people arrived who were doing such lectures or debates about how to start such practical things, how to clog money, how to establish an organization.*”²¹⁵ In this period, there was a significant expansion in English language education, facilitated through

²¹⁴ For context on the environmental movement in the Czech Republic, A. Fagan insightfully categorizes its development into the following phases: first, the enthusiasm period from nineteen eighty-nine to nineteen ninety-one or two; second, the political marginalization of environmental movements from nineteen ninety-two to nineteen ninety-six; third, the opening of doors to political lobbying and strategic changes from nineteen ninety-six to nineteen ninety-seven; and fourth, the decline of protests, professionalization, and dependence on foreign aid from nineteen ninety-six to two thousand. There is no direct comparison, as Czech ecofeminists were on the periphery of the environmental movement and are also part of the feminist movement. However, I found Fagan’s classification interesting because it corresponds to highlighting the first enthusiastic stage. However, the foreign funding and dependence on it are significant for the last stage, which differs from the narratives I analyzed because they became dependent much earlier, which can also imply a gendered aspect of professionalization of the environmental movement. Fagan, *Environment and Democracy in the Czech Republic: The Environmental Movement in the Transition Process*, 76.

²¹⁵ Hradilková, Oral History Interview, 6.

organizations like Prague Mothers and their Maternity Centers, as well as new spaces created by foreign organizations such as the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Foundation office opened on 21 August 1990 in Barrandov, Prague.²¹⁶ For example, learning English opened the world and established crucial initial contacts for Marie Haisová. *“But thanks to being there, I met William Ross, an American hired to teach us English.”*²¹⁷ At the same time, this phase was crucial for future collaborations; Purschová said she needed to learn English first to fill out forms to ask for grants, etc.: *“It was definitely challenging, as I had to write in English.”*²¹⁸ This phase was important in the sense of further continuing collaboration with international networks. In many cases, the narrators visited other countries for short-term visits, such as Denmark, Germany, Austria, England, and the USA, which lately served as an experience transformed into arguments for pushing some agendas (for instance, comparing public space with other cities abroad).²¹⁹ Francová adds the perspective of her whole life: *“Well, it (experience in Prague Mothers) gave me a lot of foreign contacts, and I like the work with the foreign literature and so on, as well as gathering those foreign experiences. (...) I benefit from it for my whole life.”*²²⁰ Overall, the relationship with foreign activists was crucial for them, and they talked about them and their beginnings very positively.

However, Francová highlighted the most exciting aspect: *“They (foreign organizations) were looking for us from abroad and offering us some stays; back then, there were not many such*

²¹⁶ In the first years of the 1990s, the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Foundation invested in the area and built a solar eco-pavilion with a garden in Barrandov as a place for NGOs. In 2005, the office moved to the Centre of Prague, Vinohrady. Matouš Hrdina, ‘Tisková zpráva: Tři dekády budování občanské společnosti: Pražská kancelář Heinrich Böll Stiftung slaví 30. výročí’, 20 August 2020, 1, <https://cz.boell.org/cs/2020/08/20/tri-dekady-budovani-obcanske-spolecnosti-prazska-kancelar-heinrich-boll-stiftung-slavi>; Unknown, ‘English Lectures’, no. 16 (October 1992).

²¹⁷ Haisová, Oral History Interview, 6.

²¹⁸ Purschová, Oral History Interview, 4.

²¹⁹ Francová, Oral History Interview; Hradilková, Oral History Interview; Kuchtová, Oral History Interview; Haisová, Oral History Interview; Poláková, Oral History Interview.

²²⁰ Francová, Oral History Interview, 8.

groups as us. We (Prague Mothers) were the only ones at the beginning of the 1990s."²²¹ For international organizations addressing women's and feminist issues, Prague Mothers initially served as the primary contact due to their relatively large membership base. They received significant attention in the first years after 1989. This raises the question of the extent to which the activities were 'pushed' from the outside. However, Francová notes that the people and their organizations were active and took the initiative independently. International contacts provided opportunities for their activities and their desire to make a difference.²²²

In the narratives describing the early 1990s, there is a vital distinction for the narrators between "US" (Czech activists) and "THEM" (international activists). This is reflected in a particular perception of foreign activists as "mentors." In many narratives, figures coming from abroad to teach something are described as "mentors," or the relationship between them and Czechs is described as mentoring experienced and older ones who give valuable advice and warnings. Hradilková, for instance, describes the warning against capitalism: "*The activists (from abroad) came here, so they warned us, yeah. We thought, yeah, but we can do it here. 'And be careful, there is capitalism (...), and you will face completely different problems. Don't be naive.*"²²³

The second phase, "gaining confidence," starting after 1992-1995, involved more active utilization of foreign financial resources and establishing more specific projects and actions, including protest actions. At this point, foreign inspirations began to be more explicitly incorporated into arguments and particular actions. For many narrators, working in NGOs was full-time, and they were financially dependent on funding from abroad. Francová said: "*There were American foundations; it was straightforward to get some money basically and get*

²²¹ Francová, 9.

²²² Francová, 7.

²²³ Hradilková, Oral History Interview, 8.

support, like, training, internships abroad, and so on, yeah.”²²⁴ Marie Haisová describes how, since 1993, she has lived on financial donations from abroad and that “*foreign support kept her afloat.*”²²⁵ The narrators did not question the financial support from abroad, except by Hříbová: “*And some foreign grants or something? I never went for it. So it seems to me that when I followed the eco-movement, for a while, I thought to myself, how much do different campaigns or something cost? It could have been like five functioning villages.*”²²⁶ Despite this, there is some contradiction in her approach, as by the late 1990s, for example, she applied for a grant from the Open Society Foundation to develop composting waste in the city.²²⁷ Simultaneously, through her nonprofit, she also applied for grants from regional and municipal sources, which could be tied to European or Norwegian funds. I explain her narrative as expressing her attitude against globalization at every level. She never even traveled to other countries, and her approach to ecofeminism was radical in creating small eco-communities with regional networks.

For other women I spoke to, traveling abroad was a crucial experience in gaining confidence and overcoming naivete about the world outside of the “Iron Curtain.” Anna Hradilková went with her whole family to the USA due to a job opportunity for her husband, and she reflected on this experience: “*And then it completely shocked me, the car culture; I just couldn’t imagine that I might have started suffering from back pain after that.*”²²⁸ After returning, she shared these experiences to show Prague’s necessary policy concerning transport infrastructure. Traveling abroad was also significant for anarchy-feminist circles; Poláková says: “*We went to Berlin for squats, someone just brought something like magazines, which we simply*

²²⁴ Francová, Oral History Interview, 7.

²²⁵ Haisová, Oral History Interview, 27.

²²⁶ Hříbová, Oral History Interview, 13.

²²⁷ *Určitý způsob života*, Dokumentární film (Česká televize tvůrčí skupina Anny Beckové a Nadace Člověk čas, 2000).

²²⁸ Hradilková, Oral History Interview, 4.

translated, read (...) and a person could not even verify the information.”²²⁹ Through practical collaborations, Czech ecofeminists gained access to international experiences, benefiting both argumentatively and inspirationally from these interactions. A certain uncritical acceptance of foreign sources, especially those rooted in anarchist traditions, is typical of radical ecofeminists drawing from neo-paganism and witchcraft, which I will discuss further below.

Interestingly, in this phase, the foreign/international activists are no longer “mentors” but something Czech ecofeminists could distinguish themselves from. Prague Mothers distinguish themselves from the “Western feminist,” and their topics are focused more on Czech issues than global environmental problems. It is visible in the narrative of “Western feminists.” This term was used, for instance, in Prague Mother’s newspaper repeatedly. Jarmila Johnová (Prague Mothers) returned from many stays abroad and then wrote about the “Western feminists” as ones who don’t like men and who are not confident. In the Prague Mothers newspaper *Přes Práh*, Eva Hauserová is in a debate with Jarmila Johnová. She says: *“I keep trying to understand Western feminists, and I tell myself that for the way they behave, they must certainly have their good reasons. (...). In a world where money, social hierarchy, profit, success, and prestige are most valued, women likely have only one way to earn respect: to penetrate the public sphere, including politics.”*²³⁰ Eva Hauserová, a propagator of radical, spiritual ecofeminism, transforms the critique of “Western feminists” by Prague Mothers, social ecofeminists, into a criticism of Western, capitalistic culture and hierarchization of values, for which the option to overcome is women in politics. She encourages active and confident women like Prague Mothers members to stand up for themselves.

However, Prague Mothers did not use international experiences only to criticize “Western feminists.” For them, the international dimension often served as a model and a new source of

²²⁹ Poláková, Oral History Interview, 7.

²³⁰ Eva Hauserová, ‘O ženském sebevědomí, dopis Jáře Johnové’ 6, no. 1 (January 1996): 2.

arguments for demands in the public space. In the Prague Mothers' leaflet "From the World and Home (about Urban Transport)," we can read a list of measures for cyclists and pedestrians in the centers of metropolises such as Zurich, Hamburg, Florence, Bergen, Hong Kong, etc., compared to the measures against pedestrians and cyclists in Prague. The list ends with the question, "Are we returning to Europe?"²³¹ This utilization of practices abroad and the activities of foreign activists was significant. Also, Czech ecofeminists had a pro-European narrative, even from the contemporary perspective. While talking about nuclear energy, Kuchtová, for instance, said that she was glad about the role of the European Union.²³² Haisová links the European Union with its beneficial effect on all non-profits.²³³ In this context, these organizations leveraged international networks for their benefit. They sought to utilize transnational networks, much like Japanese environmental activists in the 1970s and 1980s, where "international contacts can amplify the demands of domestic groups, open space for new issues, and then echo these demands" and "tapped into overseas resources, ideas, people, and networks, using such transnational engagements to empower their strategies."²³⁴

Rebecca Nash explains the Czech evolution towards gender centers and gender in general; the skepticism and fear of labeling as a feminist existed in the 1990s. Feminism and gender even more were perceived as a Western import that is not necessary.²³⁵ Compared to R. Nash's examination of feminist debates in the 1990s in the Czech Republic, Marie Haisová does not idealize the socialist period for women in contrast to the restrictions and patriarchy in the West, quite the opposite. Her examples from her mother's life serve as arguments for challenging periods for women after the communist takeover. She idealizes the period before

²³¹ Pražské matky, 'Ze světa I domova' (Pražské matky z. s., Unknown).

²³² Kuchtová, Oral History Interview, 7.

²³³ Haisová, Oral History Interview, 27.

²³⁴ Avenell, 'The Borderless Archipelago', 399.

²³⁵ Rebecca Nash, 'Exhaustion from Explanation: Reading Czech Gender Studies in the 1990s', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 9, no. 3 (August 2002): 291–309, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506802009003376>.

industrialization and Christianization. According to her, humans can only escape the environmental crisis by straightening the equality of values and the balance of women's values, bringing femininity into the world.²³⁶

The **third phase, 1996 to 2000**, is significant because many international activists came to the Czech Republic due to the upcoming anti/alter-globalization protests, intensification of the anti-nuclear movement, and, in fact, the mobilization of Czech ecofeminists. This is visible in zines and organizations' newspapers.²³⁷

The organizations and informal groups faced accusations of being "foreign agents." The NGOs continued their collaborations; they had to defend themselves against allegations, as described by Dana Kuchtová, since South Bohemian Mothers got money mainly from Austria or Bavaria, even though they tried to get funding in the Czech Republic. The South Bohemian Mothers experienced the most hostile media backlash due to their cooperation with foreign entities. Dana Kuchtová describes it: *"Unfortunately, we were labeled as agents of foreign services, like some espionage. But we simply worked, publicizing that the projects were from Austria."*²³⁸ According to Novák, the dispute over the completion of Temelín in 1996-1997 suddenly took on a new nationalistic framework. "They" Austrians were seen as interfering with "our" Czech decisions, adding to the negative perception of blockades. This further contributed to the perception of unconventional protest strategies as foreign and inappropriate for Czechs, reinforcing a negative public attitude towards such actions.²³⁹

Internationalization and radicalization can be seen, as described in the following section, in the more extensive cooperation of Marie Haisová and Agency GAIA with two international

²³⁶ Marie Haisová, 'QUO VADIS, MARIE?' (Marie Chříbková, nakladatelství One Woman Press, 1999).

²³⁷ 'Action Update', *Earth First*, no. 3 (June 2000); 'Esbat'; Marta Kolářová, 'Gender v protestu sociálních hnutí proti globalizaci', *Gender rovné příležitosti výzkum* 8, no. 02 (2007): 7–14.

²³⁸ Kuchtová, Oral History Interview, 6.

²³⁹ Novák, *Tmavozelený svět: radikálně ekologické aktivity v České republice po roce 1989*, 180–85.

ecofeminist organizations. This cooperation began at the end of the 1990s and peaked in 2000 when protests against the IMF and World Bank meetings occurred.

2.3. Integration with the International Ecofeminist Movement

A network of international ecofeminist movement stands on the edge of practical and ideological support and influence on Czech ecofeminism. The leading organizations of the international ecofeminist movement are named Women's Environmental Network (WEN), Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), and Women and Life on Earth (WLOE). Specifically, international ecofeminist organizations operating in the Czech Republic in the 1990s were WEDO and WEN; both organizations mainly collaborated with Marie Haisová through the Green Circle, when she was director, and after 1997 through Agency GAIA. Although, as I will present in this subchapter, these organizations did not significantly impact Czech ecofeminists, they still completed the mosaic of ecofeminism in Czech lands in the 1990s through the propagation of ecofeminism and co-organization of anti/alter-globalization movement at the end of the 1990s.

The first recorded informal collaboration with WEN was when Marie Haisová was the director of the Green Circle (1993-1996); she organized a Club for women together with Eva Hauserová and, in May 1996, launched the very first international conference, "Rose Among Thorns," on the topic of women in politics and public life. The conference resulted in the publication of a collection in the Czech Republic with international authorship that included contributions from

notable figures such as German Green Party politician Grabiela Bozok, Austrian politician Freda Meissner Blau, Czech philosopher Erazim Kohák, and writer Alena Wagnerová.²⁴⁰

The main argument of this book is that Czech civil society must be based on democratized relations between men and women. The authors distinguish between men's and women's worlds; men see the world materialistically and women's as a "social field" and between the perception of men's and women's politics. Women act in politics, like in the garden; i.e., they care for and protect the garden for the next generations; women should step into the man's politics and defend themselves against the concept of politics as a business for their children.²⁴¹

Again, I see the hierarchization of values based on sex, typical for Marie Haisová and Agency GAIA's thoughts. The metaphor of gardening politics stuck in my mind, which encourages women to participate in politics for the sake of the future. In the case of Marie Haisová, it is not just ideas but also practice. She

Another event was when Czech ecofeminists (Women's Club of the Green Circle) organized an event from March 21-23, 1997, in Toulcův Dvůr, focusing on alternatives to the consumer lifestyle. The event featured again Freda Meisner Blau discussing the "power and powerlessness of consumers" and a Saturday program led by the British movement WEN on household ecology. In Prague Mother's newspaper, it is possible to read about the workshop program that WEN also provided a political assessment of the situation and movements in the Czech Republic. At the same time, Czech associations focused on consumer topics, not generalizations about the movement. WEN members addressed issues like greenwashing and promoted a holistic philosophy of ecofeminism, emphasizing personal action over guilt.

²⁴⁰ E. Hauserová et al., *Růže Mezi Trnám: Ženy v Politickém Životě: Sborník Ze Semináře Ženy a Politika, Praha 3.5.-5.5.1996: Pořádaly Nadace Heinricha Bölla, Nadace pro Občanskou Společnost, Zelený Kruh: [Sestavila Eva Hauserová].* (Zelený kruh, 1996), <https://books.google.cz/books?id=f2bUtgAACAAJ>.

²⁴¹ Hauserová et al.

Another topic this weekend was a workshop where was presented alternative economics and permaculture.²⁴²

After its establishment in 1997, the Agency GAIA gained significant international support and became a member of many international organizations, specifically ecofeminists, such as the WEDO, Women for a Common Europe, and Vandana Shiva's Diverse Women for Diversity.²⁴³ Most of their international work was done under the program "Women and Environment," aimed at involving women in decision-making and environmental protection, emphasizing feminine principles in ecology, politics, and public life. Marie Haisová received a scholarship from the Ashoka Association in 1998 for her innovative projects and ideas in ecofeminism.²⁴⁴

Another significant conference was "Time is Life: Women, Children, Nature—Alternatives to the Politics of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund" in September 2000. The conference "Life is Not for Sale," featuring Vandana Shiva, highlighted their international outreach and addressed the issue of genetically modified grains. This conference was a symbolic end of Czech ecofeminism when Marie Haisová and Eva Hauserová got into conflict. Marie Haisová recalls that after the conference, Eva Hauserová wrote an article against the whole activity and especially against Vandana Shiva, which, for her, was too emotional, "*Eva simply wrote an article against us, yes, simply against the whole activity, simply to make herself visible, I have no other explanation for that.*"²⁴⁵ It is not clear what the actual reason for Eva Hauserová's critique was, whether she was disappointed with protests against globalization,

²⁴² Pražské matky, 'WEN Women's Environmental Network', *Přes Práh, Časopis pro Ochranu Rodičů, Děti a Přírody ve Městě VII*, no. 5 (May 1997): 9–14.

²⁴³ Among the membership in organizations: the Karat Association, the Anna Lindh Foundation, ACCet, the Balaton Group, Schumacher College, and the Association for Equal Opportunities Haisová, *Quo vadis, femina?: vize žen o trvale udržitelném životě*, 269.

²⁴⁴ Haisová, 268.

²⁴⁵ Haisová, Oral History Interview, 11–12.

which were violent or in some personal conflict between Marie Haisová and Eva Hauserová.²⁴⁶ Even in later articles, Eva Hauserová reflected that Vandana Shiva was militant, according to her, and she did want to be in collaboration with her. The main criticism was that the feminine and masculine values complement each other, and men are not “evil” even though the domination of men leads to the rule of money.²⁴⁷ However, even Marie Haisová: “*But it was easy to see that Vandana already had such a big ego, that’s just the glory.*”²⁴⁸ Although this conflict was not the only reason for the end of many ecofeminist activities, it did end the collaboration of one of the central ecofeminist collaboration, Marie Haisová, with Eva Hauserová, who subsequently focused more on permaculture and other topics.

After the 2000 event, the topic of ecofeminists faded among groups and organizations, and the only group affiliating and continuing with ecofeminist practices was the Agency GAIA. To a certain extent, the main content became the Quo Vadis Femina project after 2005, which was co-financed by the European Social Fund.²⁴⁹

None of the anarchy-feminist groups after 2000 focused on witchcraft or ecofeminism. There was the Feministická skupina 8. Března (Feminist Group on the 8th of March) was established in late 2000 and produced zines called Sirena (2001-2002) and Přímá cesta (2001-2009). After four years, the group was renamed Anarchofeministická skupina (Anarchy-feminist Group) and was based on socialist anarchism. The lesbian women’s group Promluv was also founded, and a literary social zine with the same name started to be published at the end of the 1990s. The most common topics were animal rights and LGBTQ+ rights.²⁵⁰ The lesbian women’s

²⁴⁶ Jan Brychta EkoList, ‘Život není na prodej, shodly se ženy na Vinohradech’, EkoList.cz, 27 September 2000, https://ekolist.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/zpravy/zivot-neni-na-prodej-shodly-se-zeny-na-vinohradech?utm_source=google.com.

²⁴⁷ Eva Hauserová, ‘Reportáž ze světové permakulturní konference’, 2017, 9, <https://www.bio-mesicnik.cz/>.

²⁴⁸ Haisová, Oral History Interview, 22.

²⁴⁹ Haisová, *Quo vadis, femina?: vize žen o trvale udržitelném životě*.

²⁵⁰ *Anarchistická Publicistika 1990 – 2013*, 134–45.

group Promluv was also founded, and a literary social zine with the same name started to be published at the end of the 1990s.²⁵¹

2.4. Conclusion

The international roots of Czech ecofeminism are interesting in two aspects. First, the international influences from alternative literature on witchcraft and permaculture, which emerged in the second half of the 1990s, significantly shaped Czech ecofeminism among all kinds of groups, and women's spirituality was a central topic for many articles. Second, on a practical level, international activists were crucial in establishing Czech ecofeminist groups. The relationships formed with these activists influenced the development of Czech ecofeminism. While international ecofeminist organizations were not highly influential overall, they played a crucial role in the anti/alter-globalization protests at the decade's end. Exhaustion among activists in the anti/alter-globalization movement, the depletion of topics within spiritual ecofeminism, and possibly disillusionment with developments after 1989 have perhaps led to the partial disappearance of Czech ecofeminism and the term ecofeminism itself in the following years, the 2000s. After the year 2000, only purely feminist zines and groups focusing on topics such as sexism, LGBTQ issues, etc., remained, and identifying with ecofeminism became even more marginal.

The case of alternative influences from abroad, such as witchcraft and permaculture, exemplifies how Czech ecofeminism perceived the relationship between men and women. This perception included a holistic approach to the "Mother Earth" and the differentiation between the values and qualities of the sexes, which should lead to an environmentally responsible worldview. Both philosophies emphasize community, which was significant for Czech

²⁵¹ Jirka Kolářová, 'Feministický mediální underground', A2 - neklid na kulturní frontě, 2008, <https://www.advojka.cz/archiv/2008/19/feministicky-medialni-underground>.

ecofeminists. Authors of zines often drew from foreign sources without specifically incorporating Czech or Slavic traditions related to goods and agriculture.

To summarize the relationship of Czech ecofeminists with foreign influences on a practical level, historical experiences show that, in the early years, foreign activists acted as “mentors.” Foreign sources also provided essential funding; for instance, Marie Haisová has repeatedly noted that “*abroad held (her) above the water*” and she “*owed actual survival to abroad.*”²⁵² The second half of the 1990s saw intensified activity among Czech ecofeminists, with ecofeminism being more explicitly identified. This was especially true in light of the upcoming anti/alter-globalization protests, which further radicalized both formal and alternative ecofeminist circles.

²⁵² Haisová, Oral History Interview, 9,28.

CONCLUSION

This thesis illuminates the vibrant and colorful mosaic of Czech ecofeminist groups in the 1990s. To uncover this mosaic and not just fragments, I utilized various types of primary sources, which helped reconstruct the history of Czech ecofeminism in the 1990s. However, the primary goal was to reconstruct events and understand when and where Czech ecofeminism emerged, how these groups organized and interacted within activist networks, and how they engaged in the public sphere.

In the 1990s, Czech ecofeminism primarily took on two forms: social and more conservative (exemplified by groups like Prague Mothers and South Bohemian Mothers) and radical/spiritual (seen in organizations such as Agency GAIA and anarchy-feminist circles). My contribution lies in dismantling the understanding of the NGO sphere and anarchism as devoid of collaboration and illuminating the networks and overlaps among activists. In the case of Czech ecofeminists and general anarchy-feminists, the distinction between formal and informal activists was insignificant, as women collaborated across ideological borders, seeking natural alliances while being aware of their differences.

Despite variations in their approaches, Czech ecofeminists shared everyday life experiences as women. Many women were involved in non-profit organizations, transitioning from their roles as mothers (the older generation) or activists entering the non-profit sector in the early 1990s. Working in the non-profit sector was essential for ecofeminists due to its flexibility, opportunities for learning, and the ability to focus on crucial topics. The example of Czech ecofeminists illustrates the professionalization of environmental and feminist movements. Key figures in Czech ecofeminism included Eva Hauserová and Marie Haisová, who influenced numerous women's groups and were active in many platforms for ecofeminism.

The internationalization of Western organizations and activists, mainly from Britain, Germany, and Austria, was something to examine critically. In the context of contemporary debates about the import of “Western feminism” to post-socialist states, Czech ecofeminists actively sought international allies but also distinguished themselves from “Western feminism” by incorporating Czech authors or authors from Central Europe and focusing on the topics and issues which they perceived as crucial for Czech society within the Czech socialist past (the emphasis on care, social issues, and education.)

A significant finding was the emergence of ecofeminism within the anarcho-feminist movement and the production of zines in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the late 1990s. These zines were notable for their emphasis on spirituality and witchcraft. Even with the strong influence of Western women’s spirituality (witchcraft, neopaganism) and influential ideologies like permaculture introduced by international activists, Czech ecofeminists adapted these concepts to fit the Czech context. They used aspects from intellectual and cultural traditions such as Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy. However, there is no intense revision of particular Czech or Slovak folklore traditions. The feminine spirituality is connected more with the Nordic mythologies in the imagined past before industrialization or even before the Christianization of the region.

While ecofeminism did not emerge as a distinct movement in the Czech Republic during the 1990s, the ideas of ecofeminism gained prominence. As the anti/alter-globalization protests in 2000 became a vital issue, ecofeminist themes appeared in zines and magazines of various organizations. This period also saw significant activities by Marie Haisová, who, connected to the international ecofeminist movement, invited prominent figure Vandana Shiva to the Czech Republic. Conversely, disappointment from the protests and the narrowing interests of groups and organizations led to the gradual fading of ecofeminism, which transformed into different

practices. These included a focus on animal rights and LGBTQ+ activism in anarcho-feminist circles or a specific focus on environmental issues and the climate crisis.

Due to lacking primary sources and capacity, I could not delve deeply into the perspectives of international activists and organizations that came to the Czech lands in the 1990s. Another problem faced during the research on Czech ecofeminist groups is that most organizations did not provide access to their archives, if they had any, and documentation was usually not as thorough as, for instance, governmental documents. Extensive research on these organizations' documents would better understand their internal relations and practical issues.

Explorations of the impacts and effectiveness of practices pushed by Czech ecofeminist organizations and their influence beyond the activist environment would enrich further research. Expanding my oral history research and speaking with more historical actors would serve for a more detailed study. If the Czech ecofeminists of the 1990s are considered the “first generation” of ecofeminists, it would be exciting to examine the “second generation” emerging from organizations like Nesehnutí or the anarcho-feminist group Feminist Group March 8, established after 2000, or even the current echoes of the “first generation of the 1990s” of Czech ecofeminist groups in the contemporary environmental and feminist movements.

Although the term ecofeminism largely disappeared from activist circles after 2000, this does not mean that Czech ecofeminists' ideas from the 1990s have vanished—quite the opposite. As I illustrated in the introduction to the 2022 university strike, connections between feminism and environmentalism are visible in the Czech climate movement, and there is renewed interest in ecofeminism within the context of the climate crisis.

While today's activists may no longer use symbols like witches or talk about women's spirituality, the ideas from 1990s Czech ecofeminism that have endured are primarily those of

social ecofeminism, emphasizing care and criticism of patriarchy and capitalism, which is seen as arising from social constructions.

It can be partly said that many ideas, which largely came from abroad (such as Western women's spirituality), did not succeed despite some adaptations by Czech ecofeminists. Instead, what has endured from the 1990s Czech ecofeminism are those ideas that had already been a tradition before 1989. Furthermore, for example, in the book *Budoucnost je feministická, gender intersectionality v českém klimatickém hnutí* (The Future is Feminist: Gender and Intersectionality in the Czech Climate Movement), we do not find any mention of the term ecofeminism, even though many of the ideas could be framed through this term.²⁵³ However, there has been a noticeable shift towards more explicitly identifying as feminists among environmental activists without the need to distinguish themselves from Western feminists repeatedly. Furthermore, a collection of essays titled "Prolomit systém, Ekofeministické vize budoucnosti" (Breaking the System, Ecofeminist Visions of the Future) was recently published by the Klimatist*ka collective.²⁵⁴ The collection is described as follows: "*The authors reflect on how to address the climate crisis with consideration for marginalized groups, why we should replace greed with solidarity, and how to organize without reproducing harmful behavior patterns.*"²⁵⁵ Among the key themes in the book are those that align with social ecofeminism, emphasizing social issues, a solidarity-based society, transformative education, the role of caregivers, and the social economy. These elements, which have a tradition from the 1990s, appear to have persisted within Czech ecofeminism and become visions for the future of contemporary female activists.

²⁵³ Michaela Pixová and Véronique Ananké Nebeská, *Budoucnost je feministická: gender a intersekcionalita v českém klimatickém hnutí* (Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2022).

²⁵⁴ the name of the collective that published the book refers to the connection between a climate activist and a female activist, fulfilling a similar meaning as the term ecofeminist. Nicole Princlová et al., *Prolomit systém. Ekofeministické vize budoucnosti.*, 1st ed. (Praha: Klimatist*ka, 2024).

²⁵⁵ Jonáš Verešpěj, 'Prolomit systém', *AnkaII* (blog), 7 June 2024, <https://anka.li/2024/06/prolomit-system/>.

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ATTACHMENT: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

FORM IN ENGLISH

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, the undersigned (hereinafter referred to as the ‘narrator’):

By Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (GDPR), I hereby grant my explicit and voluntary consent to the processing of all my personal data provided during interviews conducted in audio or audio-visual format as part of the research project for the student’s master’s thesis:

Mgr. Marie Jiříčková

Czech Ecofeminists and the International Ecofeminist Movement, 1989-1999

I acknowledge that I am providing my personal and sensitive data for the following purposes:

- Scientific or historical research in the field of humanities
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By signing this consent, I am aware that the administrator of this data becomes the aforementioned student.

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