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COASTAL CONFLICT AS STRUCTURAL CONFLICT: POWER RELATIONS, UNEQUAL ACCESS, AND FISHERS' RESISTANCE IN EKOR VILLAGE, EAST HALMAHERA REGENCY

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Abstract

Coastal areas are socio-ecological spaces shaped by the interaction of the state, the market, and local communities. This study analyses coastal conflict in Ekor Village, East Halmahera Regency, by integrating the perspectives of political ecology, structural conflict theory, institutional analysis, and the concept of everyday resistance. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, using field observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary study. Data were analysed using the interactive model. The findings show that unequal access to capital, fishing technology, government assistance, and marketing networks reproduces power relations that place traditional fishers in a subordinate position. The conflict unfolds latently through the uneven distribution of access and development benefits. Fishers develop social solidarity, informal networks, livelihood diversification, and the use of local ecological knowledge to sustain their livelihoods. These practices of everyday resistance strengthen the community's social capital, adaptive capacity, and bargaining position, although they have not directly altered the power structure. The study concludes that coastal conflict is a structural process reproduced through governance mechanisms. Integrating these approaches broadens the understanding of how conflict is reproduced and highlights the importance of inclusive, transparent, participatory, and equitable coastal governance.

Keywords: Coastal Conflict; Fishers' Resistance; Power Relations; Resource Access; Structural Conflict.

INTRODUCTION

Coastal areas bring together economic, social, political, cultural, and ecological interests. From a political ecology perspective, their management is shaped by power relations among the state, the market, and local communities, which determine access to and use of resources (Worster, 2020; Burke, 2021). In Eastern Indonesia, vast marine potential coexists with unequal access and conflicting interests (Satria, 2020; Kusumawati, 2021).

For small-scale fishers, the sea is both a source of income and a space of cultural identity and ecological knowledge passed down across generations (Berkes, 2021). Market penetration, changes in the fisheries trade, resource exploitation, and environmental dynamics have altered catch productivity (Allison & Ellis, 2021; Bennett et al., 2023). Conflict therefore involves access to capital, technology, assistance, markets, and decision-making, not merely competition over resources.

Ekor Village, East Halmahera Regency, represents a traditional fishing community in a small-island setting. Changes in the marketing of catches, capital needs, limited technology, and the uneven distribution of assistance affect the community's socio-economic conditions and access. This case is used to examine the relationships among power relations, coastal governance, conflict, and fishers' adaptation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have explained coastal conflict in terms of competition over resources and environmental degradation (Bennett et al., 2018; Satria, 2020), institutional governance (Ostrom, 1990; Kusumawati, 2021), or the distribution of access shaped by power relations (Fabinyi et al., 2021). However, studies that combine power relations, institutional rules, unequal access, and fishers' resistance to explain the reproduction of structural conflict, particularly in the small islands of North Maluku, remain limited.

The research framework integrates political ecology to examine access and power (Agrawal, 2005; Fabinyi et al., 2021), the structural conflict theories of Dahrendorf (1959) and Marx (1976) to understand domination and subordination, and Ostrom's (1990) institutional perspective to examine the rules governing resource distribution. Scott's (1985) concept of everyday resistance is used to interpret the everyday practices that sustain fishers' social capital and adaptive capacity. The four approaches are linked in an analysis of the reproduction of coastal conflict.

The research questions are:

(1) how do power relations reproduce conflict through unequal access; (2) how do institutions shape access to capital, technology, government assistance, and markets; and (3) how does everyday resistance strengthen the adaptive capacity and bargaining position of the fishers of Ekor Village?

The novelty of this study lies in an integrated framework that links power relations, institutions, unequal access, and everyday resistance as mechanisms of conflict reproduction and socio-ecological adaptation, rather than in the novelty of the study site.

This study aims to explain coastal conflict in Ekor Village as a structural conflict, the mechanisms of its reproduction within coastal governance, and the contribution of social resistance to fishers' adaptive capacity.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. A case study design was chosen because the research aims to explain the **mechanisms** through which coastal conflict takes shape as structural conflict, through the interplay of power relations, unequal access, institutional mechanisms, and forms of *everyday resistance* that emerge within a particular social context (Creswell, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach allows the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the social processes underlying the conflict, rather than merely identifying its forms or impacts. Ekor Village, East Halmahera Regency, was selected as the research site because it represents the characteristics of a small-scale fishing community that is highly dependent on traditional capture fisheries yet faces changes in coastal governance, the distribution of government assistance, access to technology, and the marketing networks for catches. These characteristics make Ekor Village a relevant case for examining how power relations and unequal access are reproduced in the management of coastal resources.

Data were collected through field observation, in-depth interviews, *Focus Group Discussions* (FGDs), and documentary study. Informants were selected using **purposive sampling** based on three main criteria: (1) direct experience in fishing activities and coastal resource management; (2) involvement in, or knowledge of, conflict dynamics and village-level decision-making; and (3) representation of actor groups occupying different positions in the social structure and coastal governance. Based on these criteria, the study involved 22 informants: 12 traditional fishers, 2 bagan (lift-net platform) owners, 3 coastal women, 2 community leaders, 2 village officials, and 1 fisheries entrepreneur. This composition was chosen to obtain diverse perspectives on power relations, the distribution of access to resources, and community resistance practices. The number of informants was determined incrementally until *data saturation* was reached, that is, when interviews and FGDs no longer produced new categories or themes relevant to the research focus.

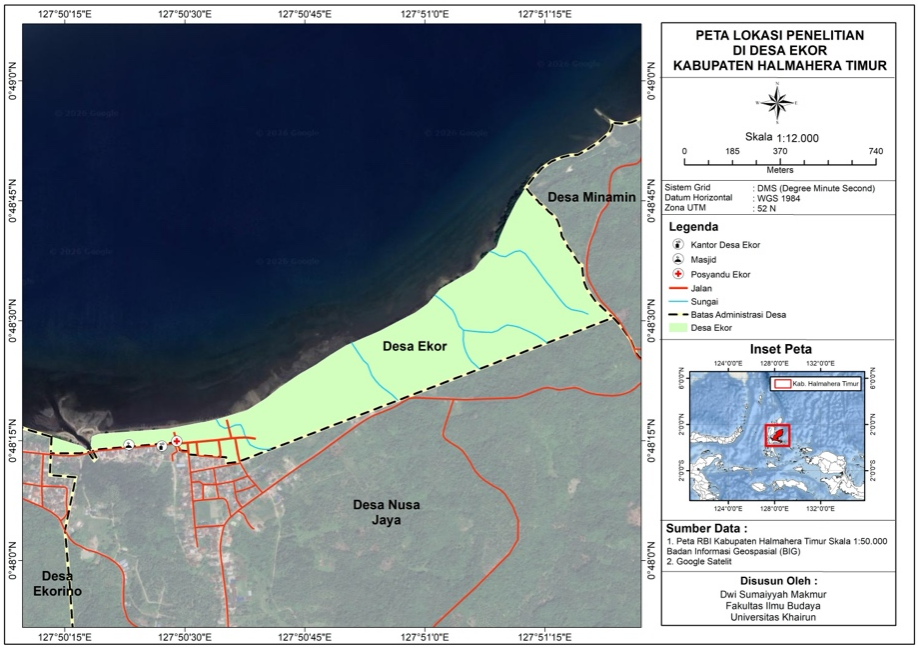

Figure 1. Map of the research site in Ekor Village, East Halmahera Regency (Source: Researchers, 2026)

The researchers served as the main instrument, supported by observation guidelines, semi-structured interviews, FGDs, audio recordings, cameras, and documentation. The instruments were designed to explore power relations; access to capital, technology, assistance, and marketing; and practices of everyday resistance.

Data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and iterative conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis began with transcription of the interviews and FGDs, followed by **open coding** to identify units of meaning related to coastal conflict.

Related codes were then grouped into categories representing the main themes, namely **power relations**, **unequal access to resources**, **institutional mechanisms**, and **everyday resistance**. These themes were then interpreted iteratively by relating the field findings to the perspectives of *political ecology*, structural conflict theory, Ostrom's institutional perspective, and the concept of *everyday resistance*, yielding an explanation of how coastal conflict takes shape as structural conflict.

Data trustworthiness was established through source and method triangulation and member checking (Patton, 2015). The principles of informed consent, confidentiality of identity, and respect for participants were applied throughout the study (Israel & Hay, 2006). The research design is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Design

Research Objective	Research Focus	Data Collection Techniques	Data Analysis
To identify coastal conflict	Forms and causes of conflict	Observation, interviews, and documentation	Data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing
To analyse power relations	Actors, interests, and control over resources	In-depth interviews and FGDs	Interactive analysis
To examine access to resources	Access and inequality in resource use	Observation and interviews	Thematic analysis
To analyse resistance strategies	Individual and collective forms of resistance	Interviews, FGDs, and documentation	Interpretation and verification

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coastal Conflict as Structural Conflict

The fishers of Ekor Village still rely on traditional fishing techniques passed down across generations. Observation identified declining catches, changes in coastal ecology, limited access to government assistance (Figure 2), and problems in the management of fishers' groups that affect household income.



Figure 2. (A) Some of the government assistance on the coast of Ekor Village; (B) government assistance in the form of fibreglass boats

According to the Secretary of Ekor Village, capture fisheries remain the backbone of the community's economy, but changes in the marine ecosystem have reduced catches:

"Most people here make their living from the sea. But now catches are starting to decline, so fishers' incomes are falling too. Almost all fishers in Ekor Village are starting to feel this." (Interview with informant R, 11 May 2026)

Declining productivity affects the economy, while differences in capital and equipment mean that fishers' capacity to adapt is unequal.

Another fisher explained that fishing grounds are now farther away and operating costs have risen, while catches, including squid, tend to decline:

"In the past, we didn't have to go far from the shore to catch plenty of fish. Now we have to go farther, but the catch isn't necessarily bigger. Squid has also become harder and harder to find." (Interview with informant H, 10 May 2026)

Another informant stated:

"When the weather isn't good, we usually don't go out to sea. And if we don't go out, there's no income. There is assistance, but not all fishers receive it." (Interview with informant E, 12 May 2026)

Bad weather limits fishing activity, while access to assistance is uneven. Fishers with capital are relatively able to use technology and reach more distant waters; those using simple equipment face lower productivity.

Based on these field findings, this study interprets coastal conflict in Ekor Village not as open confrontation or physical violence, but as a latent conflict rooted in the unequal distribution of access to coastal resources. The conflict manifests through social mechanisms that place some traditional fishers at a disadvantage in obtaining business capital, fishing technology, government assistance, and access to marketing networks for their catches. Conversely, groups with economic capital, stronger social networks, and closeness to policymakers tend to gain greater access to these resources. Thus, the conflict arises not merely from resource scarcity but from the uneven distribution of access and development benefits.

The mechanism through which this conflict is reproduced unfolds gradually. Limited access to business assistance prevents some fishers from increasing their production capacity by purchasing more modern equipment. As a result, they remain dependent on traditional fishing gear with relatively low productivity. Low catches in turn weaken the economic capacity of fishing households to invest in technology or to expand their fishing grounds. At the same time, dependence on middlemen (pengepul) to market their catches further weakens fishers' bargaining position, as fish prices are largely determined by the buyers. Consequently, economic inequality is continually reproduced over time, reinforcing the position of groups with greater access to capital, technology, marketing networks, and government policy.

These findings are consistent with political ecology's emphasis on control over resource access (Agrawal, 2005; Fabinyi et al., 2020), Dahrendorf's (1959) conflict theory on unequal authority, and Marx (1976) on the ownership of the means of production.

Table 2. Indicators of Structural Conflict in Ekor Village

Aspect	Field Findings	Implications
Access to Capital	Not all fishers receive business assistance	Unequal production opportunities
Technology	Most still use traditional fishing gear	Low productivity
Government Assistance	Distribution remains uneven	A sense of injustice emerges
Market Access	Dependence on middlemen	Weak bargaining position of fishers
Resource Management	Fishers are insufficiently involved in decision-making	Conflict persists latently

Table 2 shows that these forms of inequality reinforce one another and form a cycle of structural conflict. Limited access to capital prevents some fishers from upgrading their fishing technology. Low productivity then increases dependence on middlemen as a source of both financing and marketing. This dependence reduces fishers' ability to set selling prices, so the economic gains accrue mostly to actors who control the distribution networks. Meanwhile, the uneven distribution of government assistance reinforces perceptions of unfair treatment, especially when some fishers feel they have not had equal opportunities to access empowerment programmes. This situation is further compounded by the low involvement of fishing communities in decision-making on coastal resource management, so that their aspirations are not fully accommodated in local policy.

Thus, latent conflict is sustained through institutional rules, unequal economic opportunities, and fishers' limited participation.

Resolving it requires inclusive, transparent, and participatory governance, not merely additional economic assistance.

Power Relations and Unequal Access

Power relations in Ekor Village are formed through control over government assistance, marketing networks, information, and local institutions, in addition to the ownership of capital. Traditional fishers often depend on other actors for means of production, price setting, and access to empowerment programmes.

Most of the catch is sold within the village or through middlemen. Limited regional markets cause incomes to fluctuate with the seasons and daily catches and keep the fishers' economy at a subsistence level.

During the high-wave season or when fish are hard to find, fishers' income sometimes covers only their daily needs:

"During the wave season or when fish are hard to catch, what we earn from fishing is sometimes only enough to eat for a day. It's hard to save or to buy better gear." (Interview with informant HR, 10 May 2026)

Limited savings hinder the purchase of fishing gear. When catches decline, women in fishing households seek alternative income, including from trompon (traditional fish aggregating devices) or side jobs:

"If my husband doesn't catch any fish, we have to find other ways to make sure the household's needs are still met. Sometimes we make use of what we get from the trompon or whatever other work is available." (Interview with

informant HD, 10 May 2026)

This statement underscores the role of women and the labour of family members in sustaining the economy of fishing households.

A fisheries entrepreneur also highlighted local marketing and the limited distribution and processing facilities:
"The fish potential is actually quite large, but marketing is still limited. Cold storage has started to appear, but not all small-scale fishers can enjoy its benefits yet." (Interview with informant MGU, 13 May 2026)

These findings show that improvements in fisheries infrastructure have not automatically improved the welfare of all fishers. Access to distribution facilities and marketing networks remains easier for actors with stronger economic capital and business networks. Access problems are also evident in the implementation of fishers' empowerment programmes. The findings show that Ekor Village has only two fishers' groups, established in 2024, each with about ten members. Formally, fishers' groups were established as channels for distributing government assistance and for strengthening the institutions of coastal communities. However, the interviews show that the number of groups is not yet sufficient to accommodate all the fishers in the village.

According to the Village Secretary, group membership is an administrative requirement for receiving assistance, while quotas are limited:
"Fishers' groups were indeed formed so that people could get assistance more easily. But because the quota is limited, not all fishers can join a group or receive assistance." (Interview with informant R, 11 May 2026)

Fishers' groups have become the gateway to development resources, but their capacity is not commensurate with the number of fishers in the village:
"There are many fishers here, but only two groups. As a result, many have never received fishing gear assistance or any other programme." (Interview with EH and HT, 11 May 2026)

The main problem is the distribution of access to programmes. Fishers outside the groups are not always reached by formal assistance mechanisms.

The same pattern is evident in government assistance programmes. Informants explained that the assistance the community had received consisted of ten fibreglass boat hulls and boat engines. Although this assistance helped some fishers increase their fishing activity, the amount still falls far short of the community's needs. According to one fisher, the community's main need is not only engines or fibreglass hulls but also fishing gear suited to the conditions of Ekor Village's waters.
"What we need isn't just engines, but also fishing gear that suits the sea conditions here so that our catches can increase." (Interview with informant HR, 10 May 2026)

Based on these empirical findings, this study interprets power relations in Ekor Village as operating through mechanisms that distribute access to development resources. Government assistance, membership in fishers' groups, marketing networks, and control over information become instruments that determine who obtains greater economic opportunities and who remains in a marginal position. In other words, power is not always exercised through direct or coercive domination but is reproduced through administrative procedures, institutions, and social networks that regulate the distribution of resources.

This mechanism operates repeatedly. Fishers who belong to a group find it easier to obtain government assistance and thus have opportunities to increase their production capacity. This increased capacity enables them to obtain better catches and expand their marketing networks. Conversely, fishers outside the groups remain dependent on traditional fishing gear, have low productivity, and ultimately fall back on middlemen to market their catches. This dependence weakens their bargaining position while reinforcing the dominance of actors who control capital and distribution networks. Thus, unequal access does not end as a mere side effect of development but becomes a mechanism that continually reproduces structural conflict in coastal communities.

This interpretation is consistent with the *Theory of Access* proposed by Ribot and Peluso (2003), which holds that access to resources is determined not only by formal property rights but also by actors' ability to command capital, technology, knowledge, social networks, and the institutions that govern resource distribution. In the context of Ekor Village, membership in fishers' groups, proximity to government agencies, and access to marketing networks constitute *access mechanisms* that determine opportunities to obtain development benefits.

In political ecology (Agrawal, 2005; Fabinyi et al., 2020) and Dahrendorf's (1959) structural conflict theory, unequal control over access and authority produces domination. In Ekor Village, domination emerges through the distribution of assistance, market control, and institutions, without open confrontation.

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Table 3. Forms of Power Relations in Coastal Resource Management in Ekor Village

Actor	Form of Power	Impact on Fishers
Government	Distribution of assistance and empowerment programmes	Uneven access to assistance
Middlemen	Control over marketing networks and price setting	Fishers' dependence and weak bargaining position on prices
Fishers' Groups	Access to programmes	Not all fishers are accommodated
Traditional Fishers	Providers of labour and producers	Limited access to capital, technology, and information

Table 3 shows differences in control over resources: the government manages assistance, fishers' groups act as programme intermediaries, middlemen control marketing, and traditional fishers carry out production. Dependence on other actors for access to capital, information, and markets maintains fishers' subordinate position and the latent conflict.

Fishers' Social Resistance

Unequal access has not made the fishers of Ekor Village passive. They have developed survival strategies to sustain their livelihoods and respond to limited development resources.

Field data show that this resistance does not take the form of protests or open confrontation with the government or more dominant economic actors. Instead, resistance takes place through everyday practices rooted in values of social solidarity, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), collaboration among fishers, the exchange of information about fishing locations, the use of local knowledge about seasons and sea conditions, and the diversification of household income sources. These practices have developed as collective mechanisms to sustain the economic survival of fishing families amid uncertain catches and limited access to development resources.

One fisher described the custom of exchanging information on fish locations, weather, and currents to reduce the risks of going to sea:

"If someone knows where the fish are or that the weather is bad, we usually tell each other. So we don't go it alone." (Interview with informant HR, 10 May 2026)

This account shows that information about marine resources is treated as collective knowledge rather than individual property. This information-sharing mechanism enables fishers to retain opportunities to catch fish despite technological limitations and increasingly distant fishing grounds. Beyond information sharing, social solidarity is also expressed through mutual cooperation in fishing activities and daily life. Several residents of Ekor Village explained that they still maintain the tradition of helping one another when a fisher faces economic hardship, needs to repair a boat, or is preparing for a fishing trip.

"If a fisher is having difficulties, the community usually helps. Relations among residents are still good, and problems are always resolved through deliberation (musyawarah)." (Interview with informants AG and FS, 12 May 2026)

This solidarity functions as informal social protection, while livelihood diversification reduces dependence on catches.

Local knowledge of seasons, wind direction, currents, and fishing locations is passed down across generations and helps fishers adjust their activities to sea conditions.

Based on these empirical findings as a whole, this study interprets the strategies developed by the community of Ekor Village as a form of *everyday resistance* as described by Scott (1985). This resistance is not expressed through demonstrations or direct confrontation with the actors who control resources, but through everyday practices that enable subordinate groups to defend their living space. In the context of Ekor Village, cooperation among fishers, social solidarity, livelihood diversification, and the use of local knowledge constitute forms of resistance that develop continuously in response to the unequal access described in the previous subsection.

Solidarity builds trust, information sharing supports fishing efficiency, and diversification broadens families' economic options. Together, they strengthen social capital and collective capacity in facing socio-ecological change.

Resistance has not directly changed the distribution of power, but it has expanded networks of cooperation, adaptive capacity, and the community's bargaining position vis-à-vis coastal policy.

In political ecology, local communities are actors capable of devising strategies to maintain access to resources (Agrawal, 2005; Fabinyi et al., 2020). The forms and contributions of resistance among the fishers of Ekor Village are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Forms of Resistance among the Fishers of Ekor Village

Form of Resistance	Practice	Contribution to Social Resilience
Social Solidarity	Mutual cooperation at sea and helping fishing families	Strengthens social cohesion and social protection
Economic Adaptation	Livelihood diversification and use of trompon	Reduces dependence on catches
Local Knowledge	Determining fishing seasons and locations based on experience	Increases adaptive capacity to environmental change
Cooperation	Sharing information on fish locations and weather conditions	Strengthens social networks and fishing efficiency

Table 4 shows that the forms of resistance serve complementary functions. Social solidarity reduces the vulnerability of fishing households, local knowledge strengthens the capacity to adapt to ecological change, while livelihood diversification and cooperation among fishers broaden the range of survival strategies. Thus, the resistance that has developed in Ekor Village is not a set of isolated, spontaneous acts but a social practice continually reproduced through the community's daily interactions. These practices have not directly changed the structure of power relations, but they have succeeded in building social capital that enhances the community's collective capacity to cope with unequal access. From Scott's (1985) perspective, these forms of everyday resistance show that subordinate groups can defend their living space through informal adaptive strategies, while from the perspective of *Political Ecology*, these strategies become an important mechanism for strengthening *social resilience* and gradually improving the bargaining position of fishing communities in coastal governance.

Collective Memory and Ecological Awareness

The study shows that the fishing community of Ekor Village regards the sea not only as a source of livelihood but also as a social and cultural space that shapes the identity of the coastal community. Knowledge of fishing seasons, wind direction, changes in sea currents, the use of traditional bagan, and techniques for making trompon is part of the local knowledge handed down through fishing practice and everyday experience. This knowledge is acquired not through formal education but through intergenerational learning within families and the fishing community, and has thus become part of the community's collective memory. This finding is supported by interviews with fishers who explained that the use of seine nets (pukat), nylon lines, and traditional bagan was inherited from previous generations and is still maintained today because it is considered best suited to the characteristics of Ekor Village's waters.

"We use seine nets, nylon lines, and bagan as our parents taught us long ago. The way we go to sea also follows their experience, because they already understood the sea here." (Interview with informant HR, 10 May 2026)

Local experience also links wind direction, currents, and lunar phases to the timing of fishing trips. Fishers associate the bright moon with the squid season and the dark moon with anchovies:

"When the moon is bright it's usually squid season, while during the dark moon there are more anchovies. We know this from our parents' experience and from our own experience at sea." (Interview with an informant, 12 May 2026)

These empirical data show that local knowledge is the accumulated result of the community's long interaction with the coastal environment. This knowledge serves not only as a technical guide for fishing but also shapes how the community understands marine ecological dynamics. In addition to knowledge of fishing techniques, the findings show that the community holds a collective memory of changes in coastal environmental conditions. Almost all informants stated that catches today tend to be lower than in the past, while fishing grounds are farther away and operating costs are rising. The community understands these conditions as gradual changes experienced directly through daily life, rather than on the basis of scientific data or statistical measurement.

Intergenerational stories about marine productivity and changing seasons shape a collective memory of ecological change on the coast.

Based on these findings, this study interprets collective memory as functioning not only as a medium for transmitting past experience but also as the basis for the community's ecological awareness. Experiences of declining catches, changing seasons, and growing uncertainty at sea encourage the community to maintain local practices considered better suited to the characteristics of the coastal environment. In other words, historical experience becomes a mechanism of social learning that shapes how the community reads environmental change and determines its adaptation strategies for sustaining livelihoods. This is shown in **Table 5**.

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Table 5. Fishers' Local Knowledge

Local Knowledge	Function	Socio-Ecological Meaning
Wind seasons	Determining when to go to sea	Reducing the risk of accidents and improving safety
Squid season	Determining fishing locations	Aligning activities with marine ecological cycles
Traditional bagan	Environmentally friendly fishing technique	Maintaining fishing practices based on local experience
Value of mutual cooperation	Cooperation and information sharing	Strengthening fishers' solidarity and social resilience

Table 5 shows how knowledge of wind seasons, currents, and lunar phases helps reduce the risks of going to sea and adjust fishing locations. The use of traditional bagan maintains techniques grounded in experience and the characteristics of local waters.

Sharing information on weather and fish locations, together with mutual cooperation, turns ecological knowledge into a collective resource that reduces vulnerability and compensates for the scarcity of formal information.

From the perspective of **collective memory** (Halbwachs, 1992), these findings show that the community's memory of the sea not only records past experience but also shapes how the community understands present-day socio-ecological change. Meanwhile, from the perspective of **local ecological knowledge**, knowledge handed down across generations functions as a mechanism of adaptation to environmental change and as a social resource that strengthens the community's ability to sustain coastal life.

Coastal development should therefore integrate local knowledge and fishers' involvement, in addition to expanding infrastructure, financing, and economic assistance.

Socio-Ecological Transformation and the Development Paradox

Socio-ecological transformation in Ekor Village is marked by changes in fisheries productivity, market relations, the use of technology, and livelihood patterns. Ecological shifts are taking place alongside economic and institutional changes on the coast.

The community still uses simple fishing gear even as catches, especially of squid, are declining and fishing grounds are becoming more distant. In the FGD, fishers described this change in fishing patterns:

"In the past, if we set out before dawn, the catch was still plentiful. Now we have to go farther, but the catch keeps getting smaller because the fish have moved away from our fishing grounds." (FGD with fishers, 13 May 2026)

These empirical findings show that ecological change directly affects the fisheries production system and increases the economic vulnerability of fishing households. However, this study finds that the impacts of these changes are not felt equally across the community. Fishers with limited capital, technology, and market access find it harder to adapt to environmental change than groups with greater economic capacity. Ecological transformation thus interacts with the unequal access discussed in the previous subsection, reinforcing the vulnerability of traditional fishers. These changes are also visible in the development of the fish marketing system. One middleman explained that the arrival of *cold storage* facilities has raised the selling price of squid compared with the time when the community still relied on traditional processing.

"Before there was cold storage, squid sold for about Rp2,000 per kilogram. Now the price is much higher, but squid has actually become harder to get." (Interview with MGU, 13 May 2026)

These data show that the modernisation of the fisheries sector has paradoxical consequences. On the one hand, developments in technology and marketing networks have raised the economic value of fishery commodities and opened up wider market opportunities. On the other hand, rising market demand has also driven the intensified exploitation of marine resources, while traditional fishers' ability to seize these opportunities remains constrained by limited capital, technology, and access to distribution networks. As a result, the increased economic value of the fisheries sector has not automatically improved the welfare of the entire fishing community. Besides pressure on marine resources, the community also faces limited infrastructure to support fishing activities. Interviews show that the community hopes for the construction of a breakwater on the northern side of Ekor Village, as fairly high waves often hamper fishing activities and increase safety risks for fishers. This shows that the community's capacity to adapt to environmental change is determined not only by local experience but also by the availability of infrastructure capable of reducing ecological risks.

A development paradox emerges: innovations in storage, trade, and assistance increase economic activity, but their benefits are not yet evenly distributed, while ecological change aggravates existing inequalities.

This finding is consistent with Bennett et al. (2018), who emphasise that the success of coastal development

cannot be measured solely by increased production or economic growth, but also by the achievement of social justice in the distribution of development benefits. Similarly, Blythe et al. (2021) explain that transformations towards sustainable development can produce new forms of inequality if resource governance is not built inclusively and participatively. In the context of Ekor Village, the modernisation of the fisheries sector has not been fully accompanied by equitable access to technology, markets, or empowerment programmes, so that development benefits accrue mostly to groups with stronger economic capacity and institutional networks. This is shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Socio-Ecological Transformation

Change	Socio-Economic Impact
Declining catches	Fishing household incomes decline
Changes in seasons and sea conditions	Increased risk and uncertainty in fishing activities
Dependence on the market	Fishers' bargaining position weakens as prices are set by middlemen
Uneven distribution of assistance	Not all fishers gain access to empowerment programmes
Changes in the coastal environment	The community's economic vulnerability increases

Table 6 shows the links among declining catches, falling incomes, limited investment, seasonal risk, dependence on middlemen, and uneven assistance. These interactions cause fishers' adaptive capacity to develop unevenly.

Thus, ecological change, market structures, and development policy together reproduce socio-economic vulnerability. The modernisation of fisheries has not guaranteed an equitable distribution of benefits.

Table 7. Synthesis of Research Findings

Research Focus	Empirical Evidence	Conceptual Analysis	Research Contribution
Coastal Conflict	Conflict persists latently owing to unequal access to capital, technology, government assistance, and markets	Conflict arises not from resource scarcity but from the unequal distribution of access and development benefits	Affirms coastal conflict as structural conflict
Power Relations	Access to assistance, information, and markets is concentrated among certain actors	Power relations are reproduced through institutional mechanisms, social networks, and control over resource distribution	Explains the mechanisms through which domination is reproduced in coastal governance
Resistance	Fishers' solidarity, livelihood diversification, mutual cooperation, and the use of local knowledge	Everyday resistance strengthens the community's adaptive capacity while defending fishers' living space without open confrontation	Extends the concept of everyday resistance as a socio-ecological adaptation strategy
Collective memory	Knowledge of seasons, wind direction, fishing locations, and traditional techniques is passed down across generations	Collective memory becomes social capital that builds ecological awareness and strengthens the sustainability of coastal resource management	Links collective memory to coastal ecological sustainability
Socio-ecological transformation	Declining catches, changing seasons, market dependence, and uneven development	Ecological change and development heighten vulnerability when not accompanied by equitable access and community capacity building	Reveals the paradox of coastal development that generates both growth and inequality

Table 7 synthesises five interrelated dimensions: coastal conflict, power relations, social resistance, collective memory, and socio-ecological transformation. The distribution of capital, technology, assistance, information, and markets is the mechanism that links these five dimensions.

Power relations reproduce conflict through control over the rules governing assistance, fishers' groups, and

marketing. Actors with capital and networks obtain greater opportunities, while traditional fishers remain vulnerable. This finding extends political ecology (Agrawal, 2005; Fabinyi et al., 2020) by positioning access, rather than scarcity alone, as the mechanism of latent conflict.

Everyday resistance through solidarity, mutual cooperation, diversification, and local knowledge strengthens collective resilience without directly changing the power structure. This finding extends Scott's (1985) notion of resistance to encompass socio-ecological adaptation strategies.

Memories of seasons, winds, currents, bagan, and trompon serve as a source of ecological knowledge as well as adaptive capital. This relationship is consistent with Halbwachs's (1992) notion of collective memory and Berkes's (2021) sacred ecology.

The modernisation of markets, technology, and development programmes opens up economic opportunities, but unevenly, owing to limited access and declining catches. Coastal transformation can thus proceed alongside the reproduction of inequality, as discussed by Bennett et al. (2018) and Blythe et al. (2021).

The study's conceptual model positions coastal conflict as a process reproduced through power relations, unequal access, everyday resistance, collective memory, and socio-ecological transformation. Improving governance requires fair resource distribution, fishers' participation in decision-making, and the strengthening of socio-ecological capacity.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that coastal conflict in Ekor Village, East Halmahera Regency, is a **structural conflict** reproduced through power relations in coastal governance. Unequal access to capital, fishing technology, government assistance, marketing networks, and institutions serves as the mechanism that keeps traditional fishers in a marginal position. The conflict does not develop as open confrontation but persists latently through the uneven distribution of access and development benefits. This indicates that coastal governance is a key factor in both creating and sustaining socio-economic inequality in fishing communities. Theoretically, this study extends the **political ecology** perspective by affirming that coastal conflict is shaped not only by limited natural resources but also by mechanisms of access distribution and control over resources formed through power relations. It also enriches the study of **structural conflict** by showing how institutional mechanisms reproduce inequality over time. Furthermore, the concept of **everyday resistance** is enriched by the finding that solidarity among fishers, livelihood diversification, mutual cooperation, and the use of local ecological knowledge function not only as survival strategies but also strengthen the community's adaptive capacity and social capital in facing socio-ecological change. This study is limited in that it was conducted at a single case-study site and focused mainly on the perspectives of the fishing community, so it does not fully capture the dynamics of other actors or the characteristics of different coastal areas. Future research is therefore recommended to conduct comparative studies across coastal areas, integrating *political ecology*, political economy, and institutional analysis to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of coastal conflict. Based on the findings, the East Halmahera Regency Government, the Ekor Village Government, and relevant agencies need to develop more inclusive, transparent, and participatory coastal governance through a more equitable distribution of assistance, the strengthening of fishers' institutions, improved access to capital, technology, and marketing networks, and the involvement of fishing communities in planning and decision-making. These measures are expected to reduce the reproduction of unequal access while realising fairer and more sustainable coastal development.

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