

POWER RELATIONS AND ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ECOLOGICAL CONFLICTS IN NATIONAL STRATEGIC PROJECTS IN INDONESIA (ANDESITE MINE IN WADAS VILLAGE AND ECO-CITY IN REMPANG ISLAND 2017-2024)

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Abstract

This study analyzes ecological conflicts within the framework of the National Strategic Project (NSN) in Wadas Village (Central Java) and Rempang Island (Riau Islands) using the access theory developed by Jesse Ribot and Nancy Peluso (2003). This theory views access as the ability of actors to obtain benefits from natural resources through legal and non-legal mechanisms, such as power, capital, discourse, and social networks. This approach is used to understand the competition between the state, corporations, and local communities for control and utilization of natural resources within the context of national development. This study employed qualitative research methods with a comparative political studies approach. Data were obtained through a review of literature, policy documents, advocacy organization reports, and media coverage relevant to the conflict dynamics in both regions. The results indicate that the conflicts in Wadas and Rempang share structural similarities, both rooted in the development of National Strategic Projects that legitimize the expansion of access to natural resources by powerful state and private actors. Powerful actors utilize a combination of legal access, political authority, and development discourse to create space for development and investment interests. Nevertheless, communities exhibit forms of collective resistance rooted in ecological, social, and cultural claims. The key differences lie in the nature of resources and mechanisms of exclusion. The Wadas conflict is primarily ecological-agrarian in nature, stemming from andesite mining that threatens agricultural land and water sources, while the Rempang conflict is more political-economic and cultural in nature, stemming from the relocation of communities from coastal areas for industrialization projects. Thus, ecological conflict in Indonesia is a manifestation of the politics of access, a struggle between actors for the ability to benefit from natural resources under the hegemony of national development.

Keywords: *Power Relations, Natural Resource Access, and Ecological Conflict.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Reform Era has been dominated by discourse and practice of infrastructure development policies oriented towards economic growth. This began with the Master Plan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Economic Growth (MP3EI) during the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono administration and continued during the last 10 years of President Joko Widodo's administration, with the nomenclature changing to National Strategic Projects, or PSN. This agenda was incorporated into the 2015-2019 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and legally supported by Presidential Regulation No. 56 of 2018 concerning the Acceleration of National Strategic Projects (PSN).

This program is implemented by government institutions and/or companies that play a crucial role in driving growth and the spread of development, thereby improving public welfare and regional development. The government argues that Indonesia, as an archipelagic nation with diverse natural resource potential and a large population, faces challenges in infrastructure development. Therefore, efforts to connect remote regions and improve connectivity through modern infrastructure must be accelerated. Through the 2026 Presidential Instruction, the government requested that relevant parties take action to resolve problems and obstacles and develop policies to accelerate the implementation of the National Strategic Projects (PSN) in accordance with their respective duties, functions, and authorities. National Strategic Projects are broadly applicable and spread throughout Indonesia.

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National Strategic Projects (PSN) have high investment value and broad economic impact. Their implementation is carried out directly by the central government, regional governments, and/or companies, as well as through inter-company collaboration, prioritizing the use of domestic components. Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Airlangga Hartarto, stated that the number of PSN projects has reached 233 with an investment value of IDR 6,246 trillion, consisting of 218 projects and 15 programs (CNBC, July 18, 2024). These 218 projects include roads and bridges, ports, airports, railways, residential areas, dams and irrigation, clean water and sanitation, coastal embankments, energy, technology, education, tourism, and plantations. However, a problem that has emerged is the massive infrastructure development, which has the potential to cause environmental conflicts in various regions.

Conflicts over land grabbing in Indonesia have continued to increase, at least in the past five years, according to a monitoring report by the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA). 2024 was the year with the highest number of conflict cases, reaching 295, a 21.9 percent increase compared to the previous year. This increase in cases also includes violence and criminal acts in conflict areas (Agrarian Reform Consortium, 2025). The second largest sector contributing to conflict after agriculture and plantations is infrastructure development. In 2024, the number of conflicts due to infrastructure development reached 79 cases, or 26.8 percent of the total agrarian conflicts. The KPA noted that these conflict cases were partly caused by the accelerated implementation of National Strategic Projects (PSN). The following is conflict data by sector:

Chart 1. Ecological Conflict Sectors in Indonesia (2024)



Sumber: Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria; Diolah Litbang Kompas/L09



In general, conflicts arise related to land acquisition for national strategic programs, including the development of industrial estates, new cities, tourism areas, dams, airports, and sustainable energy initiatives. Furthermore, national strategic projects (PSN) such as andesite mining in Wadas since 2017 and the eco-city project in Rempang in 2023 also have ecological impacts that must be borne by communities surrounding the development areas.

One example of a PSN is the Benar Dam construction project in Purworejo Regency. This dam is a National Strategic Project designated by Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2017. Its construction requires andesite mined in Wadas Village as its raw material. In 2018, the Governor of Central Java issued Decree No. 590/41 regarding the determination of land acquisition locations for the construction of the Bener Dam in Purworejo and Wonosobo Regencies, which was later updated through Decree No. 590/20 of 2021.

Local residents rejected the Governor's Decree regarding the determination of land acquisition locations and took legal action to sue the Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, at the Semarang State Administrative Court (PTUN) over the issuance of the Decree regarding the land acquisition location in Wadas Village. However, the Semarang PTUN rejected the lawsuit. On February 8, 2022, land surveying and crop recording began by the Land Agency. This sparked local anger, which was expressed through mujahadah (protests), which ultimately escalated into conflict when security forces acted repressively to secure the project. Beyond overlapping regulatory issues, the residents' most prominent objection stemmed from fear of losing their living space. One such concern was the threat to the livelihoods of the community, the majority of whom depend on agriculture and plantations. Wadas Village covers an area of 405,820 hectares, of which 381,820 hectares are dry land and the remaining 24,000 hectares are rice paddies. The village is also rich in biodiversity and boasts a variety of commodities, including sangon, coconut, mahogany teak, banana, acacia, cardamom, sugar palm, and cloves, all of which are threatened with extinction due to land conversion for mining.

In addition to the Wadas case, an ecological conflict also occurred on Rempang Island, Riau Islands Province, in 2023. The Minister of Forestry, through Decree No. 463/Menhut-II/2013, established regulations establishing protected forest areas on Batam Island. This regulation created legal uncertainty in the land sector,

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ultimately triggering a conflict between Rempang Island residents and joint forces from the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), the Indonesian National Police (Polri), and the Batam Authority (BP Batam) on September 7, 2023. The conflict is believed to have been caused by unequal access to natural resources in Rempang due to the planned development of the Rempang Eco City area. Rempang Eco City is a modern industrial and residential development project, a collaboration between the Batam Free Trade Zone Authority (BP Batam), the Ministry of Investment, and PT Makmur Elok Graha (MEG). The project is claimed to create a green economic zone and attract global investment. However, local Rempang residents believe the project will alienate them from their land. Rempang Island is home to fishing villages and is located on the coast surrounded by other islands. The fishing community relies on marine resources, kinship ties, inherited cultural roles, and local social dynamics for their livelihoods. According to the Riau Province Natural Resources Conservation Agency, Rempang Island is a protected area for biodiversity and the ecosystems of mangrove forests, coastal forests, and lowland forests. This area is surrounded by water, and its ecosystem is inhabited by various living creatures such as freshwater fish, saltwater fish, and others. Since 2023, the planned relocation of approximately 16 Malay villages on Rempang Island has sparked strong resistance from the local community, who continue to resist. Social conflict, violence by authorities, and eviction from their living spaces have been the main issues in this case (Kompas, 2023). In this context, projects called "sustainable development" actually produce social and environmental inequality.

These two cases represent the paradoxical nature of development in Indonesia, where economic development and industrialization are driven by the logic of extractivism and accumulation by dispossession, namely the accumulation of capital through the appropriation of resources (Harvey, 2003). The state acts as the primary facilitator of development and investment, while local residents lose their right to their living space. Thus, the ecological conflicts in Wadas and Rempang are not simply environmental issues but also a reflection of power relations within the political economy of national development. Studying these two cases is important because they demonstrate a similar pattern: development claimed to be in the public interest, but instead causing ecological and social suffering for local residents due to unequal power relations and access to environmental resources.

In their access theory, Ribot and Peluso (2003) argue that ecological conflict resulting from development policies is caused by unequal access to natural resources. Jesse C. Ribot and Nancy Lee Peluso, writing in *Rural Sociology* 68 (2), pp. 153-181, 2003, argue that access differs from property. They define access as the ability to benefit from something, including material objects, individuals, institutions, and symbols. By focusing on capabilities rather than rights as in property theory, this formulation of access provides broader scope for social relationships that enable people to benefit from resources. Peluso and Ribot (2003) define access as the ability to generate benefits from something, including natural resources. This research is crucial for using this theory to understand ecological conflict not solely as a struggle for property rights, but rather as a struggle for power between actors (states, corporations, and local communities) to control, manage, and benefit from natural resources. This is achieved through a comparative analysis of ecological conflicts involving andesite mining in Wadas and eco-cities in Rempang.

METHOD

The research approach used is qualitative research to construct knowledge statements based on constructive perspectives, including those rooted in social and historical values, with the aim of establishing specific knowledge patterns regarding issues of change and politics (Crasswel, 2014). The author uses descriptive analysis techniques, which, according to Neuman (2013), provide a specific description of a situation, arrangement, or social relationship. A literature review is used to address limitations in conducting field research, including books, journals, news, or previous articles relevant to the topic being studied. A comparative political study is chosen to explain the comparison of ecological conflicts between two development policies in terms of the struggle for access to natural resources between actors in Wadas Village and Rempang Island, based on Ribot and Peluso's (2003) access theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Overview of National Strategic Projects (PSN)

To ensure the effective implementation of National Strategic Projects (Proyek Strategis Nasional/PSN), the Government has introduced a range of facilitative measures, including regulatory arrangements, spatial planning adjustments, allocation of financing, as well as protection and security provisions exercised by both central and regional government authorities, as stipulated in Government Regulation (PP) No. 42 of 2021 on Facilities for National Strategic Projects. The legal governance of PSN is primarily established under Presidential Regulation (Perpres) No. 3 of 2016 concerning the Acceleration of the Implementation of National Strategic Projects, which

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has been successively amended by Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2017 in conjunction with Presidential Regulation No. 56 of 2018, and subsequently by Presidential Regulation No. 109 of 2020. Furthermore, the designation and revision of the PSN list are regulated under the Regulation of the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 7 of 2021 on Amendments to the List of National Strategic Projects, which was later revised through Regulation of the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs No. 6 of 2024.

Within this regulatory framework, PSN fundamentally functions as a development policy instrument established through formal legal mechanisms to ensure the implementation of priority projects that possess substantial strategic value for national economic development and public welfare. The designation of a project as a National Strategic Project is conducted through an inter-ministerial evaluation process that takes into account a range of strategic considerations, including macroeconomic benefits, development urgency, land acquisition readiness, financing feasibility, and alignment with medium- and long-term national development planning objectives. Moreover, the enactment of Government Regulation No. 42 of 2021 provides normative legitimacy for the provision of facilitative measures, encompassing the simplification of licensing procedures, adjustments to spatial planning instruments, allocation of government financial support, and the provision of security assurances to mitigate obstacles that may impede the progress of development.

During his administration, President Joko Widodo established the Committee for the Acceleration of Priority Infrastructure Delivery (Komite Percepatan Penyediaan Infrastruktur Prioritas/KPPIP), which is mandated to coordinate policies among relevant stakeholders in order to facilitate the implementation of national strategic projects that had previously experienced delays, as well as to initiate new projects as part of a broader debottlenecking strategy (Salim & Negara, 2019). The actors involved in infrastructure acceleration efforts include the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, which serves as the initiator of the infrastructure acceleration mechanism and the issuing authority of regulations constituting the regulatory framework; and the Committee for the Acceleration of Priority Infrastructure Delivery (KPPIP), which is responsible for selecting strategic projects based on urgency and for providing facilitative support to accelerate project implementation. KPPIP was established to lead coordination in the acceleration of priority infrastructure development and to enhance the quality of project preparation through the application of Outline Business Case (OBC) guidelines (KPPIP, 2022). In addition, KPPIP conducts periodic evaluations of project progress and oversees the inclusion or removal of projects from the PSN list in accordance with established criteria, as follows:

Table 1. Criteria for National Strategic Projects (PSN)

Levels of Criteria	Description
Basic Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with national and subnational medium-term development plans, as well as sectoral strategic plans in the field of infrastructure. • Consistency with spatial and regional planning frameworks, insofar as such alignment does not entail alterations to designated green open spaces.
Strategic Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possession of strategic significance for the national economy, social welfare, and national defense and security, as reflected in contributions to Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) and Gross Domestic Expenditure (GDE), employment generation, socio-economic impacts, and environmental effects. • Intersectoral and interregional linkages among infrastructure sectors, generating complementary effects. • Balanced geographical distribution across islands, aimed at addressing disparities between development in western and eastern regions of Indonesia.
Operational Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly proposed projects are required to be supported by a Pre-Feasibility Study (Pre-FS). • The project must have an investment value exceeding IDR 100 billion or demonstrate a strategic role in promoting regional economic growth

Source: KPPIP (2022)

Based on the criteria outlined above, the Bener Dam project falls within the strategic criteria, particularly due to its complementary function. The Bener Dam is expected to support other key infrastructure and facilities, notably by ensuring an adequate water supply for the operation of Yogyakarta International Airport. Similarly, the Eco-City project on Rempang Island is intended to transform the island into an integrated industrial zone and an environmentally sustainable tourism area. This project constitutes one of the National Strategic Projects (Proyek Strategis Nasional/PSN) prioritized by the Government of Indonesia. The project is planned to be developed by PT Makmur Elok Graha, a subsidiary of the Artha Graha Network owned by businessman Tomy Winata, and operated by the Chinese glass manufacturer Xinyi Glass Holdings Ltd. (CNN Indonesia, 2023).

1. National Strategic Project in Wadas Village: Andesite Mining for the Construction of the Bener Dam

Wadas Village is one of the areas affected by a National Strategic Project (PSN) implemented by the Government of Indonesia, namely the construction of the Bener Dam. The project requires andesite stone as a primary construction material, which is to be sourced from mining activities conducted on land located in Wadas Village. Beginning in 2018, the Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, issued Governor's Decree No. 590/41 concerning the designation of land acquisition locations for the construction of the Bener Dam in Purworejo Regency and Wonosobo Regency. This decree was subsequently revised in 2020 through Governor's Decree No. 539/29 of 2020, and again updated in 2021 through Governor's Decree No. 590/20 of 2021.

The Bener Dam constitutes one of 55 dam and irrigation projects designated as National Strategic Projects (PSN), with a total investment value of IDR 5,481.4 trillion, as stipulated in Regulation of the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs No. 9 of 2022. The project originates from the "Ten New Balis" program within the framework of the National Tourism Strategic Areas (Kawasan Strategis Pariwisata Nasional/KSPN), which includes the Borobudur Cultural Heritage Area and was initially conceptualized during the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The development of this tourism area necessitates integrated transportation infrastructure, leading to the construction of Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) in Kulon Progo. To support the airport's operations, a reliable water supply is required, which is provided through supporting infrastructure, namely the Bener Dam located in Purworejo Regency. Nevertheless, the project has faced criticism from various stakeholders due to concerns that it may adversely affect the environment and ecological safety of Wadas Village. Local communities have expressed apprehension that andesite mining activities may result in environmental degradation and the marginalization of residents.

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) of Purworejo Regency, Wadas Village has a population of 1,445 residents, comprising 771 males and 748 females. The village is estimated to contain approximately 30 million cubic meters of andesite stone. Andesite is classified as a volcanic rock that is well-suited for construction foundations due to its high durability. However, under Purworejo Regional Regulation No. 27 of 2011 concerning the Regional Spatial Plan (Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah/RTRW), Wadas Village is designated as a plantation area. Consequently, andesite mining conducted through open-pit methods poses a risk of undermining the area's environmental potential, potentially resulting in the loss of landscape integrity, depletion of water springs, and the emergence of ecological hazards affecting land that has long served as the living space and livelihood base of the local community.

2. National Strategic Project in Rempang Island: Eco-City as an Industrial Zone

Environmental issues on Rempang Island attracted national attention following its designation as part of a National Strategic Project (Proyek Strategis Nasional/PSN) through Regulation of the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 7 of 2023, which revised the list of strategic projects aimed at accelerating national economic development. The project, known as Rempang Eco-City, represents an ambitious initiative intended to transform the area into an environmentally sustainable industrial city encompassing clean energy-based manufacturing, sustainable tourism, and modern residential zones.

Administratively, Rempang Island falls within the jurisdiction of Batam City, Riau Islands Province, covering an area of approximately 16,583 hectares and inhabited by around 7,512 residents. The island occupies a strategically significant location, situated within waters between Malaysia and Singapore. Between 2001 and 2002, the government granted land-use rights (Hak Guna Usaha) to a private company; however, prior to the emergence of land-related conflicts, these rights were reportedly not managed effectively. Badan Pengusahaan Batam (BP Batam) did not provide clear clarification regarding the delineation between customary land and administratively managed land, resulting in overlapping claims of land tenure.

According to official government statements, the development of Rempang Island is expected to generate several benefits and is projected to serve as a new source of economic growth for Indonesia. These anticipated benefits include the development of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), the absorption of local labor, the promotion of more equitable development, and the encouragement of sustainable investment. As part of its role as an emerging economic hub, the central government, through BP Batam, is advancing the transformation of Rempang into an integrated area encompassing industrial, commercial, residential, and tourism functions. This strategy is intended to enhance Indonesia's competitiveness vis-à-vis Singapore and Malaysia. Moreover, as a designated National Strategic Project, Rempang Eco-City is expected to strengthen Batam's position as a key economic center within the Riau Islands Province. Reflecting this broader context, Batam City recorded economic growth of 6.84 percent in 2022, while the economy of the Riau Islands Province grew by 5.77 percent in the first half of 2023 compared to the same period in the previous year.

b. Dynamics of Ecological Conflict in Andesite Mining in Wadas Village and the Rempang Eco-City Project

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) of Purworejo Regency, the population of Wadas Village totals 1,445 residents, comprising approximately 771 men and 748 women. Wadas Village is estimated to possess andesite stone reserves of approximately 30 million cubic meters. This type of rock belongs to the category of intrusive volcanic formations and is widely regarded as a suitable material for construction foundations due to its durability and structural strength. Under Purworejo Regional Regulation No. 27 of 2011 concerning the Regional Spatial Plan (Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah/RTRW), Wadas Village is designated as a plantation area. However, the ecological potential of this area is threatened by the planned andesite mining activities, which are to be conducted using open-pit mining methods. Such activities pose significant risks to the local environment, including landscape degradation, the loss of water sources, and the emergence of environmental hazards that undermine the living space and ecological security of the local population.

As a form of resistance aimed at protecting their livelihoods and living environment, community opposition in Wadas was met with responses characterized by violence, criminalization, and intimidation. On 23 April 2021, when residents of Wadas organized a demonstration in front of the village hall by conducting a *mujahadah* (collective prayer) to protest the socialization of land measurement and demarcation activities carried out by the Serayu Opak River Basin Authority (Balai Besar Wilayah Sungai Serayu Opak/BBWS-SO), police and military personnel were deployed to the site. Rather than providing protection, security forces reportedly used force, including the deployment of tear gas against civilians. As a result, 12 individuals sustained injuries, and an additional 12 people—including two legal aid advocates—were arrested on allegations of acting as provocateurs.

The escalation of violence against the Wadas community reached its peak on 8 February 2022. Thousands of armed police personnel, some reportedly operating in plain clothes, entered Wadas Village under the pretext of securing land measurement activities for the andesite mining project. Security forces reportedly conducted house-to-house searches, pursued residents, confiscated mobile phones, and subjected dozens of villagers to physical assault and abuse. More than 60 individuals, along with members of solidarity networks supporting the community and legal advocates from Yogyakarta Public Interest Law Organization (LBH Yogyakarta), were detained on charges of resisting law enforcement and obstructing land measurement activities. At the time of the incident, residents were reportedly engaged in a *mujahadah* at a mosque in Krajan Hamlet, and no acts of resistance were observed as alleged by the authorities. The security lockdown persisted for nearly one week. In the days following the incident, many residents remained confined to their homes due to the continued presence of police and military personnel in the village. Consequently, Wadas Village resembled a “ghost town,” marked by the suspension of routine social activities, while livestock and agricultural land—central to residents' livelihoods—were left unattended for several weeks.

Meanwhile, Rempang Island has also been designated as a site for a National Strategic Project involving the development of an industrial zone with foreign investment participation. Rempang Island has long been inhabited by indigenous communities whose presence predates Indonesian independence by several centuries. In August 2023, through a Regulation of the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Rempang Island was formally designated as part of the National Strategic Projects under the Rempang Eco-City Development Project in the Riau Islands. The project is being implemented by PT Makmur Elok Graha through a partnership between the government—represented by BP Batam and the Batam City Government—and private sector actors. The development is oriented toward establishing an integrated industrial, commercial, and tourism area aimed at stimulating economic growth and enhancing Indonesia's competitiveness relative to Malaysia and Singapore. As part of this initiative, the project includes the construction of a major glass and solar panel manufacturing facility, operated by a multinational

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corporation under the Xinyi Group, a Chinese-based company specializing in glass production, with its operational center located on Rempang Island.

According to statements issued by BP Batam in September 2023, approximately 17,600 hectares of land have been allocated to PT Makmur Elok Graha since 2004. Of this total area, 10,028 hectares are classified as protected forest, while the remaining 7,572 hectares are designated for development. The glass manufacturing facility alone is projected to occupy approximately 2,000 hectares of land. Nevertheless, the Rempang Eco-City project has been widely perceived as detrimental to the indigenous communities of Rempang, who contend that they lack effective control over ancestral lands. These developments are expected to adversely affect traditional livelihoods, particularly fishing, and pose risks to marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Furthermore, the project has been criticized for failing to adequately fulfill the requirement to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (Analisis Mengenai Dampak Lingkungan/AMDAL), a fundamental instrument for environmental protection, particularly given Rempang Island’s status as a small island highly vulnerable to climate change. Additionally, the extraction and management of quartz sand for industrial purposes also necessitate an AMDAL as a guiding framework for environmental safeguarding. Article 28H paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia guarantees the right of every person to physical and mental well-being, adequate housing, and access to a good and healthy environment, as well as health services.

In response to these policies, on 7 September 2023, personnel from the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), the National Police (Polri), and BP Batam forcibly entered indigenous settlements on Rempang Island to demarcate project boundaries. Subsequently, local residents organized demonstrations that escalated into confrontations between the community and BP Batam authorities. Tensions intensified as residents rejected relocation plans and continued to assert their land rights, arguing that the project threatens environmental sustainability and undermines ecosystems they have preserved for generations. Under the rationale of reducing development disparities and economic inequality, the government has accelerated physical infrastructure development through National Strategic Projects (Hill & Negara, 2019; Salim & Negara, 2019). In the context of the Rempang Eco-City project, the government sought to expedite implementation by requesting residents to vacate the area by 28 September 2023, although this information was reportedly not communicated directly to the affected communities. Residents firmly refused to leave their homes despite the provision of relocation sites by the authorities. When BP Batam attempted to proceed with land measurement activities, groups of residents mobilized to block access routes used by security forces near Bareleng Bridge 4. In response, a joint force comprising the military, police, and Batam security personnel established counter-blockades from the opposite direction. Security forces subsequently approached the crowd, ordered residents to disperse, and deployed tear gas to clear the area. As a result, numerous local residents sustained injuries due to repressive measures and were transported to hospitals for medical treatment.

c. Mapping Power Relations between Actors in Wadas and Rempang

The ecological conflict in Wadas Village is related to the planned andesite mining for the Bener Dam National Strategic Project (PSN). Within this policy, there is a division of actors, which can be divided into two categories: strong actors and weak actors, based on their ability to access benefits from natural resources. To understand the configuration of actors involved in the project, the following is a map of the actors involved in the ecological conflict in Wadas Village:

Table 2. Actors Mapping in the National Strategic Project (PSN) of the Bener Dam/ Andesite Mining in Wadas Village

Actor Category	Primary Actors	Roles and Interests	Access Mechanisms (Ribot & Peluso)
Central-State	Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR)	Serves as the principal authority responsible for the Bener Dam project. Its primary interest lies in ensuring the availability of construction materials (andesite) required for the implementation of national infrastructure development.	Access is exercised through legal authority, public financial resources, and policy legitimacy derived from the designation of the project as a National Strategic Project (PSN).
Local Government	Central Java Provincial Government and	Support the National Strategic Project in pursuit of	Access is exercised through political and administrative

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	Purworejo Regency Government	development performance legitimacy and regional economic growth objectives.	proximity to the central government and centers of decision-making authority.
Security Apparatus	Police and Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI)	Are responsible for ensuring project security and enforcing control over community protests and resistance.	Access is exercised through coercive authority, reflecting the state's repressive power.
State-Owned Enterprises	PT. Brantas Abipraya, PT. Waskita Karya, PT. Pembangunan Perumahan.	Serve as the project implementers for the Bener Dam and as direct beneficiaries of andesite mining activities associated with the project.	Access is exercised through project contracts, capital investment, and technological capacity.
Local Communities	Residents of Wadas Village	Articulate opposition to mining activities on the grounds of anticipated environmental degradation, agricultural land dispossession, and risks to local water resources.	Access is restricted due to asymmetrical power relations and limited legal, economic, and political capital; however, communities engage in collective resistance to contest and reassert access.
Activists and Civil Society Organizations	LBH Yogyakarta, WALHI, JM-PPK	Provide legal assistance and engage in public advocacy to support affected communities and contest the mining project.	Access is exercised through legal expertise, advocacy networks, and the mobilization of ecological justice discourses.
Media and Academics	Journalists and researchers	Frame and disseminate the Wadas case as an exemplar of ecological conflict and development-related inequality.	Access is derived from the production and circulation of knowledge, discourse formation, and influence over public opinion.

Source: Compiled and Analyzed by the Author (2025)

Furthermore, the ecological conflict in Rempang is related to the Rempang Eco City project, part of the National Strategic Project (PSN) and the green industry investment agenda promoted by the Batam Free Trade Zone Authority (BP Batam) and foreign investors. This national-scale policy, not only involves powerful actors but also has the consequence of creating victims affected by the development, in this case local residents who are the weak actors. A more detailed explanation of the power relations between the actors involved in the ecological conflict on Rempang Island can be seen below:

Table 3. Mapping of Actors in the National Strategic Project (PSN) of Eco-city in Rempang Island

Actor Category	Main Actor	Roles and Interests	Access Mechanism (Ribot & Peluso)
Central-State	Ministry of Investment/BKPM and Coordinator Ministry for Economic Affairs	Initiate strategic projects to attract foreign investment (especially from Xinyi Group, China).	Access through investment regulatory authorities and national economic policies.
Badan Pengusahaan (BP) Batam	Land and investment management authority in the Batam region	Maintains administrative control over land and business permits in Rempang. Directly participates in the relocation and land acquisition process.	Access through legal and administrative authorities to strategic land management.
Foreign Investors	Xinyi Glass Holdings Ltd. (Tiongkok)	Want to build a global scale glass and solar energy industry in Rempang.	Access through international capital, technology, and diplomatic support.
Local Government	Batam City Government and Riau Islands Province	Support projects to increase PAD, investment, and employment.	Access through bureaucratic coordination and local political interests.

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Security Forces	Polri and Satpol PP	Enforcing relocation and maintaining project security; often involved in clashes with residents.	Access through the coercive power of the state.
Local Community	Melayu Tua Rempang Community	They resist relocation because they believe they have a history, culture, and identity on the land. They demand recognition of their right to residency and cultural heritage.	Losing formal access but maintaining social access and cultural identity through resistance.
Activists and NGOs	WALHI, KontraS, PBHI, JATAM	Accompanying residents and condemning forced relocation.	Access through advocacy networks, public opinion, and legal mechanisms.
Media and Academics	Various national and international media	Revealing issues of human rights violations and the socio-ecological impacts of investment projects.	Access through the production of global knowledge and opinion.

Source: Processed Autodidactically by the Author (2025)

A clear distinction is made between the actors involved in these two ecological conflicts. The dominant role of the central and regional governments, along with the deployment of security forces to secure the implementation of their respective National Strategic Projects (PSN), is a commonality in both cases. Actors in both locations also demonstrate the turbulence of interests in access to natural resources, particularly in the context of development policies as a means of controlling space. However, unlike the Wadas case, which involved the state through the relevant state-owned enterprise (BUMN) and decided through a tender process, the Rempang case involved a foreign company acting as an investor for the Rempang project, a giant Chinese company. On the other hand, local residents near the project sites are often the most impacted by development policies.

d. Comparison of the Struggle for Access to Natural Resources in Wadas and Rempang

Access theory, according to Ribot and Peluso (2003), is a significant concept in the study of political ecology and natural resource management. This concept attempts to explain who can benefit from natural resources and how they access them, both legally and illegally, and through formal and informal means. Ribot and Peluso published a landmark article titled "A Theory of Access" (2003) in the journal *Rural Sociology*. They criticized previous views that focused too much on "property rights" as the primary factor determining who has the right to use natural resources. For them, access is determined not only by legal ownership, but also by various power, economic, social, and technological mechanisms that enable or hinder individuals from benefiting from resources.

Ribot and Peluso define two types of access. First, access through rights (Access via Rights), which refers to claims recognized legally, customary, or formally by the state or society. Examples include farmers with land titles or indigenous communities with legal recognition. Second, access through mechanisms (Access via Mechanisms), describes the power and social relationships that enable individuals to benefit despite not having legal rights. These access mechanisms encompass various forms of power that can limit others' access to resources, including:

1. Access through technology: the ability to use tools or technology to extract or manage resources.
2. Access through capital: the financial capacity to manage or acquire resources.
3. Access through markets: the ability to sell, buy, or utilize economic networks.
4. Access through labor: the ability to utilize or access resources through paid employment.
5. Access through knowledge: the ability to understand legal, technical, or administrative systems that provide access opportunities.
6. Access through authority: proximity to officials, bureaucrats, or political elites who can grant permits or protection.
7. Access through social identity: such as ethnicity, gender, or social class that influence a person's opportunities to obtain benefits.

According to this theory, access is not always legal or formal, but is also influenced by power and social relations. Thus, control of resources is determined more by power relations than by formal law. This theory

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broadens understanding in political-ecological analysis by showing how various actors (states, corporations, local communities) have unequal levels of access to resources.

In the conflict situations in Wadas and Rempang, the state and corporations gained access primarily through power and economic means, while local communities were marginalized due to their weak social, political, and economic positions. A comparative analysis of these two environmental conflict cases reveals this through several aspects of access rights and methods. First, access through authority demonstrates that the state, as the dominant actor, uses legal legitimacy and development policies to determine who has the right to use natural resources. In Wadas, government authority is based on the Bener Dam's status as a National Strategic Project requiring andesite stone for construction, supported by a number of legal instruments as structural legitimacy. In Rempang, the government, through the Batam Free Trade Zone Authority (BP Batam) and the Ministry of Investment, uses legal force to relocate residents to make way for the development of the Rempang Eco City industrial area. In both cases, state legitimacy serves as a primary tool to open access for projects, while simultaneously restricting communities' access to their living spaces. Local residents are forced to cede land for the national interest without deliberative forums involving meaningful public participation.

Furthermore, access through capital is also crucial. Both projects (Bener Dam and Rempang Eco City) involve actors with substantial financial resources. Capital serves as a tool to control land, technology, and political connections. Meanwhile, local communities, who rely primarily on agriculture (in Wadas) or fisheries and coastal settlements (in Rempang), lack sufficient capital to compete, resulting in their inability to utilize resources within their own territories. Furthermore, there is access through technology, where the state and large corporations master modern technology for resource exploitation. The use of heavy equipment and integrated production systems strengthens their position in extracting natural resources. On the other hand, local communities only use basic technology based on traditional knowledge, thus lacking sufficient bargaining power.

Another mechanism of access evident in the power relations between parties in both locations is access derived from knowledge and discourse. The state controls the narrative regarding development and economic growth as the basis for specific projects. In official discourse, the mining project in Wadas and the industrial area in Rempang are identified as part of the public interest and national strategy. Local knowledge regarding the ecological, social, and cultural values of the region is not recognized in policymaking, resulting in the marginalization of local knowledge. Furthermore, access occurs through social relations and power. Those with connections to political and bureaucratic elites gain advantages in licensing and project funding. Meanwhile, communities without close ties to power structures face restrictions on access, such as through pressure from officials and stigmatization as obstacles to development. To assess the comparison between the two cases of ecological conflict in Wadas and Rempang, a simplified and more specific comparison of the access capabilities of actors is presented below:

1. Similarities

Structurally, both conflicts exhibit similar patterns:

- a. Domination of the state and companies as the primary determinants of access to resources.
- b. Marginalization of local communities who lose access through legal action, violence by officials, and denial of their right to participate.
- c. Development legitimacy is used as a dominant discourse to justify expanding access to national strategic projects.
- d. Disparities in power related to capital, technology, and political networks put communities at a disadvantage.
- e. Ecological conflicts arise from changes in power relations over living spaces and resources previously managed locally.

Thus, both Wadas and Rempang are manifestations of unequal access within the context of state-mediated capitalist development.

2. Differences

Despite the shared general pattern, there are several significant differences in various aspects, including access mechanisms. The following table illustrates the observable differences between the two ecological conflicts:

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Table 4. Differences in Ecological Conflicts Between Wadas Village and Rempang Island

Aspect	Wadas	Rempang
Type Of Resource	Andesite rock (a mineral resource used as construction material for national infrastructure projects)	Land and coastal territory (designated for global-scale industrial and tourism development)
Mode Of State Access	Temporally bounded control exercised to secure material supply for the Bener Dam project	Permanent territorial control implemented through the comprehensive relocation of local populations
Forms Of Community Resistance	Grounded in environmental concerns and the preservation of agrarian-ecological systems	Centered on claims to residential rights, cultural identity, and Melayu historical continuity
Dominant Economic Actors	Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR) and national construction contractors	BP Batam, foreign investors (primarily from China), and national investment authorities
Skala Konflik	National (infrastructure-oriented development project)	Global (transnational investment-driven development project)
Identitas Sosial Masyarakat	Agrarian village communities with socio-ecological legitimacy	Indigenous Malay communities with cultural-historical legitimacy

Source: Processed Autodidactically by the Author (2025)

These differences demonstrate variations in the political-economic context and forms of community resistance to development policies that are uniform in their access patterns but differ in their manifestations.

CONCLUSION

This research, on environmental conflicts in Wadas Village and Rempang Island, utilizes the access theory developed by Ribot and Peluso (2003). This theory states that a person's ability to benefit from natural resources depends not only on legal ownership rights but is also influenced by various factors such as power, economic, social, technological, and knowledge, which can facilitate or hinder access. Based on the analysis, several key points can be concluded as follows:

1. The state, as a powerful actor, plays a primary role in regulating access to natural resources. Through legitimacy in the form of laws and development policies, the state grants access for national strategic projects, while simultaneously restricting access for local communities. Government officials serve as a crucial tool for strengthening control over space and resources.
2. Inequities in access mechanisms contribute to environmental conflicts. The state and companies dominate access due to their structural authority, capital mechanisms, technology, and political connections, while local communities are deprived of access due to economic and social limitations. This inequality creates an unbalanced relationship between development and environmental justice.
3. Wadas and Rempang share similarities in power patterns. Both demonstrate that development claimed to be in the public interest actually reinforces access mechanisms that only benefit those with capital. The differences lie in the available resources—mines in Wadas and coastal land in Rempang—and the forms of resistance undertaken by local communities, ranging from agrarian to customary.

Thus, the results of this research were conducted to add to the discourse on unequal access in ecological conflict studies by the academic. Furthermore, practically it is hoped that this research will provide considerations for inclusive development policy models for the public interest and environmental sustainability.

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Regulation

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